

**Congresswoman Cheri Bustos (IL-17)**  
**Testimony on National Defense Priorities**

Thank you Chairman McKeon and Ranking Member Smith for providing this opportunity to provide testimony essential to Illinois' 17th Congressional District.

The Rock Island Arsenal (RIA) is one of our nation's vital military assets and an integral part of the Quad City region's economy. It is important to ensure that the Rock Island Arsenal maintains the workload it needs to keep its workers' skills sharp while pursuing the public-private partnerships it needs to stay strong.

The Arsenal has a lot to offer both the private sector and our nation's military, and I'm proud for the opportunity to advocate and fight to see that the Rock Island Arsenal gets the support it needs to meet its full production potential.

It is important to recognize the Rock Island Arsenal's critical role in preserving our national security. Because of this, it is imperative that the Army keeps the Arsenal's workload strong and capable of responding to military needs or national emergencies in the event of future contingencies, and training for those contingencies.

I also want to promote public-private partnerships to support the Arsenal's workforce. As the long conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan drawdown, the workload at the Arsenal's Joint Manufacturing and Technology Center (JMTC) has decreased. To prevent even further decline, the JMTC has begun pursuing public-private partnerships to maintain adequate work levels to keep its employees' skills up-to-date. However, the JMTC's workload has fluctuated

significantly recently, forcing the Arsenal to charge above-market rates for manufacturing services to cover their operating costs.

As a nation, we cannot afford to let the Rock Island Arsenal workforce's critical manufacturing skills decline or disappear. The Rock Island Arsenal has been there for our fighting men and women in uniform and I am committed to making sure this always remains the case.

At the Rock Island Arsenal, the JMTC alone employs 1,444 workers and has an estimated economic impact of \$318 million on the surrounding bi-state region. When all the programs it houses are considered, the Arsenal has a \$1 billion impact on the Quad Cities' economy. As this bill moves forward, I will work to secure the Arsenal's future as both a strategic asset to national defense and an integral part of the local economy.

Maintaining a robust National Guard that can meet the challenges we face within the United States and, when required, overseas contingency and training operations should be priority for all Americans. Given the various demands upon the National Guard, it is vital that we maintain their readiness with the most advanced platforms to perform their mission.

I want to ensure the codification of the recommendations by the National Commission on the Structure of the Air Force (NCSAF), particularly the concurrent and proportional fielding of equipment to the Air National Guard (ANG). I appreciate that the Secretary of the Air Force and the Air Force Chief of Staff have proactively engaged with the ANG on this issue, and would like to take this opportunity to engage the House Armed Services Committee to ensure collaboration among the components on this critical issue.

I am concerned that the Air Force's Fiscal Year 2015 budget fails to incorporate recommendations by the NCSAF. I ask you to provide for the modernization and recapitalization of the ANG C-130 fleet. The 182nd Airlift Wing in Peoria, Illinois, provides critical and timely disaster relief operations, training exercises and overseas contingencies. Along with the ANG and our Adjutants General, I am concerned that the Air Force is not adequately funding modernization of the ANG C-130 fleet, nor is it providing a transparent and comprehensive plan for the future fielding of C-130J's to the ANG.

My concern, as well as the concern of the ANG, is that as the Air Force moves to field C-130J's predominately to the Active component, the ANG faces the reality of possessing a completely different platform. This runs counter to the recommendation of the NCSAF which highlights the fact that there should be better integration between components.

I request you provide language that calls on the Secretary and the Chief of Staff to update the Committee and Congress on actions being taken in conjunction with recommendations from the National Commission on the Structure of the Air Force, specifically as they relate to modernization of the C-130H fleet and put in place a plan to place C-130J's in the 182nd Airlift Wing at Peoria.

Thank you again for this opportunity to testify today.



Cheri Bustos  
Member of Congress