HR 222 calls attention to the Johnston Atoll Chemical Agent Disposal System Project and in particular the present plans to transport and incinerate, at Johnston Atoll, chemical weapons assigned to U.S. forces in Europe.

Our statement on this resolution does not represent an institutional position of the University of Hawaii.

While we share the general repugnance for chemical weapons and certainly are concerned for the safety of those who may be at risk from their disposal, it is this very concern that prompts us to express our reservations as to the appropriateness of this resolution.

It is our understanding that the United States military has maintained chemical weapons in Europe and that these weapons are now deteriorating to the point that controlled disposal in a timely manner is essential for safety. The key issue therefore is not whether or not incineration should be allowed but rather where can it be accomplished with the least risk to human health and the environment.

The incineration facility at Johnston Atoll was expressly designed to dispose of such weapons. More importantly, Johnston Atoll is an exceptionally isolated atoll, hence incineration there poses a minimal risk to either the environment or individuals on the atoll. On the other hand, construction and operation of a facility in either Europe or on the East Coast of the Mainland would risk exposure to tens of thousands of people and cost millions of dollars.

Again, while we share the general concern for the incineration of hazardous wastes, we believe that the proposed incineration of U.S. weapon supplies at Johnston Atoll is the most socially and environmentally responsible solution to a difficult problem.