

KATHY CASTOR
14TH DISTRICT, FLORIDA

SELECT COMMITTEE ON
THE CLIMATE CRISIS
CHAIR

COMMITTEE ON
ENERGY AND COMMERCE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON HEALTH
SUBCOMMITTEE ON
CONSUMER PROTECTION AND
COMMERCE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON ENERGY



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0914

WASHINGTON OFFICE:
2052 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-3376

DISTRICT OFFICE:
4144 NORTH ARMENIA AVENUE
SUITE 300
TAMPA, FL 33607
(813) 871-2817
www.castor.house.gov

March 5, 2021

The Honorable Adam Smith
Chairman
House Armed Services Committee
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mike Rogers
Ranking Member
House Armed Services Committee
Washington, DC 20515

RE: Priorities for Fiscal Year 2022 National Defense Authorization Act, MacDill AFB, SOCOM, CENTCOM and military families

Dear Chairman Smith and Ranking Member Rogers,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a list of priorities for the Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). I am proud to represent MacDill Air Force Base (AFB) in Tampa, home of the 6th Air Refueling Wing, U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM), U.S. Special Operations Command (SOCOM), the 927th Air Refueling Wing, Joint MISO Web-Ops Center (JMWC) and additional mission partners. I am also a proud co-chair of the Congressional Air Force Caucus and the Special Operations Forces Caucus.

Mold in Base Housing

MacDill is home to service members from all branches of our military and it is vital that we keep them safe on the battlefield, and also at home. I appreciate the work this committee has undertaken to tackle the mold issues in base housing across the country – including at MacDill. Over the past few years, I heard from families of service members that found mold in their on-base homes. Plain and simple, military families deserve the best housing available and reports of substandard conditions are unacceptable. Our service members should be able to focus on their mission without worrying about housing conditions, sick family members or alternative housing. I strongly encourage you to continue oversight of the implementation of the Tenant Bill of Rights that was included in the FY 2020 NDAA. It is our duty to hold the private housing contractors accountable and make military families whole when their lives are disrupted.

During my conversations with these families, they have shared how they have thousands of dollars in expenses directly related to the mold in their homes. Whether it is temporary living costs, moving costs, health care bills or other household incidentals, we must work to make these families whole for the out-of-pocket expenses they incurred. Many private housing contractors have let our military families down and I urge the committee to hold them accountable and protect military families who have already sacrificed so much to protect their fellow Americans.

Reinforce prohibition of retirement of KC-135s and Provide Adequate Resources

MacDill AFB's 6th Air Refueling Wing is the centerpiece of the U.S. Air Force's Global Vigilance, Global Reach, Global Power mission with its essential functions of aerial refueling and airlift. MacDill AFB's missions are operating at a high tempo. Just a few weeks ago, another set of MacDill's KC-135 tankers was tapped to support rapid, global mobility in the CENTCOM area of responsibility. Crews with the 91st Air Refueling Squadron from MacDill provide unmatched air refueling to the DOD.

While the Air Force expects to retain KC-135s until the replacement Boeing KC-46 Pegasus jets are operationally capable, Congress should continue to ensure the KC-135s are not retired early. I encourage the committee to maintain language similar to Section 135 of the report accompanying the FY 2021 NDAA to prohibit retirement of KC-135s until October 1, 2023 and beyond and to ensure the appropriate funding levels are authorized to maintain the tankers' mission. Additionally, both the FY 2021 report and the FY 2021 defense appropriations bill included funding for continued operation of KC-135s the Air Force had previously considered for retirement.

Plus, the Air Force strives to meet the requirements set forth in the National Security Strategy, which calls for 40 tanker squadrons, accounting for roughly 480 tankers. By contrast, in 2020, the Air Force had 26 tanker squadrons, which suggests the Air Force had only 65 percent of the squadrons it needs, and only 85 percent of the air refuelers required. I strongly encourage this committee to conduct a year-by-year review of the KC-46 before determining any further cuts, and extend these provisions as necessary to ensure readiness.

DOD Clean Energy and Resilience

Thank you for your work in the 116th Congress to position the Department of Defense (DoD) closer to achieve greater energy efficiency and climate resiliency. The department has taken important steps to build resilience across a number of systems, and also help reduce the emission of greenhouse gases that contribute to the climate crisis, such as using renewable energy. However, it is vital that Congress requires consideration of climate risk in DoD procurement, logistics and supply chain management, to be able to focus effort and prioritize resources toward those facilities that need it most.

As Chair of the House Select Committee on the Climate Crisis, I strongly encourage this committee to codify DoD Directive 4715.21 to ensure DoD has the authority and resources necessary to adapt current and future procurement, logistics and supply chain management operations to address the impacts of climate change. I also encourage this committee to include continued oversight of contractors, who must be required to evaluate climate change risks.

Additionally, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin announced that the DoD will immediately take appropriate policy actions to prioritize climate change considerations in their activities and risk assessments, to mitigate this driver of insecurity. The DoD will include the national security implications of climate change in their risk analyses, strategy development, and planning guidance as well as incorporate climate risk analysis into modeling, simulation, wargaming, and the next National Defense Strategy.

The climate crisis and its implications on our national security and DoD missions cannot be ignored. For years, the DoD has acknowledged that environmental change poses a threat to military capabilities. In FY 2020, the department allocated \$67 million in funds to help bases alleviate or repair climate-related damage. A 2018 report by the Center for Climate and Security, identified a number of key domestic military installations, including both North Carolina's Camp Lejeune and Camp Pendleton in California, as at-risk from climate change. And in 2019, a number of bases were hit by large weather events, including Offutt Air Force Base in Nebraska, which required more than \$400 million in repairs. I call on this committee to strongly support DoD's efforts not just on resiliency and efficiency, but on overall national security.

