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National Commission on the Future of the Army (NCFA): Background and Issues for Congress

(name redacted)

Specialist in Military Ground Forces

February 5, 2016

Congressional Research Service

7-....

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R44366

Summary

Title XVII of the Carl Levin and Howard P. “Buck” McKeon National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2015 (P.L. 113-291) established the National Commission on the Future of the Army (NCFA) to conduct a comprehensive study of the structure of the Army. The NCFA reported its findings to Congress and the Administration on January 28, 2016, and made a number of recommendations that may or may not be acted upon.

Some have suggested the historical post-war practice of reducing defense budgets contributed to the perceived need for a commission to address proposed changes to the Army. The perceived success of two previous commissions—the 2014 National Commission on the Structure of the Air Force and the 2015 Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission—also likely played a role in the establishment of the commission. Some say controversy surrounding the Army’s 2013 Aviation Restructuring Initiative (ARI) significantly influenced the decision to establish the NCFA.

As part of its final report, the NCFA produced a classified appendix, which is available to those with the appropriate clearance and a “need to know.” The 208-page report contained 63 recommendations for the Nation, the President, Congress, the Department of Defense, the Joint Staff, Combatant Commands, the Army, and Army Service Component Commands. Some of the report’s major recommendations include forward stationing an Armored Brigade Combat Team (ABCT) in Europe; retaining an 11th Regular Army Combat Aviation Brigade (CAB) and forward stationing it in Korea; and recommending the Army maintain 24 manned AH-64 Apache battalions—20 in the Regular Army and 4 in the National Guard.

Major themes of the NCFA’s report include developing “One Army” and the prioritization of training and readiness. Some general observations of the commission’s recommendations include the importance of the NCFA classified appendix; the impact of the commission’s recommendations on the “Corporate” Army; the history and challenges of past and current Army initiatives; and force structure issues outside the Title XVII mandate.

Potential issues for Congress include

- to what extent will Congress and the Administration implement NCFA’s recommendations;
- how much would it cost to implement the recommendations;
- potential difficulties in implementing the NCFA’s recommendations; and
- how Congress would oversee the implementation of the NCFA’s recommendations.

The author of this report served on the staff of the National Commission on the Future of the Army from June 1, 2015, until September 30, 2015. The information and analysis contained in this report are derived from open source data. Participation on this commission informed but did not influence the content of this report.

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Importance for Congress

Title XVII of the Carl Levin and Howard P. “Buck” McKeon National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2015 (P.L. 113-291) established the National Commission on the Future of the Army (NCFA) to conduct a comprehensive study of the structure of the Army (see the **Appendix**). The NCFA reported its findings to Congress and the Administration on January 28, 2016, and made a number of recommendations that may or may not be acted upon. The NCFA is likely to participate in congressional briefings and/or hearings detailing the NCFA’s recommendations.

Why Was the NCFA Established?

Some have suggested the historical post-war practice of reducing defense budgets, in part, contributed to the perceived need for a commission to address proposed changes to the Army. One defense analyst characterized this situation, noting:

The decline in the size of the active-duty force caused by reduced budgets has sparked tension among the Active, Guard, and Reserve components over their respective missions and corresponding resources. Lacking the ability to fund the existing arrangement of Active, Reserve, and Guard forces adequately, service chiefs have had to reallocate funding, forcing reconsideration of what each component needs to have and for what purpose.¹

On May 6, 2014, Senators Patrick Leahy and Lindsey Graham introduced a bill to establish an NCFA and highlighted the concerns of some Members:

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, yesterday Senator GRAHAM and I introduced a bill to establish a National Commission on the Future of the Army, an independent panel that will bear the responsibility of analyzing some major changes to the U.S. Army that were proposed in the President’s budget. The Army’s budget for Fiscal Year 2015 sets a path toward major, irreversible changes to Army capacity and capability, particularly in the Army National Guard and Army Reserves that cannot be ignored by the Congress.

Senator GRAHAM, my fellow co-chair of the Senate National Guard Caucus, has said repeatedly that these changes fundamentally alter what it means for the National Guard to be a combat reserve of the Army. The changes would also render the Nation’s operational reserve insufficient in its ability to retain gains in experience and readiness that the reserve has achieved over a decade of continuous deployment. Most dramatically, these changes would transfer all of the National Guard’s AH-64 Apaches to the active component, leaving the Nation without any combat reserves for one of the aircraft most essential to ground operations.²

The decision to establish an NCFA was also likely influenced by two previous commissions that also addressed contemporary military issues—the 2014 National Commission on the Structure of the Air Force³ and the 2015 Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission.⁴

¹ COL Richard J. Dunn III, U.S. Army Retired, “America’s Reserve and National Guard Components: Key Contributors to U.S. Military Strength,” The Heritage Organization, 2015, <http://index.heritage.org/military/2016/essays/americas-reserve-and-national-guard-components/>.

² Congressional Record – Senate, May 7, 2014, S2785.

³ <http://afcommission.whs.mil/>, accessed December 22, 2015.

⁴ <http://mldc.whs.mil/>, accessed December 22, 2015.

Both commissions provided a number of recommendations that have been either adopted by the Air Force or, in the case of the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission, enacted through legislation or policy changes and applicable to all U.S. servicemembers.

The Army's Aviation Restructuring Initiative (ARI)

Some say the Army's 2013 Aviation Restructuring Initiative (ARI) significantly influenced the decision to establish the NCFA. An April 27, 2015, U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) report, *Force Structure: Army's Analyses of Aviation Alternatives*, describes the ARI:⁵

In October 2013, the Army Chief of Staff approved a force-structure proposal—called the Army Aviation Restructuring Initiative—that would cut approximately 10,700 military positions from the Army's end strength by eliminating active-component and reserve-component [aviation] units from the Army's force structure. The proposal would enable the Army to divest nearly 800 older and less-capable helicopters [OH-58D Kiowa Warrior] from the force, and rebalance combat capabilities across the regular Army, Army National Guard, and Army Reserve. The Army would accomplish this by removing all AH-64 Apache helicopters from the reserve component and increasing the number of AH-64 Apaches in the active component. According to the Army, once implemented the aviation restructuring initiative would save roughly \$1 billion annually.

