Congressman Rick Crawford

Testimony before the House Armed Services Committee: EOD Priorities for the FY2017 NDAA

Good morning Chairman Thornberry, Ranking Member Smith, and distinguished members of the Committee. Thank you for the work you do to preserve the security of our great nation and for allowing me to testify before the full committee regarding Explosive Ordnance Disposal priorities for the Fiscal Year 2017 National Defense Authorization Act. I served in the Army as an EOD tech and am proud to be a co-founder, along with Committee member Susan Davis, of the House EOD Caucus.

Explosive Ordnance Disposal Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines are the military's preeminent team of warrior explosive experts. They are trained and equipped to identify and neutralize explosives used by terrorist networks across the globe. EOD forces have proven to be game changers in attacking and dismantling terrorist cells and associated networks. They support counterterrorism operations, build the capacity of partner nations, and protect the homeland by supporting civilian law enforcement agencies at federal, state and local levels.

In the homeland, there are an estimated 66,000 "call outs" annually across the United States on explosive ordnance by interagency, military EOD, and public safety bomb squads. We note that the civil authority public safety bomb squads are not trained to render-safe military munitions. Render-safe is done solely by our military EOD tactical units. These EOD units provide highly technical defense support to civilian law

enforcement agencies but they do not perform law enforcement activities.

With respect to the Army's capability to conduct unified land operations, we have concern that the Army has been quietly duplicating roles, responsibilities and mission sets of its EOD force into that of the Chemical force. Briefly, the Army Chemical Corps has taken credit, along with senior Army leadership, for the EOD force's accomplishments over the last fifteen years. In order to justify increasing and preserving Chemical force structure, they have waived a banner of "the all hazards CBRNE force for conducting weapons of mass destruction – elimination".

Actually, it is the EOD formations that provide scalable and tailorable mission command. Tactical EOD units conduct weapons defeat, weapons disablement, and weapons disposal activities in the Joint Force commanders' combating weapons of mass destruction elimination operations. The recent report by the National Commission on the Future of the Army notes the significant value of EOD forces in the theater structure and further cites the 30,000 Department of Army Civilians necessary to enable EOD units in theaters of operations.

We concluded that the Army had re-balanced the EOD force. However, the Army states that they will now decrement the active component EOD force by an additional 877 Soldiers, or even more. But the Army will only cut the active component Chemical force by a total of sixteen Soldiers, all while the Army busy is cutting entire Brigade Combat Teams.

We observe that the Army's Chemical Corps units have not deployed to any of the theaters of operations in the last 15 years to conduct their primary mission of passive chemical defense operations – reconnaissance, decontamination, and smoke. In that time, we have witnessed significant mission failure such as shipping live anthrax and unauthorized use of contractors to respond to improvised explosive devices at Dugway Proving Grounds; release of live chemical agents at Toole Depot; and numerous chemical and explosive safety violations at Edgewood Area of Aberdeen Proving Grounds; and more.

Therefore, the EOD caucus provides for your consideration proposed language for 10 United State Code, Chapter 307 – The Army, §3063(a)(10) strike "Chemical Corps" and insert "Explosive Ordnance Disposal Corps" as a basic branch of the Army.

On a positive note, I applaud the Chairman and Ranking Member's personal interest in streamlining the Department of Defense processes for research, development and acquisition (RD&A); however, I remain concerned about achieving major cost-savings while gaining substantial efficiencies with respect to EOD research, development and acquisition.

The Secretary of Defense has designated the Secretary of the Navy as the single manager for common EOD Technology and Training. This was a 1970s solution set that no longer serves the EOD force. I'll highlight an example.

The go-to EOD tool for rendering safe improvised explosive devices (such as those used during the Boston bombings) is the

percussion actuated neutralization (PAN) disrupter. The Services' respective EOD forces identify their common requirement to the Navy, which then adopts the requirement into the Navy program. Each of the Services must then go back to their own Service's requirements process and further identify the requirement, then further complete this common EOD requirement within their respective Service for acquisition.

Cutting to the chase, the first organizations to acquire the Department of Defense developed PAN disrupter were actually civil authority public safety bomb squads for use on improvised explosive devices, followed by the Navy EOD, Marine Corp EOD, Air Force EOD units and at last, the Army. It took the Army over ten years to field PAN Disrupters to their EOD units.

This is not what the committee envisions as streamlined and I will offer language for the committee's consideration. Briefly, this language establishes a fully joint EOD program, with the Navy as executive agent, for the Department of Defense to coordinate and integrate RD&A for EOD defense programs.

The Secretary of the Army provided the committee a brief in November 2015, on the Army EOD force. I have closely monitored the Army Training and Doctrine Command's (TRADOC) studies on reorganization of EOD force structure, EOD force modernization, and establishing an Explosive Ordnance Disposal Corps as a basic branch of the Army.

Today, the good news is that the TRADOC has established a capability manager for EOD at the Combined Arms Support

Command at Fort Lee, Virginia for the purpose of integrating EOD force modernization across all of the Army's Centers of Excellence.

However, I remain concerned on the Army's efforts to establish, and fully resource, both the EOD qualified Colonel led - TRADOC Capability Manager for EOD and the EOD qualified, Brigadier General Officer led - Commandant, U.S. Army EOD School to ensure health and viability of the Army EOD force.

Therefore, the EOD caucus provides for your consideration proposed directive language requiring the Secretary of the Army to provide the committee a briefing and report on the Army EOD Branch proponent not later than December 1, 2016 to the committee.

As the committee examines legislation refinement for our Nation's defense, I feel that there are a number of issues that we can address in this year's NDAA that can help strengthen our preeminent military explosive experts. As you draft the NDAA, please consider including language that:

1. Enact the EOD Caucus' proposed language on Title 10 United States Code, Chapter 307 – The Army, §3063(a)(10) strike "Chemical Corps" and insert "Explosive Ordnance Disposal Corps" as a basic branch of the Army

2. Enact the EOD Caucus' proposed language on Title 50 United States Code, Chapter 57 – Explosive Ordnance Disposal Program, §4701 to §4702.

3. Publish directive report language using the EOD Caucus proposed language for the Secretary of the Army to provide a brief and report on the Army EOD Branch Proponent not later than December 1, 2016 to the committee.

Thank you again for the opportunity to present my testimony today. I look forward to working with the Committee in the near future to craft legislation that supports the critical Joint Explosive Ordnance Disposal Forces in their mission to defend the homeland and our interests aboard. I remain available to the Committee for further assistance on EOD matters, and I thank you for your consideration.