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January 31, 2022

Honorable Shawn G. Skelly
Assistant Secretary of Defense for Readiness
4009 Defense Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301-4000

Dear Secretary Skelly:

On behalf of the American Federation of Government Employees, AFL-CIO, which represents over 700,000 federal and D.C. government employees who serve the American people in over 70 different agencies across the nation and around the world including approximately 300,000 in the Department of Defense (DoD), we appreciate your support of a strong national defense and your recognition of the importance of a professional, apolitical civil service supporting our uniformed warfighters. The majority of civilians we represent in the Department are directly tied to the ensuring and delivering the readiness of the force, at our installations, depots, armories, ranges, shipyards, and distribution centers.

We were very impressed with your responses to questions during your confirmation hearing and are therefore writing to you to bring to your attention two important areas that are relevant to measuring the contributions of the civilian workforce to (1) immediate and near-term readiness, (2) middle-term readiness, and (3) long term strategic readiness. Too frequently decisions involving the DoD civilian workforce, because of the lack of empirical evidence and readily available data to measure their contributions in readiness reporting systems, are budget-based and do not take into account:

- (1) The significant contributions of the civilian workforce to readiness, simply because of the lack of data showing the impact of the civilian workforce on the availability and utilization of military for operational and training missions; or the failure to map the civilian workforce to the Department's mission areas. Congress recently addressed one aspect of this lack of data by mandating the Defense Readiness Reporting system revive the reporting for borrowed military manpower, a key metric that the original Defense Science Board recognized as a leading metric for a hollow force, but which the military departments have ceased to track because of perverse budgetary incentives to mis-use military for non-military essential functions. Congress has repeatedly, over the past decade, weighed in on the damaging effects of borrowed military manpower by modifying title 10 language and requiring a GAO audit.
- (2) Related to the first point, the significant impact the civilian workforce provides to increasing the lethality of the uniformed military by enabling its optimum use for military essential warfighting functions, irrespective of whether or not the missions performed by the civilian workforce can be directly mapped to immediate and near-term readiness.
- (3) And the first two points are also directly related to metrics that measure PERSTEMPO, both with respect to boots on the ground dwell ratios for low density and high demand military occupational specialties to deployment ratios for operational capabilities. These



- metrics, as you know, directly affect stress on the force, resulting in not only lower than expected readiness ratings at unit or individual levels. Stress on the force can also be recognized on rates of death by suicide, and stresses on military families and their surrounding communities.
- (4) Finally, within any given level of military end strength, there is a mathematical relationship between the design of force structure capabilities in terms of their overall capabilities and the composition of military occupational specialties, the number of such units or formations available to meet operational demands, which are always in excess of supply, and the amount of military that gets mis-used for non-military essential functions because of the absence of or the downsizing of civilian structure. Within that construct about 13 percent of the military is being moved between assignments in different geographic areas or going through individual training (basic or advance or professional military education) or otherwise non-deployable. Failing to make civilian structure a part of the analysis during the early stages of the force development process or disregarding the analysis that is performed by the military departments during the budget process too often adversely affect readiness, lethality and stress on the force.
 - (5) Finally, too often the consideration of costs is performed in a siloed rather than a holistic manner within a total force management construct that considers the fully burdened costs of active and reserve component military, the civilian workforce, host nation support and contract support.

The two areas we urge you to consider are: First, the Center for Naval Analysis Study sponsored by P&R and published in September 2021 “Identifying Contributions of DoD’s Civilian Workforce to Readiness” points out how most prior analyses of the DoD civilian workforce have been from the perspective of civilian occupational series used by human resource personnel rather than from the perspective of mapping what the DoD civilian workforce actually does to its missions. The study found that mapping the DoD civilian workforce to missions requires more detailed analysis that examines the alignment of the workforce organizationally rather than by occupational series. The study found a wide variety of functions performed by the DoD civilian workforce that “directly support sustainment, logistics and maintenance functions, significant numbers work at activities that conduct or directly support training and education, force security, medical services, research and development, communications, and cyberspace operations. . . .Our results show that most civilians work at activities whose primary function s directly support immediate and near-term force readiness. Middle-term readiness is the second most supported areas.”

Second, as alluded to earlier, after inconsistent testimony from the military departments and documented resistance to owning up to the importance of measuring the problem of borrowed military manpower during readiness hearings during the course of the prior administration, and after push back from the military departments to a Government Accountability Office review resulting from those hearings,¹ the Congress in the Fiscal Year 2022 National Defense Authorization Act section 361 revived the Defense Readiness Reporting System requirement to track borrowed military manpower when military are pulled from operational assignments or training to perform functions that had been performed by civilian employees.²

¹ See, e.g., GAO-21-27R, “MILITARY PERSONNEL: Perspectives on DoD’s and Military Services’ Use of Borrowed Military Personnel (Nov. 18, 2020).

² The House version encompassed the use of borrowed military manpower to replace civilian employees or contract support and in Conference, the report was limited to civilian support. While our concern is with the civilian workforce, it is worth noting that during the Obama Administration, the Army attempted to use borrowed military manpower to replace handicapped owned small business dining facility employees with borrowed military manpower and was stopped by the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Readiness and Force Management) Frederick E. Vollrath.

The history of the borrowed military manpower issue is very instructive. The June 1994 Defense Science Board study on readiness that established the framework for the original Defense Readiness Reporting System “concluded that in order to achieve and sustain readiness it was essential to consider, not just the amount of hardware but key manpower issues such as the active-reserve mix, retention, training, and the sufficiency of supporting government civilians. The task force also concluded that borrowed military manpower results in a loss of unit cohesiveness, reduced training efficiency, and lowered readiness.” This same issue was recently documented by the National Security Commission on Military Aviation Safety: “The Services are not adequately tracking PERSTEMPO for units and individuals....”³ We believe your leadership is essential to overcoming parochial interests that would filibuster implementing this statutory direction in a way that would ensure this missing ingredient of data analytics to inform near and long term strategic readiness is fully captured.

These issues of effective and efficient Total Force management have been well documented by the FFRDC community on behalf of the Department, including numerous studies by RAND, IDA, and CNA. However, to date the recommendations of these studies have not been implemented. Congress has repeatedly weighed in over the course of more than a decade, but similarly to little effect. I recently wrote to Deputy Secretary Hicks, noting how the Department and P&R have abrogated their Total Force Management responsibilities. Given the inextricable connection between the civilian workforce we represent and the readiness of our uniformed personnel and platforms, I hope that we can work together to generate better outcomes for our forces.

We appreciate your consideration of our views, and welcome the opportunity for my team and I to meet with you and discuss possible solutions to these complex problems.. Any question from your staff on the details of this letter may be directed to our defense lobbyist, Dr. John Anderson, at 703-943-9438, john.anderson@afge.org or our policy counsel, Mr. Richard Loeb, at 240-643-3697.

Sincerely,


Everett B. Kelley
National President

Copy Furnished:
White House Labor Liaison
Senate Appropriations Committee
House Appropriations Committee
Senate Armed Services Committee
House Armed Services Committee
Congressional Budget Office
Government Accountability Office

³ “Diverting aviation professionals from their primary aviation duties with additional duties adds to an unsustainable workload. Due to personnel cuts, military aviation units have experienced cuts in administrative support over the past two decades, forcing aviators and maintainers to undertake additional administrative duties that interrupt their primary aviation tasks and contributed to fatigue and burnout.” National Security Commission on Military Aviation Safety, “224, Lives, \$11.6 Billion, 186 Aircraft” (Dec. 2020). Pp. 47-48.