

**STATEMENT OF**  
**CONGRESSWOMAN BARBARA LEE, OF CALIFORNIA'S 13<sup>TH</sup> DISTRICT**  
**REGARDING: DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FY14**  
**BEFORE THE HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE**

May 8, 2013

Thank you, Chairman McKeon and Ranking Member Smith for affording me the opportunity to explain my requests for you to consider including in the FY14 Defense Authorization Act. I have a number of requested changes that I will quickly address and for which I strongly urge you to support and include.

My requests are straightforward and will send a message that will be welcomed by the American people, who in the face of daunting economic challenges, believe that the era of perpetual warfare is over and that no government agency should get a pass from financial oversight and accountability.

**No Permanent Bases**

Mr. Chairman, I am concerned that this bill may not contain language prohibiting permanent bases in Afghanistan.

As signed into law on numerous occasions by both former President Bush and President Obama, Congress has maintained a longstanding prohibition on the establishment of permanent military bases in Afghanistan.

I request you consider and include in the FY2014 Defense Authorization Act be brought clearly in line with the "no permanent bases" provisions historically incorporated into Defense Authorizations and related Appropriations measures.

No one believes it is in the strategic interests of the United States to have permanent military bases based in Afghanistan.

We should guard against the perception amongst the Afghan people, who historically have displayed a strong resentment and violently resisted outside forces occupying their country, by making it crystal clear that we do not intend on permanently stationing our troops in Afghanistan.

**Withdrawal from Afghanistan :**

Mr. Chairman, it should come as no surprise that I share the belief of many in the Congress that there is no military solution in Afghanistan.

I have stated publically many times that a boots-on-the-ground, military-first strategy in Afghanistan is not in our economic or national security interest.

As the daughter of a military veteran, I also know firsthand the sacrifices and the commitment involved with defending our nation.

Our troops have done everything that was asked of them and more.

But the truth is that their mission in Afghanistan is far past its expiration date and we should be withdrawing all our troops and military contractors as soon as safely possible, and certainly we should not be considering extending our military presence in Afghanistan beyond 2014.

That is why I request you consider and include incorporating language ending combat operations in Afghanistan well before the current December 31, 2014 timeframe and limiting funding to the safe and orderly withdrawal of all U.S. troops and military contractors.

And we know that regardless of the situation in Afghanistan by the end of 2014 and beyond the Pentagon will come back to us asking for more time, more troops, and more resources.

The American people overwhelming agree that it is time to bring an end to this long war and my amendment will do just that.

**Pentagon Budget Reforms:**

In addition to auditing the Pentagon, which I will touch on in a few moments, it is important that the Pentagon face the same financial constraints that all other government agencies are being subjected to.

I am deeply concerned that the Pentagon is already seeking an exemption from the sequestration cuts mandated by Congress as part of the deeply flawed legislation I voted against last year.

I urge the committee consider common sense defense spending reforms outlined by many organizations across the political spectrum.

With billions each year lost to waste, fraud, and abuse at the Pentagon, we need to ask for the same of the Department of Defense that we ask of our other agencies.

### **AUMF Extension**

Mr. Chairman, I am deeply concerned to hear about a possible expansion of the 2001 AUMF.

As you know, Congress has a solemn Constitutional obligation to deliberate and authorize all war making and hostilities abroad.

If the Executive branch is seeking expanded war making authority, let them request it and let us engage in a full and transparent debate, with the proper committees holding hearings and Members of Congress afforded the opportunity to consider the full implications of an expanded AUMF.

I am as deeply opposed to expanding the 2001 AUMF as I was against authorizing the original AUMF on September 14, 2001, when I made the lone vote in opposition because I knew it was blank check to wage war.

I am also deeply concerned that without a proper debate that such a measure deserves, we will irrevocably damage our nation's foundation of checks of balances as they relate to U.S. national security.

Unfortunately, rather than a reevaluation of the overly broad Authorization from 2001, this committee is reportedly considering a far reaching new declaration of war against an undefined enemy, giving unchecked authority to the executive branch now and in the future.

Passing these provisions as part of a comprehensive defense authorization bill, and without a full and comprehensive debate on the consequences of such an action, is a disservice to our military service members, our nation, and our democracy.

### **AUMF Repeal:**

Mr. Chairman, in addition to my opposition to expanding the 2001 AUMF, now is the right time to repeal the overly broad 2001 AUMF.

The AUMF is the underlying legal justification for extrajudicial killings, and has been invoked to justify a wide range of activities including warrantless surveillance

and wiretapping activities, indefinite detention practices that fly in the face of our constitutional values.

I am particularly disturbed by the rapid expansion of extrajudicial targeted-killing operations conducted by unmanned, armed drones.

I am preparing to introduce legislation to bring much needed oversight and accountability over the executive branch's use of lethally armed drones and am committed to bringing sunlight and proper deliberation into the drones debate that Congress needs to have.

We must repeal this authorization for use of military force, end the perpetual state of war anytime anywhere, and re-focus our energy and efforts into creating jobs and nation building here at home.

With the end of the Afghanistan war on the horizon in 2014, now is the right time to sunset the AUMF and end the blank check for war without end along with our military presence in Afghanistan.

### **Congressional Approval of Attack on Iran**

Mr. Chairman, as we draw down from over a decade of fighting wars in two countries, we need to ensure that any potential war with Iran receive congressional approval or authorization.

I share President Obama's deep commitment to ensuring the Iran does not obtain nuclear weapons.

However, we must make sure that all diplomatic alternatives to war are exhausted before another major war is contemplated, and the Constitutional authority of Congress to declare war is clear and must be respected.

### **Audit the Pentagon**

Finally Mr. Chairman, I ask your committee to consider creating financial consequences for the Pentagon unless the Defense Department subjects itself to an audit, as it's required to do by law and as all other federal agencies regularly do.

I urge the Committee to take a first step toward compelling the Pentagon to act with urgency in assuring fiscal responsibility in our defense dollars.

As the only federal agency not subject to an audit, the Pentagon has lost tens of billions of dollars to waste, fraud, and abuse.

It is past time to check the wasteful practices with little oversight that weakens our financial outlook and ultimately our national security.

The Pentagon is the only agency that cannot be audited or predict realistically when it will do so.

The Pentagon admits the problem and agrees it has a duty to pass an audit. The Pentagon's Office of the Comptroller wrote in 2008, "Our financial problems are pervasive and well documented."

This failure of oversight and accountability is unacceptable and it is time to bring the Pentagon up to the same standards that prevail throughout the private and public sector.

**Conclusion/Thanks:**

Mr. Chairman, thank you again for the opportunity to testify.

I strongly urge you to adopt these requested changes.