

# **Center for National Policy**

Congresswoman Ellen O. Tauscher

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Thank you Jennifer for your kind introduction.

It's a pleasure to be at the Center for National Policy.

In just a very short time, you have established a strong reputation for independence and thoughtful research.

Your recent report "Agility Across the Spectrum: A Future Force Blueprint" is a well reasoned document that gives policymakers new and important insight into the future of defense.

Just a month ago, although it seems much longer then that, the American people went to the polls to demand change.

They asked for change in the way things are done in Washington, at every level and in every department.

Our national security and military are no different.

I want to discuss today the changes, the transformation, the United States should make to the size and makeup of our military force.

We are clearly at a crossroads.

We are in what we hope is the final phase of our presence in Iraq and in the middle of a thorough review of our strategy for Afghanistan.

We also have an incoming administration, which will have its own ideas about the use of American force and the type of military we need.

With two major ground wars and our armed forces stretched to the limit, some might argue this is the worst time to be making major decisions about our military.

But the world will not wait. The times are too important to let events dictate the changes we need.

As the chairman of the Strategic Forces Subcommittee of the House Armed Services Committee, I have long focused on a key aspect of transformation, // the proper size and makeup of our military.

As you know, the high operational tempo of units is undermining our military's ability to meet future threats.

It is straining the very fabric of our all volunteer force.

And it is putting tremendous pressure on military families here at home.

The Army, the largest of the services, is stretched to its breaking point.

Currently the Army has some two hundred and three thousand soldiers deployed abroad with over one hundred forty-six thousand in and around Iraq.

Forty percent of the Army's maneuver brigades, seventeen out of forty-four, are engaged overseas.

More than forty thousand Army guard and reserve members serve in Iraq, Kuwait and Afghanistan.

Not only is this a significant portion of the force deployed, but many units are serving repeated tours.

This undermines the readiness of troops who have less time to rest and train and makes it harder to meet new threats and undertake critical missions.

The repeated deployment of reservists takes away individuals whose skills could otherwise help grow the economy or serve the public here at home.

Repeated deployments are also linked to significant health problems and place great strains on marriages and families.

**If our national security is important, we have to protect and maintain its most important component; people.**

The incoming Obama administration, working with the military and Congress, must find a solution that preserves our military force and keeps it an attractive career path for young men and women.

Military transformation is not a new concept.

Its last serious discussion, most notably by Secretary Rumsfeld in 2001, was rapidly discarded as we became bogged down in Iraq.

The conversation, at the time, was about the proper mix of technology and ground forces. As the necessity of ground forces became more evident in Iraq, investments in futuristic systems were crowded out.

As they should have been.

That's not to say that technology or new systems won't play a role in the military of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it will. But technology is only as useful as the men and women who develop and use it.

I have offered a set of solutions that the Obama administration should take up in cooperation with the next Congress.

**First, increase the size of the force.**

On the campaign trail President-elect Obama called for an increase in the size of the Army and Marines.

The benefits are clear.

Additional units would take the pressure off the guard and reserve: Reservists account for about a sixteen percent of the over one-hundred forty-six thousand military personnel currently in Iraq, and that share is estimated to reach forty percent.

Reservists, in far smaller numbers, have served in every Army deployment since Desert Storm.

The deployment of two or three Guard brigades to Iraq ends that pattern.

Raising end-strength and training active duty soldiers in high demand, low density specialties would allow us to have an active force that doesn't rely so heavily on our reserves.

The practice of stop loss cannot be maintained indefinitely. Its extensive use over the last several years is driving down morale while keeping the army at an artificially large size.

By increasing the size of the active force, we can improve morale as well as recruitment and retention.

A larger active force would allow for better deployment ratios. The Pentagon has not achieved its goal of a one to one ratio where active duty forces can spend one year training and recuperating for a year deployed.

Increasing end-strength must start immediately. Because expanding the size of the military will be expensive and take several years, it must be begin now to yield ready units in two or three years.

**Second, achieve better dwell time to deployment ratios.**

One approach to ensure that troops have sufficient time to recuperate and train is to mandate a period of dwell time between deployments.

I offered a bill in the House stating that if a unit or member of a regular component of the Armed Forces deploys to Iraq or Afghanistan, they will have the same time at home before they are redeployed.

No unit or member of a Reserve Component, including the National Guard, could be redeployed to Iraq or Afghanistan within three years of his or her previous deployment.

Senator Jim Webb (D-VA) offered a similar plan as an amendment in the Senate but was not successful.

Each piece of legislation carefully considered the unknown threats we face and contained certain waivers and exceptions.

For example, in event of an operational emergency, the President would be able to waive the limitations by certifying to Congress that the unit or member is necessary. The military departments also are provided waiver authority for individual volunteers who ask to redeploy prior to the end of their dwell time.

Increased dwell time allows for better-trained troops, additional time with families, decreased cases of post traumatic stress disorder, and more predictable rotations.

On August 8, 2007, the House passed my bill H.R. 3158. Unfortunately the Senate did not act on it.

**Third, increase the size of specialized units.**

Instead of relying on what is often a serendipitous skill set present in the Guard and Reserve, create specialized units with post conflict and peace building skills: servicemen and women who are ready to staff provincial reconstruction teams, civilian affairs teams, police and military trainers, engineers, etc...

The Department of Defense would have these units at the ready, allowing for faster turnover to civilian agencies like the State Department.

Training teams would also already be on-hand to create security units in the deployed area.

This would make Reserve units, the Army National Guard and the Air National Guard, more readily available to undertake homeland security missions and assist during natural disasters.

Current combat troops would be able to focus exclusively on their military mission and current high demand/low density soldiers with relevant skill sets would not be over extended.

**Finally, perform a strategic readjustment.**

As possible, we should look for opportunities to reprioritize missions away from current manpower intensive tasks. Redeploying troops from Iraq and convincing allies to provide additional troops for Afghanistan would reduce the strains on our military force.

This last element will require significant diplomatic effort on the part of the new administration.

I am confident the world is ready to accept new responsibilities in Afghanistan if asked. There is a firm understanding of the national security implications to the world should Afghanistan once again fall under control of the Taliban and al-Qaeda.

On the domestic front, as Secretary of Defense Gates has so thoughtfully indicated, we need to find a better way to partner enable civilian agencies with the military. This partnership would help our armed forces avoid spending so much time on non-core war fighting functions.

Change on such a scale will not be easy.

The battles we are currently engaged in however can't obscure the changes we need to make to improve our national security.

Increasing the size of the active military and specialized units, mandating dwell time, and performing a strategic readjustment will not only serve our national security interests in the future, but will dramatically improve our national security in the present.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today and I would be happy to answer any of your questions.