

# **ASSESSING THE STRATEGIC READINESS OF U.S. ARMED FORCES**

**Prepared Statement**

**Readiness Subcommittee of the House Committee on Armed Services**

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Thank you Chairman Forbes, Ranking Member Bordallo, and members of the Readiness Subcommittee for the opportunity to evaluate readiness broadly and provide a framework from which you may examine the President's defense budget request for fiscal year (FY) 2012.

America's military remains the most capable and professional in the world. The Armed Forces are combat hardened and of high quality. Yet, such standing cannot be contained without the continued support of Congress. Today's world is home to a growing number of threats from both state and non-state actors, each with a myriad of ever-expanding capabilities ready to challenge our own. If the supposed peace dividend of the post Cold War years was insufficient to allow for an easy military drawdown, today's intense pace of operations unquestionably requires a strong defense capability. Between force reductions, a dramatic slowing of new starts, and closures of production lines, America's domestic industrial capacity is slowly being whittled away. Once domestic military production capabilities are lost, it will be almost impossible, if not nearly prohibitively expensive, to rebuild the industry.

It has been said that America waits for wars to become prepared for them. Such a pattern, as evidenced by repeated procurement holidays in the twentieth century, leads to repeated surges in spending that are more expensive than continued, sustained outlays. The best and most cost effective way to preserve the military's core capabilities, high readiness levels, our domestic production, and a sound defense budget is to keep the military in a constant state of health, ever ready to defend this country from both known and unknown threats.

Not since the end of World War II has America more urgently needed honest and clear thinking about its enduring national interests and a bipartisan commitment to building up the civilian and military capabilities necessary to protect them.

Yet Washington is increasingly looking inward. Policymakers spend enormous energy arguing about tactics without thinking about strategy. They react to events rather than planning for the future. Without a common purpose and driven by the desire to save money, they take steps which reduce military spending in the short term but vastly increase the danger and cost to America over the longer term.

### **A Sample of Events that Should Have Been Wake Up Calls ... But Weren't**

A recent survey of events around the world serve to highlight that others are not sitting still while U.S. defense budgets and select capabilities are set to decline. Though such declines do not guarantee the rise of new peer competitors, they do provide sufficient incentives to all but guarantee that others will challenge the United States even more in those areas where the nation is less prepared.

China's January 2007 anti-satellite weapon (ASAT) test not only showcased a new missile development, but did so from a transporter-erector-launcher. According to the Congressional Research Service, the "mobility of this ASAT weapon under development also could present challenges for U.S. tracking and warning time." Admiral Robert Willard, Commander, U.S. Pacific Command, recently announced the initial operational capability of China's anti-ship ballistic missile capable of threatening U.S. aircraft carriers from significant distance. During the Secretary of Defense's recent visit, the People's Liberation Army conducted a test flight of the Chengdu J-20 stealth fighter. The debut of this capability was admittedly "further ahead in the development of that aircraft than our intelligence had earlier predicted," according to the Secretary of Defense Robert Gates.

China's unveiling of the J-20 comes on the heels of Russia's own stealth fighter with advanced stealth technology and high-tech avionics debut last January, the PAK FA, one more in an impressive and unexpected list of Russian military modernization programs. Russia is also selling modern fourth-generation fighter aircraft to the Indian, Chinese, Algerian, Vietnamese, and Libyan militaries. In August, Russia undertook the largest airborne military exercises since the collapse of the Soviet Union, only a short time after its illegal invasion of Georgia that went largely uncontested by Europe or the country's prospective NATO allies.

With closure of the F-22 production line and changing air power and air defense capabilities across the globe, American air supremacy is not as assured as the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) once predicted. Indeed, Lieutenant General David Deptula, recently departed Deputy Chief of Staff for Intelligence in the U.S. Air Force, recently announced: "For the first time, our claim to air supremacy is in jeopardy.... The dominance we've enjoyed in the aerial domain is no longer ours for the taking." These events and more should have been opportunities for policymakers to revisit basic assumptions in current defense planning, identify gaps in strategic thinking, and reevaluate investment decisions.

