



MISSION: READINESS

MILITARY LEADERS FOR KIDS

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Retired Military Brass Support First Lady's Call To Reduce Child Obesity, Improve Nutrition

Military brass support improved school nutrition to cut obesity, ensure qualified recruits

WASHINGTON, D.C. (February 9, 2010) – General Johnnie E. Wilson, US Army (Ret.), and Lieutenant General Norman Seip, US Air Force (Ret.), said Tuesday that preventing child obesity is a matter of national security, noting that being overweight has become the Number 1 reason why potential recruits are unable to enlist in the armed services. The generals' comments came in support of First Lady Michelle Obama who announced a new national campaign to combat child obesity.

The generals noted that according to the Pentagon 75 percent of young Americans ages 17 to 24 are unable to serve in the United States military largely because they either are physically unfit, lack a high school diploma, or have a criminal record. The generals added that 27 percent of prospective recruits are not able to join the military because they are overweight, making weight problems the single biggest factor limiting the pool of potential recruits. In the past 30 years, child obesity rates have more than tripled. One in three American children (10 to 17) is now overweight or obese.

“Child obesity has become so serious that many of us in the military see the problem as a potential threat to our country's national defense,” said General Wilson, who attended the White House event. “We support the First Lady's leadership on reducing child obesity, which is clearly a concern for parents and communities across the country. We believe improving school nutrition is a critical step in helping families and communities address this national security imperative.”

Wilson and Seip are members of Mission: Readiness, a group of retired admirals and generals who support research-based approaches to ensure that young people will have many career options as adults, including military service if they choose that path.

Mission: Readiness is calling on Congress to support at least \$1 billion per year in additional funding to help improve nutrition standards for meals served in school, after school and in child care settings. The group is also seeking improved nutrition standards for all competitive foods and beverages sold on school grounds. The retired military leaders believe that improving nutrition in America's schools will help prevent and reduce obesity, thus ensuring that more young Americans will have the option of military service.

“To be sure, our military stands ready to protect against those who would threaten our security,” Lt. Gen. Seip said. “But in order to sustain our military strength for the future, we must ensure that future generations of Americans are fit to serve in a 21st century military.”

For a list of our members and more information, go to www.missionreadiness.org

MISSION: READINESS is the nonprofit, bi-partisan organization of senior retired military leaders ensuring continued American security and prosperity into the 21st century by calling for smart investments in the next generation of American children.

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