

**Representative Adam Smith (D)
Chairman, House Armed Services Committee**

**Defense Writers Group
Project for Media and National Security
George Washington School of Media and Public Affairs**

29 June 2021

Moderator: Good morning, everyone, and welcome to the Defense Writers Group. I'm Thom Shanker, the Director of the Project for Media and National Security at George Washington University, and we're extremely honored to have as our guest today Representative Adam Smith, Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee who's joining us at just a really dynamic time in national security policy. Mr. Chairman, again, thank you for joining us today.

Representative Smith: Thank you, Thom. I appreciate the chance.

Moderator: Our format will be as always. I'll ask the first question then I'll be calling on members of the Defense Writers Group in the order that you emailed me as requested. For those who didn't email, if you want to ask a question send me a direct chat note and we will get to as many as the hour allows.

Mr. Chairman, my question comes to you at a time when you and the committee are really seized with matching budgets and strategy and also vice versa - strategy and budgets. And the piece of it I wanted to ask about is strategy and funding for technology, sir. How should this nation position itself to receive information about adversaries and to analyze and act on that to defend national security while denying our adversaries that same advantage.

Representative Smith: Funding's part of it but also I think we need to better develop our relationship with technology companies in the country - large and small, frankly. When you look at a lot of the programs and a lot of the challenges we've had, they tend to be software challenges and it's well documented that the Pentagon's sort of slow procurement cycle makes it very difficult to work with emerging technologies. Innovative technologies. Things are changing rapidly. So some work has been done to build that relationship as well.

But overall, it's I think a question of a shift in philosophy and that shift has been happening. There are some things that get in

the way of it, but going back to at least Ash Carter, when Ash Carter was there, Bob Work was the Deputy. There was a real focus on the emerging importance of information and survivability. The way I've come to describe the transition is it used to be that basically your job in the military was to mass as much fire power as possible in a concentrated area where the fight was going on. Given how technology has changed and given how missile technology in particular has changed, if everything's mass it's just one bit target. And second of all, for anything to operate it's dependent upon the information chain. It's dependent on the satellites working and the links working on getting access to the information you need in a timely manner.

The way I describe it is with information, number one, you need to get the information. We're actually reasonably good at that. But number two, you need to figure out within that information what's important. How do you find the needle in the haystack as it were, or the needle in the needle stack, as someone said. That's where AI, machine learning, being able to analyze quickly, put in the algorithms, find that information. And then how do you get that information in real time to the people who need it? Whether it's the infantryman on the front line, the ship captain, or increasingly, the guy who's job it is to say protect our energy grid, or protect the pipeline so that he can see the threat like that. I mean it's great if someone at NSA sees the threat, but how do you get it to the person who's assigned to protect it?

Then of course how do you protect that chain? A lot of that has to do with redundancy, spreading out our assets so that it's not all in one place. So if they take out one satellite or one terrestrial link all of a sudden everything shuts down. A lot of that has to do also with the improved cybersecurity.

And lastly, what you alluded to, you'd like to be able to disrupt your adversary's information chain. That requires a shift in what we find, in how we move forward.

The last piece is survivability. I guess the easiest way to understand that is you can contrast a swarm of drones with a stealth fighter. A swarm of drones is much cheaper than a stealth fighter, but in many cases it can be more survivable because as we've discovered, technology right now hasn't figured out how to find it. This has happened in the Middle East, this has happened in Armenia. It happened in Carnia. So whereas a

Rep. Adam Smith - 6/29/21

missile can detect a stealth fighter coming in, it might not be able to detect the drones. So should we spend more money on those [inaudible]?

So that's all happening but there are several impediments to that. Number one, industry is fond of what it's doing because they're getting paid to do it. I love industry people who tell me that they love competition. They don't. They would just as soon be handed the contract. They love competition when somebody else has the contract and they want to go get it. So we need to encourage competition. We need to make sure that they're competing against each other so we can get the best technology.

Second, of course, is what I said about the Pentagon. It doesn't acquire technology very well. We've got to get better at that.

And third, of course, is Congress. Congress loves to bring home the bacon and protect the programs that are in individual members' districts regardless of whether they fit into this plan or not.

Those three things slow down this very necessary transition to the new type of warfare.

Moderator: Absolutely fascinating. Thank you so much.

The first question goes to Jack Detsch of Foreign Policy.

Are you on? We can come back to you if you can drop me a note.

We'll move to Julian Barnes of the New York Times.

DWG: Thank you very much.

Mr. Chairman, I want to ask a little bit about the Havana attacks or Havana syndrome, a global health incident.

I want to know what your take is on how the Pentagon and perhaps the government writ large has investigated this, if you feel there's been a sort of lack of scientific might or rigor in this, if you're frustrated that there's not an answer, or should we all just be a little bit more patient than we have been. So I'm curious about your thoughts.

Representative Smith: It certainly seems like there's been a

Rep. Adam Smith - 6/29/21

slow reaction on this, and I know this much. They have not kept Congress informed about what they're doing. If they are in fact on this, if it is in fact just a matter of it being difficult and they're working it, they have not communicated that to us.

We had one briefing on this about a month ago. It was very unsatisfying. Basically there was a lot of we don't know, we're not sure. And a lot of it seems pretty basic and pretty simple.

