

Congressman Gregorio Kilili Camacho Sablan

Before the House Armed Services Committee

Member Day Testimony on the Fiscal Year 2017 National Defense Authorization Act

March 1, 2016

2118 Rayburn House Office Building

Thank you Chairman Thornberry, Ranking Member Smith, and Members of the House Armed Services Committee for the invitation to submit testimony from non-HASC members on our nation's Defense priorities as you craft the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017.

I request that you consider two proposals for inclusion in the 2017 NDAA. The first proposal is authorization for the establishment of a unit of the National Guard in the Northern Mariana Islands. Legislative language I have introduced, H.R. 3649, is attached that would amend Titles 10, 32, and 37 of the United States Code for this purpose.

The National Guard Bureau issued a report on August 19, 2015, affirming that it would be feasible to establish a National Guard unit in the Northern Mariana Islands. The Bureau was responding to the mandate for a study, contained in Section 515 of the Fiscal Year 2014 National Defense Authorization Act, that Congress required for guidance on this issue.

Establishing a National Guard in the Northern Marianas would support the Defense Department's goal of a rebalance to Asia, increasing our military presence in the first line of U.S. soil in the western Pacific and thereby enhancing security and stability in the region.

In addition to the national security rationale, a National Guard unit would give the Governor of the Northern Marianas additional capacity to respond quickly and effectively to emergency. Ours is one of only two jurisdictions nationwide that does not have its own National Guard — a deficiency sorely apparent in August of last year, when Typhoon Soudelor caused widespread damage and led the President to declare a major disaster in the islands.

The groundwork for establishment of the Guard unit is already in place at the local level. The Northern Mariana Islands National Guard Act (Public Law 13-32) was enacted in 2002 by the Northern Marianas Legislature. What is now needed is federal action. H.R. 3649, my bill authorizing National Guard units in my district, will not require any funding nor would it impose any new requirements on the National Guard Bureau or the Department of Defense. It would simply include the Northern Mariana Islands in the definitions sections of current law of what constitutes the National Guard.

My second request is that the 2017 NDAA include language requiring the Department of Defense to produce a report detailing its plan on how it would implement a unit of the National Guard in the Northern Mariana Islands. The 2015 feasibility report found formation of National Guard units in the Northern Marianas to be feasible. I believe the proper next step would be for

the Secretary to report to this Committee its implementation plan to establish, maintain, and sustain a unit of the National Guard in the Northern Mariana Islands. Such a report should include details regarding force structure allocation, recruiting, and funding requirements that would enable this Committee to better understand how the Department would stand up a new National Guard unit, and how Congress could help.

I thank the Committee for its consideration of these two proposals for inclusion in the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017. I also thank the Committee for keeping a keen eye on the expansion of military activity in the Northern Marianas and for working with me as these plans continue to develop. The military buildup and presence in the Marianas region will have long-term consequences for the people I represent; and I appreciate the partnership of this Committee in managing these developments in the best interest of my constituents and of the national security needs of our nation.