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SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE HEARING ON RECONFIRMATION FOR CJCS

On 18 July 2013, the Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC), held its hearing on the reconfirmation of General Martin Dempsey, USA and Admiral James Winnefeld, USN to the respective posts of Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) and Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (VCJCS). The CJCS and VCJCS offices are the two most senior positions in the Armed Forces, presiding over the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) composed of the service Chiefs and acting as the premier military advisors to the President. The hearing was presided by SASC Chairman, Senator Carl Levin (D-MI), and SASC Ranking Member, Senator James Inhofe (R-OK), with 17 of 26 Committee members in attendance.

Chairman Levin opened the hearing by stating contemporary threats to national security, namely Syria, Afghanistan, North Korea, and Iran in addition to the domestic challenges of Sequestration will dominate much of this reconfirmation hearing. Chairman Levin remarked that, "The damaging effects must be addressed in order to maintain the vitality of our military... our military must be capable of responding to these threats, both foreign and domestic," steering the focus of questions from subsequent Committee members. In his opening remarks, Ranking Member Inhofe stated, "The military is supposed to have 18% of the budget but has suffered one half of the cuts," highlighting his concern that the Department of Defense (DOD) has been paying the bulk of the sequestration burden upon its shoulders.

Speaking on the issue of the Ohio Class ballistic submarine replacement program (SSBN-X), Senator Richard Blumenthal (D-CT) asked what importance the witnesses attributed to this program. ADM Winnefeld replied that the Ohio Class replacement will continue to serve as the most survivable element of the nuclear triad and, "We have delayed the program as far as we can," stressing that funding for this program is going to have to be started soon by Congress in order to meet requirements and demands upon the Navy. On the issue of sexual assault in the military Senator Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY) and Senator Claire McCaskill (D-MO) asked what measures the JCS was implementing to combat this destructive trend. Discussing cases in which the military has brought up charges under the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ), Gen. Dempsey stated that the rate of conviction within military tribunals is approximately 71 percent while civilian courts average between 18 and 21 percent.

One of the most frequent subjects for Members of the Committee was what effect Sequestration would have on our military's force readiness. Speaking specifically on the acquisition of the F-35B STOVL variant of the Joint Strike Fighter (JSF) Gen. Dempsey informed Senator Kay Hagan (D-NC) that Sequestration has moved, "Too far and too

fast... and we will suffer in readiness and modernization,” should programs such as the JSF be delayed. In addition Senator Lindsey Graham (R-SC) boldly stated his concern on the subject of budget cuts which have grounded numerous Navy and Air Force squadrons, nine in total! Gen. Dempsey provided “non-answers” in response to Senator Graham’s request for details about what Air Force and Navy units will be grounded or reduced in flight time should Sequestration continue into Fiscal Year 2014 (FY14). Similarly ADM Winnefeld offered careful answers about the future capabilities and size of Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) if the military is forced to implement further budget cuts in FY14. Also of particular interest was Senator Bill Nelson’s (D-FL) discussion of the Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) shortfall afflicting Southern Command’s (SOUTHCOM) capabilities in the maritime interdiction of narcotics. Senator Nelson spoke with particular fondness of the Navy’s experimental observation blimp capable of staying on station much longer while consuming much less fuel than a similarly tasked fixed-wing aircraft.

HOUSE VETERANS AFFAIRS, HEALTH SUBCOMMITTEE HEARING ON MILITARY SEXUAL TRAUMA

On 19 July, 2013, the House Veterans’ Affairs Committee (HVAC), Subcommittee on Health held a hearing regarding the continued care and treatment for victims of Military Sexual Trauma (MST). The hearing was led by HVAC- Health Chairman, Representative Dan Benishek (R-MI-01).