Now I do understand that our national security apparatus, DoD and others, are frequently reluctant to give specific information to Members of Congress for a variety of different reasons. So maybe they were just obfuscating because they were worried about leaks. I don't know.

But based on what they've communicated to Congress to date, no, I do not have confidence that the government is responding to those attacks in a comprehensive and effective way with the urgency that it demands. We're going to keep pushing for answers but I think we ought to have greater clarity on what's going on, who's behind it, and what we can do to protect the people who are being attacked.

DWG: Is there a specific thing that you would like them to do to boost their investigatory might on the Pentagon side of this? Or is it too early to answer that question because --

Representative Smith: No, absolutely. Attribution. That was the most frustrating question that we asked. They kept basically saying we don't know. It could be this one, could be - okay. You seem to be hinting strongly that it's this, that and the other thing. Attribution. Who is doing this and why? That to me is logically the place to start if you're going to stop it. Is it more than one actor? Is it state? Is it - you know, the slowness being able to attribute where these attacks are coming from is surprising and also a major impediment to dealing with it.

Moderator: Thank you, sir.

The next question will come from Rebecca Kheel of The Hill.

DWG: Hi. Thanks so much for doing this.

I wanted to ask about the UCMJ reform that Congress is poised to

consider. In your statement on the bill that was introduced last week you basically said reform at this point is inevitable, it's just a matter of how, and you laid out the two basic camps. But I must have missed it. You didn't say what camp you're falling in. And I know you signed onto the earlier bill that was just sexual assault crimes but would you also support taking all major crimes out of the chain of command?

Representative Smith: I have not decided yet. We've been working on this for quite some time and the focus had been to date trying to pull all sex crimes out of the chain of command and give them to the JAG Corps. That had been the focus for a long time.

Now there had been this other effort undergoing, I think there's been a bill introduced along those lines for a little while, but the focus in our committee and the focus on our side had been on sex crimes. So this is a relatively new thing. I've spoken with Senator Gillibrand several times. She's made a reasonably compelling case about it, about why it should be all felonies, why it is a cleaner way to do it. But I am listening to experts and examining arguments to figure out what the best approach is. We have to make this change. There is no question about it. But like I said, we've got the two approaches. I'm trying to figure out what the best approach is.

Also as I understand it, when Senator Gillibrand was explaining this to me I was told it was all felonies, but now that my staff has sort of looked at the bill, it actually isn't all felonies. Drug crimes are kept separate. I don't know how that impacts it, but part of the argument for going all felonies was it was a very clean split.

I used to prosecute misdemeanors for the city of Seattle, and basically one of the initial decisions after the investigation was done is it a felony? If it's not a felony then the county would kick it down to the city or the district court. There's a history of doing that, we know how to do it in a way that is understandable. That makes sense. But if you've got some felonies in and some felonies out, how does that affect it?

Then there's also the issue that Secretary Austin has brought up and that the investigation that was done by DoD to figure out what that did, the proposal that they put out. There are some of these crimes that are misdemeanors. There's a lot of misdemeanor

Rep. Adam Smith - 6/29/21

domestic violence, there's a lot of misdemeanor sex crimes. So if you take those - I don't know. I've heard good arguments on all sides and I'm trying to take the prudent approach of listening, examining and figuring out what the best approach is. I could see it going either way at this point.

DWG: What is the [inaudible] for this? Do you think this needs to be handled in the NDAA or would you support a stand-alone vote like Senator Gillibrand has been pushing for?

Representative Smith: I support both, actually. I think, I know enough about legislation that you have to come at it from a variety of different angles to get it done. So we're going to mark up the Jackie Speier's bill that mirrors the Gillibrand bill. It's not exactly the same but it's close. We're going to mark that up in mid-July as a stand-alone bill and we'll move that, and then we're also going to move it within the NDAA.

Moderator: The next question, Pat Host of Janes.

DWG: Hello, sir. I'm wondering if you think the Pentagon is working fast enough to set up F-35 organic depots and if you think that Lockheed Martin could be doing a better job at helping them set up these depots?

Representative Smith: I think there's no question that everyone involved, certainly Lockheed Martin, could be doing a better job on getting sustainment costs down and a lot of that has to do, obviously, with maintenance. How quickly can you do repairs?

So no, I don't think anyone involved in that is doing the best job they can to get those costs under control, and certainly that would be one aspect of it, making sure you can do the repairs that need to be done quickly. So a ton more work needs to be done. The sustainment costs, and it varies I understand, but they're as high as like \$38,000 an hour and that is incredibly expensive. It will make it the type of plane that you don't really want to operate any more than you absolutely have to. So we need to work hard to try to bring down those costs. We're trying to figure out ways to incentivize that. And I don't know, I've been told by my staff and I remember vaguely that the B-2 also had sustainment cost problems back ten year ago or so. And we kept pressuring the contractors to bring those costs down and they were non-responsive until somebody came up and said you know what? We're just going to stop flying the thing then. We're

Rep. Adam Smith - 6/29/21

going to mothball it and rely on some other platforms to achieve our objectives here. And then all of a sudden the contractor found a way to bring the sustainment costs down.

