

CHINFO COMMUNICATION PLAN

PRE-DECISIONAL: NCTF-RH PA Six Month Plan – June-December 2024



Background

Navy Closure Task Force-Red Hill (NCTF-RH) was established in late 2023 by the Department of the Navy to complete the decommissioning and environmental remediation of the Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility (RHBFSF). Success of this mission can only be achieved through consistent engagement with the community and with stakeholders on Oahu. This effort has been ongoing since the fuel spill* in November 2021, continuing through the defueling mission carried out by Joint Task Force-Red Hill (JTF-RH), and through the transition of the JTF to NCTF in March 2024. This plan outlines guiding principles and a strategy for public communication through CY 2024 as NCTF-RH solidifies routine operations and continues to work with regulators and the community to execute closure plans.

*For more background see Appendix A

Local Considerations

The expiration of military land leases on more than 46,000 acres of land in Hawaii between 2028 and 2030 presents a significant challenge for the Department of Defense (DoD). Retention of these parcels is crucial for the entire joint force and has far-reaching impact. However, strongly held opposing perspectives about the military's footprint, activities, and policies exist across the state. These opposing perspectives grew in number after the release of fuel in November 2021 and firefighting chemicals in November 2022 at the Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility. Opinions against the retention of leased lands based on examples of poor DoD environmental stewardship existed prior to the incidents but were taken to new levels after the releases.

NCTF-RH's motto: "Safe. Deliberate. Engaged. Committed." is our promise to the people of Hawaii to approach and execute the closure of the RHBFSF with deep respect for the land, water and people of Hawaii. Abiding by the guiding principles of the motto drives the closure and remediation processes in a way that will strengthen trust in the Navy as a conscientious steward of the environment.

Public Affairs Function and Purpose

NCTF-RH Public Affairs functions are part of a broader communication process that collaborates with Strategic Engagement (SE) cell to communicate Red Hill closure operations and Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam (JBPHH) drinking water initiatives in support of the commander's mission objectives. PA functions include providing counsel to the commander and staff; providing PA training, research, planning, assessment, and evaluation; developing and disseminating communication products; communicating with publics; and integrating PA and visual information into the operational planning process.

The PA staff is organized to:

- Provide PA counsel and support to the commander.
- Participate in operation analysis, planning, execution, and assessment.

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- Participate in all applicable cross-function staff organizations (boards, working groups, etc.)
- Research, develop, and coordinate communication guidance and plans.
- Disseminate timely, accurate information about Red Hill closure and drinking water activities.
- Respond to media and public inquiries.
- Educate the staff on the role of information and PA in operations.
- Develop programs that support community engagement on Oahu, especially in the JBPHH vicinity.
- Collaborate to develop integrated communication and engagement plans with SE team.

Goals

- 1) Communicate to strengthen confidence in the Navy by the people of Hawaii, especially on the island of Oahu and all those who live and work on the Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam (JBPHH) drinking water system.
- 2) Ensure the people of Hawaii are informed on the progress of the decommissioning and closure of RHBFSF.
- 3) The people of Hawaii view Red Hill closure as part of the Navy's broader effort to be good stewards of the environment.
- 4) Foster and leverage relationships with key leaders and advocates who can help proliferate and advance the Navy's message.

Lines Of Effort (LOEs), OBJECTIVES (and Effects)

All PA activities are connected to the commander's lines of effort (LOEs) and in support of:

LOE1: Decommission

- AFFF Removal (complete)
- Tank Cleaning
- Pipeline Removal
- Facility Closure

LOE2: Remediate

- Well Restoration
- Site Remediation
- Drinking Water

LOE3: Communicate

- Community engagements
- Government engagements
- NCTF-RH activities

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OBJ1. NCTF-RH will act and communicate to increase community and stakeholder awareness of NCTF-RH closure operations as measured through an increase in positive media coverage (current data as of May 24 indicates a one out of twelve positive-to-negative story ratio) to one out of four, and subjectively through affirmative stakeholder input captured through the community engagement events by Dec. 31, 2024.

