

NORFOLK, VA – Congressman Robert C. “Bobby” Scott’s issued the following statement this afternoon at a press conference with Governor Robert F. McDonnell and Representatives Randy Forbes (VA-04), Robert Wittman (VA-01), and Glenn Nye (VA-02) following Defense Secretary Robert Gates’ announcement to eliminate Joint Forces Command in Norfolk:

“Joint Forces Command is a critical command element of our nation’s military. JFCOM is the Defense Department’s premiere joint force trainer and has improved and expanded military readiness for decades. JFCOM helps ensure that DoD civilian personnel and members of all the branches of the armed services are working together towards one common goal – the defense of the United States.

“Since its creation, JFCOM has led the way in joint training concept development and experimentation, which includes heavy use of modeling and simulation technology. Hampton Roads is the nation’s hub for modeling and simulation technology, and our military has benefited tremendously from effective utilization of this cost-saving technology – thanks in part to the efforts at JFCOM.

“These critical functions provide continued American military superiority and many of JFCOM’s components will need to continue in some form regardless of this decision. It makes little sense to outright eliminate JFCOM, transfer the personnel dedicated to JFCOM’s mission, and create redundant missions elsewhere. In fact, many positions will not be eliminated at all but just reassigned elsewhere; and to the extent that positions are actually eliminated, there will be less coordination within the U.S. military – and that’s not how you save money.

“As a member of the Budget Committee, I completely understand and appreciate the Secretary’s motivation to weed out wasteful spending at the Defense Department. If there are inefficiencies at JFCOM, as I am sure there are in the nine other commands, then those should and must be addressed appropriately. The issue of employing and becoming overly reliant on expensive private contractors is a problem not just at JFCOM but across the Defense Department and the rest of the federal government, and this is certainly an issue I would be interested in discussing solutions to. However, I do not believe completely eliminating a command responsible for ensuring better coordination amongst the military is the best way to reach the Secretary’s goal.

“The Secretary’s office provided very little information on this decision prior to his announcement this afternoon. The decision did not go through the normal, thoughtful process that is used when bases are closed, nor was there any mention of this in the Quadrennial Defense Review, which outlines the Defense challenges for the next four years. With that in mind, I look forward to a full briefing by the Secretary’s office justifying this decision. I will work with my colleagues in the Hampton Roads congressional delegation to ensure that this decision is heavily scrutinized.”

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