

HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

POSTURE STATEMENT OF
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18TH CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF
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HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
FY15 DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE BUDGET
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Chairman McKeon, Representative Smith, and distinguished members of this Committee, it is my privilege to report to you on the state of America's Armed Forces, our accomplishments over the last year, the opportunities and challenges ahead, and my vision for the future force.

We are in our Nation's thirteenth year at war. I am extremely proud to represent the men and women of our Armed Forces. *Volunteers all, they represent America at its very best.*

It is these Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, and Coast Guardsmen – America's sons and daughters – who will face tomorrow's challenges with the strategy, structure, and resources we develop today. Our men and women are our decisive edge. Sustaining our military strength in the face of *an historic shift to the future* means making sure that the force is in the right *balance*.

In the near term, our mission in Afghanistan will transition, while we reset a force coming out of more than a decade of continuous conflict. We will sustain – in some cases adjust – our commitments around the globe to keep our Nation immune from coercion. And, we must do all of this with decreasing defense budgets. As a result, we will have to assume risk in some areas to create opportunity in others. This will require carefully prioritizing investments in readiness, training, modernization, and leader development.

Our men and women in uniform are the cornerstone of this Nation's security and our strongest bridge to the future. They are trusting us to make the right choices. So are the American people.

Joint Force Operations

America's military has been in continuous conflict for the longest period in our Nation's history. But the force remains strong. The Joint Force today is as diverse and rich in experience as it has ever been. Our men and women remain engaged around the globe supporting our Nation's interests. They are defeating adversaries, deterring aggression, strengthening partners, and delivering aid.

Over the past year, our men and women have continued to fight, transition, and redeploy from Afghanistan. In June of last year, the Afghans reached a decisive milestone as they assumed lead responsibility for their own security. This signaled a shift in our primary mission from combat to training, advising, and assisting the Afghan forces. While Coalition forces prepare to support national elections in the coming weeks, we continue to develop options for the forces, missions, partnerships, and authorities that will set the conditions for our commitment to Afghanistan after 2014.

The Joint Force continues to serve in and around an unpredictable Middle East through military-to-military exercises, exchanges, and security assistance. We are actively reinforcing our partners along Syria's borders to help contain violence, care for refugees, and counter the spread of violent extremism. We continue to pursue violent extremist organizations directly and through our partners where US and allied interests are threatened. This includes support to partners in Yemen, and to French and African partners in Mali. Our military is also working closely with the US Department of State to help restore security and stability in the Central African Republic and South Sudan.

We have deepened our traditional security ties in the Asia Pacific. In addition to our support for Typhoon Haiyan recovery efforts, we have strengthened cooperation with our allies and partners through military

activities and force posture. We have maintained an active presence in the South and East China Seas, while also remaining prepared to respond to provocations on the Korean Peninsula.

We also remain postured with our interagency partners to detect, deter, and defeat threats to the homeland—to include ballistic missile defense, countering terrorism, and safeguarding against cyber-attack on government and critical infrastructure targets. Our men and women work collaboratively with other US agencies, with forward-stationed State Department professionals, and with regional allies and partners to keep the Nation safe. Across all of these security operations, the Joint Force remains ready with military options if called upon.

Balancing Global Strategic Risk

The global security environment is as fluid and complex as we have ever seen. We are being challenged in pockets throughout the world by a diverse set of actors—resurgent and rising powers, failing states, and aggressive ideologies. Power in the international system is shifting below and beyond the nation-state. At the same time, *the balance between our security demands and available resources has rarely been more delicate.*

The confluence of wide-ranging transitions, enduring and new friction points, and “wild cards” can seem unsolvable. Yet, understanding the interrelationships between trends reshaping the security environment offers opportunities to begin to solve some of the world’s perplexing and prolonged challenges.

In any effort, the military does not do it alone. We must bring to bear every tool of national power in American’s arsenal. Our distributed networks of allies and partners are equally indispensable. Together, we can build shared understanding and develop focused, whole approaches that share the costs of global leadership. Deepening these hard-won

relationships of trust and building the capacity of our partners will be more vital in the years ahead.

With this context in mind, *the Joint Force of the future will require exceptional agility in how we shape, prepare, and posture.* We will seek innovation not only in technology, but also in leader development, doctrine, organization, and partnerships. We must be able to rapidly aggregate and disaggregate our formations, throttle up force and just as quickly, throttle it back.

We will have to be more regionally-focused in our understanding and globally-networked in our approaches. We will be adaptable to combatant commander priorities to prevent conflict, shape the strategic environment, and – when necessary – win decisively.

And, importantly, we will have to balance these competing strategic objectives in the context of a resource-constrained environment. *We must be frank about the limits of what the Joint Force can achieve, how quickly, for how long, and with what risk.*

Accordingly, we will need to challenge assumptions and align ambitions to match our combined abilities. Our force's greatest value to the Nation is as much unrealized as realized. We need to calibrate our use of military power to where it is most able and appropriate to advance our national interests. Our recent wars have reminded us that our military serves the Nation best when it is synchronized with other elements of national power and integrated with our partners.

