April 26, 2016

The Honorable Mac Thornberry
Chairman
Committee on Armed Services
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Joe Wilson
Chairman, Subcommittee on Emerging Threats and Capabilities
Committee on Armed Services
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Adam Smith
Ranking Member
Committee on Armed Services
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable James R. Langevin
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Emerging Threats and Capabilities
Committee on Armed Services
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen Thornberry and Wilson, and Ranking Members Smith and Langevin,

On behalf of the Coalition for National Security Research (CNSR), I write to respectfully request that you work to provide additional resources for the Defense Science and Technology (S&T) program as your Committee begins marking up the Fiscal Year (FY) 2017 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). CNSR—a broad-based coalition of research universities and institutes, scientific and professional associations, and industry—applauds the Chairman’s mark for increasing DoD S&T relative to the President’s request. However, we are concerned that the funding levels do not yet meet the FY 2016 enacted levels and are especially concerned that the vast majority of the basic research accounts remain reduced compared to FY 2016.

While it is clear that our FY 2017 request of $13.4 billion for S&T and $2.5 billion for 6.1 basic research is extremely difficult given the current fiscal constraints, the Chairman’s mark reduces 6.1 basic research below FY 2016 NDAA levels and 7.7 percent below FY 2016 enacted levels. These cuts will disproportionally impact the Army Research Office, Office of Naval Research, and Air Force Office of Scientific Research. The scientific research conducted at these vital institutions helps solve the technological challenges our armed forces face today and support the discoveries and innovations that will provide the necessary military capabilities of tomorrow. We urge the Committee to consider the long-term impacts of underfunding the fundamental research that ensures the U.S.’s technological edge over our adversaries for many years to come.

In addition, with the emergence of the Third Offset strategy to contribute to new operational concepts and asymmetric threat advantage, DoD could improve the acquisition of major weapon systems, enhance buying power, and increase the capability ultimately delivered to the warfighter. However, at the levels in the Chairman’s mark, we will not have the seed corn necessary for the Third Offset and beyond. The DoD S&T program gives rise to new weapon systems, defensive capabilities, and technologies used to protect and heal the warfighter. Stealth technology, GPS, satellite communications, laser technologies, sonar, UAVs, and many other innovations taken for granted today trace their roots to the Defense S&T program. We must prioritize investments in these important areas to enhance our national security and maintain the U.S. military’s technical superiority.

Thank you for considering our request. We look forward to working with you throughout the year to ensure our members provide the research and workforce pipeline to the Department that secures America’s military excellence and preeminence.

Sincerely,

John Latini
Chair, Coalition for National Security Research