### **Death by a thousand cuts**

Over the past two years, policymakers have cut plans and programs which are critical to recapitalizing the legacy fleets of all the military services. The Secretary of Defense has warned

that a resource-constrained environment requires hard choices be made, and on that basis has cancelled or sought to kill a number of defense programs, including the F-22 fifth-generation fighter, the C-17 cargo aircraft, the VH-71 helicopter, the Air Force's combat search and rescue helicopter, and the ground combat vehicle portion of the Army's Future Combat Systems. While the Army is attempting to build a replacement ground combat vehicle, this is the third generation of modernization skipped in the last 30 years.

Missile defenses have suffered as well. In September 2009, the administration cancelled America's commitment to place land-based interceptors in Poland and a radar in the Czech Republic. Further, the Pentagon reduced the overall budget for missile defense in 2010 by \$1.6 billion, or 16 percent from 2009 levels. Specifically, the Administration scaled back the number of ground-based midcourse interceptors in Alaska and California from the planned 44 to 30, terminated the multiple kill vehicle program for defeating countermeasures, deferred the purchase of a second Airborne Laser aircraft, abandoned the Kinetic Energy Interceptor program (designed for intercepting ballistic missiles in their boost phase), and purged funding for the space test bed for missile defense.

These recent defense cuts come on top of the military's dramatic reduction that began in the early 1990's. The size of the U.S. Navy has been cut by half since then, and today it is the smallest it has been since 1916. Yet in a speech last May, the Secretary of Defense ridiculed the idea that the U.S. Navy is too weak. Recent decisions are reducing core naval capabilities, however. On Gates' watch, the Navy has already ended purchases of the next-generation DDG-1000 destroyers, extended the production of the next carrier from four years to five, killed the MPF-A large-deck aviation ship and its mobile landing platform, and delayed indefinitely the next-generation cruiser.

Overall, defense spending is falling by every metric: as a percentage of the federal budget, as a percentage of the overall economy, and in real terms. Yet even with the dizzying pace of defense reductions of late, some policymakers are increasing their demands for more defense cuts.

Defense budget cuts are already having dramatic negative consequences for the U.S. military today, and will compromise America's ability to fight and win both war and peace tomorrow. If America's elected officials do not reverse the rapid decline in long-standing core U.S. military capabilities, the United States will not only lose a core ingredient of the nation's superpower status; it will be unable to sustain the capabilities necessary to defend vital American interests in an increasingly unsettled world.

Because not every potential threat can be predicted and because procurement cycles typically take decades to field a particular system, the U.S. military must plan its forces around a grand strategy and hedge with specific capabilities to meet any future requirements. These core capabilities--many of which the military possesses today--should be the mainstays of strategic planning. They include:

- Protecting and defending the U.S. and its allies against attack,
- Air dominance,
- Maritime control,

- Space control,
- Counterterrorism,
- Counterinsurgency,
- The ability to seize and control territory against organized ground forces,
- Projecting power to distant regions, and
- Information dominance throughout cyberspace.

The ingredients that comprise U.S. military primacy will decline if left unchecked. The traditional margins of U.S. military technological superiority are declining across the services and domains. Those margins--too often considered a birthright--have helped uphold the implicit contract most Americans have had with the all-volunteer military and ensured our forces were never in a "fair fight." That is simply no longer the case.

### **Comprehensively Unprepared for the Future**

To mitigate an increasingly unstable future, the U.S. must acknowledge the greatest areas of foreseeable risk. Policymakers should consider the full spectrum of potential threats to U.S. national security, including those that may not seem immediate or most likely. Preparing only for the danger of the moment would be a mistake. History has repeatedly demonstrated that the only predictable feature of war is its unpredictability. When Adolf Hitler came to power in 1933, German troops were training with sticks. Six years later, they were threatening to take over the world. Responding to that rapid threat required massive and nimble U.S. defense investments.

Policymakers should understand that the number and variety of threats challenging U.S. interests are growing. The Quadrennial Defense Review Independent Panel report identifies key global trends that will affect America, including:

- Islamist extremism and the threat of terrorism,
- The rise of new global powers in Asia,
- The continued struggle for power in the Persian Gulf and the greater Middle East,
- An accelerating global competition for resources, and
- Persistent problems from failed and failing states.

