

Joint Statement of Eric S. Edelman and Gary Roughead
Before the
Senate Armed Services Committee
Hearing on "The National Defense Strategy Commission "
Washington, DC, November 27, 2018
9:30 AM – G50 Dirksen Senate Office Building

Chairman Inhofe, Ranking Member Reed, and members of the Committee we are pleased to appear before you today to address the report of the National Defense Strategy Commission.

Americans assume U.S. military superiority, but today the United States faces a growing crisis of national defense. The strategic landscape is more ominous and dynamic as violent jihadist groups, aggressive regional challengers, and ambitious authoritarian regimes challenge U.S. interests. America's traditional military advantages are eroding rapidly because of our rivals' strategies and increasing capability and our complacency. The United States must restore the hard-power strengths that buttress its foreign policy and the global environment. Doing so requires far greater coherency and urgency and a higher and more expeditious commitment of resources than the country has mustered to date.

These are the conclusions of the Commission on the National Defense Strategy for the United States, a non-partisan, congressionally chartered body we co-chaired. Our commission consulted with civilian and military leaders in the Department of Defense, representatives of other U.S. government departments and agencies, allied diplomats and military officials, and independent experts. Our report makes clear the nation is losing its ability to defend its vital interests and preserve a global environment in which America and like-minded nations can thrive.

Since World War II, America has led a world of remarkable prosperity, freedom, and security. That achievement rested on unmatched U.S. military power. America's military strength ensured the defense and security of the United States and its allies and deterred or defeated aggression around the world and underpinned the freedom of the global commons. They averted a recurrence of the devastating global wars of the early 20th century and repeated large interventions that cost hundreds of thousands of American lives.

Today, our ability to deter and defeat are in jeopardy. China's and Russia's ambition for regional hegemony and global influence are underwritten by determined military buildups aimed at neutralizing U.S. strengths. Threats posed by Iran and North Korea have worsened as those states develop more advanced weapons and creatively employ asymmetric tactics. In many regions, gray-zone aggression—coercion in the space between war and peace—has become revisionist actors' strategy of choice. The dangers posed by radical jihadist groups such as ISIS and al-Qaeda have evolved and intensified. America is not simply facing renewed geopolitical competition, states and non-state actors are in conflict against the U.S. and the world it shaped.

Meanwhile, America has weakened its own defense. Decisions made by both political parties over the past decade, particularly the effects of the Budget Control Act of 2011 where defense spending fell from \$794 billion in Fiscal Year (FY) 2010 to \$586 billion in FY2015, have taken their toll. Political gridlock forced the Pentagon to operate on disruptive, short-term continuing resolutions that triggered crippling, across-the-board cuts associated with the sequester mechanism in 2013. Accordingly, the size, readiness, and future capabilities of the armed forces have left America with less military power relative to the challenges it faces.

In the Western Pacific and Eastern Europe, critical regional military balances are shifting dramatically in China's and Russia's favor. In the South China Sea, Ukraine, and the Middle East gray-zone aggression is shifting the status quo in destabilizing ways. Allies and adversaries question whether America can uphold its commitments. From the Taiwan Strait to the Baltics, peace has long rested on the perception, indeed belief, that the United States can win decisively. As that perception fades, conflict becomes more likely.

Should war occur, American forces will face harder fights and suffer far greater losses than at any time since Vietnam. Competitors such as China, Russia, or North Korea can disrupt the homeland with cyberattacks or the real risk of limited nuclear strikes. In war with Russia in the Baltics, with China in defense of Taiwan, or with two or more rivals simultaneously American forces might fail to accomplish timely objectives at an acceptable price. Bluntly, the U.S. could lose.

Such outcomes can be avoided. The Department of Defense needs innovative operational concepts for countering gray-zone aggression and projecting power into contested zones. Bolder approaches to acquiring and rapidly fielding leap-ahead capabilities are imperative. The United States must thoroughly modernize its nuclear deterrent, increase its cyberwarfare, electronic warfare, space, and missile defense capabilities, and remedy accumulated readiness shortfalls.

A larger military is needed. The Army, Navy, and Air Force all must grow. The United States requires more—and more capable—forces in key areas from short-range air defense to precision-guided munitions and air- and sealift. These enhancements are critical to projecting American power globally and to defeating aggression in more forms and in more than one region simultaneously. The evolving, serious security challenges in Europe, the Middle East, and the Asia-Pacific demand it.

None of these improvements are possible if we are unwilling to pay for them. The Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018 was a welcome relief from budgetary austerity but it was only a first step. The recent announcement that the national security budget for Fiscal Year 2020 may decline from \$716 billion to \$700 billion is a step in the wrong direction. Sustained, timely real budgetary growth is needed to deliver the defense the American people expect and deserve.

Three-to-five percent annual real budgetary growth for defense over at least five years to fulfill the goals of the Trump administration's National Defense Strategy is necessary. Those

appropriations must be predictable, year-long (ideally multi-year) to avoid the budgetary havoc wrought by habitual short-term continuing resolutions.

The investments we advocate are significant and possible only if America takes a strategic and holistic approach to addressing its long-term fiscal challenges that rein in runaway entitlement spending while generating additional revenues.

The Commission's recommendations require strong leadership and sustained attention and advocacy by both the Administration and Congress. Since issuing our report some have focused singular attention on the Commission's assessment of civil-military relations. The concern we expressed is not directed at individuals nor is it particular to the current administration. The stature of civilian leaders in DoD has diminished over time. Growth in military staffs, deference to uniformed leadership, and limits on bringing on board more junior policy practitioners are all contributing factors. Addressing this imbalance is important to our democracy's concept of civilian control of the military and in attracting future generations of civilian defense and national security leadership.

The costs of failing to address America's crisis of national defense will be far greater and will be not be measured in abstract concepts like "international stability" and "global order." They will be tallied in American lives, American treasure, and American security and prosperity lost.