

**OPENING REMARKS OF CHAIRMAN McKEON**  
**Impacts of a Continuing Resolution and Sequestration on Defense**  
**Wednesday, February 13, 2013**

Good morning. We meet this morning at the eleventh hour. This committee has undergone 16 months of exhaustive examination of the pending damage from Sequestration, and now it appears that this self-inflicted wound is poised to cripple our military forces in just a few days. As the military members of our panel noted in a letter I received on January 14th, “We are on the brink of creating a hollow force”.

None of us come to this committee with clean hands. The debt crisis we face was decades in the making and a result of choosing the easy path when we should have explored the bravery of restraint. The President is not blameless. His negotiators put sequestration on the table during the long fight over the debt ceiling. We are not blameless either. Many of us voted for this terrible mechanism in the naive hope the President and Congress could put our politics aside and fix our debt crisis. That was a bad bet.

Today we need to hear the ground truth from our witnesses. They have dedicated their lives to providing their best and unbiased military advice. We are certainly in need of such advice today. Unburdened from administration orders to defer planning and assessments, you can now make it clear to this body, the White House, and the public, what damage months of inaction on sequestration and the Continuing Resolution have done to our Armed Forces. General Odierno, you testified yesterday that you began your military service in a hollow force, and that you are determined not to conclude your career the same way. I hope that you and the panel can expand on that notion today, determining at what level of cuts do Congress and the President turn that fear of a hollow force into reality.

General Dempsey, in April of last year you testified about the \$487 billion we have already cut from defense. You told

Congress that to cut further would require an adjustment of strategy. You concluded that this new strategy would, and I quote, "Not meet the needs of the nation in 2020 because the world is not getting any more stable." I am interested to know if you continue to stand by that statement. Today, we anticipate detailed answers to our questions. In addition to hear about levels of risk as sequestration's blind cuts absolves folks from planning, we want to hear if we have crossed a red line and cut you too much. If that red line is in the near distance, I expect you point it out. Gentlemen, you have no stronger advocate, no better ally in this fight than the Armed Services Committee, and we urge you to work with us in these final days.

In the coming weeks and months leaders in both parties and the White House will, I hope, come together to begin discussion of the drivers of our debt and the path to fiscal health. There will be no easy choices on that table. I fear that many may choose to soften the blow of those choices by turning once again to the Department of Defense. Indeed, the formula to achieve what the President characterized as a balanced approach includes tens of billions in additional cuts for this fiscal year. I cannot support any plan, regardless of how it addresses entitlement spending or revenue, unless it also offers meaningful and real relief for DoD from sequester.

With that, I look forward to your testimony. I now recognize Ranking Member Smith for his opening remarks.