The first panel consisted of four Veterans who are victims of MST. These victims shared their experiences and concerns regarding their trauma, especially regarding their difficulties in receiving proper treatment. One of these four Veterans, Ms. Tara Johnson, stated that she encountered extreme difficulties in attempting to recover after her assault. She originally was never given the opportunity to discuss her MST, and instead treated for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). As a result of receiving PTSD related medication for treatment that caused her more anxiety, she was forced to pay out of pocket for any further treatments by the VA. Ms. Johnson expressed that continuing to struggle to receive care, further intensified her difficulties in everyday life. The second panel consisted of Dr. Michael Shepherd, a Physician, at the Office of Health Care Inspections in the Office of the Inspector General for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). He was joined by Ms. Karen McGoff, Associate Director of the Bay Pines Office of Healthcare Inspections Office of the Inspector General for the VA as well as Dr. Jonathan Farrell-Higgins, Chief of the Stress Disorder Treatment Program at a VA Medical Center in Eastern Kansas and, lastly, Dr. Carol O’Brien, the Chief of the PTSD Programs Service Network at Bay Pines office for the Veterans Health Administration (VHA). This panel focused on the statistics and studies available regarding the effects treatment facilities have on victims of MST. The Committee inquired about customer service and the actions being put forth to shrink the weaknesses of the system with this panel while also addressing the areas that need to be improved upon.

Several questions were raised by the Committee Members in regards to ways to improve MST’s victims’ experiences with receiving proper treatment. Representative Julia Brownley (D-CA-26) asked for ways to improve the process that would help to support the victims. Brian Lewis, a Veteran, answered this question by stating that fee basis care needs to be given to Veterans at their request, while being given the best practice possible. Mr. Lewis also expressed the importance of continuity of care, as most victims are only given two sessions at a time. Representative Brad Wenstrup (R-OH-02) raised the question regarding whether individuals would like to receive treatment in or out of house. All members of the first panel, who were all Veterans, responded that they would prefer to get treatment out of house. Lisa Wilken, another Veteran, added to this by stating that many people in house do not receive specific MST training and can further trigger anxiety during attempted treatments. Representative Ann McLane Kuster (D-NH-02) then asked what advice the Panel of Veterans had for the best practices in the treatment of MST. Mr. Lewis stressed the importance of different treatment for male victims and not teaching treatments strictly by the “manual.” Ms. Victoria Sanders, another Veteran, believed that offering a safe space for victims is essential to Veterans’ recovery, while Ms. Johnson stated that the basics of receiving resources needs to be more consistent. All individuals believed that there are many areas that need to be improved upon in regard to treatment by the VA for Military Sexual Trauma.

The second panel addressed the statistics, outcomes, and problems associated with the treatment of MST victims. Dr. O’Brien had several suggestions on how to improve the system that has caused so much stress on Veterans. These suggestions included the following; programs to address family and behavior problems, the need for quicker treatment plans, more options and resources for male victims, and the study of understanding the causes and triggers of all different types of MST. Chairman Benishek asked the panel what is being done by the VA Office Inspector General to improve the conditions that are currently plaguing MST individuals. Dr. Shepherd responded by saying that they have been reviewing the following years statistics and trying to make improvements, while Dr. O’Brien said her goal was that she wanted to talk and work more with Veterans themselves suffering from MST to better meet their needs.

AUSN LOOKS AT AMENDMENTS FOR HOUSE DEFENSE APPROPRIATIONS BILL DEBATE NEXT WEEK

Earlier this week, the House Rules Committee began to accept amendments, to be submitted by 16 July 2013, for House floor debate on the Fiscal Year 2014 (FY14) Defense Appropriations bill, H.R. 2397. The list of amendment reveal some of the most salient concerns of the country including the war in Afghanistan, domestic use of drones, providing military aid to Egypt and arming Syria's rebels just to name a few. Originally intended for House floor consideration this week, the amount of amendments submitted this week to the Rules Committee, along with other House floor business, caused debate to be postponed for next week. There are a considerable amount of the 160+ amendments offered that AUSN is interested/concerned with that we will be monitoring next week. Some include an amendment by Representative Tom Cole (R-OK-04), which provides that none of the funds appropriated by this Act shall be available to implement a furlough of Department of Defense federal employees who are paid from the Working Capital Fund (WCF) Account, which is a revolving fund and does not receive direct funding from Congressional appropriations to finance its operations. In addition, another amendment by Representative Jim Langevin (D-RI-02) would reduce the appropriation for Operations and Maintenance (O&M), Defense-Wide by **\$22 million** and transfers this amount to Research, Development, Test and Evaluation (RDT&E), Navy account for the purpose of supporting development, demonstration, evaluation and fielding of promising undersea technologies in RDT&E Project Number 2033, for Advanced Submarine Systems Development. At present time, it is unclear whether the Rules Committee has established which amendments will be heard next week, if at all, or not since debate rules have yet to be established. However, AUSN has heard the debate could resume early next week, possibly as early as Monday.

