

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE ADAM SMITH
RANKING MEMBER, COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON HOUSE ADMINISTRATION

March 6, 2013

Madame Chairman, Mr. Brady, and distinguished members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity once again to testify on the funding needs of the Committee on Armed Services. As always, I am pleased to do so with my Chairman and friend, Buck McKeon.

As Buck mentioned, we appear before you as a functioning bipartisan committee, faithfully passing a defense authorization bill for 51 consecutive years. Each year the task grows more difficult as threats to our nation continue to evolve and the impact of our fiscal situation undermine national security. There is no doubt that this year will be challenging. Implementation of across the board spending cuts under the BCA and now sequestration are already forcing tough decisions regarding operations and maintenance, personnel, and future weapon systems acquisitions. The committee will need to oversee the impacts of these decisions throughout this fiscal year and into the future. Now, more than ever, it is imperative that the Armed Services Committee maintain its capacity to adequately conduct oversight of the Department of Defense to ensure that our nation's defense is assured.

I am pleased to report to you once again that the committee continues to maintain a bipartisan staff with fifteen of the total seventy-one staffing positions allocated to the minority. With emphasis on subject expertise rather than politics, the HASC staff, writ large, is second to none and it is often called on to support Members

on both sides of the aisle. The allocation of minority slots is unchanged following the 9.5% budget reduction in the 112th Congress. I have maintained one vacancy to be able to afford those fourteen staffers. My current staff includes twelve professional staff who oversee the complex multi-billion dollar defense budget and who support the Members on the committee, one administrative professional and one communications professional who is also responsible for a portion of the defense portfolio.

I understand that there is a proposed 11% reduction in funding for 2013 that may be applied to the 113th committee budget. If this reduction is approved, the \$811,224 decrease would take us to the 2006 committee funding level. This reduction would be difficult to absorb and I fear it would force yet another reduction in a committee staff where the ratio of members to staff is nearly one-to-one. Any further reduction to the already streamlined staffing structure would make it much more difficult to prepare the annual National Defense Authorization Act or to conduct oversight of DOD's 525 billion dollar defense base budget. It would also inhibit the continued oversight of the ongoing war in Afghanistan and of DOD operations around the world. I understand and strongly support the need for fiscal responsibility, but I believe that reducing HASC committee staff will impair the Congress' ability to conduct necessary oversight.

The Chairman and I are committed to finding efficiencies and savings in the committee's operating budget. Over the past year the majority has lost and is yet to replace three of the committee's most senior staffers who had a combined professional tenure of nearly 65 years. That kind of expertise is difficult to replace and their loss is felt by both the majority and minority. Additionally, the majority has not backfilled recently vacated staff assistant positions, essentially utilizing one staff assistant for

three or more subcommittees. This must be corrected before we start the FY14 NDAA bill process or we will have great difficulty meeting the administrative needs of those subcommittees. To save more money, the committee has suspended publication subscriptions and implemented several efficiencies and cost-saving IT processes. All this has helped us meet our budget targets, but further cuts will likely damage committee operations and put in jeopardy its mission of providing effective legislative oversight over the Department of Defense.

I am proud to serve on the Armed Services Committee with my friend the Chairman as we execute our duty to provide for our men and women in uniform and for the defense of the nation. We are both committed to ensuring responsible defense spending in support of national security. I hope your committee will carefully weigh any committee budget recommendations before you and support us as we continue that vital mission.

Thank You, Madame Chairman.