

Testimony of Congressman Mike Johnson (LA-04)
Submitted to the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Military Construction, Veterans’
Affairs, and Related Agencies
March 10, 2020

Thank you, Chairwoman Wasserman Schultz, Ranking Member Carter and members of the subcommittee. I greatly appreciate you giving me this opportunity to provide input during the committee’s “member day” hearing for the fiscal year 2021 Military Construction and Veterans’ Affairs Appropriations budget.

First, I would like to provide this subcommittee with a brief introduction on the important role my congressional district plays in advancing the national security interests of the United States and the world. I have the distinct honor of representing two vital military installations - Fort Polk, JRTC and Barksdale Air Force Base - as well as various Louisiana National Guard facilities, such as Camp Minden. Fort Polk is home to one of only two Army Joint Readiness Training Centers in the nation which provides invaluable training to our soldiers so they are fully prepared and equipped for battle. Barksdale Air Force Base is home to the Air Force Global Strike Command, including the 2nd Bomber Wing which houses three squadrons of B-52 Stratofortress bombers, the 11th Bomb Squadron which is the training squadron, the 20th Bomb Squadron and the 96th Bomb Squadron.

Over the years, I have developed strong relationships with the generals based in my district and appreciate the opportunity to serve them in Congress. In meeting with them, I am absolutely convinced of the critical nature of their roles and that of these installations. Additionally, their insights reinforce my belief that the United States must remain the preeminent military power in the world to preserve balance and peace. As this committee deliberates and assumes the responsibility of ensuring the Department of Defense (DoD) has the resources necessary, I wish to point out several areas I believe are pertinent to achieving that goal.

As is evident with ongoing provocations of Syria, North Korea, Iran, Russia and others, we live in highly uncertain and incredibly complex times, further highlighting the importance of ensuring our nuclear force continues to be modernized. Barksdale Air Force Base and Global Strike Command continue to benefit from investments in critical DoD construction projects to meet a broad range of security threats from our adversaries. In addition, I ask this subcommittee to examine the needs related to developing critical Weapons Generation and Maintenance Facility areas. They remain critical to protecting our homeland. Placing a Weapons Generation Facility at Barksdale Air Force Base is a top priority for many members of the Louisiana delegation and should be for every member of Congress. Facilities like this allow the United States to be a nuclear force capable of deterring our enemy and if necessary, surviving a surprise attack. Especially given today’s foreign climate, the need to keep a close watch on our adversaries is as important as ever to assure our allies and maintain our own defense.

It has been said here before, and I believe it’s worth repeating, as then Secretary of Defense James Mattis stated when speaking about maintaining a safe and secure nuclear deterrent, “we must ensure a war that can never be won will never be fought...”

Just as I believe we must invest in strong nuclear deterrence, a robust investment in cyber security must follow. Safeguarding DoD's networks is critical to ensuring no bad actor can collect sensitive information or penetrate our cyber capabilities with intent to do harm. In my congressional district, public – private partnerships with DoD and local organizations benefit directly from resources authorized by this subcommittee. Organizations like the Cyber Innovation Center, General Dynamics and Radiance Technologies, all located in northwest Louisiana, have partnerships with DoD to assist in maintaining and improving the cyber capabilities that protect our homeland from cyber-attacks.

Lastly, I would like to speak about the needs of our U.S. Army. While it is vital to have a capable and robust nuclear option, we must also maintain a strong ground force. Fort Polk Army Base has continued to solidify its footprint as a multi-pronged home for military readiness with a vitally important, state of the art Joint Reserve Training Center (JRTC) and units that serve invaluable training for Advise and Assist roles. JRTC provides soldiers the training and flexibility necessary to carry out the demands placed on them and win. The exercise scenarios learned there replicate many of the unique situations and challenges a unit may face while deployed.

I hope to work with the members of this subcommittee to ensure that the Army uses the right information and the proper methodology to maximize our resources and appropriate facilities to ensure these training units have the resources necessary to address the challenges facing our nation.

In closing, I look forward to working with this subcommittee to support these critical military installations and ensure our force structure has these critical items within the FY21 Military Construction and Veterans' Affairs Appropriations budget.

Chairwoman Wasserman Schultz, Ranking Member Carter, again, I appreciate the opportunity to show my support for our men and woman in uniform, and your continued partnership. I yield back the balance of my time.