

Congresswoman Tulsi Gabbard

Testimony before the House Armed Services Committee:
National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2014

Chairman McKeon, Ranking Member Smith, and members of the committee, I appreciate the opportunity to testify before you today.

I echo words from last year's Priorities for 21st Century Defense Strategy "we are in a moment of transition". Under this committee's leadership, the United States has made significant progress in the drawdown of the costly and protracted wars in the Middle East that have consumed the resources and attention of our Armed Services for the past decade. Indeed, this is no easy task and your leadership seeing it through is greatly appreciated.

The Priorities for 21st Century Defense Strategy also emphasized the importance to focus a broader range of challenges and opportunities, including the security and prosperity of the Asia Pacific which has matured into our Rebalance Strategy.

The regional instability created by the recent North Korean provocations as well as the slow-boiling territorial disagreements around the Senkakus and South China Seas underscore the growing need to strengthen our nation's military and diplomatic presence in this region where our economic and national security interests are inextricably linked.

A region where our greatest security adversary is not a nation or a specific threat, but the distance we must overcome to ensure open and secure access to the global domains and our national security interests. Hawaii is a critical link in addressing this challenge.

We must keep Hawaii safe. In today's threat environment, this translates into ballistic missile defense.

With the increased operational tempo that our naval forces are experiencing, the Pearl Harbor Naval shipyard and Regional Maintenance Center provides full-service support to the surface fleet and the new Virginia Class submarines which cover more than 60% of the world's surface and are essential to maintaining the robust presence called for in our national military strategy.

As we continue to realign our force posture in the Asia-Pacific, it is important we ensure that we provide the very best training facilities enabling combat readiness. This additional presence comes on the heels of the Marine Corps' decision to base two squadrons of its latest transport aircraft, the MV-22 Osprey, and one light attack helicopter squadron to Kaneohe Bay.

The Pacific Missile Range Facility (PMRF) is the world's largest multi-environmental range capable of supporting surface, subsurface, air, and space operations simultaneously. PMRF's work with the Aegis Ashore Missile Defense Test Complex is vital to enhancing our nation's ballistic missile defense capabilities and protecting the United States and its territories from any future attack.

In addition, the Pohakuloa Training Area (PTA) serves as the premier combined arms training facility in the Pacific region. Ground and air units from all U.S. military services are able to train at PTA because it offers realistic training opportunities not found elsewhere and thus vital to our armed forces readiness.

Each of these key enablers is critical to this committee's efforts to provide oversight to the ongoing military transformation that is starting to take place. I look forward to working with the committee as we continue to build on the progress we have made in executing the US rebalance to this vitally important region.

Once again, thank you Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member Smith for allowing me the opportunity to testify today about the strategic importance of Hawaii in this process.