Those are the type of incentives that I'm looking for. I understand that the F-35 is an important platform. And that it's part of our future here. But it can't be part of our future at this - sorry. It's part of our future, no matter what. But for it to be effective we've got to get those costs under control and we've got to find ways to incentivize. And it's not just Lockheed. You've got a lot of subs that are involved with the software problems, there's engine issues that we're trying to get our arms around, so there's a lot of work to be done here, but we need to incentivize the entire operation to bring costs down. And also, by the way, to get us to the capability that we need, to complete the technology around the Block 4 that gets us the top end technology, which has not yet been achieved. We are counting on it but it has not yet been achieved.

DWG: Can you tell us specifically what you would like the Pentagon and Lockheed to be doing to further drive down sustainment costs?

Representative Smith: One thing I think that's out there, they're developing this new engine and I don't understand the - it's a breakthrough technology. It's a different type of technology. And both Pratt and GE are working on it. It's envisioned as being part of an engine for the NGAD but it can also be an engine for the F-35 going forward. I would say making sure that we fund that competition could significantly help us with the engine maintenance and the engine costs, and also as I understand it, this new engine is more fuel efficient. That could bring down those costs as well. Also it's got the beauty of competition. Like I said, both GE and Pratt are working on it, so increasing our competition, getting it out in the field as soon as possible would be enormously helpful.

Moderator: Next question, Michael Gordon of the Wall Street Journal.

DWG: Sir, President Biden has justified the airstrikes in Syria and Iraq under Article 2 of the Constitution as an act of self-defense, but there have been more than two dozen rocket and drone attacks since President Biden took office, including one yesterday, two U.S. air strikes, and it looks like we're drifting

Rep. Adam Smith - 6/29/21

into a situation of an open-ended, low intensity conflict in Iraq and Syria against these militias which was pretty much the case during the previous administration. This is happening at a time when the [AO] map is being revoked or under scrutiny and the White House is supporting that.

Is Article 2 a sufficient legal basis for these military interventions going forward? What needs to happen legally from your perspective? And when were you consulted about the strike? Were you told about the strike before it happened? How much before? Did you find the consultation process to be adequate?

Representative Smith: The consultation was fine. I was told before the strike, I think 24 hours before, something like that.

There are two answers to your question. First of all historically, as far as the courts and the way that the law has been interpreted, the answer to your question on Article 2 is yes. It is sufficient for this response based on what the courts have done historically. I'm not going to get into my opinion. I'm not a legal scholar here. All I know is that the courts for a long time have had a broad interpretation of Article 2 that has empowered the President to do a lot. That said, I think it's incredibly important that we update the AUMF. I support repealing the 2002 AUMF. We shouldn't have that on the books long after that mission was clearly completed. The 2001 AUMF, it's 20 years later, bin Laden is dead; al-Qaida's in a different place; ISIS is - we need to update the AUMF. Congress needs to make clear to the President what we authorize and what we don't so that we can reassert our Article 1 authority to offer some guidance on what that military activity should be. Like I said, legally, historically, courts have given the President broad Article 2 power, but in terms of the way we should do our job and the way the country should be run, you're right. There's an ongoing conflict that's been going for 20 years and we need to set the parameters for that conflict. I'm working with Chairman Meeks on the Foreign Affairs Committee, it's his jurisdiction and several other members who are interested in this issue including Barbara Lee and Elissa Slotkin to try to revise the 2001 AUMF to reflect that.

DWG: So your position is AUMF needs to be revised, but pending that Article 2 is sufficient.

Representative Smith: That's not my position, that's the court's

Rep. Adam Smith - 6/29/21

position. And I don't know, is it really my place to tell the courts how to interpret the Constitution? I don't know. But it is my interpretation of the legal history of our country that the courts have given the President broad Article 2 power and if we want to change that we will need to change that legislatively. We can't rely on a Constitutional argument.

Moderator: Next question from Tony Capaccio of Bloomberg.

DWG: Hi there, Chairman. I had a question about a new nuclear missile that the Pentagon is going to be approving. The Long Range Standoff Cruise Missile. The Air Force told us last week that they may be awarding a contract as soon as this week to Raytheon for full-scale development of the program. The Pentagon last month approved a full-scale development going into Milestone B.

My question is this. Do you think it's prudent to take these steps like a week and a half after they announced a Nuclear Posture Review? Do you think it's a little premature?

Representative Smith: I do. I think the Biden administration should do the Nuclear Posture Review. At the moment I don't think we should take anything completely off the table, but nor do I think we should push snowballs over the hill and start them rolling before the President makes his decision on what the Nuclear Posture Review is going to be. Sometimes that's difficult. You've got a program moving forward. You can't just cut off the money and wait. But I think to make a big leap on a program like LRSO at this point while the President and his newly appointed Pentagon leadership is examining where they want to go with the Nuclear Posture Review, I think to the extent possible we should keep those options open and see that that review tells us.

DWG: Does that mean you don't approve like going into full-scale development at this point or pursuing a contract?

Representative Smith: Well, full-scale development I don't think is a term of art here. I would have to see what that means. I would support spending the least amount of money possible to keep our options open. Depending on what the President decides in the Nuclear Posture Review and also depending on what he could potentially begin to negotiate with Russia or China on arms control agreements. I don't think we should commit ourselves to

Rep. Adam Smith - 6/29/21

stopping a whole bunch of programs, or commit ourselves to fully funding a whole bunch of programs. Obviously that can get a little gray in terms of fully funding a program is, but again, we should wait for the President's posture review before fully committing ourselves to a lot of spending.

