

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 22, 2015

General Frank J. Grass
Chief, National Guard Bureau
1636 Defense Pentagon Ste 1E169
Washington, DC 20310-0001

General Grass:

We are troubled that the latest National Guard Bureau interpretation of the Army's Aviation Restructuring Initiative eliminates North Carolina's Apache unit without providing our state with a deployable aviation battalion headquarters or any consummate capability such as a robust heavy rotary lift capability in the event that the Army is permitted to carry out its plans.

North Carolina is justifiably proud of the 10,000 men and women of our Army National Guard. As you know, the 1-130th Attack Reconnaissance Battalion (ARB) was selected as the first National Guard attack helicopter formation to deploy to Operation Enduring Freedom because of their readiness and consistent performance. Since 2004, the combat record of the 1-130th ARB is amongst the finest in the entire Army across all components. Yet, their reward for outperforming their peers appears to be deactivation.

The FY 2015 NDAA and FY 2015 Appropriations Act established the National Commission on the Future of the Army with duty to comprehensively study the structure of the Army and to report to Congress on its findings in February 2016. Freezing further transfers of the Apaches through FY 16 complies with the intent of Congress to avoid irreversible cuts in the combat mission of the Army National Guard before the Commission reports to Congress. The combat prowess of the Army Guard is indisputable and this transfer damages the progress the Guard has made in the last two decades.

We request you provide us with an explanation of the criteria used in the decision making for the current NGB aviation basing plan and the reason for the proposed acceleration. We are also waiting for a business rationale for leaving North Carolina without the originally-planned replacement assault helicopter battalion considering its proximity to active duty forces and the eastern seaboard.

If attack aviation remains in the Guard, we fully expect North Carolina to retain its attack aviation battalion due to its proven combat record and impressive accomplishments. While not ideal, North Carolina could accept the assignment of an assault helicopter battalion in return for our attack reconnaissance battalion because of its strategic location and the 1-130th's demonstrated excellence as an aviation asset.

We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Richard Burr
United States Senator



Thom Tillis
United States Senator