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SUBCOMMITTEE ON READINESS

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

December 2, 2022

The Honorable Carlos Del Toro
Secretary of the Navy
1000 Navy Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20350

Subject: AFFF Spill at Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility

Dear Secretary Del Toro

I write with deep concern regarding the recent spill of over 1,100 gallons of concentrated Aqueous Film Forming Foam (AFFF) at the Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility on Tuesday, November 29, 2022. As you know, AFFF contains PFAS forever chemicals and known carcinogens — which could be devastating to O‘ahu’s aquifer and drinking water. These continued operational failures at the Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility are egregious and completely unacceptable.

It is evident that the Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility has been plagued by a multitude of operational errors and severe lack of oversight that have directly impacted hundreds of thousands of O‘ahu residents—both civilian and military—who rely on drinking water from the aquifer that sits just 100 feet below the fuel storage facility. While the first public-facing emergency occurred in January of 2014, we now know that there were likely many other spills and accidents at the facility in decades prior. Despite repeated assurances from the Navy, the November 2021 crisis which resulted in the contamination of O‘ahu’s sole-source aquifer resulted in the decision from the Department of Defense to permanently close the facility.

The most recent spill of AFFF illustrates that the scale and scope of operational and maintenance failures at Red Hill have exceeded the capabilities of the U.S. Navy to manage. We know Red Hill’s fire suppression system has been damaged long before the recent crises, despite \$40 million in repairs ordered in 2015. According to a Naval Facilities Engineering Systems Command memo from March 2021, Red Hill’s fire suppression system had experienced “unexpected operational failure”, displaying horrifying negligence at the largest underground fuel storage facility in the world. But even further, that an operational failure of this system is the

culprit of yet another environmental crisis—in the wake of monumental efforts and resources from the Navy to protect our environment and people—seems unimaginable.

It should be deeply worrying for the Navy and Department of Defense that even under the present context, another failure of this magnitude can occur. Note that this crisis and the response thereof continues to unfold under the intensely critical and unwavering eye of the public, media, advocacy groups, and state and local government decision makers. The ongoing crisis at Red Hill has resulted in a nearly ubiquitous erosion of public trust in the Navy across the State of Hawai‘i. Importantly, this deepening trust deficit not only affects the Navy, but indeed the entirety of the U.S. Armed Forces and their ability to maintain relationships and operations across our state. Rebuilding this broken trust will require long-term, monumental efforts.

Those efforts must begin today. The people of O‘ahu and the State of Hawai‘i are demanding immediate answers to understand the variables surrounding the most recent spill. With this in mind, I am requesting written answers from the U.S. Navy to the following questions by December 16, 2022:

Questions:

1. How did this very large leak of AFFF occur at Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility?
2. Please confirm whether the private contractor, Kinetix, was contracted to run the system and installed a valve that leaked?
3. Can you provide a full list of all private contractors at Red Hill, including:
 - a. The total monetary value of the contracts;
 - b. What the contractors are responsible for, including any applicable Statements of Work; and
 - c. How are the contractors being held accountable for safety and performance?
4. How many cameras exist at the Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility? What is their individual operational status?
5. Did any cameras (interior or exterior) capture the AFFF leak? What is the status of the exterior and interior cameras of adit 6?
6. What is the status of the cleanup of the AFFF spill?
7. What is the current status of the AFFF Fire Suppression system and how will its status affect the facility and current efforts to address structural repairs while the facility prepares to drain the fuel tanks?
8. If the status of the AFFF Fire Suppression system will cause delay, how long is the delay expected?
9. What is the assessed risk to the water sources at Red Hill or adjacent areas?
10. How much AFFF at any given time is required to be stored on site as part of the fire suppression system requirements?
11. What specific measures will be taken to ensure this does not happen again?

I am committed to holding the U.S. Navy accountable to ensure swift corrective action is taken and future crises are mitigated while the Navy continues to defuel and permanently close the facility. Thank you for your full attention to these critical matters and I look forward to your timely response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Kaiali'i Kahele', written in a cursive style.

Kaiali'i Kahele
Member of Congress

cc: ADM John C. Aquilino
RADM John Wade