

## **Statement to Commission on Military, National and Public Service**

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### **Background**

I grew up in the 1950's and 1960's in Lubbock, Texas, registered for the draft at age 18, and joined the Marine Corps in 1965 at age 20. I was in the PLC-law program and was in law school from 1967-70. My active duty time was three years, from Jan. 1971 thru Dec. 1973. When the Vietnam War ended in late January, 1973, I was stationed in Okinawa.

### **General Comments**

My overall view is that in planning for future military operations, our nation will be best served by having as many Americans as possible having "skin in the game." In my youth during the Vietnam era, most individuals had skin in the game in at least one of two ways:

1. Selective Service draft registration
2. Special tax surcharge to support the war

### **Specific Comments**

1. Selective Service draft registration

I recommend that draft registration be retained, but have women added. Women already are serving, and can provide critical skills to our military. When draft age men and women register, I recommend that any special skills be noted on the forms. We need to have draft age men and women register in case of emergency, or in case special skills are needed in certain situations.

Otherwise, we should attempt to provide national security by use of our present volunteer force. An actual draft invariably discriminates among individuals and causes a great deal of resentment within those affected.

If national service of some sort by all eligible men and women was affordable, certainly that would be helpful. However, I suspect such a plan would be extremely expensive and would increase the national debt substantially. And when our country engages in a war, having had some national service would not necessarily create skin in the game.

2. Special tax surcharge to support the war—

During the Vietnam War, there was a three-year period when a special tax surcharge was imposed to help pay for the war. An individual or corporate taxpayer calculated a normal tax amount and then multiplied that amount by a percent (eg. 5 percent) to arrive at a tax surcharge to help pay for the war. Although it was an unpopular law, it did serve to

provide more money for the federal government to help pay for the war, and the tax surcharge definitely gave most taxpayers (some low level income taxpayers were exempted) who paid federal income taxes some skin in the game.

Below is a notable quote from a New York Times opinion piece in 2013 by R. Russell Rumbaugh entitled “A Tax to Pay for War?.” I agree with the sentiment expressed.

“By tying military action to additional revenue, the president would actually have a freer hand in deciding when to use force. Every argument the Obama administration makes for military action would explicitly include a call for increased taxes, forcing the question of whether the stakes in the military situation are worth the cost. If the American people agree they are worth it, the president will get both the political support and financing he needs.”

“If military action is worth our troops’ blood, it should be worth our treasure, too — not just in the abstract, but in the form of a specific ante by every American.”

### **Summary**

My conclusion is that long-term, Americans need to have some skin in the game when military force is being considered. A military draft could provide that for most young men and women, but there are inherent problems. But certainly, we need to maintain a draft registry of eligible men—and women, to provide critical skills whenever needed.

A military tax surcharge would affect even more Americans than would a military draft, and would provide a substantial amount of skin in the game. Would we still be in Afghanistan if Americans had to pay for that war on a current basis, versus using borrowed money?