

**Testimony before the House Armed Services Committee
“Testimony from Members on their National Defense
Priorities for the NDAA”**

Rep. Randy Neugebauer

March 1, 2016

Chairman Thornberry and Ranking Member Smith, I would like to thank you for this opportunity to testify before you today on my national defense priorities. My district, Texas’s 19th Congressional District, is home to the 5,100 military and civilian personnel stationed at Dyess Air Force Base. Located on the outskirts of the City of Abilene, Dyess houses, among other missions, the 7th Bomb Wing, home to 33 of the 62 B-1 Lancer strategic bombers.

As a part of its FY 2017 budget, the Air Force has proposed \$5,830,000 in Research, Development, Test and Evaluation funding for the B-1 and \$116,319,000 in Procurement funding. Throughout its proposed FY 2017 budget, the Air Force includes funding in other accounts for various improvements to the B-1s as well as funding for B-1 maintenance and funding for the new B-1 Classic Associate Reserve Unit at Dyess.

Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member, I request the Committee’s support for these essential B-1 programs as it considers the FY 2017 National Defense Authorization Act.

Since 2001, the B-1 bomber has played a vital role in Afghanistan and Iraq and is now a major force in our battle against ISIL. In its budget documents, the Air Force highlights the B-1’s critical importance in our national defense, stating:

The B-1B Lancer is a swing-wing, supersonic, long-range conventional bomber. It carries the largest payload of both guided and unguided weapons in the Air Force inventory. The multi-mission B-1B is the backbone of America's long-range bomber force and can rapidly deliver massive quantities of precision and non-precision weapons against any adversary, anywhere in the world, at any time. . . . The current service life extends beyond 2040.

As further evidence of the B-1's importance, it was the first aircraft to be fitted for the Joint Air-to-Surface Standoff Missile-Extended Range (JASSM-ER) and, along with the F/A-18 E/F, will be initial aircraft to carry the Navy's Long Range Anti-Ship Missile (LRASM).

In its request for FY 2017 Overseas Contingency Operations funding, the Air Force stated;

As a force provider to the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) Area of Responsibility (AOR), the primary Combat Forces are the Air Force's front-line fighters and bombers (A-10, B-1, F-15 and F-16) representing the "tip of the global power projection spear." These assets provide a strong capability to counter a wide range of threats to the U.S. and its allies, as well as help assure a viable deterrent posture in the region.

As the backbone of the long-range bomber force, as the "tip of the global power projection spear", and with a service life beyond 2040, it makes sense from national defense standpoint and from a fiscal standpoint to ensure that the B-1 continues

to receive the funding that it needs in order to remain effective and viable, today and into the future. I request the Committee's support for this funding for FY 2017 and beyond.

I would also like to request the Committee's continued support for the new Long Range Strike-Bomber, which the Air Force has designated as the B-21. This new bomber has been under development for several years and it is essential that the Air Force complete the necessary research work and begin the production of this aircraft in order to meet the goal of having it operational by the mid-2020s.

As the Air Force and Congress move forward with the new bomber, we support the selection of Dyess Air Force Base to host the B-21. Dyess has been a bomber base since its inception, more than 50 years ago, initially hosting the B-47s and the B-52s. For the past 30 years, Dyess has been the Air Force's primary B-1 base. Dyess has also successfully served as the B-1 Formal Training Unit and now has a B-1 Classic Associate Reserve Unit. With this strong track record of meeting long-range strike mission requirements, Dyess would be an excellent base for the new B-21.

Thank you again Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member for the opportunity to address you in this forum.