



ASSOCIATION OF THE UNITED STATES ARMY

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4 September 2014

General Gordon R. Sullivan
United States Army (Ret.)
President

The Honorable Harry Reid
United States Senate
522 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Reid:

The first duty of a leader is to keep hope alive. In my experience, good leaders must act, and through their words and their work create a feeling deep inside those who are led that here is someone to trust during difficult times.

As a nation, we live in perilous times and face complex threats. It is a time when we need leadership, for the peace of mind of U.S. citizens, for our friends and allies and even for our potential enemies, to show this nation is able to govern itself in a collaborative, purposeful and bipartisan fashion.

I have no utopian illusions about the state of play between the Executive and Legislative branches of our government and am fully aware this is an election year for the entire House of Representatives and one third of the Senate, but I would like to think somewhere in the very souls of our leaders there is a sense of unified selflessness which can be tapped at this time.

What I'm proposing isn't as difficult as it sounds. There are simple steps to sending the right message: Kill sequestration, stop all downsizing in the Defense Department and security-related agencies, and make some tangible progress in building the balanced joint force we've long talked about with trained and ready land, maritime, air, cyber and special operations forces who can respond anywhere in the world when we need them.

Is this too hard? I cannot speak for 300 million Americans, but I will speak for myself. I have been in or around the U.S. Army for almost 60 years, and I am very concerned that our enemies, potential and current, don't see us as a rock-steady nation. They think we cannot act in a collaborative, efficient manner. Some of our closest friends are left scratching their heads wondering what is going on in America that makes us seem so indecisive and weak.

Those who know us best can see that we have lost our edge. Our forces are less ready, and we are taking apart a magnificent, combat-honed force based on a great American myth that when we need defense we can just create it. Let me be clear, it is a myth. A lesson we should have learned by now is that the cost of being unprepared is paid in lives and spilled blood.

Hope is the anchor of our souls, but success requires creating a vision and making it happen so our nation believes it and our allies and friends perceive us as serious and our enemies know we have placed ourselves where we belong, on center stage.

We don't have a year to fix what ails our national defense. We must stop sequestration now. We must cease downsizing now. We must rely on the elected, appointed and uniformed leaders of this nation to structure forces capable of ensuring our security. We have precious little time to show the world how good we are.

Sincerely,



GORDON R. SULLIVAN
General, USA Retired

GRS/wbl