GAO further noted:⁶

The National Guard Bureau, although agreeing with many aspects of the Army's proposal, has opposed the effort to remove the AH-64 Apache helicopters from the Army National Guard. Bureau officials said that in their view the removal of these helicopters will degrade the Army National Guard's role as a combat reserve; establish a precedent for removing other combat capabilities from the Army National Guard; and disrupt Army National Guard units and force structure across 20 states.

The disagreement between the Army and the National Guard Bureau over the ARI was visible to the public, the Administration, and Congress⁷ and reportedly became acrimonious. It is possible this lack of consensus between the Army and National Guard and their perceived contentious relationship suggested a need for an independent body to examine the ARI as well as other Active and Reserve Component force structure issues.

NCFA's Major Recommendations

On January 28, 2016, the NCFA released its final report.⁸ As part of the report, the NCFA produced a classified appendix (see topic outline and access instructions in Appendix E of the report), which is available to those with the appropriate clearance and a "need to know." The 208-page report contained 63 recommendations for the Nation, the President, Congress, the Department of Defense, the Joint Staff, Combatant Commands, the Army, and Army Service

⁵ GAO-15-430R Force Structure, Force Structure: Army's Analyses of Aviation Alternatives, April 27, 2015, p. 1.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Sebastian Sprenger, "Absolutely False Statements Alleged: Army Leaders Sketch Out Vision of Less Combat-Focused Reserves," *InsideDefense.com*, June 5, 2015 and Sebastian Sprenger, "Unanimous Disagreement: With Active-to-Guard Apache Transfers Approaching, Some Still Grumble," *InsideDefense.com*, August 7, 2015.

⁸ http://www.ncfa.ncr.gov/sites/default/files/NCFA_Full%20Final%20Report_1.pdf.

Component Commands, and these recommendations are summarized in Appendix B of the report. The commission's major findings and recommendations are summarized below:

- An Army of 980,000 soldiers (Regular Army of 450,000; Army National Guard of 335,000; and an Army Reserve of 195,000) is the minimally sufficient force to meet current and anticipated missions with an acceptable level of risk. This finding is consistent with the endstrength and force mix minimums established by Army leadership in 2014.⁹
- The Army should retain an 11th Regular Army Combat Aviation Brigade (CAB) instead of drawing down to 10 CABs as proposed under the ARI. This 11th CAB should be forward stationed in South Korea. The commission believes there is significant risk in terms of aviation safety given terrain and aviation mission complexities for rotational aviation forces in Korea. Forward stationing of this CAB in South Korea would provide aircrew greater familiarity with the demanding environment and enhance interoperability with South Korean allies.¹⁰
- The Army should forward station an Armored Brigade Combat Team (ABCT) in Europe. While the Army is currently rotating an ABCT through Europe, both the changing European security environment, as well as the advantages of deploying from Europe if the ABCT is required for a Middle Eastern contingency, support the permanent stationing of an ABCT in Europe. Based on its analysis, the commission believes little additional staffing would be required to accommodate the forward stationed ABCT.¹¹
- The commission noted a significant shortfall in Army air defense capability as a result of post-Cold War changes in force structure. Noting the security situations in the Ukraine and Syria, concern was expressed that no short-range air defense battalions were in the Regular Army and a sizeable percentage of the National Guard's short-range air defense capability was devoted to protecting the National Capital Region, leaving little spare capacity for contingency operations.¹²
- The commission also found shortfalls in tactical mobility; missile defense; chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) defense—particularly as it relates to homeland defense; field artillery; fuel distribution; water purification; Army watercraft; and military police.¹³
- If the Army's 980,000 soldier strength cannot be increased to address the creation of units to address the aforementioned shortfalls, the Army should consider eliminating two Regular Army Infantry Brigade Combat Teams (IBCTs) to free up spaces to create these units.¹⁴ While such an action might provide the needed spaces, equipping these units would likely require the dedication of significant budgetary resources unless equipment already exists within the Army's inventory.

⁹ Report to the President and Congress of the United States, National Commission on the Future of the Army, January 28, 2016, p. 2.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 2.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

- Regarding the Army’s proposed Aviation Restructuring Initiative (ARI), the commission recommends the Army maintain 24 manned AH-64 Apache battalions—20 in the Regular Army and 4 in the National Guard. The Regular Army Apache battalions would be equipped with 24 AH-64s, and the National Guard battalions would have 18 Apache helicopters and would need to cross level helicopters between units prior to deploying.¹⁵ To help decrease the costs to the commission’s recommendation, only 2 UH-60 Black Hawk transport helicopter battalions would be added to the National Guard as opposed to the 4 Black Hawk battalions under the Army’s ARI proposal.

The NCFA – Charter, Structure, and Operations

As previously noted, Title XVII of the Fiscal Year 2015 National Defense Authorization Act (P.L. 113-291) established the National Commission on the Future of the Army (NCFA). It is detailed in the **Appendix**, but the commission’s charter, structure, and operations are summarized in the following sections.

The NCFA’s Charter

Title XVII spells out the NCFA’s duties as follows:

- Conducting a comprehensive study of the structure of the Army as well as policy assumptions related to the size and force mixture of the Army in order to:
 - Make an assessment of the size and force mixture of the Active Component (AC) and Reserve Components (RC); and
 - Make recommendations on modifications (if any) to the Army’s structure as it relates to the Army’s current and anticipated mission requirements. These recommendations must be at acceptable levels of national risk and in a manner consistent with both available resources and anticipated future resources.
- Conducting a study of the transfer of Army National Guard AH-64 Apache aircraft from the Army National Guard to the Regular Army.

When conducting these studies, the NCFA is directed to consider the following:

- When evaluating and making recommendations on a force structure for the Army, that structure should:
 - Have the depth and scalability to meet current and anticipated Combatant Command requirements;
 - Achieve cost efficiency between regular and reserve components, manage military risk, take advantage of the strength and capabilities of both components, and consider fully burdened lifecycle costs;
 - Ensure both components have the capacity to support current and anticipated homeland defense and disaster assistance missions in the United States;
 - Provide sufficient numbers of regular forces to form a base of trained personnel from which reserve component personnel can be recruited;

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 87.