Congress should also harness the power of the military, for net-zero and resilient energy installations, and increase funding for DoD to partner with the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) to improve the resilience of renewable energy projects at military installations to climate change impacts. I was very concerned to learn that many installations, including MacDill AFB, have no plan or direction to locate and expand renewable energy and energy efficiency resources to strengthen their resilience and save taxpayers money. Federal spending to locate or expand fossil fuel infrastructure is costly and unwise as we need every strategy to reduce America's carbon footprint and achieve energy savings for the federal budget. Congress should also use the data collected by the DoD Climate Assessment Tool (DCAT) to complete climate exposure assessments on all major U.S. installations and major overseas installations, to enable personnel at all levels to understand each location's exposure to climate-related hazards, using historical data and future climate projection.

It is also vital that DoD continues to work to strengthen its coordination with local governments for climate resilience. Congress should direct DoD to require that domestic military installations coordinate their resilience planning with hazard mitigation and climate resilience

planning by state, tribal, territorial and local governments adjacent to and within commuting distance of their facilities. DoD also should coordinate with stakeholders, including environmental justice communities and other community organizations where installation plans and activities affect community resources, such as drainage or environmental impact.

Public Schools on Military Installations

Educating the children of our service members is a task we should not take lightly. We need to prioritize funding to public schools on military installations to ensure we serve the unique needs and challenges that face military children while giving them a top-rated education. I am proud to represent General Clarence Tinker K-8 School (Tinker) at MacDill AFB. Tinker School has been the primary school for the children of MacDill military personnel for almost 70 years. Tinker provides its students with a support system, counselors and administrators who understand the unique needs and challenges of military families such as deployments and frequent moves. Other public schools are not as expert in providing such focus. For this reason, MacDill families requested and were granted an expansion of Tinker to include grades six, seven and eight by Hillsborough County Public Schools six years ago. The community strongly supported the expansion; however, with the student population expanding to over 720 students, more infrastructure is needed to properly serve MacDill's students.

Tinker middle school students currently use modular classrooms and multi-purpose cafeteria facilities. According to an assessment done in 2018, seven additional classrooms and improved special needs space, upgraded food facilities and a gymnasium are needed as soon as possible. This is not ideal and will be very costly – but necessary. I strongly encourage the committee to authorize sufficient resources for public schools on military installations, so the children of our service members have the best education combined with the necessary support system.

Uphold No Drilling Past the Military Mission Line Off Florida's Coast

I urge the committee to safeguard our military training areas in the east central Gulf of Mexico and continue to oppose oil drilling in this area. Aside from risks to our tourism-based economy in Florida and across the Gulf, our strong military presence throughout the region needs the east central Gulf for their exclusive use for testing – free of drilling rigs, platforms and supply vessel traffic. It is for this reason that the Military Mission Line (MML) in the east central Gulf (EGOM) was established by the 2006 GOMESA law to delineate the military testing area as being off limits to oil exploration.

The DoD called the eastern Gulf of Mexico an “irreplaceable national asset” for combat force readiness and for accomplishing the goals of the National Defense Strategy. In the 116th Congress the House passed H.R. 205 Protecting and Securing Florida's Coastline Act, with bipartisan support, including a number of committee members. This bill permanently extends the moratorium on oil and gas leasing, preleasing and related activities in the eastern Gulf.

Post-Deployment Rehabilitation and Evaluation Program (PREP)

I also strongly encourage the committee to continue to prioritize and expand the number of service members and veterans able to receive care through the Post-Deployment Rehabilitation and Evaluation Program that is based at the James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital (Haley VA). PREP provides individualized in-patient treatment for our service members and veterans for combat-related physical, cognitive and mental health symptoms.

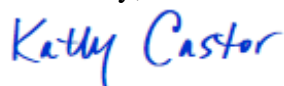
This initiative provides the DoD a perfect opportunity to partner with the VA to include programmatic information and funding levels for PREP in current and future budget requests, as stated in the FY 2021 MILCON-VA report language. The physical rehabilitation and mental health needs of our active duty service members and veterans should be one of our top priorities, so I encourage the committee to continue to look for ways to bolster the Post-Deployment Rehabilitation and Evaluation Program to ensure the men and women who scarified so much for us receive the care they have earned, especially as thousands of Americans begin to return home from Afghanistan.

Joint MISO Web-Ops Center (JMWC)

It is important for the committee to ensure JMWC's budget is consistent and that it receive the funding necessary to carry out its mission. Along with the overall funding, the committee should expedite a permanent building for the SOCOM-led, CENTCOM-inspired JMWC in the location selected at MacDill AFB. The current modular trailers do not provide a cohesive, modern workspace for a mission so central to America's national defense. Additionally, the mission of JMWC is vital and it requires all hands on deck. To that end, I would encourage the DoD to ensure personnel from all combatant commands are located at JMWC.

Thank you all for the work you do to support our men and women in uniform and their families, and for allowing me to share the issues that are important to my community, MacDill Air Force Base and our overall national security. I look forward to working with you during the National Defense Authorization process and beyond to ensure we face our nation's ongoing and future national security challenges head-on.

Sincerely,



Kathy Castor
U.S. Representative
Florida – District 14