



**CONGRESSMAN**  
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## **NEWS**

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**Opening Statement of  
The Honorable Herbert Bateman  
Chairman, Subcommittee on Military Readiness**

This afternoon, the Subcommittee on Military Readiness begins its review of the President's fiscal year 2000 budget request and the adequacy of that budget request to sufficiently support the critical readiness needs of our armed forces. Shortfalls in readiness and the migration of funds from Readiness accounts to fund unbudgeted contingencies have been a problem for several years. This subcommittee has been in the forefront of identifying readiness problems. Only last fall did the senior leadership of DOD publicly recognize that which this subcommittee had discovered much earlier. The readiness of our armed forces has been degraded and will continue to decline until it is adequately funded, and those funds must not come from modernization accounts, which are an essential part of the readiness equation, nor can they be funded by voids in Quality of Life funds.

I and many other members of this committee have been sounding the alarms on declining readiness for the past several years, and at long last, the Administration has finally admitted that there are indeed readiness problems in the military services. With much fanfare and media attention, the Administration claims that readiness problems have been addressed in the budget request. To this point, I must express my deep concern that the budget request before us may be long on rhetoric but woefully short in real terms. I fear this budget may only slow down the decline, but much more than that is needed.

The Administration's budget request reports that there is an additional \$12 billion in the fiscal year 2000 budget request for overall defense needs. We now know that over \$8 billion of that "increase" is based on funding adjustments such as lower inflation rates, lower prices for fuel, favorable foreign currency accounts and other adjustments from one year to the next. That \$8 billion will not 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 you deduct the funding for programs that are not supposed to be in the normal defense budget, such as commissary operations and Pentagon renova-

tion funding, there is not much left to improve readiness. When you level the playing field by stripping out all of the funding gimmicks found in some of the Operation and Maintenance accounts, funding for some of the military services actually declines. If we are to reverse the decline in military readiness, the Administration will have to budget real dollars and abandon a tactic of trying to pay for real needs with mythical saving and assumptions.

This committee, and indeed the entire Congress, has long recognized the underfunding by the Administration of critical readiness accounts. These critical readiness accounts include base operations; combat vehicle, ship, and aircraft depot maintenance; funding for increased operations, such as flying hours and combat vehicle tread miles; facility and infrastructure repairs, and mobility enhancement funds. In fact, between 1994 and 1995, this committee alone has added over \$7.2 billion to the Administration's annual request in just these areas. Some make the hollow charge that increases represent "pork barrel" additions and say that the Pentagon did not ask for the increased funding. I would argue that additions to these accounts are not Congressional district specific and therefore can not be categorized as pork. The fact that the Pentagon did not ask for the additions is one of the primary reasons why we have readiness problems today. I have been asked why, with the level of effort Congress places on these specific accounts, do we continue to have readiness problems. The answer is simple: much of the originally requested and the additional funding for these accounts is diverted to other purposes and to fund a series of unscheduled and unfunded contingencies and deployments.

We are fortunate this afternoon to have as our lead off witness, the principal senior executive of the Department of Defense in charge of readiness, Mr. Rudy de Leon, the Under Secretary of Defense for Readiness and Personnel. As readiness and personnel issues are closely related, especially in the area of quality of life issues, it is my hope that Mr. de Leon will be able to enlighten us on the direction the department has taken in these areas and will be able to provide us with the Department's vision on how we are to permanently fix our readiness problems. Mr. de Leon is no stranger to the committee and we welcome him here today.

Also appearing before the subcommittee today is a panel of senior officers from each of the military services who are responsible for the formulation of their respective budget proposals. We look forward to their testimony on how each of the military departments will address readiness problems with the funds that have been made available.

For the past two years, this committee has initiated legislation that would change the way in which readiness is measured. It is my belief that the current system does not depict a true, real world picture of the state of readiness of our military forces. In numerous field hearings at bases around the country and personal visits to the troops in the field, there is a different view of readiness from those that have to live it every day to that expressed by the senior leadership in Washington. Only by reporting readiness consistently at all levels will we be getting a true picture of military readiness. It is my hope that our witnesses today will be able to update the committee on its efforts to revise their readiness reporting systems.