Yet the Pentagon's major strategy known as the Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) does not adequately identify the panoply of risks confronting the United States. Still beyond the challenges that defense planners and policymakers can predict are the unforeseen challenges. History indicates that as states destabilize and as rising powers see weakness among Western-allied democracies, international crime, terrorist safe havens, piracy, oppression, and lawlessness will increase. Such drastic scenarios may seem unrelated, but as the QDR Independent Panel report notes, "the risk we don't anticipate is precisely the one most likely to be realized."

Further, the defense strategy does not address the elephant in the room: The U.S. military is already too small and its equipment too old to fully answer the nation's call today, much less tomorrow. The U.S. has largely failed to recapitalize its military in a generation, leading to an ever-growing gap between what the U.S. military is asked to do and the tools it has to accomplish their missions.

Any discussion of how to build an appropriate Pentagon strategy should begin with the President's foreign policy strategy, which follows from the nation's vital interests rather than vice versa. Many Americans across the political spectrum are uncomfortable with the primary role the United States continues to play in world affairs, yet no President of either political party has backed away from America's global leadership role. Nor has any recent President significantly reduced America's commitments by treaty or interest around the globe. Judging by the number and expanded scope of U.S. military missions over the past 15 years, the exact opposite holds true.

A de facto bipartisan consensus on America's duties continues to provide evidence that strong American leadership is necessary to protect the nation's vital interests. As long as America undertakes a comprehensive role in guiding the international order toward peace and freedom, the nation's leaders must sustain the power necessary to accomplish that mission.

Defense strategy should consider an exhaustive list of possible threats and, most importantly, consider both current and potential future foes as part of the exercise. This axiom is especially relevant today. While the U.S. is heavily engaged in counterinsurgency operations overseas, policymakers will be tempted to simply believe that other risks may never materialize by accepting the assumption that no other nation will attempt to challenge the U.S. using traditional forms of military power. This risk is all the more dangerous because the ramifications of such a decision would likely be felt not by those who made it, but by their successors.

In this context, recent history is enlightening. For example, operating under the false belief that putting large numbers of boots on the ground would be unnecessary in the post-Cold War world, a Republican-led Congress and the Clinton Administration cut the size of the force, including the Army, by more than one-third in the 1990s. Less than a decade later, the nation was involved in two substantial ground wars, which continue to strain the Army's resources even today. Several years ago, Congress authorized a permanent increase in Army endstrength. The expense of reconstituting the Army, together with the human and monetary costs of overworking the force for the past two decades, is far greater than the cost of simply maintaining the Army at adequate force levels in the first place.

Today's planners are claiming--with the same level of certainty with which they incorrectly argued the opposite proposition in 1993--that the military should focus on ground wars, particularly irregular and counterinsurgency conflicts, and that traditional air and naval assets will likely be redundant. The truth is that America continues to face myriad risks and needs to maintain a similarly broad set of capabilities to confront them.

### **Short and Long-Term Readiness Challenges**

Maintaining readiness is no less urgent in today's technologically advanced and globally interconnected world in which enemies can arm themselves even more rapidly or crudely counter U.S. systems. High readiness levels require robust National Guard and Reserve forces that can provide national surge capacity when needed, and it entails investment in a wide range of dual-

use, multi-mission platforms. Policymakers should reject the premise that defense is a zero-sum game and refuse to rob the future military to pay for today's capabilities.

Further, the U.S. should not only prepare for the full spectrum of risks, but also maintain substantial safety and technological superiority margins. Seeking to have "just enough" of any important capability would be foolish. Planning is never perfect, but the cost of being too strong is far less than the cost of weakness.

For example, if the U.S. buys slightly more airlift capacity than it needs today, the downside is paying for assets that go unused for the moment. However, if America has less airlift capacity than it needs tomorrow, the cost will be measured in higher casualties, protracted engagements, and the possible sacrifice of a vital national interest. In the long run, supplying sustained and predictable funding to the military and providing for regular, modern upgrades is far more cost-effective than allowing the force to become hollow and then rebuilding it from tatters. This is particularly true if the industrial base to rebuild a military capability has disappeared. The United States built its last bomber more than a decade ago, and that plant is now a Wal-Mart. The time, cost, and consequences of building capabilities after the nation has permanently shed them are higher than what policymakers should be prepared to bear.