- Maintain a peacetime rotation force to avoid exceeding operational tempo goals of 1:2 (1 year deployed followed by 2 years at home station) for AC members and 1:5 (1 year deployed followed by 5 years at home station) for RC members; and
- Manage strategic and operational risks by means of tradeoffs in:
 - Readiness;
 - Efficiency;
 - Effectiveness;
 - Capability; and
 - Affordability.
- Identify and evaluate Army force generation policies with respect to size and force mix needed to fulfill current and anticipated mission requirements, consistent with current resources and anticipated future resources. These policies should include:
 - Readiness;
 - Training;
 - Equipment;
 - Personnel; and
 - Maintaining the RC as an operational reserve to capitalize on the expertise and experience gained by the RC since September 11, 2001.
- Identify and evaluate the authority and responsibility for the allocation of Army National Guard personnel and force structure to the states and territories.
- Identify and evaluate the strategic basis or rationale, analytical methods, and decisionmaking processes used for the allocation of Army National Guard personnel and force structure to the states and territories.

The NCFA’s “Products”

The NCFA is required to submit a report to the President and congressional defense committees no later than February 1, 2016, that sets forth a detailed statement of the commission’s findings and conclusions as well as recommendations for legislative and administrative actions based on the results of the NCFA’s studies. The final report was released on January 28, 2016.¹⁶ While not explicitly stated in Title XVII, the NCFA commissioners are likely to participate in briefings and hearings related to the commission’s final report.

The NCFA’s Structure

The Commissioners

In accordance with Title XVII, the NCFA is composed of eight appointed commissioners, including a chair and vice chair who were selected by the commissioners. As per the Title XVII mandate, four commissioners were appointed by the President and four others by the individual

¹⁶ NCFA Press Release: National Commission on the Future of the Army Releases Roll Out Date of its Final Report, December 18, 2015.

chairmen and ranking Members of the Committee on Armed Services of the Senate and the Committee on Armed Services of the House of Representatives. An April 20, 2015, press advisory provides some basic background on the NCFA's commissioners:¹⁷

- **Retired Army General Carter Ham (Chair).** General Ham, currently an advisor at Jefferson Waterman International, was most recently Commander of U.S. Africa Command where he led all U.S. military activities across the continent.
- **Former Assistant Secretary of the Army for Manpower and Reserve Affairs Thomas Lamont (Vice Chair).** Secretary Lamont, who was Assistant Secretary from 2009 to 2013, also served as an attorney in private practice and as the State Staff Judge Advocate General for the Illinois Army National Guard.

In addition to General Ham and Secretary Lamont, appointees to the Commission are listed below in alphabetical order:

Retired Sergeant Major of the Army (SMA) Raymond Chandler. SMA Chandler served in every key enlisted position from combat armor units to being the most senior enlisted member of the Army from 2011 to 2015.

Retired Army General Larry Ellis, President and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of VetConnex. General Ellis served in a number of command and leadership positions in the United States, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Germany, South Korea and Vietnam and commanded Army Forces Command from 2001 to 2004.

The Honorable Robert Hale, a Fellow at Booz Allen, Mr. Hale previously served as DOD Comptroller and Chief Financial Officer from 2009 to 2014 and as Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Financial Management from 1994 to 2001.

The Honorable Kathleen Hicks, Director of the International Security Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. Dr. Hicks formerly served as Director for Policy Planning at the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy.

Retired Lieutenant General Jack Stultz, member of the Board of the VSE Corp., and former Chief of the U.S. Army Reserve. He also served as the Commanding General of the U.S. Army Reserve Command from 2006 to 2012.

Retired General J.D. Thurman served as the commander of the United Nations Command for the Republic of Korea, U.S. Combined Forces Command and U.S. Forces Korea from July 2011 until October 2013 and also commanded Army Forces Command from 2010 to 2011.¹⁸

Staffing the Commission

Title XVII provides for the detailing of federal government employees to the NCFA to serve as staff. The NCFA staff consisted of approximately 40 personnel from the Active Army, Army National Guard, and Army Reserve assigned to the commission on a temporary basis. Department of Defense and Department of the Army Civilians were also assigned to the staff, as was a Congressional Research Service Specialist in Military Ground Forces.¹⁹ About half a dozen members of the Washington Headquarters Service (WHS) were assigned in a support capacity,

¹⁷ NCFA Press Advisory: Commission on the Future of the U.S. Army Announces Chairmanship, April 20, 2015.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ See Summary for additional details.

and a small number of contractors were hired by the commission to provide additional support. Length of service for the individual staff members varied based on the needs of the commission running through the commission's termination (90 days after the date on which the commission submitted its report).

Subcommittees

In order to facilitate the completion of the report, the NCFA staff was organized into five subcommittees. Commissioners chaired the subcommittees, and staff was assigned to the subcommittees; staff members typically served on more than one subcommittee. The subcommittee breakout and responsibilities are as follows:

Operational Subcommittee

The Operational Subcommittee will assess the size, force mixture, and component mixture of the active and the reserve components of the Army and make proposals on the modifications, if any, of the Army's structure and policies to meet current and anticipated mission requirements at acceptable levels of national risk and in a manner consistent with available and anticipated future resources. The Operational Subcommittee is also responsible for developing a risk framework for all subcommittees.

Institutional Subcommittee

The Institutional Subcommittee will assess the impact of various sizes, force mixes, and component mixes on the institutional elements of the Army and make proposals on the modifications, if any, of the Army's structure to meet current and anticipated mission requirements at acceptable levels of national risk and in a manner consistent with available and anticipated future resources.

Force Generation Subcommittee

The Force Generation Subcommittee will develop conclusions and proposals on the Army's projected force generation process and the viability of maintaining "peacetime rotation" rates with operational tempo goals of 1:2 for active members of the Army and 1:5 for members of the reserve components of the Army.

Aviation Subcommittee

The Aviation Subcommittee will study the transfer of Army National Guard AH-64 Apache aircraft from the Army National Guard to the Regular Army. The study will consider the depth, scalability, and cost-efficiency between the components; strengths, limitations, and capabilities of each component; a "peacetime rotation" force that does not exceed operational tempo goals of 1:2 for the Regular Army and 1:5 for members of the Army National Guard and Army Reserves; the risks within and across readiness, efficiency, effectiveness, capability, and affordability; and policies affecting readiness, training, equipment, personnel, and maintenance of the reserve components as an operational reserve.

