

Rep. Brad Wenstrup (OH-02) HAC-D FY18 Member Day Testimony

Mr. Chairman,

I appear before you today in support of a robust defense budget for Fiscal Year 2018 (FY18) that fully funds our military's urgent needs and ensures our national security for the long term. It is an honor to testify before this committee, which contributes so much to Congress's constitutional obligation to provide for the national defense. My colleagues and I on the Armed Services Committee look forward to continuing our partnership with you in providing the men and women of our Armed Forces everything they need to complete their mission of keeping America safe, and maintaining peace and stability around the globe.

During the presidential campaign and since assuming office, President Trump has repeatedly expressed his support for rebuilding our military. He has called for a renewed commitment to destroying ISIS; a Navy of 350 ships; an Air Force of at least 1,200 fighters; an Army of 540,000 soldiers; and major investment in our ballistic missile defenses. Crucially, he has also stated that he is determined to end the defense sequester, which will finally allow us to return to budgets based on long-term planning, rather than yearly crisis. These proposals make clear that the President understands the dire straits in which our military finds itself today, after years of conflict and insufficient funding, and with new challenges from Russia, China, and others on the horizon. I also applaud the President's commitment to reducing waste, eliminating unnecessary spending, and finally auditing the Department of Defense, as every dollar saved is one we can use to bolster spending toward our modern day warfighting needs. However, I am concerned that the FY18 defense budget previewed by the White House will not be enough to accomplish the goals that President Trump has set for his administration.

Rep. Brad Wenstrup (OH-02) HAC-D FY18 Member Day Testimony

Today, our military faces an urgent readiness crisis, and none of the services are spared. In testimony before the Armed Services Committee last year, Army Chief of Staff General Mark Milley noted that, “Right now the readiness of the United States Army, all components of the United States Army, is not at a level that is appropriate for what the American people would expect to defend them.”¹ Just one month ago, General Glenn Walters, Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps for Aviation, remarked that in the Marine Corps, “We simply do not have the available aircraft assigned to our fighter-attack and heavy lift squadrons.”² Likewise, General Stephen Wilson of the Air Force testified that “Today we find ourselves less than 50 percent ready across our Air Force and we have pockets that are below that.”³ And finally, Admiral William Moran, Vice Chief of Naval Operation, stated that “It has become clear to me that the Navy’s overall readiness has reached its lowest level in many years.”⁴

At the same time, we have not provided our military with the funding necessary to enable it to modernize for future challenges. Lieutenant General H.R. McMaster, now President Trump’s National Security Advisor, told the Senate Armed Services Committee last year that “We are outranged and outgunned by many potential adversaries, and our Army in the future risks being too small to secure the nation.”⁵ As technological advances in space, cyber, and other domains continue to progress, we must not lose the competitive edge that we have spent decades working

¹ Testimony of General Mark A. Milley, USA, Chief of Staff of the Army, before the House Armed Services Committee, “The Fiscal Year 2017 National Defense Authorization Budget Request from the Military Departments,” March 16, 2016.

² Testimony of General Glenn Walters, USMC, Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps, before the House Armed Services Committee, “State of the Military,” February 7, 2017.

³ Testimony of General Stephen W. Wilson, USAF, Vice Chief of Staff of the Air Force, before the House Armed Services Committee, “State of the Military,” February 7, 2017.

⁴ Testimony of Admiral William F. Moran, USN, Vice Chief of Naval Operations, before the House Armed Services Committee, “State of the Military,” February 7, 2017.

⁵ Freedberg Jr., Sydney J. “McMaster: Army May Be Outnumbered AND Outgunned In Next War,” *Breaking Defense*, 4/6/16.

Rep. Brad Wenstrup (OH-02) HAC-D FY18 Member Day Testimony

hard to maintain. American troops should never be sent into a fair fight; the enemy must always be at a disadvantage.

I would like to highlight three particular areas that demonstrate the impossible tradeoffs being forced on our military, tradeoffs that we can avoid by properly funding our national defense.

