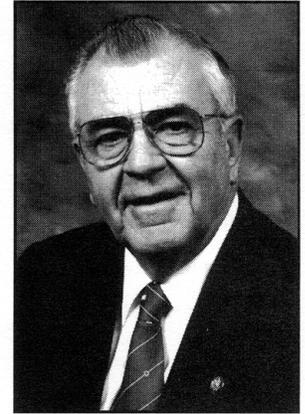


Congressman Herbert H. Bateman AMERICA'S FIRST DISTRICT — VIRGINIA **NEWS**



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 26, 1999

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OPENING STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE HERBERT H. BATEMAN CHAIRMAN, SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY READINESS

I would like to welcome everyone here today to this Military Readiness Subcommittee of the House Armed Services Committee hearing. This hearing is being held to help Members of Congress get a better understanding of the lessons learned and the problems encountered during the conduct of the military operations in Kosovo, also known by the code name Operation ALLIED FORCE. This hearing is an effort by the Readiness Subcommittee to look at how readiness of the military units who participated in the operation were effected before, during and after the conduct of Kosovo operations.

Many of us know something of the effort it took to prosecute the operational aspects of the ALLIED FORCE but I, for one, do not claim to understand the full magnitude of the effort. Nor do I have a good appreciation of the impact it had on the overall readiness of our armed forces. Perhaps even more important than the readiness of the units, personnel and equipment involved in the actual operations in Kosovo is the impact it had on the units who remained at home station.

The units at home station were what remained to respond to any crisis that may have arisen in some other part of the world. Every indication we have gotten in Congress is that these home station units were the bill-payer for needed parts, smart bombs, ammunition, personnel and equipment needed in the ALLIED FORCE.

Today I hope to learn more about the challenges faced by these non-deploying units, especially the Air Force stay behind force. We are led to believe that nearly 40 percent of the Air Force was involved in Kosovo at the peak of operations. I fear that we were accepting a great deal of risk that was magnified by the lower readiness rates of units left behind.

In a recent Readiness Subcommittee hearing, we verified that the lack of spare and repair parts has proven to be a major stumbling block to the improvement of Readiness in the military. A recent General Accounting Office report shows that a survey of 1000 active-duty troops in retention-critical specialties revealed that many of the respondents to the survey are dissatisfied and intend to leave the

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service. Dissatisfaction with their “quality-of-life” due to unavailability of equipment, parts and material is ranked number two and number one respectively among enlisted and officers.

Although there were assurances during our recent hearing..... assurances I might add that we have heard before.....that problems with shortages of parts will soon be rectified. I am interested in learning how these admitted parts shortages impacted the actual conduct of Operation ALLIED FORCE and the ongoing recovery of forces.

Another area, as it relates to the Kosovo operations, that I am personally very interested in learning more about is the impact shortages of personnel has had on the planning and execution of operations. For example, we know that there are shortages of key personnel, such as maintenance personnel in the Air Force, especially first line supervisors.

Nearly all of the military services are experiencing personnel shortages especially within low density, high demand military occupational specialty fields. I hope our witnesses today will help us understand the true impact that personnel shortages have on Readiness when the military is asked to go in harms way to execute a major operation such as ALLIED FORCE.

Another area of interest to me is what the military calls the “reconstitution of forces” or the recovering of the force. We know that military who participate in this kind of operation need time to reconstitute forces or recover from the intense operations necessary to conduct theater operations.

At the end of hostilities in Kosovo, the Air Force had asked for six months to stand down and recover. I want to understand what needed to be done, how much has been accomplished toward recovery and the current status of any ongoing efforts to return to the readiness state normally maintained by units prior to the conduct of ALLIED FORCE.

We are very fortunate to have two panels of military witnesses whose commands have played a key role in the overall theater operations in Kosovo. These panels can give us insight into the readiness challenges they face and some ideas about how we can all work toward fixing any identified problems. We look forward to their testimony.

Before we get into hearing from our panel, I would like to yield to my good friend from Texas and the Ranking Democrat on the subcommittee, the Honorable Solomon Ortiz for any comments that he wishes to make.

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