



HAWAI'I STATE LEGISLATURE

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HONOLULU, HAWAI'I 96813

Captain Darren B. Guenther
Chief of Staff, Commander, Navy Region Hawaii
850 Ticonderoga St
Pearl Harbor, HI 96860-5101

October 18, 2021

Aloha Captain Darren B. Guenther,

We are asking for your support in investigating the possibility that officials representing the U.S. Navy misled state Health Department regulators and the public about an unauthorized release of fuel into the waters of Pearl Harbor from the Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility.

According to recent news reports, U.S. Navy officials allowed “optics” and “politics” to justify delaying the immediate reporting of a new leak from the Red Hill tanks to Health Department regulators. Reports indicate that a significant amount of fuel was released into the ocean over an extended period of time, and that the U.S. Navy waited months to properly report the leak to Health Department officials. It is possible that the U.S. Navy made no effort to notify the public or the Hearing Officer taking evidence in the contested case hearing on the Navy’s permit application to operate the Red Hill Fuel Tanks. If true, we ask that violating U.S. Navy officials be held accountable for their failure to be completely truthful with regulators and the residents of O’ahu.

We request an independent investigation into the causes and extent of the fuel leak beginning in January 2020, the details of how the leak was reported to regulators, whether all of the fuel was cleaned up, and if any fines or other enforcement actions were imposed on the U.S. Navy for the release of fuel into the environment.

We acknowledge that Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam is strategically important to the U.S. Navy’s military mission. We further acknowledge that military readiness can never come at the expense of the health and safety of our constituents and the environment.

Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam occupies the land and nearshore waters historically known as Pu’uloa. During the Kingdom of Hawai’i, Pu’uloa was operated as a fishpond that fed the residents of O’ahu until it was forcibly given to the U.S. military in 1887 via the “Bayonet Constitution.” Because it is operating on traditional Hawaiian lands and waters, it is absolutely critical that the U.S. military conduct itself with the highest level of respect and transparency.

We appreciate the opportunity for a full accounting of this incident, in order to prevent harm to our shared island home in the future.

Mahalo,

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¹ <https://www.hawaiipublicradio.org/the-conversation/2021-07-19/navy-says-pearl-harbor-friday-fuel-leak-contained-sheds-light-on-march-2020-leak>

Cc:

Governor David Y. Ige
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Lene Ichinotsubo
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Representative Kahele
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² <https://www.civilbeat.org/2021/10/amid-political-concerns-navy-kept-quiet-about-red-hill-pipeline-leaking-into-pearl-harbor/>