

**OPENING STATEMENT OF U.S. SENATOR JIM INHOFE
CHAIRMAN, SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE**

March 26, 2020

To receive testimony on the posture of the Department of the Army in review of the Defense Authorization Request for Fiscal Year 2021

The Committee is conducting this hearing to receive testimony on the posture of the U.S. Army and its fiscal year 2021 budget request.

We welcome the testimony of Ryan McCarthy, Secretary of the Army, and General James McConville, Chief of Staff of the Army, on these matters, and thank both for their distinguished service.

Today, our nation is facing an unprecedented health crisis. The entire federal government – including the Department of Defense and all of the Services – is working non-stop to halt the spread of the novel coronavirus and mitigate its effects.

Of great concern to me today is how the Army is handling this emergency. First and foremost – how are our soldiers and their families being protected and taken care of?

In addition, I want to better understand the operational effects, and what steps you are taking to minimize its impact to the national security missions of the Army.

I commend you both, Secretary Esper, and the entire Department for taking every precaution to protect our service members from COVID-19 so far – and I am confident that you will continue to prioritize the health and safety of our soldiers, as well as the success of our missions.

While we are dealing with this enormous and urgent challenge, we've also got to keep an eye on our persistent national security objectives and challenges.

The National Defense Strategy (NDS) directs our nation's military to address the return of great power competition. This means we must be prepared to deter and, if necessary, defeat potential near-peer adversaries like China and Russia.

For the Army to achieve that goal, our Army must be manned, trained, and equipped appropriately.

The Army continues to make significant progress in rebuilding readiness across the force, but there is still much work to be done. Maximizing readiness, both tactical and strategic, is crucial for our nation to maintain peace through strength.

Russia and China have modernized both conventional and nuclear forces with alarming speed, and now present a credible regional threat to America and our allies – as well as an increasing threat around the world. In some areas, they have surpassed us.

It's past time for action. After three years of significant increases in defense budgets thanks to President Trump, this year's defense topline falls well short of the 3-5 percent growth recommended by the National Defense Strategy Commission report. In fact, it represents a \$15 billion decrease in purchasing power. This isn't your fault, but you will have to deal with the repercussions.

This will mean homing in on top priorities – like readiness and modernization. Several of these priorities are housed at Fort Sill in Oklahoma, including Air and Missile Defense and Long-Range Precision Fire. In addition, any successful modernization strategy must focus on results. We cannot allow the past acquisition failures to be repeated.

The Army recently undertook a second iteration of the detailed and exhaustive look at every single program to ensure that each supports the National Defense Strategy –an important task started by now-Secretary of Defense Esper.

You have made hard decisions to prioritize programs that effectively implement the NDS. This resulted in reallocating funding for modernization efforts that will help the Army regain a qualitative and quantitative advantage over our adversaries.

Continuing to make smart and informed choices will require an open and transparent dialogue with Congress along the way. We look forward to working with you to make our shared modernization vision a reality as the Army reinvents itself to become a 21st-century fighting force prepared for the more lethal and dynamic battlefields that define today's reality.

###