

HASC Begins Mark-Up of FY 19 NDAA

Last week, the House Armed Services Committee (HASC) held subcommittee mark-ups of the FY 19 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), H.R. 5515. Each Subcommittee convened on Thursday, April 26, to agree on provisions relevant to each Subcommittee's jurisdiction. The full committee will meet next week, Wednesday, May 9, to mark-up the entire NDAA, which will then move to the House floor in the coming weeks.

Electronic Warfare (EW) and Directed Energy (DE) have a growing list of champions on the HASC and there were numerous provisions included in Subcommittee mark-ups (and others that are anticipated to come up in full committee mark-up) that address our ability to fight in the EMS. The following is a breakdown of major EW-related provisions by Subcommittee.

Tactical Air and Land Forces

- Provides the US Navy with Multiyear Procurement Authority, beginning in FY 19, for F/A-18E/F Aircraft and EA-18G.
- Limits Pending Certification on the Joint Surveillance Target Attack Radar System (JSTARS) Recapitalization Program. Specifically, the provision restricts the funding obligation for the US Air Force's Advanced Battle Management System (ABMS) of Systems initiative and the proposed retirement of the JSTARS. According to the bill, the restriction would remain in effect until the Secretary of the Air Force certifies to the congressional defense committees that the JSTARS Recapitalization program is "proceeding unhindered" as planned based on the USAF's FY 2018 budget request.

Strategic Forces

- Provides for a study on private sector capabilities for Space-Based Radio Frequency Mapping through the offices of the Secretary of Defense and Director of National Intelligence.
- Extends the Commission to Assess the Threat to the United States from Electromagnetic Pulse Attacks and Similar Events pursuant to Section 1691 of the FY 2018 NDAA.

Seapower and Projection Forces

- Calls for an official USAF briefing to the HASC on the Service's B-2 secure communication modernization plan. Specifically, the briefing must address (1) the USAF decision to downgrade B-2 communications capabilities; (2) recommend solutions that would enable automated transfer of data to the B-2 and enable a networked capability with other elements for the long-range strike family of systems; and (3) provide estimated modernization costs and timelines, and consider opportunities to exploit capabilities developed for other programs.
- Supports the Compass Call Recapitalization Plan to replace the EC-130H Compass Call with the EC-37 aircraft. The Committee express concern with the planned "efficiency" of the transition and calls for an official briefing to the Committee to discuss opportunities to accelerate recapitalization.

Emerging Threats and Capabilities

- Extends Directed Energy Prototyping Authority provided for in Section 219(c)(4) of the FY 17 NDAA through FY 19.
- Calls for the Secretary of Defense to provide a roadmap and technology assessment for High Energy Lasers (HEL) and limits the availability of funds for select HEL activities until the roadmap is complete.
- Requires an official briefing to the HASC on use of quantum sciences for military applications.
- Directs the Under Secretary of Research and Engineering to establish an Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) Policy and Oversight Council to strengthen governance, investment, and development of AI/ML technology and applications.
- Directs a comprehensive review and assessment on advances in AI and ML and associated technologies for military applications.
- Calls for an official briefing to the HASC on advancements in counter-unmanned aerial system (C-UAS) threat detection. Specifically, the Committee believes that “additional advancements in scalable C-UAS technologies are necessary to effectively detect, track, neutralize, and ensure the force protection and operational security of deployed service members.”

The above provisions highlight the growing attention to EMS operations and related disciplines, especially AI and ML. There will be additional provisions added during full committee mark-up next week, and the AOC hopes the HASC through the NDAA will address key provisions in Joint Electromagnetic Spectrum Operations Readiness Act (JEMSORA), introduced by Rep. Bacon last month. We will continue to monitor these provisions and key program funding as more information becomes available. If you have any questions or need additional information on specific provision, please contact Amanda Crowe (crowe@crowds.org) or Ken Miller (kmiller@crowds.org).