

**Chairman Thornberry, Ranking Member Smith,** I want to thank you and this Committee for the opportunity to share some of the national security priorities I hold for the upcoming year on behalf of those serving and working in the Twenty Third Congressional District of Texas and around the world.

Having spent nearly a decade serving as an undercover officer in the CIA, I've seen the threats and challenges we face around the world first hand. This experience taught me that it is vital we have a foreign policy that is based on clear military and economic goals and a sound strategy for achieving them.

In order to achieve those goals we must ensure that our brave men and women have the tools they need to take the fight to the enemy around the globe, win, and return home safely. As threats around the world continue to increase, now is simply not the time to limit our ability to respond. Maintaining our place as the world's leader requires military strength, diplomacy, and a willingness to stick to our guns.

Today, I would like to discuss a number of issues: namely, the challenges that we must face along with our allies and partners; the importance of

ensuring accountability, and the value of training and preparation for the future.

As this committee considers an Authorization for Use of Military Force against ISIS, I believe that we must continue to focus our efforts on encouraging our Arab allies in the region to directly engage this barbaric threat. Meanwhile, the U.S. focus should be on providing support not only militarily, but also through actionable intelligence and leadership. As my good friend Ambassador Ryan Crocker has noted, sometimes it is just as important to have pumps and wingtips on the ground, as it is boots.

We cannot just look at the current threats, but as we rapidly enter an age where micro actors can have a macro impact it is critical we look toward the future. Not only does this mean developing new weapons systems, but also strategies and tactics that focus on realms beyond the physical battlefield. As the importance of defensive and offensive cyber operations grow, we also need to modernize the way in which we procure information technology. I'm thrilled that this committee has made acquisition reform a priority and I look forward to working with my colleagues to ensure meaningful improvements to Information Technology procurement are part of any final legislation.

Texas is fortunate to be home to over 1.5 million proud veterans, and I am lucky to represent a District that has a strong military presence given its proximity to Joint Base San Antonio, Camp Bullis, Laughlin Air Force Base, and Fort Bliss. Having recently visited many of these installations I am pleased to report on their fine work.

The men and women at these installations have matchless capabilities and unique missions, across intelligence, cyber, maneuver, and training, safeguarding future dominance across the battlefield. Continuing to work with each installation to ensure their priorities are met when it comes to equipment, facilities, and training is a top priority for me particularly as the nation transitions from a focus on counter insurgency to more traditional operations

Laughlin Air Force Base is a perfect example of where DoD's focus has strayed over the past decade. This base is responsible for training more pilots than any other location in the country, yet when it rains more than one inch the entire flight line is flooded and operations must cease. Not only does this affect long-term readiness, it has also cost taxpayers far more in maintenance than simply fixing the issue permanently would have. It is ludicrous that pilots who operate in the world's premiere Air Force are waiting around on money to be allocated for such a project. I earnestly hope that as we work through the authorization and

appropriations process my colleagues will seek to address these deficiencies at installations across the nation.

Finally, I would like to take a moment to recognize the enormous sacrifice our service members and their families have made over the past decade. Increased operational tempos, new types of warfare, and increasingly complex battlefield injuries have been borne by a minority of this country so that the rest of us can sleep safely at night. As their elected representatives it is our responsibility to ensure their sacrifices have not been in vain.

Thanks again to the Committee for the opportunity to speak today and for your commitment to our nation's warfighters and their families.