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House of Representatives
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House Armed Services Committee National Defense Authorization Act Member Day Testimony

Congressman A. Donald McEachin

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Thank you, Chairman Smith and Ranking Member Thornberry, for your leadership in keeping our nation safe. Thank you, as well, for affording those of us who do not sit on the Armed Services Committee—or who *no longer* sit on the Committee—the opportunity to communicate our priorities at the outset of this year’s National Defense Authorization Act process.

While I have many hopes for this year’s NDAA, I would like to emphasize one in particular. I very much hope that this year’s bill will fully reflect the 2017 *National Security Strategy*’s whole-of-government approach to important security challenges. A whole-of-government approach to our national security challenges is needed more now than ever. Ensuring that servicemembers and civil servants have an understanding of the importance of the whole-of-government effort and how to tackle problems in that context is sorely needed in the Department of Defense, as well as in other agencies. To that end, I want to express my support for bill language that has broad support from the Virginia delegation. I am including a draft of the legislative language below:

Sec. XX – Training in Whole of Government approaches to national security challenges.

- a) In general. - The Secretary shall ensure that midcareer Department of Defense personnel receive training in whole of government approaches to national security challenges and shall coordinate with the heads of other federal departments and agencies to promote cross-agency and multi-sector learning, collaboration and problem-solving for midcareer military and civilian personnel.
- b) Training components. - Critical elements of a whole of government training program shall include –
 1. creating integrated and consistent policy across the executive branch;
 2. understanding the role of Congress, state and local governments, community organizations, academia, foreign governments, non-governmental organizations and the private sector in influencing and executing whole of government solutions to regional, national and global challenges;
 3. operating collaboratively in an interagency environment;
 4. table-top role playing exercises and mentorship programs that will enable participants to gain a greater understanding of their interagency partners and how to leverage the whole of government approach to achieve desired outcomes.
- c) Additional requirements. –
 1. Training shall be provided to cohorts comprised of a mix of military and civilian staff from across the Department and military services and, to the greatest extent possible, from other federal departments and agencies.

2. The Secretary shall ensure that the training provided under this section is made available through the military staff and war colleges, National Defense University and accredited public institutions of higher education that provide whole of government curricula and are centrally located in areas of high concentration of military and civilian national security personnel.
3. At least 50% of the training described in this section shall be provided at or by accredited public institutions of higher education as described in paragraph (c)(2).

It is important that this training is conducted by appropriately-accredited public institutions of higher education that can leverage a wide range of personnel with varied backgrounds that simply is not resident in Department of Defense educational institutions. I am hopeful that the Department of Defense will seek to make the best possible use of this permissive authority and similar educational and training programs, and that opportunities to participate will be afforded to personnel—particularly mid-grade officers and civil servants—from across all services and Departmental components.

Thank you again for your leadership, and for your consideration of this request.

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