

JIMMY PANETTA
20TH DISTRICT, CALIFORNIA

COMMITTEE ON
AGRICULTURE

COMMITTEE ON
NATURAL RESOURCES

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0520

228 CANNON HOUSE OFFICE
BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-2861
100 WEST ALISAL
SALINAS, CA 93901
(831) 424-2229
701 OCEAN STREET
ROOM 318
SANTA CRUZ, CA 95060
(831) 429-1976

Testimony before the House Appropriations Committee

Subcommittee on Defense

Honorable Jimmy Panetta CA-20

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Though I am a new member of Congress, I fully understand the responsibility faced by the Appropriations Committee and its critical role in the functioning of the United States government. I proudly represent a region along the central coast of California that has a robust defense presence. While we are best known for the Naval Postgraduate School and the Defense Language Institute, there are 13 other defense equities located in Monterey County, CA that have a combined workforce of over 15,000 and \$1.4 billion in budget authority.

I urge my colleagues to include report language, as they have in the past at the request of my predecessor, Rep. Sam Farr, to ensure that any new BRAC round captures the intellectual capacity of installations like NPS and DLI. This request is consistent with Rep. Adam Smith's bill, HR753, that is cosponsored by the Ranking Member, Mr. Visclosky. Section 6 of the bill defines military value criteria as "the ability to support educational requirements that enhance the success of members of the Armed Forces in their military career fields, and the impact on operational readiness of the total force of the Department, including the impact on joint warfighting, training and readiness."

The reason this language is so important is that the previous COBRA models give weight to bases that have traditional military assets like runways or hangers, but there has not been established criteria to quantify intellectual capacity. If we intend to have a world class military force for the 21st Century, we need to invest in our Department of Defense educational institutions. Both DLI and NPS have been on previous BRAC rounds, so I know firsthand the impact of the process – on the schools, the community and the military mission. First and foremost is the importance of the military mission. And I firmly believe education and training are integral to our nation's national security and readiness.

I believe we have a solemn obligation to ensure our military personnel have greater access to mental health services. My predecessor, Sam Farr, secured bill language in the FY17 Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Bill for VA to accept additional accreditation programs for Marriage and Family Therapists (MFTs) if they meet rigorous requirements established in the bill. It is my understanding the Department recognizes the same limited MFT programs as the VA did before the Farr fix. I will be submitting the same bill language to the Committee to expand the pool of qualified MFTs to increase access to mental health providers for our military personnel and I ask for your support.

For the remainder of my testimony, I would like to refer to the Op-Ed that appeared in the March 3 Washington Post by Michelle Flournoy, who was the former Undersecretary of Defense for Policy from 2009 to 2012, and ask that it be submitted for the record.

She cogently lays out five reasons that a \$56 billion increase in defense spending could make sense, if it is spent wisely. The prism for evaluating that increase is readiness, force structure and modernization. She questions whether deterrence and alliance capabilities are being strengthened. She states that “Critical to the United States’ ability to deter aggression and prevent conflict in regions where we have vital interests is deploying U.S. military forces forward and helping allies and partners build their own defense capacity.”

I am proud to say that helping our allies and partners build their own defense capacity is a core mission of the Center for Civil Military Relations (CCMR), located within NPS. CCMR builds partner capacity, improves interagency and international coordination, and increases cooperation by providing Allies and Partners with the educational tools necessary to meet the challenges of the future. These challenges include: enhancing democratic civil-military relations, supporting defense reform and institution building, improving peacekeeping and peacebuilding operations, and combating terrorism. She goes on to state that these types of investments are relatively small in dollars, but “are disproportionately important to reducing the risk of more costs U.S. military engagements.” I encourage the Committee to invest wisely in capabilities that strengthen democratic civil-military relations around the world.

Her third prism of evaluation questions whether the budget keeps faith with our military personnel. She asks whether “it improves education and professional development?” Having been a Navy Reserve Intelligence Officer in Afghanistan, I’m here to tell you that advanced education in regional issues and foreign language training would have helped me do my job better. Understanding the cultural and regional nuances of your duty assignment and having a

basic understanding of the spoken language can mean the difference between life and death on the battlefield.

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. I look forward to working with you as you develop the FY18 Defense Appropriations bill.