

Testimony in Support of Additional Funds for the Army Reserves

Rep. Aumua Amata Radewagen (AS – At Large)
Subcommittee on Defense, H-140, March 9, 2017, 11:20 am

Talofa, taeoa manuia; Good morning Chairman Granger and Ranking Member Visclosky; and thank you for allowing me to testify before you today. I come to support additional funds for the National Guard and Reserve Equipment Appropriation (NGREA), so that the Reserve can purchase Modular Small Arms Ranges (MSARs).

American Samoa is the only U.S. soil in the Southern Hemisphere, lying approximately 2,500 miles south of Hawaii. We may be far from the mainland but we love the U.S., as demonstrated by the rate our sons and daughters enlist in the military, the highest in the United States, a fact that we are very proud of. The U.S. Army Reserve website states “The Army Recruiting Station in Pago Pago is ranked #1 in recruitment out of the 885 Army recruiting stations and centers under the U.S. Army Recruiting Command.”

American Samoa has been and continues to be an important strategic location for the United States for 117 years now, providing the only U.S. deep sea port in that part of the world; and is home to a U.S. Army Reserve unit.

Currently stationed in American Samoa, we have two Infantry companies of 200+ Soldiers that belong to the 100th Battalion of the 442nd Infantry, the most decorated unit of its size in the entire Army. They are warriors, knowledgeable professionals, tactically and technically proficient Soldiers and they are great role models for our community; even our late member, Rep. Eni Faleomavaega served with this unit, in Vietnam and as a reservist. Most families back home have many members that are serving or have served in the Army Reserves in the Pacific, and many community leaders are current or former members as well. These citizen Soldiers have and will continue to be called upon to perform dangerous missions in remote locations around the globe, and we want to provide the best possible training and equipment to ensure that they return home safely to their families and community.

I am here today as their voice in Congress to solicit your support in making sure our Soldiers are provided the best equipment and training tools, to allow them to

be trained and ready to deploy into harm's way when called upon to protect our way of life.

The Army Reserve Command is asking us in Congress for funding for a containerized small arms range for their units. To this end, both **Gen. Brown, Commanding General for U.S. Army Pacific, and BGen. Curda, Commanding General, 9th Mission Support Command**; have called on Congress for additional funds to purchase Modular Small Arms Ranges for Reserve units.

The Modular Small Arms Range is a containerized facility and not an open or outdoor live fire range. There is no live fire range on American Samoa because Army safety standards for live fire ranges prohibit the construction of an open air live fire range. This is largely due to our island's terrain and population density, it is next to impossible to conduct live fire and ensure public safety on an open air range. The closest small arms range is in Hawaii.

As it stands, in order for our Army Reserve units to be combat ready, they must fly to Hawaii, 5 hours away, to train and qualify on their individually assigned weapons. The cost to send 200 plus Soldiers to Hawaii and the logistics to support them is upwards of 1.2 million dollars annually. Modular Small Arms Range will save the Army and our taxpayers millions of dollars in the future while allowing our Soldiers to be trained at home.

Marksmanship is a perishable skill and our Soldiers' lives and the lives of their fellow soldiers depend on their ability to properly engage a target. Simple functions such as changing a magazine or sighting in a target can become monumental when the stress and frustration of combat is added. Live-fire training and consistent weapons training ensure that the Soldier has the muscle-memory to perform these critical functions when under stressful combat situations.

Ensuring that our Soldiers are ready to fight is one of my top priorities and I urge you to consider this request for a modular small arms range for our Army Reserve units. Thank you for your time.

Fa'afetai tele lava, I yield back the balance of my time.