Details can be found at [AUSN's Capitol Hill Blog on House Defense Appropriations Amendments](#).

AUSN ON THE HILL

In addition to monitoring this week's hearings, AUSN had many meetings this week to discuss pending authorization and appropriation bills as well as particular Veteran bills of interest. Earlier in the week, AUSN met with staff from the offices of Senator Mark Pryor (D-AR) and Senator John Boozman (R-AR) to discuss progress on the Veteran status legislation for career Reservists; H.R. 679 and S. 629. The House is set to pass its bill as a standalone provision, if need be, and the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee (SVAC) was ready to mark up S. 629 earlier this week, but that hearing had to be postponed (the furthest that this legislation has come in recent years). It was a relatively optimistic meeting on the future of this legislation. In addition, AUSN met with the offices of Representative Susan Davis (D-CA-53), Representative J. Randy Forbes (R-VA-04), Senator Joe Donnelly (D-IN), Delegate Madeleine Bordallo (D-Guam) and staff of the Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC). These meetings focused on topics such as Navy equipment, general collaboration, Veteran unemployment, funding for Navy Youth programs and general concerns regarding TRICARE and military pay in the Fiscal Year 2014 (FY14) National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). AUSN also participated in monthly meetings of The Military Coalition (TMC), which focused on the new Commission on Military Retirement and Compensation, as well as meetings with the National Military Veterans Alliance (NMVA).

PRIORITY BILLS INTRODUCED THIS WEEK

S. 1320, Military Reserve Jobs Act of 2013. Introduced by Senator Joe Donnelly (D-IN), the bill would establish a tiered hiring preference for members of the Reserve Components of the Armed Forces.

S. 1296, Servicemembers Electronic Health Records Act. Introduced by Senator Bill Nelson (D-FL), the bill would amend the Wounded Warrior Act to establish a specific timeline for the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to achieve interoperable electronic health records.

S. 1295, Veterans Services Outreach Act. Introduced by Senator Sherrod Brown (D-OH), the bill would amend Title 38, United States Code, to require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to provide Veterans with notice, when Veterans electronically file claims for benefits under laws administered by the Secretary, that relevant services may be available from Veteran Service Organizations.

H.R. 2704, (Official title yet to be released). Introduced by Representative Michael Michaud (D-ME-02), the bill would amend Title 38, United States Code, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to submit to Congress a Future-Years Veterans Program and a quadrennial Veterans review, to establish in the Department of Veterans Affairs a Chief Strategy Officer.

In the advocacy section of the website, you can click on [Bills of Interest](#) to get daily revisions on Congressional action for all AUSN priority bills. We STRONGLY encourage you all to visit our [Advocacy](#) page, especially the [Capitol Hill Blog](#) which receives almost daily submissions when Congress is in session to see what AUSN is doing for you on

Capitol Hill.

We also encourage you and your friends and family to visit the [AUSN FACEBOOK PAGE](#). If you have an account, please Login and “Like” us, which will allow you to see our [TWITTER](#) feeds and other updates from AUSN that shows us monitoring Capitol Hill on your behalf!

