

House Advances \$831 Billion Pentagon Bill with Pay Raises, Acquisition Overhaul

July 18, 2025

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The U.S. House of Representatives has moved forward with an \$831 billion defense authorization bill for Fiscal Year 2026, including a military pay raise, expanded family support, and a wide-ranging overhaul of the Pentagon's procurement process, signaling renewed Republican momentum behind military readiness and reform.

The National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) passed out of the House Armed Services Committee with strong bipartisan support. Central to the bill is a 3.8 percent pay increase for service members, a 60 percent hike in the Family Separation Allowance, and changes to make more troops eligible for the Basic Needs Allowance by excluding housing benefits from income calculations.

Beyond compensation, the legislation proposes significant reform to the U.S. Department of Defense's (DoD) acquisition system. Republican Representative Mike Rogers of Alabama, chairman of the committee, said the bill "cuts red tape, eliminates bureaucratic hurdles, and encourages innovation," reflecting a broader effort to modernize how the Pentagon equips its forces.

The bill also contains a series of quality-of-life initiatives for military personnel. These include extending the Child Care in Your Home Pilot Program through 2029 and launching specialized mental health services for cyber operations personnel. In addition, the legislation authorizes service members in unaccompanied housing to use their Common Access Cards for food purchases on base, an effort to improve access to nutrition and reduce food insecurity.

Strategically, the bill reinforces U.S. commitments abroad. It prohibits the reduction of American troop levels in Europe below 76,000 without congressional approval and mandates independent military risk assessments before any adjustments to overseas deployments. It also includes \$400 million in aid for Ukraine and \$1 billion for Taiwan's defense, underscoring continued bipartisan support for deterring aggression from Russia and China.

Disagreements remain between the House and Senate over the final budget figure. The House has proposed \$848 billion in defense discretionary funding, while the Senate is seeking closer to \$878.7 billion. These differences will need to be resolved before the end of the fiscal year on September 30 to avoid disruption to government operations.

The bill complements other Republican-led initiatives, including the proposed “One Big Beautiful Bill Act,” which seeks an additional \$150 billion for critical defense programs like missile systems, drone fleets, and naval expansion. Together, these measures reflect a sharpened focus on deterrence, military readiness, and restoring America’s technological edge amid growing global threats.