

Testimony for Rep. Kihuen (NV-04)

Chairman Thornberry, Ranking Member Smith and my colleagues on the Armed Services Committee, I want to thank you for giving me the opportunity to come before the committee to discuss the vital role military installations in Nevada's Fourth Congressional District play in protecting our national security.

Members of the Committee, I want to begin with Nellis Air Force Base, in the Las Vegas Valley, and the adjacent Nevada Test and Training Range. Nellis is known as the home of the Thunderbirds, which showcases the remarkable skills of our nation's most highly-trained military pilots, and whose pilots consider themselves "America's Ambassadors in Blue." If I may have a moment of personal privilege, I'd like to recognize Maj. Stephen Del Bagno, a Thunderbird pilot who was killed on April 4, 2018 during a training exercise.

Nellis' mission goes far beyond the Thunderbirds, and it is also the home to the U.S. Air Force Warfare Center, the largest and most demanding advanced air combat training mission in the world. Aircraft from Nellis operate on the Nevada Test and Training Range, which offers more than 15,000 square miles of airspace and 4,700 square miles of restricted land. More than 75 percent of all live munitions used by the Air Force for training are dropped on the Nevada Test and Training Range.

Nellis employs 11,000 military and 3,700 civilians, making it one of the largest employers in the state. When family members and retirees are included, the total military population swells to more than 40,000. In total, the Nellis Complex has an economic impact of over \$5.5 billion annually.

Nellis Air Force Base is also home to RED FLAG, the premiere military training exercise in the world. RED FLAG was created to provide the US and our allies combat training in a realistic, but safe environment. RED FLAG brings together units with diverse missions ranging from air interdiction, combat search and rescue, close air support, dynamic targeting and defensive counter air, and pits them against other units who are specially trained to replicate the tactics and techniques of potential adversaries. As a result of this type of training, during the 2017 RED FLAG exercises, the F-35 scored an impressive 20-1 kill ratio.

Over the years, RED FLAG has provided training for more than 440,000 military personnel, including more than 145,000 aircrew members flying more than 385,000 sorties and logging more than 660,000 hours of flying time. During RED FLAG operations, the forces amassed at Nellis Air Force Base combine to constitute the fourth largest air force in the world.

Nevada's Fourth Congressional District is also home to Creech Air Force Base, which is most famous as the Command and Control facility for remotely piloted aircraft systems flying missions across the globe. From its base in Nevada's Fourth Congressional District, airmen at Creech fly 70 to 75 percent of the unmanned aircraft combat operations around the world, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Finally, I would like to recognize the importance of the Hawthorne Army Depot in Hawthorne, Nevada. The Hawthorne Army Depot receives, stores and issues conventional munitions; demilitarizes and disposes of unserviceable, obsolete and surplus munitions; and maintains serviceability through inspection and renovation to ensure munitions readiness in support of Joint Forces. If you visit the Hawthorne Army Depot, which I recently did, you will see thousands of munitions storage structures dotting the Nevada desert. These facilities are used to ship thousands of tons of munitions per year to

the Warfighter and receive thousands of tons of munitions per year for disposal. In addition, Hawthorne is home to a detachment of the Naval Undersea Warfare Center.

The Fourth Congressional District in Nevada plays an essential role in protecting our national security and supporting our military. That is why I am asking that you continue to authorize operations that occur at Nellis, Creech, the Nevada Test and Training Range as well as the Hawthorne Army Depot as part of the NDAA so that Nevada can continue to lead the way in conducting vital missions all around the globe. I want to thank you for your time in letting me come before the committee.