

STATEMENT OF DUNCAN L. HUNTER, FORMER MEMBER, U.S HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, TO THE HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, good morning. Thanks for allowing me to give my views on America's security challenges and the adequacy of our present force structure, as well as that which is projected under the massive automatic cuts that would occur should the Joint Committee on Deficit Reduction dead-lock or should the contingency plan requested of DOD by OMB, which requires 10% cuts, be carried out.

Bluntly, these massive cuts disserve: 1) the present war against terrorists; 2) the difficult build-up of the Army and Marine Corps in which this committee has played such a significant role; and 3) the constitutional obligation of this government to defend its citizens.

In the last century, World War I, considered to be the "war to end all wars" was followed by a period of neglect for America's defense apparatus. In 1941, jolted by the Axis Powers and particularly the attack on Pearl Harbor, we mobilized massively, aided by a robust industrial base and a secure homeland, and saved the world. Only a few years after World War II, America stacked arms to such a degree that a third-rate military power drove our defenders down the Korean Peninsula and almost into the ocean before we managed to hold the Pusan perimeter and push north, weathering a Chinese intervention and stalemating the communists into a divided Korea that continues to this day.

After Vietnam, America's defenses declined precipitously, resulting in the so-called "hollow army" of the late 1970's, a period in which fewer than 50% of our tactical fighters were fully combat mission-capable and a time when more than 1,000 petty officers a month were leaving the Navy due to inadequate pay and support.

In 1981 we commenced to rebuild defense, with President Ronald Reagan partnering with this committee to enhance our ground forces, build the Navy toward a goal of 600 ships, initiate a missile defense program, and increase airlift, sealift, and sustainability.

With this new muscle we stood up to the Soviet Union, which, disassembled by American strength, released hundreds of millions of its people from its tyranny into the sunlight of freedom.

The 1990s found the U.S. dominating the First Gulf War with an array of conventional weapons from the build-up of the 1980s. Then, in the mid-1990s defense was cut substantially. The Army was reduced from 18 to 10 divisions and only about fifty per cent of our aging weapons systems were adequately replaced. Administration budget cutters went after defense. This committee lead the Congress in adding back over 40 billion dollars during this period. It wasn't enough.

In 2001, spurred by the 9-11 terrorist attack, our nation went into a period of rebuilding aging systems, increasing end strength and moving ahead on missile defenses. While the build-up was not as robust as that of the Reagan years, we did fill many of the short-falls of the 1990s.

Today the Iraq War is won, with Iraq's elected government enduring and the military that we built from the ground-up holding. Iraq is now an ally thanks to the one million American volunteers who served in uniform in that war. The Afghanistan mission continues, complex, but winnable.

China is emerging as a military super-power, stepping into the shoes of the former Soviet Union, developing high performance missiles, aircraft and ships, out producing the U.S. in key areas such as attack submarines (5 to 1), and ballistic missiles.

Iran, having failed to defeat America with its interference in the Iraq War, is continuing apace with its program aimed at producing a nuclear weapon. Its path over the past five years is littered with failed sanctions, imposed by the allies and blunted by China and Russia. Iran is following the model of its fellow nuclear weapons aspirant, North Korea which talked, wrangled and lied until it had produced a nuclear device.

Russia, shorn of its captive nations, retains an immense strategic strike capability.

This, Mr. Chairman, is the state of the world, the back-drop against which America is poised to massively cut defense.

To assess the huge cuts that are projected, I use the committee's calculation on the numbers: 1 trillion dollars cut from the Presidents FY 2012 FYDP, counting 465 billion dollars in cuts already enacted.

The enormity of these cuts will almost certainly result in large reductions in the size of the Army and Marine Corps.

A few years ago, we began correcting the downsizing of our land forces. Remember that we cut the Army almost in half during the 1990s.

During the height of the Iraq war our troops felt the pain of the downsizing as multiple deployments and 15 month tours stressed the force. We stressed the force. We policy makers swore “never again” and increased the Army to 569,400 and the USMC to 202,000.

Now we are poised to repeat the mistake of the 1990’s downsizing.

People costs are “right now” expenditures the projected cuts cannot be carried out without slashing end strength.

The cuts will also disserve the Navy in multiple ways. The 288 ships will face an unprecedented threat in the near future.

China has clearly moved to implement a new strategy to handle the U.S. Navy in a “Taiwan scenario.” They are building the capability to destroy American warships. Including carriers, at long ranges, before U.S. Naval projection can reach the straits.

China’s ship killers are ballistics missiles, tipped with anti-ship precisely targetable war-heads.

Never before has the US Navy had such an immense survivability challenge.

The projected budget cuts will preclude the Navy from fielding missile defense systems of necessary robustness to defend against sustained anti-ship ballistic missile attacks.

Also, the Navy’s “leverage weapon”, its fleet of attack submarines, will be reduced substantially. Meanwhile, China’s submarine program accelerates.

Our heavy bomber force is already at its historical low point of 135. A two war contingency involving heavy Armed Forces will require a “swinging “ of bombers from one war to the other, with a risk that substantial casualties will be taken without the fist of immediate air power.

Today, the U.S. has less than 70% of the airfields available worldwide that we had in the 1960's. Yet our strategic and tactical airlift is comprised of only 651 aircraft.

In this age of quick flare contingencies, tactical aircraft are high leverage. Today the Air Force has only 1990 fighters, half of what we had at the end of the Cold War.

The questions this committee must ask the President and your colleagues are these:

- Is the world suddenly safer to the degree that we can let our guard down and cancel the insurance policy that a strong defense has given the U.S.?
- Is the war against terrorism over?
- Do we want to “unlearn” the lesser of the “too small” Army and Marine Corps, and reduce them again?
- Should we concede space competition to our potential adversaries?
- Does it still make sense to stop incoming missiles?
- Do we want our Navy to have fewer than 250 ships?
- Do we want to cede military dominance in this century to communist China?
All these questions stage this greater question for every Member of Congress:
- Isn't our primary duty to defend our nation?

The defense cuts already made should be restored and any new reductions soundly rejected.

These cuts, should they be attended, along with China's military ascendance and growing industrial base, guarantee that China will become the world's dominant military power in this century.

Thank you Mr. Chairman