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**OPENING REMARKS – REP. STEVE BUYER
MILITARY PERSONNEL SUBCOMMITTEE HEARING
FUTURE U.S. DOMESTIC TRENDS**

Several months ago when I heard reports that some of the military services were beginning to talk about requesting more end strength and force structure, it struck me that, at least from my understanding of the problem, such requests were premature.

My reaction was based principally on three factors. First, the desire for increased end strength and force structure appeared to come from a need to better accommodate the exceedingly high optempo and perstempo demands of a national strategy of engagement, but without asking fundamental questions regarding the future validity, scope and supportability of the strategy that was driving the requirements. Second, in the midst of the most significant challenge ever to the ability of the military services to sustain an all-volunteer force, the ramifications and feasibility of adding to the challenge by increasing force structure and end strength did not appear to have been fully thought through.

Finally, as I had learned during the subcommittee’s deliberate approach to understanding the underlying causes of recruiting and retention shortfalls, the complexity of the military personnel problems today defies “silver-bullet” solutions, and until the full scope of those complexities are understood, proposing solutions could easily be an ineffective, wasteful effort.

That brings us to today’s hearing. I would mark this as the beginning of a deliberate fact finding and evaluative effort that will culminate in the FY 2001 National Defense Authorization Act. I think there is no better place to begin than an inquiry into the broad context and direction of domestic trends that will shape America’s future national security generally, and more specifically, to gain further insight into factors challenging the health of the all-volunteer military.

To that end, the recently completed work of the National Security Study Group, is especially timely and pertinent. Like the phase-one report of the Hart-Rudman Commission which the study group supports, the study group’s analysis is descriptive, not prescriptive. Such prescriptive effort will develop through phases two and three of the study group effort. Nevertheless, the study group’s phase-one analysis of future U.S. domestic trends is thought provoking, insightful and particularly relevant to the focus of our subcommittee.

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