



FY26 Senate National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA)

Summary of S. 2296 The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2026

As of July 22, 2025

	Passed in Committee	Passed in Chamber	Agreement	Final Passage	Signed into Law
House	15 July 2025				
Senate	09 July 2025				

Table of Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	- 1 -
ARMY NATIONAL GUARD - AUTHORIZATION OF FUNDING (ALL DOLLARS IN THOUSANDS)	- 2 -
AIR NATIONAL GUARD - AUTHORIZATION OF FUNDING (ALL DOLLARS IN THOUSANDS)	- 2 -
LEGISLATIVE PROVISIONS.....	- 3 -
AIR FORCE PROGRAMS	- 3 -
ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT	- 3 -
MILITARY PERSONNEL AUTHORIZATIONS	- 3 -
MILITARY PERSONNEL POLICY	- 4 -
COMPENSATION AND OTHER PERSONNEL BENEFITS	- 4 -
GENERAL PROVISIONS.....	- 4 -
MATTERS RELATING TO FOREIGN NATIONS	- 5 -
CYBERSPACE-RELATED MATTERS	- 5 -
MILITARY CONSTRUCTION.....	- 5 -
SASC COMMITTEE REPORT REQUIREMENTS/ ITEMS OF SPECIAL INTEREST	- 7 -

Executive Summary

This guide provides a summary of the Senate Armed Services Committee's Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA).

To obtain a complete understanding of any particular provision, users are encouraged to review the actual bill text. Bill text and the conference report can be found on NGB-LL's website: [Link](#). Beyond the legislative provisions, there are a number of directive reports with specific relevance to the National Guard. Readers are encouraged to review this report language for their own situational awareness.

Status:

On July 09, 2026, the Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC) passed their FY26 National Defense Authorization Act, S. 2296. The bill authorizes military and national security programs at the Department of Defense and Department of Energy.

Note: an asterisk (*) represents a provision or committee report language/item of interest included after the SASC released their committee report.

Highlights:

- Authorizes Governors to direct AGR personnel to perform duties in response to, or in preparation for a disaster emergency for 14 days (NGB Legislative Proposal - *Emergency Response Authority*)
- Authorizes officers to transfer from the Selected Reserve to the Inactive National Guard (NGB Legislative Proposal - *ING*)
- Authorizes military recruiters access to secondary schools (Similar to NGB Legislative Proposal - *RC Recruiter Access to High Schools*)
- Directs the Secretary of the Air Force (SecAF) to submit a bomber roadmap which would include integrating the Air National Guard (ANG) and the Air Force Reserve into B-21 bomber aircraft operations
- Extends prohibition on reducing C-130 aircraft assigned to the National Guard until 2028
- Directs the Chief of the National Guard Bureau (CNGB) to provide a report on the number of National Guard members who received sexual assault prevention and response training in the preceding calendar year
- Directs the Secretary of Defense (SecDef) to analyze DoDI 5111.20 relating to the State Partnership Program
- Directs the SecDef to establish a steering committee on artificial general intelligence which membership includes the Vice Chief of the National Guard Bureau
- Authorizes funding to support a 3.8 percent pay raise for military members

National Guard Accounts Overview

FUNDING AUTHORIZATIONS DO NOT EQUAL FINAL FUNDING. FINAL FUNDING LEVELS WILL BE DECIDED BY APPROPRIATIONS BILLS



Army National Guard - Authorization of Funding (All Dollars in Thousands)

Army National Guard	FY26 PB Request	HASC Mark	Delta from PB	SASC Mark	Delta from PB	Conference Report	FY26 Delta from PB
O&M	\$8,673,981	\$8,688,98	\$15,000	\$7,151,29	-\$1,522,68		
MILCON	\$151,880	\$303,680	\$151,80	\$1,760,58	\$1,608,705		

Note: FSRM funding was transferred from O&M to MILCON (\$1.27B)

Army National Guard End Strength

Army National Guard	FY26 PB Request	HASC Mark	Delta from PB	SASC Mark	Delta from PB	Conference Report	FY26 Delta from PB
End Strength	328,000	328,000	-	328,000	-		
AGR	30,845	30,845	-	30,845	-		
Dual Status Technicians	21,294	21,294	-	22,294	+1,000		
ADOS	17,000	17,000	-	17,000	-		



Air National Guard - Authorization of Funding (All Dollars in Thousands)

Air National Guard	FY26 PB Request	HASC Mark	Delta from PB	SASC Mark	Delta from PB	Conference Report	FY26 Delta from PB
O&M	\$7,332,59	\$7,152,06	-\$180,54	\$6,777,24	-\$555,357		
MILCON	\$194,571	\$210,492	\$15,921	\$1,304,17	\$1,109,60		

Note: FSRM funding was transferred from O&M to MILCON (\$549M)

Air National Guard End Strength

Air National Guard	FY26 PB Request	HASC Mark	Delta from PB	SASC Mark	Delta from PB	Conference Report	FY26 Delta from PB
End Strength	106,300	106,300	-	106,300	-		
AGR	25,171	25,171	-	25,982	+811		
Dual Status Technicians	10,485	10,405	-80	10,744	+289		
ADOS	16,000	16,000	-	16,000	-		

LEGISLATIVE PROVISIONS

Air Force Programs

Sec. 132. Bomber Aircraft Force Structure and Transition Roadmap.