DWG: A quick F-35 follow-up. Earlier this year you said you were not in favor of adding to the President's request as has been done over the last five years. The House Appropriations Committee marks tomorrow. If they add dollars to it, does that not moot the point then that things are going to get funded, if they decide to go along with it, and the SAC.

Representative Smith: Yes. I don't know if it moots the point because the point was my position. The point wasn't whether or not I was God and my position was going to carry the day. Obviously if the majority of Congress - which by the way, I don't have a problem with. I actually believe in representative democracy. I believe that you state your position, you go out and you have a vote and if you lose, you live with the result. I know it's a novel approach these days but I think it's the way the country ought to be run.

Moderator: That was a very inspiring answer, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

Next question is from Garrett Reim of Flight Global.

DWG: Hi, Mr. Chairman. Thanks for the time.

My question is around model-based engineering. The Air Force and some of the other military branches have made a lot about this new software design technology saying they can develop faster, on schedule and on budget. The T-7A trainer recently has run into some delays and the Air Force has said that things would have been worse if we hadn't had model-based engineering, but at the same time the schedule they set was based on the ability to move quickly with it.

My question is, the other program that's gotten a lot of attention around model-based engineering is the B-21 and you've praised that program. From what you've seen, how much of the B-21's good progress is because of that new technology? And how much of it is because of other factors? Do you have any thoughts on this new reliance on this new technology?

Representative Smith: I'm way crazy out of my depth to answer that question. There are a thousand different things that are going into the B-21, the GBS, the NGAD. I am initially optimistic that whatever the new alchemy is here, it seems to be working better than what we experienced during the F-35 and a variety of other programs. And I've had a lot of conversations with the people who are leading these programs, people who are involved in them, and I believe there is a sense of urgency within the Pentagon to figure this out and get better at it and that sense of urgency seems to be paying off with some of the programs, like I said, B-21, NGAD, GBS. I don't know that much about the trainer program, I apologize.

It seems to be getting better. I've always sort of struggled with this because on the one hand you can look at the 20-year history of Expeditionary Fighting Vehicle, Future Combat Systems, the LCS, the V-22 and go look at all this - and without question, we do a lot better. On the other hand, you know, we're not making toilet seats here. It's a fricking complicated thing to do to build an airplane or to build anything that's going to be in the middle of a firefight, and it's not going to go seamlessly and it's not going to go on time and under budget every time. However, we can do a hell of a lot better than we did in the last 20 years.

You can also look at the way they tried to excessively rely on well, we'll skip a lot of the testing, we'll just do it in the computer model, we'll assume it's going to work. Redundancy. And a lot of things did not work out that were envisioned circa the turn of the century basically. There was new technology coming on-line. How are we going to use this? What's going to work? What's not going to? We learn as we go but we've got to get better at it. But my sense from the programs that I've seen is that it is getting better and yes, and I always forget the name of that thing that you said about how you do it, whatever, modeling. Seems to be helping.

As does holding onto the IP so that you avoid the vendor lock issue. You want to keep competing this stuff. I'm a huge believer in competition, as I said. Part of the problem is you can't fully compete all of this. You can't build two F-35s and then say well, that one's not working out we'll get back to you in a couple of years and see if you can fix it. But you can compete the software. You can compete the maintenance. You can

maybe compete the engine. Compete whatever you can compete in order to incentivize the contractors to keep the costs down. Because as I pointed out, when we're talking about \$38,000 an hour sustainment costs in the F-35 and we're all acting like it's a big problem. It's sort of like the way I looked at the healthcare industry when people talk about how much money we're spending on healthcare when the enormous problem is - well, it's not a problem if you're a healthcare provider, it's not a problem if you're - let me see. Okay. You're paying me \$38,000 an hour. I'm pretty much locked in forever. And you're telling me you're upset about that and you want me to figure out how you can pay me less. Yeah, let me get right on that.

There are different ways to incentivize that, obviously. The NGAD is a pretty good way to incentivize it. If you screw us on this contract then we ain't giving you the next one. There's a bunch of different ways to work it, but I want you to be as creative as possible about incentivizing competition and incentivizing all of our contractors to give us the best deal possible. And we didn't do a very good job of that from like 1997 to 2018. And we're getting better, it seems.

Moderator: Thank you. I wanted to give Jack Detsch of Foreign Policy one more chance. He was the first to ask to ask a question. Are you back on? No. Fair enough.

Let's go to Tony Bertuca of Inside Defense.

DWG: Hi, Chairman. Thank you.

My question actually goes to what you were just talking about. You mentioned vendor lock, intellectual property. About a month ago at McAleese you brought this up. You said one of your priorities is going to be getting the best bang for the buck and trying to reset this dynamic with defense contractors. Is there anything in the bill that you think you can propose that would do that?

Representative Smith: Yes. We are taking some suggestions, first of all, from the Future of Defense Task Force. We're taking some suggestions from the Supply Chain Management Task Force. That is not fully baked in my mind at the moment so we need to look and see, but I think there are different things that we can do in the bill to incentivize that. That's what I'm trying to get is the specific ideas and sort of turn that into

incentives.

Now a lot of what can be done here can be done by the Pentagon if they're sending out the contractors, done by the procurement officers and all that. The answer to your question is yes and what I am working on right now is getting the specifics, putting meat on those bones so we can see what it actually looks like. And I wish I had a better answer for you.

