H.R. 8070—SERVICEMEMBER QUALITY OF LIFE IMPROVEMENT AND NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2025

SUBCOMMITTEE ON TACTICAL AIR AND LAND FORCES

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This section establishes a Drone Corps as a basic branch of the Army.

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BILL LANGUAGE

SEC. 112 [Log 80210]. MULTIYEAR PROCUREMENT AUTHORITY FOR CH–53K AIRCRAFT AND T408 ENGINES.

(a) AUTHORITY FOR MULTIYEAR PROCUREMENT.—Subject to section 3501 of title 10, United States Code, the Secretary of the Navy may enter into one or more multiyear contracts, beginning with the fiscal year 2025 program year, for the procurement of the following:

(1) CH–53K aircraft.

(2) T408 engines for such aircraft.

(b) CONDITION FOR OUT-YEAR CONTRACT PAYMENTS.—A contract entered into under subsection (a) shall provide that any obligation of the United States to make a payment under the contract for a fiscal year after fiscal year 2025 is subject to the availability of appropriations or funds for that purpose for such later fiscal year.

(c) AUTHORITY FOR ADVANCE PROCUREMENT.—The Secretary of the Navy may enter into one or more contracts, beginning in fiscal year 2025, for advance procurement associated with the aircraft and engines for which authorization to enter into a multiyear procurement contract is provided under subsection (a), which may include procurement of economic order quantities of material and equipment for such aircraft or engines when cost savings are achievable.

SEC. 113 [Log 80900]. RECAPITALIZATION OF TACTICAL FIGHTER AIRCRAFT OF THE NAVY RESERVE.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of the Navy shall ensure that all covered F–18 aircraft are—

(1) provided only to the Navy Reserve; and

(2) used only to recapitalize and maintain, within the Navy Reserve—

(A) a deployable tactical strike-fighter capability; and

(B) a threat representative adversary support capability that may be used in support of training activities of the Department of Defense.

(b) COVERED F–18 AIRCRAFT DEFINED.—In this section, the term ''covered F–18 aircraft'' means any F/A–18E/F Super Hornet aircraft procured using funds appropriated for the Navy for fiscal year 2022 or fiscal year 2023.

SEC. 115 [Log 80674]. LIMITATION ON STRUCTURAL IMPROVEMENTS AND ELECTRICAL POWER UPGRADES FOR AH–1Z AND UH–1Y HELICOPTERS.

(a) LIMITATION.—The Secretary of the Navy may not carry out covered upgrades to AH–1Z Viper and UH–1Y Venom helicopters at a location other than a facility owned by the original equipment manufacturer for such helicopters until the date on which the Secretary certifies to the Committees on Armed Services of the Senate and the House of Representatives that the plan for carrying out covered upgrades at location other than a facility owned by the original equipment manufacturer is expected—

(1) to result in greater performance, survivability, lethality, interoperability, mission execution, and overall safety of the helicopter platform than would otherwise be achievable by completing such upgrades at a facility owned by the original equipment manufacturer for the model of helicopter involved;

(2) to provide improved onboard electrical power capacity and ensure adequate power margin for integrating future capabilities;

(3) to improve and expand future weapons interfaces; and

(4) to allow for improved ease of maintenance.

(b) COVERED UPGRADES.—In this section, the term ''covered upgrades'' means any structural improvements or electrical power upgrades for AH–1Z viper or UH–1Y venom helicopters.

SEC. 126 [Log 80867]. NOTIFICATION OF DELAYS IN DELIVERY OF MH–139 AIRCRAFT.

(a) NOTICE REQUIRED.—Not later than 30 days after becoming aware of an expected delay in the delivery date of an MH–139 aircraft, the Secretary of the Air Force shall submit to the Committees on Armed Services of the Senate and the House of Representatives written notice of such delay together with an explanation of the reasons for such delay.

(b) DELIVERY DATE DEFINED.—In this section, the term ''delivery date'', when used with respect to an MH–139 aircraft, means the date on which such aircraft is expected to be delivered to the Air Force under the most recent schedule for such delivery in effect as of the date of the enactment of this Act.

Subtitle B—Program Requirements, Restrictions, and Limitations

SEC. 211 [Log 80182]. MODIFICATION OF CERTAIN REQUIREMENTS RELATING TO THE JOINT ENERGETICS TRANSITION OFFICE.

Section 148 of title 10, United States Code, is amended—

(1) by redesignating subsection (e) as subsection (f); and

(2) by striking subsection (d) and inserting the following new subsections:

''(d) BUDGETING AND FUNDING REQUIREMENTS.—

''(1) The Secretary of Defense shall ensure that the Office is budgeted for and funded in a manner sufficient to ensure the Office has the staff and other resources necessary to effectively carry out the responsibilities specified in subsection (c).

''(2) In the budget justification materials submitted to Congress in support of the Department of Defense budget for fiscal year 2027 and each fiscal year thereafter (as submitted with the budget of the President under section 1105(a) of title 31), the Secretary of Defense shall include a dedicated budget line item for the implementation of subsection (a)

and for the testing and evaluation of energetic materials and technologies by the Office.

''(e) STANDARDS AND BEST PRACTICES CURRICULUM.—

''(1) The Under Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering, in coordination with the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment, shall include, within the program management and engineering curriculum of the Defense Acquisition University, instruction in standards and best practices for the development of energetic materials and ensuring the safety of explosives.

''(2) In carrying out paragraph (1), the Under Secretaries shall consult with—

''(A) the President of the Defense Acquisition University; and

''(B) individuals and organizations in academia and industry with relevant expertise in the field of energetics.''.

SEC. 214 [Log 80356]. MODIFICATION TO CONSORTIUM ON USE OF ADDITIVE MANUFACTURING FOR DEFENSE CAPABILITY DEVELOPMENT.

Section 223(c) of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2024 (Public Law 118–31; 10 U.S.C. 4841 note) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (5), by striking ''and'' at the end;

(2) in paragraph (6), by striking the period at the end and inserting ''; and''; and

(3) by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

''(7) develop a rapidly deployable additive manufacturing system that is capable of fabricating replacement safety-critical parts for military aircraft and unmanned aerial vehicles in environments where access to traditionally manufactured replacement parts is severely restricted.''.

SEC. 902 [Log 80862]. EXECUTIVE AGENT FOR COUNTERING THREATS POSED BY SMALL UNMANNED AIRCRAFT.

Chapter 4 of title 10, United States Code, as amended by [section 901 (Log 80501)], is further amended by adding at the end the following new section:

"§ 149b. Executive agent for countering threats posed by small unmanned aircraft

''(a) EXECUTIVE AGENT.—The Secretary of Defense, shall designate a senior official from among the personnel of the Department of Defense to act as the executive agent responsible for providing oversight of—

''(1) the efforts of the Department to counter small unmanned aircraft and systems; and

''(2) associated training and technology programs.

''(b) DUTIES.—The Executive agent shall—

''(1) coordinate and integrate joint requirements to counter threats posed by small unmanned aircraft;

''(2) provide common individual training to members of the Armed Forces on countering such threats; and

''(3) carry out joint research, development, test, and evaluation activities for common activities on be-

half of the military departments with respect to counter-UAS systems.

