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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-4601

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The Honorable Paul Ryan
Chairman, Committee on the Budget
U.S. House of Representatives
207 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Ryan,

We are at a critical time in our history when it comes to our nation's defense. More than ever, our Department of Defense and the Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Marines that make up our fighting force demand the attention of the Congress. The time to take action against the sequester cuts to the Department of Defense is now. The readiness of our all-volunteer force and our ability to project power is at stake. As the Chairman of the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Readiness, I am privy to the classified Quarterly Readiness Report briefings that show our declining state of military readiness across the services. I invite you to join me in an intensive review of the latest report in detail to see the true impacts of sequestration, to help inform your decisions, and those of the budget conferees, as you move through conference negotiations.

Our declining state of military readiness is a very serious issue that will be compounded if sequestration is allowed to continue. If Congress allows sequestration to continue, our forces will be unprepared to deploy, they will face increased risk, their safety will be jeopardized, their missions compromised, and there will be an increased likelihood that more Americans will be killed carrying out their Constitutional duty, both on the battle field and in training. Congress must not stand idly by and watch the dangerous degradation of our nation's military. I urge the conference committee to reduce the defense sequester cuts to the greatest extent possible.

Since Secretary Robert Gates announced his "efficiency initiatives" in August 2010, the Department of Defense has been constrained through a series of internal efficiency initiatives, successive budget cuts, the Budget Control Act of 2011, sequestration, and most recently, through a government shutdown. Even before the shutdown, defense spending had already decreased by more than \$800 billion from levels proposed just three years ago – which projected out to 2020 represents the lowest level of defense funding as a percentage of the U.S. Government's total budget authority since before WWII.

These hundreds of billions in cuts over the next 10 years, \$52 billion in Fiscal Year 2014 alone, led Army Chief of Staff General Raymond Odierno to warn the House Armed Services Committee in recent testimony that future cuts could lead to a situation where "we would struggle to meet even one major theater contingency." The other Chiefs echoed his concerns about the United States' potential inability to

execute the most basic strategic requirement: defeating an enemy in a single major contingency. This dire assessment comes on the heels of a year-old Defense Strategic Guidance that ended a generation's worth of strategy that called for the U.S. military to be postured to prevail in two major contingencies due to budget constraints.

Using words like "bleak," "insidious," "difficult," and "devastating," the Chiefs outlined a future military far from the one we had just three years ago. To describe further cuts, General Mark Welsh, Air Force Chief of Staff, warned that further reductions would lead to fewer new combat systems and long-term deferment of critical upgrades that help maintain our technological edge: "... if the reduced caps under current law continue, our modernization forecasts are bleak. This funding level will impact every one of our investment programs." He also warned the Committee of a dramatically smaller Air Force divested of entire fleets of A-10 close air support aircraft, KC-10 tankers, and F-15C fighters.

Concerned about cuts to end strength, Marine Corps Commandant General James Amos stated, "Further reductions will incur heightened, and in some cases prohibitive, risk to the National Security Strategy." He also warned this smaller force would mean that Marines would have significantly less time home between deployments. General Odierno described a future Army that would have to eliminate nearly half of its 45 Brigade Combat Teams and cancel enough training to render 85 percent of soldiers unprepared for combat and Admiral Jonathan Greenert, the Chief of Naval Operations, warned of a Navy "unable to meet U.S. Strategic Command presence [nuclear deterrent] requirements..."

In another more recent Armed Services hearing, Marine Corps Lieutenant General William Faulkner and Army Lieutenant General Raymond Mason, the top logisticians for the Army and Marine Corps charged with resetting the force after 13 years of combat, described the human toll of budget cuts and furloughs by warning that they already see the initial signs of a mass exodus of the best and brightest engineers, planners, and managers with decades of experience who are leaving for a more stable private sector or retirement. They warned this cadre of professionals will be impossible to replace in the short-term.

Air Force Space Command General William Shelton captured the cumulative impacts of these budget-driven decisions telling a conference that sequestration "probably represents a bigger threat to our capabilities than anything an enemy is thinking up."

I know you share my passion to honor the oath that we took to this nation and to support and defend the Constitution. I believe there is no higher calling in this office then to abide by Article 1, section 8 of the Constitution; "Provide for the common Defense and general Welfare of the United States... To raise and support Armies...and to provide and maintain a Navy." Again, I invite you to join me to review the Quarterly Readiness Report in detail and see the true impacts of sequestration on our all-volunteer fighting force and the security of our nation.

Sincerely,



Robert J. Wittman
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Cc:
Rep. Tom Cole (R-OK)
Rep. Tom Price (R-GA)
Rep. Diane Black (R-TN)