

Statement for the Record

The Honorable Paul C. Broun, M.D. (GA-10)

Committee on Armed Services, U.S. House of Representatives

Hearing On: National Defense Priorities from Members for the FY 2015 National Defense Authorization Act

Wednesday, April 9, 2014

Chairman McKeon, Ranking Member Smith, Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

As an original-intent Constitutionalist and Navy Medical Officer, I view national security as the most important function of the federal government.

While President Obama and many within his party would like to further cut our military and prioritize wasteful domestic spending over our national defense, I disagree with this approach. Instead, we should be strengthening our military and restoring its readiness in the face of ongoing geopolitical threats.

To this end, I appreciate your efforts to counterbalance the Senate and the Executive branch in the past, and urge you to continue to do so.

That being said, I continue to have deep concerns over how the 2001 Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Terrorists – or AUMF –is being utilized.

This hastily-crafted response to the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks dramatically expanded the powers of the President, and yet few Americans are even aware of its existence.

In just 60 words, the AUMF opened the door to egregious abuses of federal power. In particular, it allows for the indefinite detention of American citizens and broad, warrantless wiretapping by the National Security Agency.

The AUMF also paved the way to today's shadow drone war that, under the Obama Administration, has quietly claimed the lives of at least 4 Americans.

I appreciate the operational advantage we gain from using drones in our military operations, and I view them as a valuable asset. But it is unconscionable for the U.S. government to kill any of its own citizens without first allowing them their day in court. No administration has the right to be the judge, jury, and executioner of American citizens.

I was pleased that my amendment prohibiting drone strikes on American citizens was included in last year's NDAA as passed out of the House, but I am deeply disappointed that the language was dropped in the compromise.

As such, I respectfully urge the Committee to include the language from my amendment while crafting this year's authorization, as well as other language to constrain the powers of the AUMF such as Ranking Member Smith's proposed amendment to prohibit indefinite detention.

Mr. Chairman, it is my understanding that the Judiciary Committee has jurisdiction over the AUMF itself. However, the Armed Services Committee can, and in my opinion should, take the strongest possible action to prevent these specific abuses.

At the same time, I hope the Committee will include text, in plain language, clearly showing Americans that these disturbing, overly-broad powers come from the AUMF and not from the NDAA itself. We need to ensure that people across the country know what powers the federal government believes it has, and what legal justification it presents for those powers.

Our war efforts and military activities must be tightly focused and kept within the bounds of the Constitution. America is a beacon of liberty and a force for good in this world only as long as we remain vigilant in keeping it that way.

We must never sacrifice our God-given, Constitutionally-protected rights in the name of security or expediency, and I am hopeful that this year's NDAA will stay true to these principles.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify before you today.