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Punaro: Future defense spending needs 'smarter, not richer' thinking

ARLINGTON, VA – Several factors will limit projected defense spending — and hence budgets — in the out-years of the defense plans, and defense officials and Congress will need to think “smarter, not richer” in how they approach funding, Arnold Punaro said Wednesday while accepting the 2018 James Forrestal Industry Leadership Award from the National Defense Industrial Association.

“Due to the changing political landscape, towering deficits and growing impact of entitlements, we will not see the necessary sizable, real growth budgets in the out-years of the five-year defense plan as we have in FY18 and FY19,” Punaro said. “As a result, we need to think smarter, not richer,” he said, adding Deputy Defense Secretary Patrick Shanahan and John Gibson, the Defense Department’s chief management officer, “are leading the charge on implementing Sec. [James] Mattis’ high-priority reform agenda.”

Punaro also said, “Today’s funding supports a force that is 50 percent smaller, and in some cases less ready and less capable. I have called this the ever-shrinking fighting force. This must be reversed, and Congress is supporting Sec. Mattis’ efforts to increase the size, readiness and lethality of our wartime forces.”

He added, “The solution going forward is to make every dollar count to create, in some way, our own national security multiplier effect. We need more bang for the buck.”

A retired Marine Corps general, Congressional adviser, businessman and thought leader in defense for more than 40 years, Punaro received NDIA’s Forrestal award for his steadfast commitment to national security and service members and stalwart support of the defense industrial base. He was presented the award before a capacity crowd at a lunch in his honor at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel Pentagon City in Arlington, VA.

Punaro is chief executive officer of The Punaro Group LLC of Washington, a consulting firm he founded in 2010 that guides businesses through the federal marketplace. From 1997 to 2010, Punaro served as an executive vice president at Science Applications International Corp. (SAIC), an \$11 billion technology and professional services firm. Defense News recognized him as one of the 100 most influential people in U.S. defense. He also served as NDIA board chairman and is chairman of the Reserve Forces Policy Board.

“Arnold has personified the roles of innovator and leader in the field, in the Senate, in business, and in government,” retired Air Force Gen. Hawk Carlisle, NDIA’s president and chief executive officer, said of Punaro. “We are fortunate and proud Arnold is in NDIA’s corner and that of the industrial base. He is a true champion of this industry.”



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Founded in 1954, the James Forrestal Industry Leadership Award is named for the former Secretary of the Navy and of Defense who supported a strong defense industrial base. The annual award is given to a defense industry executive who best reflects Forrestal's vision.

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ABOUT NDIA

The National Defense Industrial Association is the trusted leader in defense and national security associations. As a 501(c)(3) corporate and individual membership association, NDIA engages thoughtful and innovative leaders to exchange ideas, information, and capabilities that lead to the development of the best policies, practices, products, and technologies to ensure the safety and security of our nation. NDIA's membership embodies the full spectrum of corporate, government, academic, and individual stakeholders who form a vigorous, responsive, and collaborative community in support of defense and national security. For more information, visit www.ndia.org