Drafting Subcommittee

The Drafting Subcommittee will consolidate and consider all information and input provided to the Army Commission, including information presented by the other subcommittees; articulate the future threats and mission demands in a manner consistent with the Commissioners' input and opinions; and synthesize the Commission's conclusions and recommendations into a coherent draft report.²⁰

²⁰ Taken from the NCFA website, <http://www.ncfa.ncr.gov/subcommittees>, accessed January 4, 2016. Additional (continued...)

Designated Federal Officers (DFOs)

In order to be compliant with the Federal Advisory Commission Act (FACA) (5 U.S.C. Appendix—Federal Advisory Committee Act; 86 Stat. 770, as amended) a Designated Federal Officer (DFO)²¹ and Alternate DFOs were assigned to the NCFA Staff. The DFO’s duties are described as

- calling, attending, and adjourning committee meetings;
- approving agendas;
- maintaining required records on costs and membership;
- ensuring efficient operations and adherence to FACA and other applicable laws;
- maintaining records for availability to the public; and
- providing copies of committee reports to the Committee Management Officer for forwarding to the Library of Congress.²²

How the NCFA Operates

The Federal Advisory Commission Act (FACA)

As previously noted, the NCFA operates under the provisions of the Federal Advisory Commission Act (FACA) (5 U.S.C. Appendix—Federal Advisory Committee Act; 86 Stat. 770, as amended).²³ It should be noted, however, that Title XVII *does not* contain legislative language requiring the NCFA to operate under the provisions of FACA, but the Department of Defense required that the NCFA adhere to the provisions of FACA. CRS Report R44253, *Federal Advisory Committees: An Introduction and Overview*, discusses the origins and basic requirements of FACA:

By the 20th century, some Members of Congress believed the executive branch’s advisory bodies were inefficient and not accessible to the public. Some Members believed that the public harbored concerns that a proliferation of federal advisory committees had created inefficient duplication of federal efforts. Moreover, some citizens argued that the advisory entities did not reflect the public will, in part because many committees’ policies of closed-door meetings. Congress was called on to increase oversight of the proliferating advisory boards. Subsequently, Congress enacted the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) in 1972. The legislation requires advisory bodies that fit certain criteria to report a variety of information—including membership status, costs, and operations—annually to the General Services Administration (GSA), which then aggregates and reports the information to Congress.²⁴

(...continued)

detailed information on the subcommittees can be found by clicking at each subcommittee’s hyperlink.

²¹ For detailed information on FACA see CRS Report R40520, *Federal Advisory Committees: An Overview*, by (name redacted).

²² General Services Administration (GSA) Fact Sheet: “FACA 101,” <http://www.gsa.gov/portal/content/244333>, accessed January 5, 2016.

²³ For detailed information on FACA, see CRS Report R40520, *Federal Advisory Committees: An Overview*, by (name redacted).

²⁴ CRS Report R44253, *Federal Advisory Committees: An Introduction and Overview*, by (name redacted) .

In addition to commission meeting-related responsibilities, NCFA DFOs also ensure that notices of opened and closed NCFA meetings are posted in the *Federal Register*,²⁵ taking, reviewing, and approving minutes of NCFA meetings; and attending all meetings when some or all NCFA commissioners are present.

NCFA Public Website

The NCFA established a public website (<http://www.ncfa.ncr.gov/>) to provide the public access to the commission's activities as well as briefings, studies, and testimony used to inform the commission's analysis of the Army's force structure. This website has been updated frequently and is viewed as a useful resource for those trying to gain a better understanding of the Army force structure and aviation restructuring debates as well as track the progress of the commission's activities over time.

Meetings²⁶

One means by which the NCFA gathered information to support its efforts was a series of meetings conducted at various locations in the United States. Two types of meetings were conducted: (1) *open meetings*, where the public could attend and participate, and (2) *closed meetings*, where classified matters were discussed and only holders of a U.S. government security clearance commensurate with the classification level of the meeting could attend. According to the NCFA website, between May and December 2015, the NCFA held 11 open and 8 closed meetings, with the minutes as well as other supporting material available on the NCFA website.

Site Visits²⁷

Another method employed by the NCFA to obtain information was site visits. Site visits covered a wide range of interactions at locations in the United States and overseas. The NCFA conducted 26 site visits between May and November 2015, including, for example the following:

- discussions with the Deputy Secretary of Defense, Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, Chief of Staff of the Army, and Director, Army National Guard at the Pentagon;
- Senate Armed Services Committee Staff and the House National Guard and Reserve Component Caucus on Capitol Hill;
- U.S. Army Europe and U.S. Army, Africa (both headquartered in Germany); and
- Active and Reserve Component installations such as Ft. Bragg, NC; Ft. Hood, TX; Camp Shelby, MS; and Ft. Indiantown Gap, PA.

These site visits varied from opened to closed, from office visits to observing live fire exercises, and included commissioner and staff interactions with individuals ranging from governors to junior enlisted soldiers. Site visits usually encompassed interactions with both Active and Reserve Component units and personnel. Details on site visits, including minutes and other supporting material, are available on the NCFA website. Classified materials and minutes, however, are not available on the public website.

²⁵ The *Federal Register* is the official daily journal of the U.S. government containing, among other things, government agency rules, proposed rules, and public notices; <https://www.federalregister.gov/>.

²⁶ Information taken from NCFA website, <http://www.ncfa.ncr.gov/>, accessed January 7, 2016.

²⁷ Ibid.

Subcommittee Meetings

The primary means by which the NCFA commissioners interacted with NCFA staff were subcommittee meetings. As in the case of meetings and site visits, subcommittee meetings were subject to FACA and DFOs were in attendance; minutes were taken and published (see NCFA website under “Subcommittees”). Subcommittee meetings were closed events although NCFA commissioners and staff did ask outside experts, on occasion, to present briefings and participate in discussions. Information provided by these outside experts is reflected in the minutes, and any associated supporting materials (briefings, studies, papers) are posted on the NCFA website.

Concerns with the NCFA

A detailed examination of publicly available material and press reports suggests four primary groups—the Army, state governments, Congress, and the public—expressed varied opinions regarding the need for, and the recommendations offered by, the commission.