''(c) SUPPORT WITHIN DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE.—The Secretary of Defense shall ensure that the military departments, Defense Agencies, and other components of the Department of Defense provide the executive agent designated under subsection (a) with the appropriate support and resources needed to perform the roles, responsibilities, and authorities of the executive agent.

''(d) COMPLIANCE WITH EXISTING DIRECTIVE.—The Secretary shall carry out this section in compliance with Directive 5101.1.

''(e) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

''(1) The term 'Directive 5101.1' means Department of Defense Directive 5101.1, or any successor directive relating to the responsibilities of an executive agent of the Department of Defense.

''(2) The term 'executive agent' has the meaning given the term 'DoD Executive Agent' in Directive 5101.1.

''(3) The terms 'counter-UAS system', 'unmanned aircraft', and 'small unmanned aircraft' have the meanings given those terms in section 44801 of title 49, United States Code.''.

SEC. 912 [Log 80405]. DESIGNATION OF DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY OF THE ARMY AS PRINCIPAL OFFICIAL RESPONSIBLE FOR EXPLOSIVE ORDNANCE DISPOSAL.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 7014 of title 10, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

''(g)(1) The Secretary of the Army shall designate the Deputy Under Secretary of the Army as the official within the Office of the Secretary of the Army with principal responsibility for the explosive ordnance disposal enterprise of the Army.

''(2) The responsibilities of the Deputy Under Secretary of the Army under this subsection shall include—

''(A) providing oversight and strategic direction for the management and operations of the explosive ordnance disposal enterprise of the Army, including planning, programming, budgeting, and execution;

''(B) providing strategic direction for the funding of the enterprise, including funding for—

''(i) manning, training, organizing, equipping (including any associated research and development), and sustaining the enterprise; and

''(ii) supporting military installations that comprise the enterprise;

''(C) providing strategic direction for the activities of the enterprise in providing explosive ordinance disposal support for—

''(i) the President;

''(ii) combatant commanders;

''(iii) military installations; and

''(iv) civilian law enforcement agencies (in accordance with sections 282 and 283 of this title); and

''(D) providing strategic direction on the activities of the enterprise over the full range of military operations from irregular warfare to large-scale ground combat.

''(3) On an annual basis, the Deputy Under Secretary of the Army shall provide to the Committees on Armed Services of the Senate and the House of Representatives a briefing on the status of the explosive ordnance disposal enterprise of the Army. The briefing shall include, with respect to the period covered by the most recent future-years defense program submitted to Congress under section 221 of this title (as of the date of the briefing), an estimate of the total obligatory authority for the enterprise and the numbers and types of personnel expected to be assigned to the enterprise.

''(4) In this subsection, the terms 'explosive ordnance' and 'explosive ordnance disposal' have the meanings given those terms in section 2284(d).''.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendment made by subsection (a) shall take effect 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 913 [Log 80202]. ESTABLISHMENT OF THE DRONE CORPS AS A BASIC BRANCH OF THE ARMY.

(a) DESIGNATION AS BASIC BRANCH.—Section 7063(a) of title 10, United States Code, is amended—

(1) in paragraph (12), by striking ''and'' at the end;

(2) by redesignating paragraph (13) as paragraph (14); and

(3) by inserting after paragraph (12) the following new paragraph:

''(13) Drone Corps; and''.

(b) ORGANIZATION AND FUNCTIONS.—Chapter 707 of title 10, United States Code, is amended by inserting after section 7081 the following new section:

''§ 7082. Drone Corps: organization and functions

''(a) IN GENERAL.—There is a Drone Corps in the Army. The Drone Corps consists of—

''(1) the Chief of the Drone Corps, who shall be appointed by the Secretary of the Army from among the officers of the Drone Corps;

''(2) commissioned officers of the Regular Army appointed therein; and

''(3) other members of the Army assigned thereto by the Secretary of the Army.

''(b) FUNCTIONS.—Subject to such limitations or conditions as the Secretary of the Army may prescribe, the Drone Corps shall—

''(1) be the organization in the Army with primary responsibility for programs, projects, and activities involving—

''(A) small and medium unmanned aircraft;

''(B) unmanned aircraft systems that include such aircraft; and

''(C) counter-UAS systems;

''(2) serve as a command center for Army operations involving the aircraft and systems described in paragraph (1);

''(3) carry out activities to integrate such aircraft and systems with Army forces that have not traditionally used such aircraft and systems;

''(4) conduct research, development, testing, and evaluation of such aircraft and systems;

''(5) provide personnel with specialized training in such aircraft and systems;

''(6) carry out programs to attract and retain personnel with expertise relevant to such aircraft and systems;

''(7) develop strategies and capabilities to counter the unmanned aircraft and unmanned aircraft systems of adversary forces; and

''(8) perform such other functions relating to unmanned aircraft and unmanned aircraft systems as the Secretary determines appropriate.

''(c) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

''(1) The terms 'counter-UAS system', 'unmanned aircraft', and 'unmanned aircraft system' have the meanings given those terms in section 44801 of title 49, United States Code.

''(2) The term 'medium unmanned aircraft' means an unmanned aircraft with gross takeoff weight that is equal to greater than 55 pounds and less than 1320 pounds.

''(3) The term 'small unmanned aircraft' means an unmanned aircraft with a gross takeoff weight of less than 55 pounds.''.

SEC. 914 [Log 80201]. ARMY ELECTRONIC WARFARE CENTER OF EXCELLENCE.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 707 of title 10, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

"§ 7085. Electronic Warfare Center of Excellence

''(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—The Secretary of the Army shall establish and operate an Electronic Warfare Center of Excellence within the Army Training and Doctrine Command.

''(b) MISSIONS.—The Electronic Warfare Center of Excellence shall be used to—

''(1) provide comprehensive training and other educational programs relating to electronic warfare, including—

''(A) advanced individual training;

''(B) professional military education;

''(C) new equipment training; and

''(D) instructor training and certification;

''(2) develop and regularly update the curriculum for such training and programs;

''(3) identify, develop, and integrate materiel and organizational requirements for electronic warfare;

''(4) investigate emerging electronic warfare requirements;

''(5) conduct assessments for electronic warfare materiel requirements determination and development;

''(6) develop and manage the integration of electronic warfare solutions with doctrine, organization, training, materiel, leadership and education, personnel, and facilities;

''(7) conduct analysis for electronic warfare force requirements;

''(8) develop and manage organizational documentation relating to electronic warfare, including field manuals, technical manuals, training materials, standard operating procedures, doctrine publications, and after-action reports;

''(9) carry out such functions as the Secretary of the Army determines appropriate.''.

(b) TRANSFER OF FUNCTIONS.—Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, to the extent determined appropriate by the Secretary of the Army, the Secretary shall transfer the electronic warfare-related programs, projects, and activities of the Cyber Center of Excellence of the Army to the Electronic Warfare Center of Excellence established under section 7085 of title 10, United States Code, as added by subsection (a).

SEC. 1043 [Log 80406]. PLAN FOR FIELDING AIR BASE AIR DEFENSE SITES AT AIR FORCE INSTALLATIONS.

