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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

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April 6, 2026

Congressman Mike Rogers
Chairman
House Armed Services Committee
2216 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Congressman Adam Smith
Ranking Member
House Armed Services Committee
2264 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

RE: FY 2027 LA-02 NDAA Requests

Dear Chairman Rogers and Ranking Member Smith:

Thank you for considering these requests for the Fiscal Year 2027 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). This letter highlights my requests and the importance of these projects for our national defense.

1. Report Language for Continuity of Mission and Readiness During Transition of F/A–18 Aircraft to Navy Reserve

This provision ensures continuity of mission execution, fleet readiness, and personnel retention as the Navy transitions F/A–18 aircraft to the Navy Reserve to replace legacy F–5 aircraft. It requires the Secretary of the Navy to prevent any readiness gaps during the transition by maintaining pilot proficiency, sufficient flying hours, simulator access, and properly trained maintenance personnel. The provision specifically addresses concerns that delays in awarding and executing maintenance and simulator support contracts could result in extended lapses in qualification, leading to degraded readiness and the potential loss of experienced Reserve aviators and maintainers (contract or military).

The language further requires overlap between the sunset of F–5 support contracts and the activation of F/A–18 sustainment and training contracts to prevent operational disruption. It conditions full divestment of F–5 aircraft on certification that replacement aircraft, contracts, and qualification pipelines are fully operational and that no gap in mission execution exists. Collectively, the provision safeguards adversary training capacity, protects Reserve force readiness, and supports retention of critical strategic Reserve personnel during the aircraft transition.

Draft Language:

SEC. ___. CONTINUITY OF MISSION AND READINESS DURING TRANSITION OF F/A–18 AIRCRAFT TO NAVY RESERVE.

(a) In General.

As the Secretary of the Navy transitions F/A–18 aircraft to the Navy Reserve to replace F–5 aircraft, the Secretary shall ensure there is no degradation, gap, or delay in mission execution, fleet readiness, or pilot and maintainer qualification during such transition. The Secretary shall further ensure that transition actions support the retention of key strategic Reserve personnel whose continued service underpins operational readiness.

(b) Requirements.

In carrying out subsection (a), the Secretary shall ensure:

1. *the uninterrupted execution of assigned operational and adversary training missions throughout the transition period;*
2. *sufficient aircraft availability, flying hours, and simulator access to maintain pilot proficiency, currency, and qualification in the F/A–18 aircraft, including measures to prevent extended lapses in flight activity that would negatively impact readiness or retention;*
3. *the timely award, execution, and overlap of required maintenance, logistics, and simulator support contracts to prevent any capability gap between the planned sunset of F–5 aircraft support contracts and the commencement of F/A–18 sustainment and training support contracts, including actions to accelerate contract execution as necessary to preserve readiness;*
4. *adequate training, certification, and qualification of maintenance personnel to support new aircraft systems and maintenance requirements; and*
5. *alignment of operations and maintenance resources necessary to sustain readiness and prevent avoidable delays that would result in aircrew or maintainers being unable to meet currency requirements.*

(c) Certification.

The Secretary of the Navy may not complete the divestment of F–5 aircraft assigned to Navy Reserve units until the Secretary certifies to the congressional defense committees that

1. *F/A–18 aircraft, associated maintenance support, and simulator contracts reach initial operational capability;*
2. *pilot and maintainer qualification pipelines are established and funded; and*
3. *no projected gap exists in mission execution or readiness metrics as a result of the transition.*

(d) Briefing.

Not later than 120 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall provide a briefing to the congressional defense committees on the transition timeline, contract execution status, readiness impacts, and risk mitigation measures.

(e) Congressional Defense Committees Defined.

In this section, the term "congressional defense committees" has the meaning given that term in section 101(a)(16) of title 10, United States Code.

2. Report Language for Quality of Life Assessment at Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base New Orleans

This proposal directs the Secretary of the Navy to conduct a comprehensive quality-of-life assessment at Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base New Orleans and submit a report to the congressional defense committees within 180 days of enactment. The assessment shall evaluate food availability for permanent, temporary, and Reserve personnel; the condition and resiliency of potable water infrastructure, including required repairs to elevated water storage systems and mitigation of single points of failure; the scope, cost, and timeline to repair the Aquatic Recreation and Training Facility that sustained structural damage in 2023 due to drought-related soil subsidence; the status of disaster recovery funding for Navy Reserve facilities, including disparities between Operations and Maintenance, Navy and Operations and Maintenance, Navy Reserve accounts; and the impact of the current Flight Surgeon vacancy on aviator readiness and travel costs. The report shall include findings, cost

estimates, and a prioritized corrective action plan with recommended funding sources and any additional legislative authority required to implement corrective measures.

