

Testimony of Congressman Mike Johnson (LA-04)
Submitted to the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense
April 10, 2019

JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I very much appreciate it and Ranking Member Calvert and esteemed colleagues. I greatly appreciate you giving us the opportunity to provide our input during the committee's "member day" hearing for the Fiscal Year 2020 Defense Appropriations budget.

First, I want to provide the subcommittee with a brief introduction on the important role of my congressional district. We do play a critical role in advancing the national security interests of the United States and the world. I have the distinct honor of representing two vital military installations - Fort Polk, JRTC and Barksdale Air Force Base - as well as various Louisiana National Guard facilities, such as Camp Minden. Fort Polk is home, of course, to one of only two Army Joint Readiness Training Centers in the nation, and it provides invaluable training to our soldiers so they are fully prepared and equipped for battle. Barksdale Air Force Base is home to the Air Force Global Strike Command. It includes the 2nd Bomber Wing which houses three squadrons of B-52 Stratofortress bombers, the 11th Bomb Squadron which is the training squadron, the 20th Bomb Squadron and the 96th Bomb Squadron.

Over the years, I have developed strong relationships with the generals based in my district and appreciate the opportunity to serve them in Congress. In meeting with them, I am absolutely convinced of the critical nature of their roles and that of these installations. Additionally, their insights reinforce my belief that the United States must remain the preeminent military power in the world to preserve balance and maintain peace. As this committee deliberates and assumes the responsibility of ensuring the Department of Defense has all the resources necessary to do its job, I wish to point out several areas I believe are pertinent to achieving that goal very quickly.

As is evident with ongoing provocations from Syria, North Korea, Iran, Russia and others, we live in highly uncertain and incredibly complex times, which further highlights the importance of ensuring our nuclear force modernization. I support the president's FY20 budget proposal that continues the implementation of the Nuclear Posture Review through investments in the nuclear triad. Barksdale Air Force Base and Global Strike Command continue to benefit from investments in DoD research and development to meet a broad range of security threats from our adversaries. In addition, I ask this subcommittee to examine the needs related to developing critical Weapons Generation and Maintenance Facility areas. They are critical and remain critical to protecting our homeland. Placing a Weapons Generation Facility at Barksdale Air Force Base is a top priority for many members of the Louisiana delegation and should be for every member of Congress. It just makes sense. Facilities like this allow the United States to be a nuclear force capable of deterring our enemy and if necessary, surviving a surprise attack. Especially given today's foreign climate, the need to keep a close watch on our adversaries is as important as ever to assure our allies and maintain our defense.

It has been said here before, and I believe it's worth repeating, as then Secretary of Defense James Mattis stated when speaking about maintaining a safe and secure nuclear deterrent, "we must ensure a war that can never be won will never be fought..."

Just as I believe we must invest in strong nuclear deterrence, a robust investment in cyber security must follow, and I know you all appreciate that. Safeguarding DoD's networks is critical to ensuring no bad actor can collect sensitive information or penetrate our cyber capabilities with intent to do harm. In my district, we collect sensitive information and take care of those things, and we have public – private partnerships with DoD and local organizations that benefit directly from resources authorized by this subcommittee. We have organizations like the Cyber Innovation Center, General Dynamics and Radiance Technologies, all located in northwest Louisiana, and they have partnerships with DoD to assist in maintaining and improving the cyber capabilities that protect our homeland from cyber-attacks.

Lastly, I just want to speak briefly about the needs of our U.S. Army. While it is vital to have a capable and robust nuclear option, we must also maintain a strong ground force. Fort Polk Army Base has continued to solidify its footprint as a multi-pronged home for military affairs with a vitally important, state of the art Joint Reserve Training Center. The JRTC has served as invaluable training for Advise and Assist roles as well. It provides soldiers the training and flexibility necessary to carry out the demands placed on them and win. The exercise scenarios learned there replicate many of the unique situations and challenges a unit may face while deployed, and it's really something to see. I hope that you can all visit if you haven't recently.

With that in mind, our ground capabilities face near dire infrastructure needs. For that reason, I ask this subcommittee to continue funding the Defense Community Infrastructure Program, which is vital to the welfare of our service members and their families. Furthermore, this program assists local government, of course, in addressing infrastructure needs that ultimately support our military installations.

I hope to work with all of you on the subcommittee to ensure that the Army uses the right information and the proper methodology to maximize our resources and appropriate facilities to ensure these training units have the resources necessary to address the challenges facing our nation.

In closing, I look forward to working with all of you to support these critical military installations and ensure our force structure has these critical items within the FY20 Defense Appropriations budget.

Again, I certainly appreciate your time. I'm grateful that you do this for all the members to allow us to come and plead these needs. I know you all appreciate and understand it, and I thank you so much.