(a) PLAN REQUIRED.—The Secretary of the Air Force, in consultation with the Commander of United States European Command and the Commander of United States Indo-Pacific Command, shall develop a plan to support the fielding of air base air defense sites at Air Force installations and other priority sites.

(b) AIR BASE AIR DEFENSE SITE REQUIREMENTS.—The plan required under subsection (a) shall include each of the following requirements for each air base air defense site fielded under the plan:

(1) Expeditionary mobile protection for dispersed air bases.

(2) Fixed protection for primary air bases.

(3) Layered kinetic and non-kinetic effects from the surface.

(4) Counter-uncrewed aircraft systems.

(5) Counter-fixed and rotary wing aircraft.

(6) Counter-cruise missiles.

(7) Interoperability with joint command and control networks.

(8) 360-degree active and passive sensors.

(9) Systems and software that enable reduced staffing.

(c) FIELDING REQUIREMENT.—The plan required under subsection (a) shall be developed to ensure that—

(1) by not later than September 30, 2027, at least four air base air defense sites are fielded; and

(2) between 2028 and 2031, at least four air base air defense sites are fielded each year.

(d) SITE PRIORITIZATION.—The Secretary of the Air Force shall select Air Force installations and other sites as prioritized sites where air base air defense sites will be fielded under the plan.

(e) REPORT.—Not later than March 1, 2025, the Secretary of the Air Force shall submit to the congressional defense committees a report on the plan required under subsection (a).

DIRECTIVE REPORT LANGUAGE

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DIVISION A—DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE AUTHORIZATIONS

TITLE I—PROCUREMENT

AIRCRAFT PROCUREMENT, ARMY

Items of Special Interest

CH-47 Chinook Advanced Infrared Suppressor

The committee recognizes that the recent mass proliferation of man-portable air-defense materiel across multiple theaters poses an evolving threat to Army heavy-lift logistics. The committee is aware that the Army's CH-47 aircraft

remains unequipped with the more advanced infrared exhaust suppressor fielded on the Special Operations MH-47 variant of the airframe.

Anticipating future sortie cadence and mission geographies that may require increased threat protection, the committee directs the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Acquisition, Logistics, and Technology to provide a briefing to the House Committee on Armed Services not later than December 21, 2024, detailing plans to execute the hardware qualification program of the MH-47 infrared exhaust suppressor on the CH-47. To inform future Chinook modernization budget planning, the briefing shall also provide the committee with an evaluation comparing power-loss derived payload and range impacts between MH-47 and CH-47 infrared suppressors. The evaluation shall also compare the mean time between the replacement rate of each suppressor. Furthermore, the briefing shall detail how the Army may leverage ongoing U.S. Special Operations Command MH-47 Block II procurement to reduce advanced suppressor acquisition costs and integrate the hardware with CH-47 Block II.

Future Long Range Assault Aircraft Program

The committee applauds the significant progress and reduction of risk achieved on the Future Long Range Assault Aircraft (FLRAA) program and its advancement toward production and first-unit-equipped starting in 2030. The committee recognizes that the FLRAA tilt-rotor weapon system, based on the Bell-Textron V-280 Valor technology demonstrator, expects to deliver transformational vertical lift capability, fly twice-as-far and twice-as-fast as current operational helicopters, and provide speed and range critically needed in the Indo-Pacific and other theaters of operation. The committee notes that next-generation tilt-rotor technology utilized in the FLRAA is based on lessons incorporated from over 750,000 tilt-rotor flight hours, and represents a unique strategic capability, technology, and manufacturing advantage.

Given the leap-ahead nature of the FLRAA aircraft, the committee expects the Department of Defense to support the Department of the Army's efforts to expeditiously complete the development, testing, and fielding of the assault and medical evacuation configurations in the Active Duty Army, the Army Reserve, and the Army National Guard. Additionally, the committee encourages the Department of Defense to leverage the Army's FLRAA program to fulfill U.S. Special Operations Command and other military services' requirements for advanced vertical-lift capabilities.

Therefore, the committee directs the Secretary of the Army to provide a briefing to the House Committee on Armed Services by December 1, 2024, on its preliminary fielding plans for the assault and medical evacuation variants, and plans, efforts, and initiatives to facilitate expeditious sales to partner nations. Additionally, the committee directs the Secretary of the Navy, in coordination with the Secretary of the Air Force and the Commander, United States Special Operations Command, to provide a briefing to the House Committee on Armed

Services by January 31, 2025, on the plans, concepts, and opportunities to leverage the Department of the Army's Future Long Range Assault Aircraft program to fulfill advanced vertical-lift capabilities that exist for the Department of the Air Force, the Department of the Navy, and U.S. Special Operations Command.

Plans to Fill Tactical Unmanned Aerial Systems Gap

The committee is concerned that the Army has failed to bridge the gap between retirements of the RQ-7 Shadow and future tactical unmanned aerial systems (UAS). This gap may cause a disruption in the ability for the Army to provide a Group 3 UAS capability over the next several years. Additionally, the committee is concerned that the Army has failed to appropriately acquire and integrate tactical UAS at the necessary pace to keep up with the evolving landscape of warfare. Therefore, the committee directs the Secretary of the Army to provide a briefing to the House Committee on Armed Services by December 1, 2024, on tactical UAS. This briefing shall include:

(1) a plan to bridge Group 3 UAS gaps between the sunset of the RQ-7 Shadow and the full operational capability of the Future Tactical UAS program; and

(2) an evaluation of the Army's efforts to acquire and integrate Group 1 and Group 2 UAS. This evaluation shall include an assessment of the applicability of commercial-off-the-shelf solutions.

UH-72 Lakota Lifecycle Sustainment and Modernization

The committee recognizes the significant contributions of the UH-72 Lakota Light Utility Helicopter to homeland defense, force generation, and installation support. The UH-72 Lakota has proven to be a versatile, reliable, and cost-effective platform across a range of missions. However, the committee is concerned with the accelerated aging of the UH-72 Lakota helicopter fleet due to higher-than-programmed OPTEMPO and the lack of a defined and budgeted long-term sustainment strategy. Recognizing the typical acceleration of flying hour costs as fleets age across all Army aviation platforms, and as the Lakota approaches 20 years of service, the committee is interested in understanding the Army's Lifecycle Sustainment Plan for Lakota.

The committee directs the Secretary of the Army, in coordination with the Chief of the National Guard Bureau, to submit a briefing to the House Committee on Armed Services by December 31, 2024, on the Army's strategy for long-term life cycle sustainment and modernization of the Lakota fleet inclusive of, but not limited to:

(1) a lifecycle sustainment course of action analysis for the Lakota fleet that addresses fleet aging, long-term sustainment, attrition, and the impacts and opportunities associated with the end of UH-72A production in lieu of the UH-72B. This analysis will assess and compare at least two separate courses of action. The first assumes the long-term sustainment of the existing fleet of 460 UH-72A's and 18 UH-72B's. The second will address the sustainment costs and timing associated

with a cascade plan to redistribute, recapitalize, resell, or dispose of UH-72As in lieu of the UH-72B aircraft;

(2) a remanufacturing analysis of the UH-72A to UH-72B. The analysis shall include an assessment of the cost and readiness benefit of harvesting components not applicable to a remanufactured UH-72B for reuse on the enduring UH-72A fleet at locations such as Ft. Novosel; and

(3) an analysis that provides potential concepts of operations for the use of Army National Guard Security & Support (S&S) Battalions in semi-permissive, deployed environments for operations consistent with the S&S role including but not limited to counter-narcotics, reconnaissance, and light utility operations, and to include an assessment of aircraft modifications required to conduct various mission profiles.