Effect 1.1: Improved public perception of the Navy's efforts to close the RHBFSF.

Indicator: Measurable shift in media coverage from negative to neutral and/or positive reporting on Navy activities.

Effect 1.2: Noticeably increased trust and satisfaction among key stakeholders in Oahu, including leaders, kupuna (elders), and influencers towards the Navy and its actions related to Red Hill.

Indicator: Self-reported confidence and satisfaction communicated through various channels such as NCTF-RH leadership meetings, strategic engagement meetings, public engagements and other designated forums.

Effect 1.3: Increased public perception the Navy and Regulatory agencies are collaborating and making progress.

Indicator: Navy and regulators conduct routine events and collaborative messaging efforts regarding major NCTF-RH initiatives.

OBJ2. Reduce community concerns about drinking water by decreasing complaint calls by 50% through saturating the information environment with factual information about Navy drinking water initiatives.

Effect 2.1: Reduction in public concern about water quality.

Indicator: 50% decrease in monthly calls to the Region Operations Center (ROC) requesting testing and sampling.

Effect 2.2: Measurable decrease in public anxiety over water safety related to Red Hill.

Indicator: Noted reduction in questions and concerns raised during community engagement activities such as orientation briefs, open houses, EDWM booths, and town halls.

Effect 2.3: Reduced public perception of ongoing risk associated with the November 2021 Red Hill water contamination event.

Indicator: Decrease in media reports linking current drinking water issues to the Navy and the spill.

OBJ3. Counter mis/disinformation regarding the NCTF-RH mission and water quality from within the community, news media, or other channels by identifying it quickly and taking action to share factual information regarding closure operations and drinking water initiatives (continuous).

Effect 3.1. Measurable decrease in the spread of mis/disinformation related to NCTF-RH activities on Oahu.

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Indicator: Reduction in news media reports presenting demonstrably false or misleading information as fact.

Effect 3.2. Public discussions/forums about NCTF-RH activities are dominated by factual information and productive discourse.

Indicator: Measurable decrease in the spread and amplification of misinformation and disinformation at public events (i.e. CRI, NISF, social media channels).

Effect 3.3. Members of the public police those that aim to spread mis/disinformation through fact-checking and constructive dialogue regarding NCTF-RH.

Indicators: Noted members of public forums speak up when mis/disinformation is presented; others advocate for fact in social media channels where mis/disinformation is being proliferated.

Effect 3.4. Increased collaboration between news media and Navy representatives (e.g., NCTF-RH) to verify information related to NCTF-RH activities on Oahu.

Indicators: News media reach out to NCTF-RH to verify mis/disinformation prior to publication; measurable decrease in the spread of mis/disinformation.

Desired End State:

A trusting information environment exists where the people of Hawaii, particularly those on Oahu and who live and work on the JBPHH drinking water system, have full confidence in the Navy's actions related to RHBFSF closure and the safety of drinking water. This environment is characterized by:

- **Slow, steady strengthening of Navy trust and credibility:** The public begins to see the Navy as a reliable source of information on RHBFSF closure and water safety efforts.
- **Open communication:** The Navy proactively shares information on progress, challenges, and timelines related to RHBFSF closure and water safety.
- **Accessibility of information:** Information is readily available through various channels (digital, in person, routine engagements) and tailored to meet the needs of diverse stakeholders.
- **Reduced misinformation and disinformation:** The public is empowered to critically evaluate information and identify inaccurate or misleading narratives.
- **Strong relationships with key stakeholders:** The Navy collaborates effectively with leaders, advocates, and media outlets to ensure accurate and consistent messaging.
- **Informed public:** The people of Hawaii feel well-informed about the closure process, water safety measures, and potential risks and mitigation efforts.

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Public Affairs Posture

Posture is Active for most routine operations; active restricted release for select items; and passive as required/directed.

