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

**Opening Statement - Prepared**

**Full Committee Hearing on the Fiscal Year 2018 National Defense Authorization Budget Request**

**June 12, 2017**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to welcome Secretary Mattis and General Dunford and to thank them both for appearing this evening. Their testimony is instrumental to our consideration of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2018.

The United States continues to confront an array of national security challenges. We know that Russia, China, North Korea, Iran, and numerous violent extremist organizations, such as ISIL and al Qaeda, threaten the international rules-based order in a variety of ways. The threats posed by Russia are especially concerning. Russian meddling in electoral processes, a revanchist Russian posture in Europe, and the Russian military's aggressive employment of destabilizing cyber and hybrid warfare methods illustrate systematic efforts to undermine liberal democratic institutions in order to promote those grounded in authoritarianism and kleptocracy. Through its efforts, Russia aims to disrupt our governmental and economic systems and to weaken our standing within the international community. As a result, Russia presents a clear and present danger to our safety and security, our liberties, and our way of life.

The United States must concentrate its efforts on countering this threat. In doing so, it must implement a whole-of-government strategy, which will: strengthen our defenses, deter Russian aggression, engage more expansively in the international arena and build greater solidarity among our many allies and partners around the world, uphold internationally-accepted norms, and reinforce our values. Given how interconnected the world is, it has never been more important to show collective resolve against common threats. We cannot face them alone. Our counter-Russia strategy must also harness extensive national capabilities, including military, diplomatic, and development assistance capabilities, across all geographic regions, functions, and domains. Comprehensive threats demand comprehensive responses.

A similarly engaging and comprehensive approach must be taken regarding violent extremism. A successful counterterrorism strategy will require long-term commitment, and military means are only a part of the package. Addressing violent extremism with military force may be necessary, but it is insufficient. We must also address the political, economic, and social conditions that fuel the discontent, upon which violent extremist ideologies prey. We must encourage and facilitate reconciliation among political, ethnic, and sectarian factions, support productive economic reforms, promote civil liberties and respect for human rights, and expose the reprehensible aspects of violent extremist ideologies in order to delegitimize their appeal. Again, we are not alone in this struggle. The cooperation and assistance that we receive from our allies and partners in this endeavor is crucial to success.

That is why the mixed messages that this Administration is sending to Qatar, regarding its dispute with certain other Gulf countries, are disconcerting to me. Qatar is a key defense partner of the United States, and it hosts a major U.S. military installation. Yet, the President is willing to risk alienating Qatar and the strategic relationship that we share by issuing hardline rhetoric that implicitly supports those disputants who have imposed an economic embargo on Qatar. Why is he exacerbating the issue instead of doing everything he can to mediate an agreeable way forward? The United States should be exercising constructive leadership. If the United States, Qatar, and other partners can make improvements that progress the fight against terrorism, then let's work together to realize them. I look forward to hearing our witnesses' views on how we might improve our security relationships with Qatar and other partners around the globe. I also welcome their views on how the new Administration's regional policies are taking shape with respect to our significant military involvements in Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, Yemen, and Somalia.

The security environment in that region and elsewhere will continue to evolve in ways that will surely affect our national interests. Therefore, the United States will need to maintain a modern, balanced, and ready force that can meet significant challenges with a spectrum of effective capabilities. To do this, we need fiscal certainty. The President has requested a total of $639.1 billion for the Department of Defense for fiscal year 2018. That is a lot of money. Indeed, the President's request far exceeds the budgetary caps imposed by the Budget Control Act of 2011 (the BCA), and it assumes that Congress will provide legislative relief.

I have long held that Congress should eliminate sequestration and lift the BCA caps. However, securing defense dollars by raiding the non-defense accounts is unacceptable. Investments in diplomatic efforts, foreign assistance programs, and emergency preparedness also need to be prioritized, and we need to invest heavily in infrastructure, research and innovation, energy solutions, education, health care, and many other facets of enduring national strength. National security involves much more than defense. I am especially disappointed by the Administration's willingness to subsidize increased defense spending by making cuts to important State Department and USAID programs, which would affect U.S. support to the United Nations (including UN peacekeeping organizations), foreign military assistance, and development assistance. This inclination is misguided, as it would detract from the engaging, whole-of-government approaches needed to address our most serious national security concerns.

We also need to enact reforms that will yield future savings. The Department should be given the flexibility to reduce excess infrastructure and overhead and to revise and balance force structure as may be appropriate. 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.

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

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