

2 January 2004

Donald H. Rumsfeld  
Secretary of Defense  
1000 Defense Pentagon  
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Subject: Older Fighters Corps (OFC)

Dear Secretary Rumsfeld -

This recommendation is from an older cannon cocker (US Army Artillery) who sees our country and the noble and necessary work in the mid-east being threatened.

Problem: In Iraq and Afghanistan the US is losing young military combatants carrying out routine but still dangerous peacekeeping, administrative, and nation building operations. These inevitable casualties bear a cost beyond their human suffering in the domestic and international political arenas. Their mounting count threatens America's ability to complete the transformation of Iraq and the mid-east into a region that benefits its people and is more friendly toward the west. Our ability to mount future operations against other rogue nations will be compromised and our domestic security will be demolished if, due to such casualties, we turn tail and run from Iraq.

Recommended Solution: Turn over the routine peacekeeping, administrative, and nation building operations to a newly formed corps of older fighters drawn from the ranks of retired and discharged US military personnel who will volunteer to train for and serve their country in such capacities. OFC units will replace the current active Army and Marine units composed of young people at the prime of their productive and family formation stages of life. Sufficient regular (i.e. younger) military units will be kept in-country to carry out sophisticated and rapid response combined arms assaults against concentrated formations of the enemy that may arise from time to time. However, the daily street patrols, resupply convoys, people-to-people projects, and administrative support operations would be assumed by OFC units who will put themselves in harm's way against the random terrorist strikes and thereby free the younger people to return to their families and jobs.

This proposal should be considered in light of its many salutary attributes –

1. America has millions of healthy ex-military citizens most of whom would be willing to serve tours in the OFC. These citizen patriots would consider it an honor to be able to again serve in their later years so as to spare the country's young blood.
2. The deaths and injuries to us older fighters who have completed raising their children and finished most or all of our careers will be acceptable to the country to a much greater extent than seeing the daily televised fare of parents, young wives, and children in grief.
3. It is easy and relatively inexpensive to update our training as required for the described OFC operations – we don't have to run five miles with a full pack or do

- twenty pull-ups to patrol the streets, drive convoy trucks, man communications centers, field depots, etc., and/or engage in short fire fights (until the young bucks of the regular response units arrive).
4. From a financial perspective we older fighters are cheaper casualties– we will die sooner and easier (in any event).
  5. Killing an OFC trooper will deny the full measure of honor that often motivates an ideology-driven enemy to engage in a terrorist operation. This may also reduce their ability to recruit new young blood if the coup they can count is primarily against guys old enough to be their fathers.
  6. Older experienced heads come to boil more slowly and will have a lesser tendency to over react to a sudden crisis situation. In socially explosive environments this factor alone may be worth the price of the OFC.
  7. Most foreign cultures have a great respect for age. Members of the OFC could be more effective in carrying out the military’s public relations and person-to-person programs at a grass roots level.
  8. A well-trained OFC shows the world that America has an enormous and effective pool of human resources for post-combat stabilization operations as the war on terror continues. This sends a strong message to those still contemplating messing with us.
  9. OFC members have developed skills and interests that would let them better handle the more sedate support jobs in the military that often demoralize younger troopers who are away from family, friends, and familiar environments.
  10. OFC troopers are easier to provide for in off hours – we don’t need the types of R&R that younger people do.
  11. We can take the first bullet, RPG, or roadside bomb just as well as our younger bothers in arms and give equivalent return.
  12. We and our families are more experienced at longer partings and will tolerate them better.
  13. OFC members will not compete with the regular career military for chain of command advancement. We just want to serve and come home “when it’s over over there.”
  14. Dying with our boots on for a noble cause is a deep-bred American cultural belief; beats hell out a long exit with dementia or disease that causes suffering to all concerned.

No doubt there are more and, perhaps, even better arguments for fielding an Older Fighters Corps to accomplish long-term, post-combat military missions that support our foreign policy. Please consider this proposal in light of the new kind of war in which our country is now engaged.

Sincerely yours,

George Rebane, PhD, PE  
(1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Artillery, US Army – retired)  
Nevada City, California