MISSILE PROCUREMENT, ARMY

Items of Special Interest

Precision Strike Missile Increment 4

The committee supports the Army's Precision Strike Missile (PrSM) program and the Army's competitive acquisition strategy to develop a fourth increment of the missile system that will significantly extend the range of the missile to meet well-documented Indo-Pacific Command requirements. The committee notes that competition for PrSM Increment 4 should ensure an affordable cost and provide the Army with technology options to meet its demanding range requirements. The committee is concerned, however, that the Army lacks sufficient funding to maintain the PrSM Increment 4 schedule and the associated acquisition strategy.

Therefore, the committee directs the Secretary of the Army to provide a briefing to the House Committee on Armed Forces not later than March 15, 2025, on the PrSM Increment 4 program. The report may include a classified annex and shall include the following:

(1) a detailed description of the PrSM Increment 4 requirements and schedule;

(2) an assessment of Technology Readiness Levels including rocket motor development; and

(3) a layout of the acquisition strategy and the resources needed to complete competitive development.

PROCUREMENT OF WEAPONS AND TRACKED COMBAT VEHICLES, ARMY

Items of Special Interest

M240 Industrial Base

The committee is concerned about the Army's ongoing efforts to sustain the family of M240 medium machine guns. The Army's sustainment plan and approach to the industrial base remain unclear. The committee notes that the Army has programmed little or no weapons procurement funding for the M240, the Army's only medium machine gun, in fiscal year 2024 and 2025, instead relying on the replacement of individual parts for sustainment. The committee understands that, while the Army maintains significant quantities of M240s in inventory, the Army lacks consolidated, detailed information on the state and status of that inventory. Additionally, that inventory primarily consists of legacy M240B variants, as opposed to the lighter and more reliable M240L. Currently, the Army has no defined replacement for the M240 and the weapon system is expected to be used well into the future. The committee is concerned that the Army's current strategy could result in a decline or elimination of industrial capacity to manufacture this critical weapons system.

Therefore, the committee directs the Secretary of the Army to provide a briefing to the House Committee on Armed Services not later than December 22, 2024, on the family of M240 medium machine guns. This briefing shall include the following items:

(1) an evaluation of the M240 industrial base through the Future Years Defense Plan;

(2) an overview of steps taken or planned to be taken to sustain the industrial base; and

(3) options to sustain the industrial base through the upgrade of legacy systems, such as replacing the existing inventory of M240B medium machine guns with the lighter weight M240L model.

PROCUREMENT OF AMMUNITION, ARMY

Items of Special Interest

Drone-Agnostic Droppable Munitions

The committee notes that there may be utility in the acquisition of drone-agnostic droppable munitions that have a dual tactical capacity to explode in the air or on impact. The committee notes that such a munition may provide the warfighter, specifically infantry brigade combat teams, with a cost-effective, easy-to-pack option to destroy enemy targets, aid in trench and urban warfare, and clear minefields for obstacle reduction.

Therefore, the committee directs the Secretary of the Army to provide a briefing to the House Committee on Armed Services not later than February 1, 2025, on the feasibility and utility of acquiring drone-agnostic droppable munitions that have a dual tactical capacity to explode in the air or on impact. This briefing shall include an evaluation of the cost-effectiveness and affordability of drone-agnostic droppable munitions in comparison to one-way small uncrewed aerial

systems and an evaluation of the U.S. defense industrial base's capacity and capability to produce drone-agnostic droppable munitions.

OTHER PROCUREMENT, ARMY

Items of Special Interest

Army Load-Carrying Technology Advancements

The committee recognizes the need to advance the warfighter's capabilities through innovative load-carrying solutions. The committee notes that the positive outcomes associated with the Maneuverable Lightweight Electric Weight Reducer (MLEWR) effort highlight the potential for significant enhancements in troop mobility, lethality, and survivability. Further, the committee understands that the Army has initiated the validation of a requirement for the Dismount Unit Soldier Transport (DUST) based on the MLEWR effort.

Therefore, the committee strongly encourages the Secretary of the Army to prioritize the inclusion of dedicated acquisition funding for load-carrying technology advancements, such as those demonstrated in the MLEWR program, within the Fiscal Year 2026 Program Objective Memorandum. This action is essential to secure the rapid procurement and deployment of these capabilities, ensuring they are available to support soldiers in the near future.

Additionally, the committee directs the Secretary of the Army to provide a briefing to the House Committee on Armed Services by December 30, 2024. This briefing should include:

(1) comprehensive feedback from the units assessing the efficacy and utility of the current load-carrying technologies under evaluation, with an emphasis on the MLEWR effort. The briefing should encapsulate the operational benefits, challenges encountered, and potential for integration at scale;

(2) a clear and detailed description of the accessory kits currently being utilized by units that have received systems under the MLEWR effort, detailing how each accessory enhances the platform's utility and the warfighter's mission effectiveness;

(3) an update on the progression and validation status of the DUST Capability Development Document, including an anticipated timeline and the steps being taken towards achieving its milestones; and

(4) a description of the initiatives being undertaken to expedite the fielding of the aforementioned capabilities in fiscal year 2026, along with an analysis of potential obstacles and the strategies devised to address them.

Army Utilization of Link 16

The committee notes that Link 16 is the primary Tactical Data Link for U.S. and allied military forces. Additionally, the committee notes that the Army has been designated the lead service, and joint proponent for contested logistics

worldwide. The committee understands that contested logistics will rely on joint interoperability. However, the committee is concerned that the delays in the Army fielding Link 16 throughout ground forces is undermining the timely attainment of force optimization. Therefore, the committee directs the Secretary of the Army to provide a briefing to the House Committee on Armed Services by December 1, 2024, on the Army's plan to accelerate the fielding of Link 16 throughout the Army for command and control, fires, and to ensure maximum interoperability, lethality, and survivability of combat and combat support elements supporting the Joint Force within contested logistics environments in the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command theater and meeting Joint All-Domain Command and Control goals worldwide.

Fielding Counter-Unmanned Aircraft Systems Capabilities to Brigade Combat Teams

The committee notes the current and emerging threat small drones pose to soldiers and formations. The small unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) threat continues to evolve, with enemy drones becoming more capable and dangerous, exposing a critical vulnerability of vehicles in mounted formations that lack adequate counter-unmanned aircraft systems (C-UAS) protection. Drones are now part of all future conflicts regardless of theater. Therefore, the Army must field C-UAS capabilities as quickly as possible to protect all maneuver forces and facilities.