The Army

There have been mixed feelings within the Army, by component, about the need for the NCFA. In 2014, then Chief of Staff of the Army General Raymond Odierno noted in testimony:

For the last year, 12 to 18 months, we’ve done detailed analysis internal to the Army and we’ve done external to the Army. The Rand Corporation has studied this. In addition to this, OSD CAPE [Cost Assessment and Program Evaluation] has validated our total force levels as well as the Aviation Restructure Initiative. So we’ve had outside validate this.

So in my mind, I’m not sure what additional expertise would be brought to this by a commission. In addition to that, it would cost us \$1 billion additionally a year if we delay this [ARI] two years, and I worry about that because we already have significant unfunded requirements.²⁸

Also at the hearing, Chief of the National Guard Bureau, General Frank Grass noted:

I think your question to me is there a value in an external look at the Reserve component versus the Active component balance. I will tell you, throughout my career every time we’ve had challenges, fiscal challenges, this comes up. My personal opinion is that it never hurts to have another look at that balance, because we all learn from it over time.²⁹

Lieutenant General Jeffery Talley, Chief of the Army Reserve, on the other hand, supported General Odierno’s position, stating at the hearing:

Senator, it’s not clear to me why we need an Army commission. I think the Army, working together and leading through some of the challenges we’re having, which are really, to be frank, an impact of the serious budget issues that have been placed upon this service, I think we can resolve them.

If the Congress makes the decision to go forward with the commission, the only thing I would ask is it’s critical to make sure that all three components are well represented and integrated.³⁰

²⁸ Hearing Transcript, Senate Armed Services Committee, “Army Active and Reserve Force Mix,” April 8, 2014, p. 56.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

The current Chief of Staff of the Army, General Mark Milley, may be more receptive to the NCFA than his predecessor. Speaking at the National Guard Association (NGAUS) Conference September 11, 2015, General Milley reportedly was open to considering input from the NCFA, including its recommendations on the ARI.³¹ General Milley is also reportedly interested in reexamining the number of annual training days required for National Guard soldiers as well as establishing composite or round-out units³²—initiatives also considered by the NCFA.

State Government³³

A number of governors met with the NCFA and expressed their support of Regular Army bases in their state but, in particular, the National Guard. In addition to echoing the aforementioned National Guard common themes, they also stressed the importance of the Guard's role in disaster response and expressed concern that Guard reductions in their state could have dire consequences. The National Governor's Association, in its discussions with the NCFA, expressed similar sentiments.

Congress³⁴

Many in Congress have taken an active interest in the activities of the commission. On the NCFA website under "Statements,"³⁵ letters from Members to the NCFA address a variety of concerns. Examples of these concerns include Member opposition to the ARI; maintaining the National Guard as an operational reserve; concerns about the overall conduct of the commission; and the belief that the commission's work was not in keeping with the provisions and spirit of Title XVII. In addition to individual and group letters to the commission, a number of Members provided written or oral statements expressing their personal concerns.

Public³⁶

There was a wide range of public involvement in the NCFA's activities. Particularly in the case of site visits, private citizens and veterans, as well as local leaders and businessmen, almost universally expressed support for their respective military installation and its troops and their families. There was also a widespread misconception within the public that the NCFA visit was part of an effort to close down their base along the lines of the Base Realignment and Closure Commission (BRAC).³⁷ Also, as part of public discourse, a number of academics and defense analysts offered suggestions and provided analysis to the NCFA. Defense industry representatives also participated in NCFA activities.

³¹ Sydney J. Freedburg Jr., "Guard Association (NGAUS): We Can Work With CSA Milley," *Breaking Defense*, October 2, 2015.

³² Jen Judson, "As Army Shrinks, Milley Considers Ways to Regenerate Force," *Defense News*, December 14, 2015.

³³ See Minutes section of <http://www.ncfa.ncr.gov/>.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ <http://www.ncfa.ncr.gov/artifact-tags/statements>.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ For additional information on the BRAC see CRS Report R43425, *Military Base Closures: Frequently Asked Questions*, by (name redacted)

Major Report Themes

Apart from the commission's major findings detailed earlier in this report, the commission presented thematic findings, each of which contains a number of specific recommendations, and it is here where the vast majority of the commission's 63 recommendations are found. It should be noted that many of these less prominent recommendations, like the major findings, could prove to be both difficult and costly to implement.

Developing "One Army"

The commission notes the Army is intended to operate as one force—the Regular Army, Army National Guard, and the Army Reserve—but gaps and seams exist in the Army's stated Total Force Policy. The commission believes the Army must fully implement its Total Force Policy and offers some of the following recommendations to achieve this end:

- Expand the use of multicomponent units and organizations with the Army. The commission specifically recommended a substantial pilot program to test multicomponent approaches to aviation units.³⁸
- Establish pilot programs that align the recruiting efforts of the Regular Army, Army National Guard, and Army Reserve so the Army does not "compete with itself" for a diminishing pool of qualified individuals.³⁹
- Congress should enact legislation to allow Regular Army officers and soldiers to be assigned to Army National Guard positions without prejudice to their federal standing as well as permitting National Guard officers and soldiers to serve in a similar manner without prejudice in Regular Army units.⁴⁰
- Establish a true regionalization of the Army's school system and implement immediately the One Army School System⁴¹ to achieve savings sooner.⁴²
- Congress, the Department of Defense, and the Army should continue to support and adequately fund the Integrated Personnel & Pay System—Army (IPPS-A) as the cornerstone of effective management and integration of the components of the Army.⁴³

³⁸Report to the President and Congress of the United States, National Commission on the Future of the Army, January 28, 2016, p. 3.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 69.

⁴¹ "The One Army School System establishes common standards for individual training and maximizes the opportunities for active duty soldiers to train at Reserve or National Guard courses, and vice versa." see Army's "One Army School System Increases Training Effectiveness, Capacity" November 5, 2012, <http://www.army.mil/article/90085/>, accessed February 1, 2016.

⁴² Report to the President and Congress of the United States, National Commission on the Future of the Army, January 28, 2016, p. 75.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 49.