Top Line Messages

- The Navy Closure Task Force is committed to the safe and expeditious closure of the Red Hill underground storage tanks and removal of pipelines.
- We approach this project with deep respect and admiration for the land and the water, and know our work is important for generations to come.
- The Navy’s core values – honor, courage, and commitment – will guide our efforts to close Red Hill, remediate the environment, and establish a system for long term monitoring of the site.
- The Navy, the people of Hawaii, and stakeholders want the same thing: safe, clean water. We are in this together, working toward the same goal.
- Close partnership, collaboration, and clear communication with regulators, stakeholders, and the community are a key component of this vital mission.
- Protecting the environment and public health are our top priorities.

Motto: “Safe, Deliberate, Engaged, Committed.”

Our motto drives our Foundational Talking Points:

Safe: *We will conduct a safe and expeditious closure.*

Deliberate: *We follow a comprehensive plan that factors in all stakeholder and regulator concerns.*

Engaged: *Proactive communication with, and listening to, our community.*

Committed: *Commitment is a Navy core value. It is in our DNA.*

Safe: We will conduct a safe and expeditious closure.

- The Navy Closure Task Force is committed to the safe and expeditious closure of the Red Hill underground storage tanks and removal of pipelines.
- Safety for the aquifer, the environment, and workers is at the heart of everything we do.

Deliberate: We follow a comprehensive plan that factors in all stakeholder and regulator concerns.

- There are many requirements we need to accomplish for this mission. We operate off a long-term, comprehensive schedule that ensures all actions needed to close the facility are captured and planned in accordance with applicable laws and regulations, and with careful consideration of risks to people and the environment.
- The NCTF is working hand in hand with regulatory agencies throughout the closure and remediation effort.

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Engaged: Proactive communication with, and listening to, our community.

- We have been and will continue to work shoulder to shoulder with all the stakeholders in the community. Consistent, timely, and factual public communication is paramount to this effort until the mission is complete.
- Listening is just as important as transmitting information. We want to collaborate with, and learn from, the community.

Commitment is a Navy Core value; it is in our DNA.

- We view the decommissioning of the tanks and closure of Red Hill as a long-term, open-ended effort.
- The Navy is committed to safely closing the Red Hill Fuel Storage Facility, remediating all residual contamination there, and monitoring the environment for the long term to ensure no contaminants return.

Talking Points

Rebuilding trust: We remain committed to rebuilding trust with the people of Hawaii.

- We know we have work to do to regain the trust of the people of Hawaii. We are committed to acting honorably and communicating regularly and clearly to earn back public trust.
- We are, and will continue to be, accountable for our actions and demonstrate our genuine respect for the land, water, and people of Hawaii as we work.
- This Task Force is committed to continuous engagements with various groups and individuals throughout the community, including the Congressional delegation, the State legislature, local officials, and other community stakeholders and organizations including Native Hawaiian groups. Receiving and implementing feedback from these entities helps NCTF-RH remain safe and successful.
- NCTF leadership is well positioned to fully and completely close Red Hill, remediate the environment, and install a plan to for the long-term monitoring of it with appropriate regulatory oversight.

Commitment to the environment and ongoing remediation: We are committed over the long term to protecting the environment, the aquifer, and the broader community.

- Commitment is one of the Navy's core values. The Navy is committed to safely closing the Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility, remediating all residual contamination there, and monitoring the environment for the long term to ensure no contaminants return.
- The NCTF is committed to working with local, state, and federal agencies to ensure the Red Hill facility's underground storage tanks (USTs) and piping system are permanently closed with no further impact to the environment or public health.
- We continue to address the communities' health and safety concerns through our Extended Drinking Water Monitoring (EDWM) program to maintain clean and safe drinking water.

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- We continue to expand our network of ground water monitoring wells, working closely with our regulators, to ensure we have the best information on the aquifer and actively share the data.

Training and accountability: We are taking an aggressive approach to training and exercising/practicing each operation to ensure our personnel are proficient and our processes refined and safe.

