

Statement of Admiral Gary Roughead, U.S. Navy (Retired)
before the
Senate Armed Services Committee
Hearing on Department of Defense (DoD) Personnel Reform
December 2, 2015

Chairman McCain, Ranking Member Reed, members of the Committee thank you for the opportunity to offer my thoughts on Department of Defense (DoD) personnel reform and strengthening the All Volunteer Force. I applaud and welcome the more strategic view this Committee has taken in assessing global security challenges and the efficacy of our Armed Forces today and in the future. Nothing is more important to our nation's security strategy than getting the force design right and optimizing the total personnel strategy to that design.

In addition to command at sea I have had the privilege of being a Service Chief and a member of the Joint Chiefs, serving on Combatant Command (COCOM) and Service staffs, and commanding a NATO Striking Force in the Atlantic and a Joint Task Force in the Pacific. But I spent my life in the U.S. Navy because of the extraordinary young men and women who serve in it. It was my pleasure, every day, to sail and serve with them and there was no higher honor than to have been afforded the opportunity to lead them. Any comments and recommendations I make are not criticisms of their dedication, commitment and contribution to the hard and important work they do around the world.

The fundamental question I inferred from your letter of invitation was: is the total DoD force optimally organized, sized and compensated for the security demands of today and those we will likely face in the future? The answer is - no. The organization and processes under which we operate, fight and manage the force were derived in different times. The world has changed. We have not and do not lack for recommended solutions. Numerous studies over the years have examined organization and processes. Many recommendations have been implemented, many have not. The solutions are organizationally and mechanically simple, but the personal impact on those who serve and have served is largely distasteful and the political will, in the information environment in which we live, more doubtful. The work you are doing at this time is critical because we are at a point where the current force is approaching an unsustainable mix of cost, force balance and lethality. We continue to sacrifice procurement and the necessary maintenance and training funds of a shrinking fighting force to feed the current personnel structure. One credible estimate projects that with personnel and operation and maintenance costs growing, as they have been at four and two percent respectively, those two accounts will consume 86% of the allowed DoD budget by 2021 and all of it by 2024, the last year of the second term of the next president. As much as we all desire, significant topline relief is not likely. Piecemeal solutions will not work. A total

examination and comprehensive revision of the manpower organization and governing personnel legislation and policies of the DoD is required.

We continue to attempt to reduce manpower costs by cutting the number of those who are on point – active duty uniformed personnel. We have an all volunteer force with a compensation and benefit system that is not tuned to that force and a uniformed promotion paradigm that bleeds needed technical expertise to fulfill a one size fits all hierarchical promotion model. We are bound to well-intentioned and needed joint forcing legislation (Goldwater-Nichols) that has achieved the joint imperative but has ballooned headquarters' overhead. We have a uniformed, government service civilian and service contractor ratio conspicuously out of balance to our fighting force. We attempt to attract and retain quality new generations of government civilian employees with a civilian personnel system that values longevity over merit. We have become exceedingly disposed to headquarters service contractor support without knowing how many service contractors we are paying for and whether they are the optimum solution.

Sizing the Force. The number of active duty uniformed personnel has fluctuated since 9/11. Ground force numbers appropriately increased during the high demand years in Iraq in Afghanistan. Active duty Navy and Air Force personnel declined, but in the aggregate the total number of active duty personnel has not increased that much. The civilian workforce, after early post 9/11 growth, has remained illogically stable with some growth occurring within the acquisition community at a time when we are buying less. Reserve and Guard numbers are rarely in question; and, while public debates rage over reductions in active uniformed personnel, there is relative silence regarding the other components of the force. Further force reductions should begin with holding active uniformed numbers constant and reducing the other components, primarily civilian numbers.