In the committee report accompanying the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2024 (H. Rept. 118-125), the committee noted the need for the Army to ensure small-unit tactical level formations have combat vehicles with kinetic and non-kinetic defeat capabilities to protect them from Group I-III UAS. The committee encouraged the Army to field the single vehicle C-UAS capability with urgency. The committee is encouraged by the Army decision to design, build, test, and field a single Stryker variant of the Mobile, Low, Slow, Small Unmanned Aircraft Integrated Defeat System (M-LIDS) capability. This consolidation of proven C-UAS technologies on a single Stryker reduces costs, increases lethality, improves reliability, and achieves commonality with other air defense systems.

The committee is aware of the June 2023, Commanding General, I Corps, signed Emerging Operational Needs Statement, highlighting the urgent need for a mobile C-UAS capability for Stryker units at the tactical level. The committee understands the Army is set to receive two division sets of the M-LIDS Strykers to protect echelon above brigade units and assets. However, the committee has not seen the urgency to design, develop, test, and field mobile C-UAS capabilities for mounted Brigade Combat Teams (BCTs) and below.

The committee continues to encourage the Army to accelerate fielding of a single vehicle C-UAS capability for mounted BCT formations and below. Therefore, the committee directs the Secretary of the Army to provide a briefing to the House Committee on Armed Services no later than December 1, 2024, on the plan to meet the urgent needs of mounted tactical formations requesting these capabilities.

High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicles Retrofit Plan

The committee directs the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Acquisition, Logistics, and Technology to provide a briefing to the House Committee on Armed Services not later than December 1, 2024, on its plan to ensure that all high mobility multipurpose wheeled vehicles are retrofitted with anti-lock brake systems and electronic stability control kits as expeditiously as possible. This briefing should include the following:

(1) a description of the steps required to ramp up production of the anti-lock brake system and electronic stability control kits;

(2) challenges identified by the Army, if any, to expediting these retrofits;

(3) monthly rates of retrofits currently underway, as well estimated monthly rates of retrofits if funding were increased; and

(4) identification of any authorities or funding necessary for secondary destination transportation.

Modular Standardized Weapons and Targeting Mount

The committee is encouraged by the Department's continued progress on the next generation directed energy weapons and targeting systems for deployment on wheeled and tracked vehicles and military installations. However, the committee is concerned that the use of disparate mounting solutions unnecessarily increases costs for such systems and diminishes military readiness. The committee is aware of modular payload-agnostic mounting solutions capable of supporting Department requirements while enhancing operational performance and reducing costs to the taxpayer. Therefore, the committee directs the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment to provide a briefing to the House Committee on Armed Services by January 30, 2025, that examines requirements and costs for weapon and targeting mounts across the Joint Force and analyzes the feasibility of standardizing a payload-agnostic mounting solution for such systems. This briefing should be unclassified but may include a classified annex.

Protecting Armored Brigade Combat Teams on the Modern Battlefield

Following the cancellation of the Extended Range Cannon Artillery program, the committee is concerned about the evolving risks and lethality of Armored Brigade Combat Teams. Specifically the committee is concerned about the need for a rapid solution to the Army’s Long-Range capability for howitzers, and the adaptation to the increasing prevalence of unmanned aerial systems in modern warfare.

Therefore, the committee directs the Secretary of the Army to provide a briefing to the House Committee on Armed Services not later than February 1, 2025, on the following:

(1) an assessment of how our current formations would perform in the current environment, like Ukraine, for both counter unmanned aerial systems and long-range cannon fires;

(2) a review of our solution options in terms of best operational performance by unit type, recognizing that factors such as lethality, survivability, and maneuverability differ between Stryker brigades and Armored brigades;

(3) an evaluation of whether new vehicles or programs are being considered, taking into account the historical tendency for new starts to be time-consuming, costly, and prone to failure. The benefits of this approach should be weighed against the total costs, including developmental cost, acquisitions costs, long-term sustainment, and operational costs;

(4) an exploration of the potential for existing platforms to perform these missions. Information should be provided on existing platforms that have already been integrated and fielded in the Army. The benefits of this approach should be weighed against the total costs, including developmental cost, acquisitions costs, long-term sustainment, and operational costs; and

(5) a recommendation for the best option for quickly fielding this capability at the lowest cost to the Government.

Rapidly Deployable, Short Range Air Defense System

The committee recognizes the standard budget and acquisition process of the Department of Defense does not allow for agile development and rapid procurement of innovative technological solutions designed to solve real-world challenges. However, today's continually evolving threats require the Department of Defense to adapt and allow for creative and agile responses to emergent problems.

In early fiscal year 2023, the Air Force introduced a requirement for a mobile short range air defense solution that could be rapidly and affordably developed and fielded for use in Ukraine. A family of systems called FrankenSAM was designed to defend against manned and unmanned aerial threats using a ground launch system that integrates an existing supply of air-to-air missiles into an open-architecture fire control backbone. The FrankenSAM program demonstrated the ability of the Air Force and industry to rapidly produce effective solutions to immediate problems when given the imperative to perform critical missions, such as air defense.

The committee directs the Secretary of the Army to provide a briefing to the House Committee on Armed Services not later than February 1, 2025, on how the Department and partner countries have utilized the FrankenSAM system in contingency operations. The briefing should include what additional resources may be required to expand and improve the FrankenSAM system, and how the Department can leverage the capability for quick reaction or extended use in other theaters.

Resilient Waveforms and Interoperability with Coalition Partners

The committee notes that it is critical to ensure effective interoperability between the United States and key partners in critically contested environments. Moreover, the committee understands that several partner nations are looking to

procure waveforms that provide key capabilities, including anti-jam and interoperability with partners for their organic very high-frequency radios.

The committee notes that it has previously supported tactical communications procurements for key partners throughout the world and understands that there are significant benefits to ensuring that these systems are able to communicate with U.S.-fielded systems primarily through software upgrades. Moreover, the committee strongly encourages the Army to ensure that they adopt waveforms that are interoperable with key international partners and allies in any waveform procurements for both current programs of record and future programs of records.

Therefore, the committee directs the Secretary of the Army to provide a briefing to the House Committee on Armed Services not later than December 31, 2024, on resilient waveforms and interoperability for the Army and coalition partners. This briefing shall include the following items:

(1) an evaluation of the Army's efforts to ensure the adoption of waveforms that are interoperable with key international partners and allies in any waveform procurements for both current programs of record and future programs of records; and

(2) a plan to ensure interoperability in its future procurement of waveform technologies.

Tethered Unmanned Aircraft Systems Capabilities

The committee is encouraged by the positive feedback from Army units and combatant commanders regarding the emerging use of tethered unmanned aircraft systems (Te-UAS) as highly mobile, variable height antennas that extend the range and effectiveness of communications, intelligence, and force protection payloads currently in inventory. This technology may prove to be ideally suited for expeditionary, multi-domain, decentralized operations. The committee believes the Army should consider incorporating these capabilities into existing tactical network, intelligence, electronic warfare, and maneuver sensors programs to enhance their existing capabilities while potentially extending their service life. Therefore, the committee directs the Secretary of the Army to provide a briefing to the House Committee on Armed Services no later than December 15, 2024, on the Army's strategy and plans for wider development and fielding of Te-UAS throughout the force.

