

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

February 11th, 2015

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. I am pleased to do so with my new Chairman and friend, Mac Thornberry. Our committee has a strong bipartisan history and I am very confident it will continue and grow stronger under Mac's leadership.

The Chairman mentioned his desire to pursue reform within the Department of Defense in the same spirit that Congress once did prior to passage of the Goldwater-Nichols Act. He is correct in observing that the need for comprehensive reform in many areas within the department. The President has requested \$585 billion for the activities of the DOD in FY16. This represents more than half of the discretionary budget. Even at this level, the DOD is stretched to meet the national security challenges that come from our adversaries. It is absolutely vital that we, the Congress, oversee the department to ensure that resources are being properly spent to achieve our national security objectives.

Unfortunately, since my last appearance here at the beginning of the 113th Congress the committee's job has gotten more difficult. This is partly due to a more complex and difficult international security situation. Partly, it is harder because the sequester continues to disrupt the normal budgeting and planning processes that the DOD would use to address these emerging threats. But the greatest challenge we

have in addressing our oversight responsibilities has come from reduced committee funding. In 2013 the Armed Services Committee took an 11% cut to its budget. This is an enormous cut when you consider that 97% of the committee's budget is spent on staff salaries. The HASC majority administers the committee budget for both sides and the minority's portion of this cut forced my staff to take 18 days of furlough in 2013 until staff attrition created enough vacancies to balance the payroll. My current committee staff of 12 is three smaller than when we entered the minority in 2011 and our limited budget has made pay COLAs or merit increases impossible in the 113th Congress. As members, we rely on staff to assist in conducting oversight and with the functioning of the committee. Staffing reductions and constrained pay don't make those tasks easier.

In this fiscal environment, a professional and committed staffer's value cannot be overstated. It takes years to gain an understanding of the complex Defense budget and, when utilized, a single staffer can achieve significant savings for the American taxpayer which easily surpasses their salary. Due to the budget cuts to the Armed Services Committee, we have lost four seasoned staffers with roughly seventy years of experience. Seventy years. You cannot replace that level of knowledge and experience overnight. The small short-term savings achieved by cutting committee budgets significantly undermines this institution's ability to serve its constitutional responsibility.

We have already started our work on the FY 16 National Defense Authorization Act. As you all know, this is a bill that the committee has completed annually for 53 years. It is a huge undertaking with over 800 provisions that is vital to our military, service members and the national security. The minority works in partnership with the

majority to create this bill and to manage the hundreds of amendments that are proposed in the mark-ups and on the House floor. Certainly, we in the minority have our differences with the majority over parts of the bill, but, taken as a whole, it is an example of what a bipartisan process can achieve. This bill would not be possible without the committee's experienced staff. Our ability to pass this legislation and to conduct oversight is tied closely to the funding request before you.

I am very 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 support the Chairman's request for additional funding, and I hope you will look favorably on this request. I hope that your committee will carefully weigh any committee budget recommendations before you and that it supports us as we continue that vital mission.

Thank You, Madame Chairman.