

STATEMENT OF

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BEFORE THE

**SUBCOMMITTEE ON FISHERIES, WILDLIFE,
OCEANS, AND INSULAR AFFAIRS**

of the

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
NATURAL RESOURCES**

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Chairman Fleming, Ranking Member Sablan, and members of the Subcommittee, I am pleased to appear before you today to discuss H.R. 4402, “The Guam Military Readiness and Training Act of 2014.”

As the Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Infrastructure, Strategy, and Analysis, I am responsible for directing the planning, programming, communications, environmental assessment, and program execution for an \$8.6B project to relocate approximately 5,000 U.S. Marines and approximately 1,300 dependents to Guam. I would like to emphasize that we remain committed to establishing an operational Marine Corps presence on Guam, the foundation for which is an international agreement between the United States and the Government of Japan.

An essential component of the proposed relocation is the construction and operation of a live-fire training range complex (LFTRC) on Guam that allows for simultaneous use of all firing ranges to support training and operations of the relocated Marines. Establishment of the LFTRC is essential to maintaining training and readiness of Marine Corps personnel on Guam as required by Federal law.

The LFTRC will consist of a Known Distance rifle range, a Known Distance pistol range, a Modified Record of Fire Range, a nonstandard small arms range, a Multipurpose Machine Gun range, and associated range control facilities and access roads at a single consolidated location to meet the individual weapons training/qualification requirements of the relocating Marines. Training on the LFTRC will be limited to small arms.

The Marine Corps has a long history of range design and safety. Regardless of which location is ultimately selected on Guam, each range would include an appropriate berm located behind the target line, ranging from 25 feet to 12 feet tall. Each range would be designed so that expended rounds of ammunition would be contained by berms within the footprint. Our range experts estimate that the probability that a round or

fragment would escape the height of these berms is extremely low. Joint Army and Marine Corps regulations addressing small arms range design and safety require the establishment of surface danger zones (SDZs) specifically tailored to the weapons used on the range. The goal of SDZs is to contain munitions and hazardous fragments with a probability of escapement from the SDZ not to exceed one in one million.

Access to the area within a SDZ is restricted while a range is in use. It follows that a SDZ remains in effect only when a range is in use. It is this restriction which presents an issue with the Department of the Navy's (DON's) preferred alternative for the LFTRC on Guam at Andersen Air Force Base-Northwest Field.

The DON has identified the LFTRC at Andersen Air Force Base-Northwest Field as the alternative among five currently under consideration which best meets the purpose and need of the Marine Corps. Two other preliminary alternatives previously developed were not advanced due to issues regarding use of non-Federal lands and effects on communities and sensitive natural and cultural areas. The proposed LFTRC would be constructed and operated exclusively on Department of Defense land, and the associated SDZs would extend beyond the boundaries of the base overlaying a significant portion of the Ritidian Unit of the Guam National Wildlife Refuge owned by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. While the ranges are in use, access by Refuge managers and the public to that portion of the Refuge underneath the SDZ would be restricted which may significantly impact the Service's ability to manage the Ritidian Unit. No rounds will be fired directly into the Ritidian Unit.

The DON has worked—and continues to work—with the Fish and Wildlife Service and the Department of the Interior's Office of the Solicitor in a cordial and deliberate manner to address, in part, the question whether the SDZs associated with the DON's preferred LFTRC alternative at Andersen Air Force-Northwest Field can be implemented lawfully and in a manner that is both consistent with purposes for which the

Ritidian Unit was established and which meets the Marine Corps' purpose and need. We have not identified a solution, and we caution that even if we can deconflict both the Service and Marine Corps missions, legal obstacles may remain that are impossible to overcome. We will continue our discussions at the highest levels to ensure that the Marine Corps' critical training requirements are accomplished with due consideration to the Ritidian Unit and the species it was established to conserve. The timeline associated with this Project, which provides for a decision in March 2015, and the associated international implications of any delay call for the expeditious resolution of this matter.

The above referenced legal issue first came up late last year when the DON wished to conduct a noise experiment at the proposed location of the LFTRC on Andersen Air Force Base-Northwest Field to supplement the acoustic data developed as part of our ongoing environmental analysis. The experiment would have involved the placement of sound meters within the Ritidian Unit to measure received sound levels from small arms live-fire at the proposed LFTRC firing line. Consistent with Marine Corps range safety regulations, the experiment would have required implementation of a temporary SDZ overlaying the Ritidian Unit during the small arms live-fire events. This meant that access to the Ritidian Unit would have been restricted for a total of 28 hours over a four-day experiment. In February, the Service notified the DON that the proposed experiment would be an inappropriate use of the Ritidian Unit and rejected the special use permit request.

We appreciate the introduction of H.R. 4402 and will continue to work with the Department of the Interior toward a resolution of the issues surrounding the Marine Corps critical training requirement. H.R. 4402 does not direct a specific decision by the DON, but rather provides flexibility in the decision-making process as it proceeds with its environmental planning efforts. This flexibility may be necessary if the legal restrictions that would prohibit consideration of Anderson Air Force Base-Northwest Field as a reasonable alternative cannot be remedied through our current interdepartmental efforts.

The DON released a draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement on April 18th that analysed five alternatives for the LFTRC, and included Anderson Air Force Base-Northwest Field as the preferred alternative. There will be a series of public meetings held in Guam in May, and the public will have the opportunity to provide comments through June 17, 2014. These processes will ensure due consideration to the various and important land use, environmental, and cultural considerations on Guam associated with the relocation.

We thank you for your support of the Administration's Asia-Pacific strategy. I look forward to working with you to ensure that the proposed relocation is implemented in a timely, cost-effective, and environmentally sound manner. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today and I welcome your questions.