- We have taken a very deliberate look at successful defueling operations by the JTF and are using lessons learned and best practices to improve proficiency, effectiveness, and accountability.
- We have partnered with regulators to develop and execute new training plans, drills and other exercises for spill response that prioritize aquifer protection.

Closure planning: We are working closely with regulators on all steps of the closure process.

- The Red Hill tanks will **never** be used again for storage of fuel.
- If a beneficial non-fuel reuse option is selected, the NCTF will take appropriate steps to render the tanks unusable for fuel storage, but in a manner that will support the planned reuse.
- The NCTF will coordinate with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Hawaii Department of Health (DOH) to ensure compliance with environmental safeguards and will execute safe and expeditious closure of the Red Hill facility's USTs and piping system in accordance with all applicable federal, state, and local regulations.
- The DON will utilize the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process to enable maximum possible disclosure to inform the public of potential impacts and involve the public in the decision-making process.

AFFF

- On April 23, the NCTF-RH team completed the safe removal of 39 55-gallon drums and seven drums of personal protective equipment used by personnel during the AFFF concentrate removal process.
- Successful removal of the AFFF eliminates a final major threat to the aquifer and the environment. This is an example of the Navy's commitment to close the facility safely and deliberately.

PFAS (from CHINFO):

- The Department of the Navy has a comprehensive program to respond to per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) releases that it has incorporated across the country, under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act and its long-standing regulations.
- For Joint Base Pearl Harbor Hickam and the Red Hill Facility, the Navy initiated the investigation process to identify the nature and extent of PFAS releases from Navy activities

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and determine the appropriate cleanup actions based on risk to human health and the environment. This process is occurring under an enforceable Federal Facilities Agreement (FFA) executed by the Navy, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Hawaii Department of Health.

- The Navy has submitted preliminary assessment/site investigation reports identifying areas of PFAS storage, use or release in Hawaii for regulatory review, and remedial investigations are underway to determine the nature and extent of PFAS in the environment. Navy is committed to working with the regulatory agencies to monitor, investigate and take any needed actions to address PFAS to ensure the drinking water continues to meet all state and federal standards and requirements.

Strategy, Timeline and Tactics

The table below outlines operations, activities, and initiatives NCTF-RH Public Affairs professionals will support through public information efforts and opportunities. Each event* should have supporting objectives/effects that are designed to accomplish the approved end state.

*This only captures major, known events as of 24MAY – operational activities that support major events will be scheduled on a shorter 3-week timeline throughout the duration of the plan.

Key:

PR*	Press release	FS	Fact Sheet
I/V	Imagery and/or B-roll	VE	Volunteer Event
SE	Strategic Engagement		
PSA	– Public Service Announcement – video with accompanying PR or FS	SA	Event on for situational awareness, no action by NCTF-RH
NRH PA	Navy Region Hawaii PA	OIC PA	Red Hill OIC PA
TF PA	NCTF-RH PA	FO	Flag Officer event

*All PRs will have an app push notification and be posted to the website

Date	Lead	OAI (Operation/Activity/Initiative)	OBJ/EFF	Tactics
28MAY	TF PA	Air Quality Monitoring/Ventilation	1/1.1, 1.2 3/3.1, 3.2, 3.3	PR, imagery, Fact Sheet
30MAY24	TF PA	Tank 8 Ventilation Starts		PR, MA, Website
28MAY-11JUN	TF/OIC PA	AQM continuous updates	1/1.1,1.2 3/3.1, 3.2, 3.3	App, Website
31MAY24	SE	Sen. Hirono NSA STAFFDEL		I/V
05JUN	TF PA	Tank 7 Ventilation Starts		PR, MA, Website

