



# MEDIA RELEASE

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## **Tennessee could lose 30 OH-58D Helicopters under proposed Army plan**

### **UH-72 Lakota also targeted**

**NASHVILLE** - Tennessee's Adjutant General, Maj. Gen. Max Haston is perplexed by the latest move by the Army to eliminate the OH-58D Kiowa Warrior helicopters from the Army inventory.

Tennessee is the only National Guard state in the nation who flies these versatile reconnaissance aircraft used to target enemy locations in a wartime environment.

"I understand that the Kiowa is a legacy aircraft, but to eliminate them without a suitable replacement, simply doesn't make sense," said Haston. "This will have a tremendously negative impact on the Tennessee Guard. If the Army follows this course of action, Tennessee will lose 30 helicopters and the 692 Soldiers who support them. It will also eliminate 113 fulltime jobs and possibly 2 of the 3 Army flight facilities across the state."

The Army plan is to assign its rotary wing reconnaissance missions currently accomplished using the OH-58D to the AH-64 Apache attack helicopter, until a suitable replacement for the OH-58D can be determined. But the Army has experienced numerous failed attempts over the past several years in selecting the next generation of armed reconnaissance helicopters. There are currently 338 Kiowa Warriors in the Active Army and 30 in the Army National Guard. These helicopters are capable of bridging the acquisition gap until the next generation is procured.

Units of Tennessee's 1/230th Air Cavalry Squadron who fly OH-58D Kiowa Warriors are scheduled to deploy to Afghanistan with the aircraft later this year.

"The National Guard has the most seasoned pilots and maintainers, and National Guard aircraft maintenance readiness levels are consistently better than our Active Component counterparts," Haston continued. "Taking attack and reconnaissance aviation from the National Guard is simply not the best business practice."

The Army plan also includes moving the LUH-72 Lakota helicopters, newly acquired specifically for the National Guard, to their aviation training center at Ft. Rucker to use as a platform to train new pilots. Tennessee currently has four of these new helicopters and will lose one and possibly two of these airframes under this plan. The LUH-72 is primarily utilized in the state's counter-drug missions and numerous other missions that does not require heavy lift capability. The LUH-72 operational cost is one-quarter of operating the UH-60 Blackhawk which is the only alternative.

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## **Tennessee could lose 30 OH-58D Helicopters . . .**

The loss of aircraft could also affect the Guard's ability to respond during domestic emergencies.

"If the OH-58's and the LUH-72's are removed from the National Guard, we lose a valuable asset to the Governor in the event of emergencies here at home. The Kiowa and Lakota give us an outstanding reconnaissance platform to evaluate an emergency event. Also, if we lose the aircraft, all of the support vehicles and other assets that work with them will be lost," said Haston. "It will definitely have a negative impact on our ability to respond to an emergency in Tennessee."

If the aircraft is divested, no plans are on the table to backfill the loss. Haston is working closely with National Guard Bureau to coordinate a replacement, but is in competition with 53 other states and territories.

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**All Tennessee Army and Air National Guard press releases can be found at <http://www.tnmilitary.org>**

**OH58 & LUH-72 Fact Sheets attached**