



14 January 2013

The Honorable Howard P. "Buck" McKeon
Chairman
Committee on Armed Services
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

The readiness of our Armed Forces is at a tipping point. We are on the brink of creating a hollow force due to an unprecedented convergence of budget conditions and legislation that could require the Department to retain more forces than requested while underfunding that force's readiness. We ask for legislative action that adequately resources readiness while granting the Department the authority and flexibility to shape the force to new budget realities.

Budget conditions unfolding right now are causing this readiness crisis. The timing and magnitude of Sequestration under the 2011 Budget Control Act along with the 2013 Defense Budget Continuing Resolution—if carried through the end of the fiscal year—will trigger a cut in operating budgets of more than 20 percent across the Joint Force compared with the President's budget. The compelling need to fully fund preparation for and execution of combat operations and care for our wounded warriors allocates this cut across a smaller portion of the force, exacerbating the readiness decrease for forces that may need to respond to a contingency.

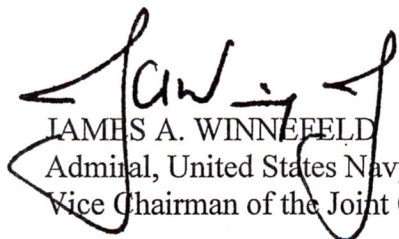
Troops on the front lines will receive the support they need, but the rest of the force will be compromised. Should this looming readiness crisis be left unaddressed, we will have to ground aircraft, return ships to port, and stop driving combat vehicles in training. Training will be reduced by almost half of what we were planning just three months ago. We are also now planning for the potential to furlough up to nearly 800,000 defense civilians who are essential to critical functions like maintenance, intelligence, logistics, contracting, and health care. We will also be unable to reset and restore the force's full-spectrum combat capability after over a decade of hard fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan.

To avert this crisis, we urge you to take immediate action to provide adequate and stable funding for readiness. We need a legislative solution that provides the time and flexibility to properly shape the best military force in the world. This means prioritizing warfighting readiness, appropriately sizing our military and civilian workforce and force structure, and reducing overhead costs. We must also be given the latitude to enact the cost-saving reforms we need while eliminating the weapons and facilities we do not need.

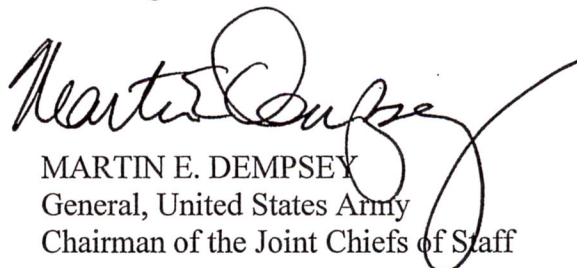
Even if Sequestration is de-triggered, but the Continuing Resolution remains in effect through FY 2013, we will require transfer authority and support for follow-on reprogramming authority from investment accounts to readiness in order to help meet readiness concerns.

The combination of capabilities and capacities of the Nation's military force required to defend our national security interests with an acceptable degree of risk is a separate issue. However, the force we choose to resource must be ready to fight. Under current budgetary uncertainty, we are at grave risk of an imposed mismatch between the size of our Nation's military force and the funding required to maintain its readiness, which will inevitably lead to a hollow force.

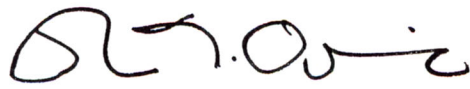
We willingly bear the burden of responsible stewardship for the resources entrusted to us by the American people, and stand ready to provide additional information that will help resolve this budget crisis in a way that preserves the near and long-term readiness of the Joint Force.



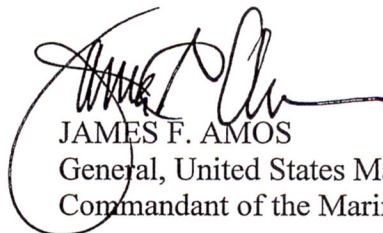
JAMES A. WINNEFELD
Admiral, United States Navy
Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff



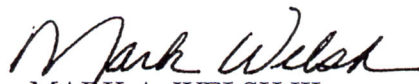
MARTIN E. DEMPSEY
General, United States Army
Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff



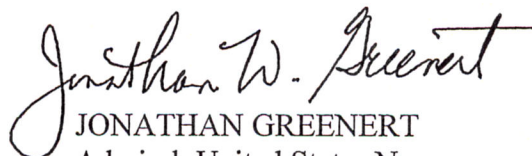
RAYMOND T. ODIERNO
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Chief of Staff of the Army




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Commandant of the Marine Corps



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General, United States Air Force
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FRANK J. GRASS
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