Another reason the U.S. must maintain military primacy is that the military's missions are not only to fight but also to deter conflict. America decisively won Operation Desert Storm because it brought overwhelming power to bear. Clear victory in that conflict is one reason why no other country has since chosen to engage the U.S. in a direct, high-intensity conflict. Similarly, a missile attack is less likely if America deploys a comprehensive, layered missile defense system. China is less likely to use aggressive means to reunify with Taiwan if U.S. air and naval assets can unquestionably protect the island. Russia will be less adventurous in the former Soviet republics if its leaders feel that NATO is more than prepared for any contingency.

However, the current superiority of America's capabilities should not lead officials to be complacent. Military primacy is fleeting unless purposefully maintained through robust investment in next-generation technology and systems. Equipment ages and deteriorates due to wear and tear, and America's enemies and potential foes are constantly developing new ways to challenge the U.S. On one end of the spectrum, more countries with sophisticated militaries are developing nuclear weapons and intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) that could soon reach the U.S. homeland. On the other end, terrorists constantly find creative ways to defeat U.S. advanced technology with cheap, primitive weapons, such as improvised explosive devices, which have caused thousands of casualties in Iraq and Afghanistan.

To keep its global edge and to develop the abilities to defeat shifting threats ranging from IEDs to ICBMs, the U.S. military must maintain, modernize, and ultimately replace old weapons while simultaneously researching, designing, testing, and fielding next-generation systems. The average ages of most major weapons systems in use are startling, and many next-generation programs are being eliminated. Congress has acceded to most of the Administration's defense budget requests and voted to terminate or truncate more than one dozen major defense programs in the 2010 defense bills--predominantly for budgetary rather than strategic reasons. As a result,

the military will lose vital capabilities along with the potential to develop them later as defense industries shut down production lines and hemorrhage skilled workers.

### **Readiness Case Study: The U.S. Air Force**

All the military services, including the National Guard and Reserves, are experiencing lower levels of readiness after ten years of major combat operations overseas and more homeland defense missions in the United States. Symptoms include:

- Delayed, shortened, or less diverse training;
- Cross-leveling of personnel and equipment from disparate units to plug deploying-unit shortfalls;
- Less maintenance for worn-out weapons; and
- Shortened rest time at home before redeploying overseas.

While Congress has provided necessary funding for many urgent needs of the services, more must be done to restore short and long-term readiness within the U.S. military. An illustrative example is the readiness crunch facing the U.S. Air Force. While the availability rates of aircraft--fighter, bomber, tanker, cargo, rotary wing, and training--are holding relatively steady (except bombers), the aircraft are spending longer periods of time in depot to maintain the fleet. Meanwhile, the cost per flying hour is increasing as the force ages while being employed at wartime rates. While depot funding has increased over the past 6 years, at some point the increasingly intensive maintenance will give way to reality that aircraft must be replaced with newer frames. Fighters, such as the F-15, are nearing 30 years in average age. At some point soon, it will no longer be possible to maintain these assets at reasonable cost.

For example, some of the A-10Cs are currently experiencing fuselage cracks after substantial funds were spent to re-wing these aircraft and upgrade their avionics. The fatigue of this airframe highlights that investing money in aging systems is a gamble because it is hard to predict what failures may occur next. Accordingly, Congress must carefully monitor how much the services hedge by spending funds on service life extension programs because they alone are not fail-safe.

Of all current aircraft, the B-1 has the worst availability rate at 32%, representing a true challenge. B-1s are a fundamental platform used at high rates in current combat operations. Additionally, since the long range strike fleet is so small, the number of bomber tails matter. Retiring the B-1 fleet now would invite tremendous strategic risk as the Air Force proposes to begin work on a new bomber. Given that there is no guarantee the Air Force will ultimately acquire a new bomber in sufficient numbers, the service must hedge by maintaining this increasingly costly and less capable system because of the dearth of options.

The C-130 fleet illustrates another example of the major costs associated with sustaining legacy aircraft. The C-130's center wing box design has inherent weaknesses that necessitate replacement. This will affect all C-130s as they age over time. Replacement costs roughly \$6 to \$8 million per aircraft above the \$18 million cost per to modernize the H model avionics. There are times when the purchase of a new system would save taxpayer money in the long-run over maintaining older ones.

