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U.S. House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515-6035

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March 11, 2019

The Honorable John Yarmuth
Chairman, Committee on the Budget
U.S. House of Representatives
207 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman,

Pursuant to section 301(d) of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974, and clause 4(f) of rule X of the Rules of the House of Representatives for the 116th Congress, I am forwarding to you the views of the Republican Members of the Committee on Armed Services regarding the National Defense Budget Function (050) for fiscal year 2020 (FY20).

We appreciate the Committee on Budget's focus on the first job of the federal government—to provide for the common defense—and we are dedicated to fulfilling our responsibility to conduct oversight of the Department of Defense. We are committed to restoring the readiness of our Armed Forces and to implementing institutional reforms that ensure that our military has the best equipment, the best training, and the best pay and benefits our nation can possibly provide.

Our military is standing guard around the world to defend us and our way of life. Less than one percent of the Nation's total population is currently serving in the all-volunteer active force, guard, and reserves. Nearly half of those currently serving are 25 years old or younger, and they represent the best our country has to offer. Our duty in Congress is to provide the resources and authorities they need to accomplish the missions the Nation asks of them.

Strategic Environment

Unlike many other government programs, national security needs must necessarily reflect the strategic environment in which we find ourselves. We have consistently received testimony that the United States faces the most complex security challenges in its history from a variety of actors using a multitude of tools and tactics. Among those with whom we must be concerned are: Russia, China, Iran, North Korea, and a variety of terrorist groups. Among the domains in which we must be prepared to fight and to prevail are: land, sea, air, space, and cyberspace.

Ongoing Readiness Restoration

“Let me be clear: As hard as the last 16 years of war have been on our military, no enemy in the field has done as much to harm the readiness of U.S. military than the combined impact of the Budget Control Act’s spending caps, worsened by operating of 10 of the last 11 years under continuing resolutions of varied and unpredictable duration.”¹”

The funding levels Congress provided for fiscal years 2018 and 2019 through the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018 began to rebuild our military, repairing damage caused by years of high demands and low budgets. The military services have begun the long process of simultaneously restoring forces and equipment worn down by years of combat and accelerating critical modernization programs to stay ahead of strategic competitors with modern militaries, such as China and Russia. A return to an unstable and uncertain budget situation would be incredibly irresponsible, especially when we already know the consequences.

The cost of not providing the resources needed to maintain equipment, provide adequate training, and maintain appropriate manning levels is stark. There is no doubt that failure to provide appropriate funding directly affects the safety of our men and women in uniform. As just one example of the consequences of inadequate resourcing, there is a direct correlation between decreased defense spending and aviation mishaps. The trend lines are clear: reduced funding for maintenance and training clearly impacts safety.

Total Aviation Mishaps vs. Base Funding Department of Defense

(Constant FY19 \$ in Billions)

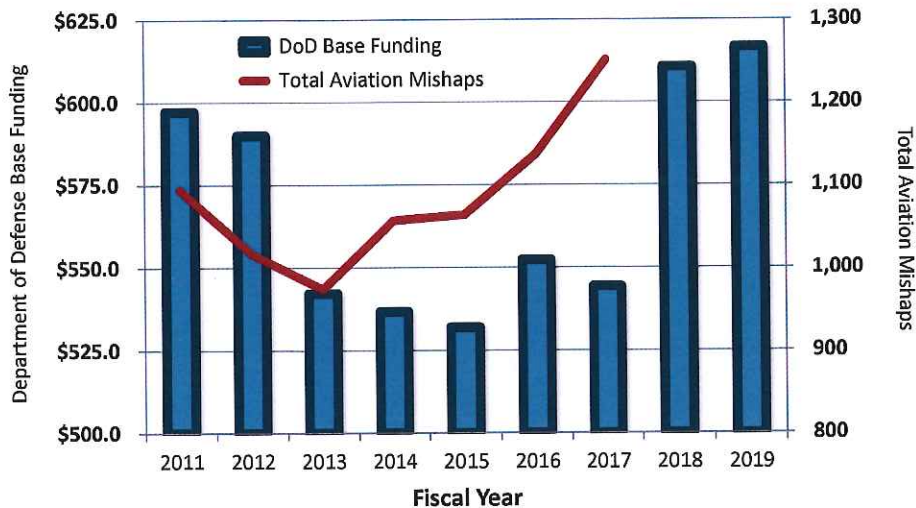


Table 2-1: Base Budget, War Funding and Supplementals by Military Department, by P.L. Title, National Defense Budget Estimates for FY 2019 (aka “Green Book”)