DWG: That's okay. Let me try something else then.

Those of us who watch all your committee hearings, we sort of know what the big bones that are going to get picked are, but I was wondering if you could give us a sense of what you think those are. We've heard about top line, whatever people are using to define as Critical Race Theory. What do you think is going to really be the hurdle through your build here?

Representative Smith: I kind of like to sort of keep that to myself, as far out as possible so as not to prejudice the overall outcome.

I think you've kind of identified a couple of them. We're still sort of playing that out a little bit, but yes, the top line is going to be a major challenge I think.

Then there's going to be the issue of things that people want to add to the bill. I refer to this as the PFOS problem from 2019 when we tried to take a very aggressive swing at PFOS. And by the way, no committee in Congress has done more in terms of putting things into law to deal with PFOS than the Armed Services Committees in the House and the Senate. We've put a lot of things in there to get after what DoD is using with the chemical and everything. But we were able to put in a more ambitious plan that went outside of our jurisdiction and dealt with the whole issue of, and I'm forgetting the terminology now, classifying it as a toxic substance for CERCLA purposes and all of that.

Where the problem comes in is people decide that that has to be in the bill or they won't support it. The more of those things that get added, my position has always been look, if I can carry something in the bill that's good, positive legislation, I'm going to give it a shot. But if we're unsuccessful I don't want you then to use that as an argument to kill my bill. And people don't really get that. Well, I think the better argument is not

Rep. Adam Smith - 6/29/21

so much that they don't get that, their politics are their politics. So we'll have that. We'll have people wanting to add things to the bill that are very ambitious and unrelated and then acting like if we don't add it to the bill that's a reason to vote against it.

Then we've got to balance that out against the top line.

The Critical Race Theory stuff, it's certainly a problem but I don't see anything that needs to be put in our bill one way or the other on that. That's an administration thing. That's the DoD. And people can fight that out over there. We are going to try to avoid legislating on that issue.

And let me just say, and I can only imagine how this is [ultimately going to come out in the stories you write, but my problem on the Critical Race Theory thing is, we have a problem in our society with systemic racism, with white supremacy, and also with extremism. What I mean by extremism is the advocacy of violence to overthrow government results as opposed to using representative democracy to do that. There is a problem in this country with those people doing that, and as we saw on January 6th, there's at least a little bit of a problem with that within the military. There has been considerable evidence of white supremacy in the military. There has been evidence that systemic racism - surprise, surprise as it impacts all of our society impacts the military. And there has been evidence of extreme anti-government opinions and extremism in the military.

To be fair, some of that has been Islamist terrorist groups and when we saw the Fort Hood and the Pensacola instances, but there has also been documented instances of white supremacy, of right wing anti-government groups, and I think it is important that we address those issues. What the Republicans have basically said is because Critical Race Theory exists, therefore racism isn't a problem. And that is not a logical connection there.

You can have your argument about Critical Race Theory and that's fine. Go ahead and have it, get into it. But regardless of what's going on with that, systemic racism, white supremacy and extremism in this country is a problem.

So what I would ask the Republicans is, how do you want to deal with that? You don't want to deal with it with Critical Race Theory, and that's fine. There's really no evidence that that's

Rep. Adam Smith - 6/29/21

how the military is choosing to deal with it. How do you want to deal with it? You can't just pretend it doesn't exist because of Critical Race Theory. There's a real problem here that needs to be addressed.

Again, I don't at the moment see any legislative necessity on this. We actually did quite a bit last year in terms of creating the Chief Diversity Officer, putting a lot of incentives to look after those.

When you look at promotions in the military, when you look at the application of UCMJ, there is considerable evidence that it is not properly respected diversity and it has been discriminatory against people of color. What are we going to do about that?

Like I said, we put stuff in the bill last year that can help us address that, but I hope we can get past the culture war here and really just look at what is a real problem in our society and what is also a problem in the military that needs to be address and one that I think Secretary Austin and Chairman Milley are handling quite appropriately right now.

Moderator: Very important topic. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Our next question is Matt Beinart of Defense Daily.

DWG: Thank you.

Ahead of the committee's hearing with Army leaders later this morning I wanted to ask about the service's modernization effort. Army officials recently have talked about how in putting together this request in night court over the last several years, they've kind of gone through all the low-hanging fruit that they can pick in order to kind of sift on to commit to fully funding modernization. Hearing that, they've kind of picked through this low-hanging fruit, is that some sort of cause for concern in terms of being able to move ahead with modernization? And then they've also floated this idea of if spending is still tight they might be forced into a situation where they have to stretch modernization programs in order to make all the funds work. Is that maybe a cause for concern as well as they try to modernize the force and roll out all these

signature systems?

Representative Smith: None of this is easy. There's no like oh, we'll just start doing this and everything will be fine. It's going to be difficult to make these programs, and pick the right programs to begin with. And what is the right approach to modernization? I've talked about this before but there was an initial focus on well, we've got to get rid of legacy systems and we've got to build new ones. That doesn't mean anything. What means something is what is the application? What's the capability? What are we -

As I point out, there is no more legacy system in the military than the B-52 and the B-52 is a huge part of what we're doing going forward for the next 50 years, or at least 25 or 30 years.