America's space assets are increasingly geriatric and in need of modernization. Nearly all of these systems are in operation beyond their intended design lives. Repairs are not possible in space so this aging invites increased mission risk. Considering the large volume of old space systems, Congress must ensure defense leaders are not creating an unaffordable replacement cost bow wave that could lead to mission failure in key areas.

Congress must honestly determine how much risk leaders the military should be able to absorb in their increasing mission demands. For example, there are many scenarios that could occur where the U.S. would be unable to utilize its tactical strike fleet. Carriers may have to stay out of a region due to various threats. Regional basing might not be available due to political constraints. These and other limits in a future scenario could require the U.S. to launch strike missions with its bomber fleet. If the adversary has a reasonable air defense network in place, the B-1 and B-52s would be relegated to standoff strikes. By way of comparison, America lost 15 B-52s in 12 days during Operation Linebacker 2 in 1972. Over the past thirty years, global air defense networks have grown increasingly lethal and yet over one-third of America's long range strike force is comprised of these same B-52s. While standoff strikes are of some utility, it is unlikely the U.S. could afford the inventory of munitions required to service the roughly 30,000 aim points that exist in the average theater-size campaign. That would leave the Air Force dependant upon 20 B-2s. The risk remains that only four to six of these aircraft are available for combat operations at a given time. Therefore, depending on how much this capability is valued, the Air Force is assuming a great deal of risk in this realm.

While growing in technological sophistication, increasingly smaller air fleets are also posing greater readiness challenges. The F-22 fleet provides a useful example. With a fleet of 185 F-22s, the service does not have any elasticity to absorb attrition or wartime losses. That means when the Air Force lost two production F-22s in recent years, this attrition came at the expense of core inventory. There are no back up reserves to absorb these losses. When leaders factor out F-22s involved with training or undergoing depot maintenance, there is only a small fleet of jets that are combat deployable. This is occurring as the legacy fleet is drawing down in size. Practically, this means fewer jets flying more hours to meet requirements around the globe. This then leads to increased fatigue, higher maintenance costs, and a demand for recapitalization in a shorter period of time than originally planned.

### **National Consequences: Higher Risk, Less Strategic Flexibility**

A significant component to maintaining readiness is training. Training does not just include preparing forces about to deploy to Iraq or Afghanistan in counterinsurgency operations, but also conventional warfare training in non-desert terrains, for example. Military servicemembers receiving training do not have the luxury of preparing for or focusing on only one type of conflict. They must be trained on all weapons systems and platforms for all types of contingencies--even while major combat operations are underway.

Senior military commanders in Iraq repeatedly noted that soldiers and Marines lacked training for major combat operations using their entire range of weapons. For example, artillerymen have not been practicing firing heavy guns but are instead doing counterinsurgency work as military

police. General Robert Magnus, Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps, has said the Marine Corps' ability to train for potential conflicts has been "significantly degraded." Former Chief of Staff of the Air Force, General Michael Moseley, was concerned that airmen--particularly those in the Guard and Reserves--were spending too much time training outside their mission specialties. In one of his notes to airmen, he described this phenomenon as "ancillary training creep" that jeopardizes mission accomplishment with the potential to overshadow combat focus.

The potential consequences of reduced readiness levels across the U.S. military range from the practical--such as more time in depot for maintenance on equipment used at five or six times the peacetime rate and more mechanics required to keep older planes, ships, and vehicles running--to the dire, such as an unforeseen crisis requiring aid from the U.S. military. Restoring readiness is critical because the nation does not have the residual capacity in many units, particularly the Army, to respond to domestic emergencies should they arise. Beyond potentially misspent time, there are secondary and tertiary effects of reduced training in a servicemember's core competency. These negative possibilities may include an altered career path where professional military education, specialty certifications, or other development and education suffers thereby affecting the performance reviews that, in part, help determine promotion and pay increases.

In addition to a reduced ability to respond quickly to crises here in the United States, there are many second-tier effects of low readiness levels in the military. Regional combatant commanders beyond Central Command have seen their personnel and equipment diverted to these two countries over the past several years. Admiral Timothy Keating, former Commander of the U.S. Pacific Command, said that mission demands hindered his ability to respond to an unforeseen crisis in the military's largest geographical command region because 30,000 ground forces that are typically under his control were in the Middle East instead.