Trusted Military Communications via Team Awareness Kit

The committee recognizes that interoperable, low cost, mesh radio systems present unique benefits and capabilities to the Army. The committee also recognizes that artificial intelligence (AI) and voice replication pose considerable threats to tactical military communications. Moreover, the committee understands that the Department of Defense requires trusted, robust interoperable communication networks that are not vulnerable to AI voice manipulation. For example, mesh

network radios with low electromagnetic signature, leveraging the Android Team Awareness Kit, may provide this capability to the tactical level while maintaining interoperability and trusted communication.

The committee encourages the Department of the Army to broadly adopt these systems to support tactical units' communications, and command and control needs.

Therefore, the committee directs the Secretary of the Army to provide a briefing to the House Committee on Armed Services by February 1, 2025, on their plan to provide tactical mesh radio systems to the ground forces. That plan shall include resourcing requirements and cost and timeline for implementation.

AIRCRAFT PROCUREMENT, AIR FORCE

Items of Special Interest

Air Force A-10 Divestment Timeline

The committee notes that actions are necessary in order to continue force modernization and maintenance efforts congruent with the lethal, sustainable, resilient, survivable, and agile concepts outlined in the 2023 National Defense Strategy. These A-10 divestments will free up the canopy space and workforce necessary for maintaining fifth generation aircraft in organic depots, which will be critical to securing the highly contested combat environments of the future.

Therefore, the committee directs the Secretary of the Air Force to provide a briefing to the House Committee on Armed Services not later than February 1, 2025, detailing how the Air Force is proceeding to divest A-10 aircraft on the expected timeline through fiscal year 2029. If the secretary deviates from the aforementioned timeline, the secretary is directed to provide a subsequent briefing that provides:

(1) an explanation for the delay;

(2) a plan to re-establish expected timeframe; and

(3) a declaration of whether any specific policy changes or appropriations are necessary to meet the timeline for A-10 divestiture.

Finally, the briefing should include an overview on how organic depot facilities are managing the workforce transition to fifth generation aircraft.

Efficient Medium-Scale Propulsion for Collaborative Combat Aircraft

The committee notes that last fiscal year's 2024 budget request included a large increase for Collaborative Combat Aircraft (CCA) under the Next Generation Air Dominance program, and notes that the 2025 budget request continues this priority capability. The committee believes that these aircraft demonstrate significant potential as a force multiplier capable of overwhelming anti-access area denial threat capabilities that limit force projection. The committee supports rapid development and testing to begin fielding in the late 2020s.

CCA operational concepts call for extended unrefueled range greater than 3,000 nautical miles, advanced sensor and weapons packages to conduct varied missions, and the ability to take-off from runways one quarter the length of traditional runways. Identifying a propulsion system capable of meeting thrust and electrical power requirements, while aligning with strict cost and timeframe objectives, is necessary to afford the minimum 1,000 aircraft targeted by the Secretary of the Air Force. In order to minimize cost and risk, the committee encourages the Air Force to consider propulsion systems currently in military service, particularly those that are upgradeable through spiral insertion of key technologies under development through the Efficient Medium Scale Propulsion program.

Therefore, the committee directs the Secretary of the Air Force to provide a report to the congressional defense committees not later than February 1, 2025, on the minimum viable propulsion capability necessary to carry identified mission systems and weapons payloads, accounting for range, fuel load, and runway profile. The report should identify modifiable commercial off-the-shelf propulsion systems in the Department of Defense inventory that meet power and scalability requirements and can be rapidly modified with technologies in development. The report should further detail plans to continue funding development of critical modifications, including distortion tolerant fans, embedded generators, and fan duct heat exchangers.

F-35 Fifth-Generation Weapons Development and Fielding

The committee is unclear as to the Air Force's intent to execute a service-wide initiative to implement development and procurement of next-generation advanced capability weapons, over what exists in the inventory today with current weapons that could complement advanced capabilities and sensors inherent within fifth-generation aircraft. The committee believes that a critical problem is that fifth-generation aircraft have not consistently been outfitted with next-generation advanced weaponry and equipment.

Therefore, the committee directs the Secretary of the Air Force to provide a report to the congressional defense committees not later than April 1, 2025, that includes the following elements:

(1) a definition for fifth-generation weapons capabilities that matches the sensing, processing, and battle management capabilities needed to address increasing adversarial threats;

(2) a review of the state of each category of fifth-generation weapons currently in development;

(3) a review of the current weapons that meet the above definition that are deployed;

(4) an assessment of the number of fifth-generation weapons of each category that the Secretary assesses are needed to meet the anticipated threat environment in the next ten years;

(5) a strategy to close the gap between the need and the deployed fifth-generation weapons;

(6) progress made in meeting the assessed number of needed weapons from the previous report; and

(7) an assessment of any needed changes to policy to deliver the categories of fifth-generation weapons detailed in the report in the assessed timeline.

MH-139 Formal Training Unit

The committee is concerned with the Air Force's plans to decrease the MH-139's Formal Training Unit (FTU) from 10 aircraft down to 8 aircraft. The committee strongly encourages the Air Force to reevaluate its plans for the MH-139 FTU. The committee believes that due to the important roles and responsibilities assigned to the MH-139 platform the Air Force would be better served maintaining its original plan of providing 10 aircrafts to its MH-139 FTU.

Therefore, the committee directs the Secretary of the Air Force to provide a briefing to the House Committee on Armed Services no later than December 1, 2024, on the benefits of acquiring and maintaining a 10-aircraft MH-139 FTU.

OTHER PROCUREMENT, AIR FORCE

Items of Special Interest

F-35 Tactical Combat Training System Increment II Training Capability

The committee recognizes that joint and coalition combat air forces training environments should mimic expected combat environments, which may necessitate U.S. test and training ranges having multi-level secure instrumentation to enable full live-virtual-constructive (LVC) capabilities. Such capabilities enable large scale combat simulations that link live training with other pilot training around the world operating in simulators or integrating allied air forces on common missions.

The committee commends the Secretary of the Navy for leading the joint force with the development and adoption of the Tactical Combat Training System, Increment II (TCTS II), which has this LVC functionality. However, the committee remains concerned that despite an F-35 Joint Strike Fighter Executive Steering Board decision memorandum, dated September 22, 2020, directing funding alignment to incorporate the TCTS II system in the F-35, there is no certified plan to implement this platform-interoperable LVC training capability, which potentially prevents fifth generation platforms from adequately training with other fourth generation joint force or coalition assets.

Therefore, the committee directs the Undersecretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment, in coordination with the Secretary of the Air Force, Secretary of the Navy and the F-35 Program Executive Officer, to provide a report to the congressional defense committees not later than March 1, 2025, explaining how the TCTS II training capability will be incorporated, resourced, and initially

operational by 2027 and achieving full operational capability across the F-35 enterprise by 2030.

PROCUREMENT, DEFENSE-WIDE

Items of Special Interest

Attritable Unmanned Aircraft Systems

The committee notes that the Department of Defense's use of the term "attritable unmanned aircraft system (UAS)" remains ambiguous. The committee recognizes that categorizing UAS as expendable or attritable varies with the situation. Additionally, the committee acknowledges the difficulty of classifying UAS into weight-based categories as expendable or attritable, considering the different sensor and munition configurations they can carry. However, the committee believes there is still utility in illuminating how the Department of Defense views and categorizes its UAS as attritable. Therefore, the committee directs the Secretary of Defense, in coordination with the Secretary of the Army, the Secretary of the Air Force, and the Secretary of the Navy to provide a briefing to the House Committee on Armed Services no later than December 1, 2024, on how the Department of Defense categorizes UAS as attritable. This briefing shall include each military service's definition of “attritable” in per unit dollar amounts for Group 1, Group 2, Group 3, Group 4, and Group 5 UAS. These definitions may be provided as a variable range due to payload and situation-dependent configurations.

