



Testimony of
The Honorable Don Young
Before the
House Armed Services Committee
FY 2017 National Defense Authorization Act Member Request Day

Chairman Thornberry, Ranking Member Smith, and distinguished colleagues on the House Armed Services Committee, thank you for holding this hearing, and for giving me the opportunity to testify as the lone Representative for the State of Alaska. Though I am not a member of the Armed Services Committee, I am proud to represent the most strategic state in our country, with the largest number of service members and veterans per capita in the nation. I appreciate your consideration of the following provisions for inclusion in the Fiscal Year 2018 National Defense Authorization Act. I will keep my remarks today brief, and my staff will be happy to follow up with you to provide additional information on all of these issues, if needed.

Inclusion of HR. 1816, the Icebreaker Act

First, I would like to request the inclusion of the language from H.R. 1816, the Icebreaker Act. This legislation, which I introduced with HASC members Duncan Hunter, John Garamendi, and Rick Larsen, and is endorsed by the Association of the U.S. Navy, would specifically authorize the U.S. Navy to partner with the U.S. Coast Guard to procure up to six new icebreakers – three medium-class and three heavy-class – which are desperately needed to ensure the nation’s security and maritime interests are protected in the Arctic.

With Russia, China, and other nations seeking to increase their presence in the Arctic region, the United States must get serious about updating its limited and aging fleet of icebreakers. This language is very simple, in that it specifically authorizes the Navy, in consultation with the Coast Guard, to enter into a contract to build icebreakers. As development in the Arctic continues, including new resource development, potential shipping lanes, and other economic activities, we cannot afford to be left behind.

Report on Modernization of the Joint Pacific Alaska Range Complex

Alaska is home to the nation’s largest air training range—the Joint Pacific Alaska Range Complex (JPARC). This range complex is nine times larger than the Nevada Test and Training Range at Nellis Air Force Base, and more than



twenty times larger than the Barry Goldwater Range near Luke AFB in Arizona. While this range complex provides unmatched training capacity for the Air Force, much of its infrastructure (including its threat emitters) was developed for 4th generation aircraft.

Given Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson's two F-22 squadrons, the decision to base two F-35A squadrons at Eielson Air Force Base, as well as Eielson's annual Red Flag and biannual Operation Northern Edge exercises, the Air Force should examine how it will modernize the range complex to continue to provide our Joint Air Forces with the best training possible. This language would require the Air Force to produce a report on modifications to the Joint Pacific Alaska Range Complex necessary to provide a true, 21st century training environment.

Requirement for the Air Force to update its 168th Wing Business Case Analysis

Section 1054 of the FY 2015 National Defense Authorization Act required the Secretary of the Air Force to complete a business case analysis on the conversion of the Alaska National Guard's 168th Air Refueling Wing at Eielson Air Force Base to an Active-Associate Total Force Initiative unit. While this report was completed in the spring of 2016, it did not contain any reference to the Air Force's decision to base two squadrons of F-35A fighters at Eielson.

I believe that the findings from the Air Force's business case analysis would be dramatically different if they had considered this basing decision, as it will drastically change the conditions in which the 168th operates. Therefore, this language would require the Secretary of the Air Force to update its business case analysis to ensure that it takes into account the F-35s that are scheduled to be based at Eielson beginning in FY 2019/2020.

Report on Arctic Capability Gaps

Section 1068 of the FY 2016 National Defense Authorization Act required the Department of Defense to update its 2013 Arctic Strategy in light of significant changes in the international security environment. This document was completed in December of 2016, and is a great step forward in articulating the desired ends for the United States in the Arctic region.

As part of this report, the Department of Defense specifically detailed several capability gaps in the Arctic region, including a lack of necessary infrastructure, shortfalls in observation, remote sensing, and weather forecasting,



lack of navigational aids, challenges in high-latitude communications infrastructure, and limited personnel recovery capabilities.

While it is valuable to understand that these capability gaps exist, it is critical that we in Congress ensure that the Department of Defense is working to address these capability gaps. Therefore, this provision would require the Department of Defense to submit a report to Congress on how it intends to fill these gaps.

Business Case Analysis for replacing the Army's Small Unit Support Vehicle

The House Armed Services Committee Report for the FY 2016 National Defense Authorization Act requested a briefing from the U.S. Army on potential options to replace the Army's current Small Unit Support Vehicle (SUS-V), a vehicle critical to U.S. Army Alaska's ability to operate in an arctic and extreme cold weather environment. This briefing identified two possible courses of action—refurbishing the current SUS-V fleet, or procuring a new vehicle (specifically the BAE BvS10 Beowulf).

As the logical next step in the process, I request language that would require the U.S. Army to conduct a business case analysis for replacing the Army's current fleet of Small Unit Sustainment Vehicles, a vehicle of great import to US Army Alaska and any unit operating in an arctic environment.

Direct Hire Authority for Reserve Dual-Status Technicians

I request the inclusion of language that is very similar to a provision included in the House-passed FY 2017 NDAA, which provides U.S. Army and Air Force reserve units with "direct hire authority" to fill dual-status technician vacancies. Dual Status Technicians provide the vast majority of the full-time manning for reserve component units, and are critical to ensuring that our reserve units are able to accomplish their missions.

However, due to the terrible and overly-bureaucratic civilian hiring process for Dual-Status Technicians, it can often take more than 120 days—more than four months—to fill a Dual-Status Technician position. This language would simply provide the Army and Air Force Reserves with the ability to use a direct hire authority to more quickly fill its critical Dual-Status Technician positions, reducing this process by 30-40 days (according to U.S. Army and Air Force Reserve estimates).



Modification of the Justification and Approval Process for Native Sole-Source Contracts

Late in Conference for the FY 2010 National Defense Authorization Act, an original “good government” provision, Section 802 was modified to unfairly isolate native contractors for enhanced scrutiny. This new provision, Section 811, modified the justification and approval process for Sole-Source Contracts valued at more than \$20 million, and now required head of agency approval. For example, if a contracting officer in the U.S. Air Force intended to award a \$19.9 million dollar contract, they could go through a standard approval process. However, if a similar contract was valued at \$20.1 million, that contracting officer would be forced to receive approval from the Secretary of the Air Force. This is simply inefficient and unnecessary, and it has had large negative effects on Native American and Hawaiian community-based contracting organizations participating in the SBA’s 8(a) Program.

Given Section 811’s negative effect on Native 8(a)s in Alaska and around the country, I request that the House include language that would align the Section 811 justification and approval process more closely with Federal Acquisition Regulations, which provide increasingly senior approval authorities based on a contract’s value. This would ensure that contracting officers are able to efficiently award contracts, and not burden heads of agencies with contract approvals for contracts that should be able to be approved by much lower-level officials.

Chairman Thornberry, Ranking Member Smith, and members of the Armed Services Committee, I again thank you for giving me this opportunity. I encourage all of you, and your staff, to come to Alaska to see firsthand all that we offer the Department of Defense. A strong defense presence in Alaska is not only vital to Alaska, but also vital to the national security of the United States.