

**Testimony
Of
Congressman Jodey Arrington (TX-19)
Before
House Committee on Armed Services**

**Testimony from Members on their National Defense Priorities
for the FY 2018 National Defense Authorization Act**

April 27, 2017

Chairman Thornberry and Ranking Member Smith, thank you for this opportunity to testify before you today on the national defense priorities of Texas' 19th Congressional District. We are the proud home of Dyess Air Force Base, located in the City of Abilene. The base has 5,100 dedicated military and civilian personnel and is under Global Strike Command. Dyess serves as the home for the Air Force's 7th Bomb Wing, which has 33 of our Nation's 62 B-1 bombers. Dyess is the B-1 Training Base and has a B-1 Operational Squadron, a B-1 Training Squadron, and a new B-1 Classic Associate Reserve Unit. Dyess' missions also include two Active Duty C-130J squadrons with a total of 27 of these new, highly-capable aircraft.

Since 2001, the B-1 has been playing a major role in Afghanistan and Iraq and, more recently, in the fight against ISIL. The B-1 has been able to do this because Congress provided funding in prior years that improved the aircraft's capabilities to drop a variety of weapons with increasing accuracy. The new Integrated Battle Station is the latest enhancement that will ensure that the B-1 will be even more effective in meeting its mission requirements. In recognition of the B-1's overall capabilities, the B-1 was selected, along with the F/A-18 E/F, to be the initial aircraft to carry the new Long Range Anti-Ship Missile, which is a joint Navy/DARPA project.

Although we do not have a detailed FY 2018 budget request from the Administration, the Air Force has an ongoing program that will continue to improve the B-1's capabilities.

Chairman and Ranking Member, I appreciate the Committee's longstanding support and funding for B-1 Research, Development, Test & Evaluation and B-1 Procurement and I request the Committee's continued support for these essential B-1 programs as it considers the FY 2018 National Defense Authorization Act.

I also understand that the Air Force's Unfunded Priorities List includes a service life extension program for the B-1 engines. Since the B-1 has a service life beyond 2040, this would seem to be a prudent investment to ensure the efficient operation of the aircraft in the years ahead. As the Committee considers the FY 2018 National Defense Authorization Act, I request that this important B-1 engine program receive the necessary support.

In addition to improving the B-1's capabilities, the Air Force is proceeding with the development of a new long-range strike aircraft, the B-21 Raider. I appreciate that the Committee has been

supportive of this important program and request continued support to keep the B-21 program on track.

Given the Air Force's goal of having the B-21 become operational in the mid-2020s, I would expect that the Air Force will begin to consider basing opportunities in the next several years. I would like to note that Dyess has successfully operated as a long-range strike aircraft base since it opened in 1956, more than 60 years ago. The base has served as a home for B-47s and B-52s and has been the Air Force's main B-1 base for more than 30 years. Importantly, Dyess has been the Nation's B-1 training base, is close to training ranges and training routes, and has a new B-1 Classic Associate Reserve Unit. All of this adds up to Dyess being an exceptional base for the B-21 and an outstanding location for B-21 training activities. And in closing, I'd add that, in fact, Dyess is such an exceptional base and Abilene is such an exceptional community that the Air Mobility Command Community Support Award now even bears the community's name, as "The Abilene Trophy."

I would like to thank you again, Chairman Thornberry and Ranking Member Smith, for the opportunity to testify before you today.