FY 2015 Budget Hearing on Naval Reactors and Defense Nuclear Nonproliferation Programs
April 3, 2014
Opening Statement As Prepared

I'd like to call this hearing to order. This morning, we examined the portion of budget for the National Nuclear Security Administration that carries out the critical programs to sustain our nuclear weapons stockpile. This afternoon, we will focus on the Department's two other important national security programs: nuclear nonproliferation, and naval reactors.

I'd like to welcome back the Honorable Bruce Held, Acting Administrator for the NNSA. Mr. Administrator, the breadth of programs that NNSA oversees is truly impressive and I'd like to thank you for dedicating your entire day to testify before this Subcommittee. I'd also like to welcome both Admiral Richardson and Ms. Anne Harrington. It's good to see you both again, as well, and I look forward to hearing from you on your programs.

Admiral Richardson, this is your second appearance before this Subcommittee. I think I can speak for my colleagues when I say that you have this Subcommittee's full support for your critical work and we greatly appreciate your service. In the past, we've depended on you to make some tough decisions so that we can meet our defense needs under tight fiscal constraints. Even though the Ryan-Murray budget deal provided us with a plan for discretionary spending in fiscal year 2015 and most importantly removed the damaging across-the-board sequestration cuts for the upcoming year, overall defense spending will be essentially flat. That means it is more important than ever to hear from you on your priorities and how we can ensure that the Navy receives the support it needs to continue to operate its nuclear fleet. The fiscal year 2015 budget request for Naval Reactors is $1.377 billion, an increase of $282 million or 26% over last year's enacted level. This afternoon, we will consider some of the details of that request and how those activities are needed even during this period of budget austerity.

The budget request for the NNSA's Defense Nuclear Nonproliferation is $1.555 billion, a decrease of $398 million or 20% from last year's enacted level. Ms. Harrington, you run programs around the world to keep fissile material out of the hands of those who would do us harm. The NNSA's cooperative nuclear security activities in Russia and the former Soviet states have been some of the big successes of the post-Cold War era. Now, many of those programs are ending or ramping down and the nature of our cooperation with Russia has started to change. These changes began even before the recent events in Ukraine and are likely to continue given Russia's belligerent actions. We look forward to hearing from you on how these programs are evolving and how the NNSA's strategies will actively and effectively advance U.S. and global security goals.

Ms. Harrington, we must also hear from you today on the elephant in the room: the project to construct, or not construct, the MOX facility at Savannah River. In the past, the Subcommittee has been highly critical of the NNSA's management of the project. The fiscal year 2015 budget request says that the Department is placing the project in cold standby. I hope we are able to hear more details from you on your plans and rationale for scuttling this project, after fifteen years of design and construction and nearly $6 billion in taxpayer dollars already spent.

Please ensure that the hearing record, responses to the questions for the record, and any supporting information requested by the Subcommittee are delivered in final form to us no later than four weeks from time you receive them. I also ask that if Members have additional questions they would like to submit to the Subcommittee for the record, that they please do so by 5:00 PM tomorrow.

With those opening comments, I would like to yield to our ranking member, Ms. Kaptur, for any opening comments that she would like to make.

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