This section requires the SecAF to submit a comprehensive bomber roadmap detailing the planned force structure, basing, modernization, and transition strategy for the bomber aircraft fleet of the Air Force through fiscal year 2040. This would include integrating units of the ANG and Air Force Reserve into B-21 bomber aircraft operations.

Sec. 137. Prohibition on Retirement of A-10 Aircraft.

This section prohibits using any authorized funding to retire, prepare to retire, or otherwise divest A-10 aircraft to an inventory level below 103.

Sec. 140. Requirements Relating to C-130 Aircraft.

This section provides an extension of the minimum C-130 inventory requirement from 2025 to 2028. This section would also provide an extension of prohibition on reduction of C-130 aircraft assigned to the National Guard from 2025 to 2028.

Energy and Environment

Sec. 312. Requirement to Support Training on Wildfire Prevention and Response

This section would require the U.S. Army and the U.S. Air Force, in consultation with the National Guard Bureau, to provide support for the training of appropriate National Guard personnel on wildfire prevention and response.

Military Personnel Authorizations

Sec. 411. End Strengths for Selected Reserve.

The section authorizes 328,000 personnel for the Army National Guard (ARNG) and 106,300 personnel for the ANG.

Sec. 412. End Strengths for Reserves on Active Duty in Support of the Reserves.

The section authorizes 30,845 ARNG positions for the ARNG and 25,982 positions for the ANG (811 above the budget request).

Sec. 413. End Strength for Military Technicians (Dual Status).

This provision authorizes 22,294 dual status technicians for the ARNG and 10,744 for the ANG.

The provision would also establish limits on the number of temporary technicians authorized to be employed within the end strengths set forth by this section to not more than 25 percent of the total authorized strength for each component.

The provision would also prohibit the coercion of a military technician (dual status) by a State into accepting an offer of realignment or conversion to any other military status, including as a member of the Active, Guard, and Reserve program of a reserve component. The provision would further specify that if a technician declines to participate in such a realignment or conversion, no further action may be taken against the individual or the individual's position.

Sec. 414. Maximum Number of Reserve Personnel Authorized to be on Active Duty for Operational Support.

The provision authorizes 17,000 ADOS positions for the ARNG and 16,000 ADOS positions for the ANG.

Military Personnel Policy

Sec. 513. National Guard Personnel Authorities.

This section would allow ARNG officers and warrant officers and ANG officers to transfer to the inactive National Guard. **(NGB Legislative Proposal)**

Sec. 514. National Guard Personnel Disaster Response Duty.

This section would allow AGRs to perform disaster response duty up to 14 days at the direction of the Governor pursuant to an emergency declaration. **(NGB Legislative Proposal)**

Sec. 584. Recruiter Access to Secondary Schools.

This section would provide military recruiters with the same access to secondary schools that is provided to any prospective employer, institution of higher education, or other recruiters and no less than four in-person recruitment events per academic year. **(Similar to NGB Legislative Proposal)**

Compensation and Other Personnel Benefits

Sec. 612. Implementation of Aviation Incentive Pay for Members of Reserve Components.

This section directs the SecDef to evaluate aviation incentive pay and make a specific determination regarding the percentage of such aviation incentive pay that is paid specifically to maintain skill certification or proficiency.

General Provisions

Sec. 1036. Modification of Requirements Relating to Support of Civil Authorities by Armed Forces

The section would require members of the Armed Forces, including the National Guard, to visibly display the name of the armed force, Federal entity, or other organization by which such individual is employed when supporting civilian law enforcement agencies.

Sec. 1043. Report on National Guard Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Training.

This section directs the CNGB, in coordination with the SecDef, to provide a report containing the number of members of the National Guard, disaggregated by State, that received sexual assault prevention and response training in the preceding calendar year.

Sec. 1057. Irregular Warfare Exercise Laboratory

This section would authorize the SecDef to establish and maintain an Irregular Warfare Exercise Laboratory. The laboratory would support the training, experimentation, preparation, and validation of the Armed Forces of the United States to conduct full-spectrum irregular warfare activities, and it would enable activities to build the capacity and interoperability of the security forces of friendly foreign countries.

The committee notes that the Ridge Runner irregular warfare exercise hosted by the West Virginia National Guard and the Department of Defense Irregular Warfare Center brings together U.S. Special Operations Forces, allies and partners, and other stakeholders to provide validation for deploying special operations elements in dynamic and realistic irregular warfare scenarios. The committee encourages the expansion of such activities, as appropriate.

Matters Relating to Foreign Nations

Sec. 1207. State Partnership Program Selection Analysis.

This section directs the SecDef to make changes to DoDI 5111.20 relating to the State Partnership Program. The selection analysis would give preference to States that have only one active assigned country under the program.

Cyberspace-Related Matters

Sec. 1605. Report on Reserve Component Integration into Cyber Mission Force and Cyberspace Operations.

This section directs the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Cyber Policy and the Commander of United States Cyber Command, in coordination with the CNGB to provide a report on the integration of the reserve components into the cyber mission force with a particular focus on the National Guard and authorities under Title 32.

Sec. 1626. Artificial General Intelligence Steering Committee.

This section directs the SecDef to establish a steering committee on artificial general intelligence analyzing the current trajectory of artificial intelligence models and enabling technologies that would support achievement of artificial general intelligence. Membership would include the Vice Chief of the National Guard Bureau.

Military Construction

Sec. 2401. Authorized Defense Agencies Construction and Land Acquisition Projects.

