

Remarks of Rep. Chris Smith (R-NJ)
JB MDL—Jan. 4, 2024

Special thanks to the distinguished Adjutant General, [Brig. Gen. Lisa Hou](#), for your extraordinary leadership and service to our country. And, special thanks to each of you, especially our men and women in uniform, for your commitment, sacrifice and service to our nation.

The nearly \$16 million Readiness Center will provide critical maintenance support including repair capability for automotive, ground support, communications and electronics, land combat missile systems, and armament systems.

Even as we mark the opening of this facility, **2,000 of our fellow citizens from the 44th Infantry Brigade Combat Team plan for their deployment in support of Operation Inherent Resolve.** In 10 days, these New Jersey “citizen-soldiers” will be deploying to the Middle East in what will be the largest deployment of New Jersey National Guard personnel since 2008.

All of you are well aware of the escalating threats worldwide and the compelling need for a strong defense which enhances deterrence:

- As we all know, on October 7th, Hamas committed unspeakable crimes and is seeking the annihilation of all Jews and the State of Israel.

- This week [Iran sent a destroyer vessel to the Red Sea](#) where the US Navy had just confronted and sank three Iranian-backed, Houthi-rebel boats off the coast of Yemen in an apparent hijacking attempt in support of Hamas against Israel.
- War continues to rage in Ukraine—at the very door step of NATO—as Putin continues to commit war crimes and genocide of the Ukraine people, most [recently threatening British Navy](#) for its support of Ukraine.
- Today the communist government of the People’s Republic of China is a barbaric, authoritarian regime hostile to the individual and human rights, led by Xi Jinping, the man who infamously had said “show no mercy” as he has unleashed genocide on the Muslim-majority Uyghurs—who took over Hong Kong and whose regime daily threatens in both words and provocative deeds to invade our close friend and ally Taiwan.

The Chinese Communist Party flagrantly commits every human rights abuse imaginable—including torture, sex and labor trafficking, religious persecution, forced sterilization and abortion, and the crushing and jailing of democracy activists and journalists. Last year, the House passed my bill, the *Forced Organ Harvesting Act*, to criminalize and combat the killing of young people to steal their vital organs.

Xi Jinping is clear in his ambitions for China and seeks to displace the rule-of-law-based, US led, international order, with Chinese hegemony of the Western Pacific and beyond.

- To welcome in the New Year, on Monday North Korea's brutal despot Kim Jong Un, [renewed his threat](#) to our country, and our ally the democratic republic of South Korea, by ordering his military to "thoroughly annihilate" the United States and South Korea if provoked.

So now—more than ever—the United States must enhance and invest in the capabilities that provide deterrence and military power projection across the globe to mitigate threats posed by malign actors.

Modern infrastructure like this new, 40,000-square-foot Readiness Center, and the sprawling two-bay KC-46 hanger opened a few months ago, are tangible evidence of the vital and ever-expanding role the Joint Base plays in defending freedom and ensuring the security of the United States.