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[home](#)[email this newsletter to a friend](#)[print friendly version](#)[search back issues](#)

### IN THIS ISSUE

- ▶ [AUSA + 1st Session, 110th Congress = Some Good News, But... and Mission Review](#)
- ▶ [Commission on the National Guard and Reserve Releases Report](#)
- ▶ [In the Next Issue](#)

## AUSA + 1st Session, 110th Congress = Some Good News, But...

In its 1st Session, the 110th Congress made some progress toward allocating much-needed resources to the Army. Through the use of supplemental appropriations as well as authorizations and appropriations to the base budget, Congress provided resources for continuing current operations worldwide, especially in Iraq and Afghanistan, and for resetting the force; reduced the pay gap between military and private sector pay; substantially increased the death gratuity for Department of the Army civilians; blocked Department of Defense efforts to offset rising health care costs on the backs of retirees; and took steps to ensure that military children receive high-quality education.

However, there is more to be done. By only delaying increases in TRICARE fees, cost shares and pharmaceutical costs for retirees, Congress merely postponed making the necessary decisions to ensure affordable health care for those who, even after retirement, continue to serve as key influencers helping to encourage and sustain the nation's All-Volunteer Force. Moreover, reducing the required funds for the Future Combat Systems, the Army's major modernization program, will delay insertion of technological advances into the current force and escalate program costs.

If the nation wants fully manned, mission ready land forces, resources must follow. All AUSA members must work together to ensure funding of initiatives to ensure Soldiers and their families have a quality of life commensurate with those they serve and to secure resources that will restore balance, provide depth to Army capabilities and build capacity for the future.

Here are some of AUSA's major objectives for the last legislative session and a report on how we fared:

### People

**AUSA spoke out for:** Increasing active Army endstrength to 700,000.

**Congress responded by:** Temporarily authorizing active Army endstrength up to 525,400 and to 547,400 between 2008 and 2010 but without base budget funding.

**AUSA spoke out for:** Closing the pay gap between Soldiers and the private sector and providing pay increase parity for Department of the Army civilians.

**Congress responded by:** Decreasing the current pay gap by approving a January 2008 pay raise of 3.5 percent for military personnel and providing pay increase parity for Department of the Army civilians.

**AUSA spoke out for:** Repealing the law that reduces military survivor benefit (SBP) annuities by the amount of Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) payments.

**Congress responded by:** Authorizing a special payment of \$50/month to survivors affected by the SBP/DIC offset beginning 1 October 2008 and increasing by \$10/month for five years.

**AUSA spoke out for:** Not increasing TRICARE fees/deductibles.

**Congress responded by:** Barring the Defense Department from increasing any TRICARE Prime or Standard Fees, pharmacy co-pays or TRICARE Reserve Select premiums, but only through 30 September 2008.

**AUSA spoke out for:** Funding reserve component endstrength at 358,000 for Army National Guard and 206,000 for Army Reserve.

**Congress responded by:** Authorizing and funding Army National Guard endstrength at 351,300 and Army Reserve endstrength at 205,000.

**AUSA spoke out for:** Increasing the death gratuity for federal civilians to \$100,000.

**Congress responded by:** Increasing the death gratuity payment for federal civilians to \$100,000.

**AUSA spoke out for:** Repealing in its entirety the Department of Veterans' Affairs offset on retired military entitlement (concurrent receipt).

**Congress responded by:** Authorizing 100 percent of disabled retirees rated unemployable to receive full concurrent receipt retroactive to 1 January 2005.

**AUSA spoke out for:** Reducing from 60 to 55 the age retired reserve component personnel receive their pay and benefits.

**Congress responded by:** Reducing the age reserve component personnel receive retired pay by three months for every aggregate 90 days of active duty service in support of a contingency operation after the FY2008 Defense Authorization Act is signed into law.

## Readiness/Force Transformation

**AUSA spoke out for:** Funding the Federal Impact Aid Program to preclude children of military families from being disadvantaged in public schooling.

**Congress responded by:** Maintaining the current funding level for Impact Aid by authorizing \$30 million for schools that benefit dependents of service members and Department of Defense civilians and an additional \$5 million for schools that benefit dependents with severe disabilities and authorizing (but not funding) \$10 million for districts experiencing a change in student load due to rebasing or base realignment.