Balancing the Force

As part of an historic shift to the future, the institution is fundamentally re-examining itself to preserve military strength in the face of the changing security environment and declining resources. Here are five

ways in which we are working to make sure the Joint Force remains properly balanced over time:

Resource Allocation

We are resetting how we allocate our budget among manpower, operations, training, maintenance, and modernization. Disproportionate growth in the cost per service member is overburdening our manpower account and threatening to erode combat power. We have to bring those costs back into balance with our other sacred obligations to the Nation.

The President's FY15 budget request, importantly, reflects the needed personnel reductions, institutional streamlining, and administrative changes that better reflect our military's more limited resources. We will keep driving towards becoming more steel-plated on all fronts—shedding waste, redundancy, and superfluity in our organizations and processes. We are rebalancing our tooth-to-tail ratio by shrinking the Department's headquarters, overhead, and overseas infrastructure costs. We are taking steps to improve our acquisitions enterprise. And, we will make the tough choices on force structure.

We will never end our campaign to find every way to become more effective. Yet, we have already seen that not every effort generates the savings we need as fast as we need them. And some proposals to shed excess infrastructure have not gained the support of Congress, most notably our calls for a Base Realignment and Closure round and requests to retire legacy weapons systems we no longer need or afford.

Getting our personnel costs in balance is a strategic imperative. We can no longer put off rebalancing our military compensation systems. Otherwise we are forced into disproportionate cuts to readiness and modernization. We price ourselves out of the ability to defend the Nation.

We must work together to modernize and optimize our compensation package to fairly compensate our men and women for their service. We should provide the options and flexibility that they prefer and shift funds from undervalued services to the more highly valued benefits, as we reduce our outlays.

We need to *slow the rate of growth* in our three highest-cost areas: basic pay, health care, and housing allowances. The Joint Chiefs, our senior enlisted leaders, and I also strongly recommend *grandfathering any future proposed changes to military retirement*, and we will continue to place a premium on efforts that support wounded warriors and mental health.

To that end, I look forward to working in partnership with Congress and the American people on a sensible approach that addresses the growing imbalances in our accounts, enables us to recruit and retain America's best, and puts the all-volunteer force on a viable path for the future.

We should tackle this in a comprehensive package of reforms. Piecemeal changes are a surefire way to fray the trust and confidence of our troops. They want – and they deserve – predictability.

Geographic Shift

The United States remains a global power and our military is globally engaged. While we transition from the wars of the past decade, we are focusing on an evolving range of challenges and opportunities. *Our military will continue to have deep security ties in the Middle East and globally.* And, we are – of necessity – continuing the rebalance to the Asia Pacific as part of our government's larger priority effort towards the future stability and growth of that region.

Broadly, this geographic rebalance recognizes where the future demographic, economic, and security trends are moving. In a sense, it is

“skating to where the puck is going,” as hockey great Wayne Gretzky used to say. As such, we are – over time – investing more bandwidth in our relationships in the Asia Pacific, engaging more at every level, and shifting assets to the region, to include our best human capital and equipment.

Europe remains a central pillar to our national security and prosperity. Our NATO alliance has responded to security challenges in Afghanistan, Africa, and the Middle East. The most successful and durable alliance in history, NATO transcends partnership because common values underpin our 65 year-old alliance. Going forward, we will all benefit from the security NATO provides.

Preparing across the Spectrum

Our force is coming out of more than a decade of focusing primarily on one particular kind of fight centered on the Middle East. As a result, we have become the finest counterinsurgency force in the world.

Current and future security challenges mandate that we broaden our approach. Across the Services, we are resetting how we apply our training bandwidth and how we develop leaders to account for conflict across the spectrum. This includes those critical conventional areas that – by necessity – were deemphasized over the past decade.

We are also pluralizing our partnerships with other agencies and nations. With the global terrorism threat specifically, we are rebalancing our emphasis towards building or enabling our partners, while retaining the capability to take direct action ourselves.

Remaining the security partner of choice increases our Nation’s collective ability to safeguard common interests and support greater stability in weaker areas of the world. Improving partner capability and

capacity in a targeted way is an important component of our military strategy, especially as our resources become more constrained.

Force Distribution

In keeping with the evolving strategic landscape, our force posture must also evolve. As we emerge from the major campaigns of the last decade, we are developing new approaches across and within commands in the way we assign, allocate, and apportion forces inside a broader interagency construct.

We are determining how much of the force should be forward-stationed, how much should be rotational, and how much should be surge ready in the homeland. Baselineing forces in each combatant command will allow us to predictably engage with and assure partners and deter adversaries. Baseline does not mean equal resources. We seek instead a *force distribution appropriately weighted to our national interests and threats.*

Our military has become more integrated operationally and organizationally across the Active, Guard, and Reserve, especially over the past decade. We are working to determine the most effective mix of each of the components to preserve the strength we have gained as a more seamless force. This too will be different across the combatant commands. For example, many relationships in Europe – especially the newest NATO partner nations – benefit from the National Guard-led State Partnership Program, which is in its 20th year. Relationships such as these will help us to sustain the capabilities we will require in the years ahead.

