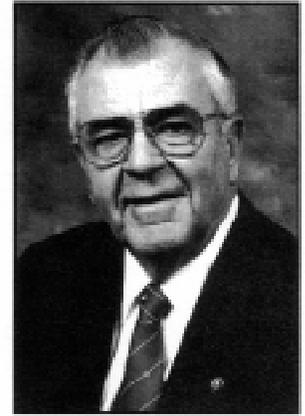


Congressman Herbert H. Bateman
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NEWS



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Statement of the Honorable Herbert H. Bateman

Subcommittee on Military Readiness Markup of H.R. 1401

The subcommittee meets today to mark up the Military Readiness portion of the Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2000.

Compared to last year at this time, there is good news and bad news concerning the readiness of our armed forces. The good news is that the Administration and senior leadership at the Pentagon have finally admitted what you and I on the subcommittee have been saying for a number of years. That is: there are significant, serious readiness problems in all of the military services. The bad news is, despite admitting to readiness shortfalls and announcing publicly that funding has been provided to remedy these problems, the budget request before us today is long on rhetoric but woefully short in real terms and, at best, may only slow down the decline in readiness. Additional bad news is that a military force that is already over committed and stretched to the breaking point, has yet again been required to conduct an unfunded and unplanned contingency operation. I believe we are quickly moving from a point where we currently ask our military men and women to do more with less, to a point where we are asking that they do more with nothing.

The Administration has stated that there is an additional \$12 billion in the budget request for overall defense needs. Over \$8 billion of that so called "increase" is based on funding adjustments such as lower inflation rates, lower prices for fuel, favorable foreign currency accounts, assumed savings from unproven, unrealized efficiencies, and other adjustments from one year to the next. Unfortunately, that \$8 billion cannot be used to buy additional training time on combat training ranges, additional spare parts, more flying hours, or more steaming days for our combat ships, nor will it begin to reduce the staggering backlog of facilities maintenance in all of the services. Of the remaining \$4 billion, if the funding for programs that are not supposed to be in the operation and maintenance budget, such as commissary operations and Pentagon renovation funding are deducted, there is not much left to improve readiness. I believe that after stripping out all of the funding gimmicks found in the budget request, readiness funding for some of the military services actually declines. The only way to reverse the degradation in military readiness is for

the Administration to budget real dollars and abandon the tactic of trying to pay for real needs with mythical saving and assumptions, and pushing expenditures into the outyears.

In subcommittee field hearings at military installations throughout the United States and overseas, the consistent complaint of shortages of spare parts, inadequate training, decaying infrastructure, and personnel shortages has been heard. The subcommittee has determined that increased funding in these and other critical readiness areas is necessary to reverse the downward trend in military readiness.

Because of the committee's long standing concern with continued under-funding of critical readiness accounts, Chairman Spence again this year asked each of the military service chiefs to provide a list of unfunded priorities for fiscal year 2000. These lists reflect billions of dollars the military services say they need to fully fund readiness requirements. In determining the level of increases in its recommendations, the subcommittee relied heavily on testimony from the military services and the service chief's unfunded priority lists.

As in the past, the subcommittee remains committed to providing adequate funding to several readiness critical accounts that, I believe, must be maintained in order to ensure the readiness of the military services. As an example of the committee's past commitment, from fiscal year 1994 through fiscal year 1998, the committee has increased funding for key readiness accounts by over \$7 billion. The subcommittee mark before us today continues this trend by recommending an increase of over \$2 billion in the critical readiness accounts. This increase includes over \$1 billion for real property maintenance and base operations support, over \$300 million for depot maintenance accounts; over \$200 million for aircraft spare parts; over \$100 million for combat training centers; and over \$700 million to fund other readiness requirements contained on the service chief's unfunded priority list. I remain convinced that increases in these critical areas are necessary to not only stem the decline in readiness, but also to provide real improvements in current readiness.

In addition to the funding issues, the mark contains a legislative package that will substantially improve how the DOD conducts its day to day business. The mark contains several provisions that would clarify notification requirements in existing law concerning the outsourcing of functions in the military services and industrial activities; a provision that would require a review the chronic shortage of repair parts versus large excess inventories of the Department of Defense; a provision that would review the capabilities of the Department to provide repair parts and supplies during times of national emergencies; and a requirement for the Department to review the causes and remedies associated with the huge backlog of maintenance and repair at military installations. The mark also contains a series of provisions dealing with the management of civilian personnel of the Department of Defense.

The mark, again this year, includes a provision that would authorize \$35 million for impact aid for local school districts with large concentrations of children from military families and provision to expedite their receipt of the funds.

I believe that the mark before you achieves the goals that we all share: providing the necessary resources to ensure force readiness and improving the quality of life for the men and women of our armed forces.