¹ Testimony of James N. Mattis, Secretary of Defense, before the House Armed Services Committee, “The National Defense Strategy and the Nuclear Posture Review,” February 6, 2018

Nuclear Arsenal and Deterrent

"They are viable today. They are safe, secure, reliable, ready, [and] they can do all the missions they need to do today, ... [b]ut in the not-too-distant future, that won't be the case. Sadly, we've delayed the modernization of those programs really too long. And now if you lay all the modernization programs out on a single table and you look at when they all deliver, they all deliver just in time".²

Our nuclear deterrence is the cornerstone upon which all of the rest of America's national security is built. Documents and testimony provided to the Committee demonstrate that shortfalls remain across the nuclear complex. Aging nuclear infrastructure includes one-of-a-kind production facilities that are significantly past their design life. The most recent Nuclear Posture Review correctly highlighted that while the United States has continued to reduce the number of nuclear weapons, others, including Russia and China, have moved in the opposite direction. They have added new types of nuclear capabilities to their arsenals; increased the importance of nuclear forces in their strategies and plans; and engaged in increasingly aggressive behavior, including in outer space and cyberspace.³ Delayed investment in the safety of our nuclear complex is inconsistent with the expectations and trust the American people and our allies place in our stewardship of these weapons.

Ground Forces

"Today we are outranged, outgunned, and outdated."⁴

Ground forces are struggling to balance executing current ongoing and emerging missions, focused mainly on non-state actors, while simultaneously preparing to deter future conflict. The Army and Marine Corps continue to operate at a high operational pace while simultaneously managing the consequences of earlier reductions to their authorized personnel levels (end strength). The combination of these two factors have put strain on our ground forces. In response, the Army and Marine Corps will need continued funding to meet their readiness challenges for current operations and successfully respond to future contingencies.

At the same time, the Army and Marine Corps must also renew their focus on fighting and winning high-end conflicts against near-peer state competitors. The ground force's ability to maintain its combat dominance and overmatch through combined arms maneuver warfare is being challenged by competitors who are developing capabilities and techniques specifically designed to counter competencies in which the United States has competitive advantage. Congress must provide resources for investment in modernization to rapidly develop and procure next-generation capabilities that improve the survivability and lethality of soldiers and marines, including long-range fires; air and missile defense; future vehicle lift technology; next generation combat vehicles; improved target acquisition; and close combat lethality capabilities.

Naval Force Projection

Our naval presence projects power across the globe, allowing for the freedom of movement for both commercial activities and defensive maneuvers. Freedom of navigation across the global

² General John Hyten, Commander U.S. STRATCOM <https://www.stratcom.mil/Media/News/News-Article-View/Article/1282165/usstratcom-commander-describes-challenges-of-21st-century-deterrence/>

³ Executive Summary of the 2018 Nuclear Posture Review. <https://media.defense.gov/2018/Feb/02/2001872877/-1/-1/1/EXECUTIVE-SUMMARY.PDF>

⁴ General Daniel B. Allyn, Vice Chief of Staff, United States Army, written testimony for the House Armed Services Committee, "The State of the Military," February 7, 2017

commons is a key tenet of the unprecedented American and global prosperity of the post-World War II era and is underwritten by American naval power. Strategic competitors such as China seek hegemony over critical maritime regions to control access to critical shipping lanes and to infringe on the sovereignty of neighboring countries. At the same time, deferred maintenance and diminished shipbuilding budgets erode our ability to project power. For example, the inadequacy of our aircraft carrier force structure is having an acute impact. Our commander responsible for the Middle East, General Joseph Votel, testified that Central Command is not adequately resourced with Navy aircraft carriers because of insufficient force structure.⁵ A previous commander of the Pacific, Admiral Harry Harris, indicated he received less than half of the attack submarines he needed to conduct peacetime operations.⁶ Admiral John Aquilino, the current commander of the Pacific Fleet, stated the Navy is 6,200 sailors short of adequately manning the surface fleet.⁷ Addressing these readiness shortfalls needs to be coupled with a disciplined focus on modernizing the fleet as well as adding additional naval force structure and manpower.