Strategic engagement has also suffered as exercises with foreign militaries and allied partners have been curtailed over the last several years. These demands have also hamstrung Pacific Command's ability to conduct exercises and build alliances that could one day prove decisive particularly in reducing the potential for future conflict. Large and small exercises with foreign militaries provide an effective display of capabilities, acting as a deterrent to would-be aggressors--and are important methods for enhancing military readiness. An effort to increase these exercises would be especially useful in the Asia-Pacific and in places like the Horn of Africa and the Strait of Hormuz, where increased coordination is required to stem the threat posed by both pirates and terrorists.

Similarly, since 9/11 the U.S. has worked diligently to train and equip foreign militaries in counterterrorism as well as other security and stability operations. The U.S. military participates in the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership, the Regional Strategic Initiative, the DoD Counterterrorism Fellowship Program, and the Building Global Partnerships Train and Equip program. Both U.S. Southern Command and U.S. Africa Command have made building partnerships and enhancing strategic cooperation central pillars of their missions. In addition to the benefits offered by training foreign militaries, these initiatives also serve to strengthen respect for the civil-military relationship and should not be bill payers for readiness. These

marginal investments can reap savings for taxpayers in the event they help avoid conflict and the expenditure of greater resources.

Further consequences of continued low readiness levels include recruitment and retention difficulties and the overall decline in the condition of the nation's all-volunteer force. While all the services have done tremendous work in meeting high recruiting and retention goals since 2001, there are palpable signs of strain. The QDR Independent Panel "stress tested" America's all-volunteer force and found there is reason to doubt the military can attract and maintain the requisite high quality numbers of personnel as the economy improves. The report noted that even if endstrength numbers remain steady, the quality of the force may decline due to emerging challenges and the loss of institutional memory. There is also some evidence to suggest that the average length of service is getting shorter.

The U.S. Army is currently experiencing a shortfall in mid-career officers that poses long-term risks to the service. In 2007, the U.S. Army was short about 3,000 mid-career officers and as a result promoted captains and majors at rates above its own guidelines. These and other lagging indicators, including promotion rates, are growing in volume. Congress must prevent the U.S. military from crossing any "invisible red line" of dangerously reduced readiness that would likely be detected only after the fact.

### **How to Shape, not Chase, the Future**

Congress must help the Armed Forces create trade space to mitigate growing risks and free up resources to invest in priorities. Specifically, Congress should:

- Maintain the capacity that exists today as the minimum force needed for the future while selectively expanding some areas of investment, to include shipbuilding, long range strike, and additional space and cyber assets.
- Support the building of next-generation capabilities to compete against future threats, including a sixth-generation fighter, a new bomber, a modern nuclear submarine.
- Ensure the Department of Defense has a sound industrial policy to preserve the highly-skilled defense industrial workforce that design and build modern equipment.
- Support increased foreign military sales and ITAR regulatory reform.
- Bolster resources spent on missions that reduce the potential to spend more later, including the need to maintain cutting-edge and varied training and participate in robust building partner capacity missions.

To preserve traditional U.S. margins of military technological superiority, Congress should review potentially outdated requirements and projections, and policymakers should push defense officials to enact more forward-looking budgeting and acquisition strategies. Increased investment in modernization and new partnerships with allies will be necessary to prevent the naval, air, space and cyberspace power balances from tilting in favor of others and to hedge against the potentially destabilizing proliferation of advanced technology and platforms to unstable actors, non-state groups, and/or terrorism-sponsoring rogue states around the world. For example, if Syria or Iran acquires Russia's PAK FA, it could provide the fighter to the non-state group Hezbollah to form a proxy air force against Israel.

Congress should address the military's urgent modernization needs and take into account the long-term implications of procurement freezes and underfunding of the defense industrial base. The Pentagon's defense strategy should direct the military to build core capabilities across a broad range of areas to hedge against various risks. America's enemies will likely exploit areas of weakness, attacking precisely those areas where the country is least prepared. However, maintaining a broad range of capabilities will minimize these risks.

