

Member Testimony
Representative Colleen Hanabusa (HI-01)
House Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Defense
10:05 a.m. – 5 mins

Chairman Frelinghuysen, Ranking Member Visclosky, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee; thank you for the opportunity to testify about defense programs that are vital to my home-state of Hawaii.

I have been a fierce advocate for the Obama Administration's rebalance to the Asia-Pacific. I believe this to be vital to the future policy interests of the United States, and as such remain committed to priorities within the defense budget that will support this shift in our foreign policy and military posture. There are many critical programs in this shift, and I would like to take a moment to highlight a few.

I fully support the President's request to fund the steady two-a-year production rate for the Virginia Class Submarine program. Sustaining the two-a-year build rate is not only vital to mitigating the shortfall in our attack submarine force in the next decade, but will also continue to leverage critical savings and efficiencies in building these advanced platforms.

With undersea capabilities playing a central role in our national security strategy, I believe that defense research funding this year can continue to produce advantages by developing technology that is capable of covertly burying undersea cables beneath the seabed, which will result in a significant increase in mission-effectiveness and cost-savings to the Navy for such operations.

I believe that the shipbuilding budget should be fully resourced, and appreciate the inclusion of funding that continues buying two destroyers as well as one additional Afloat Staging Base this year. These ships will be critical to maintaining a presence in the U.S. Pacific Command Area of Responsibility, which encompasses 53% of the earth's surface.

With commitment to our allies in the Asia-Pacific region essential at this point in time, I believe funding projects that will increase the ability to project a presence in the region are of the utmost importance.

With that said, I remain concerned about the effects that policies put in place by Congress like sequestration will have our ability to meet the priorities outlined in the latest defense guidance. I have remained steadfast in my opposition to the mindless cuts from sequestration, and believe that a bipartisan effort needs to be made to fully repeal this provision, rather than piecemeal solutions that restore smaller pieces of funding. One of the reasons I was opposed to the budget deal back in January was because it left intact more than \$75 billion in defense cuts, while cutting billions more to other important domestic programs.

Something that we have heard over and over again from officials testifying and committee leadership on both sides of the aisle was that the FY15 defense request produced by Department of Defense is a result of the constraints set by the Bipartisan Budget Act. I knew it would produce a budget that had significant negative impacts to the state of Hawaii and result in increased risks and challenges to our national security.

Defense Secretary Hagel and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Martin Dempsey have talked about the increased risk that we take on through readiness and capability as a result of the cuts that must be made in the areas of defense with these budget numbers. This may hamper our readiness and capability, and could compromise our nation's security.

Another concern with this request is the reductions to programs that fall within the U.S. Pacific Command's area of responsibility are inconsistent with our nation's stated goal of a rebalance to the Asia Pacific region. At a time when Admiral Locklear has stated that he already cannot meet the demands of the Pacific with the existing fleet, the proposal to mothball 11 cruisers will only exacerbate the existing shortfalls in the Navy. Program cuts to assets like the Maui Space Surveillance Complex and Maui High Performance Computing Center are all inconsistent with our national defense strategies.

I believe that it should be a priority of the Committee to include the additional \$26.1 billion in defense funding proposed in the Opportunity, Growth, and Security Initiative, which would restore many of the cuts that run contrary to supporting the rebalance to the Asia-Pacific. This additional funding proposed by the Department of Defense is fully offset by proposals within the President's budget. Some of these offsets are more popular than others, but if we are going to provide the resources to fund the defense budget we need to ensure our national security, all of us will have to compromise somewhere.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today, and I look forward to working with you in the future on our nation's defense priorities.