

**Submission of statements  
for Garrett Reppenhagen  
House Committee on Natural Resources and Homeland Security Forum on  
Countering Extremism on America's Public Lands  
June 15, 2016**

In the military, we have a term using the NATO phonetic alphabet called "Charlie Mike." It means Continue Mission. Typically used after minor setbacks in operations. It is motivational in the way our forces on the ground can overcome obstacles and are determined to march on in the face of any challenge, but it also applies to much of what's happening today around our parks and public lands.

Much of this spring was spent celebrating our public lands. From the designation of [three new national monuments](#), to [National Park Week](#), it was a time for the country to come together and show appreciation for the lands, waters and open spaces that are part of our shared national heritage and embody so much of what we believe to be unique and special about America.

That is why recent violent actions and rhetoric from a small group of extremists aiming to take over our nation's public lands, including the [incident at the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge](#), are so disturbing. Not only do these lands belong to all Americans, but I sharply disagree with anyone who seeks to disenfranchise the American people through force and violence for their personal gain. These efforts to upend the peaceful democratic processes upon which our nation is built run contrary to what I as a veteran have fought for.

As a military veteran, the violation of these spaces is particularly painful. The outdoors hold a uniquely powerful and special place in the hearts of veterans who value open space for recreation and recuperation. Our public lands are part of what generations of brave men and women have fought for. Not only should these lands remain public but they should remain places where veterans and their families can go to spend time without fear of armed militiamen who seek to claim the land as their own.

So the violence we have seen in recent months is not only disrespectful, but personally offensive to so many in the veteran's community. Many of the law enforcement officers from at the Bureau of Land Management, Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service, Forest Service, and elsewhere who have been on the receiving end of violent actions and rhetoric are also military veterans. These men and women should be applauded for their service and their work to safeguard visitors and natural resources across our public lands, not harassed or intimidated.

In a speech last month, Secretary of Interior Sally Jewell stood up for our public lands and called on all of us, as Americans, to stand alongside her to ensure the continued health and protection of these special places. From funding for our parks and public lands to the importance of continuing to protect places with special natural, cultural or historic value, Secretary Jewell made one thing clear- it won't always be easy and it's up to us to help make it happen.

I thank the President and Secretary Jewell for their stewardship, and urge the administration to continue the mission to ensure that spaces with cultural, historic and natural significance remain protected and accessible for all of us to enjoy.

Charlie Mike!