Replacing military platforms that the U.S. has developed and fielded since World War II are also vital to ensuring a superior fighting force. America's defense manufacturing industrial base has allowed the United States to design and build an advanced array of weapons systems to meet the full spectrum of missions the military has been called upon to fulfill. But the workforce is shrinking. In less than ten years, the number of major defense contractors has fallen from 50 to six. A decade ago, America boasted six major aircraft producers while today only two. For the first time in a century, the nation has no manned military or civilian aircraft in design.

Securing America's military dominance for the decades ahead will require:

- An industrial base that can retain a highly skilled workforce with critical skill sets and
- Sustained investment in platforms that offer future commanders and civilian leaders a vital set of core military capabilities and equipment to respond to any threat.

In order to properly guide future defense investments, robust analysis must include substantial input from defense acquisition leaders, program managers, systems engineers, compliance managers, auditors, and other experts. The national defense strategy should also discuss at length the ability of the defense industrial base to respond rapidly to defense strategy changes.

The critical workforce ingredients in sustaining an industrial base capable of building next-generation systems are specialized design, engineering, and manufacturing skills. Already at a turning point, the potential closure of major defense manufacturing lines in the next five years with no additional scheduled production could shrink this national asset even further. While the manufacturing workforce alone should not dictate acquisition decisions, the potential defense "brain drain" must be considered when Congress determines whether or not to permanently shut down major production lines--particularly shipbuilding and aerospace. More often than not, once these highly skilled workers exit the federal workforce, they are difficult to recruit back and more expensive to retrain with significant project gaps.

Congress should also broadly support increased foreign military sales. America's defense industrial base also serves an important role in helping to build the military capacity of foreign allies while enhancing their interoperability with the U.S. military. These efforts indirectly save U.S. taxpayer funds over time and include the advantage of reducing wear and tear on U.S. equipment. Increasing international sales between the U.S. and its allies and partner nations will require either limiting the restrictions placed on the defense sector by the U.S. International Trade in Arms Regulations (ITAR), which are both time-consuming and confusing, or, in the case of America's closest allies, negotiating bilateral defense trade cooperation treaties to help facilitate easier market access. While the concern that sensitive defense technologies may fall into the wrong hands without proper oversight is valid, the archaic ITAR regulations remain

insufficient in today's globalizing defense market. Congress should pursue these opportunities to deregulate the defense market as opposed to adding more layers and rules to an already risk-averse and weighed-down process.

Readiness levels should be restored across the services. Immediate steps that can be taken include timely maintenance on all the military's major platforms to maintain or extend the service lives of equipment being used at wartime rates. A significant element of restoring readiness levels includes the procurement of new platforms and resetting older, worn-out items. Congress must also help the Armed Forces avoid training creep. Recent Army posture statements have simply accepted that operational requirements for soldiers and insufficient time between deployments require a focus on counterinsurgency training and equipping at the expense of preparing for the full range of military missions. As forces in Iraq finish drawing down, U.S. ground forces must resume training for both irregular and conventional missions (amphibious assault, combined arms, etc.) using their entire range of weapons. This includes the need to increase realistic live-fire training and reduce reliance on simulation when possible.

The benefits of stability and security are served by building military partnerships and preserving coalitions by training and advising foreign military forces. Larger military engagements, such as the biannual Rim of the Pacific exercise, and smaller bilateral training opportunities that target specific operational issues serve to increase interoperability between the United States and its friends and allies. These important exercises and engagements should be restored or increased based on combatant commander assessments. Congress should help the Department of Defense reduce reliance on Navy and Air Force personnel to supplement ground forces in counterinsurgency missions overseas. This will bolster varied training for sailors and airmen and keep a healthier all-volunteer force by not hurting individual sailor and airman promotion rates and military career specialties when they work outside of their specialty.

## **Conclusion**

If America continues to under-resource the military, it will not mean a less ambitious foreign policy. It will hollow our nation's security and treaty commitments, greatly increase the risk of conflict, and cause substantially greater casualties for the men and women who serve in the military.

The American Founders held out the possibility of more peaceful relations among nations. But they nevertheless understood that "the surest means of avoiding war is to be prepared for it in peace." America's Founders believed that peace through strength is preferable--militarily, financially, and morally--to allowing war to come through weakness. Congress would be wise to reaffirm these first principles.

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