So it requires a lot of very sophisticated analysis to figure out okay, what do we need and how do we get it in the most cost-effective way possible. And I think what has happened in the last five or six years as you've gone through the night court or the blank slate review or any number of different things is we're starting to bring the right intellectual rigor to the question. Instead of give me more money so I can build more stuff. Which has been a lot of what DoD has done for quite a while. They really started to analyze the question of how can we leverage existing systems to achieve new needs, capability wise? As we had our discussion about how they're doing NGAD and the B-21. How can we build these sophisticated weapon systems so that there is less risk of cost overruns or not meeting capability requirements?

We're getting there. And yeah, I can't tell you there's nothing to worry about, everything's fine. It's going to be difficult, it's going to be a challenge, but I think we're asking the right questions and taking the right approach.

And I will also say that I don't think it is a problem that they are feeling strapped for cash. It incentivizes better behavior. You've probably all heard my speech on this many

Rep. Adam Smith - 6/29/21

times before. I'll try to give you the reader's digest condensed version. But the Winston Churchill quote about "Gentlemen, we're out of money. Now we have to think." I'm really fond of that.

And in my own personal experience, when I ran my first campaign for the state Senate the short version of the story is I had a budget that was like \$200,000 and I knew where I was going to get that money from, and as my campaign developed it turned out that 90 percent of that money, the people who I thought were going to give it to me were not going to give it to me. So 90 percent of my budget went - gone. But I am not one to give up. So I was like okay, let's look at this from a different direction. Is there a way to do this for this cheaper amount of money? The short answer, yes. But I had to be forced to think about it, to really get after it and say I can't just rely on the fact that they're going to give me another 100 grand if I ask for it. I've got to figure out how to spend this tiny little amount of money I have in the most cost-effective, intelligent way possible.

That is what I think is beginning to go on in the Pentagon. That's good. It is going to, necessity is the mother of invention, I don't know, pick your cliché. I think it incentivizes the right type of behavior and the right type of decision-making. So I am going to hold fast on the idea that we don't just give them more money because they haven't figured it out yet. Let's do the work and let's figure it out and make it work within a cost-effective framework.

DWG: A bit of a follow-up on that. It seems to be more of a conscious effort with this budget request from the Army perspective to kind of not have a catch-all term of legacy systems, but they're trying to delineate between what's an enduring capability and what's a legacy system? Has the committee seen any sort of a list that's specific about what's in one bucket versus what's in another? And I that sort of an encouraging sign that they're not having this sort of catch-all, vague kind of term?

Rep. Adam Smith - 6/29/21

Representative Smith: Yes and yes.

Moderator: The next question will be to Dmitry Kirsanov of the TASS News Service.

DWG: Good morning, Mr. Chairman. Thank you so very much for doing the Zoom session.

Russia and the United States are about to launch the Strategic Stability [bailiwick], next month probably, as you know. And I wanted to ask you if will Congress support a potential U.S.-Russian arms control agreement if there are one?

Representative Smith: I can't speak for Congress. I can speak for myself. Yes. I think that's where we need to go. I think the most dangerous thing that's going on in the world right now is you've got Russia, China and the U.S. as reasonably sophisticated military powers, spending a fair amount of money. We're developing new technologies all the time - hypersonics, AI, directed energy weapons, missile defense, new types of nuclear weapons. The risk for miscalculation is great. We need to know what each - everyone wants to be able to protect themselves and a lot of fights out there in the world start because well, I know this guy's going to hit me so I better hit him first. We need to be having those conversations to understand how to properly deter each other.

So I would be very supportive of that and I hope the Biden administration pursues that.

DWG: A brief follow-up to that. How about missile defense arrangements? If the administration and the Russian government comes to some sort of an understanding, an agreement on possibly limiting some element of the missile defense. Will the Democratic party support it? Or it's just something completely out of the question?

Representative Smith: It's not completely out of the question but it depends on what it is. Again, I think we

should pursue arms control agreements across the range of capabilities. Now we've got to see what the agreement is. We're not going to agree to a bad deal. But I will tell you from my part, I am very supportive of the administration pursuing that and I would be very supportive of their efforts. Again, it depends on what the agreement is. But the dialogue at a minimum needs to start. I think operating in the dark with the level of sophisticated weapons that are out there is dangerous.

Moderator: Our next question is Abraham Mahshie of Air Force Magazine.

DWG: Thank you so much for taking my call.

Mr. Chairman, are you happy with the Space Force budget as it is? And what do you believe are the investment priorities that you want to zero in on to catch up with adversaries' space capabilities, especially with this potential that Russia and China could team up in space?

Representative Smith: I don't think catch up is the right word. We're not behind in this area. But I think the most important capabilities are number one, launch to make sure that we can launch effectively in a cost-effective way. And then also the survivability of our satellites and our command and control systems. We need more smaller, easier to defend satellites that have redundancy. That's the biggest priority for me within the Space Force budget is figuring out how to build an information system infrastructure that is reliable and survivable, that we can protect. That's where we are a little bit vulnerable right now because for decades we have built very large, very sophisticated systems. It's a bit of an overstatement to say they have a single point of failure, but it's not that bit of an overstatement. We need to build greater redundancy and greater survivability and that's what I think the Space Force can bring to us is to look at the whole architecture and say how do we make sure that this keeps working no matter what happens. That's what I think is the primary objective of the Space Force going forward.

Rep. Adam Smith - 6/29/21

DWG: Do you believe that the Space Force budget is doing that right now? And also that Russia-China idea, that they would team up in space?

