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COMMITTEE ON NATURAL
RESOURCES

SUBCOMMITTEES:
OVERSIGHT AND INVESTIGATIONS
INDIAN AND INSULAR AFFAIRS
WATER, WILDLIFE AND FISHERIES

April 8, 2024

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

Good morning and aloha,

And thank you to the Committee for the opportunity to again testify on our annual National Defense Authorization Act.

I would like to highlight three points, all related to implementation of our National Defense Strategy and focusing on the Indo-Pacific and the pacing geopolitical challenge of the Peoples Republic of China.

Pacific Deterrence Initiative

The first is ensuring that the Pacific Deterrence Initiative achieves the goals for which it was implemented.

PDI was established to enhance U.S. deterrence and defense, assure allies and partners, and counter adversary threats in the Indo-Pacific, by providing a detailed and coordinated account of spending and programs that advance U.S. strategic goals in the Indo-Pacific. Of course, like the European Deterrence Initiative, it was designed not just to properly quantify but to assure the coordinated funding required. A properly designed and implemented PDI would highlight quality investments in the Indo-Pacific but also areas lacking in investment.

Examples of areas that may not be sufficiently highlighted in PDI and not sufficiently resourced to date are campaigning and soft power. Efforts such as joint military exercises, Community Action Teams and infrastructure upgrades in partner nations.

I urge the Committee to continue your support for a fully funded and transparent PDI, but also to conduct a larger overview of PDI to assure that it does in fact function more like EDI rather than, as it was once characterized, just an accounting mechanism.

Defense Infrastructure

Also critical to our National Defense Strategy in the Indo-Pacific is ensuring resilient and mission ready military installations and command and control nodes. We all know that that in this area we are stretched by both budgets and logistics to retain a sufficient trajectory of both new infrastructure and repair and maintenance.

My Hawai'i exemplifies this challenge. Home to over one hundred thousand service members, dependents and civilians, twelve military installations, one of our nation's four

public shipyards, commands from every military service and Headquarters U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, Hawai'i is the hub of military activity in the Pacific.

Unfortunately, the military's investment in critical infrastructure throughout Hawai'i has lagged over the past decades, resulting in multiple, critical failures in wastewater treatment plants, drinking water infrastructure, operations facilities, airfields and piers, training facilities, power infrastructure and more. If left unaddressed, the command and control of our forces in the Indo-Pacific and the resilience of our posture throughout the region is at risk.

I ask for the Committee's further support in ensuring that the Department of Defense continues to pursue a coordinated and fully funded effort to address failing critical infrastructure and develop the necessary plans and processes to mitigate future failures.

Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility

There is no greater example of the consequences of infrastructure failure throughout the DoD than the Red Hill bulk fuel storage facility leaks of 2021. Failures on a number of fronts resulted not only in risks to military preparedness but in serious health consequences and risks to hundreds of thousands of people and a crisis in the military-civilian relationship which is key to the military's presence in Hawai'i.

I would like first to again say say mahalo nui loa (my deepest thanks) to the Committee for your continued support in response to the crisis. I would also like to thank USINDOPACOM's Joint Task Force – Red Hill on its recent completion of defueling operations and transfer of responsibility to Navy Closure Task Force – Red Hill.

Although defueling is complete and permanent closure is underway, this crisis will require major support from the DoD and Congress for many years to come. In particular, aside from permanently closing the facility and assuring our bulk fuel storage needs are addressed elsewhere, we still don't have sufficient clarity of the extent to which the aquifer remains contaminated and the water is safe to drink, nor on long-term health implications, nor on the programs and funding required to address these and other issues.

I ask for the Committee's own continued support of the multiple lines of effort that must continue.

I again express my deep appreciation for this Committee's continued support for our efforts in the Indo-Pacific, for our service members and their families, and for my Hawai'i. I look forward to continuing to assist you in your initiatives.