



Chairman Rodney Frelinghuysen

Subcommittee on Defense, House Committee on Appropriations

ARMY BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 2016

March 26, 2015

Opening Statement As Prepared

The Committee will come to order.

This morning the Committee will receive testimony on the posture and budget request of the United States Army. The request for fiscal year 2016 is \$124.9 billion, plus \$20.7 billion for overseas contingency operations (which, by the way, I think might need to be renamed “the Global War on Terror account.”)

The GWOT total includes \$493 million for the Joint Improvised Explosive Device Defeat fund, and \$3.8 billion for the Afghanistan Security Forces Fund. The President’s request also includes \$1.3 billion for training and equipping the armed forces of Iraq and Syria.

This morning we will hear testimony from two superbly qualified witnesses, the Honorable John McHugh, Secretary of the Army, and General Raymond Odierno, Chief of Staff of the Army. Secretary McHugh became Army Secretary in September 2009 after a distinguished career in the United States House of Representatives, including service as Ranking Member of the House Armed Services Committee. Mr. Secretary, welcome back and thank you for your many years of service in Congress and as Army Secretary.

We also welcome back General Raymond Odierno, the 38th Chief of Staff of the Army. General Odierno became Chief of Staff of the Army in September 2011. He has nearly 40 years of service and has commanded forces from artillery battery to infantry division to theater command, including joint and multi-national forces. This is his fourth appearance before this Committee, and it is probably his last appearance before this Committee. Chief, thank you for your dedicated and skillful leadership of our Army in very challenging times. .

Gentlemen, a year ago the Administration was planning to reduce our force level in Afghanistan to about 5,000. On this presumption, the Army would be able to reset soldiers and equipment and ensure readiness for other potential conflicts.

However, the situation has changed dramatically in Afghanistan *and* in Europe.

Earlier this week, the President announced his intention to sustain the troop level of 10,000 into FY 2016 in order to assist Afghan security forces defeat a resurgent Taliban.

Russia annexed Crimea, invaded Ukraine and threatens its neighbors in the Baltics and Eastern Europe.

In the Middle East, U.S. forces continue the fight against ISIS. While airstrikes may receive most of the attention, the Army continues to provide assistance to the Iraqi Security Forces, even as Iran and its Quds Force lead the charge on the ground! What a troubling brew we are witnessing!

In this situation one might expect the U.S. Army to increase force structure in order to meet the demands of the combatant commanders. However, General Odierno, you testified before the Senate Armed Services in January, that over the past three years active component endstrength has been cut by 80,000, and the reserve component by 18,000. The Army has eliminated 13 active component brigade combat teams!

There are many other frightening statistics regarding the size and readiness of the Army which we look forward to discussing with you today.

But if I may observe, my predecessors – Jack Murtha and Bill Young – both warned of the dangers of the pendulum of spending. At a time when the Army, and its sister services, were flush with funding to fight concurrent wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, they both predicted that pendulum would swing back and funding would become exceedingly scarce.

Today, with our President openly declaring that the United States is “not on a war footing,” we are seeing the Murtha and Young predictions becoming reality. And the Army and the nation are now at greater risk.

We also need to hear your views on several major acquisition programs:

A new infantry fighting vehicle remains a major goal for the Army but the Ground Combat Vehicle program has been cancelled.

The Army Network - which was at the top of the list for Army research and development - is now reaching the field. We would like an update on the Network.

The Paladin self-propelled howitzer are beginning production and I am sure that our members will have questions on its progress.

The Joint Light Tactical Vehicle program is scheduled to select a single competitor later this year, to begin Low Rate Production. JLTVs will replace about one third of the Army's 150-thousand HumVeets.

The Aviation Restructure is designed to retire oldest and least capable aircraft. The active component will downsize by 687 helicopters, and the Army National Guard will cut 111 helicopters. The plan moves all the Apaches from the Army Guard to the Active Component. Whether or not to keep an Apache reserve in the Army Guard remains a difficult issue. The budget request proposes \$209 million to remanufacture 64 Apaches to the latest AH-64E model.

The Armored Multi-Purpose vehicle which will replace the Vietnam era M113 series vehicles is likely to generate questions.

Finally, gentlemen, the Committee looks forward to an update on the prevention of sexual assault in the force, and prosecution of offenders. No volunteer should EVER be subjected to assault and our Committee will not tolerate it!

Mr. Secretary, General - the Committee is deeply concerned about the challenges facing the Army for both current operations and readiness for the future.

The House Budget Resolution, passed yesterday, is an early step toward relief from the straight-jacket of the Budget Control Act. However, in lieu of a compromise, we will be forced to produce an FY '16 bill that cuts approximately \$6 billion from your request.

We do not want to do that. You do not want us to do that. But in the meantime, we will ask you for a clear picture of what the Army will look like at the reduced funding level and how that Army measures up to the requirements of the National Defense Strategy.

We will ask our witnesses for their summarized statements in a moment, but first I want to recognize the distinguished ranking member, Mr. Visclosky for his comments.

#####