Draft Language:

SEC. ___. QUALITY OF LIFE ASSESSMENT AT NAVAL AIR STATION JOINT RESERVE BASE NEW ORLEANS.

(a) Assessment. Not later than 180 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary of the Navy shall conduct a quality-of-life assessment at Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base New Orleans.

(b) Matters Included. The assessment under subsection (a) shall address, at a minimum:

1. *Food Services. The adequacy and availability of on-installation dining facilities and food vendors for permanent, temporary, and Reserve personnel, including identification of service gaps and corrective actions.*

2. *Potable Water Infrastructure. The condition, capacity, and resiliency of potable water systems, including required repairs to elevated water storage infrastructure, mitigation of single points of failure, cost estimates, and recommended funding mechanisms.*

3. *Aquatic Recreation and Training Facility. The scope, cost, and timeline for repair of the Aquatic Recreation and Training Facility that sustained structural damage in 2023 due to soil subsidence, including identification of funding sources.*

4. *Disaster Recovery Funding. The status of disaster recovery funding for Navy Reserve facilities at the installation, including any disparities between Operations and Maintenance, Navy and Operations and Maintenance, Navy Reserve accounts, and recommended corrective actions.*

5. *Flight Surgeon Staffing. The status of Flight Surgeon staffing, impacts on readiness, costs associated with off-installation medical travel, and a plan to address any vacancies.*

(c) Report. Not later than 180 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall submit to the congressional defense committees a report containing the results of the assessment under subsection (a), a prioritized corrective action plan, associated cost estimates, and any recommendations for additional legislative authority.

(d) Congressional Defense Committees Defined. In this section, the term "congressional defense committees" has the meaning given that term in section 101(a)(16) of title 10, United States Code.

3. Bill Language for Preservation and Expansion of Domestic Naval Architecture and Ship Design Capabilities

This proposal asks for an authorization of $70 million over fiscal years 2027 through 2029 to establish a dedicated Naval Design and Engineering Readiness Program within the Department of the Navy. These funds would support academic programs, apprenticeships, fellowships, mid-career development, and investments in advanced digital design tools. This is a modest but strategically sound investment. Historical data suggests that poor design maturity contributes to five to ten percent cost growth on major programs, meaning this three-year

investment could conservatively avert hundreds of millions in downstream costs, representing a return on investment of more than ten to one.

The United States must be continue to be able to design and engineer complex naval vessels. Continuous design activity is essential to workforce proficiency and cost-effective shipbuilding, yet the domestic naval architecture and marine engineering workforce has been steadily eroding due to irregular design workloads, aging talent, and a thin pipeline of early-career professionals. Without sustained investment, the U.S. risks losing its sovereign design capability entirely, increasing dependence on foreign design agents and exposing future shipbuilding programs to significant cost growth and schedule delays. This challenge is compounded by growing international competition from foreign entities backed by national investments in digital engineering and AI-enabled design tools.

Draft Language

Sec. XXX. Preservation and Expansion of Domestic Naval Architecture and Ship Design Capabilities.

*(a) **Policy.—** The U.S. risks losing critical naval design capability within the next decade without sustained workload and targeted policy action. The Secretary of the Navy shall take actions necessary to maintain and expand robust domestic naval architecture, marine engineering, and ship design capabilities necessary to support the construction, modernization, sustainment, and lifecycle management of naval vessels built for the Armed Forces.*

*(b) **Establishment of Program.—** The Secretary of the Navy, hereafter known as the Secretary, shall establish a program, to be known as the Naval Design and Engineering Readiness Program, to develop, sustain, and expand the national workforce and industrial capacity of naval architects, marine engineers, and associated design personnel. This program may support naval design needs across the Department of Defense and other Federal maritime agencies, as appropriate.*

*(c) **Program Activities.—** Under the program, the Secretary shall, to the maximum extent practicable—*
(1) provide competitive grants to accredited academic institutions that offer naval architecture or marine engineering degree programs;
(2) support apprenticeships, internships, cooperative training, and fellowships with United States shipyards, design agents, and naval research laboratories;
(3) fund continuing education, credentialing, and mid-career development for naval architects and marine engineers;
(4) invest in artificial intelligence, digital design, and digital engineering capabilities that enhance the productivity, resilience, and competitiveness of domestic naval design agents; and
(5) provide cost-share support to industry for workforce recruitment, retention, and training activities necessary to sustain sovereign naval design capability.