Air Dominance

Since the end of the Cold War, the United States has assumed air dominance in all military engagements and overseas contingency operations—an advantage that is quickly eroding as near-peer competitors continue to rapidly develop advanced air defense system capabilities. Proliferation of these advanced integrated air defense systems will challenge even our most strategic aircraft, including 5th generation strike fighters. Potential opponents have had nearly 30 years to study our air warfighting tactics, techniques, and procedures, which depend on stealth and precision, and have developed countermeasures and competing capabilities. In addition, shortfalls in defense spending have diminished the capacity, capability, and readiness of the United States tactical aviation (TACAIR) forces. Unprecedented operational tempo and reduced levels of funding for maintenance for our TACAIR forces have led to extremely low readiness rates across the Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps. We must continue to fund readiness recovery, while also increasing investment in modernization (future readiness). This modernization must include the development and procurement of advanced capabilities, such as the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter, that will be able to penetrate the most extreme contested environments.

Finally, we continue to fly an aged bomber fleet and to operate refueling aircraft designed and constructed over 60 years ago. To address these issues, the Air Force is developing the advanced Long Range Strike Bomber, B-21, and has begun accepting delivery of the new refueling tanker, KC-46A, this year. Successful integration of these capabilities, while retiring expensive older aircraft, will require a stable and reliable level of base funding. In the interim, the Air Force and industry are sustaining these capabilities, but at a steadily increasing cost.

National Security Space

“Space is integral to our way of life, our national security, and modern warfare. Although United States space systems have historically maintained a technological advantage over those of our

⁵ https://www.military.com/daily-news/2019/03/07/4-star-some-requests-carriers-middle-east-are-getting-turned-down.html?utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=ebb%2008.03.19&utm_term=Editorial%20-%20Early%20Bird%20Brief

⁶ <https://thediplomat.com/2017/05/us-pacific-command-needs-more-submarines-as-navy-struggles-to-maintain-force/>

⁷ Testimony of Admiral John C. Aquilino, USN Commander U.S. Pacific Fleet before the House Armed Services Committee, “Naval Surface Forces Readiness: Are Navy Reforms Adequate?,” February 26, 2019

potential adversaries, those potential adversaries are now advancing their space capabilities and actively developing ways to deny our use of space in a crisis or conflict. It is imperative that the United States adapt its national security organizations, policies, doctrine, and capabilities to deter aggression and protect our interests.⁸

Our space capabilities (Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance; communications; Global Positioning Systems) are vulnerable during peacetime and are largely not survivable during a conflict. Armed Service Committee Members have led the effort to stop the decline of our advantage in space and will continue to shape the development of the establishment of the Space Force through the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA).

Protecting Critical Technologies

The National Defense Strategy framed the current security environment as one of “rapid technological advancements that is changing the character of war.” We must adapt to this new reality or risk the erosion of our own military superiority. Since World War II, our U.S. military dominance has been assured by our technological advantage. We are entering a new era of strategic competition that is defined by our advancements in technologies, including artificial intelligence, microelectronics, hypersonics, and synthetic biology. We must protect these critical capabilities, and, more importantly, preserve the innovation ecosystem we depend on to develop and mature these groundbreaking technologies. The Committee will focus on investments in cybersecurity, counterintelligence, emerging science and technologies, and preserve the integrity of our research enterprise.

Perspectives on the Budget Environment

“Stable budgets and increased funding are necessary because of four forces acting on the Department at the same time.... Each of these four forces – 16 years of war, the worsening security environment, contested operations in multiple domain, and the rapid pace of technological change, require stable budgets and increased funding to provide for the protection of our citizens and for the survival of our freedoms. Because as expensive as it is for the American people to fund the military, it is far less costly in lives and treasure than a conventional war that we are unable to deter because we are seen as weak.”⁹

The primary job of the federal government is to provide for the common defense; yet today, only 15 percent of the budget is devoted to that task. By comparison, it was about 50 percent in the early 1960s. We spend about 3.4 percent of Gross Domestic Product on defense and international affairs compared to the 15 percent of GDP we spend on federal payments to individuals. In addition, while defense spending was cut approximately 20 percent in real terms starting in 2010, there was no similar reduction in the threats we faced. In fact, many of our global threats increased and diversified in scale and complexity. Congress must consider defense funding on the basis of current and projected threats, not on the basis of an arbitrary cap, or by attempting to balance defense spending with non-defense spending. Entitlement spending is the driver of our fiscal challenges and getting mandatory spending under control should be the focus of deficit reduction efforts. Even if we were to eliminate the Department of Defense, the deficit would still exist. We must address our Nation’s spending problem without compromising the defense of the Nation and all we hold dear.

