

**Opening Statement of U.S. Senator Jack Reed
Ranking Member, Senate Armed Services Committee**

**Room SD-106
Dirksen Senate Office Building
Wednesday, March 18, 2015**

**To receive testimony on the postures of the Department of the Army and the
Department of the Air Force in review of the Defense Authorization Request
for Fiscal Year 2016 and the Future Years Defense Program.
(As Prepared for Delivery)**

Thank you Mr. Chairman. I also want to welcome our witnesses and thank you for your service. Thank you also to the soldiers and airmen and their families who selflessly serve this nation every day.

This Committee has heard testimony from numerous witnesses expressing concern about the effect of the BCA caps, the threat of sequestration, and the lack of budget predictability. General Odierno and General Welch, you made a compelling case to the Committee a month ago about the risks of continued fiscal constraints. Recently General Dempsey testified that funding at the President's budget request, which is already \$38 billion above the BCA caps, will keep the Department at the "lower ragged edge of manageable risk" and will leave "no slack, no margin...for error or strategic surprise." I do not believe that this is the way to remain the finest fighting force in the world.

The FY2016 budget request continues implementation of the Army size and force structure changes directed in the 2012 Defense Strategic Guidance and 2014 Quadrennial Defense Review. At the end of FY16, active Army end strength will be down to 475,000 soldiers and combat brigades to 30. The funding request for personnel next year is essentially flat compared to this year. I would appreciate an update in how the Army is managing the pace and scope of end strength reductions and force structure changes.

The Army's readiness request in operation and maintenance continues to slowly build depth in non-deployed units, including 19 combat training center rotations, of which 15 are for active and 2 for National Guard combat brigades.

I am interested in learning how the Army plans to sustain momentum in building the readiness of more units over the next few years. What are the most important capabilities, capacities, and

readiness levels in the Army and how does this request fund them to meet the missions of today and tomorrow? How would BCA caps impact the Army's management of these changes and the associated strategic risk in readiness to meet urgent contingencies?

The challenges of declining resources and the high cost of new technologies have driven the Army to make tough choices in its major modernization programs. The FY 2016 request includes a modest increase over last year for research, development, and acquisition emphasizing aviation and science and technology programs while deferring investment for a next generation combat vehicle or a replacement Armed Aerial Scout. We are interested to hear how the Army's budget request and the Future Years Defense Program (FYDP) supports a stable, affordable, and achievable modernization strategy.

For the Air Force, this budget request reverses a recent downward trend in end strength, and increases military personnel by more than 6,000 airmen, mostly in active duty personnel. I am interested in learning how these personnel will be utilized, because it is my understanding that they will not be allocated for remotely piloted aircraft, which is an area currently facing a manpower crisis.

The Air Force wanted to reduce the number of Predator and Reaper remotely piloted aircraft (RPA) Combat Air Patrols (CAPs) it will support, but demand from the combatant commanders prevent it. High tempo Predator and Reaper CAPs strain their supporting ground crews so much that the Commander of the Air Combat Command recently sounded an alarm that we are near the point of breaking this critical force. Unfortunately, we have been facing the prospect of breaking the RPA force for at least the past 6 years, while demand has continued to exceed supply. The Air Force appears to have made little or no progress in solving this operational problem. We need to hear how the Air Force leadership intends to fix this once and for all.

Once again, the Air Force is proposing significant force structure reductions in fiscal year 2016 and the FYDP. For example, the Air Force would retire the entire A-10 fighter force; would retire roughly 26 older C-130 aircraft leaving roughly 275 aircraft to support tactical operations; and would make significant reductions in certain high-demand/low-density forces, such as the AWACS, JSTARS and Compass Call fleets. I am interested to hear how the Air Force is balancing the need for savings with mission requirements in this area.

Finally Mr. Chairman, we just received the Air Force's report on how it intends to implement the recommendations in the report of the National Commission on the Structure of the Air Force. One of the principle efficiency recommendations of the Commission would move, "approximately 36,000 additional active airmen into the reserve components and [achieve] related savings of roughly \$2 billion." The Air Force report, however, states that their, "mission area analysis does not support [this] concept due to the reduction in rotational capacity and the resulting increase in risk." We will need to understand why that may be true.

Again, thank you for your service and I look forward to your testimony.