***(d) Design Capability Sustainment.—** The Secretary shall identify domestic shipyards, naval design agents, and commercial entities with advanced naval architecture, marine engineering, and ship design competencies as critical elements of the national security industrial base pursuant to **sections 4801 and 4811 of title 10, United States Code** and may designate such entities as critical suppliers for purposes of industrial base sustainment and prioritization. The Secretary shall establish mechanisms to ensure a continuous pipeline of naval design and engineering work sufficient to sustain critical domestic capabilities between major shipbuilding programs, including through prototyping, concept design, and pre-acquisition activities.*

*(e) **Limitation on Offshoring of Core Naval Vessel Design.—** No vessel procured for the United States may be designed by a foreign entity or outside the United States unless the Secretary determines that it is in the national security interests of the United States and provides a detailed justification to the congressional defense committees a written certification demonstrating that no qualified domestic capability exists, including an assessment of impacts to the domestic industrial base.*

*(f) **Coordination.—** The Secretary shall coordinate activities under this section with the Maritime Administration, the Coast Guard, relevant Federal research entities, and qualified industry stakeholders.*

*(g) **Report.—** Not later than 180 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall submit to the congressional armed services committees a report on the status of domestic naval architecture and ship design capabilities. The report shall include—*
(1) an assessment of current and projected workforce demand by vessel class and program phase;
(2) an inventory of academic, government, and private-sector design capacity;
(3) identification of capability gaps and workforce shortfalls;
(4) an assessment of risks to the sustainment of sovereign naval design capability;
(5) recommendations for additional actions or authorities required to preserve and expand such capability; and
(6) an assessment of reliance on foreign design agents and associated risks.

*(h) **Definitions.—** In this section, the term "naval architecture and ship design capability" includes naval architecture, marine engineering, structural and systems design, digital engineering, and model-based lifecycle engineering activities necessary to support naval vessels procured for the United States.*

*(i) **Metrics**. — The Secretary shall establish measurable performance metrics for the program, including—*

- *workforce growth and retention rates*
- *number of active domestic design programs*
- *reduction in design-related cost growth and change orders*
- *level of domestic participation in naval design activities*

*(j) **Authorization of Appropriations.—**There is authorized to be appropriated to the Secretary of the Navy $15,000,000 for fiscal year 2027, $25,000,000 for fiscal year 2028, and $30,000,000 for fiscal year 2029 to carry out this section, to remain available until expended.*

*(k) **Termination**.— The authority under this subsection shall terminate on September 30, 2029, unless extended by an Act of Congress.*

4. Bill Language for National Security Gallium Supply Chains

Our national defense increasingly relies on advanced gallium nitride (GaN) and gallium arsenide (GaAs) semiconductors to maintain military superiority across radar, electronic warfare, communications, missile defense, and emerging directed energy systems. Gallium has become indispensable yet China controls approximately 98% of global production.

In January 2026, the Department took the first steps, forming a $450M strategic partnership with ATALCO, the nation's last alumina refinery, to secure U.S. alumina production and build America's first large scale primary gallium production circuit. With no gallium strategic reserves in the National Defense Stockpile, gallium and gallium oxide remain unprotected under existing statute.

Gallium risk exceeds that of rare earth magnets, prompting Congress to enact DoD domestic sourcing restrictions in FY19, FY23, and FY24, similar to those enacted for specialty metals (FY07) and Tungsten and Tantalum (FY21). The next step to combat Chinese market manipulation is to expand the FY26 restriction on Gallium sourced directly from adversary countries such as DPRK, China, Russia, and Iran (FY26) and require it to be domestically sourced for use by our armed forces.

This provision would amend 10 U.S.C. § 4863 to go beyond merely limiting gallium and gallium oxide acquisition from adversaries and include these specialty metals in domestic sourcing requirements consistent with rare earths, tungsten, and tantalum.

Draft Language

SECTION ___. AMENDMENT TO SPECIALTY METALS RESTRICTIONS.
(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 4863(l) of title 10, United States Code, is amended—
(1) in paragraph (1), by striking "and" at the end;
(2) in paragraph (2), by striking the period at the end and inserting "; and"; and
(3) by adding at the end the following new paragraph: "(3) gallium and gallium oxides."
(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by subsection (a) shall take effect on the date that is 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act and shall apply with respect to contracts entered into on or after such effective date.

Thank you for carefully considering these requests.

Sincerely,

Troy A. Carter Sr.
Member of Congress