

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE HOWARD P. "BUCK" McKEON
CHAIRMAN, HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON HOUSE ADMINISTRATION

Introduction

Chairman Miller, Mr. Brady, distinguished member of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity once again to testify on the resource requirements of the Armed Services Committee and the work that drives those requirements. I am grateful to be joined here today by my partner and ranking member, Adam Smith.

Adam's presence here today is more than symbolic. I am proud to say that the Armed Services Committee is a truly bi-partisan committee. For more than a half-century our committee has fulfilled the House's Constitutional responsibility to "provide for the common defense."

We do that each year by pulling our parties together to craft an annual defense authorization bill. Each year Adam and I have worked to stop politics at the water's edge and build a sound military and national security policy based on bi-partisan consensus; sending a message to every man and women in uniform that their country is behind them.

This week, we will hold the first series of hearings in preparation for the 52nd annual NDAA. We will do it in the toughest partisan environment either of us has ever known. Every year naysayers ask if this is the cycle when we won't get a bill done and every year we beat the odds. Last year, we passed our bill with only hours to spare.

The partisan environment does not give me pause. The enhanced oversight burden we face does not deter me. If there is one thing that I worry will stop us from getting our work done, or cause us to produce a substandard product; it is a resource deficit in the committee.

Who we are and what we do

The Armed Services Committee is the largest committee in the House, overseeing the largest federal department. Yet, we are also a "no frills," "bang for your buck" organization. The Committee ranks 10th on overall committee funding. We have the lowest staff to member ratio of any committee at 1:1.15. Traditionally, we return less than 1% of our allocated funds.

I appreciate that last year, HASC resources were not cut as deeply as they might have been. However, the cut did have an impact. Though we are authorized 71 staff slots, we could only sustain 67 personnel on staff in the 112th Congress. In order to

sustain this reduced staff we were forced to cancel important resources like subscriptions and deferred maintenance and replacement of equipment .

96% of the Committee budget is spent on staff salaries. That is the case, in large part, because we rely on highly specialized staff to carry out our mission. Employees must be able to hold top level security clearances as a condition of employment. They must also be not just proficient, but experts in a variety of national security policies, weapons platforms, and strategically vital regions. Most importantly Adam and I have to be able to rely on them to do the herculean behind the scenes work that it takes to get a bill like the NDAA passed. Like many Americans, HASC staff has gone without cost of living adjustments for two years.

At the proposed 11% cut, the committee will only be able to support 61 staff and even then we may need to implement a furlough system. We will limp by on old equipment and rely on detailees from other agencies to carry out vital oversight work. We will not be able to fill critical vacancies in our Tactical Air and Land Forces Subcommittee or the Subcommittee on Military Personnel.

This would cripple committee functions at an important time. The Defense Bill we have already begun work on for FY14 will be one of the most important our committee has ever passed. This is a pivotal time for the Department of Defense, their resources are on the decline while threats around the world are on the rise.

The Committee will have a decisive role to play in a number of key areas. We will help determine how our forces withdraw from Afghanistan without giving up the gains we have made over the course of a decade. We will help chart the military's course in dealing with the emerging cyber threat, while also managing our status as a likely target of cyber attack.

We will ensure that missions against the emerging al Qaeda threat in North Africa are properly resourced. As military resources decline, the HASC will also ensure that DoD does not divest itself of critical equipment – like Guard and Reserve platforms- in a manner inconsistent with domestic requirements.

Most importantly, we will embark on a substantial reform project. Adam and I often disagree on the appropriate amount to spend on the military. But we do agree on this: As it stands today our military strategy, the defense budget, DoD policy, and the threats around the world are mismatched. If we do not reform the Pentagon, we will find ourselves in a readiness crisis with a hollow force.

In the absence of an FY14 Defense Authorization Bill, The Pentagon and the White House will begin making a series of irreversible and short-sighted decisions. These decisions are aimed at resolving short-term budget problems at the expense of long-term strategic challenges. Many of you have already experienced the first taste of those choices when the Air Guard attempted to divest itself of critical equipment last year. It was the House Armed Services Committee that uncovered the flaws in the

Air Force's logic and it was the HASC, through the NDAA, that protected those assets with a better solution.

I fully expect that sequestration will force the Army to make the same tough choices for the National Guard this year. Without a FY14 Defense Bill, Congress will have a difficult time influencing those choices. Without a fully staffed and resourced and resourced committee, passing an adequate FY14 NDAA is put at risk.

Thank you again Chairman Miller, for your time and the opportunity to testify. I am happy to answer your questions after Mr. Smith's testimony.