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J. Randy Forbes
United States Congress
4th District, Virginia

27 October 2010

The Honorable Robert Gates
Secretary of Defense
The Department of Defense
The Pentagon, Suite 319
Washington, DC 20301

Dear Secretary Gates:

Last Thursday evening, 70 days after requesting documentation and information from the Department of Defense on the closed-door decision to shutter the US Joint Forces Command, my office received the nondisclosure form you required members of your initiative task force to sign. I am deeply disappointed that this most basic of information took nearly three months to provide and I note your intentional lack of response to the remaining requested information I and House Armed Services Committee Members have demanded. This information, requested through briefings, informal requests, letters directly to you, and the HASC hearing on 30 September remains outstanding.

I have always had great faith in the intelligence, hard work and integrity of the Department of Defense. It has always been a point of pride that our Department of Defense acts as a deliberative body, thinking through each issue, assessing risks, and developing a comprehensive solution and associated implementation plans. But with this recent decision, many across the nation are questioning how meticulous and analytical the Department has become in its decision making if a decision as important as closing one of our nation's ten Combatant Commands can be made without any documented analysis. Because of this I and many Members of Congress across the nation remain deeply concerned for the future of our nation's security.

To date the only information we have received has been minutia and other generally available information, most of which was created after the 9 August announcement. In fact, we have not received any information, analysis or documentation about the benefits of these initiatives that were drafted prior to the announcement and initial briefings. Everything that has been provided was created after your decision was made public. This back-filled documentation creates the perception that the Department is reverse engineering the data in order to support a philosophical decision. This is a backward way of making decisions and is contrary to any generally accepted process of executive level decision making. But even with the fact that you now have teams furiously working to find information and develop analysis to support a foregone conclusion, you have failed to provide any analysis,

information or documentation to show that this decision will make the Department more efficient, no matter what that efficiency may be.

Since the initial reason provided for this initiative was that it would provide cost savings, again, I ask that you provide the information and analysis performed prior to the 9 August announcement that demonstrates any expected savings. The next reason provided during the 30 September hearing that the initiative was a military decision. Again, I ask that you provide information and analysis done prior to the 9 August announcement demonstrating that this will help the military become a more efficient organization, an assessment of the risks assumed by this action, as well as the changes and compromises that will be made in military readiness and command in the course of any implementation of the initiative and thereafter.

As I and other members of the House Armed Services Committee continue our oversight of the Department we will be mindful of the Department's lack of responsiveness to our oversight requests on this subject. These decisions with their grave analytical inadequacies and the Department's failure to comply with our constitutionally-authorized oversight have consequences.

I again, request responses to my, and others, requests for information and analysis before any final decisions on implementation are made.

Sincerely,


J. Randy Forbes
Ranking Member, Readiness Subcommittee