The SecDef may acquire real property and carry out military construction projects for the installations or locations inside the United States

State	Location	Authorized Amount
Pennsylvania	Harrisburg Air National Guard Base	\$13,400

Sec. 2601. Authorized Army National Guard Construction and Land Acquisition Projects.

The provision would authorize the following military construction projects for the ARNG for fiscal year 2026.

Army National Guard			
State	Location	FY2026 Request	Senate Authorized
Arizona	Camp Navajo	--	\$4,000
Guam	Joint Forces Headquarters – Guam	\$55,000	\$55,000
Illinois	Jones NG Readiness Center	--	\$5,000
Illinois	Marseilles Training Center	--	\$3,050
Illinois	Peoria Armory	--	\$8,000
Indiana	Shelbyville Armory	--	\$55,000
Iowa	Waterloo Armory	\$13,800	\$13,800
Kentucky	Jackson Field	--	\$1,850
Michigan	Camp Grayling	--	\$4,400
Mississippi	Meridian Readiness Center & Army Aviation Support Facility	--	\$2,200
Mississippi	Camp Shelby	--	\$11,600
Nevada	Henderson Armory	--	\$2,371

New Hampshire	Plymouth Training Center	\$26,000	\$26,000
New York	Albany	--	\$90,000
New Mexico	Santa Fe Training Center	--	\$4,250
North Carolina	Salisbury Training Center	--	\$69,000
North Dakota	Jamestown Armory	--	\$5,200
Oregon	Naval Weapons Systems Training Facility Base.	--	\$16,000
South Dakota	Watertown Training Center	\$28,000	\$28,000
Tennessee	Smyrna Training Site	--	\$4,000
Vermont	Swanton Armory	--	\$4,000
Virginia	Army Aviation Support Facility Sandston	\$15,500	\$15,500
Washington	Fairchild Air Force Base	--	\$1,800
Wisconsin	Black River Falls	--	\$2,000
Worldwide Unspecified	Design	\$13,580	\$13,580
Worldwide Unspecified	Facilities, Sustainment, Restoration & Modernization (Transferred from O&M)	--	\$1,275,984
Worldwide Unspecified	Unspecified Minor Construction	--	\$39,000
Military Construction, Army National Guard Total		\$151,880	\$1,760,585

Sec. 2604. Authorized Air National Guard Construction and Land Acquisition Projects.

The provision would authorize the following military construction projects for the ANG for fiscal year 2026.

Air National Guard			
State	Location	FY2026 Request	Senate Agreement
Alaska	Eielson Air Force Base	--	\$16,000
Alaska	Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson	\$46,000	\$46,000
Georgia	Savannah/Hilton Head International Airport	\$27,000	\$38,400
Illinois	Scott Air Force Base	--	\$6,000
Indiana	Fort Wayne International Airport	--	\$18,000
Iowa	Sioux Gateway Airport	--	\$148,000
Maine	Bangor Air National Guard Base	--	\$2,500
Massachusetts	Otis Air National Guard Base	\$31,000	\$31,000
Michigan	Selfridge Air National Guard Base	--	\$14,200
Mississippi	Key Field Air National Guard Base	\$19,000	\$25,700
Nevada	Reno-Tahoe International Airport	--	\$8,600
New Hampshire	Pease Air National Guard Base	--	\$16,000
New Jersey	Atlantic City International Airport	--	\$68,000
Oregon	Kinglsey Field Air National Guard Base	--	\$8,000
Oregon	Klamath Falls Airport	--	\$80,000
Oregon	Portland International Airport	\$16,500	\$16,500
Utah	Salt Lake City International Airport	--	\$145,000
Wisconsin	Volk Air National Guard	--	\$8,400
Worldwide Unspecified	Design	\$24,146	\$24,146
Worldwide	Facilities, Sustainment, Restoration &	--	\$549,496

Unspecified	Modernization (Transferred from O&M)		
Worldwide Unspecified	Unspecified Minor Construction	\$25,000	\$25,000
Military Construction, Air National Guard Total		\$188,646	\$1,304,172

Sec. 2607. Extension of Authority to Carry Out Certain Fiscal Year 2023 Projects.

The provision would extend the authorization of funds for 11 projects until October 1, 2026, or the date of the enactment of an Act authorizing funds for military construction for fiscal year 2027, whichever is later.

National Guard and Reserve: Extension of 2023 Project Authorizations			
State	Installation	Project	Original Authorized Amount
Alaska	Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson	Aircraft Maintenance Hangar	\$63,000
Arizona	Morris Air National Guard Base	Base Entry Complex	\$12,000
Arizona	Tucson International Airport	Land Acquisition	\$11,700
Arkansas	Camp Robinson	Automated Multipurpose Machine Gun Range	\$9,500
Florida	Gainesville	National Guard Readiness Center	\$21,000
Florida	Perrine	Army Reserve Center/AMSA	\$46,000
Hawaii	Marine Corps Base Kaneohe Bay	C-40 Aircraft Maintenance Hangar	\$116,964
Indiana	Fort Wayne International Airport	Munitions Maintenance & Storage Complex	\$16,500
Ohio	Rickenbacker Air National Guard Base	Small Arms Range	\$8,000
Puerto Rico	Camp Santiago Joint Maneuver Training Center	Engineering/Housing Maintenance Shops (DPW)	\$14,500
West Virginia	McLaughlin Air National Guard Base	C-130J Apron Expansion	\$10,000

Sec. 2801. Requirement for the Military Departments to Develop and Annually Update a 20-Year Infrastructure Improvement Plan.

