



The William (Mac) Thornberry National Defense Authorization Act for FY21

“For sixty years, under Republican and Democrat majorities, and working with Presidents of both parties, Congress has met its Constitutional obligation to protect the country by passing a Defense Authorization Act. No other piece of legislation has the same track record. We didn’t get here by accident. Instead, year after year and decade after decade, Members kept in mind that this bill is about our troops, not about our politics.

“The [NDAA] is not the bill I would have written, but on the whole, it is one I agree with and can support. It is the product of the House Armed Services Committee’s bipartisan process and reflects priorities raised by of all of the Committee’s members. “

- Rep. Mac Thornberry, Ranking Member

Items Worthy of Support

Resources: The NDAA adheres to last year’s bipartisan budget agreement and fully funds the President’s budget request. That includes \$740.5B total for National Defense Discretionary programs, including \$130.6B for procurement of advanced weapons systems, an increase of \$1.9B over the President’s request, and \$106.2B for Research Development Test and Evaluation, an increase of \$475.5M over the President’s request.

Nuclear Modernization: The NDAA fully funds vital nuclear modernization programs to ensure that our nuclear deterrent--the cornerstone of America’s defense--is safe and reliable. It fully funds the B-21, a Columbia Class submarine along with an additional attack submarine, and begins work on the W93 warhead that will be critical to meet STRATCOM Commander requirements for the sea-based deterrent.

Confronting China: While there is still much work to do, the NDAA lays the foundation for an Indo-Pacific Deterrence Initiative to deter China, modeled on the European Deterrence Initiative, and [similar to the one Rep. Thornberry introduced this year](#). The bill also increases funding in emergent technologies, such as AI, to maintain a technical edge against China, and starts taking financial actions to pursue China’s graduation from the World Bank and greater transparency with China’s debt.

Supporting Our Troops and their Families: The NDAA supports the pay and benefits our troops and their families need, deserve, and have earned. This includes supporting a 3% pay raise. Importantly, the NDAA includes most of the [Military Family Readiness Act](#) introduced by Ranking Member Thornberry and Congressman Kelly.

COVID-19 Response: The NDAA includes several provisions addressing the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure that the Department of Defense has the diagnostic equipment, testing capabilities, and personal protective equipment necessary to protect our Armed Forces. It also requires the National Security Strategy to address the provision of drugs, biologics, vaccines, and other critical medical equipment to ensure combat readiness and force health protection.

Increased Investments in Science and Technology: The NDAA includes almost \$600 million above the President's Budget Request for science and technology and investments in critical emerging technology areas including artificial intelligence, autonomous systems, and biotechnology.

Items of Concern for the Floor

House Democrats will offer a number of amendments with serious consequences. The defense-related issues include:

Dangerous Cuts to National Security: Rep. Pocan and House Progressives will offer an amendment to cut the DOD topline, excepting the Defense Health Program, Military Personnel accounts, and Civilian Personnel, resulting in a 16% cut to all other accounts. This cut is more than double, in real terms, the cuts imposed on the military during sequestration. If enacted, these cuts would cut tens of billions from critical training and maintenance programs, over \$200 million from military housing accounts, \$17 billion from the research and development programs vital to keeping our competitive edge against Russia and China, and \$160 million from pandemic preparedness.

Insurrection Act: Rep. Escobar will offer an amendment that imposes certification requirements before the President can invoke the Insurrection Act, including standards a President may not be able to meet during a national emergency, while also imposing limits on what the military can do under the Insurrection Act.

Nuclear Testing: The National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) currently maintains an ability to conduct nuclear testing if a technical reason for a test arises. Rep. McAdams will offer a blanket prohibition against nuclear testing, that will directly put national security at risk by preventing NNSA from conducting the stockpile stewardship activities required to ensure the safety, reliability and effectiveness of our nuclear weapons.

Issues Not Ruled in Order

The Rules Committee did not permit, or House Democrats have not offered, amendments on issues that could have imposed serious costs, unnecessary restrictions, or otherwise harmed national security including:

- Cuts or restrictions on providing surplus military items to local law enforcement, or otherwise defund the police.
- Amendments that would restrict DOD's ability to determine who is and is not qualified to serve in the military, including transgender service members.
- Terminations or modifications to the Authorization for the Use of Force. While there are important AUMF issues that Congress should consider, they should be taken up and debated on their own not as part of a larger bill.