



Chairman Rodney Frelinghuysen

Subcommittee on Defense, House Committee on Appropriations

Full Committee Markup - FY 2016 Defense Appropriations Bill
June 2, 2015
Opening Statement As Prepared

Mr. Chairman, I rise to present the Subcommittee recommendation for the fiscal year 2016 Department of Defense appropriations bill.

At the outset, I want to thank you, Mr. Rogers, for your leadership and support and for being a true friend to our men and women in uniform wherever they serve across the globe.

I'd also like to thank Ms. Lowey as well.

Mr. Chairman, this legislation is informed by 12 hearings, many briefings, travel to the Middle East and Europe and countless staff hours.

This is a product of a very bipartisan and cooperative effort, for which I thank my good friend, the Ranking Member Pete Visclosky. In fact, every member of the Subcommittee contributed and many on the full committee offered suggestions to improve the bill and I am confident that we can all be proud of the measure before us this morning!

In total, the bill provides \$578.6 billion in discretionary funding, an increase of \$24.4 billion above the FY 2015 enacted level.

This top line includes \$88.4 billion in Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) funding for war efforts and is at the level assumed in the House-Senate budget conference agreement.

I would point out the total is very close to the number President Obama submitted in his FY '16 budget request for national defense

Of course, the base funding recommendation is \$490.2 billion, which reflect the budget caps enacted in 2011 as part of the Budget Control Act, which we've met.

To reach our reduced allocation, the Subcommittee reviewed in detail the President's submission and found areas and programs where reductions were possible without harming military operations, warfighter readiness, or critical modernization efforts.

For example, we've taken reductions from programs that have been restructured or terminated, subject to contract or schedule delays, contain unjustified cost increases or funding requested "ahead of need;" historical under-execution, and rescissions of unneeded funds.

I commend the staff (led by Rob Blair and Becky Leggieri) and all the members for their vigorous oversight.

Of course, this recommendation keeps faith with our troops and their families by including a 2.3 percent pay raise, a full percentage point above the President's request. It also provides generous funding in their benefits and defense health programs.

In another key area, this package contains robust funding to counter worldwide cyber threats.

But I think we would all agree that the world is a much more dangerous, unstable and unpredictable place than it was in 2011.

The budget caps developed back then could never have envisioned the emerging and evolving threats that we're seeing today in the Middle East, North Africa, Asia and elsewhere.

So, to respond to current and future threats, and meet our Constitutional responsibilities, we were asked by Chairman Rogers to develop a recommendation that adheres to current law AND provide additional resources to avoid catastrophic cuts to military programs and people.

We recommend adoption of Global War on Terrorism funding— Title 9 – to ensure that our armed forces are agile, lethal and ready to confront the challenges ahead, and that they have the strength and capability to defeat the rise of the multitude of Islamic terror groups worldwide and deter potential nation-state aggressors in every corner of the globe whether that be Iran, Russia, China or North Korea

Within Title 9, I want to highlight two areas of critical importance: ISR and readiness.

We believe that a strong Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) capability is a critical component of the Global War on Terrorism. And yet, this Spring our Subcommittee witnessed a succession of Combatant Commanders come before us and testify that only a fraction of their ISR requirements are being met, in essence, leaving them blind to the enemy's activities, movements and intentions.

Accordingly, the GWOT account contains an additional \$500 million above the President's 2016 request to improve our ISR capabilities "tooth to tail." And from recent events in the Middle East and across every continent, we will be stronger for this additional investment.

That includes the procurement of additional ISR aircraft and ground stations, the training of ISR pilots, personnel and the processing of ISR-derived data.

Likewise, we share the concern of the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marines about the erosion in overall readiness in the force.

For example, we all heard General Odierno tell us that only one-third of all Army brigades are "ready" and that the Army is "only generating enough readiness for immediate consumption."

We all agree: that's not good enough. In fact, it is unacceptable!

To begin to reinvest in readiness, Title 9 includes an additional \$2.5 billion above the President's request for this purpose. This funding will be distributed to all the services and to the Guard and Reserves to be used ONLY for increased training, depot maintenance and base operations support.

In a recent Statement of Administration Policy, the White House asserted that GWOT funding – the old OCO account – is a “funding mechanism intended to pay for wars...”

I could not agree more. That’s why we included in Title 9 additional funding for ISR. After all, we cannot predict the future, but we must have the ability to see what’s happening today and ensure that our forces are ready for whatever challenges they face!

For example, we know that serious Russian firepower is massing on the Ukrainian border.

We know that China is becoming more assertive and aggressive with its island-building in the South China Sea – challenging us on the seas and in the airspace!

We know that Libya has become a training ground for ISIL and Yemen is a humanitarian disaster and a potential launching pad for terrorist interests!

The month of May was the deadliest month ever in Syria where over 6,600 people died to bring the death toll to over 230,000. Iran is on the march and al Qaeda too. And al-Shabab and Boko Haram gain ground every day in other parts of Africa.

We know that North Korea is moving ahead with development of an advanced missile program and miniaturized nuclear warheads.

But we don’t know where the next crisis or hot spot will erupt and when or how our armed forces will be asked to respond.

Thus, America must continue to lead and this bill enables that leadership.

Mr. Chairman, if the Committee will allow me a closing thought:

The Washington Post recently editorialized that “there isn’t much bipartisan governance left in Washington, but if anything fits that description, it’s probably the annual defense” bill. (Referring to the Authorization bill.)

Like the work of our predecessors, this measure has been developed with the full cooperation of Republicans and Democrats.

Past Defense Subcommittee Chairmen Young, Dicks, Murtha and Lewis, and others, consistently reminded us that we are here for the defense of the nation and partisan politics has no place in a defense appropriations bill.

As Members of Congress, our first duty is to “provide for the common defence.” It is on our shoulders to make sure our troops can dominate any and every battlefield upon which they march.

Make no mistake: we want to work with the President and this recommendation provides him with the tools he needs to fulfill his responsibilities as Commander-in-Chief!

Mr. Chairman, this bill deserves bipartisan support.

I yield back the balance of my time.

#####