This section requires the military departments to develop 20-year infrastructure plans to provide better fidelity for cost estimates for future planning.

SASC Committee Report Requirements/ Items of Special Interest

Acoustic System for Passive Surveillance

The committee notes that the Army has been testing a multiarray, non-line-of-sight, passive surveillance system with sensors that can detect and track acoustic emissions from threat platforms while rejecting signals from commercial aircraft and other ambient noise sources. Such a system has broad applications for developing situational awareness in congested airspaces to identify incursions of recreational drones or other threats in an operational environment, such as at joint-use airports.

Therefore, the committee encourages the National Guard Bureau, in consultation with Reserve and Active-Duty partners, to examine the utility of these systems specifically at joint-use airports and

Combat Readiness Training enters during military exercises focused on contingency response operations.

C-130H Divestment Plan

The committee is aware of the Air Force's plans to divest portions of the C-130H fleet as part of ongoing modernization and force structure adjustments. The committee emphasizes the importance of maintaining mission capability and readiness at installations affected by such changes, particularly within the Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve.

To ensure transparency and informed oversight, the committee directs the Secretary of the Air Force to provide a briefing to the congressional defense committees, not later than March 31, 2026. The briefing should address: (1) Installations impacted by C-130H divestment; (2) Potential new or replacement flying missions under consideration for affected bases; (3) Anticipated personnel and infrastructure implications; and (4) The status of coordination with state and local stakeholders.

The committee expects the Air Force to remain engaged with affected communities and to keep the Congress informed throughout the decision-making process.

Concerns About Accelerated Divestment of A-10 Aircraft

The committee is gravely concerned by the Department of the Air Force's decision to accelerate full divestment of the A-10 fleet in fiscal year 2026, 3 years ahead of the previously stated glidepath. This decision, disclosed only through fiscal year 2026 budget documents and not through direct communication with Congress, represents a fundamental breach of transparency and undermines prior commitments to responsibly manage force structure changes. The Department's decision to proceed with full divestment, without providing mission transition plans for affected units or ensuring sufficient combat capacity replacement, raises serious concerns about readiness, force distribution, and the Department's commitment to responsible stewardship.

Of particular concern is the lack of communication with or consideration for A-10 units that are currently deployed in support of combatant commands. These units are actively supporting ongoing operational requirements, and to propose their divestment immediately upon return from deployment—without replacement missions or personnel transition plans—damages the credibility of the Department and risks future recruitment and retention of pilots and maintainers across the total force.

Accordingly, the committee directs the Secretary of the Air Force to provide, not later than January 15, 2026, a briefing for the congressional defense committees that includes:

- (3) A list of all A-10 units scheduled for divestment in fiscal year 2026, fiscal year 2027, and fiscal year 2028, including location, component (Active, Guard, Reserve), number of aircraft, and whether the unit is currently deployed or scheduled for deployment during that period;
- (2) For each affected unit:
 - (a) a timeline for drawdown and divestment;
 - (b) replacement mission plans and associated aircraft, equipment, and training requirements; and
 - © personnel transition plans and impacts (e.g., reassignments, retention, recruiting shortfalls); and
- (3) An assessment of the operational risk incurred by removing the A-10 fleet from the inventory on an accelerated timeline.

Consideration of Additional F-16 Aircraft Procurement

The committee recognizes the continued relevance of the F-16 Fighting Falcon in meeting U.S. and allied tactical air requirements, particularly in support of homeland defense, partner capacity-building, and theater security cooperation. As the Department of the Air Force continues to modernize its fighter fleet, the committee believes that procuring additional new-build F-16 aircraft could provide a cost-effective means to augment force structure and mitigate near-term capacity gaps caused by legacy aircraft retirements.

Therefore, the committee directs the Secretary of the Air Force to provide a briefing to the Committees on Armed Services of the Senate and the House of Representatives, not later than December 1, 2025, on the feasibility, cost, and strategic benefit of procuring additional Block 70/72 F-16 aircraft. The briefing should include:

- (1) An evaluation of potential roles and missions for additional F-16 aircraft in the context of Air National Guard and active-duty force utilization;
- (2) An analysis of production capacity and timelines from the F-16 production line, including options to accelerate delivery; and
- (3) An estimate of procurement costs, including unit cost comparisons with alternative platforms. The committee encourages the Air Force to seriously consider the benefits of additional F-16 procurement as part of a balanced and affordable tactical airpower strategy.

F-16 Electronic Warfare Modernization

The committee recognizes the continued importance of the F-16 to the Air Force's tactical aviation portfolio. As adversary electronic warfare (EW) and air defense capabilities grow more sophisticated, legacy platforms like the F-16 must be equipped with modern survivability enhancements to remain operationally relevant in contested environments.

The Air Force has been developing the Integrated Viper Electronic Warfare Suite (IVEWS), a digital, open-architecture system intended to significantly improve the F-16's survivability against advanced threats. The committee supports the continued advancement of IVEWS and encourages the Air Force to evaluate additional EW upgrade options to ensure the most cost-effective, capable, and sustainable solution is available to the total force.

