

Representative Rick Berg  
State of North Dakota  
April 14, 2011

Testimony before the House Armed Services Committee

Mr. Chairman:

Thank you for the kind invitation to testify before the House Armed Services Committee (HASC) regarding your national defense priorities.

I would like to thank the Committee for this opportunity.

I would also very much like to thank all of the men and women of the Armed Forces for their service to our country. I would be remiss if I did not mention the often unsung heroes and heroines—the spouses, families and children of military personnel that stay behind in North Dakota as service members deploy overseas and into harm's way—in many ways it is harder for the families back in North Dakota worrying about the unknown. They all have my profound respect and admiration for all they do for our country.

I am prepared to offer a few proposals as your Committee to consider as part of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2012.

My brief testimony today is intended to provide the Committee members with the opportunity to assert congressional priorities in the conduct of U.S. defense policy that are not earmarks pursuant to House rule XXI.

Having two Air Force bases in my district, I have had the opportunity to interact with many Airmen and women, and I understand the importance of providing a good quality of life for our service men and women. I would first urge you to consider these quality of life issues.

For the married Air Force personnel, the continued support for the soon to be Air Force wide policy of the Privatization of Military Family House, which would affect many Air Force bases including Minot and Grand Forks is critical. Minot will turn over 1,700 Military Family Homes and Grand Forks would turn over 800 homes to the Privatization Program. This proposal will provide both bases with a community center/club house with an indoor playground and storage facilities. In addition, some undesirable properties will be demolished.

Furthermore, the president's submitted FY12 budget for Minot Air Force Base provides for the construction of a new 168 room, single occupancy, dormitory for young Air Force personnel that is up to Air Force wide standards.

It is important that we not only support our Air Force personnel, but their families as well. I fully support these important quality of life issues, and I truly hope that the Chairman agrees with me.

I would also like to discuss technological advancements the Air Force is undertaking. As the Air Force moves into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the implementation of new technologies and aircraft such as the Raptor and Global Hawk are key to the growing mission of America's Air Force.

I've spoken with senior leadership at the Grand Forks Air Force Base, and they have expressed support for the three Global Hawk Block 40's the Grand Forks Air Force Base is slated to receive this year. As bases like Grand Forks continue to expand their development and training for unmanned aircraft, access to these aircraft will be essential.

Grand Forks will also benefit from a Battlefield Airborne Communications Node mission, which they are set to develop this year. This mission would entail flying Global Hawks – the block 20's - which are forward deployed to military missions in regions such as Afghanistan. This aircraft would serve as an antenna so that a group of soldiers on one side of a mountain range could communicate with another group on the other side of the mountain. This is accomplished by using the plane as a relay above the battlefield where both groups submit a signal through the plane.

The Grand Forks Air Force Base is quickly becoming an international leader in unmanned aviation—technology that holds enormous potential for not only our Nation's future military, but also for agriculture and border security.

Lastly, just this week I had the opportunity to work with North Dakota Air National Guard with regard to the flooding currently taking place in North Dakota. The North Dakota Guard, and Guardsmen across this country, play a pivotal role in our military success and it is important that we maintain their ability to answer the call of duty. I was happy to hear that four C-27 J Spartan aircraft are scheduled to be delivered to the North Dakota Air Guard this year. Those planes will not only strengthen our security, but will also help play a crucial role when the Guard is called up to work on such operations as the current flood fight.

As you consider the Fiscal Year 2012 National Defense Authorization Act, I would strongly urge you to support the Air Force's continuing development of these projects. I want to thank you again for the opportunity to testify today.