



State of the Union: What Should He Say

January 13, 2016

President Barack Obama will deliver his final State of the Union address to Congress tonight. Military Times expects the president to tout progress made against the Islamic State and the reduction of homelessness and unemployment among veterans.

At NGAUS, retired Maj. Gen. Gus Hargett, the association president, would like reform of military health care to be a presidential priority.

"But I would be most pleased if he acknowledged the value the National Guard is to the states and the nation," he said.

The publication asked several defense watchers what they would like to hear from the commander in chief. Here is a sampling of the responses:

Benjamin Friedman, defense research fellow at the Cato Institute:

"After almost 15 years, can't we pay for wars at least through the normal appropriation process rather than a special overseas contingency operation fund?"

Phil Carter, senior fellow at the Center for a New American Security:

"Defense and [Department of Veterans Affairs] health reform belong at the top of the president's agenda, but will likely not be mentioned because they are too wonky."

Joe Davis, spokesman for the Veterans of Foreign Wars:

"We want the president to ensure full defense funding in support of the troops and their worldwide fight against terrorism and insurgency, and for the [VA] to identify and fix what's broken . . . and to restore the faith of veterans in their VA."

Paul Rieckhoff, CEO of Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America:

"We call on the president to prioritize bipartisan action on behalf of female veterans."

Byron Callan, managing director at Capital Alpha Partners:

"For 2016, I'd like to see the president . . . demand that Congress stop blocking the [Defense Department's] efforts to implement sensible plans to reduce excess facilities and wasteful spending."