

# HB 2410, HD 1

## RELATING TO THE MILITARY.

Requires the Governor, on behalf of the State, to enter into a memorandum of understanding with the United States Department of Defense to enhance the State's relationship with the military and provide continued support for the military's presence in Hawaii.

**Testimony to the Senate Committee on Public Safety and Military Affairs  
Tuesday, March 13, 2012  
2:50 PM  
Conference Room 224**

**RE: HOUSE BILL NO. 2410, HD1, RELATING TO MILITARY**

**Chair Espero, Vice Chair Kidani, and members of the committee.**

My name is Charles Ota and I am the Vice President for Military Affairs at The Chamber of Commerce of Hawaii (The Chamber). I am here to state The Chamber's support of House Bill No. 2410, HD1, Relating to Military.

The measure proposes to require the Governor, on behalf of the state, to enter into a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the US Department of Defense to enhance the state's relationship with the military and provide continued support for the military's presence in Hawaii.

The Chamber's Military Affairs Council (MAC) has served as the liaison for the state in matters relating to the U.S. military since 1985, and provides oversight for the State's multi-billion dollar defense industry.

We concur with the comments stated in Section 1 of the proposed bill, which clearly indentifies the defense industry as one of the primary pillars in Hawaii's economy. The action proposed in this measure would help to protect and enhance growth in the defense industry

A formal MOU is essential to protecting against any misunderstandings between the state and the military. It would add clarity in indentifying the needs of the military and the actions necessary on the part of the state to satisfy those needs. This is especially important since senior military commanders rotate in and out of Hawaii at two to three year intervals, leaving little time for them to learn about state land use policies and collaborate with state officials in matters relating to land use.

Furthermore, it should be noted that the actions proposed in this measure would protect the defense industry from the challenges that are being launched by competing defense communities throughout the US. The ongoing budget-cutting debates and actions being considered by the Congress and defense officials in the Pentagon have prompted US defense communities to expedite the adoption of measures to protect its existing military bases from closure or force realignments that result in decreasing military presence.

The Pentagon and President Obama have already proposed conducting two Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) proceedings in 2013 and 2015, raising an ominous threat of the severity of actions that must be taken within the next 5-10 years to balance the federal budget.

In light of the above, the MAC and the Chamber strongly recommend that this measure be passed and expedited to counter budget-cutting measures being proposed by the US Department of Defense and the Congress, and to successfully compete against other US defense communities.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify on this important measure.



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**Testimony of Thomas Smyth**

**Military Officers Association of America, Hawaii Chapter**

**Before the Committee on Public Safety, Government Operations, and  
Military Affairs**

**Tuesday, March 13, 2012, 2:50 am, Room 224**

**HB 2410 HD 1 Relating to the Military**

**Chair Espero, Vice Chair Kidani and Committee Members**

**Our chapter of more than 400 retired and currently serving officers of the Uniformed Services strongly supports HB 2410 HD 1, as amended, directing the Governor to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with the U.S. Department of Defense.**

**The Technical Report by RAND National Defense Research Institute cited in this bill clearly shows that Hawaii currently benefits from the military presence here. Hawaii is the only state studied by RAND, so it is hard to compare defense spending here with other states. We do know that Hawaii has the largest percentage of active duty personnel per capita compared to other states. So, clearly the economic and community benefits are high. As is often noted when we specifically thank those who serve so honorably here, the contribution that these individuals and their families make to our state goes far beyond their contribution to our economy. They actively support youth groups, adopt schools for both infrastructure repairs and maintenance and in the classroom, and participate in other community activities in a big way.**

**It is important to note that Hawaii is the only state public school system funded from general revenues, not local property taxes. Since almost all of the military bases in Hawaii are located in what I would call "urban areas" military personnel spend much more time in the civilian community than is the case in other states where bases are often located far from major population centers. They shop in the same stores and eat at the same restaurants as their civilian counterparts, thus putting money into**

**our economy, supporting jobs and taxes. In other states those living on-base pay no property tax and thus do not directly contribute to those school districts, even when their children attend local public schools. We are also aware that a Military Representative attends BOE meetings and actively participates in their deliberations.**

**In recent months there was much debate on likely cuts to the DOD budget. Initially the local press, citing the RAND Study opined that this would mean a drastic reduction in funding in Hawaii. More recently however, that perception has changed as senior Administration officials, including the Secretary of Defense, speaking here last week, have stressed the importance of a strong military presence in our Asia Pacific region. On the contrary, we expect to see increases in Marine and Air Force aircraft and Navy submarines. There will be related construction to make that presence grow, more than it is today. We also are now aware that many Marines now on Okinawa will likely be stationed at MCB-Kaneohe Bay.**

**The proposed MOU is an important step in reinforcing this relationship, so I urge the Legislature to express its strong support of such an agreement.**

**Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.**

My name is Coreen Williams of Hau'ula. I have been a lifetime resident of O'ahu since birth. My ancestors are natives of this land. I oppose HB2410\_HD1, which allows the Governor to enter into an "understanding" with the United States Department of Defense. There are a variety of reasons that I OPPOSE THIS BILL.

- The introduction of this bill presents the state's reliance on the DOD's spending and job creation. It is as if the State of Hawaii wants to always be reliant on some other entity rather than building an economy that will make us self-sufficient. Instead of groveling for funds from the feds or from tourists, the economy should shift toward creating diverse agricultural crops, creating energy systems not reliant on oil, maintaining the purity of water sources, etc.
- The military system, which includes their families as well as their training efforts, is very intrusive of the host culture! The federal government as well as the State seems to support the American lifestyle while totally ignoring the host culture.
- Refer to SECTION 2  
What exactly does a "memorandum of understanding" mean? This sounds like the State will be creating bigger government which will stress an already strapped budget. It also seems that the State will nurture and coddle the military at the expense of the people who already exist here.
  - **Item 1: "Retaining or expanding military bases..."**  
The military's presence in Hawai'i is intrusive. Every time I hear of discoveries of unexploded missiles off the waters of Wai'anae, I become angry. When I hear of all the cancer cases in Wai'anae, regardless of the military's environmental impact statements, I connect it back to the U.S. Military's presence in Makua Valley.
  - **Item 2: "Limiting the development of areas adjacent to military bases..."**  
This sounds to me like the people of Hawai'i are not the priority and the military is. This is not a fair trade, in my opinion!
  - **Item 3: "Facilitating affordable housing located near military bases..."**  
Once again, the priority is not the people of Hawai'i. What about affordable housing for the people who have existed in these islands for millennia.
  - **Item 5: "Identifying civil obligations that may be postponed to accommodate deployed military personnel;"**  
Why are we so geared toward appeasing the military and their family when there are struggling citizens? Can we make special referendums and exceptions for them?
  - **Item 7: "Providing workforce training..."**  
It is apparent that the State's priority is on the military. You ignore the people that are already here!
  - **Item 8: "Exploring the feasibility of granting credit for military training..."**  
Can this be something that is implemented to fit the needs of the people of Hawai'i? Several people are trained and should receive credit for their training that has never served in the military. Someone with a military background should have to go through the same credentialing as an average person. If he or she has

the right skills then they should have no problem with meeting the requirements of licensing.

- **Item 9: “Encouraging the hiring of military spouses...”**

This, by far, is probably the most ridiculous thing I have ever heard. People should be hired according to their merits and not according to their marital status.

I oppose this bill and discourage the nurturing of any relationship with the Department of Defense. We should not cultivate the culture of war!