



U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations

PRESS RELEASE

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Chairman Inouye Opening Statement at Subcommittee Markup of FY 2010 Defense Appropriations Bill

"Today the subcommittee meets to consider funding for the Department of Defense for Fiscal Year 2010 and for other purposes. Vice Chairman Cochran and I are presenting recommended funding which totals \$636.3 billion for the discretionary programs under this subcommittee's jurisdiction.

"This amount is \$3.9 billion below the amount requested but is the same as the subcommittee allocation. Of this amount \$128.2 billion is funding to sustain our overseas contingency operations, primarily in Iraq and Afghanistan. Again I applaud Secretary Gates and the Administration for putting forward a budget request which covers the operations both for the normal costs of running our national security programs and for the on-going wartime needs.

"The proposed funding protects the priorities of our military and civilian leaders, supporting our men and women in uniform and needed acquisition programs. There has been much discussion this year about proposals by the Administration to cut funding for 'unneeded' weapons programs. Vice Chairman Cochran and I have reviewed each of the proposals by the Administration.

"While we are not in complete agreement with the judgment of administration officials, we have generally concurred with the recommendations of our current leaders. I would like to remind my colleagues that the Defense Department has been wrong on several occasions in recommending program terminations.

"Luckily the Congress has not always agreed with such proposals. Let me give three examples, although we could spend all day relaying examples of mistakes by previous administrations. First, the F-117 Stealth Fighter. After producing only one squadron of F-117's the Air Force wanted to terminate the program which some in the Defense Department saw as a threat to the F-15E.

"Congress continued to add funding for the program until two squadrons had been completely filled out. Without the additional aircraft provided by the Congress, the Defense Department would have been woefully short of stealth aircraft in conducting operations in Desert Storm and Bosnia.

"Second, the first Bush administration fought very hard to kill the V-22 which today the Marine Corps considers one of its greatest assets. Finally, I would remind my colleagues that shortly before Desert Shield-Desert Storm the Pentagon wanted to eliminate the Central Command. The view at the time was that we probably wouldn't need to focus much attention on South West Asia. This clearly demonstrates that our ability to predict hot spots and future threats is not perfect.

"As we go forward today killing the F-22, the Presidential helicopter, the Combat Search and Rescue helicopter, the Kinetic Energy Interceptor, we do so with the hope that today's military and civilian leaders are more prescient than their predecessors in predicting our future needs.

"The recommendations before the subcommittee provide our best judgment on the needs of our nation for national security. We have not provided funding for the closure of Guantanamo because the Administration has yet to produce a credible plan. We have adjusted funding for the Littoral Combat Ship because the Administration did not request sufficient funding to produce the quantity it requested.

"We have reapplied savings cut from unjustified amounts requested in the budget to programs that are better suited for funding. For example, we have reduced amounts requested for Afghanistan security forces which the Administration agrees cannot be spent in the coming year and transferred that amount to cover a shortfall in the critically needed MRAP program.

"While we strongly concur with the Administration that increased funding is needed to train and equip our Afghan army and police forces, it makes no sense to provide more funding than can be spent when other shortfalls exist.

"Along with our staffs we spend countless hours reviewing the programs and funding requests proposed by the Administration. As you all know the Defense budget is huge and it is extremely complex. There are thousands of acquisition and operations programs. In most cases the specific amounts requested for each of these programs was proposed by the military services more than a year ago.

"During the intervening period many changes occur. It is not unusual for a program to be delayed or even terminated while a request is pending before the Congress. As such, it is up to the subcommittee to make the necessary adjustments to ensure that the Congress is afforded the best use of the funds provided under the subcommittee's allocation. In so doing, we are recommending several program increases in this bill.

"For example, we are recommending adding \$1.5 billion to provide for essential equipment for our National Guard and Reserve forces. We have also added funding to sustain our near term missile defense programs -- like the Aegis standard missile, THAAD radars and Ground Based Interceptors for testing.

"We are recommending \$1.7 billion to purchase an additional DDG-51 destroyer to put that restarted program on a more efficient and economical production schedule. And we have added \$2.5 billion to sustain production of the C-17 program for one additional year. The Administration has recently been provided with authority to retire the aging, hard to maintain, and often broken C-5A force. We expect that in re-examining its airlift fleet the Defense Department will eventually conclude that purchasing additional C-17's and maintaining the strategic asset of a hot airlift production line is the right solution.

"On the question of earmarks, as we described earlier this year, the subcommittee has reduced the amount recommended for earmarks by \$300 million or 10% from last year's recommendation. In numbers, the subcommittee has reduced the number of earmarks by nearly 200 fewer projects. We recognize that all members of the subcommittee will receive less than last year. We hope that our colleagues can support this package with its streamlined approach to earmarking.

"Collectively, we believe the recommendations in this bill will provide for our nation's defense and is far superior to the budget request submitted by the Administration. Having had the time to review the suggestions of the Administration carefully has afforded the subcommittee the opportunity to produce a better bill. I hope that all my colleagues can support the bill as drafted."

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