Readiness and Training

The commission recommends that the Army must continue to treat readiness as its most important funding priority⁴⁴ and particularly training readiness. Some of the commission's recommendations that address readiness and training include the following:

- the reduction of the Army's tactical wheeled vehicle fleet, largely driven by budgetary constraints, has created significant risk in many units Army-wide;⁴⁵
- the Army should increase the number of annual rotations for Army National Guard BCTs at Combat Training Centers (CTCs) beginning in FY2017 without decreasing the number of Regular Army BCT rotations;⁴⁶
- noting the Army has over 1,000 directives, regulations, pamphlets, and messages regarding mandatory training and that the Army National Guard and Reserve have too many mandatory training requirements in one year, the commission recommends the Army reduce the number of mandatory training activities;⁴⁷ and
- the Army should consider increasing flying hours available for peacetime training, as the commission found that training proficiency has decreased due to funding issues related to flying hours.⁴⁸

General Observations of the Commission's Recommendations

The Importance of the NCFA Classified Appendix E

Appendix E of the NCFA report is classified and not included with the report. The classified appendix addresses the strategic environment in terms of the threat to the homeland; gray-zone warfare and information operations; and functional threats.⁴⁹ Appendix E also contains classified information on how the commission modelled and analyzed force structure in terms of size and mix.⁵⁰ Finally, the appendix addresses the impacts of strategic lift, the cluster munitions ban, and cyberwarfare on the commission's work.⁵¹ While the "Future Challenges" section of the report attempts to address some of these issues on an unclassified level, a thorough review of Appendix E could provide policymakers with a greater degree of clarity and context.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 71.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 77.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 94.

⁴⁹ Appendix E: NCFA Classified Annex, Report to the President and Congress of the United States, National Commission on the Future of the Army, January 28, 2016, p. 124.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

The Impact of the Commission’s Recommendations on the “Corporate” Army

As previously discussed, the NCFA final report contained 63 recommendations for the Nation, the President, Congress, the Department of Defense, the Joint Staff, Combatant Commands, the Army, and Army Service Component Commands (Appendix B of the report). The majority of the report’s “action items” would fall to the Army to implement. For example, the commission recommends the Army:

- **Establish Pilot Programs to:**
 - Permit recruiters from all three components to recruit individuals into any component (Recommendation 38);
 - Test multicomponent approaches for Army aviation force structure (Recommendation 34); and
 - Assign Regular Army officers and soldiers to Army Reserve full-time support positions by February 28, 2017, and then evaluate this program in two years for effectiveness (Recommendation 36).
- **Conduct a Review/Assessment of:**
 - The Army School System and report to Congress by February 28, 2017, on the efficiencies gained by consolidating under-used capacity (Recommendation 42);
 - The risk in current and planned tactical mobility and how to close readiness gaps with the report due to Congress by February 28, 2017, (Recommendation 8); and
 - The mission effectiveness of the current sourcing solution for the Ground-based Midcourse Defense (GMD) mission (Recommendation 21).
- **Implement:**
 - The commission’s ARI recommendation (Recommendation 57);
 - Immediately implement the entire One Army School System to realize savings sooner (Recommendation 44); and
 - Implement a more aggressive modernization program for aviation forces (Recommendation 60).

The aforementioned actions are examples of some of the requirements that could fall to Army leadership and the Army staff—the “Corporate Army”—for action, with a number of recommendations having relatively short timelines for implementation. Given the scope and complexity of some of the recommendations, questions might arise as to how much capacity the “Corporate Army” can dedicate to NCFA recommendations approved by the Administration and Congress, given the Army’s current worldwide role in active conflicts as well as other military operations.

The History and Challenges of Past and Current Army Initiatives

The commission’s comprehensive approach described on page 19 of the report under “The Fact-Finding Phase” identified a number of initiatives instituted by the Army, including

- Multi-Component Units;

- Integrated Personnel & Pay System-Army (IPPS-A);
- Generating Force Model;
- One Army School System;
- Reduction in Mandatory AR 350-1 Training Requirements; and
- Objective-T Methodology for Assessing the Progression of Training Readiness.

Each of these aforementioned initiatives have a unique history and set of challenges that will influence if and how these initiatives are implemented as part of the commission's recommendations. In terms of multicomponent units, the commission acknowledges the "long history of mixed results using multicomponent units" and notes that in "many cases, the Army tried to implement multicomponent constructions in units or with policies that were not suited to the model."⁵² The commission further notes the Army currently has 37 multicomponent units already in service.⁵³ In other cases, programs such as the Integrated Personnel & Pay System-Army (IPPS-A) and the One Army School System have experienced a variety of issues such as budgetary constraints, developmental and technical issues, and bureaucratic hurdles, which have, to varying degrees, influenced the Army's ability to successfully implement these initiatives.⁵⁴ As an example, the Pentagon's Director of Operational Test and Evaluation notes in his FY2015 Annual Report that the IPPS-A program continues to have significant problems with data correctness on a widespread basis across the Active Duty, Army National Guard, and Army Reserve.⁵⁵ While the commission was made aware of the associated histories and challenges of these initiatives, it might be considered prudent for the Administration and Congress to examine these initiatives in greater detail to determine if the implementation of these commission recommendations is feasible. If the implementation proves feasible but difficult, progress by the Army on implementing these recommendations might be worth monitoring to ensure the Army gives these initiatives an opportunity to succeed in the face of potential preliminary setbacks and bureaucratic resistance.

Force Structure Issues Outside the Title XVII Mandate

An examination of the NCFA's final report to the President and Congress and the provisions of Title XVII suggests the commission addressed all of the requirements mandated by Congress. While not explicitly stated in Title XVII, there are other force structure-related issues that might be worth considering. While not normally associated with conventional Army force structure discussions, U.S. Army Special Operations Forces (SOF)⁵⁶ and the Army's Commands, Direct Reporting Units, and Army Service Component Commands are part of the Army's overall force structure.

While the commission met with U.S. Army Special Operations Command during its June 2015 North Carolina site visit,⁵⁷ there are no recommendations related to U.S. Army SOF—both Active and Reserve units. U.S. Army SOF also consists of combat units that operate with Army General

⁵² Ibid., p. 67.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ See Minutes section of <http://www.ncfa.ncr.gov/>.

⁵⁵ Director, Operational Test and Evaluation, FY 2015 Annual Report, January 2016, p. 118.

