



Chairman Rodney Frelinghuysen

Subcommittee on Defense, House Committee on Appropriations

FY 2017 Defense Appropriations Bill – Full Committee May 17, 2016 Opening Statement

Thank you, Mr. Chairman for the time.

I rise to present the Defense Subcommittee's recommendation for the FY 2017 Department of Defense Appropriations bill.

At the outset, I want to express our gratitude to two members of the Subcommittee – Ander Crenshaw and Steve Israel – for their significant contributions.

I also want to thank each of member of the Subcommittee for their loyal attendance at the 11 hearings and numerous briefings (many of them closed and classified) that helped shape this legislation.

These meetings allowed us to look - in great detail - into our national defense posture and the capabilities of our adversaries and our partners.

We are concerned by what we see.

Over the past several years, we have largely focused on the dangers posed by Islamic terrorist organizations – al Qaeda, the barbaric ISIS, Al Nusra and others.

But in recent years, new threats have emerged: a more aggressive and more capable Russia; an expansionist China; emboldened states like Iran; and rogue nations like North Korea.

At the same time, we were dealing with fiscal constraints imposed by sequestration and budget caps.

Looking today at our Department of Defense and Intelligence Community we note: our readiness levels are alarmingly low for our soldiers, Marines, sailors and Airmen; our decisive technological edge over our adversaries is eroding; and our adversaries' resolve and their capability are only growing.

The bill before you begins to reverse these trends by providing more money for national security.

Our recommendation mirrors the funding structure that the House Armed Services Committee introduced a few weeks ago and shifts \$16 billion from the President's OCO request into the base bill, while providing a "bridge fund" for our overseas operations through the end of April 2017.

By that time, the new Administration will be able to assess our defense posture, reevaluate readiness levels and recapitalization efforts and request a targeted supplemental to support our troops.

I am confident that members of this Committee will work in a bipartisan way to ensure that this essential supplemental appropriations legislation is passed when the time comes. Rest assured that we will never let our troops down!

By providing a “bridge fund” to next April, rather than an entire year of funding, this bill is able to make targeted investments in additional manning for the Army, Marines and Air Force, more training, as well as the equipment they rely upon – all designed to repair the alarming readiness gaps we see across our Armed Forces.

Funding for base requirements totals \$532.8 billion, \$15.1 billion above the President’s budget request.

In order to “make every dollar count,” we exercised our oversight responsibilities vigorously and reduced funding from programs that have: seen unjustified cost increases; been subject to contract or schedule delays; been restructured or terminated; include funding requested ahead of need; and seen historical under-execution.

As a result of this work, (and I thank the staff for their efforts) we were able to increase funding for: the number of troops (adding 52,000 – 27,000 active component/25,000 Guard and Reserves) and their training by \$9.4 billion over the President’s request, and for equipment to approximately \$9.6 billion.

These investments will allow all our military services to fully meet critical training requirements such as flying hours and ground training, improve our facilities, and increase the number of our troops to reverse years of reductions.

The recommendation ensures that our military and intelligence community are able to begin to rebuild their advantages over our near-peer adversaries.

We currently have the lowest manning level in the Army since before World War II and this legislation boosts Army – and Marine Corps – end strength.

Our Navy is now smaller than at any time since before World War I and this bill funds a significant increase in shipbuilding.

Our Air Force is flying the oldest fleet in its entire history and this measure boosts modernization of our fighters, bombers, tankers and other aircraft.

I also want to note that our legislation again includes \$500 million to continue our investment in ISR for our Combatant Commanders. I’ve been pleased by the aggressiveness with which the Department of Defense has used the additional resources provided this year, and look forward to working with them again in fiscal year 2017.

Mr. Chairman, as I close, I want to make an observation about this year’s debate.

The President's spokesman and the Secretary of Defense were quick to criticize the funding structure of the National Defense Authorization bill and, indeed, this morning's proposal.

The White House and Secretary Carter have suggested that we are "gambling" with the troops' mission in the Middle East.

What was really "gambling" was the Administration's decision to pull our troops from Iraq and Afghanistan -against the advice of our military leadership - and not anticipate that the resulting vacuum would be filled by ISIS, the Taliban and other terrorist groups.

What was "gambling" was ousting Khadafy in Libya without any plan for the aftermath.

It is gambling to believe that Iran will not violate many aspects of the Geneva agreement; that the American people would not pay attention to increased U.S. military operations in Syria and Iraq if the President simply refused to call them "combat operations."

It was gambling to establish a poorly- thought-out and poorly-executed "train and equip" scheme in Syria; that China and Russia would cease their aggressive challenges to American superiority in the Atlantic, Pacific and Arctic.

My friends, one thing that we all can agree upon is that the last few years of budget cuts and constant deployments have only eroded our readiness and capabilities.

The bill before you does not "gamble."

Rather, this proposal wisely invests more money for more troops, more training, modern equipment, expanded cybersecurity, more intelligence-gathering capability and better health care outcomes for our troops and their families.

The Constitution says the primary job of Congress is to provide for the common defense. The bill before you allows us to fulfill that important responsibility in an increasingly dangerous world.

I thank my Colleagues for their attention and urge adoption of the recommendation.

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