Department of Defense Unmanned Aerial Systems Interoperability and Compliance with North Atlantic Treaty Organization Standardization Agreement 4586

The committee notes that the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Standardization Agreement (STANAG) 4586 specifies the interoperability for unmanned aerial systems (UAS) controls and is critical to increased combat effectiveness of NATO Combined and Joint Services. The committee understands that STANAG defines architectures, interfaces, communication protocols, data elements and message formats, and includes data link, command and control, and human/computer interfaces. However, the committee understands that STANAG 4586 primarily concerns large, fixed-wing UAS and may not be applicable to group 1 small UAS (sUAS) and autonomous UAS, whose interoperability is largely standardized through Robotic and Autonomous System-Air protocols.

Therefore, the committee directs the Secretary of Defense to provide a briefing to the House Committee on Armed Services no later than December 1, 2024, on the Department of Defense's strategy to assure applicable UAS programs

comply with STANAG 4586, and how interoperability standards for autonomous and sUAS may be aligned across NATO Combined and Joint Services.

TITLE II—RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT, TEST, AND EVALUATION

RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT, TEST, AND EVALUATION, ARMY

Items of Special Interest

Adaptive Landing Gear Systems for Group 3 and Group 4 Unmanned Rotorcraft

The committee notes that there exists pressing challenges that will require innovative rotorcraft technologies for successful deployment in strategic, austere, or nonpermissive environments. The committee recognizes the limitations of conventional landing gear on slopes less than 5 degrees due to dynamic rollover and loss of control authority. Moreover, the committee notes there may be a necessity for an adaptive landing gear system. This system would dynamically adapt through active control, sensing, and actuation, thus enabling rotorcraft to operate effectively in demanding conditions and support expeditionary operations.

The committee appreciates the ongoing exploratory research and flight demonstrations conducted by the U.S. Army Combat Capabilities Development Command's Aviation & Missile Center on unmanned rotorcraft on Group 3 and Group 4 unmanned rotorcraft. Additionally, the committee recognizes the capacity and capability within the U.S.-based commercial industry to develop and provide such an adaptive landing gear system, leveraging advancements in lightweight composite structures, mechanism design, and nonlinear control algorithms.

Therefore, the committee directs the Secretary of the Army to provide a briefing to the House Committee on Armed Services not later than February 1, 2025, on adaptive landing gear systems for Group 3 and Group 4 unmanned rotorcraft. This briefing shall include the following items:

(1) a plan to detailing a roadmap for the development, demonstration, and integration of U.S.-based commercial adaptive landing gear system solutions into current and future unmanned rotorcraft within Groups 3 and 4, specifically designed to enhance their performance in expeditionary operations;

(2) an evaluation of the commercial industrial base for adaptive landing gear systems that could be used for Group 3 and Group 4 unmanned rotorcraft; and

(3) an evaluation of associated actions and milestones required to ensure successful implementation and integration of an adaptive landing gear system on Group 3 and Group 4 unmanned rotorcraft.

Passive Multi-Static Radar Technology for Mobile Counter-Unmanned Aircraft Systems

The committee supports the ongoing effort by the Department of Defense to develop counter-unmanned aircraft systems (C-UAS) technology. However, the prolific availability of UAS platforms and demonstrated employment by nation states and non-state actors requires the Department to expedite the fielding of proven technology. Moreover, the current conflict in Ukraine and recent Tower 22 attack in Jordan highlight the need for radio frequency passive capabilities due to the current condition of warfare and rapid change of the operational environment. Small size, weight and power passive multi-static radar technology for mobile C-UAS vehicle and base defense systems is fully tested, proven, and available. Therefore, the committee encourages the Department of Defense to rapidly field passive multi-static radar detection systems across the joint force.

Therefore, the committee directs the Secretary of the Army to provide a briefing to the House Committee on Armed Services by February 1, 2025, on the Army's progress in fielding this technology. Specifically, the briefing should include the following:

(1) the Army's plan to incorporate passive multi-static radar technology into its current C-UAS and base defense architecture;

(2) current efforts within the Army to integrate passive multi-static radar technology into integrated C-UAS systems;

(3) an assessment of capability gaps between current threat detection technology and threat defeat systems; and

(4) any current or planned research, development, test, and evaluation on passive multi-static radar detection.

Rotorcraft Survivability

The committee is increasingly concerned about the threat to Department of Defense rotorcraft from emerging threats, Man-Portable Air-Defense Systems (MANPADS), and other contemporary air defense systems. The committee understands that these rotorcraft systems often fly into contested environments to protect and support ground forces, eliminate air defense systems, and lead search-and-rescue missions. However, the committee notes these aircraft are poorly defended and are increasingly at risk with the proliferation of MANPADS and other weapons that threaten low-flying air platforms. The committee notes that the Improved Threat Detection System (ITDS) has been intended to increase the survivability of rotorcraft, however, due to the cancellation of the Army's Future Attack and Reconnaissance Aircraft there may be significant impacts on this program. Moreover, the committee notes that the plans to place the ITDS on legacy rotorcraft remain ambiguous. Ultimately, the committee harbors concerns surrounding the survivability of rotorcraft against contemporary and emerging threats on the future battlefield, especially concerning legacy rotorcraft.

Therefore, the committee directs the Secretary of Defense, in coordination with the Secretary of the Army, the Secretary of the Navy, and the Secretary of the Air Force, to provide a briefing to the House Committee on Armed Services by

February 1, 2025, on options for fielding active protection on rotorcraft and other smaller airframes. The briefing shall also provide an evaluation of the survivability of legacy rotorcraft by airframe in contemporary contested environments against near-peer threats and the threats expected in the contested environment of the 2030s.

RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT, TEST, AND EVALUATION, AIR FORCE

Items of Special Interest

Next Generation Escape System Program Review

The committee is concerned by numerous delays associated with the planned ejection seat being integrated into Air Force B-2, F-15, F-16, and F-22 aircraft under the Next Generation Escape System (NGES) program. The committee notes that the NGES contract was awarded under a sole-source contract, and that at the time of contract award, the sole-source Justification and Approval (J&A) document, signed in September 2019, stated that there was "…only one ejection seat capable of meeting all of the [U.S.] Government's requirements, to include the qualification schedule as currently planned with Air Force's program objectives. Moreover, award to any other source would result in an unacceptable delay of at least 26 months…"

Since the award of the sole-source contract, the NGES ejection has not yet been qualified for, or integrated into, F-15, F-16, or F-22 aircraft. Disturbingly, 38 new B-2 ejection seats have been delivered to the Air Force to replace the existing ejection seat, but the new ejection seats have not been installed into any B-2 aircraft yet. Consequently since the original begin date of the NGES program, another viable vendor has developed and qualified an ejection seat and will soon begin integration into Foreign Military Sales variants of the F-16 Block 70 aircraft. Accordingly, the committee questions whether the assumptions underpinning the rationale for sole-source contracting remain valid to date, and questions whether it is in the best interest of the Air Force to continue foregoing a competitive acquisition strategy moving forward for the NGES program.

