**House Armed Services Committee Ranking Member Adam Smith Opening Statement**

**Full Committee Hearing on the Fiscal Year 2019 National Defense Authorization Budget Request from the Department of Defense**

**April 12, 2018**

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Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I welcome Secretary Mattis and General Dunford, and I thank them for testifying today. Their views are fundamental to our evaluation of the President’s budget request and its correlation with the National Defense Strategy (the NDS).

The President’s budget request for fiscal year 2019 matches the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018 (the BBA) in providing $716 billion for national defense. Approximately $686.1 billion of that request is designated for the Department of Defense to sustain operations, restore readiness, and invest in future capabilities. That is a significant amount, and we have a duty to manage our country's resources responsibly in fielding an effective military force. As I have said many times, we must invest wisely in national security, and we must be realistic when it comes to resourcing strategic objectives. Given the current security environment, an increase in defense spending is justifiable, but we clearly need to find new ways to realize savings within the defense budget.

In doing so, we will need to make tough budgetary choices. When you combine the defense budget with all of the other government programs that the public wants funded, there simply isn’t enough money to go around. We need to raise revenues, and we need to scrutinize tradeoffs within the defense budget for potential savings. I am particularly interested to know the opportunity costs associated with the $1.2 trillion plan for the nuclear weapons enterprise.

We also need to be mindful of how we aim to achieve strategic priorities. The NDS establishes numerous defense objectives to address challenges to the international rules-based order posed by Russia, China, North Korea, Iran, and violent extremist organizations, such as ISIS and al Qaeda. Thus, it provides the foundation for this year’s defense budget request. In introducing the NDS, however, Secretary Mattis acknowledged that “national security is much more than just defense.” We must embrace whole-of-government approaches to securing objectives and to meeting future challenges, as those challenges will surely continue to require us to attend holistically to the political, economic, and social conditions that nurture them.

Secretary Mattis also indicated that fiscal certainty will be necessary for implementing the NDS and for building and maintaining a capable force. Long-term planning requires a comprehensive and reliably funded long-term budget. Congress should begin by eliminating sequestration and by lifting the spending caps imposed by the Budget Control Act of 2011 to provide relief to both the defense and nondefense discretionary accounts, because empowering defense priorities alone is insufficient. The nondefense discretionary accounts should be funded to the extent the BBA allows, because important federal spending priorities, including homeland security, law enforcement, emergency preparedness and response capacities, veterans’ services, and foreign assistance programs require sufficient budgetary support. We also need to reinvest in sound infrastructure, research and innovation, education, health care, public safety, housing, the workforce, small businesses and many other facets of enduring national strength.

Despite the Secretary’s recognition that national security is a broadly defined concept, I am concerned that we may be tilting toward overreliance on defense funding and military capability as means for effecting national policy. It seems that the Department of Defense is being tasked with either performing or supplementing the performance of more and more key diplomatic, development, and law enforcement roles that traditionally are performed by civilian government agencies. The commitment of military resources to reinforce the southern border serves as a case in point. When you combine this trend with the Administration’s willingness to deprive the nondefense elements of the federal government of necessary funding to perform important national security functions, I worry that the broader definition of national security isn’t widely accepted. I am interested in Secretary Mattis’ thoughts on how we might maintain balance within the broader National Security Strategy and allow the Department of Defense to focus on its core responsibilities.

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