

About half of 3,900 JFCOM jobs in Southeast Virginia to be preserved

RICHMOND, VA & WASHINGTON, DC – Governor Bob McDonnell, Virginia's two U.S. Senators and four members of southeastern Virginia's delegation to the U.S. House of Representatives issued the following statements today after the U.S. Department of Defense released final plans to disestablish Joint Forces Command (JFCOM) and restructure and realign many of its critical functions.

Last August, U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates proposed the complete elimination of JFCOM as part of a broad plan to reduce defense spending and promote greater Pentagon efficiency. JFCOM employs about 5,800 military and civilian workers and private contractors, and about 3,900 of these employees work at facilities in Norfolk and Suffolk. Today's announcement preserves about half of those 3,900 jobs, with the transformation expected to take about one year to complete.

Over the past six months, Virginia's congressional delegation, Governor McDonnell, and other state and local elected officials worked closely and met with the Department of Defense and Joint Forces Command to ensure the command's closure would not degrade the military's joint training, operations, and war-fighting capabilities. Additionally, Governor McDonnell and members of the delegation met in November with Secretary of Defense Robert Gates and Admiral Mike Mullen, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. A comprehensive business case was developed in an attempt to preserve JFCOM's core military functions determined to be critical for satisfying enduring operational and national security requirements.

As a result of this bipartisan effort, the Pentagon's final plan released today retains several of JFCOM's unique functions and missions that were developed over many years to improve the way each branch of the armed forces operate and fight together as part of a joint force. The Defense Department's reorganization plan preserves and refocuses the cutting-edge modeling and simulation expertise that has developed around JFCOM's campus in Suffolk.

In addition, state officials announced today that Virginia has been awarded a \$500,000 grant from the Defense Department's Office of Economic Adjustment (OEA), which is the Pentagon's primary source for assisting communities that are adversely impacted by base closures, realignments, and contract or program cancellations. These funds will be used to establish a

Workforce Transition Center in Suffolk, providing a “one-stop-shop” to allow displaced JFCOM workers to access a broad range of resources and assistance available from local, state, federal and nonprofit organizations.

Statements from the Governor and members of the Virginia congressional delegation can be found below.

Governor Bob McDonnell: “In August, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates announced his unilateral decision to close the Joint Forces Command. Since that time, we have worked in concert with our congressional delegation and a team of volunteer retired senior officers to retain as many positions, and command functions, in Hampton Roads as was possible. This effort has been marked by bipartisan cooperation in the pursuit of the best possible outcome for both our national security interests and the citizens of the Commonwealth. Today’s announcement demonstrates that our work has produced some positive results in the face of steep odds. While Joint Forces Command will still close, we were successful in retaining 50% of the Command’s positions in the region. Further, the new “Joint Staff South” will be led by a two-star Admiral, and we are making every effort to ensure that a significant amount of the currently occupied office space will either be retained by the Command, or occupied by other National Security and Defense organizations.

“We remain disappointed in the final decision to close the Joint Forces Command. That decision will cost a number of Virginians their jobs, and we are committed to utilizing every resource and taking every possible step to help these individuals and their families in this trying time. The impact of the closing will be felt throughout the regional and state economy, and our cooperation across party and governmental lines must continue in order to help our citizens navigate the difficulties ahead. However, I do believe the worst case scenario has been avoided. Many jobs have been retained. I thank all the local, state and federal officials along with our volunteer team of experts who have worked with us in this effort, and look forward to our future work to ensure that Virginia’s historic partnership with the United States military remains strongly in place.”

U.S. Sen. Jim Webb (D-VA): “I support, as a general principle, Secretary Gates' efforts to achieve efficiencies and cost savings in the Department of Defense. Following intense, bipartisan efforts, my concerns about the lack of consultation and cooperation in responding to legitimate requests for information and analytical data have largely been met. JFCOM’s most important functions have been preserved to sustain our military’s joint warfighting capabilities and many highly-skilled employees will continue to perform their critical duties.”

U.S. Sen. Mark Warner (D-VA): “As our nation grapples with its unsustainable deficits and debt, the Hampton Roads region and the Commonwealth as a whole inevitably will be confronted with additional efforts to reduce military and federal spending. I believe this effort helped us design a workable model going forward. Our elected leadership worked as a strong, bipartisan team, partnering with local officials and reaching-out to key retired military officials in Hampton Roads to push-back with facts and logic. I am extremely pleased that the Pentagon ultimately agreed with our strong business and national security arguments that JFCOM’s modeling and simulation investments and infrastructure provided a capability that simply doesn’t exist anywhere else in the U.S. military today.

“While the coming months could be difficult for many families, it is important to point out that this collaborative, bipartisan effort saved more than half of the JFCOM-related jobs that were targeted for elimination just six months ago. We will continue to work in partnership with state, regional and local officials, and other community and non-profit organizations, to help affected workers access needed services and training as they make the transition to other opportunities and jobs.”

Rep. Rob Wittman (R-1): “Going forward, it will be important for the Department of Defense to show a roadmap and a plan of what functions are moving, what people are moving, and how that will be implemented to ensure core capabilities of JFCOM are not simply cast aside. It is critical we don’t lose the knowledge and expertise of these men and women. Furthermore, the DoD has to date failed to provide the strategic analysis leading up to this decision to close JFCOM, and I remain disappointed that DoD has yet to be forthright with this evidence to provide critical insight as to why the decision was made. As the Chairman of the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, I will continue to press DoD for answers and hold them accountable for their decisions.”

Rep. Scott Rigell (R-2): “The lack of transparency throughout this entire process is troubling. While I appreciate and fully support cutting waste and inefficiencies in every area of government, the Pentagon thus far has failed to provide the detailed analysis and supporting

documents that support the dismantling of JFCOM, making it impossible to determine if its dismantling is justified. I therefore continue to question the wisdom of a move of this magnitude because of these unknowns, including its impact on the essential mission that the command provides to our troops serving in harm's way.”

Rep. Bobby Scott (D-3): “While it is disappointing that Joint Forces Command will be disestablished, I am pleased that the Defense Department recognized the importance of JFCOM’s modeling and simulation functions and the need for most of that mission to remain in Hampton Roads.”

Rep. Randy Forbes (R-4): “This is a sad day for Hampton Roads and for our national defense. While Virginians will see the economic impact immediately, the strategic harm caused by the abandonment of military jointness will be a weakening agent to our military capabilities for decades. I will continue to work with our delegation to lessen the impact of these actions. I also join, however, with 37 Members of Congress from 22 different states, including 32 Members of the Armed Services Committee, who have registered their strong concern over the closure of JFCOM as well as the secrecy, speed, and stonewalling that has come to characterize Pentagon’s standard operating procedure. As Chairman of the Armed Services Readiness Subcommittee, I intend to continue closely scrutinizing and shedding light on what I believe to be a dismantling not just of one of our nation’s 10 combatant commands but a critical cornerstone of U.S. military strength.”

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