

Congresswoman Niki Tsongas (MA-03) Testimony before the Defense Appropriations Subcommittee

March 15, 2016

Good morning Chairman Frelinghuysen, Ranking Member Visclosky and Members of the Committee. I appreciate the opportunity to testify before you on my priorities for the Fiscal Year 2017 Defense Appropriations Bill.

I have long advocated for maintaining the Pentagon's focus on researching, developing, engineering and producing the best equipment and platforms for our servicemembers.

These advancements not only ensure that our men and women in uniform have the most advanced life-saving equipment possible, but they also help maintain America's technological edge over its adversaries. Unfortunately, defense-related RDT&E has faced a disproportionately sharp cut in recent years, beyond the mandates of the Budget Control Act, and I'd like to advocate for full funding for defense-wide RDT&E.

In particular, I'd like to highlight three important RDT&E-related efforts in this year's budget.

First, I want to recognize the work conducted by the Warfighter Technology Directorate which empowers the United States Army by focusing on improving body armor, eye protection and other protective systems for our Soldiers. I was discouraged to see that the FY17 President's Budget decreased funding for the Directorate by almost \$2 million as compared to the previous fiscal year and I would request that the Committee direct an additional \$5 million above the President's Budget.

Second, I'd like to offer my support for the President's Budget request for the Joint Surveillance Target Attack Radar System, or JSTARS, Recap program. As many on the Committee know, the legacy JSTARS platform has provided unparalleled joint air command and control capabilities for over two decades but the program is badly in need of modernization and I request full funding in this year's Defense Appropriations bill.

Third, I would like to commend the Department of Defense for expanding the Defense Innovation Unit-Experimental concept to the East Coast and for its plan to open a DIU-x extension in the Boston area this June. Doing so will enable the

Department to collaborate more extensively with leading industry partners and world class universities in the greater Boston area. I support full funding in the President's budget for both the RDT&E and O&M funding lines to bring DIUx to Boston.

Next, I request that the Committee provide the Department with full funding for the DOD Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office at the level requested in the PB. Every servicemember deserves to know that the Department will not tolerate any form of sexual assault or harassment and I ask that the SAPRO office be fully funded.

Additionally, I'd like to advocate for \$25 million in funding for the Department's STARBASE program that provides STEM-based educational programs to some of the most socio-economically disadvantaged and under-represented students across the country. The program seeks to educate the next generation of scientists, mathematicians, and engineers in our country and deserves our support.

Finally, I respectfully request that you include not less than \$25 million for the recruitment and retention of women in the Afghanistan National Security Forces and the recruitment and training of female security personnel. As a large body of research has demonstrated, meaningful inclusion of women in security forces can vastly enhance their operational effectiveness and I ask for your support.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Visclosky, Members of the Committee, I thank you for this opportunity.