Therefore, the committee directs the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment to submit a report to the congressional defense committees no later than March 1, 2025, covering a review of the Air Force's requirements and current acquisition strategy for the NGES, the underpinning assumptions in the J&A that led to a sole-source contract award, and a review of market conditions for fighter ejection seats, and an assessment and recommendations as to whether the Air Force would be better served by entering into a competitive acquisition strategy for upgrading the Air Force F-16 ejection seat.

RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT, TEST, AND EVALUATION, DEFENSE-WIDE

Items of Special Interest

Critical Precursor Chemicals Supply Chain Vulnerabilities

The committee is concerned that our dependence on importing critical active and inert precursor chemicals for energetic materials and munitions from adversarial nations presents significant risk to U.S. national security. Of note, more than a third of critical precursor chemicals are sourced from China, threatening the Department of Defense's supply chains and readiness. The committee urges the Department to identify vulnerable active and inert precursor chemical supply chains for energetic materials and munitions and to communicate those gaps to the domestic biomanufacturing industrial base. Further, the committee directs the Secretary of Defense to provide a report to the House Committee on Armed Services not later than March 1, 2025. The report shall be unclassified and may include a classified annex if necessary. At a minimum, the report shall include:

(1) an analysis of the vulnerabilities of the Department's supply chains for active and inert precursor chemicals for energetic materials and munitions including but not limited to CL-20, Trinitrotoluene, Butanetriol Trinitrate, High Melting Explosive, and Royal Demolition Explosive;

(2) a review of the volumes of those active and inert precursor chemicals which were consumed by the Department in the last 5 fiscal years;

(3) an analysis of domestic biomanufacturing capabilities and projected future demand of the precursor chemicals; and

(4) a range of options to incorporate domestic biomanfacturing capabilities to cover the identified vulnerabilities.

Modular Open Systems Architecture Implementation for Collaborative Combat Aircraft Development and Fielding

The committee regards continued use of modular and open systems architecture (MOSA) standards as beneficial to reducing cost and increasing speed of evaluating and integrating new technologies to enhance competition, innovation, and interoperability. As the Air Force and Navy continue their acquisition of the Collaborative Combat Aircraft (CCA) capabilities, the committee expects the Air Force and Navy to ensure MOSA standards, as mandated in section 4401 of title 10, United States Code, are integrated into the acquisition and system requirements for CCA development.

Therefore, the committee directs the Secretary of the Navy, in coordination with the Secretary of the Air Force, to provide a briefing to the House Committee on Armed Services not later than February 1, 2025, that explains in sufficient detail how MOSA standards will be integrated into the acquisition and system requirements during development of CCA capabilities.

OPERATIONAL TEST AND EVALUATION, DEFENSE

Items of Special Interest

Joint Simulation Environment Development Integration and Fielding Plans

The U.S. Air Force and Space Force are fielding numerous fifth and sixth generation systems, platforms, and technologies to address great powers competition and conflict readiness requirements. Without dedicated integration of these advanced capabilities, the full deterrence value will not be realized and victory in future conflicts becomes uncertain. The threats within the Indo-Pacific theater heightens these risks in urgency and in consequence. Addressing these threats and challenges, conducting the necessary test and evaluation events, and practicing tactics, techniques and procedures during training can often only be accomplished in the Joint Simulation Environment (JSE).

Therefore, the committee directs the Secretary of the Air Force, in coordination with the Secretary of the Navy, to submit a report to the congressional defense committees not later than March 1, 2025, on the resource needs, accelerators, barriers, and other factors impacting the ability of the Department of the Air Force to integrate fifth generation Air and Space Command and Control (C2) (i.e., E-7 Wedgetail and Tactical Operations Centers-Light, Medium, and Fixed) with fifth and sixth generation fighters (i.e., F-22, F-35, Next Generation Air Dominance) and Collaborative Combat Aircraft (CCA) employing artificial intelligence). Specifically, the report should address:

(1) Air and Space C2 interoperability with fifth and sixth generation fighters to ensure common interfaces with CCAs;

(2) alignment to Combined Joint All Domain Command and Control training and operational interoperability, with AUKUS emphasis;

(3) All-Domain Long Range Kill Chains use cases that support advanced weapons; and

(4) the schedule and location fielding plans of each Secretary noted for deployment of JSE capability at various and required basing locations.

TITLE X—GENERAL PROVISIONS

ITEMS OF SPECIAL INTEREST

OTHER MATTERS

Ensuring Transport Layer Connectivity to Tactical Users

The committee supports the Space Development Agency's (SDA's) Proliferated Warfighter Space Architecture (PWSA) that will provide space-based capabilities to benefit joint operations with assured, resilient, low-latency military data and communications connectivity to a full range of platforms. The committee is encouraged by SDA's efforts through tranche 1 and tranche 2 to incorporate new on-

orbit technologies like active phased array antennas into the PWSA, which will help to maximize communication flexibility and connection with ground terminals. However, the committee is concerned that investments in new on-orbit capabilities are not being equivalently matched in upgrades to the tactical terminals employed by end-users to fully achieve the objectives of Joint All Domain Command and Control.

The committee supports acquiring tactical user equipment that meets or exceeds upgrades to on-orbit technologies to provide tactical users with fully capable high-bandwidth, low-latency communication links. Therefore, the committee directs the Secretary of Defense to provide a briefing to the House Committee on Armed Services not later than March 1, 2025, on plans to acquire tactical user equipment that connects with upgraded on-orbit technologies, to include multibeam active phased array antennas.

Transition and Fielding of Innovative Counter-Unmanned Aerial Systems Detect and Defeat Capabilities

Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS) continue to evolve rapidly and present growing threats to the United States and allied personnel and infrastructure. Although many adversarial UAS are inexpensive and easy to replace, U.S. forces often respond with defensive capabilities that are much more expensive, limited in quantity, and slow to replace. Moreover, many legacy systems struggle to effectively counter larger UAS. The committee believes the most effective counter-UAS capabilities for the joint force are those using software-defined technologies of autonomy, artificial intelligence (AI), and machine learning to outpace the current and evolving UAS threats.

The committee commends U.S. Special Operations Command and U.S. Central Command for leveraging innovative capabilities like open-architecture, vertical take-off and land, and AI-driven autonomous air vehicles for Group 3 defeat missions. However, the committee is concerned that the military services have not budgeted to sustain and expand these types of critical capabilities in fiscal year 2025 or in the Future Years Defense Program. For example, the Army has failed to transition these capabilities at scale, and the Navy and Air Force lack clear program office direction to begin such transition.

The committee directs the Secretary of the Army, in coordination with the Secretaries of the Navy and Air Force, to provide a briefing to the House Committee on Armed Services by December 13, 2024, on plans to resource, transition, and scale advanced, AI-enabled, combat-validated UAS defeat capabilities to conventional forces within the department.