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

**Full Committee Hearing on the National Defense Strategy and the Nuclear Posture Review**

**February 6, 2018**

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Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to welcome Secretary Mattis and General Selva and to thank them for appearing today. Their testimony will be instrumental to our evaluation of the recently released National Defense Strategy and the Nuclear Posture Review.

The National Defense Strategy asserts that the United States continues to face a range of national security challenges and that the international rules-based order is threatened in various ways by Russia, China, North Korea, Iran, and violent extremist organizations, such as ISIS and al Qaeda. Threats posed by Russia are especially concerning. Russia is seeking to weaken liberal democratic institutions and to promote authoritarianism. Russia has meddled in electoral processes, adopted a revanchist posture in Europe, used influence operations with malign intent, and systematically pursued efforts to undermine alliances and partnerships.

The National Defense Strategy correctly recognizes that cooperative efforts with allies and partners are essential to deterring conflict and to maintaining the international rules-based order. We cannot face the threats identified by the National Defense Strategy by ourselves. The highest levels of the Administration must now demonstrate that alliances and partnerships are top priorities through expanded cooperation and support for diplomacy and development, and by ensuring that important State Department and USAID programs are sufficiently resourced.

In introducing the National Defense Strategy, Secretary Mattis acknowledged that “national security is much more than just defense.” We must adopt whole-of-government approaches to strengthening our defenses and meeting future challenges. Just as addressing violent extremism requires more than military force, future challenges will almost certainly continue to require us to address the political, economic, and social conditions that fuel them.

Secretary Mattis further indicated that fiscal certainty will be necessary to implementing the National Defense Strategy and for building a force capable of meeting anticipated challenges. Long-term planning requires a reliably funded, comprehensive, long-term national budget. We cannot continue to rely on wasteful continuing resolutions. Congress should also eliminate sequestration and lift the budgetary caps imposed by the Budget Control Act of 2011 to provide relief to both the defense and non-defense accounts. Investments in diplomatic efforts, foreign assistance programs, and emergency preparedness are just as important to our national security as defense spending. We also need to invest in infrastructure, research and innovation, energy solutions, education, health care, and many other facets of enduring national strength.

To effect a coherent National Defense Strategy, we will need to make tough budgetary choices. When you combine the Department’s call for resources to implement the National Defense Strategy with all of the other government programs that the public wants funded, there simply isn’t enough money to go around. We need to review our investments and to take actions that will yield savings and raise revenues, and we need to scrutinize potential tradeoffs in the process. For example, on the defense side, I am very interested to know the opportunity costs associated with the $1.2 trillion nuclear weapons enterprise plan.  I appreciate the National Defense Strategy’s goal for producing cost-saving efficiencies within the Department, including providing Congress with options for a Base Realignment and Closure, but I am eager to learn more about the underlying budgetary assumptions supporting the strategy and how they will translate into the pending budget request for fiscal year 2019 and funding budgeted by the Department over the five-year Future Years Defense Program.

We have a duty to manage our country's resources responsibly in fielding an effective military. We must invest wisely when it comes to national security, and we must be realistic in matching strategic objectives with resources. A strategy without the means to support ways to achieve its ends is incomplete, but a strategy that fails to apply the limits of practicability is aspirational.

I appreciate that General Mattis and General Selva are also here today to discuss the Nuclear Posture Review.  I am concerned that this review takes the United States in a dangerous direction that will undermine our defense posture.  It further exacerbates our national security budgeting difficulties, lowers the threshold for using nuclear weapons and increases the risk of miscalculation. Given the President’s erratic tweets about having “a much bigger and more powerful” nuclear button, we need to ensure that we move away from a button-measuring policy that could devolve into a button-pressing policy.

The Nuclear Posture Review undermines our ability to make choices about the military capabilities that we need to enhance readiness. The expectation that Congress will fund the costly plan to upgrade our nuclear weapons enterprise is unrealistic and only delays the hard choices we will have to make. By requesting more new nuclear weapon systems and additional unneeded capacity, the Administration is making the problem worse. Adding new low-yield programs siphons resources away from the capabilities that we need to counter current and future threats, and disregards the hundreds of low-yield and non-strategic weapons, which are already in the U.S. arsenal and which we are already modernizing. This is fiscally irresponsible.

I am also very concerned that the Nuclear Posture Review devalues our nuclear forces and jeopardizes our strategic deterrence capabilities.  U.S. nuclear forces are second to none, and they ensure that we have an extremely robust, highly credible nuclear deterrent that is capable of responding to a nuclear attack against the United States or its allies with decisive force. Replacing our strategic capabilities with low-yield warheads on nuclear ballistic submarines, could, if used, jeopardize these submarines and undermine the most reliable and survivable leg of the triad. We cannot put our most valuable nuclear forces at risk.

In addition, the Nuclear Posture Review focuses on low-yield strike options, which could lower the threshold for using nuclear weapons, feed a nuclear arms race, and increase the risk of miscalculation that could precipitate a nuclear war. It is paramount that we do not rebrand nuclear weapons as war-fighting weapons. They are weapons of last-resort, not weapons to be used in lieu of conventional forces or in a way that would needlessly risk escalating to an all-out nuclear exchange.

We must move forward with a robust posture that deters adversarial aggression by pushing back forcefully in effective ways that strengthen security. This approach must be pursued in parallel with meaningful efforts to reduce the risk of nuclear war. I have advocated establishing direct military-to-military dialogues and regular high-level engagements with Russia, China, and North Korea to reduce the risks of miscalculation that could lead to nuclear war, and adopting a U.S. policy against using nuclear weapons first. We should also revisit our launch-on-warning posture as Senator Sam Nunn, Secretary George Shultz and Secretary William Perry have recommended. These measures should be a top priority, and the misguided recommendations of the Nuclear Posture Review only make them more urgent.

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