

U.S. House of Representatives
Subcommittee on Defense

HAC-D Member Day
Rep. Susie Lee's Written Testimony

Thursday, March 9, 2023, at 2:10-2:15 PM ET

Chair Calvert and Ranking Member McCollum –

Thank you for this opportunity to share with the committee southern Nevada's priorities for defense and ensuring our nation's security. I'm excited to highlight the unique role Nevada plays in our national defense as we make critical funding decisions for fiscal year 2024.

As you know, southern Nevada is home to key defense installations and equities, without which our nation would be less safe, and the world a more dangerous place.

These installations include Nellis Air Force Base—home of the U.S. Air Force Warfare Center, the Weapons School, the 2.9-million-acre Nevada Test and Training Range, and numerous subordinate wings, groups, and squadrons. Nellis is on track to become the 5th Generation Center of Excellence. It holds the future of joint-aerial combat. Taking full advantage of the Nevada Testing and Training Range, the base hosts regular Red Flag exercises, which provide U.S. and allied aircrews experience with diverse aircraft in a unique, safe training environment.

Southern Nevada is also home to Creech Air Force Base, which hosts 8,000 Air Force personnel and conducts an essential mission for our nation's security. Creech hosts the "Hunters" of the 432nd Air Expeditionary Wing, responsible for the global Remotely Piloted Aircraft Enterprise, and executing combat operations 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and 365 days a year. As Creech's mission continues to expand, I look forward to working with the committee to ensure that the needs of its mission and personnel are fully met.

Another gem in Nevada defense is the Naval Air Station Fallon. Up in the northern high desert, the station serves as the Navy's premier strike warfare training facility and the only one that allows an entire carrier wing to conduct comprehensive training. I know the committee will remain focused on ensuring continued support for Fallon's unrivaled Navy training mission.

The Nevada Army and Air National Guard also stands out, with their C-130's and their impressive capabilities across tactical airlift, medevac, transportation, and engineering. A particularly important contribution is the Nevada Guard's Modular Airborne Fire Fighting mission, and I appreciate the committee's attention to the need to replace their legacy fleet of C-130Hs with the modern C-130Js.

Another major contribution of the Nevada Guard is their role in the State Partnership Program. In partnership with Samoa, the Kingdom of Tonga and the Republic of Fiji, Nevadan Guardsmen

are doing critical work in building security cooperation and productive relationships across the Pacific. This element of the Nevada Guard's mission will only increase in importance as the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command continues to navigate a difficult security landscape.

While the committee should keep Nevada's equipment and training needs top of mind, we also need to make sure we are supporting the personnel behind these critical missions. Affordable housing, access to childcare and medical care—these need to be regarded as top priorities this fiscal year. This is a question of U.S military readiness. For example, junior enlisted Airmen living at Nellis but working at Creech drive 50 miles one way to get to work. That's \$400 in gas a month, eating up 29% of their basic pay. I encourage the committee to look into solutions here, like hardship pay or a gas stipend, to support Airmen struggling with the elevated cost of living.

Childcare has been another major stressor for military families in southern Nevada. Our Air Force parents work irregular hours, long commutes away from the city, and they lack the affordable, flexible childcare options they need. The wait lists at our Child Development Centers are simply out of control, with an average wait time of 130 days, Air Force-wide. The committee must prioritize continued progress in supporting families like those at Creech and Nellis by improving fee assistance programs and increasing flexibilities for at-home childcare options.

I am proud of Nevada's role in defending our nation and contributing to global security. Still, in fiscal year 2024, there is much work to make sure our Silver State service members are provided for and set up to succeed. I appreciate the subcommittee's attention to the critical missions conducted at Nellis, Creech, and by the Nevada Guard, and I look forward to a productive appropriations process to support our servicemembers and enhance our national security, taking full advantage of all that Nevada offers in the defense realm.

I thank the committee for the time today and yield back.