Therefore, the committee directs the Secretary of the Air Force to provide a briefing to the congressional defense committees, not later than March 31, 2026, on the Air Force's plan to field these F-16 EW capabilities. The briefing should include: (1) The current status, schedule, and performance of IVEWS development and integration; (2) A description of any other potential F-16 EW modernization efforts under consideration or in development; (3) The strategy and criteria for fielding EW upgrades across the active duty, Air National Guard, and Air Force Reserve F-16 fleets; (4) Funding profiles and procurement plans across the Future Years Defense Program; and (5) Any assessments of operational effectiveness, cost, and risk associated with competing or complementary EW solutions.

The committee emphasizes the importance of ensuring parity in survivability and mission capability across the total force F-16 fleet and encourages the Department of Defense to pursue a common, interoperable solution set where feasible.

Litter Basket Stabilization

The committee understands that the Army is beginning to adopt autonomous litter stabilization technology that provides precision, reliability, and predictability for medical evacuation crews operating in complex environments. The committee believes efforts to eliminate the need for a tagline in lift operations, and especially medical evacuation operations, are worth the investment as operations are improved and risk is reduced to personnel and aircraft. The committee notes the interest from the Army National Guard for these capabilities.

Accordingly, the committee directs the Secretary of the Army to provide a briefing, not later than March 31, 2026, to the Committees on Armed Services of the Senate and the House of Representatives on Army efforts to procure and employ this capability that enables hoist operations without the need of a tagline.

UH–60M Black Hawk Modernization

The committee notes that in February 2024, the Army announced its Aviation Rebalance Initiative to reallocate its aviation modernization investments across new and enduring platforms to meet emerging capability requirements in a resource constrained environment. As part of that announcement, the Army committed to pursuing a new Multi-Year Procurement (MYP) contract starting in fiscal year 2027 for new UH–60M Black Hawk aircraft when the current MYP is completed at the end of fiscal year 2026. This new MYP is needed to ensure adequate inventories of UH–60M helicopters for the active Army and the Army National Guard (ARNG), given the Army's decision to cancel the UH–60V modification program. Even as the Army develops the Future Long Range Assault Aircraft, the Army has stated that the UH–60M will remain a large part of the Army's active and ARNG aviation fleet for decades to come.

The committee endorses the Army's efforts to continue to procure and modernize the UH–60M Black Hawk as part of the future aviation force. The committee supports Army efforts to prepare for a fiscal year 2027 MYP, including any long lead or advance procurement actions that can be taken to streamline schedules, maintain the supplier base, and secure key components to ensure timely deliveries.

Therefore, the committee directs the Secretary of the Army to provide a briefing, not later than September 30, 2026, to the Committees on Armed Services of the Senate and the House of Representatives, on measures the Army is taking to support a new MYP for the UH–60M Black Hawk, including the number of aircraft to be included in the new MYP, delivery schedules, and contracting in advance for key components and subsystems. The briefing should also include an assessment of the total UH–60M requirement for the active and ARNG aviation fleet in light of the cancellation of the UH–60V modification program.

Army Strategy and Requirements for Wildfire Suppression Mission

The committee notes that over the last 10 years, wildfires in the United States have grown in frequency, size, destructive capacity, and cost. Given the threat of more frequent and larger wildfires, communities increasingly rely on U.S. Army personnel in significant numbers to augment dwindling U.S. Forest Service firefighting capabilities. In 2024 alone, more than 2,000 Army Active, Guard, and Reserve personnel were deployed to carry out wildfire suppression duties, including direct firefighting and suppression, air and ground logistics support, and evacuations and security. In January 2025, 1,200 personnel from the Washington Army National Guard were activated to address the wildfires that destroyed more than 18,000 homes and other structures in southern California. Unfortunately, this mission emerged so quickly that the U.S. Army did not have time to develop requirements for wildfire response. Consequently, U.S. Army units received inconsistent training and dangerously outdated equipment to meet the firefighting mission.

As the frequency, scope, and destructive power of wildfires continues to grow, U.S. Army personnel continue to be called upon to protect American communities. The committee understands that deploying home-stationed U.S. Army units for this mission is increasingly essential for successful wildfire suppression missions in support of communities around the country facing wildfire threats.

However, the committee is concerned that the Department of Defense has not methodically assessed this emergent mission and lacks a strategy and requirements for meeting it. In particular, the committee is concerned that, absent a formal wildfire firefighting requirement, the U.S. Army will continue to rely on equipment, provided by other agencies, that does not meet U.S. Army

standards designed to protect readiness and ensure effective operations of units deployed to meet this mission.

Accordingly, the committee directs the Secretary of the Army to provide a one-time briefing to the congressional defense committees, not later than March 1, 2026, on the U.S. Army's strategy and requirements for meeting the emergent wildfire suppression mission. The briefing should include: (1) The current process for procuring mission-specific equipment, such as load carriage, for Active, Guard, and Reserve units; (2) A strategy and timeline for assessing the quality and suitability of equipment currently issued to ensure mission readiness and mitigate fatigue and injury; and (3) An assessment of the needs and benefits of establishing a formal U.S. Army requirement for wildfire response, including the opportunity to procure appropriate equipment.

Briefing on Defense Language and National Security Education Office and Future Planning for Foreign Language Programs

The committee recognizes that, in partnership with universities and senior military colleges across the country, the Defense Language and National Security Education Office provides important training for servicemembers for the purposes of accelerating the development of foundational expertise in critical and strategic languages and regional area studies. The committee notes that these programs support critical language acquisition and training for the U.S. active duty military, National Guard and Reservists, other Department of Defense personnel, Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) cadets and midshipmen, and U.S. graduate and undergraduate students who are committed to federal service.

