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Opening Statement (As Prepared)
Chairman John Garamendi
Subcommittee on Readiness Hearing:
“Energy, Installations, and Environment Program Update”
March 16, 2022

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Good afternoon.

Ladies and gentlemen, I call to order this hearing of the Readiness Subcommittee of the House Armed Services Committee.

Today’s witnesses oversee a wide range of programs of considerable interest to this subcommittee. The last several NDAA’s have included significant reforms on issues related to installation resiliency, privatized military family housing, the treatment of emerging contaminants, sustainment of military infrastructure, energy resiliency, and climate change. Today we will receive testimony from these witnesses on the Department’s progress on executing these reforms.

Of these topics I am particularly focused on two areas. First, the chronic failure of the military departments to adequately maintain quality of life infrastructure such as barracks, dormitories, and child development centers. For years, I have sat in these hearings and listened to you and your predecessors across multiple administrations tell us that you have chosen to take risk to the detriment of our service members by underfunding, under-maintaining and delaying recapitalization of quality-of-life infrastructure. While you are comfortable with this risk, we are not. Over the years you have told us that barracks and child development centers just don’t compete well in the budget process. The inadequate annual investment does not match the lip service from your service secretaries about the importance of service members and their families. In the FY22 NDAA, we got tired of waiting for you to make good on your promise to make service members a priority and took some of your ability to take risk away. The FY22 NDAA forces the military departments to allocate a fixed percentage of facilities sustainment and renovation funds to unaccompanied housing. Combined with nearly annual congressional plus-ups of the related budget lines, the forced emphasis on these facilities will start to remedy a problem you have proven incapable of fixing on your own. I know it will require an adjustment in your thinking, but I am confident that your operational needs will continue to compete favorably while our service members finally start to see relief from the poor and failing conditions they have been forced to endure.

My second focus is on the issue of resiliency and demand reduction. While there are those of us who believe that mitigating climate change is an end in itself, the idea that these measures are inherently detrimental to our readiness and lethality is simply untrue. This

dangerous false dichotomy prevents us from taking a clear-eyed look at how to evolve our platforms and our installations to succeed in an environment of near-peer competition. We know that demand reduction is necessary to address our contested logistics challenges, both in the Pacific with its oceanic tyranny of distance and in more terrestrial areas of operations. This was true in the Pacific in World War II, and we are watching this issue play out in Ukraine with Russian convoys. While supply is part of the answer it can only take us so far. Logistics lines will always be targeted and tactical vehicles that use less help us lengthen the tether our fighting forces have to resupply and extend their reach and on-station time. I applaud the Army for its recently released climate strategy, that seeks to transition our tactical vehicle fleet away from a sole reliance on fossil fuels and look forward to hearing more about how the Army will execute this vision while remaining the world's premier fighting force.

Installation resiliency remains a key focus to ensure our military bases can continue to perform their critical missions in the wake of natural disasters or disruptions to the grid. I strongly support the Department's transition to non-tactical electric vehicles. Not only will those vehicles lower the Department's carbon footprint, but if we pair them with the right support infrastructure, they can become another source of resilient power for critical missions. I look forward to hearing about the Department's progress on energy and water master plans as well as the full installation master plans we mandated in FY20.

Finally, we must look at our critical missions outside of the continental United States as well. One of the most extreme examples of the need for effective climate and energy resiliency planning can be found on Kwajalein atoll. The atoll is already experiencing sea level rise-fueled high surf that will lead to increasingly frequent over-wash events that destroy freshwater supplies and infrastructure. This is not a concern of the distant future, but something we could see as soon as 2030. In addition, although the atoll is almost completely dependent on outside liquid fuel sources for energy, nothing has been done to increase conservation and resiliency to mitigate that vulnerability. With the critical missions performed on Kwajalein, these two issues combine to make it a compelling test case for installation resilience master planning, and readiness-focused energy conservation measures.

I look forward to hearing the witnesses talk about their work in these areas as well as providing an update on these and the myriad other topics of mutual interest over the next two hours.

With that, I would like to turn to our Ranking Member, Congressman Mike Waltz of Florida, for any remarks he may have.

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