

**Opening Statement of  
Chairman Rodney P. Frelinghuysen  
at a Hearing of the  
House Defense Appropriations Subcommittee  
on the  
President's Proposed FY 2015 Defense and Intelligence Budget**

**March 13, 2014**

The Committee will come to order.

Before we begin this hearing I want to take just a moment to pay tribute to the service of our late chairman, Congressman Bill Young. America's men and women in uniform had no more effective advocate. We will miss his leadership and friendship.

For my part, my working relationship and friendship with Mr. Visclosky, the committee's Ranking Member, will help fill that loss. Our recent trip to the Middle East strengthens the ties that bind us in our work together.

We meet today to begin a series of hearings to examine the Fiscal Year 2015 budget request for the Department of Defense.

We are pleased to welcome the Secretary of Defense, Chuck Hagel, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Martin Dempsey, and the Department of Defense's comptroller, the Honorable Robert Hale.

We are honored to have each of you with us and look forward to your testimony.

For the first time in years, this Committee is operating under regular order. The budget agreement reached in December between Congress and the President means that we can proceed in an orderly, deliberate, transparent fashion to meet our responsibilities to the full committee, the full House, and to the American people.

Over the past several years, the practice of funding the federal government through Continuing Resolutions has seriously affected the ability of both the Department of Defense and Congress to do long-range planning that is crucial to our defense and intelligence responsibilities.

Furthermore, the sequester, which the President proposed and the Congress agreed to, has compounded the problem. We must all work together to avoid its return.

This committee has, as it always has had, two principal responsibilities.

The first is to provide the Department of Defense and the intelligence agencies with the resources they need to carry out their missions in the most effective and efficient manner.

The second, and equally important responsibility, is to ensure that our men and women in uniform -- every one of whom has volunteered to serve -- have the resources they need to defend our nation and support their families.

As a committee, I want to be certain everyone knows that these hearings will provide all of our members with the opportunity to ask the questions they have and get the answers they require to make fully informed judgments about the budget before us.

Ladies and gentlemen, we begin these hearing today at a critical juncture for America.

The decisions this committee makes will help set the course for America's defense capabilities, not just for the coming fiscal year, but for many years to come.

And as we consider this budget, we must recognize that we still live in a dangerous and unstable world.

In the Middle East and throughout Africa. In Ukraine and Asia. And in countless hidden places where non-state actors are plotting and planning to do harm to our country and our interests, both at home and abroad.

So among the challenges this committee faces are these:

- First, how do we use limited resources in the most efficient and effective way? That includes making certain our acquisition process works.
- Second, what are the risks associated with the decisions we make on the size of our military -- the size of the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marines -- and what capabilities -- such as the increased use of drones or cyber warfare -- do we want our military to emphasize?
- Third, are those risks tolerable given the threats and conflicts we can reasonably be expected to face as a nation and as a world leader?
- And, fourth, with so many demands and such limited resources, what specifically, do we hope to achieve through the 2015 budget?

People around the world -- our allies and our adversaries -- are watching to see how we answer these questions. And, we want to be certain that our response reassures our allies and deters our enemies.

A budget is, after all, not just about numbers. A budget is, in essence, a policy document.

Where we decide to spend our money reflects – or should reflect – our strategies for defending our nation. Those choices also reflect our best evaluation of where the most likely threats to our national security are likely to originate and how we can best overcome those threats should they materialize.

We have heard talk from the Administration that it is time for the United States to, “get off a war-footing.” Frankly, such talk troubles me, especially coming, as I do, from a state that suffered so much loss on September 11<sup>th</sup>.

Nations around the world saw the manner in which we withdrew from Iraq, and the way we are addressing Iran and Syria. They will be watching how we exit Afghanistan. And, they want to know whether America is still ready, willing, and able to lead.

When we talk about getting off a war-footing, it suggests to both our adversaries and our allies alike that the United States has lost its will and its ability to lead. If that’s the message we send, we will be promoting greater instability in the world, not less.

History is replete with examples of what happens when a great nation tires of the responsibilities that accompany greatness. If we withdraw from the world stage we would leave a vacuum that others – others whose interests do not necessarily align with ours – are all-too-eager to fill.

But at an even more basic level, history also shows the wisdom of what George Washington said more than two centuries ago: “To be prepared for war is one of the most effective means of preserving peace.”

We must make certain that in meeting the demands of fiscal austerity we do not leave any question about our will and our ability to defend ourselves and our interests around the world.

It is not enough for anyone to say that the President’s proposed budget does not support the military any of us want. We must do everything we can to ensure that it supports the military we need.

We must be creative and innovative in finding ways to rein-in spending and make every dollar count, while also meeting our national security responsibilities and providing our military with what it needs to meet its mission.

And we must hear directly from you where this budget is taking us and exactly what our defense posture will look like in one, two, and five years from now as a result of it.

We must also be realistic. Realistic, not just about our resources, but also about the world in which we live. Realistic about the threats we face today and are likely to face in the years ahead. And realistic about maintaining our ability to deter and then, if necessary, meet those threats effectively and decisively.

Now, I would like to recognize our ranking member, the gentleman from Indiana, Mr. Visclosky, for his opening statement.