



Chairman Rodney Frelinghuysen

Subcommittee on Defense, House Committee on Appropriations

Fiscal Year 2016 Budget Hearing – Department of Defense
March 4, 2015
Opening Statement As Prepared

The Committee will come to order.

I am pleased to welcome the 25th Secretary of Defense, Ashton Carter. This is Dr. Carter's first appearance before the Subcommittee as Secretary although we know him well from his many years of service to our country.

We also welcome General Martin Dempsey, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Dr. Michael McCord, making his first appearance before the Subcommittee as the Comptroller of the Department.

Mr. Secretary, as you know, this committee has, as always, two principal responsibilities.

The first is to provide the Department of Defense and the intelligence community the resources they need to carry out their missions to protect America and our allies.

The second 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 we gather here this morning, both of those tasks are becoming more difficult. The threat environment facing America is becoming more complicated and more dangerous. The fiscal challenges are worse than ever before;

As the Budget Control Act of 2011 remains the "law of the land," we find ourselves staring down the barrel of renewed tight budget caps.

Mr. Secretary, I completely agree that the BCA needs to be modified to avoid dramatic immediate and long-term negative impacts on our military capabilities.

But unless and until the law is changed, this Committee has no choice but to draft our bill to comply with the BCA caps -- at least \$37 billion below the President's budget request.

So, we will need to work very closely together to ensure the funding you are appropriated is sufficient to take care of our uniformed and civilian personnel, maintain your readiness at the highest possible level, and sustain our technological advantage.

The decisions this committee makes will help set the foundation for America's defense capabilities, not just for FY '16, but for many years to come.

While much of the focus is on the BCA and "sequester," choices are made (or not made) by this Commander-in-Chief every day that have a direct bearing on our defense and intelligence posture.

After all, Sequester did not create ISIS - that depraved barbaric force that grew as a result of our premature withdrawal from Iraq.

Sequester is not responsible for over 200,000 deaths in Syria, and millions of refugees and displaced families throughout the Middle East;

Sequester had nothing to do with the President's State of the Union declaration that the United States is no longer on a "war footing";

Sequester did not loosen sanctions on Iran and let that nation advance to the brink of a "game-changing" nuclear weapons capability;

Sequester did not prompt Vladimir Putin to annex Crimea and send his troops to fight alongside separatists in eastern Ukraine;

Sequester did not lead us to "liberate" Libya and then turn our back while the country devolved into a dangerous breeding ground for terrorists.

We look forward to your comments and an informative question and answer session.

In addition to your assessments of the Middle East and Persian Gulf, the Subcommittee also wants to hear your views on the conventional and unconventional threats posed by China, Russia, Iran, North Korea and Non-state actors (Terrorist Groups), such as ISIL, al Qaeda, al Shabbab, Boko Haram and others.

In closing, Mr. Secretary, 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.

Without objection, your written statement will be entered into the record so feel free to summarize your statement this morning.

Now, having said all that, let me turn to my good friend, Ranking Member Pete Visclosky for any comments he may wish to make.

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