Representative Smith: More or less, I think that the Space Force budget is correct. I've got to do a deeper dive on that to really understand it but I think it's moving more or less in the right direction. I don't have any idea, I don't think anyone has any idea whether or not Russia and China are going to team up. But whether they team up or not, we need to be ready for it. We need to be able to protect our systems and we need to be able to deter our adversaries from attacking them in the first place.

Moderator: The next question is Kimberly Underwood of Signal.

DWG: Thank you, Mr. Shanker. Thank you, Chairman, for speaking with us this morning.

I wanted to ask kind of how you look at or handle emerging technologies such as autonomous aircraft [free] from logistics and kind of how that would decrease pilot needs, where maybe the culture in some areas is still pushing for pilots. How do you kind of balance that kind of juxtaposition between emerging technologies and kind of the traditional ways of things?

Representative Smith: This is not going to be an overwhelmingly satisfying answer. But in my experience the new technology is really simple. You need smart people looking at it and you need to ask the right question. The right question is, what are you trying to achieve? What's the goal? What's the objective here? A lot of times with technology you can get lost in the sophistication of it. But what's our goal? What's our objective? What are we actually trying to achieve with that technology? And if it's just something that looks really cool and really neat but it doesn't help us achieve our objective, then don't use it. Unmanned systems, okay, we have to look at what are we trying to achieve and how is that going to help us get there? And what's unsatisfying about this answer is, basically you've got to be smart about how you approach it. What's smart? Well, I know it when I see it. Okay. Again, I

have campaign analogies here, but when you're putting together a tight budget and you're trying to figure out how do you deliver your message, there's all manner of different things out there that are available to you. You can do TV commercials, radio commercials, mail, on-line stuff obviously. But when you understand it, it's like you've got to spend a certain amount of money to be effective in a certain media. Every new campaign manager I have brings me an idea to do a one-piece mail plan. Now being generous, I don't fire the person at that point, I educate them, which is if you're going to send out a one-piece mail plan you're better off just setting the money on fire because nobody learns anything. So how do you use it? How do you use what's available to you? How do you use the resources and the information? What are you going to do with an unmanned system? What's the objective here?

The objective is to deter our adversaries. And to give you sort of the idea of where I'm going with unmanned systems and with all of this, it has to do with these wargames that have been talked about so much. Actually not talked about as much as I think they should have. A lot of people are aware that the Office of Net Assessment did about five or six years' worth of wargames - longer than that actually - with our existing capacity up against China. The basic idea was what if China goes after Taiwan, how do we deter them? What happens?

It was an unsatisfying result basically. We were not able really to protect our systems, we weren't able to achieve what we wanted.

Well the Air Force got clever about a year ago and said what if we had a lot of unmanned systems, a lot of drones? What if we had the NGAD? I forget the other technologies that were involved in this. So let's put that out on the battlefield.

The most important part about that is that when they put that wargame up and they picked the red team and they picked the blue team and they said let's go, the red team looked at it and said we're not going to do this. We can't win in this environment.

Now of course the leader of the game said that's cute, but we're actually going to do this because that's the whole point. So they engaged. But that's what we're trying to achieve. We're trying to get China and Russia and North Korea and Iran to look at this and go yeah, no, we're not going to fight because that's

Rep. Adam Smith - 6/29/21

not going to come out well for us. And unmanned systems are part of that. And command and control are part of that. Distributed forces so that they're not concentrated in one place and can get smacked with just 15 missiles or whatever. That's all part of it.

Now how does all this play out? You've got to have smart people but you also have to have the right approach, and you've heard me give this analogy before, but it's the whole computer playing chess thing. They had a computer, the basically plugged all of the information into the computer about how to play chess. Everything we ever knew about this move, that move, whatever. That was the big [inaudible]. It did pretty well, but humans occasionally can beat it.

But then they used AI and they told the computer here are the rules of chess. We're not going to tell you how to do it. These are the rules, go figure it out. That computer is absolutely unbeatable. And it's doing things that people who are chess masters are like well that's stupid, why would you do that? Oh, I didn't get that.

That's what I'm talking about is that type of learning. That's what AI can help with, but also you need to train humans the right way to be results-oriented instead of process oriented, instead of all right, as long as I check all these boxes then whether the mission succeeds or not I'm going to get promoted so let's go. Promote the innovator. Promote the people who know how to get the results. All these systems you're talking about plug into that.

The unsatisfying thing about that answer is, for the three or four minutes that I've been talking about it, the answer is really be smart not stupid. That's really the answer.

Moderator: Dan Leone of Exchange Monitor Publications. Next question.

DWG: Hi, Congressman Smith. Thanks for making your day shorter.

I have another question about the nuclear weapons budget. It's about the GBSB ICBMs and the accompanying DOE plutonium fit infrastructure.

The DOE just this budget cycle, just this year has said they're

not going to be in time with their pit plant at Savannah River. Now you've proposed before focusing on the pit plant at Los Alamos and doing a Minuteman III life extension, and it seems like there's a golden opportunity to propose that again with the posture review on the way and your remarks about 20-30 minutes ago that you shouldn't push any snowballs over the hill on nuclear budgets or on programs that are just winding up.

