

**Testimony of
Congressman Gregorio Kilili Camacho Sablan**

Before the House Armed Services Committee

Hearing on Member National Defense Priorities for the
National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2015

April 9, 2014, 10:00 am
2118 Rayburn House Office Building

Thank you Chairman McKeon, Ranking Member Smith and Members of the House Armed Services Committee for the invitation to submit testimony on Defense priorities as you craft the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2015.

I request that you consider two provisions for inclusion in the 2015 NDAA. The first provision would be an amendment to the 2014 NDAA, which authorized \$29.3 million for Air Force divert airfield projects on the island of Saipan. I ask that the authorized location for these projects be changed to the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands out of consideration that the Air Force and the Commonwealth governments are discussing alternative locations for the divert airfield. The second provision would be language extending to December 31, 2019, the existing transition period for the implementation of federal immigration law in the Northern Marianas. This extension would help ensure the availability of labor for the Air Force divert project and other military construction in the Northern Mariana Islands and Guam associated with our nation's strategic military pivot toward the Asia-Pacific region.

In more detail the first requested provision would amend Sec. 2301 of the 2014 NDAA and designate the "Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands," rather than "Saipan," as the site for expenditure of \$29.3 million for Air Force divert airfield projects. This change in designation would enable the funds to be used at sites other than Saipan. The change would be consistent with language that I worked with the Committee to include in the 2014 NDAA that bars expenditure of the authorized funds until the Air Force reports to Congress on the alternatives considered for the divert airfield and the overall construction requirements for the project. The change in designation would also be consistent with the Joint Explanatory Statement, accompanying the 2014 NDAA, that notes that the Commonwealth Governor has expressed concerns regarding Saipan as the proposed divert field location, and expresses the expectation that the Secretary of the Air Force will consult with the Governor with the goal of achieving a mutually agreeable solution with respect to location of divert projects and activities.

I would like to note for the record that, in my view, the island of Tinian should be the location for the divert capability projects. In the Northern Marianas' Covenant of Political Union with the United States, which was approved by over 78 percent of voters in 1975, the needs of the U.S. military were to be addressed and satisfied by the lease of two-thirds of the island of Tinian, portions of Tanapag Harbor in Saipan, and the entire island of Farallon de Mendinilla for fifty years with an option to extend for another fifty years. The Committee will appreciate that with only 176 square miles in the Commonwealth, we must be extremely careful apportioning

the use of lands. In addition, the use of land already leased or otherwise available to the Air Force should result in considerable savings of taxpayer dollars, an important consideration in this fiscally austere environment.

The second request I have for inclusion in the 2015 NDAA is language that would extend the current transition period for the implementation of federal immigration law established under P.L. 110-229. This extension would help ensure that there is sufficient labor available for construction and other activities associated with the military realignment—in the Northern Mariana Islands and Guam—by continuing an exemption from H visa caps for both jurisdictions. Draft language is attached.

When P.L. 110-229 was enacted in 2008, the military buildup in the Marianas region was thought to be imminent. Both House and Senate committee reports on P.L. 110-229 noted that a five-year transition period was necessary to help meet expected labor demands associated with the planned buildup. To date, however, much of this construction activity has been delayed, yet the transition period is set to expire at the end of this year. For this reason I am requesting that the transition period be extended for another five years until December 31, 2019.

I want to take this opportunity to thank the Committee for keeping a keen eye on the expansion of military activity in the Northern Marianas and for working with me as you did in the 2014 NDAA. The military buildup and presence in the Marianas region will have long-term consequences for the people I represent; and I appreciate the partnership of this Committee in managing these developments in the best interest of my constituents and of the national security needs of our nation.

Please feel free to contact me or my office should you have any questions or concerns.

1 Section 6 of Public Law 94-241 (90 Stat. 263; 122 Stat. 854) is
2 amended—

3 (1) in subsection (a)(2), by striking “December 31, 2014,
4 except as provided in subsections (b) and (d)” and inserting
5 “December 31, 2019”; and

6 (2) in subsection (d)—

7 (A) in the third sentence of paragraph (2), by striking
8 “not to extend beyond December 31, 2014, unless extended
9 pursuant to paragraph 5 of this subsection” and inserting “ending
10 on December 31, 2019”;

11 (B) by striking paragraph (5); and

12 (C) by redesignating paragraph (6) as paragraph (5).

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22