

### *Services Agree to Provide Progress Report to Congress on Implementing Commission Recommendations*

Washington, D.C. (Mar. 6, 2012) – At a Congressional forum held today to examine efforts to increase diversity and eliminate hazing in the military, General Lester Lyles, the former Chairman of the Military Leadership Diversity Commission, reported in a [new assessment](#) that, although some progress has been made, the military has failed to fully implement 14 of 19 recommendations made in a [report](#) issued by the Commission nearly a year ago.

The forum was co-hosted by Rep. Elijah E. Cummings, the Ranking Member of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Senator Ben Cardin, and the Chairs of the Congressional Tri-Caucus.

“The Commission found that a highly qualified and diverse officer corps is essential to our national security,” said Cummings. “For that reason, the pathway to leadership must be open to individuals of every race and ethnicity, as well as to women. Unfortunately, it is apparent from the Commission’s assessment that we still face many challenges in meeting these goals.”

The assessment, which was compiled by General Lyles and two other former Commissioners, concluded that the Department of Defense has acted on some of the Commission’s recommendations, such as issuing a review of laws, policies and regulations restricting the service of women in the Armed Forces and implementing robust diversity management policies within the Services. However, the majority of the Commission’s recommendations are still under review or in the process of being implemented.

According to General Lyles, “Things are beginning to happen, but not at the pace some of us would like to see. We need to institutionalize recommendations ... not study them or look how we might do it, because we might lose momentum.”

At the forum, Congresswoman Judy Chu emphasized the need to promote diversity among military leadership in order to help eliminate race-related hazing. She cited her nephew Harry Lew’s suicide as an example that highlights the need for cultural sensitivity training and accountability among military leadership to enforce existing anti-hazing policies.

“We must eradicate the culture of hazing that is so ingrained within our troops, and ensure that our officers are diverse so the chain of command can better understand the challenges every

military volunteer from every background faces, said Chu. “Servicemembers in positions of responsibility in the field must be made to feel that they should stop hazing when they see it, rather than encourage it, or turn the other way.”

“The Second Military Diversity Forum was a productive discussion about discrimination issues that still plague the Department of Defense, including hazing, lack of transparency in promotions and the need for greater commitment by commanders on the field to make diversity one of their mission priorities,” said Cardin. “I wholeheartedly agree with Major General Taguba’s comment that it is the unit commander that must be the chief diversity officer, the chief EEO officer, the chief sexual assault prevention officer, and the chief educator on tolerance. I urge the DoD leadership to make the immediate implementation of all the Military Leadership Diversity Commission recommendations their top priority.”

Congressman Joe Baca echoed concerns that military diversity does not reflect the culture fabric of the nation: “As a veteran myself, I understand the hardships that our military families face in order to keep us safe. It is critical we do all we can to actively create a culture of diversity in our Armed Forces, with an equal opportunity at success for all Americans.”

Also appearing at the forum were officials from the Office of Secretary of Defense and every military branch.

“Our primary focus continues to be carrying out strategic efforts to increase diversity throughout the ranks, particularly at senior leadership levels; instituting an accountability process across the services to identify areas requiring engagement; and improving our education and training programs as our foundation in equity and diversity training,” said Clarence Johnson, the Director for Diversity Management and Equal Opportunity in the Office of the Secretary of Defense. “We are committed to a culture of inclusion, in words and actions, and regret recent incidents that may call that commitment into question.”

At Cummings’s request, each military branch committed today to providing in one week an overview of progress made to implement the Commission’s recommendations. Cummings also pledged to hold another forum in three months to examine ongoing progress.

The Department of Defense will also issue its plan to enhance diversity on March 16, 2012, in order to comply with an [Executive Order](#) President Obama issued last fall directing departments and agencies to implement a comprehensive focus on diversity and inclusion as a key component of their human resource strategies.

The Commission was created by Cummings, Cardin, and other Members as part of the National Defense Authorization Act of 2009. Last year, Cummings and Cardin hosted the first [forum](#) on military diversity with Commission members.

## **Video Highlights of Forum**