**Statement of Ranking Member Adam Smith**

**House Armed Services Committee Hearing: Damage to the military from a Continuing Resolution**

I thank the Chairman for holding this hearing, and I thank each of the service chiefs for appearing today. Their expert perspectives on military preparedness and how it might be affected by an annualized continuing resolution are vital to our deliberation of the issue. We are now in the second half of fiscal year 2017, and the federal government is still operating under a continuing resolution. By April 28, Congress must pass an appropriations bill, another continuing resolution, or a combination of the two to avoid a government shutdown.

Another continuing resolution would undermine timely and productive action. As I stated for the record when the service vice chiefs recently testified, the harms inflicted by the Budget Control Act (BCA) caps, years of budgetary standoffs leading to several threatened government shutdowns, one actual government shutdown, and congressional overreliance on continuing resolutions have combined to foster fiscal uncertainty, which has weakened the abilities of the Department of Defense and every other Federal Department and Agency to invest confidently and to fund critical activities. Uncertainty challenges the military’s ability to fulfill the national defense strategy, and uncertainties regarding ground force end strength totals, the number of serviceable Navy ships and aircraft, the numbers of Air Force bomber and tactical fighter aircraft, other major weapon system procurement programs, and combat unit readiness are just a few defense-related examples of the numerous unsettling effects that the congressional failure to enact a comprehensive, deficit-reduction plan has imparted on governmental operations. Extended reliance on a continuing resolution in fiscal year 2017 would only perpetuate these uncertainties and further frustrate important plans and priorities.

It is, therefore, high time for Congress to put the country’s fiscal house in order. I have long held that it must begin by eliminating sequestration in its entirety and by subsequently establishing a long-term, discretionary spending plan that advances national interests on a broad front. Unless the law is changed, sequestration would be applied in fiscal year 2018 through fiscal year 2021 to a wide variety of discretionary spending programs. Even the Administration’s request for roughly $30 billion in supplemental appropriations for the national defense budget function for fiscal year 2017 and its request for approximately $603 billion in national defense base budget funding for fiscal year 2018 depend on Congress adjusting the BCA caps. However, securing defense dollars alone, especially at the expense of non-defense accounts, is unacceptable. Investments in homeland security, law enforcement, emergency preparedness and response capacities, veterans services, diplomatic efforts, and foreign assistance programs also need to be prioritized, and we need to reinvest heavily in sound infrastructure, research and innovation, education, health care, public safety, housing, the workforce, small businesses and many other facets of enduring national strength. National security involves much more than defense. I also wish to reiterate that deficit-reduction goals cannot be achieved through cuts alone. Increased revenues and changes in mandatory spending are integral to the solution.

As we focus on addressing the needs of the military, we need to strike the right balance with respect to providing resources and with respect to maintaining an effective joint force. The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017 authorized $611.2 billion for national defense. Assuming that appropriations supporting that top-line amount eventually follow, it is a considerable sum. Given the complex diversity of the current security environment, one can make a strong argument for increasing funding for defense, but we clearly need to find new ways to realize savings within the defense budget to maximize effectiveness. I concur with former Secretary Gates’ assertion that “not every defense dollar is sacred and well-spent, and that more of nearly everything is simply not sustainable.” Simply throwing money at the defense budget is not a viable option. Rather, the legislative and the executive branches of government must work in concert to identify efficiencies that can be justifiably reinvested to good effect.

We must also guard against making force structure adjustments that could potentially compromise military effectiveness. The modern joint force is a sophisticated and carefully orchestrated body of specialized roles and capabilities. Too much attention to any one element or detail risks the cohesion and readiness of the whole. As we evaluate methods for rebuilding readiness and the preferences of the individual services for improving it, we need to do so with a mind to optimizing the effectiveness of the joint force construct. We must invest wisely when it comes to national security.

 Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I look forward to our witnesses’ testimony.