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Opening Statement (As Prepared)
Chairman Jim Cooper
Subcommittee on Strategic Forces:
*"Markup of H.R. 7900 - National Defense Authorization
Act for Fiscal Year 2023"*
June 8, 2022

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Welcome to the annual Strategic Forces Subcommittee markup of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). First, I would like to thank Ranking Member Lamborn and our subcommittee members on both sides of the aisle for their many contributions to this mark. As I have often said, this subcommittee has in its jurisdiction the most technical, complex, and consequential issues of any committee in Congress. This year, we have held four public hearings and six closed briefings covering policy and programmatic issues regarding space, nuclear weapons, missile defense, and hypersonics. This mark is a result of that months-long bipartisan process to maintain our 61-year tradition of producing an NDAA.

Unfortunately, the world continues to become more dangerous. For example: Russia's aggressive nuclear threats surrounding its invasion of Ukraine, the unprecedented expansion of China's nuclear arsenal, and renewed testing of nuclear-capable missiles by North Korea. It is obvious that a nuclear attack on the United States, our forces abroad, or our allies would be catastrophic. It is imperative that we continue to deter nuclear attack by ensuring that our superior nuclear forces are safe, secure, and reliable, including their command-and-control infrastructure. This mark focuses on ensuring the Departments of Defense and Energy are well-positioned for the immense task of sustaining our legacy forces, while also recapitalizing the nuclear enterprise for the next 70 years. Managing so many just-in-time transitions from legacy-to-modern capabilities requires focused, world-class management.

Regarding space, in the past several months we have witnessed unprecedented Russian and Chinese capabilities specifically designed to degrade and destroy U.S. space assets. When testifying before this subcommittee, Lt. Gen. Guetlein, Commander at the newly

established Space Systems Command, pledged to “exploit what we have, buy what we can, and build what we must.” We must continue to buy the best off-the-shelf technology and partner with the best firms to invent new technology. We must also demand that the U.S. have capabilities that vastly exceed anything in the private sector. We must always be years ahead of any competition.

Lastly, the ongoing war in Ukraine reminds us that integrated air and missile defense is vital in modern conflicts. The mark favors an increase in the current Army Patriot battery inventory, directs an independent review of the integrated air and missile defense system for the U.S. territory of Guam, and requires that a lead be established for cruise missile defense architecture of our homeland, an issue has festered for the past five years. I am happy to report that the Pentagon has already responded to our mark by promising to designate such a lead by the end of next month. Lastly, our mark highlights the subcommittee’s continued support of asymmetric technologies for ballistic and hypersonic defense, because as threats become more complex, we need more than a kinetic response.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to give a sincere thanks to our outstanding professional staff led by Maria Vastola — namely John Warden, Ryan Tully, Whitney Verett, and William Braden. I would also like to thank my personal staffer for this subcommittee, Zack Brown, for his excellent work.

Before I close, this is my last Strategic Forces Subcommittee mark due to gerrymandering in my home state. I want to thank my colleagues on both sides of the aisle here in Washington for making the Full Committee, and this subcommittee, proof that Congress can work together in a bi-partisan way to put the safety and security of the nation above politics. There are issues on which we disagree, but we work together to build a stronger America, as we and our predecessors have done for 61 years.

I now turn to my Ranking Member, the gentleman from Colorado, for his remarks.

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