NEW LEGISLATIVE ALERTS

There was one new Legislative Alerts sent this week based on hearings and interaction with Congressional staff, as well as traction on the issue. When these alerts are sent to your email, please click on the **TAKE ACTION** link that is at the top of the alert email to send a letter response to your Members of Congress. If you have not seen them, please go to the [Legislative Alerts](#) section on the AUSN webpage and/or check your e-mail for the following alerts which were titled:

Legislative Alert #113-17: URGE Congress to Find a Bipartisan Solution to Sequestration, End DOD Civilian Furloughs

NEXT WEEK OUTLOOK

Next week, both the House and the Senate will be in session. The House was supposed to bring up for a floor vote its Fiscal Year 2014 (FY14) Defense Appropriations Bill, in the form of H.R. 2397, but the open amendment decision by the House Rules Committee delayed its consideration until next week as over 160 amendments have been proposed by Members. There will also be a few hearings next week, including a House Armed Services Committee (HASC) hearing on rebalancing the force to the Pacific, as recommended in the 2012 Strategic Guidance, and a HASC- Military Personnel Subcommittee hearing on Women in the Services. Next week, AUSN will also be having its quarterly Navy Now Forum (NNF), guest speaker will be the Commandant of the USCG, Admiral Robert Papp, where we encourage local AUSN members to [register and attend this NNF](#). In addition, AUSN will be attending a Navy Sea Cadet Corps aware reception for Senator James Inhofe (R-OK), the Ranking Member of the Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC), for his efforts on behalf of Sea Cadets and AUSN will also be attending an afternoon briefing by the Save Our Benefit Coalition, a group of Veteran Service Organizations (VSO's) with the goal of preserving military commissaries for our military families.

AUSN LEGISLATIVE DEPARTMENT ACCEPTING LEGISLATIVE INTERN APPLICANTS FOR FALL 2013

The Association of the United States Navy (AUSN) is looking for a full or part time unpaid Legislative Intern for their offices in Old Town, Alexandria.

Candidates should have, or be pursuing, an undergraduate degree in Political Science/Government Affairs/ Communications. Strong writing and personal skills a must! An interest and passion for the United States Navy and Navy Reserve is highly desirable. In addition to administrative tasks, i.e. answering phones and helping to schedule appointments, interns will monitor and write After Action Reports on Congressional Hearings of interest such as House and Senate Armed Services, Appropriations and Veterans' Affairs Committee hearings. Interns will also have the opportunity to attend meetings with Congressional Staff along with the Legislative Director as well as other meetings off of Capitol Hill.

The Legislative Director is also willing to oversee a research project of the intern's interest if they are pursuing class credit for the internship. Candidates can submit a cover letter, resume and 1-2 page writing sample to the Director of Legislation, Mr. Anthony A. Wallis at Anthony.Wallis@ausn.org or fax it to 703-683-3647. Schedules are flexible/ negotiable for the summer and Metrorail travel reimbursement is available to interns as well as free parking at our headquarters off of King Street in Alexandria. Please apply by **10 AUGUST 2013**. More information can be found on [AUSN's Legislative Department Intern webpage](#).

CALL FOR AUSN NATIONAL RESOLUTIONS

In preparation for AUSN's Annual Business Meeting, [Annual Meeting Registration Now Open Here](#), (formerly Annual Conference) in Alexandria, VA on 26- 27 September 2013, proposals for 2013 National Resolutions are currently being accepted. Any AUSN member may propose a Resolution or Resolution change which should address a legislative or policy issue related to the missions and goals of our organization. Resolutions are received, reviewed, and processed by the Resolutions Committee at the Annual Business Meeting.

Resolutions must be timely, concise, and include sufficient background information. Resolutions must be submitted 30 days in advance of the 25 September 2013 meeting in order for proper staffing, review and formatting as needed.

A listing of current Resolutions, adopted by the Resolutions Committee at the 2012 meeting, can be found and reviewed at the [AUSN National Resolutions webpage](#). For new submissions, changes and edits, as well as instructions on formatting, changing or adding new Resolutions, please visit our [“How To/ Resolutions Format”](#) which also includes a downloadable form for submission at the top right of the page as well. Please follow instructions on the form carefully.

Proposed Resolutions and Resolution changes can be sent by mail to AUSN Headquarters, ATTN: AUSN National VP of Government Relations and Resolutions Committee Chair, RDML Robin Graf, USN (Ret.), 1619 King Street, Alexandria, VA 22314. They can also be sent by email to anthony.wallis@ausn.org at least 30 days before the Annual Business Meeting, no later than **25 AUGUST 2013**.

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS/CONCERNS

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Legislative Action Center: [Contact Congress](#)