

HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

STATEMENT OF
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CHAIRMAN
JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF
BEFORE THE HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
ON THE FUTURE OF NATIONAL DEFENSE
AND THE U.S. MILITARY TEN YEARS AFTER 9/11
OCTOBER 13, 2011

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Chairman McKeon, Ranking Member Smith, members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on the future of national defense and the U.S. military ten years after the attacks of September 11th. As this is my first time testifying before this committee in my new position as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, I want to note that I look forward to continued cooperation with you. I take seriously our shared responsibility of maintaining a military that provides our leaders with a wide range of options to counter the threats and crises we face and that preserves the trust placed in us by our citizens. I believe we can sustain this trust while also being good stewards of our nation's resources. In that spirit, I thank the Committee for engaging in this important discussion of the future of our national defense.

Last month marked the tenth anniversary of the September 11th attacks. It is appropriate to reflect on what we have achieved, what we have learned, and where we see ourselves going forward.

In the past decade, over two million men and women have deployed overseas in support of operations in Afghanistan, Iraq, and elsewhere. Our Joint Force, along with our interagency and international partners, has remained resolute and resilient throughout a decade of hard combat in hard places. We have demonstrated initiative, we have demonstrated strength, and we have demonstrated resolve. We have met our sacred obligation to protect our nation and our fellow citizens.

There remains work to be done in achieving our objectives in the conflicts in which we are currently engaged and against the threats we currently face, and we will get it done.

Our military has learned and adapted to a shifting security landscape. Among the many lessons we have learned, a few stand out.

First, we live in an increasingly competitive security environment. Military capabilities proliferate more quickly and are no longer the monopoly of nation states. The distinction between low and high intensity conflict is blurred. This requires us to prevail in the competitive learning environment—we must learn faster, understand more deeply, and adapt more quickly than our adversaries. Our systems and processes must be far more effective, efficient, and agile if we are to keep pace in this environment.

Second, we must continue to value allies and partners. Coalitions and partnerships – with other countries and with other government agencies – add capability, capacity, and credibility to what are shared security responsibilities. As fiscal constraints become more binding, the importance of partnering will only grow. As a consequence, we are committed to expanding the envelope of cooperation at home and abroad.

Third, we must continue to value joint interdependence. Our Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard combine to field an unmatched team. We still need our Services to be masters of their core competencies and stewards of their cultures. But, modern conflict is fought across multiple domains. Operating as a single, cohesive team is the imperative. Therefore, we must continue to advance the interoperability of people and equipment.

Fourth, we must value innovation even more than we have in the past. Our forces have expanded many of our previously low-density capabilities and fielded many new technologies. We have found ways to expand our special operations forces, our intelligence systems, and our cyber capabilities. And, our units have combined these capabilities in innovative ways to the great benefit of the mission, our troops, and non-combatants on the battlefield.

Finally, we must always value leadership above all else. Leadership is the core of our military profession. It has been the key to our ability to learn, adapt, and achieve results over the past decade. Modern counter-insurgency and counter-terrorist operations drive us to push combat power and decision making to the edge of the battlefield. Continued development of adaptive leaders will be our nation's decisive advantage in a competitive security environment.

Even as we successfully transition today's conflicts, we are preparing for tomorrow's. The way we recover from combat and reconstitute our capabilities will shape our future military. We are building today the Joint Force we will have in 2020. Joint Force 2020 must be powerful, responsive, resilient, versatile, and admired. It must have the capability and capacity to provide options to our national leadership. It must account for the capabilities we have now to include the relatively new capabilities we have grown. And, it must preserve our human capital. Above all, we must get the "people" right and keep faith with our Military Family.

Developing the Joint Force our nation needs is complicated by known and potential fiscal constraints. Be assured, we understand that our nation needs us to be more affordable. We are fully committed to reducing costs without compromising the capabilities our nation also needs. But, becoming lean and efficient will only get us so far. We will have to make hard choices that balance risk across our global commitments and across time. We will have to consider reforming pay and benefits as well as reducing end strength. If we fail to put everything on the table, we risk hollowing the force by gutting modernization and readiness. Most importantly, we need to be precise. Indiscriminate, across the board cuts would wreak havoc on our plans and programs. Together, we need to avoid self-inflicted wounds to our nation's security.

I look forward to cooperating with the members of this Committee and the rest of Congress. We will need your help in making the tough choices and in supporting the service members we send into harm's way. They deserve the future they sacrificed to secure.