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STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE JIM SAXTON
SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY INSTALLATIONS AND FACILITIES

HEARING ON THE FY1998 MILITARY CONSTRUCTION BUDGET REQUEST

PROGRAMS OF THE ACTIVE AND RESERVE COMPONENTS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY AND THE DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE

March 4, 1997

The Subcommittee on Military Installations and Facilities meets today to continue its hearings on the FY1998 budget request for the military construction and military family housing programs for the Department of Defense. Chairman Hefley regrets that he is not here this afternoon, but he is necessarily absent. In the interest of early consideration of the Administration's FY1998 budget request, he requested that the subcommittee continue with its planned activities. I will place his prepared statement, without objection, into the record following my remarks.

The focus of the subcommittee's inquiry today is on the military construction and military family housing programs which support the active and reserve components of the Department of the Navy, including the Marine Corps, and the Department of the Air Force. Each of the military departments are being asked to do more with less. The Administration's FY1998 budget request is 25 percent less than the funding provided by Congress just two years ago. The Administration is requesting fewer and fewer resources for military construction despite the sizable requirements for the recapitalization of basic infrastructure, the revitalization of military housing, and the modernization of facilities which have a direct impact an the operational mission of the military services.

For each of the military services, the rapid erosion of resources for facilities improvements is causing choices to be made that, while "tough", create budgetary trends that appear to threaten the long-term health of the Nation's military infrastructure. I want to cite a couple of examples that are relevant to our discussion today.

- The active Air Force's military construction program would be cut by the budget request by one-third from current spending levels. In FY1996, the President requested $496 million for Air Force military construction; in FY1997, he requested $603 million. This year, he wants to go back to $496 million. How can the service properly plan in that kind of environment?

- The Department of the Navy's military family housing construction program would be cut by the Administration's FY1998 budget proposal by $221 million – 44 percent – from current spending levels. More telling, the FY1998 budget request represents the third time in four years in which the President has requested less for Navy family housing construction than he did the year before and the request has declined each year since FY1996.

I look forward to the testimony of the witnesses as the subcommittee continues to try to understand the choices made by the Administration in the development of this budget request.