Compensation and Officer Promotion. The changes to compensation begun by this Committee are positive and relevant to new generations who will serve in our military. Regarding officer promotion and retention, it is time to reform the Defense Officer Personnel Management Act (DOPMA). Time in service and time in grade promotion milestones should be tuned to the needs of each Service and to specialties within each Service. This will be key to incentivizing service and can make a difference in retaining quality and skill. Similarly, the 'up or out of DOPMA' should be eliminated in skill areas determined by the Services. This will be particularly important in areas such as cyber where broad competition for talent will be intense. Retaining experience and skill in a niche area will be more important than promotion opportunity. This change will require a longevity and skill pay scale for those who do not promote but are committed for the long haul to their area of technical expertise.

Goldwater-Nichols Legislative Reform. Without the forcing function of the Goldwater-Nichols DoD Reorganization Act of 1986 we would not be the unmatched fighting force we are today. The joint imperative must be sustained; however,

adherence to Goldwater-Nichols today is more synonymous with promotion requirements than war-fighting skill and experience. Those promotion requirements have caused the size of joint staffs (COCOM and JCS Staff) to increase in size based on assignment throughput rather than necessary and appropriate work. Concomitantly, it has reduced the attractiveness of Service staff assignments where expertise, experience in and the responsibility for manning, training and equipping of our forces reside. Joint promotion requirements for Flag and General officers should be retained, and Services should manage joint assignment strategies and incentive strategies to support senior leader requirements. Mandated numbers and promotion ratios between Service and the Joint Staff should be relaxed to best spread skill, talent and relevant experience among Joint and Service staffs. This more limited approach is consistent with addressing and tailoring to that which Service and joint organizations need rather than incentivizing all.

Recent testimony before this committee addressed the responsibilities of Combatant Commanders, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the nature of their staffs. In the case of the former, the trend to Joint Task Forces leading the fight has called into question the role of the Combatant Commander. That is a behavioral not an organizational problem because senior headquarters and leaders tend to bypass the chain of command. Combatant Commanders must command and be accountable for operations across the spectrum of operations, including combat. Their authority and accountability must be seen in their respective region or function as absolute and continuous. Joint Task Forces will remain the optimum organization for focused operations but the COCOM must be accountable for effects and outcomes. The tasks and functions of COCOM staffs should not replicate those of subordinate Joint Task Force or functional staffs and COCOM staffs must be sized for oversight not redundancy.

Nothing speaks more to our nation's principle of civilian control of the military than the advisory role of our most senior uniformed leaders, particularly the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff – that should not change. With regard to recent musings and proposals regarding creating a 'General Staff,' this could potentially create an elite military entity that could generate outside influence while limiting the infusion of recent operational, war-fighting, and technical experience into joint staffs in our rapidly evolving world.

DoD Civilian Personnel Management. Our nation is fortunate indeed to have dedicated men and women who are drawn to and take great pride in public service. As previously mentioned, the number of civilian personnel in the DoD must be rationalized with the number serving in uniform. Additionally, the management of that force should value merit over longevity. It was my duty and pleasure to have implemented the National Security Personnel System in several commands when it was in effect in a previous administration. The effects were quickly apparent – increased interest in government service, greater optimism regarding being rewarded more rapidly for hard work and innovation, and less concern for being the first to be let go if the last to come aboard – quality and hard work mattered.

Staff Size and Service Contractor Accounting. The number of people in an organization should be a function of work to be performed. We account for and control uniformed personnel and government civilian personnel through end strength and Full Time Equivalent (FTE) authorization. There is no method to account for service contractors on staffs; accordingly, staff size can float based on money available rather than work to be performed. Any count of contractors on a staff is vague and time late, and staffs can grow with limited control and awareness. Without more disciplined control in this area right-sizing organizations and staffs will be a mirage. While not perfect, creating a contractor personnel authorization at the service and joint staff level, i.e. CPN (in the case of Navy) or CPA (Army), etc. is a way to stabilize, monitor and control the size of headquarters. Once stabilized and controlled the work of debating and defining the appropriate roles and mix of government civilian versus contractor can take place. Absent that we will continue to attempt to design an optimal total force using nebulous variables.

Personnel management, especially reforming compensation and right-sizing overhead, is hard, complex and politically challenging. My comments and recommendations touch on what I consider to be the major areas of needed reform. I am hopeful they are helpful, and I look forward to your questions.