The committee notes with concern that, due to budget constraints, fewer programs were funded in fiscal year 2024. In the case of Language Training Centers, no programs are expected to be funded in fiscal year 2025, reducing capacity at higher education partners and significantly limiting access to critical and strategic languages including Chinese, Russian, Arabic, and Korean. Further, the committee believes these constraints present challenges for retention and recruitment of existing program infrastructure capabilities and qualified academic instructors with the language fluency and expertise in the areas of the world critical to current and long-term U.S. national security interests. The committee believes the inroads made by higher education partners such as the University of Mississippi, the University of Rhode Island, the University of Arizona, and James Madison University, as well as many others, are crucial to sustaining and growing these vital programs, but adequate resources are required. The committee is concerned that despite section 575 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2024 (Public Law 118–31) amending the statute authorizing the Language Training Center to require the Secretary of Defense to carry out the program, the Department failed to budget any funding in fiscal year 2025, effectively halting the program.

Accordingly, the committee directs the Secretary of Defense to brief the congressional defense committees, not later than January 1, 2026, on maintaining critical and strategic language proficiency for servicemembers and ROTC students. This briefing shall include: (1) Optimal requirements for training in languages and cultures critical to national security, to include the necessary funding levels to meet and sustain such requirements; (2) An evaluation of the Department's readiness posture as it relates to language capabilities; (3) The capacity to increase strategic languages in response to emerging language requirements; and (4) The Department's funding plan across the future years defense program for the Language Flagship Program, Project Global Officer, Language Training Centers, and Boren Awards.

Further, the committee encourages the Department to continue placing a high priority on the Language Flagship Program, Project Global Officer, Language Training Centers, and Boren Awards, with an emphasis on quality of instruction and a preference for programs that provide college credit and have strategic value to U.S. national security interests.

Expanding Arctic Training

The committee notes that much of the Department of Defense's (DOD) Arctic expertise resides in the reserve components, including the National Guard. The committee further notes, however, that the DOD will need to rely on the capabilities and expertise provided by the total force to achieve success in the Arctic. To operate in the changing Arctic environment, the committee believes that the Joint Force must have the requisite skills, training, and experience.

Accordingly, the committee directs the Secretary of the Army to submit a report to the Senate Armed Services Committee, not later than January 15, 2026, on locations in which the Army could establish or expand Arctic training and exercises in order to test soldiers and equipment to meet requirements for operating in Arctic and cold weather conditions. The report should include additional sites to conduct the Army's Cold Weather Orientation Course, Cold Weather Leader Course, and Isolation Survival in Cold Regions Course. Additionally, the report should examine tactical, technical, and logistical challenges unique to operating in extreme cold weather conditions and how additional cold weather training locations would impact readiness.

FireGuard

The committee continues to support the FireGuard program as an essential tool for federal, state, and local firefighters to aggregate, analyze, and assess multi-source remote sensing information for interagency partnerships in the detection and monitoring of wildfires, given their increasing frequency and scope of damage across the United States.

Accordingly, the committee directs the Secretary of Defense to provide a briefing to the Senate Armed Services Committee, not later than March 1, 2026, identifying where in the Department of Defense FireGuard should reside as a program of record. The briefing should also include: (1) A plan for funding and manning to the levels required; (2) The number and names of states, territories, counties, municipalities, and tribal governments to whom FireGuard has provided fire intelligence services; (3) A comparative analysis of polygons provided by FireGuard for wildfires and endstate perimeters of the same wildfires; (4) An analysis of the time between detection via raw satellite data and the alerts being sent to local responders; and (5) A review of efforts undertaken to integrate emerging satellite and aerial surveillance technologies from qualified private, nonprofit, and public sector sources.

Northern Strike Exercises

The committee notes that the annual Northern Strike Exercise is a large, all-domain reserve forces exercise. The committee believes it provides a realistic, decisive action training environment as well as robust training experiences for units and leaders to strengthen joint all-domain warfighting capabilities. Further, it fills a critical gap in resourced readiness building multi-domain exercises for National Guard combat formations. Resident within the State of Michigan, Northern Strike is conducted twice a year (winter and summer) within the four-season National All-Domain Warfighting Center's contested multi-domain operating environment. Using a combination of integrated live, virtual, and constructive models and simulations, participants increase Mission Essential Task proficiencies and build readiness through repetitive task iterations at echelon by training for combat operations as part of the joint team. The committee believes that Northern Strike is at the forefront of unmanned aerial systems and counter unmanned aerial systems training that provide individual servicemembers critical exposure to current, real-world threats.

Accordingly, the committee encourages the Department of Defense to establish recurring funding for this critical exercise series.

Briefing on General and Flag Officer Reductions

Pursuant to the memorandum entitled "General/Flag Officer Reductions," dated May 5, 2025, the Secretary of Defense directed a force-wide reduction in general and flag officers. In order to conduct congressional oversight on this matter, the committee directs the Secretary of Defense to

provide a briefing to the Committees on Armed Services of the Senate and the House of Representatives, not later than February 2, 2026.

This briefing should include, at a minimum: (1) Each military department's methodology for identifying general and flag officer reductions; (2) Expected force reduction outcomes by service; (3) Detailed implementation plans and timelines for each service; and (4) An analysis of potential consolidation or grade reduction of the general and flag officer positions assigned to joint duty assignments, as well as all other general and flag officer positions currently exempted from authorized strength by statute.

