



ASSOCIATION OF THE UNITED STATES ARMY

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10 May 2016

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

The Honorable John McCain
Chairman
Senate Armed Services Committee
218 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman McCain:

On behalf of the membership of the Association of the United States Army (AUSA), and as a former Chief of Staff of the Army, I write to urge you to oppose a proposal recently approved by the House Armed Services Committee (HASC).

The recent HASC mark-up of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2017 included a section (702) that will transfer administrative control of all the Military Treatment Facilities (MTFs) from the Service Surgeons General to the Defense Health Agency (DHA).

The new law would give DHA control of budgetary matters for the MTFs. Since DHA and the Services will likely have different priorities, resources will be diverted from where the Army needs them most, and moved to where a bureaucratic agency wants them. Decisions on what services to deliver at which MTFs should not be made on the basis of "business" criteria. The MTFs are readiness platforms, and that should be the perspective through which decisions on specific services should be made. Those decisions involve far more than the cost of delivering the benefit.

This provision, if it becomes law, will jeopardize execution of Service Title 10 responsibilities and degrade operational readiness. The realignment fragments authority, and divides accountability for quality, mission support and readiness.

The first premise of medicine's Hippocratic Oath is, "First, do no harm." The legislative provision ignores this premise and tries to fix something that isn't broken. In fact, it would jeopardize a system that over the last 15 years of war has performed magnificently in saving lives on the battlefield that would have been lost in previous conflicts.

AUSA strongly opposes this provision. We urge you to not include it in the Senate's version of the NDAA.

Sincerely



GORDON R. SULLIVAN
General, USA Retired

GRS/jlg

CC: Senate Armed Services Committee Members