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Date	Lead	OAI (Operation/Activity/Initiative)	OBJ/EFF	Tactics
TBD JUN24	TF/OIC PA	PFAS PA Ops (TBD O/O)	1/1.1, 1.2 2/2.1, 2.2 3/3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4	MA, PR, Audio byte, Fact Sheet, NB
JUN		National Safety Month		PR on importance of safety
JUN	TF PA, NRH PA	Neighborhood Boards (NBs)	1/1.2 2/2.2 3/3.2	-
JUN- DEC24	TF PA	Tanks 7,8 Cleaning start (ongoing +9 months: includes spool removal, ventilation, scaffold set up, power washing, inspection etc.)	1/1.1, 1.2	- Ventilation PR, Photos, NB
5JUN	-	World Environment Day		SA
5 JUN	FO	DCOM – UH Hydrogeology Study Meeting		-
7 JUN		Military Affairs Council (MAC)		I/V
8JUN		World Oceans Day		
10-14JUN		ASN Berger visit (White Boat tour w/kupuna)		I/V
11JUN	-	Kamehameha Day		SA only – CNRH raise HI flag
12JUN		Society of American Military Engineers (SAME) Conference		I/V
13/18JUN	TF PA	EPA Webinar or EDWM/Drinking Water	1/1.3	I/V, NB
18 JUN	SE	Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC)		I/V
~20JUN	FO/SE	Community Engagement (T)		I/V
21JUN	SE	Hawaii State Emergency Response Commission (HSERC)		I/V
24JUN	SE	Board of Water Supply (BWS)	1/1.3	I/V
26JUN- 2AUG	-	RIMPAC		SA
JUN	PA	EDWM Approval from RAs	1/1.3	PR, FS
JUL	TF PA, NRH PA	NBs	1/1.2 2/2.2 3/3.2	N/A
JUL		Spill Prevention Month		Interest Story
JUL (TBD)	PA	Tanks 5,6 Cleaning Start (ongoing +9 months: includes inspection, spool removal, ventilation, scaffold set up, power washing, etc.)	1/1.1, 1.2	I/V, PR, NB

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Date	Lead	OAI (Operation/Activity/Initiative)	OBJ/EFF	Tactics
4JUL	-	Independence Day	-	SA
~8JUL	PA	Spill Drill Exercise		PR, MA, Website
16JUL	SE	Committee on Water resource Management (CWRM)		I/V
18JUL		Community Engagement (T)		I/V
18JUL		Tank 8 Inspection		I/V
25JUL	SE	Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA); Waianae Kupuna Council		I/V
28JUL		Nature Day		-
31JUL	PA	Open House Announcement/begin marketing	ALL	PR, Ad buys
AUG24	TF PA, NRH PA	NBs	1/1.2 2/2.2 3/3.2	-
AUG		National Water Quality Month		Interest Story
9AUG	-	Int'l Day of Indigenous People	-	SA
15AUG	FO	Open House	ALL	I/V, Pre/post event, PR, MA
15AUG		Community Engagement		I/V
16AUG	-	HI Statehood Day	-	SA
22AUG	SE	Navy Information Sharing Forum (NSIF)	1/1.2, 1.3 2/2.2	None
26-31AUG24		World Water Week		Series of graphics about drinking water or feature
27AUG24	TF PA	Tank 8 Sludge Removal Start		I/V, PR, MA, Website
20SEP24	TF PA	Tanks 5/6 Ventilation Start		I/V, PR, MA, Website
SEP 24	TF PA, NRH PA	NBs	1/1.2 2/2.2 3/3.2	-
SEP24	TF PA	Pipeline Deconstruction Contract Award	1/1.1	PR – from CHINFO/NAVFAC
2SEP	-	Labor Day	-	SA
17SEP	SE	LPEC		-
17SEP24	TF PA	Tank 7 Sludge Removal Start		PA, MA, Website
19SEP	FO	Community Engagement (T)		I/V
21SEP24		World Clean Up Day		VE: Bike Path Cleanup; I/V
23SEP		Ecological Debt Day		SA
26SEP	SE	Waianae Kupuna Council		I/V
26SEP		World Environmental Health Day		SA or graphic

