

Opening Statement for Ranking Member Ken Calvert

Appropriations Committee Markup of the FY22 Defense Appropriations Bill

July 13, 2021

Thank you, Chair DeLauro, Ranking Member Granger and Chair McCollum. Congratulations on your first bill as our new Chair and Happy belated Birthday. I know crafting this bill in such a short period of time was a challenge, so I would like to thank you and your staff for your hard work. I would also like to wish our HAC-D Minority Staff Director, Johnnie Kaberle, a Happy Birthday! In addition, I would like to also thank all of the Minority Staff – Johnnie, Nick, Kiya, Jamie and Mike, and all those in the Majority Staff – for their work this appropriations season.

As we meet here today, the Department of Defense is at an inflection point in history. We are rapidly removing forces from Afghanistan and refocusing on Great Power Competition with adversaries like China. To find the right balance of modernization and readiness, we must give thoughtful and careful assessments of what capabilities our warfighters need for both current and future fights.

The 2018 bipartisan National Defense Strategy Commission made it very clear that 3 to 5 percent of real growth over the next 5 years is required to meet our global strategic objectives. Those who think that the bill before us today is enough funding for the DOD do not understand what guided the commission's recommendation. The Commission was concerned that the growth planned for the DOD was based on an arbitrary dollar amount when it should be based on current and future threats.

The Commission's report states that "given that the United States could plausibly face threats from both Russia and China at once, given the persistent dangers posed by North Korea and Iran, and given that the U.S. military will also continue to face challenges that require enduring effort in the Middle East, this outcome entails an intolerable level of national risk."

The goal of the Commission was to put the DOD on a budgetary path that was based on grand strategy in order to minimize risk – not arbitrary fiscal constraints.

Republicans are opposed to this funding level because we are, acutely aware of the readiness and modernization challenges facing each of the Services, and the 2018 National Defense Strategy's accurate assessment of what it would take to meet these challenges. The goal of our Committee must be to maintain our military edge against near-peer adversaries, and this bill falls short.

Over the past year, inflation has been roughly 2%; and economists expect inflation to rise and continue into the foreseeable future. In FY21 we enacted \$696 billion for Defense. A flat budget accounting for 2%, and most likely closer to 3% inflation, would be around \$710 billion. Yet, the bill we are marking up today is currently \$706 billion.

So, as the majority proceeds with proposing up to 24% increases for other domestic spending bills after inflation, this bill cuts defense. I would also like to point out that when we talk about defense spending, we must place it in the context of the entire budget. The CBO estimates that out of **all** federal outlays, 16% is spent on national security. The overwhelming majority of our federal dollars go to domestic spending.

At a time when we face increased threats from China, Russia, Iran, North Korea, and Violent Extremist Organizations across the globe, we must show the world that the United States can, and will lead. One of the most important ways we convey that message is through the investments that we make in this bill.

There are some portions of this bill that I support, such as the increase in research and development funding in some accounts. Unfortunately, procurement was cut in some critical areas. Funding research and development that does not ultimately lead to the procurement of new platforms, technologies and capabilities is not a useful investment.

I have always been an advocate of new and innovative technology, but the promise of new technology in a distant future, at the cost of being able to “fight tonight” is short sighted and foolish.

The bill does not adequately address critical Army funding needs, such as funding for the Abrams tank, the Paladin artillery program, and the Joint Light Tactical Vehicle. As a result of the inadequate funding requested in the President’s Budget, the Chief of Staff of the Army has requested an additional \$369 million for the Abrams tank to avoid delaying fielding to the National Guard, a request this bill fails to address. That request is even more important given that the Marine Corps is divesting its armor to reorient to the Pacific.

Alarming but not surprising, the new administration has abandoned the Navy’s 355-shipbuilding plan. While I thank the Chair for adding in an additional Arleigh Burke-class destroyer, the reality is that we should be buying at least 12-14 ships this year. China has the world’s largest Navy and numbers matter.

The ability to maintain freedom of navigation and if necessary, mobilize our forces around the world depends on it. This bill also makes cuts in key areas such as jamming, sensors, electronic warfare, digital deception, and autonomous systems.

Due to the arbitrary top line funding level, this bill takes from today in the hope that our investments will outpace our adversaries in the 2030-time frame. That’s fine if our adversaries agree not to go to war until 2030 – which they have not. Nor are they pausing on development as they aggressively invest in more lethal capabilities.

Last week the Chinese President threatened that any nation who gets in the way of China's priorities will find their heads bashed bloody against a great wall of steel. The Chinese Communist Party is not trying to hide its intentions. They are rapidly modernizing, usually with stolen technology from our weapons systems. They are watching us closely and this bill sends the signal that we will cede military superiority and allow their rise to go uncontested. My fellow Republicans and I cannot support this position. We must be prepared to “fight tonight” **and** modernize for tomorrow.

History shows us what happens when countries try to provide for their national defense with good intentions. In 1938, when England’s Prime Minister signed the Munich agreement, essentially giving Czechoslovakia to the Nazi’s in an attempt to prevent a war and appease a dictator, Winston Churchill was one of the few who saw clearly the ramifications of ignoring a militarized Germany while cutting their own defense budgets.

He said, “our loyal, brave people should know the truth. They should know that there has been gross neglect and deficiency in our defenses; they should know that we have sustained a defeat without a war... And do not suppose that this is the end. This is only the beginning of the reckoning.”

One year after giving this speech, Germany invaded Poland, initiating World War II in Europe, the most devastating war in human history. I encourage all the Members of this Committee to take a step back and really ask yourself if this bill does enough to defend the country against revisionist peer adversaries. Let us be as clear eyed as Churchill and recognize the folly of ignoring China's military and economic build up.

Before I close, I want to briefly express my extreme frustration with the Biden Administration's decisions in Afghanistan. While Americans celebrated their Independence Day, the last U.S. troops slipped out of Bagram Air Base, literally overnight. Unceremoniously we left behind 20 years of vehicles, supplies, and American sacrifice in a final betrayal to our Afghan partners. We have given a vague promise to those who helped us on the ground – putting their lives and those of their families at risk – that we will help them reach safety. I have yet to see decisive action on this by the Administration. There is no doubt that our precipitous exit has sent a message to the world, and U.S. reliability as a partner is now in question.

We need to work together to pass a defense bill that properly resources our troops for today and tomorrow; and signals to our allies and adversaries that America is committed to maintaining global peace and security. Unfortunately, I will strongly oppose passage of this bill at this time.

Madam Chair, I yield back.

###