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STATEMENT BY THE HONORABLE
HENRY E. BROWN, JR.
RANKING REPUBLICAN MEMBER
AT THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON INSULAR AFFAIRS, OCEANS AND WILDLIFE
HEARING ON H. R. 5284: SIKES ACT AMENDMENTS OF 2010: MAY 25, 2010.

Madam Chairwoman, on September 15th of this year, the Department of Defense will celebrate the 50th Anniversary of when President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed the landmark Sikes Act into law.

It is certainly appropriate that we are having this hearing today because the Sikes Act is responsible for conserving 30 million acres of military land, some of which is important habitat for hundreds of plant and wildlife species.

In 2003, the Congress extended and made a number of important common sense policy changes to the Sikes Act. I am particularly interested in learning the impact of substituting approved Integrated Natural Resource Management Plans for critical habitat designations. For instance, have any species been adversely impacted by this modification?

This is a critical question because under the terms of H. R. 5284, introduced by our distinguished Chairwoman, some 47 state-owned National Guard installations will be required to write and implement similar plans for their facilities. What is the rationale for including them under the Sikes Act? Do these facilities currently have resource management plans and did the affected states request inclusion under the Act?

I am also interested in finding out the results of the Guam Invasive Pilot Program. Specifically, what is the potential cost to implement this program on all U. S. military bases?

Finally, I am hopeful that we can get an update on efforts by the Department of Defense to implement the Disabled Sportsmen's Access Act of 1998. According to the Paralyzed Veterans of America, there are only 20 out of the nearly 400 installations that have equipment that disabled veterans, military dependents with disabilities and other persons with disabilities can use to hunt or fish. Sadly, most bases do not have organized hunting and fishing programs for the disabled.

In my own State of South Carolina, the Marine Corps Air Station in Beauford has indicate an interest in developing such a program and it is my hope that one day soon they will have the same type of facilities that are found at the Marine Corps Base Quantico. Due to the dedication of retired Marine Colonel Lew Deal, Quantico has three hydraulic lifts, three wheelchair accessible duck blinds and an active Wounded Warrior Program.

While I understand access to our military bases has become more complicated since 911 and the tragic shootings at Fort Hood, we need to make every effort to ensure that the fundamental goals of the Disabled Sportsmen's Access Act are being achieved. We have a responsibility to those who were injured in the service of this country to provide them with recreational opportunities. There are a lot of intelligent base commanders who can make this program work.

Madam Chairwoman, thank you for holding this hearing on H. R. 5284, the Sikes Act Amendments, and I look forward to the testimony of our distinguished witnesses.