

Member Day Testimony on FY2023 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA)

House Committee on Armed Services

Congressman Ed Case (HI-01)

April 27, 2022

Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Rodgers and Members of the Committee. Aloha, and thank you for the opportunity to focus on the national security challenges and opportunities that face us in my part of the world - the Indo-Pacific – and Hawaii’s continued critical role. Today I’d like to address three specific issues: the Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility crisis; the Pacific Deterrence Initiative; and our public shipyards including Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard.

Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility

First, I am very grateful to this Committee for your prompt and full efforts to address the Red Hill crisis. Your support has been critical not only to the thousands of our servicemembers and their families who were physically harmed and displaced by the fuel leaks, but to the hundreds of thousands of Honolulu residents and visitors who depend completely on this aquifer.

Addressing the Red Hill crisis is more than just fixing old and dilapidated infrastructure. It is about force readiness in the Indo-Pacific and about public confidence and support of our military back home.

This crisis has forced us to re-think logistics and bulk fuel distribution in this critical region. These changes, which will need to be implemented over several years, will be instrumental in meeting the challenge in the Indo-Pacific.

To this end, I ask this Committee to fully support the President’s additional \$1 billion FY23 budget for Red Hill and to take all other actions to provide effective oversight and direction of the Red Hill remediation, defueling and closure initiative of the Department of Defense.

Pacific Deterrence Initiative

A critical component of our military’s efforts in the Indo-Pacific is the Pacific Deterrence Initiative. Now in its second year, PDI continues to evolve and mature as a cohesive series of investments that strengthen our presence throughout the region.

Unlike its counterpart, the European Deterrence Initiative, the PDI is not a single fund, which provides it a level of flexibility to address key areas of need. This year, the administration submitted a budget of \$6 billion for PDI, which is a welcome and necessary further increase from last year’s level set by this Committee. Further, we see an increase in military construction and improvements in critical logistics nodes throughout the region. During my recent delegation visit to the Pacific, a recurring theme from our friends and allies is the need for more “US presence.” These investments will underscore our commitment to them.

This year, the President's Budget increased PDI—but we cannot stop there. There are other opportunities brought forth by the Indo-Pacific Command we can support. Unfortunately, the threats in the region are only growing. Two of our biggest competitors, China and Russia, continue to threaten the security of our friends and allies with their aggressive expansionist claims. Additionally, North Korea remains a danger due to its increasingly threatening actions.

PDI and these other initiatives will reaffirm our commitment to the Indo-Pacific as a continued guarantor of the peace and international rules-based order of the last three generations.

Public Shipyards

Underpinning all of our efforts in the vast and maritime Indo-Pacific are our public shipyards. Without the physical and human capacity of our shipyards, we cannot project the force that is necessary to deter and address today's threats.

The Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard, as with our nation's other three shipyards, is a part of the fabric of the Hawaiian community. Unfortunately, these shipyards have become aged and increasingly ill prepared for the challenges of the Twenty-First Century. We simply must reinvest in these facilities and our world class shipyard workers.

The Shipyard Infrastructure Optimization Plan, or SIOP, is our commitment to improve and recapitalize these facilities. It is critical that we continue to support the multi-year, \$21 billion effort. SIOP is multi-faceted, and the plan will recapitalize our dry docks, reconfigure infrastructure, and modernize the equipment necessary for a more agile and efficient workforce. Without these improvements, we will see delays in the timely return of ships and submarines to their mission.

Closing

In closing, I encourage this Committee to continue to authorize the commitments that address our modern-day challenges in the Indo-Pacific. These promises reaffirm our obligation to our service members and their families, the workers that keep our shipyards running, and finally, to our friends and allies that rely on us to be the bulwark of democracy in the region.

Mahalo.