

Defense Experts Give Donald Trump a Big Thumbs Up

Wednesday, just hours before he was set to take the stage against Hillary Clinton in the third and final presidential debate, Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump got a boost from a group of defense, national security and foreign policy experts.

The group includes many of the country's most experienced and renowned defense experts, including current and former congressional leaders, distinguished military leaders, and former senior executive branch appointees. Combined, they have accumulated hundreds of years of experience defending the U.S. and its national security interests.

They wrote the following letter of support for Trump:

As individuals who have served our country in Congress, the executive branch, or in uniform, we write to support strongly Donald Trump's recently released plan to rebuild our military.

Over the last eight years, the U.S. military has been faced with reckless cuts by the Obama administration and the dangers incurred by defense sequestration. Concurrently, the world has grown increasingly dangerous and unstable, from ISIS attacks around the world to Russian intervention in Eastern Europe to Chinese adventurism in the South China Sea. Cutting commissary benefits by 30 percent and restricting cost of living raises to 1.6 percent send a telling message to our warriors, many of whom spent 50 percent of their careers in combat zones.

Our military requires a serious and substantial investment to overcome the neglect of recent years and rebuild to meet tomorrow's challenges and threats. The bipartisan National

Defense Panel has stipulated that \$611 billion was the minimum defense spending required to meet the national security requirements of our country. We are confident Mr. Trump is committed to removing the sequester limit on Defense spending and to increasing the level of investment in defense so our war fighters are properly trained, equipped and ready to face ever-more-complex threats with dominant military strength.

We believe that Mr. Trump, in consultation with us and distinguished experts in the national security community, will work with active military leadership and Congress to establish and implement a serious and comprehensive long-term plan to rebuild our services. Our military force structure must be based on sound operational plans driven by a thorough and unvarnished threat assessment. Looking to the future, it is not unrealistic to set a target force structure, which would include a 350 ship Navy, an Army with an end strength of 540,000, an Air Force of at least 1,200 active fighter aircraft, and a Marine Corps of 36 battalions. Such growth phased within budget reality represents the kind of targeted investment our services need today and is grounded in the kind of serious and sober strategic thinking our country needs in these perilous times by a peace through strength policy. Mr. Trump's intention to reform the Defense Department, including a full audit and focused acquisition reform, is much needed and long overdue. His commitment to a comprehensive ballistic missile defense is indispensable in a world of rogue actors and missile proliferation. And we appreciate his understanding of the cyber threat and the steps we must take to defeat it.

The men and women of our nation's military have served gallantly over the last 15 years, and we as a country owe them a debt that can never fully be repaid. We must now provide them every resource necessary to execute their missions and come home safely. We believe that Donald Trump

is a better choice than Hillary Clinton to move our military in the right direction as president of the United States."