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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
PERMANENT SELECT COMMITTEE
ON INTELLIGENCE

September 28, 2010

The Honorable Robert Gates
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Mr. Secretary:

On May 12, 1998, I introduced a bill, H.R. 3845, to create a Joint Forces Command based on the recommendations of the 1997 National Defense Panel (NDP). I worked with Senators Lieberman and Coats in support of that objective, which, of course, the Department decided to adopt. I have been a member of the Command's outside advisory group, which has been constituted in various ways over the years, since the inception.

I have been disappointed, however, that Joint Forces Command has not lived up to the goals first suggested by the NDP. Despite being led by some excellent officers, it became additional layers of bureaucracy rather than a driving force to help our military think about and plan for the future. Therefore, I cannot say that I disagree with your decision to close the Command.

But, I am especially concerned about what will become of its mission to prepare our military to meet emerging threats to our security. Until recently, the commander of JFCOM had four responsibilities. The one which has consumed by far the greatest amount of his time and energy, heading Allied Command Transformation, was relinquished to French command this past June. The remaining three command missions involve training joint forces, providing joint forces, and representing what has been called the "COCOMs-After-Next," or formerly, "CINC Future."

These three missions are critical to our overall military effectiveness. The first two arguably can be relocated within existing commands. However, the critical mission of anticipating and preparing our military for emerging disruptive shifts in the character of warfare—the mission that was the inspiration for creating Joint Forces Command—risks becoming an orphan unless it is accorded high priority by you.

The "COCOMs-after-Next" are those military leaders that will take command five to ten years from now. We do not know their names, so their voices cannot be heard. The JFCOM commander has been designated to represent these "silent" COCOMs. Most of the changes in equipment, doctrine, and force structure being contemplated today will support these future COCOMs, not the COCOMs of today. It is essential that someone think, plan, and speak on their behalf.

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In my view, the Command was not effective in helping our forces *anticipate* emerging challenges rather than *react* to them. I recognize that the commander's ACT responsibilities consumed the bulk of his time, leaving him playing "catch up" with the Command's other missions. The press of wartime requirements meant that most of the commander's remaining energies would be directed toward training and providing joint forces for ongoing military operations. Similarly, the Pentagon's top leaders have also found their attention diverted from balancing the need to address immediate challenges while also anticipating those on the distant horizon.

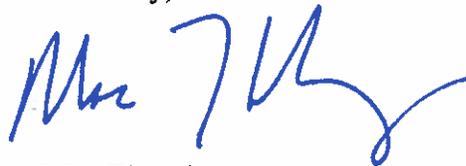
Simply stated, we have placed ourselves at high risk of reacting to our adversaries' actions in the future, rather than anticipating them and taking steps to offset them.

JFCOM as currently constituted may not have succeeded in this mission as originally intended, but the mission must find a home somewhere. Equally important, the Command in which it finds its new home must receive persistent support from senior DoD policymakers and military leaders in terms of time and resources.

I would very much appreciate knowing how JFCOM's unique mission of enabling our future commanders and their forces to be effective will be addressed in the wake of its disbandment.

I stand ready to work with you in furtherance of that goal.

Sincerely,



Mac Thornberry
Member of Congress

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