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HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

U.S. House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515-6035

ONE HUNDRED ELEVENTH CONGRESS

ERIN C. CONATON, STAFF DIRECTOR

March 3, 2010

The Honorable John Spratt
Chairman, Committee on the Budget
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

In accordance with the applicable provisions of the Budget Act of 1974 and House Rule X, clause 4(f) of the Rules of the House of Representatives, we are writing to provide additional perspectives on the views and estimates of the Committee on Armed Services with regard to the fiscal year 2011 funding allocations for the Defense Authorization bill. While many of the proposed policies in the budget request aim at getting our economy back on track, we write to emphasize the imperative of maintaining a strong national defense. We believe our long term domestic economic health relies upon sustaining our national defense requirements. We also support war time supplemental funding that provides the resources necessary to succeed in Iraq and deliver the capability required to win in Afghanistan

The President's Fiscal Year 2011 defense budget requests \$708 billion for discretionary and war funding. This represents an increase of 3.4 percent from the previous year—or 1.8 percent real growth after inflation. While this is not the cut to the defense budget that many anticipated, we have concerns about this request.

We commend the Secretary of Defense for his laser focus on the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, but believe efforts to make the Secretary's *balance initiative* a fixture in the Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) and the out-year budget is short-sighted and puts the Defense Department on the wrong path for the next 20 years. Choosing to win in Iraq and Afghanistan should not mean our country must also choose to assume additional risk in the conventional national defense challenges of today and tomorrow.

As a result, we find a future-years defense plan and QDR that basically reinforce the status quo despite serious threats to our current capability. Thus, this future-years defense plan and QDR provide a force structure that is built for the wars we're in today, when the purpose of

the review is exactly the opposite – to prepare for the likely conflicts of tomorrow. If QDR is really a vision for the “defense program for the next 20 years”, as the law requires, then why does the QDR lay out a force structure for the next five years – not to mention one that looks a lot like today’s force? The QDR is supposed to shape the Department for 2029 – not describe the Pentagon in 2009.

Our concerns revolve primarily around one of the QDR’s key mission areas: “deter and defeat aggression in anti-access environments.” In our view, this is the mission area which should have driven the growth in size and capability of our air and naval forces. Yet, we cannot evaluate whether the QDR has the right force structure for this critical mission area, because it offers no clear force planning construct and abandons the two war strategy.

Oddly, the QDR seems to suggest that while this threat grows, we can make do with less than we previously thought. For example, the last stated Air Force requirement for fighters was 2,200, but the QDR now reflects a need for approximately 1,600 fighters. This reduction of approximately 600 fighters in the Air Force would seem to create a substantial increase in strategic risk and makes the dubious assumption that future conflicts will be like Iraq and Afghanistan where we have uncontested air dominance. Likewise, the budget does not appear to take any steps to mitigate the similar fighter shortfall in the Navy and Marine Corps.

Another example of inadequate force structure is in the area of missile defense where there is no indication that the Navy has increased the requirement or funding for large surface combatants to support its increasing role in the Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD) mission. The QDR maintains the requirement for large surface combatants at approximately 88. This requirement was established in 2006, at which time there was no BMD mission for these vessels. We have since received testimony that perhaps dozens more surface combatants could be required to perform this mission on top of the ships’ other existing missions. How does this budget request meet the President’s new European missile defense plan or the other regional missile defense needs called for in the Ballistic Missile Defense Review? Our fear is that the Department plans to harvest these assets from an already under-resourced Navy. In fact, the Navy’s long-range shipbuilding plan acknowledges that the Navy will have to consider redistributing these assets away from current missions.

When one considers the dynamic threat environment and the gaps in our capability, the need for more investment in our national defense becomes critical. The QDR seems to continue the trend—as we saw in the previous budget cycle—where military requirements seem to disappear by overstating our capability. Vladimir Putin’s recent announcement of Russia’s intent to field a new strategic bomber is a clear example of why we cannot afford adopt the QDR’s short-sighted approach to our national defense. At some point, decisions, such as the decision to terminate the Next Generation Bomber, will catch up to us. The fact is we live in a world where our enemies and adversaries strive to do us harm. This reality warrants a higher top line just to maintain our qualitative edge. Simply shifting into neutral, as the budget request would do, puts America at risk.

Finally, the request includes a \$350 million transfer fund to finance all aspects of detainee operations at the U.S. Naval Station in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, or the Thomson

Correctional Center in Thomson, Illinois. In our view, the flexible transfer authority sought in this request reflects the overall problem with this Administration's detainee policy – there is no clear policy on how we will handle the detainees held at GTMO. Our view is clear: this Congress should not support authorizing funds for a facility which will hold GTMO detainees in the United States.

We appreciate the opportunity to express these additional views. 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 resource the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and sustain our national defense requirements.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Howard P. Buck McKeon". The signature is written in a cursive, somewhat stylized font.

HOWARD P. "BUCK" McKEON
Ranking Member

cc: The Honorable Paul Ryan

Scott

g Ry Duke

Jeff Miller
Todd R. Platts

Mr. T. H.

Michael R. Linn

Jim Deery

Mike Cotts

Ronald H. H.

W. C. O. D. Ari

Kristin Long

Frank Frank

Many fallen

Cathy M. K. Hodgen

Robert J. Wittman

John Kline

John Fleming

Ray Lambert

Mike Lynn (son)

Bill Shuster

Sy Wilson

John S.

John L. Binko