The Secretaries of the military departments and the Chief of the National Guard Bureau should support the development of this briefing and provide the necessary service-specific data and implementation plans to the Secretary of Defense in a timely manner.

Implementation Report on Self-Initiated Mental Health Referrals

The committee acknowledges and commends the Department of Defense for its efforts to implement a self-initiated referral process for mental health evaluations, as required by section 1090b(e) of title 10, United States Code, across the active duty force and recognizes the steps taken to expand access to mental health care. These efforts reflect a growing commitment to reducing stigma and increasing support for servicemembers in crisis.

However, the committee is concerned by reports of inconsistent application of, and education and training on, this self-initiated referral process across active-duty units and applicable Reserve Component troops on active-duty orders. The committee notes that, although the military departments and services have made progress in executing the law, more work is required to fully implement the law, educate servicemembers on the policy, and ensure transparency and accountability for those responsible for enforcing the law.

Additionally, the committee is concerned that Phase II of the implementation plan, to implement within the Reserve Component, to include the Reserves and the National Guard, serving less than 30 consecutive days on active orders, has not yet occurred.

Therefore the committee directs the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, in coordination with the Secretaries of the military departments and the Director of the Defense Health Agency, to submit to the Committees on Armed Services of the Senate and the House of Representatives, not later than December 31, 2025, a briefing on the implementation of the self-initiated referral process required under section 1090b(e) of title 10, United States Code. The report should include:

- (1) Any Department of Defense instruction or other document issued by the Secretary of Defense since May 5, 2023, with respect to the implementation of the self-initiated referral process required under 1090b(e) of title 10, United States Code;
- (2) Any memorandum or guidance issued by:
 - (a) the Department of the Navy since July 11, 2023 directing the implementation of such process;
 - (b) the Department of the Air Force since July 28, 2023, directing the implementation of such process; and
 - (c) the Department of the Army since August 29, 2023, directing the implementation of such process;
- (3) A description and timeline of any communications made to members of the Armed Forces with respect to the implementation of such process;
- (4) A description and timeline of efforts by the Secretary of each military department to implement the annual training required under subsection (f) of such section; and
- (5) A description and timeline of efforts to ensure that such process reduces stigma in accordance with subsection (b) of such section.

In addition, the committee directs the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness and each military department to brief the Committees on Armed Services of the Senate and the House of Representatives biannually on implementation progress, training effectiveness, and report adherence to section 1090b(e) of title 10, United States Code. This biannual reporting requirement should terminate on December 31, 2030.

Exempted Positions from Deferred Resignation Program

The committee recognizes the importance of maintaining a mission-ready civilian workforce within the Department of Defense (DOD) and ensuring that critical positions are not adversely impacted by workforce reduction initiatives. The committee recognizes that the Deferred Resignation Program as implemented in the Department of Defense permitted voluntary workforce reductions and included mission essential exemptions.

The committee is aware that certain categories of personnel, including military personnel, have been historically exempted from similar programs and that Title 32 Dual Status Technicians play a critical role in maintaining the readiness of National Guard formations. Given the urgency of exemption requests submitted by the National Guard Bureau and the time-sensitive nature of the program, the committee is concerned about the lack of clarity regarding the positions that have been formally exempted by DOD leadership.

Therefore, the committee directs the Secretary of Defense to provide a briefing to the Committees on Armed Services of the Senate and the House of Representatives, not later than December 1, 2025, detailing all positions and occupational categories granted exemptions from the Deferred Resignation Program. This report should include: (1) A comprehensive list of all exempted positions, including pay plan, occupational series, grade, and title; (2) The justification provided for each exemption; and (3) The process by which exemption requests were reviewed and approved.

Medical Licensure Portability for the National Guard

The committee recognizes the essential role that National Guard (NG) healthcare providers (HCPs) play in contributing to our Armed Forces' medical corps and medical enterprise. They are asked to maintain a high level of readiness to deploy at a moment's notice to provide expert medical care to and save the lives of Americans during natural disasters or to servicemembers during military operations. This high level of readiness depends on the ability of NG HCPs to maintain expert proficiency through regular hands on trainings and certifications, especially on the kind of trauma care most relevant to injuries during emergency or conflict scenarios.

The committee is aware that to obtain such specialized training, NG HCPs may be required to travel to a completely different State for annual training or other stateside operational missions requiring medical support. The committee supports NG HCPs having ready and easy access to the best cross-state training opportunities.

In order to streamline access by NG HCPs to cross-state training, the committee directs the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs, in consultation with the Chief of the National Guard Bureau, to provide a briefing, not later than March 31, 2026, to the Committees on Armed Services of the Senate and the House of Representatives on licensure portability for National Guard medical providers and whether existing law presents barriers to generating readiness.

Unified Joint Military Trauma System

The committee is aware of the challenges the future battlespace will place on combat medical operations and the need for modernized casualty care. The committee recently received testimony on the readiness of the Military Health System, which noted that the Department of Defense lacks "a coherent, unified strategy for military medical readiness that will deliver expert trauma/burn care on future battlefields while also benefitting civilian trauma care and public health." Additionally, the

testimony suggests the Uniformed Services University is currently developing a comprehensive military trauma system policy roadmap that considers the direct care component, civilian partnerships, the role of the National Guard and Reserve, synergy with the Department of Veterans Affairs, and involvement with the National Disaster Medical System and National Trauma Emergency Preparedness System.

