

Congressman Neal Dunn (FL-2)
House Armed Services Committee Testimony

Chairman Thornberry, Ranking Member Smith, and distinguished members of the Committee, it is an honor to testify today.

I am here to express support for incorporating H.R. 1968, the Military Assets Protection Act, into the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2018. I recently introduced the legislation with Representative Hanabusa. Representative Rosen is also a cosponsor of the legislation.

The emerging threat of Unmanned Aircraft Systems piloted by our enemies was brought to my attention by military leaders at Tyndall Air Force Base in Florida's Second Congressional District, as well as General James Mike Holmes, the Commander of Air Combat Command, and Lieutenant General Scott Williams, the Commander of the First Air Force.

This Committee has also received testimony regarding the seriousness of the threat. On March 8th of this year, General John Hyten, the Commander of U.S. Strategic Command, stated his concern about "unauthorized flights of unmanned aerial systems over Navy and Air Force installations. These intrusions represent a growing threat to the safety and security of nuclear weapons and personnel."

This is not a theoretical threat. Terrorist groups like the Islamic State have increasingly used armed drones against our allies overseas. As the tactics and technology of weaponized drones are proven on battlefields abroad, they will be exported to our shores for attacks and espionage against U.S. military installations here at home. Our Armed Forces face a new threat from drones, and the law needs to catch up.

As you know, the Federal Aviation Administration also recently regulated drone flights at 133 military facilities in the form of air space restrictions. Although this is a good first step, we can't expect terrorists to follow FAA's "Notices to Airmen." And importantly, military personnel currently lack the authority and requisite shield against liability shield to interdict drones that compromise the security of assets, installations, classified information, and personnel.

For this reason, we drafted the Military Assets Protection Act in consultation with the Department of Defense and the Air Force Office of the Judge Advocate General.

In the NDAA for Fiscal Year 2017, this committee made critical progress on this issue. The Military Asset Protection Act will further clarify and strengthen the Defense Department's legal authority to interdict drones that threaten homeland assets and installations.

I respectfully request that the committee consider H.R. 1968 as it develops the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2018. Thank you all for your time and the opportunity to speak to you on this important issue.