

Member Day Testimony on FY2024 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA)

House Committee on Armed Services

Congressman Ed Case (HI-01)

May 16, 2023

Chairman Rogers, Ranking Member Smith and members of the Committee:

Aloha, and thank you for the opportunity to testify today on the Fiscal Year 2024 NDAA.

I'd like to highlight my home state of Hawai'i, which plays a central role in our National Defense Strategy. The NDS identifies the People's Republic of China as our most consequential strategic competitor, a pacing challenge, and an opponent to a free and open Indo-Pacific that must be countered through integrated deterrence, campaigning and building an enduring advantage. Hawai'i has been central to our presence in the Indo-Pacific over the last century-plus, but never has our role been more critical than today and over the next century.

To preserve and fully leverage Hawaii's strategic importance, I want to address four specific issues with you today: (1) the Pacific Deterrence Initiative (PDI); (2) the Defense of Hawai'i; (3) the Red Hill incident; and (4) Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS). These all relate in one way or another to maintaining a superior force posture in Hawai'i, maintaining the support of the people of Hawai'i for that posture, and projecting our presence out of Hawai'i into the broad Indo-Pacific.

PDI

The Pacific Deterrence Initiative is an instrumental part of integrated deterrence in the Indo-Pacific and highlights key elements and investments needed to maintain our competitive advantage, and lays the foundation that will be indispensable to our efforts for decades to come. These investments will only be fully realized through a whole of government approach that combines multiple lines of effort and fosters mutually beneficial cooperation with like-minded countries that prioritize a respect for sovereignty, human rights and a rules-based system. We cannot do this without the help of our allies and partners. In addition to reaffirming our commitment to our treaty allies, we must also ensure that we are the partner of choice for the Pacific Island countries, to include Vanuatu, Papua New Guinea, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of Palau and the Republic of the Marshall Island, to name a few. A continued investment in the security and development of these countries will provide us with the enduring advantage that we need.

Defense of Hawai'i

In addition to partnerships, another instrumental part of our National Defense Strategy is defending our homeland. That homeland includes my Hawai'i, which is home to Indo-Pacific

Command and numerous other force-multiplying defense assets. Hawaii's location in the Indo-Pacific provides us with a strategic competitive advantage and expands our operational reach into the Indo-Pacific. But if left insufficiently defended, it will also leave us highly vulnerable to the proliferation of advanced missile threats. The military agrees and has stated that Hawai'i lacks modern "surveillance capabilities to meet today's mission needs such as inability to characterize and classify targets or cover all required airspace." This is not acceptable. I urge the Committee to accelerate investment and planning in our missile defense capabilities and employ them to defend Hawai'i.

Red Hill

I want to say mahalo nui loa (my deepest thanks) to the Committee from the people of Hawai'i for your continued support and efforts to address the Red Hill crisis, including full implementation of the Secretary of Defense's directive to defuel and close the Red Hill bulk fuel storage facility. This crisis has provided the side benefit of compelling a long-overdue strategic reset and redesign of our bulk fuel distribution system throughout the Indo-Pacific. It has also allowed our military to reset the standard for how we take care of our servicemembers, their families and the local communities that are impacted when crises such as these occur. To that end, I again ask for the Committee's continued support to protect O'ahu's aquifer, take care of our servicemembers, their families and all those impacted by the Red Hill crisis and assist in the updated redistribution of bulk fuel storage across the region.

PFAS

In our efforts to remediate Red Hill, the dangers caused by PFAS, which has leaked from the facility, have become crystal clear to my state. The military has made strides in the curtailment of use, mitigation and clean-up of these forever chemicals in recent years, but that is not enough. We must urge and support the Department of Defense in its efforts to do more.

Closing

In closing, I encourage this Committee to ensure this year's NDAA reflects the strategic importance of Hawai'i and the Indo-Pacific theater in achieving integrated deterrence and building an enduring advantage over our pacing challenge. Of course, none of our objectives can be achieved without taking care of our servicemembers and their families, or without the help of our allies and partners, and I urge that all of these efforts be fully supported as well.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today and for your leadership and dedication to advancing our country's national security. Mahalo.