⁵⁶For additional information on Army Special Operations Forces, see CRS Report RS21048, *U.S. Special Operations Forces (SOF): Background and Issues for Congress*, by (name redacted) .

⁵⁷ Report to the President and Congress of the United States, National Commission on the Future of the Army, January 28, 2016, p. 19.

Purpose Forces in a variety of operational scenarios so their omission in the report is noteworthy. While the commission might have considered an examination of U.S. Army SOF force structure and mix outside of its mandate, a detailed examination of these forces, to include Army-provided “enabling units,” might have provided the Administration and Congress with some valuable insights.

In a similar manner, there was no discernable examination of the Army’s Commands, Direct Reporting Units, and Army Service Component Commands by the commission. While less closely associated with force structure discussions than U.S. Army SOF, these organizations also consume Army manpower and resources. With 3 major commands (such as Training and Doctrine Command [TRADOC]), 11 Direct Reporting Units (such as U.S. Army Corps of Engineers), and 9 theater and functional Army Service Component Commands (ASCCs) (such as U.S. Army Pacific and Space and Missile Defense Command), the commission might not have had the time and resources to adequately address what appears to be a substantial analytical undertaking. Despite these limitations on the commission, these organizations might also benefit from a review in terms of their necessity, potential “redundancies” and opportunities for consolidation, and their added value in an increasingly dynamic, decentralized, and resource-constrained security environment.

Potential Issues for Congress

How Would Congress and the Administration Implement NCFA’s Recommendations?

With the issuance of the final report, two potential questions arise. First, by what means or process would the Administration, Congress, and the Army evaluate the NCFA’s recommendations and then decide which ones to implement? Second, should the Administration, Congress, and the Army agree upon which recommendations to implement, how would this be accomplished? Without an established process to vet evaluations and an implementation plan, the commission’s work might become more informative in nature as opposed to an actionable plan.

How Much Would It Cost to Implement the Recommendations?

The commission’s 63 recommendations run the gamut from creating new units, forward stationing units overseas, creating new military school and pay systems, to not implementing the Army’s Aviation Restructuring Initiative. One common aspect of these varied recommendations is they each have an associated cost, and finding “offsets”⁵⁸ might not be practical or possible to fund these initiatives. Another consideration, dependent on the number of recommendations adopted for implementation, is that in many cases, costs must be established for these recommendations and this might prove to be a difficult and lengthy undertaking. Once costs are estimated, there would likely be some process initiated to determine what recommendations are affordable under current and projected budget constraints and which recommendations might have to be deferred.

⁵⁸ An “offset” refers to eliminating or reducing a program or unit to fund another program or unit.

Potential Difficulties in Implementing the NCFA's Recommendations

There are a number of potential difficulties associated with implementing the commission's recommendations. Perhaps the most significant hurdle to implementation is affordability but this can be addressed by a variety of means including "offsets," providing the Army additional budgetary authority, or modifying or time-phasing the implementation of the commission's recommendations. Developmental and technical issues and bureaucratic opposition can also pose significant challenges to the implementation of the commission's recommendations. Just as it is important to have a clear understanding of the costs associated with a recommendation, policymakers may wish to consider potential developmental and technical problems and possible bureaucratic push-back in order to facilitate the effective implementation of the commission's recommendations.

How Would Congress Oversee the Implementation of the NCFA's Recommendations?

The final stage of implementation is oversight. While some recommendations can be implemented in fairly short order, others might take a number of years to fully realize. It is not readily apparent how Congress would choose to oversee the implementation of potentially dozens of the commission's recommendations. One possible mechanism might be to establish special hearings dealing exclusively with NCFA recommendation implementation or possibly the Army's annual posture or modernization hearings might be the appropriate oversight venue. Other possible means of oversight could be semiannual or annual reports to Congress or periodic updates to Members, staffs, and congressional defense committees. The formal establishment and designation of a means of congressional oversight could prove to be beneficial to all concerned parties.

Appendix. Title XVII, P.L. 113-291⁵⁹

TITLE XVII—NATIONAL COMMISSION ON THE FUTURE OF THE ARMY

Subtitle A—Establishment and Duties of Commission

Sec. 1701. Short Title.

Sec. 1702. National Commission on the Future of the Army.

Sec. 1703. Duties of the Commission.

Sec. 1704. Powers of the Commission.

Sec. 1705. Commission Personnel Matters.

Sec. 1706. Termination of the Commission.

Sec. 1707. Funding.

Subtitle B—Related Limitations

SEC. 1701. SHORT TITLE.

This subtitle may be cited as the “National Commission on the Future of the Army Act of 2014”.

SEC. 1702. NATIONAL COMMISSION ON THE FUTURE OF THE ARMY.

(a) Establishment.—There is established the National Commission on the Future of the Army (in this subtitle referred to as the (“Commission”).

(b) Membership.—

(1) Composition.—The Commission shall be composed of eight members, of whom—

(A) four shall be appointed by the President;

(B) one shall be appointed by the Chairman of the Committee on Armed Services of the Senate;

(C) one shall be appointed by the Ranking Member of the Committee on Armed Services of the Senate;

(D) one shall be appointed by the Chairman of the Committee on Armed Services of the House of Representatives; and

(E) one shall be appointed by the Ranking Member of the Committee on Armed Services of the House of Representatives.

(2) Appointment date.—The appointments of the members of the Commission shall be made not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act.

(3) Effect of lack of appointment by appointment date.—If one or more appointments under subparagraph (A) of paragraph (1) is not made by the appointment date specified in paragraph (2), the authority to make such appointment or appointments shall expire, and the number of members

⁵⁹ <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/PLAW-113publ291/html/PLAW-113publ291.htm>, accessed January 7, 2016.

of the Commission shall be reduced by the number equal to the number of appointments so not made. If an appointment under subparagraph (B), (C), (D), or (E) of paragraph (1) is not made by the appointment date specified in paragraph (2), the authority to make an appointment under such subparagraph shall expire, and the number of members of the Commission shall be reduced by the number equal to the number otherwise appointable under such subparagraph.

(4) Expertise.—In making appointments under this subsection, consideration should be given to individuals with expertise in national and international security policy and strategy, military forces capability, force structure design, organization, and employment, and reserve forces policy.

