

HENRY CUELLAR, PH.D.

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

April 9, 2014

The Honorable Howard P. McKeon, Chairman
The honorable Adam Smith, Ranking Member
House Committee on Armed Services
2120 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman McKeon and Ranking Member Smith:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony regarding the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year (FY) 2015. There are several priorities I would like to bring to the Committee's attention that are important to my district and to the security of nation.

The first involves military-to-military engagement and the reuse of excess defense articles between two strategically important partners: the first being our neighbor to the south, Mexico. The second being those countries that make up the "Silk Road": Georgia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan.

As our third largest trading partner, with a border that stretches over 1900 miles and a Mexico-to-U.S. oil exportation rate of around 10%, security within Mexico is of vital interest to the United States. Whether it be through the providing of nonintrusive inspection and communication equipment, or direct training provided by U.S. military advisors, aiding Mexico's security apparatus will aid the United States in stopping narcotics importation, reducing violence along the U.S.-Mexico border, and will lay the ground work for an even more robust partnership over the coming years.

Still of strategic importance, but for very different reasons, are those countries that make up Central Asia and lie in the southeastern part of Europe. Due to the Europe-to-Asia trade routes that traversed the area for millennia, this region was given the name "Silk Road". In modern times, due to their strategic geographic location to Russia, Iran, and China, and the abundance of oil, gas, and mineral resources, these "Silk Road" countries have the potential to become major flash points for conflict for the foreseeable future. The United States must remain actively engaged once our withdrawal from Afghanistan is complete. Continued military assistance through the disposition of retrograde of military equipment from Afghanistan, and our assistance in the development of self-defense and deployment capability, will be key actions that should be considered.

Second, I would like to call the committees attention to the advanced sensor application program. As mentioned in last year's NDAA, there are "a number of irregular threats that are not well suited for the array of sensors developed and optimized for observing more conventional adversary threats". I ask the committee to continue its support of manned and unmanned surveillance and reconnaissance sensor systems that can target smuggling activity and those actions that could potentially support global terrorism.

Third, I also ask that the committee support the Secretary of Defense in his efforts to complete the mandatory inventory report on all United States military installations located overseas due this upcoming January. It would provide an assessment of the requirements for overseas military force structure and infrastructure, as well as an inventory of potentially excess infrastructure and any opportunities for consolidation.

Fourth, too many of our returning warriors are harming themselves once they arrive back home. Our current system does not take into account that some veterans have a delayed reaction to trauma after they leave the service. This is why I call on the committee to expand veteran's eligibility to enroll in VA health care to 15 years after the completion of service. Sometimes the most detrimental wounds do not manifest themselves until far in the future, and we must do more to see that these wounds do not become fatal.

If you require further information, do not hesitate to contact me or Wendell White, my legislative assistant, at 225-1640.

Sincerely,



Henry Cuellar, PhD
U.S. Congressman
Texas, District 28