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Date	Lead	OAI (Operation/Activity/Initiative)	OBJ/EFF	Tactics
OCT24	TF PA, NRH PA	NBs	1/1.2 2/2.2 3/3.2	-
9OCT	SE	Fuel Tank Advisory Board (FTAC)		I/V, story
9OCT	TF PA	Tank 8 Pressure Washing Starts		PR, MA, Website
13OCT	-	Navy Birthday	-	SA
13OCT	-	Indigenous Peoples Day (Columbus Day)	-	SA
15OCT	SE	CWRM		I/V
17OCT		Community Engagement (T)		I/V
24OCT	SE	OHA		I/V
24OCT24		Int'l Day of Climate Action		-
01OCT24	TF PA	Open House Announcement/marketing begin	ALL	PR, ad buys
30OCT	TF PA	Tank 7 Pressure Washing Starts		PR, MA, I/V
~16OCT	FO	Open House	ALL	Pre/Post event PR, I/V
NOV24	TF PA, NRH PA	NBs	1/1.2 2/2.2 3/3.2	None
1NOV		World Ecology Day		SA
NOV24	TF PA	Tanks 3,4 Cleaning Start (ongoing +9 months: includes spool removal, ventilation, scaffold set up, power washing, etc.)	1/1.1, 1.2	- Ventilation PR, Photos, NB
5NOV	-	Election Day	-	SA
8NOV		Hawaiian Civic Club Convention		I, PR (of display)
11NOV	-	Veterans Day	-	SA
21NOV	FO	Community Engagement (T)		I/V
24NOV	-	Thanksgiving	-	SA
NOV24	SE	Governor's Water Committee		
NOV24	OIC PA	Soil Vapor Extraction Pilot report out	1/1.1, 1.2 2/2.1, 2.2 3/3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4	PR, video story/broll
DEC24	TF PA, NRH PA	NBs	1/1.2 2/2.2 3/3.2	None
5DEC		World Soil Day		SA/interest story
7DEC		Pearl Harbor Day		SA
DEC/JAN	TF PA	Tanks 7, 8 Final Inspection (TBD)	1/1.1, 1.2	PR, I/V
10DEC	SE	LEPC		-
13DEC	SE	HSERC		-

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Date	Lead	OAI (Operation/Activity/Initiative)	OBJ/EFF	Tactics
19DEC	FO	Community Engagement (T)		I/V
20DEC	TF PA	Tanks 5/6 Sludge Removal Starts		PR, MA, Website
25DEC	-	Christmas Day	-	SA
DEC24	OIC PA	Revised ground water modeling due to DOH	1/1.1, 1.2 2/2.1, 2.2 3/3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4	PR
DEC24	TF PA	Tanks 7,8 Cleaning Complete (first tanks cleaned/done)	1/1.1, 1.2	PR, MA, I/V

Assessment

- Strategy of assessment
NCTF-RH PA will assess use the indicators listed above to measure the effectiveness of efforts and determine if objectives are being met. The assessment will use the below methods:
 - Leverage contractor support to maintain awareness of public sentiment/information environment through daily analysis of social and traditional media.
 - Develop log/record of subjective reporting to identify trends.
 - Use already established reporting processes (call center reporting/contact us, etc.)



Appendix A: Extended Background

Construction and Development

Construction work on the Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility began on December 26, 1940. On December 7, 1941, nearly one year after the project commenced and before the fuel stored above ground at Pearl Harbor could be moved elsewhere, Pearl Harbor was attacked about three miles from the project site. The attack itself had little direct impact on the Red Hill project site and the first fuel tank was completed and received its first oil in September of 1942.

In total, it took 3,900 workers laboring around the clock for nearly three years to complete and deliver the project on September 30, 1943, nine months ahead of schedule. Construction of the Red Hill fuel storage tanks involved numerous features for which no prior example was found in design or construction. Although numerous tunnels had been built in the lava of surrounding mountains, no construction project had ever been attempted, in Hawai'i or elsewhere, that required the 100-foot rock span necessary in the building of the 20 tanks, each of which is large enough to engulf Aloha Tower.

