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**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
Washington, DC 20515

COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS  
SUBCOMMITTEES:  
DEFENSE  
HOMELAND SECURITY

May 19, 2025

The Honorable Mike Rogers  
Chairman  
Committee on Armed Services  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Adam Smith  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Armed Services  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

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

Aloha, and thank you for the opportunity to testify today on the Fiscal Year 2026 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). I'd like to highlight for your consideration and action some specific national security challenges regarding my home state of Hawai'i and the broader Indo-Pacific.

The Indo-Pacific, of course, is the frontline of our generation pacing challenge led by the People's Republic of China (PRC). As is again confirmed in the Interim National Defense Strategic Guidance and will surely be reconfirmed in our next National Defense Strategy (NDS), Hawai'i will remain central to our presence and strategy in the Indo-Pacific.

To preserve and enhance Hawaii's strategic importance, I want to address five specific interrelated issues: (1) the Defense of Hawai'i, (2) environmental concerns in Hawai'i that impact the readiness of our forces, (3) the continued need for soft power in the Indo-Pacific, (4) the imperative of supporting contracting innovation, and (5) supporting Hawai'i military training land lease negotiations. 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 military presence out of Hawai'i into the broader Indo-Pacific.

### **Defense of Hawai'i**

Beyond our international partnerships, a core pillar of our national security is the defense of our homeland, and that includes my home state of Hawai'i. It is not only the headquarters of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, but it also hosts a range of force-multiplying defense assets that are vital to our posture in the region. Its location offers a distinct strategic advantage, enhancing our operational reach across the Indo-Pacific. However, that same positioning also makes Hawai'i a potential target, especially as advanced missile threats continue to proliferate.

The Department of Defense itself has acknowledged that Hawai‘i lacks modern surveillance and response capabilities for missile attacks despite the growing capabilities of the PRC. That gap is unacceptable. To defend Hawai‘i, our nation must invest in the ability to characterize and classify targets and provide full airspace coverage. I strongly urge this Committee to prioritize and accelerate investment in missile defense systems tailored to Hawaii’s unique needs.

In addition to radar upgrades, we must also invest in those who operate the system, the Hawai‘i National Guard, which operates a command structure that also requires updates to effectively respond to emerging threats.

### **Environmental Programs in Hawai‘i**

I want to extend a heartfelt mahalo nui loa (my deepest gratitude) to this Committee on behalf of the people of Hawai‘i for your steadfast support in addressing the Red Hill crisis. The commitment to the full implementation of the Department of Defense’s directive to defuel and permanently close the Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility is deeply appreciated. While this crisis has brought real hardship, it has also driven a much-needed strategic reassessment of our bulk fuel distribution system across the Indo-Pacific.

The incident also continues to present an opportunity to redefine how we care for our servicemembers, their families and the surrounding communities when such incidents occur. I respectfully urge the Committee to continue its support in protecting O‘ahu’s aquifer, assisting those affected by Red Hill and facilitating the effective redistribution of fuel storage infrastructure throughout the region.

Additionally, the Red Hill situation has brought into sharp focus the risks posed by PFAS contamination. While the Department of Defense has made meaningful progress in reducing the use and remediation of these persistent chemicals, we must go further. I ask the Committee to support enhanced efforts to mitigate and eliminate PFAS threats to ensure long-term environmental and public health protection for our communities.

Finally, there are many related military environmental programs that serve to address both military and long-standing community concerns that were highlighted during the Red Hill crisis. As one example, the Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration Program (REPI) preserves military missions by supporting cost-sharing agreements between the services; other federal agencies, state and local governments; and private conservation organizations to avoid land use conflicts near military installations and address environmental restrictions that limit military activities. Programs like REPI are part of the solution for Red Hill and cannot be neglected as the military refocuses its budget priorities.

### **Soft Power in the Pacific**

The military has been and must be a significant instrument of our soft power, fostering goodwill, enhancing influence and promoting stability in ways that go beyond combat capabilities and at a fraction of the cost. As we confront rising competition and strategic challenges in the Indo-Pacific, it is imperative that we double down on soft power tools that build trust, foster collaboration and reinforce democratic values.

Programs and institutions like the Daniel K. Inouye Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies are central to this mission, serving as a hub for regional dialogue and strategic education that strengthens relationships with our allies and partners. We must continue its essential mission as a cost-effective means to deter and counter PRC activities throughout the region.

Likewise, the State Partnership Program (SPP) continues to deliver outsized returns by linking U.S. National Guard units with Indo-Pacific nations, building lasting people-to-people ties and enhancing interoperability. However, our government still has fewer SPP relationships in the Indo-Pacific than in Africa, Europe and South America. We need to redouble our efforts to expand this program in countries as we race to match the PRC's expanding influence in the region.

Furthermore, the Office of Local Defense Community Cooperation (OLDCC) has played a pivotal role in supporting infrastructure and resilience in key Pacific territories and states, reinforcing our presence without provoking confrontation. OLDCC needs continued support for its work within our country, but it is time to see what aspects of its programming can be replicated in countries where we are expanding our military presence without building bases. We need to empower our military leaders with the tools needed to maintain critical relationships with local leaders in foreign countries.

### **Contracting Innovation**

As we look to maintain our competitive edge, especially in the Indo-Pacific, we must embrace contracting innovation as a strategic imperative. We need to continue expanding the use of rapid prototyping pathways that allow us to move at the speed of relevance. By streamlining the acquisition regulations, we can more effectively compete with the PRC, which has invested billions in an effort to develop technology that leapfrogs past our slow-moving acquisition system.

The Defense Innovation Unit has been instrumental in bridging the gap between Silicon Valley and the Pentagon, tapping into the commercial sector's agility to deliver cutting-edge solutions directly to the warfighter. It is one example of the wide range of contracting options we must provide to our warfighters. It is also a model that is adapted to the different phases of research and fielding that each service needs.

If we are to outpace near-peer threats, we must fully empower these initiatives, streamline the contracting process and foster a culture of calculated risk-taking across the Department of Defense.

### **Hawai'i Land Lease Negotiations**

I also want to briefly address the ongoing land lease negotiations in Hawai'i, which are highly significant to both the State of Hawai'i and the Department of Defense. These lands, many of which are critical for training, readiness and regional posture, must remain available to support our national security objectives. At the same time, we must recognize the unique cultural, environmental and community considerations involved. That is why I firmly believe the outcome must reflect a win-win – one that upholds the strategic needs of the military over the next generation while honoring the values and priorities of the people of Hawai'i.

Productive dialogue is ongoing, and I am encouraged by the commitment from both sides to find common ground. With transparency, mutual respect and a shared focus on long-term stewardship, I am confident we can reach an agreement that strengthens our defense posture while reinforcing the deep partnership between Hawai'i and the federal government. The full implementation of this agreement may require the full attention of this Committee in the NDAA and/or otherwise, and I thank you in advance for your full consideration.

### **Closing**

In closing, I urge this Committee to ensure that 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.

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

With aloha,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ed Case". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly informal style. The letters are dark blue and stand out against a light, textured background.

Ed Case  
Hawai'i-First District