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ROBERT L. SIMMONS, II, STAFF DIRECTOR

August 1, 2013

The Honorable John M. McHugh
Secretary
United States Army
101 Army Pentagon
Washington, DC 20310

Dear Mr. Secretary:

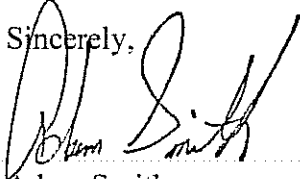
I am writing to express my concern that the Army is not appropriately or equally recognizing the operational experiences and sacrifices of service members who are executing Operation Enduring Freedom activities in geographic areas that have not been declared a combat zone or in "direct support of military operations" and are eligible for Hostile Fire Pay/Imminent Danger Pay (HF/IDP).

Soldiers have been executing operations against Al Qaida and other terrorist organizations under the Authorization to Use Military Force in areas where they are also receiving HF/IDP. These soldiers serving in these countries are conducting many of the same activities as those within the declared combat zone. They are also conducting the same types of activities currently being executed by service members participating in Operations Enduring Freedom in the Philippines. However, since they are not in a declared combat zone, these soldiers are not receiving the same type of combat tour service credit or awards, such as the Army's authorization to wear overseas service stripes and Shoulder Sleeve Insignia for Former Wartime Service.

Expansion of the current combat zone is not a feasible solution for recognizing these service members. However, soldiers who meet the award for the Global War on Terrorism – Expeditionary (GWOT-E) Medal, while simultaneously serving in a HF/IDP status should also be eligible for combat tour service and awarded appropriate service awards and/or accoutrements. I am writing to request that the Army adopt a policy to provide such combat tour service credit, and also retroactively grant combat tour credit to soldiers who have served and earned the GWOT-E and have also received HF/IDP.

Mr. Secretary, as the Army draws down, soldiers are under intense pressure to compete for retention and promotion. It is important that we retain our most experienced and highest quality personnel. This can only be done if an individual's service record accurately reflects his or her service. I look forward to working with you to resolve this situation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Adam Smith", written over a horizontal dotted line.

Adam Smith
Ranking Member