

**Chairman Thad Cochran Opening Statement
Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense**

**Hearing to review to Review the FY2017 Budget Request & Budget Justification
for the Defense Health Program**

March 9, 2016

(As prepared for delivery)

Today, the Subcommittee on Defense Appropriations is reviewing the Fiscal Year 2017 budget request for the Defense Health Program. We are pleased to welcome:

- Lieutenant General Nadja West, Surgeon General of the Army;
- Vice Admiral Forrest Faison, Surgeon General of the Navy;
- Lieutenant General Mark Ediger, Surgeon General of the Air Force; and
- Mr. Christopher Miller, Program Executive Officer of the Defense Healthcare Management Systems.

Our military has made great strides in many areas ranging from disease research and treatment, to expedited treatment and medical evacuations off the battlefield, to better training and education techniques for advanced learning. We are particularly proud of the work performed in our state at Keesler Air Force Base by the 81st Medical Group, which flies out of there.

In July 2015, the Department awarded a \$4.3 billion contract for its new electronic health record system. As procurement and deployment of the new record system continues in Fiscal Year 2017, we sincerely hope that the Department of Defense will not lose sight of the goal of being fully interoperable with the Department of Veterans Affairs.

While budget constraints remain in place, healthcare costs continue to grow. The budget request proposes a consolidation of TRICARE and modest increases in pharmacy co-pays and enrollment fees.

I look forward to hearing your views on these proposals and how we can improve the access, the quality, and the safety of the healthcare we provide to servicemembers and their families, both today and in the future.

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