

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

**ROOM SD-G50
DIRKSEN SENATE OFFICE BUILDING**

Tuesday, June 22, 2021

***To conduct a hearing on the Department of the Navy posture in review of the
Defense Authorization Request for Fiscal Year 2022 and the Future Years
Defense Program***

(As prepared for delivery)

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to thank all three of our witnesses for dedicating their lives to the security of our nation.

As Secretary Austin told us, along with nearly every witness who's come before this committee, China is our "pacing threat." It's a global, long-term competition. And it's across every arena of national power. But the military balance of power concerns me most.

In 2018, the National Defense Strategy [NDS] gave us a blueprint for pushing back on China. The bipartisan NDS Commission said 3-5 percent real growth was needed to implement the strategy.

Since then, the threats have gotten worse. And this administration gave us a budget that cuts spending when we need real growth. They want the military to do more on climate change and pandemic response. More mission—but with fewer resources.

We've been asking our military to do too much, with too little, for too long. President Biden's budget cut would make it even harder. It barely treads water while we face all these threats.

This budget cuts ships, aircraft, munitions, and more. We have nearly \$25 billion of unfunded priorities. These aren't "wish lists." They are "risk lists."

This budget cuts aircraft procurement by 20 percent, backslides on Army readiness, and starves Navy shipbuilding. This budget forces our military leaders to choose between being ready for today's fight or the fight of the future. Chinese military leaders are not making that choice.

On Tuesday, I read in the press about a memo by the Acting Secretary of the Navy on next year's budget. He says the Navy must choose between modernizing ships, subs, or aircraft. Does anyone think the Chinese are choosing between ships, subs, or aircraft?

The Chinese defense budget has grown 450 percent since 2001. They added \$200 billion in the last decade while we cut \$400 billion—so we're behind in some areas and falling behind in others.

As a result, I'm worried deterrence will fail: maybe today, or in five or ten years. And when it does, the cost will be much higher than any investment we could make today to prevent it. We're not making hard choices. We're making bad and short-sighted choices.

The administration keeps telling us that the Pentagon budget is cut because of "fiscal realities," but they're spending trillions of taxpayer dollars on everything else under the sun.

We all agree, even the administration, that a strong military improves all the other tools of national power. I just can't understand this short-sighted underfunding of our troops.

We make a sacred compact with our service members. We tell them we'll take care of them and their families—we do that very well. We also tell them that we'll give them the tools to defend the nation and come home safely.

But we're not holding up our end of the bargain. With this proposed budget, we are failing to give them the resources needed to implement the strategy.

*We can't spend our way out of our military problems. We've got to innovate, reform, and fight differently. But we can spend too little to give ourselves a chance.
Mr. Chairman.*