**AUSA spoke out for:** Funding accelerated modernization of reserve component equipment.

**Congress responded by:** Authorizing \$980 million for procurement of critical, high priority equipment to address reserve component unfunded equipment shortfalls.

**AUSA spoke out for:** Maintaining the Army's strategic advantage and advancing modernization in its current force.

**Congress responded by:** Authorizing helicopter upgrades and modernization for Abrams tanks and Bradley Fighting Vehicles; \$5.2 billion for procurement of Army aviation assets to include the Armed Reconnaissance Helicopter and the Joint Cargo Aircraft; \$2.9 billion for Stryker vehicles; retaining Army responsibility and operational control of the Extended Range Multi-purpose Unmanned Aerial Vehicle.

**AUSA spoke out for:** Funding for Army procurement items deemed essential for continuing operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

**Congress responded by:** Authorizing \$17.6 billion for Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicles; \$3.3 billion to up-armor additional High-Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicles; more than \$18 billion to replace equipment lost in combat; \$1.2 billion for personal protection and gear such as

body armor; \$4.77 billion for improvised explosive device defeat equipment and research.

**AUSA spoke out for:** Ensuring adequate stocks of munitions to support training and the warfighting stockpile.

**Congress responded by:** Authorizing \$2.2 billion for Army ammunition programs.

**AUSA spoke out for:** Ensuring adequate prepositioned equipment stocks.

**Congress responded by:** Requiring the Defense Department to report annually the status of prepositioned equipment stocks and plans to reconstitute stockpiles.

**AUSA spoke out for:** Developing the Future Force for the transforming Army.

**Congress responded by:** Authorizing \$3.4 billion for the Future Combat Systems.

## FY08 NDAA Provision Requires Roles and Mission Review

The fiscal 2008 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) contained a provision that requires the Department of Defense to conduct a thorough review of the military services' roles and missions.

A press released issued by House Armed Services Committee Chairman Rep. Ike Skelton, D-Mo., states, "The roles and missions of our military services are largely unchanged since the Truman Administration and the Key West Agreement of 1948. After almost six decades, it's time to once again analyze the Defense Department's roles and missions, identify the services' core competencies, discover the missions going unaddressed, and examine possible duplication of effort among the branches," said Skelton.

"In today's rapidly evolving security environment, the Department of Defense must be able to reform and modernize to meet 21st century threats. The defense authorization conference agreement, which requires a roles and missions review every four years, will be an invaluable tool to ensure that our forces are properly prepared and ready to respond to future national security challenges," said Skelton.

In an article in the Jan. 24 issue of *Defense Daily*, Rep. Skelton said that last year, the military tried to get Congress to referee mini roles and mission spats on programs like the Joint Cargo Aircraft and the issue of executive agency for unmanned aerial vehicles.

"They wanted us to decide whether the Army or the Air Force should manage both of those weapon systems," Rep. Skelton said. He does not believe Congress should be in the position of making those decisions.

The provision would:

- Require a review of the roles and missions of the Department of Defense every four years, with the first review in 2008 and subsequent reviews occurring in 2011 and every four years thereafter;
- Require that the missions of the Department be organized into core mission areas, and that the requirements, acquisition, and budget processes follow this organizational structure;
- Require the review to identify the core competencies and capabilities of the military departments, the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the commands, defense agencies, and field activities;
- Require the Joint Requirements Oversight Council (JROC) to provide the military services with clear guidance on the priority assigned to each requirement to ensure that the resources allocated align with the assigned priority level; and;
- Require the future years mission budget to be displayed by core mission area, allowing Congress and the Department of Defense to assess whether resources are being allocated properly between mission areas.

## Commission on the National Guard and Reserve Releases Report

The congressionally-chartered Commission on the National Guard and Reserve released its long-awaited report last week.

Arnold Punaro, a retired Marine Corps Reserve major general and chairman of the Commission said the panel is calling for “fundamental changes” in how these forces are trained, equipped, used domestically, paid, promoted and supported if they are to become an operational reserve rather than a strategic reserve.

“Without these 600,000 guardsmen and reservists” mobilized for operations in Afghanistan and Iraq “the nation would have had to go back to the draft,” said Punaro.

