

**Statement of John F. Tierney
Chairman
Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
U.S. House of Representatives**

**Hearing on “Rethinking our Defense Budget:
Achieving National Security through Sustainable Spending.”**

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July 20, 2010

Good Morning. Today, the Subcommittee continues its oversight of spending at the Department of Defense. Specifically, we will examine recommendations from a number of defense experts for ways that we can reduce defense spending while ensuring that our national security interests are not compromised.

Over the last two Congresses, this Subcommittee has devoted significant time and resources to oversight of defense spending. We have examined the defense acquisitions process and have worked to ensure that adequate planning and testing is completed before multi-billion dollar weapons systems are purchased. We have investigated contracting in our overseas military operations and discovered widespread waste, lack of management, and blindness to the broader security implications of these problems. We have looked closely at the Missile Defense Agency, military aid programs, and strategic planning for new technologies such as unmanned aerial vehicles. We continue to try to get a clear picture from the Department of the actual number of overseas military bases we have as well as the strategic rationale for each location. Time after time, we see opportunities for increased efficiency, less waste, and better use of taxpayer money.

Just two weeks before President Obama was sworn into office in January, 2009, the Congressional Budget Office announced that the Fiscal Year’s deficit was estimated at over \$1 Trillion. The inauguration occurred with an anticipated estimated long range deficit of \$11.5 Trillion. In February of this year, President Obama established the bipartisan National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform. This Commission has been tasked with finding ways to improve the long-term fiscal outlook of the United States. It is critical that the Commission scrutinize all aspects of our budget, including the defense budget as it formulates its suggestions. I hope, in fact, that members of the Commission will pay close attention to our discussion, and in fact am scheduled to meet with the Commission’s Co-Chairs tomorrow afternoon at which time I intend to urge them to do just that.

Today, we will consider options for realigning our national defense spending. We have with us a panel of experts from diverse political viewpoints who will speak about ways that they and others who worked with them on the related report believe we can cut the defense budget while maintaining our commitment to national security. Two of our

witnesses are members of the Sustainable Defense Task Force, which has recently released that report with recommendations that, if implemented, would reduce the Department's budget by \$960 billion by the year 2020.

Neither I, nor the individual members of this Sub-committee are bound to agree with each and every recommendation made by the report or the testimony today, yet most would, I believe, welcome consideration of the topic and a number of the individual suggestions proffered. We look forward to the discussion of those recommendations, as well as any additional suggestions from our panel.

To be absolutely clear, this discussion should not be dismissed, as it may be by some, as an attempt to weaken the Department of Defense or under-prioritize U.S. national security. As this Subcommittee's track record demonstrates, every Member of this panel takes the security of our country very seriously. Waste is waste, regardless of the context, and inefficiencies only hurt our ability to respond effectively to crises and promote our national security interests.

Sound national security in an austere budget environment requires strategic choices and rational resource allocation. Bigger is not always better, especially in matters of national defense. Budgets always involve hard choices, but in this case those choices can make our nation stronger. It is through that lens that we approach our conversation today.

It is our duty on this Subcommittee – and in Congress as a whole – to make certain that taxpayer money is spent responsibly. As President Obama has said, “we have an obligation to future generations to address our long-term, structural deficits, which threaten to hobble our economy and leave our children and grandchildren with a mountain of debt.” The critical importance of our national security does not in any way exempt the Defense Department from its obligations to spend money wisely and efficiently.