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Priorities for the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2020
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I would like to thank Chairman Smith and Ranking Member Thornberry for the opportunity to provide testimony on this year's National Defense Authorization Act. I would like to identify several items that I hope the Armed Services Committee will pay close attention to during consideration of this year's bill.

First, I would like to ask that committee pay close attention to strengthening our nation's defense industrial base. In my home state of Rhode Island, the birthplace of the American Industrial Revolution, defense manufacturing is vital to our economy. From construction and development for our nation's naval fleet, to development of sophisticated intelligence technology, to textile production for military uniforms at home and abroad, Rhode Island plays a critical role in protecting our nation.

I ask the committee to support provisions which strengthen American defense manufacturing, bolster Buy America provisions, and support American workers who are the backbone of our industrial base.

In this same regard, I would like to thank the committee for continued support of the Virginia Class Submarine and Columbia Class Submarine programs. These programs not only play a vital role in securing our naval superiority around the world, but construction of these submarines supports more than 4,500 manufacturing jobs in my home state of Rhode Island. Supporting future construction and workforce development for these programs will advance our national security interests, and strengthen our nation's industrial base.

It is also imperative that this year's NDAA present a new course for American leadership around the world that has been in decline under the current administration. We should take concrete steps to reaffirm our nation's alliances and partnerships across the Atlantic, and around the world. One action that the committee can take is to support ending the long standing arms embargo against the Republic of Cyprus. Cyprus remains a critical partner for the United States in the Eastern Mediterranean region, particularly in areas of counterterrorism against organizations like the Islamic State. However, since 1987, the Republic of Cyprus has been subject to an arms embargo which has hindered deeper cooperation between our two nations. Strengthening our security relationship with Cyprus would only serve to support our interests, and those of Europe.

Additionally, this year's NDAA should take firm steps to demonstrate consequences for Turkey's increasingly authoritarian and reprehensible behavior, as well as its lurch toward the influence of Russia. I ask the committee to include provisions in this year's bill prohibiting the transfer of F-35 aircraft to Turkey, and take steps to prevent Turkey from obtaining Russian military technology and equipment, such as the S-400 air defense system.

While the United States must reaffirm its leadership around the world, we must also avoid costly, ill-advised military entanglements abroad. We have all watched in horror as the regime of Nicolás Maduro has destroyed Venezuela's economy, starved its people, and engaged in widespread corruption and repression. And while the Venezuelan people have a right to pick their leaders through free and fair elections, any transition must be truly democratic and lead by the people of Venezuela. I am concerned over continuing comments by the Trump Administration noting that the use of military force is, as the President said, "an option". Under the Constitution, only Congress can declare war, and this year's NDAA should make it clear that Congress has not granted the Administration the authority to send our Armed Forces into hostilities in Venezuela.

Finally, this year's NDAA must be accountable for increased unaccounted for defense spending through the Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) account. These funds were intended to be used for emergencies and for providing funding for our Armed Forces deployed abroad. However, this account has been increasingly used as a slush fund to increase defense spending to record amounts and circumventing statutory budget caps, while cutting spending for other critical programs government wide. The President's budget proposed an astronomical \$165 billion in OCO funds while proposing to drastically cut or eliminate essential education, environmental, and other domestic programs. I ask that this year, the Committee take concrete steps to reduce the misuse of OCO funds.

I would like to once again thank Chairman Smith and Ranking Member Thornberry for allowing me the opportunity to provide testimony regarding this year's NDAA, and I ask that the Armed Services Committee provide due consideration to the priorities that I have laid out.