In its 400-page report, the Commission said that Congress must modernize the military reserves to enable them to better respond to wartime needs and correct an “appalling” lack of readiness for domestic catastrophes. The report also said it sees “no reasonable alternative to the nation’s continuing increased reliance on the reserve components” for missions at home and abroad.

Punaro said at the start of the Commission’s work about 2 ½ years ago that “We were skeptics” about the changing nature of the reserve components’ role in military operations abroad and in providing military support to civilian authorities.

He said that it was a natural fit to have the reserve components take the lead in responding to weapons of mass destruction being used in the homeland, massive earthquakes and catastrophes such as the destruction wreaked by Hurricane Katrina along the Gulf Coast.

“They have a huge skill set that the active duty does not” in these kinds of crises, he said. He added they also have the equipment and training for that kind of mission. “We need to enhance DoD’s role” in providing this support to local and state governments.

But, Punaro said the Commission found the Army National Guard less ready now than it was seven months ago when the panel said 88 percent of units were not ready for deployment.

Wade Rowley, a Commission member who served 23 years in the California Army National Guard and Army Reserve, said, “Today, the U.S. is part of the battlefield,” but “nowhere is it spelled out the National Guard’s role in homeland security and civil support” missions.

Rowley said the Commission is recommending that U.S. Northern Command have a significant increase in guard and reserve membership and be included by statute in the command’s leadership. “We believe the National Guard and reserve should be the tip of the spear in homeland security and civil support” and that federal forces in those situations should be placed under the governor’s control.

Defense Secretary Robert Gates said earlier he would not recommend that federal forces be placed under local control.

Looking at personnel questions, Patricia Lewis, a Commission member and former senior staff member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, said the panel “wants to take advantage of the highly educated work force of the future” and shed recruiting and retention practices that are 50 years old or more.

She said the Commission was recommending a portable benefits package so a person can move in and out of military service, “promotions based on skills rather than longevity” that would include changes in Goldwater-Nichols for joint duty assignments and education needed for promotion to three-star or higher rank, “recognizing civilian skills on entering military service” and “more early vesting for retirement.”

At the same time, the Commission recommends integrating pay and personnel systems from the 20

or more statuses a guardsman or reservist could be in to two “on active duty or in reserve”

Lewis said that better support for families and employers was “critically important.” The panel recommends an expanded role for the Employer Support for the Guard and Reserve program with a “one-stop shopping site for employers and small businesses” to receive the information they need about the rights and responsibilities of the guardsmen and reservists working for them.

“Continuity of care is a significant concern for families of mobilized guardsmen and reservists, she said, and the panel recommended incentives for employers to keep these families in their health care programs and the possibility of opening the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program to them.”

The response from Congress was swift and critical of the Commission’s report. Sens. Patrick Leahy, D-Vt., and Christopher Bond, R-Mo., leaders of the Senate’s National Guard Caucus strongly objected to a proposal that would subordinate leaders of the Army National Guard and Air National Guard to their respective services chiefs of staff, saying it would undermine the Guard’s power.

Sen. Leahy said that the panel “disconnected its findings from recommendations” while Sen. Bond called many of the panel’s plans “not only short-sighted but flat-out wrong.”

They were also critical of the Commission’s proposal that the Department of Homeland Security tell the Department of Defense what it would be expected to provide in terms of personnel and equipment in domestic crises. They said it would overwhelm the department and create confusion in military budgeting and bureaucratic infighting.

The Pentagon's reaction to the report was equally critical. They called the report's assertion that the U.S. military is not adequately prepared to respond to nuclear, biological and chemical attacks on the United States “fundamentally flawed.”

“While there are positive elements of the Commission's report, in most cases echoing and validating actions already well underway within the Department of Defense, the core elements of the report are fundamentally flawed,” said Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense Paul McHale.

He also said that some of the Commission's specific recommendations would harm the National Guard and reserve, such as changing the National Guard's mission to responding exclusively to domestic disasters or cutting the pay of reservists. “We think that's wrong. Converting the National Guard into a domestic disaster-response force, training on half pay, would be a problematic and counterproductive course of action.”

The Commission’s report can be found on:

<http://www.cngr.gov/Final%20Report/CNGR%20Final%20Report.pdf>

## In the Next Issue

The President's Budget request for fiscal 2009 will be forwarded to Congress later today. Look for details of the budget and Congress' reaction in next week's newsletter.