Also to strengthen the Joint Force, we are committed to offer everyone in uniform equal professional opportunities to contribute their talent. Rescinding the Direct Ground Combat Rule last January has enabled the elimination of gender-based restrictions for assignment. The Services are mid-way through reviewing and validating occupational standards with the

aim of integrating women into occupational fields to the fullest extent over the next two years. We are proceeding in a deliberate, measured way that preserves unit readiness, cohesion, and the quality of the all-volunteer force.

Additionally, as our force draws down, the remarkable generation that carried the best of our Nation into battle is transitioning home and reintegrating into civilian life. We will keep working with the Department of Veterans Affairs, other agencies, and communities across the country to make sure they have access to health care, quality education opportunities, and meaningful employment. This generation is not done serving and our efforts to enable them to contribute their strengths should be viewed as a direct investment in the future of America.

Competence and Character

We are making sure that as the Nation's Profession of Arms, we remain equally committed to competence and character throughout our ranks. The pace of the last decade, frankly, may have resulted in an overemphasis on competence. Those we serve call for us to be good stewards of the special trust and confidence gifted to us by our fellow citizens—on and off the battlefield.

Even as – especially as – we take this opportunity to remake our force and its capabilities, we owe it to the American people and to ourselves to also take an introspective look at whether we are holding true to the bedrock values and standards of our profession. Historically, the military has done precisely this after coming out of major periods of conflict.

The vast majority serve honorably with moral courage and distinction every day. But sexual assault crimes, failures of leadership and ethics, and lapses of judgment by a portion of the force are evidence that we must do more—and we are. These issues have my ongoing and full attention.

It has been and continues to be one of my foremost priorities as Chairman to rekindle within the force both its understanding and its resolve as a profession. We must strengthen the enduring norms and values that define us and continue to be a source of trust and pride for our Nation.

We are looking at who we are promoting. More importantly, we are looking at *what* we are promoting—the standards, the ethos, the essence of professionalism. We know that we can never let our actions distance us from the American people, nor destroy the message that draws many into the ranks of the military in the first place.

To that end, we are advancing a constellation of initiatives towards our continued development as professionals. These include 360 degree reviews, staff assistance and training visits to senior leadership, and a deeper investment in character development and education through the span of service. We are detecting and rooting out flaws in our command culture and promoting an ethos of accountability across the ranks. *We know we own this challenge and we are committed to meeting it.*

Balancing Strategic Choices

Our military's ability to field a ready, capable force to meet global mission requirements has been placed at risk by layered effects of the operational pace and converging fiscal factors of recent years.

The funds above sequester levels passed by this Congress in the Bipartisan Budget Agreement allow us to buy back some lost readiness and continue to make responsible investments in our Nation's defense. It doesn't solve every readiness problem and is no long-term solution to sequestration, but it does give us a measure of near-term relief and stability.

The Joint Chiefs and I are grateful for Congress's support of the efforts to return units to the necessary levels of readiness. It helps us

preserve options for the Nation and ensure that our troops can do what they joined the military to do. Likewise, we appreciate the dialogue engendered in these chambers to determine the kind of military the American people need and can afford—the right mix of capabilities and programs to protect our national interests.

While we have achieved a degree of certainty in our budget for the next two years, we still don't have a steady, predictable funding stream, nor the flexibility and time we need to reset the force for the challenges we see ahead.

This tension comes at a time when winning together through jointness has been at its peak. If we don't adapt from previous approaches toward a sounder way to steward our Nation's defense, *we risk ending up with the wrong force at the wrong time.*

The President's FY15 budget request represents a balanced, responsible, and realistic way forward. It leads to a Joint Force that is global, networked, and provides options for the Nation. It helps us rebuild readiness in areas that were – by necessity – deemphasized over the past decade, while retaining capacity and capability. It supports the reset and replacement of battle-damaged equipment and helps us meet future needs by balancing force structure, readiness, and modernization priorities. It invests in missile defense and in modernizing the nuclear enterprise. It allows us to advantage intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR), Special Operations Forces (SOF), and cyber, while making adjustments to the conventional force.

To be clear, we do assume higher risks in some areas under the FY15 proposal, but this budget helps us to remain the world's finest military—modern, capable, and ready, even while transitioning to a smaller force over

time. If sequester-level cuts return in 2016, the risks will grow, and the options we can provide the Nation will shrink.

The Joint Chiefs and I remain committed to making the tough choices – carefully informed – that preserve our ability to protect our Nation from coercion and defend the American people. Our sacred obligation is to make sure our men and women are never sent into a fair fight. That means we must make sure they are the best led, best trained, and best equipped in the world.

But, we need help from our elected leaders to rebalance the force in the ways I have described. This includes, importantly, making the financially prudent, strategically informed reductions we need.

The opportunity is ours in the months ahead to carry the hard-earned lessons learned of our Nation's wars into the context of today, to set the conditions to prepare the force to address the challenges of tomorrow, and to sustain and support our dedicated men and women in uniform and their families. I look forward to seizing these opportunities together.

Thank you for your enduring support.