Recently, the largest deployment of U.S. troops arrived in Europe since the end of the Cold War. They are on a mission to reassure our European allies and deter further Russian aggression on the continent. However, over the past few years, Russia has made major investments in modernizing its combat vehicle fleet and honing its tactics during its invasion of Ukraine. To counter this greatly improved adversary capability, the U.S. Army in Europe declared an urgent operational need for defensive and offensive upgrades to its Stryker vehicles, including by adding a “double-V hull” that reduces vulnerability to land mines and improvised explosive devices (IED), as well as a 30 millimeter cannon to increase their firepower. However, while the single Stryker Brigade Combat Team (SBCT) deployed to Europe is receiving those upgrades, limited resources will prevent the Army from quickly upgrading the rest of our SBCT’s, even though they may be required to deploy to Europe or elsewhere, should conflict arise. In fact, the production rate is at risk of falling as low as one brigade every three years, a lethargic pace for critical upgrades to an essential combat capability. If we want our forces in Europe to serve as an effective deterrent to Russian aggression, we must fully fund the Stryker upgrades necessary to ensure that we pose a credible threat to our adversary’s forces.

Another challenge our military is facing is maintaining the “Golden Hour” standard for trauma care in a potential conflict with a “near-peer” adversary. The “Golden Hour” refers to the fact that wounded service members have over a 90 percent survival rate when they reach role 2

Rep. Brad Wenstrup (OH-02) HAC-D FY18 Member Day Testimony

medical care within the first hour of being injured. This standard has become an expectation of service members and the American public alike, and has been a major contributor to the United States suffering far fewer combat related deaths in the wars of the last 15 years than in any previous conflicts. In fact, one study credited former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates's order to maintain the "Golden Hour" in Afghanistan despite the vast distances and difficult terrain of that country with saving 359 lives.⁶

However, maintaining the "Golden Hour" when we do not have uncontested control of the air and sea domains, as would be the case in a potential conflict with Russia or China, requires developing a new set of capabilities to address the difficulty of quickly moving casualties to advanced care facilities. These capabilities include organic medical equipment sets, deployable infrastructure, and medical and support personnel trained to provide sustained care in the field. We should not accept a lower standard of care – and a higher fatality rate – for our troops, just because the fights of the future may pose new challenges. Instead, we must fully fund the costs of maintaining the "Golden Hour" capabilities in both today's conflicts and those of the future.

The final priority I would like to discuss is growing our Army. In 2016, the Army reached the lowest level of Active Duty troops since 1940.⁷ The FY17 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) stopped even further cuts and mandated an end strength of 476,000 troops, but this number is still insufficient to meet our national defense needs. Quantity has a quality of its own, and we will need more troops if we are to simultaneously combat ISIS, support the Afghan government against the Taliban, deter Russia, and still be prepared to respond to unexpected contingencies elsewhere in the world, or even at home. Rebuilding the Army's end strength is a

⁶ Shanker, Thom, "Study Says Faster Medical Evacuation Was Lifesaver for U.S. Troops," *The New York Times*, 9/30/15.

⁷ Tice, Jim, "Army shrinks to smallest level since before World War II," *Army Times*, 5/7/16.

Rep. Brad Wenstrup (OH-02) HAC-D FY18 Member Day Testimony

long, complex process that could take a decade, but we must begin making the investment today to realize the goal of an Army big enough to accomplish its mission in the future.

Mr. Chairman, military leaders are used to making difficult choices. Just like any other federal agency, the Defense Department will never get everything it wants in the budget, and we must not tolerate waste or inefficiency in its operations. But, like a number of other items highlighted by the House Armed Services Committee, these three urgent needs – modernizing our Stryker vehicles, maintaining the “Golden Hour”, and growing our Army – are not optional. A failure to fully fund them will result in the loss of American lives and a weaker national defense. The good news is that we do not have to force these impossible choices on our military. By writing a bill that provides an adequate topline number for the Defense Department, and that addresses both the military’s urgent readiness needs and longer term modernization, we can fulfill our constitutional obligation to provide President Trump and Secretary Mattis with the force they need to keep us safe, secure, and to deter aggression.

Thank you.