

The Honorable Colleen Hanabusa (HI-01)
U.S. House of Representatives
House Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Military Construction, Veteran Affairs, and Related Agencies
February 15, 2017

Chairman Dent, Ranking Member Wasserman Schultz, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. In my testimony this morning, I will highlight several Military Construction (MILCON) programs that are vital to our military readiness and continued engagement with the Asia-Pacific region. In addition, I will also share the importance of continued funding for construction of Veterans Affairs (VA) facilities and improved services so that our veterans in my district in Hawaii, in the state, and across the country can receive the proper care they deserve.

Although the new Administration has not released a budget or outlined specific plans for investing in our military, we know that there will almost certainly be a significant increase in defense spending. Everyone agrees that there are certain areas where investment is needed in order to improve readiness, revamp our force structure, and maintain our quantitative and qualitative edge over our rivals well into the 21st century; however, simply spending money for the sake of spending money will not make us safer. We need to make sure we spend smarter.

First, significant investments are needed in our nation's four public shipyards. Although we expect there will be a healthy debate over shipbuilding and our fleet's size requirements in both the House Armed Services Committee (HASC) and the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense, it does us no good to have more ships if those ships cannot be properly serviced, maintained according to schedule.

Our public shipyards are the primary providers for depot-level maintenance for nuclear-powered warships and submarines. According to Naval Sea Systems Command, "New dry dock

capacity at the naval shipyards is the core requirement to meet the Fleets' mission ahead." For example, Dry Dock 3 at Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard does not have the capacity to service Virginia-class nuclear submarines. If the Virginia-class submarines have an additional Virginia Payload Module (VPM), their increased length means they also cannot be serviced at Dry Dock 2. This leaves only Dry Docks 1 and 4, and Dry Dock 4 has limited available capacity for submarine maintenance work because it has to be shared with the local private contractor who does Surface Ship Depot Level Maintenance.

When one Dry Dock is forced to operate at diminished capacity, there is a chain reaction down the maintenance schedule that leads to delays in vital repairs and prevents our sailors and submariners from getting underway on schedule. Extending and refitting Dry Dock 3 would dramatically improve fleet readiness, and provide a point of refuge for Virginia-class submarines in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. Similar improvements at the three other shipyards would further improve fleet readiness and bolster our Navy's capability to respond to threats anywhere around the globe. Thus, I respectfully request that increased funding be allocated to Military Construction, Navy and Marine Corps, sufficient to meet the critical needs of the four public shipyards. I would additionally urge this committee to support potential public-private partnership initiatives that would help us meet the fiscal needs of our shipyards in a responsible and thoughtful way.

I also strongly support robust funding for the Army Corps of Engineers and NAVFAC to perform much-needed environmental remediation projects. In January 2014, we experienced a fuel leak at the Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility, which has a capacity of 250 million gallons of fuel and serves as the "last gas station" for Army, Air Force, Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard operations in the Western Pacific. The Navy estimates up to 27,000 gallons of jet fuel

was released from one of 20 fuel tanks, in close proximity to local aquifers used by both civilians in the military. Thankfully, vigorous testing continues to show that local drinking water remains safe. However, this incident demonstrates the need for extreme environmental vigilance around our national strategic assets, especially those that date from the World War II era and before, like Red Hill. While the cost of upgrading and modernizing the Red Hill facility will be high, it pales in comparison to what the cost of a catastrophic fuel leak into the water supply would have been. Thus, I respectfully ask that this subcommittee allocate robust MILCON funding for all critical environmental remediation efforts, in order to help our armed forces continue to be good stewards of the land and good neighbors to local communities.

As we continue our diplomatic, economic, and military rebalance in the Asia-Pacific, our military partners are anticipating additional MILCON requirements to maximize troop readiness and to help counter the regional threats posed by China and North Korea. There are a number of important Asia-Pacific projects in each branch's pipeline. For example, the Air Force hopes to acquire land on Tinian, in the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands, to serve as a "Divert Field" for Pacific Air Forces, and the Marine Corps hopes to continue its building projects to increase resilience on Guam. Closer to my home, Pohakuloa Training Area, which is managed by the Army but used by every service, state and local partners, and allied militaries, has a runway that is badly in need of repair. If our troops can't train, they can't fight, and readiness suffers.

Senator John McCain recently issued a White Paper titled "Restoring American Power," in which he discusses the recently-proposed Asia-Pacific Stability Initiative. I would also like to express my support to this subcommittee for the Asia-Pacific Stability Initiative, which would support our forces in the Asia-Pacific region as well as our allies. The initiative will allow us

and our partners to maintain a focus on readiness and warfighting capability. While it is unclear exactly how funding would be allocated, infrastructure investments will be crucial as a platform for future cooperation, both in wartime and peacetime. These MILCON investments could include land acquisition, construction of runways and airplane hangars, servicemember housing, and development of other facilities for use by us and our partner nations. Like the European Stability Initiative or the Maritime Security Initiative, the APSI would go a long way in reassuring our allies and other actors in the region of our commitment to the future of the Asia-Pacific. Thus, I respectfully request that this subcommittee allocate robust MILCON funding sufficient to allow the DOD and the service branches (including National Guard Components) to make all necessary investments in the Asia-Pacific region.

Finally, I'd like to talk about our most solemn obligation: providing for our nation's veterans. For many veterans, the biggest obstacle to receiving timely, quality care is access. While the VA Choice Program helps our veterans in rural areas who are facing waits of over 30 days for treatment, not all veterans are eligible. If we really want to cut down wait times and delays in care, we need more VA facilities, more doctors, and more options for our veterans. I am proud to support the VA Pacific Islands Healthcare System's (PIHCS) goals of providing more access by developing new "One Stop Shopping" Veterans Centers, which include Community-Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs) as well as other services; building new CBOCs and renovating old ones to serve more patients; and, adding an additional level to the parking structure at the Spark Matsunaga VA Medical Center in Honolulu. We should support VA PIHCS and all Veterans Integrated Service Networks in these important efforts. Thus, I respectfully request that this subcommittee allocate robust funding to the Veterans Health

Administration for Construction (both Major and Minor Projects) and Facilities sufficient to allow for these critical investments.

In conclusion, the resources allocated by this subcommittee will be vital to ensuring the readiness of our military, maintaining their ability to defend our national interests and promote global stability, and keeping our promises to our veterans by providing them with proper care. I see and hear about the critical MILCON investment needs in my district every day, and I know these much-needed investments will make our entire country safer. On a larger scale, the State of Hawaii and America's Pacific Territories will continue to be the lynchpin of our rebalance to the Asia-Pacific, and the first line of defense against eastward aggression from China, North Korea, and Russia. Finally, by providing robust funding for the VA, we can fulfill our duty to give back to those who served unselfishly, and signal to current and future service-members that their sacrifices will be honored and our promises will be kept.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify before this subcommittee.