So are you going to propose doing a Minuteman life extension and refocusing on pit production at Los Alamos again in the NDAA this year? Or if you're not going to say that, do you think that's something that ought to be done regardless of the avenue?

Representative Smith: There are a couple of problems with this in terms of how we understand this issue. And mostly I stand by what I said about the Nuclear Posture Review.

The biggest problem here is that it turns out that Minuteman extension as it is currently being explained to us is actually more expensive than building the GBSD, because all the systems that go into that, these things are like ancient and the cost of rebuilding it - the analogy I use is the law school I went to at the University of Washington, Condon Hall, was this huge brick structure build in the late '60s. And when they looked at it and they said we need to rebuild this. They basically determined that it was more expensive to rebuild it than it was to simply build an entirely new law school. So they wound up building an entirely new law school. And preliminarily it looks like it's going to be more expensive to do a life extension on the Minuteman III than it is to do the GBSD.

Now that does not mean that we need to have as many ICBMS as the previous posture review suggested, or even that the need that leg of the triad. So what I would propose doing is we're not going to kill the GBSD program, but we're going to keep it alive. The Minuteman III will be fine for a little while. Let's look at the Nuclear Posture Review and figure out maybe we only need 200 instead of 400 in terms of what's going on. Let's not commit to the full-scale building as many missiles on the ground-based system approach as we did. But I don't think life extension of the Minuteman III is going to get us there.

Now I'm looking at the data again. We're checking their work as it were, but that's the concern there.

Rep. Adam Smith - 6/29/21

On pit production, the big question is how long do the pits that we have last? And we don't really have a good answer to that question. We still have a lot of pits. The question is, how long are they good for? We're trying to figure out that answer.

Lastly, and this is my big concern, I do not trust Savannah River. I do not trust Savannah River for two reasons. Number one, because of the MOX facility which you all know too well, which was just abhorrent, the amount of money they spent on that doing absolutely nothing, trying to figure out something that wasn't going to happen.

Number two, I've been down to see the building down there, and I don't know if you can just convert a MOX facility into a pit production facility. And already we've seen it wind up to be more expensive and projected to take longer than they thought.

Now I am told that over the course of the next 18 months they're going to give us a final answer on that, and that final answer is going to cost us about \$250 million which is a reasonable amount of money to spend to get to that final answer.

I'm not going to commit to billions of dollars to Savannah River right now. Let's see what that final study says and in the meantime Los Alamos is a reasonable alternative.

Again, if we can figure out that we need fewer pits, because either A, the ones that we have are going to last longer or B, we're going to build fewer nuclear weapons overall which I agree with, then conceivably in a year or two we can determine that we don't need to spend \$15-\$20 billion at Savannah River to build those pits.

So we're kind of in a pre-decisional moment here. I can't say no, we're not going to build any more ground-based nuclear weapons or no, we're not going to build any more pits, but I want to slow down the acceleration of that. We're going all in, we're going to spend all the money now. Let's wait and see what we learn about the pits, what we learn about the viability of Savannah River, what we learn about the Nuclear Posture Review under the Biden administration. Let's hold the line on that and not commit all of that money before we get the answers to those key questions which should come in the next 18 months.

DWG: To follow up on pits, the NNSA's testifying that they think

Rep. Adam Smith - 6/29/21

the pit factory at Los Alamos is going fine and that one's making 30 a year instead of 50 a year that they're proposing for Savannah River. Would you notionally be all right with giving them the authorization that they're seeking only for Los Alamos pits? Only as they've described it up until this point.

Representative Smith: I've also heard that it's possible that we could get more than 30 a year out of Los Alamos. Do I'm not going to exaggerate that, but you get potentially 40 or 50? I think that is where we should focus our efforts in the near term. And the near term is like a decade. Because even the Savannah River proponents say that they're not cranking a pit out of Savannah River until 2033, and we all know that's going to slip to the right. So yeah, I think we should keep our focus on Los Alamos for now.

Moderator: Mr. Chairman, we're down to our final minute. I wanted to thank you most sincerely for your time, sharing your wisdom and experience with us for a very interesting discussion. Do you have any final comments, sir, before we thank you for your time and send you back to do the people's business?

Representative Smith: Yeah, just one thing that didn't come up. The committee is in a really good place. I'm working very well with Mike Rogers as Ranking Member. He and I are both very focused on getting the bill done. We know we have disagreements, our caucus is in one place, his caucus is in another, we're working through that. But the partnership on the committee is as strong as it's ever been between the Republicans and the Democrats.

I think this is incredibly important. I say this normally with a dry wit sort of approach about representative democracy and all that, it's really rather important to show people that the system works. Dick Gephardt always used to say that politics is a substitute for violence, which when I first heard him say that when I was 31 years old and a new Member of Congress, I was like wow. Chill out, many. But he's kind of right. Politics is how we resolve our differences so we don't choose to try and kill each other to resolve them. I think it's important to continue to do the former and I think it's going well on the committee. So I just want to give a little shout-out to Mike and appreciate our partnership. I think we're working well together and I'm confident we'll get our job done this year.

Rep. Adam Smith - 6/29/21

Moderator: Mr. Chairman, this has been an absolutely fascinating discussion. We do thank you for your time. And to all the members of the Defense Writers Group, thank you for joining us. Keep an eye out on your email because we're sending a first-ever survey around in the next week to get your thoughts for the new Director and as we move ahead.

So thank you all so much.

#