The committee directs the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs to provide a briefing to the Committees on Armed Services of the Senate and the House of Representatives on the status of the military trauma system policy roadmap not later than March 1, 2026. The briefing shall include the following elements:

- (1) A list of the organizations involved in the development of the military trauma system policy roadmap effort;
- (2) An explanation of the objectives, status, and anticipated completion date of the updated policy;
- (3) An assessment of any barriers inhibiting the Department from implementing the updated military trauma system policy; and
- (4) Any other matters the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs considers relevant.

Government Accountability Office Review of Costs of Supporting Civil Authorities

The committee notes that since 2002, the Department of Defense (DOD) has supported the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) requests to secure the Nation's borders. Over the years, the DOD has seen an increase in requirements for supporting civil authorities including the deployment of additional active-duty military personnel and other assets to the United States-Mexico border. Published on February 23, 2021, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) produced a report entitled "Southwest Border Security: Actions Are Needed to Address the Cost and Readiness Implications of Continued DOD Support to U.S. Customs and Border Protection" (GAO-21-356), which found weaknesses in the DOD's estimates of the costs to support DHS activities. Further, GAO found that the DOD did not track all costs or give Congress timely information on the full costs the DOD incurred for DHS support, as it was mandated to do. The committee is interested in ensuring that it has an accurate assessment of DOD and National Guard support of operations to the DHS and therefore directs the Comptroller General of the United States to assess the extent to which the DOD has tracked the costs, including reimbursement and reprogramming actions, for its support to the DHS since fiscal year 2025 and the extent to which the DOD is following statutory reporting requirements for support to the DHS since fiscal year 2025.

The committee further directs the Comptroller General of the United States to brief the congressional defense committees, not later than March 31, 2026, with the results of the review to follow in a mutually agreed upon format and timeframe.

State Partnership Program

The committee notes the importance of the State Partnership Program (SPP) in building cooperation with our allies and partners. This cooperation can include working together to build innovative defense capabilities to address the security needs of the United States, its State Partnership Program partner, or both.

Therefore, the committee directs the Chief of the National Guard Bureau, in consultation with the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment and the Under Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering, and other relevant elements of the Department of Defense, to provide a briefing to the Senate Armed Services Committee, not later than March 31, 2026, on the SPP. The briefing should, at a minimum, address the following: (1) A description of SPP activities that involve collaboration on technology; (2) A description of any opportunities to utilize SPP

activities with foreign partners to collaborate on and develop emerging technologies; and (3) Any other matters the Chief of the National Guard Bureau deems relevant.

United States-Morocco Defense Partnership

The committee notes the importance of the United States-Morocco defense partnership to regional security across a range of interests, including U.S. Africa Command-led African Lion training exercises, which are the largest of their kind on the African continent; counterterrorism cooperation and intelligence sharing; and the National Guard's State Partnership Program. The committee continues to monitor the relationship with an eye toward facilitating greater security cooperation.

Infrastructure Support for the 185th Air Refueling Wing

The committee remains concerned about infrastructure limitations affecting the operational readiness of the 185th Air Refueling Wing (ARW), a critical National Guard unit supporting global aerial refueling missions. Located at a dual-use facility not owned by the Department of Defense, the 185th ARW relies on non-federal infrastructure for mission execution. These limitations have restricted the Department's ability to invest in necessary upgrades to sustain readiness and future mission requirements.

The Department has historically faced challenges in using military construction funds to support infrastructure it does not directly own. However, the 185th ARW's reliance on such facilities presents a unique case where readiness and strategic capacity may be weakened without targeted investment and coordination. Programs such as the Defense Community Infrastructure Program (DCIP), cooperative agreements, or other legal authorities may offer pathways for resolving these infrastructure gaps.

Therefore, the committee directs the Secretary of Defense to provide a briefing to the Committees on Armed Services of the Senate and the House of Representatives, not later than April 1, 2026, on the Department's plan to: (1) Preserve the operational readiness of the 185th ARW, including support for current and projected mission requirements; (2) Identify infrastructure challenges associated with the unit's reliance on non-federally owned facilities; (3) Assess available legal authorities and potential legislative changes that would enable the Department to contribute to infrastructure modernization efforts, including the use of programs such as the DCIP; (4) Describe any current or planned mitigation efforts, such as partnerships with state or local governments; and (5) Provide recommendations for congressional action.

Requirement for Camp Navajo Entry Bridge Repairs

The committee notes that in the event of a conflict, it is critical to have reliable access to munitions in storage and the ability to expediently ship munitions. The committee acknowledges that the transport of munitions often relies on rail transportation to expeditiously move munitions from the interior of the United States to munition ports to be shipped outside the contiguous United States to the theater of operations.

The committee acknowledges that properly maintaining the infrastructure, such as bridges and overpasses, at military installations operating munitions storage missions along the Strategic Rail Corridor Network, including Camp Navajo in Bellemont, Arizona, is important for our national security. However, the condition and size of the current bridge limits the portion of the strategic national rail line underneath the overpass to one lane of travel, creating a limiting factor to support contingencies, logistics, and resupply in the Indo-Pacific area of responsibility.

Accordingly, the committee urges the U.S. Army and the U.S. Army National Guard to prioritize military construction and sustainment funding to replace and sustain the bridge network contained within the Department of Defense's jurisdiction.