⁸ Space Policy Directive-4: Establishment of the United States Space Force

⁹ Testimony of James N. Mattis, Secretary of Defense, before the House Armed Services Committee, “The Fiscal Year 2018 National Defense Authorization Budget Request from the Department of Defense,” June 12, 2017

What is Required

“We know now that continued growth in the base budget for at least three percent above inflation is the floor necessary to preserve today’s relative competitive advantage.... We are confronted with literally what has been described as a bow wave of modernization in the nuclear enterprise, in the cyber capabilities, our electronic warfare capabilities, space resilience, maritime capabilities, land forces. And so what we try to do is just get the right balance within the top line that we have been given. It is also why I highlighted that minimum of three percent just to maintain the competitive advantage that we have today.”¹⁰

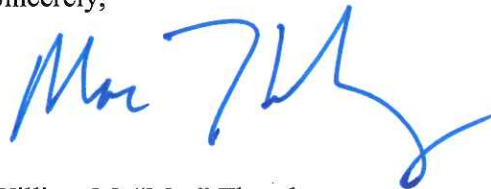
Several times before our Committee, Secretary Mattis and General Dunford testified that after Fiscal Year 2019, a minimum of three to five percent real growth in the defense budget would be required to continue to restore our readiness and to make progress in meeting the threats posed by near-peer competitors, such as Russia and China. Therefore, we support defense budgets that meet this minimum threshold.

Committee Legislative Activities

The primary legislative vehicle of the Committee on Armed Services is the (NDAA). The NDAA contains all the essential authorities required to sustain our military and is the chief mechanism through which Congress exercises its Article I, Section 8 responsibilities to raise and support armies and to provide and maintain a navy. The importance of this responsibility has ensured that, for 58 consecutive years, this bill has been signed into law. We intend to do the same this year and, working with our partners in the Senate, our goal is to file and pass a conference report before the end of the current fiscal year. As we develop the NDAA for fiscal year 2020, the committee will continue its practice of conducting significant hearings, briefings, and roundtable discussions to examine the current security environment, to evaluate proposals for reform, and to assess the military requirements supporting a coherent strategy.

We appreciate the opportunity to express these additional views on behalf of the Republican Members of the Committee on Armed Services. We look forward to working with you and the Members of the Committee on the Budget to construct a budget plan that reflects our commitment to meeting emerging threats and securing our national defense.

Sincerely,



William M. “Mac” Thornberry
Ranking Member

cc: The Honorable Steve Womack, Ranking Member

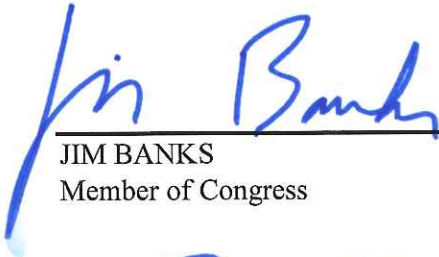
¹⁰ Testimony of Gen Joseph F. Dunford Jr. USMC, Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff before the House Armed Services Committee, “The Fiscal Year 2018 National Defense Authorization Budget Request from the Department of Defense,” June 12, 2017



RALPH LEE ABRAHAM
Member of Congress



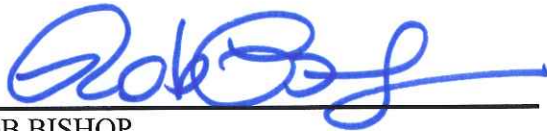
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Member of Congress



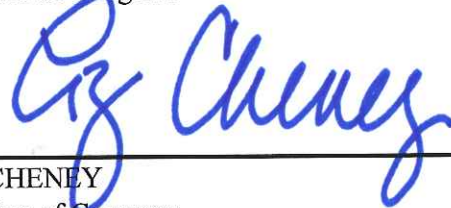
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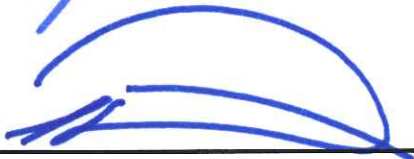
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Member of Congress



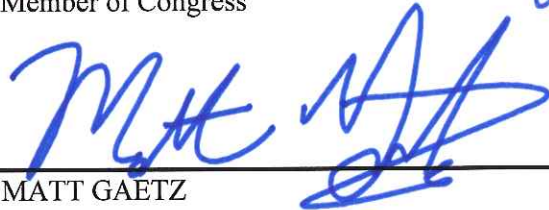
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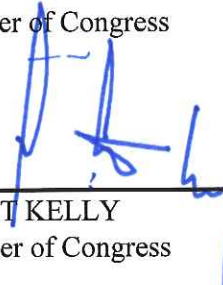
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