(c) Period of Appointment; Vacancies.—Members shall be appointed for the life of the Commission. Any vacancy in the Commission shall not affect its powers, but shall be filled in the same manner as the original appointment.

(d) Chair and Vice Chair.—The Commission shall select a Chair and Vice Chair from among its members.

(e) Initial Meeting.—Not later than 30 days after the date on which all members of the Commission have been appointed, the Commission shall hold its initial meeting.

(f) Meetings.—The Commission shall meet at the call of the Chair.

(g) Quorum.—A majority of the members of the Commission shall constitute a quorum, but a lesser number of members may hold hearings.

SEC. 1703. DUTIES OF THE COMMISSION.

(a) Study on Structure of the Army.—

(1) In general.—The Commission shall undertake a comprehensive study of the structure of the Army, and policy assumptions related to the size and force mixture of the Army, in order—

(A) to make an assessment of the size and force mixture of the active component of the Army and the reserve components of the Army; and

(B) to make recommendations on the modifications, if any, of the structure of the Army related to current and anticipated mission requirements for the Army at acceptable levels of national risk and in a manner consistent with available resources and anticipated future resources.

(2) Considerations.—In undertaking the study required by subsection (a), the Commission shall give particular consideration to the following:

(A) An evaluation and identification of a structure for the Army that—

(i) has the depth and scalability to meet current and anticipated requirements of the combatant commands;

(ii) achieves cost-efficiency between the regular and reserve components of the Army, manages military risk, takes advantage of the strengths and capabilities of each, and considers fully burdened lifecycle costs;

(iii) ensures that the regular and reserve components of the Army have the capacity needed to support current and anticipated homeland defense and disaster assistance missions in the United States;

(iv) provides for sufficient numbers of regular members of the Army to provide a base of trained personnel from which the personnel of the reserve components of the Army could be recruited;

(v) maintains a peacetime rotation force to avoid exceeding operational tempo goals of 1:2 for active members of the Army and 1:5 for members of the reserve components of the Army; and

(vi) manages strategic and operational risk by making tradeoffs among readiness, efficiency, effectiveness, capability, and affordability.

(B) An evaluation and identification of force generation policies for the Army with respect to size and force mixture in order to fulfill current and anticipated mission requirements for the Army in a manner consistent with available resources and anticipated future resources, including policies in connection with—

(i) readiness;

(ii) training;

(iii) equipment;

(iv) personnel; and

(v) maintenance of the reserve components as an operational reserve in order to maintain as much as possible the level of expertise and experience developed since September 11, 2001.

(C) An identification and evaluation of the distribution of responsibility and authority for the allocation of Army National Guard personnel and force structure to the States and territories.

(D) An identification and evaluation of the strategic basis or rationale, analytical methods, and decision-making processes for the allocation of Army National Guard personnel and force structure to the States and territories.

(b) Study on Transfer of Certain Aircraft.—

(1) In general.—The Commission shall also conduct a study of a transfer of Army National Guard AH-64 Apache aircraft from the Army National Guard to the regular Army.

(2) Considerations.—In conducting the study required by paragraph (1), the Commission shall consider the factors specified in subsection (a)(2).

(c) Report.—Not later than February 1, 2016, the Commission shall submit to the President and the congressional defense committees a report setting forth a detailed statement of the findings and conclusions of the Commission as a result of the studies required by subsections (a) and (b), together with its recommendations for such legislative and administrative actions as the Commission considers appropriate in light of the results of the studies.

SEC. 1704. POWERS OF THE COMMISSION.

(a) Hearings.—The Commission may hold such hearings, sit and act at such times and places, take such testimony, and receive such evidence as the Commission considers advisable to carry out its duties under this subtitle.

(b) Information From Federal Agencies.—The Commission may secure directly from any Federal department or agency such information as the Commission considers necessary to carry out its duties under this subtitle. Upon request of the Chair of the Commission, the head of such department or agency shall furnish such information to the Commission.

(c) Postal Services.—The Commission may use the United States mails in the same manner and under the same conditions as other departments and agencies of the Federal Government.

SEC. 1705. COMMISSION PERSONNEL MATTERS.

(a) Compensation of Members.—Each member of the Commission who is not an officer or employee of the Federal Government may be compensated at a rate not to exceed the daily equivalent of the annual rate of \$155,400 for each day (including travel time) during which such member is engaged in the performance of the duties of the Commission. All members of the Commission who are officers or employees of the United States shall serve without compensation in addition to that received for their services as officers or employees of the United States.

(b) Travel Expenses.—The members of the Commission shall be allowed travel expenses, including per diem in lieu of subsistence, at rates authorized for employees of agencies under subchapter I of chapter 57 of title 5, United States Code, while away from their homes or regular places of business in the performance of services for the Commission.

(c) Staff.—

(1) In general.—The Chair of the Commission may, without regard to the civil service laws and regulations, appoint and terminate an executive director and such other additional personnel as may be necessary to enable the Commission to perform its duties. The employment of an executive director shall be subject to confirmation by the Commission.

(2) Compensation.—The Chair of the Commission may fix the compensation of the executive director and other personnel without regard to chapter 51 and subchapter III of chapter 53 of title 5, United States Code, relating to classification of positions and General Schedule pay rates, except that the rate of pay for the executive director and other personnel may not exceed the rate payable for level V of the Executive Schedule under section 5316 of such title.

(d) Detail of Government Employees.—Any Federal Government employee may be detailed to the Commission without reimbursement, and such detail shall be without interruption or loss of civil service status or privilege.

(e) Procurement of Temporary and Intermittent Services.—The Chair of the Commission may procure temporary and intermittent services under section 3109(b) of title 5, United States Code, at rates for individuals which do not exceed the daily equivalent of the annual rate of basic pay prescribed for level V of the Executive Schedule under section 5316 of such title.

SEC. 1706. TERMINATION OF THE COMMISSION.

The Commission shall terminate 90 days after the date on which the Commission submits its report under this subtitle.

SEC. 1707. FUNDING.

Amounts authorized to be appropriated for fiscal year 2015 by section 301 and available for operation and maintenance for the Army as specified in the funding table in section 4301 may be available for the activities of the Commission under this subtitle.

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