When completed, the tanks—each 250 feet high and 100 feet in diameter and buried more than 100 feet in a mountain ridge—stored and protected 252 million gallons (the equivalent of approximately 382 Olympic-sized swimming pools) of fuel. Since construction and completion of the Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility occurred largely during a period of martial law in Hawai'i there were few entities outside the Navy and military that were aware of the project.

The Navy viewed the facility as critical in its war efforts. In fact, at the height of World War II, Admiral Chester Nimitz referred to the Pearl Harbor Naval Supply Depot, which controlled the tanks, as “the secret weapon of the Pacific.” Speed and secrecy in the construction and completion of the project were of paramount importance and RHBFSS would not be declassified until 1995.

Leak History

Since it was built in the 1940s, there have been 70 documented leaks and spills for an estimated 180,000 gallons of various types of fuel. It is estimated that on average approximately 5,800 gallons per year in “incidental leaks” occurred from the tanks that are too small to be accurately measured by available instruments. Outside entities have estimated that between 644,000 gallons and 1.94 million gallons may have leaked from the facility during its history.

The first report of a fuel spill at Red Hill by the Navy to the Department of Health occurred on November 10, 1998, when petroleum-stained basalt cores were discovered beneath tanks, indicating that there were leaks from the tanks into the ground. In the early

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2000s, transverse cores were performed beneath each tank, revealing evidence of petroleum staining beneath 19 of the 20 tanks.

On December 9, 2013, the Navy placed Tank #5 back into service and refilled the tank with petroleum after routine scheduled maintenance, including cleaning, inspecting, and repairing multiple areas within the tank. It is believed that a release of approximately 27,000 gallons occurred from Tank #5 between December 12, 2013, and January 6, 2014, and was verbally reported to the Department of Health on January 13, 2014.

Following the 2014 fuel release, the Environmental Protection Agency and Department of Health entered into the Red Hill Administrative Order on Consent with the Navy and Defense Logistics Agency.

November 2021 Leak

On May 6, 2021, there was a pressure surge event resulting in the release of approximately 20,000 gallons of jet fuel from supply piping in the lower access tunnel during the refilling of Tank #20. Reported estimates of the fuel released on May 6, 2021, was only 1,600 gallons, and the Navy did not discover that more fuel had been released until the November 2021 incident.

On November 20, 2021, there was a release of approximately 14,000 gallons of a mixture of water and JP-5 jet fuel from a crack in a fire suppression drain line, contaminating Red Hill Shaft and the Navy's Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam drinking water system. Eight days later, customers—many of them military dependents—began complaining of a fuel odor coming from their water and/or an oily sheen. These complaints were followed by reports of family members and pets experiencing health issues such as rashes, mouth sores, stomach aches, vomiting, burning eyes, sore throats, headaches, and nausea.

On November 29, 2021, one day following the complaints, the Department of Health issued an advisory to all users on the Navy's water system to avoid using tap water for drinking, cooking, or oral hygiene, and those who detected a fuel odor to also avoid using tap water for bathing, dishwashing, and laundry.

Over 3,000 residents were required to move out of their homes, with most temporarily relocated for several months to hotels. Several businesses were shut down or were forced to limit their operations by not using tap water. Several public schools and child development centers on the system were also impacted, forced to close off sinks and water fountains, and use only bottled water for handwashing, drinking, and dishwashing.

Across the valley from the RHBFSF is the Board of Water Supply Hālawa Shaft that supplies 20 percent of the water to metropolitan Honolulu. Immediately after Red Hill Shaft was shut down, the Board of Water Supply shut down Hālawa Shaft and its Hālawa and 'Aiea wells in order to protect the aquifer and the drinking water system from the risk of "pulling" the jet fuel plume further into the aquifer toward Hālawa Shaft, and/or drawing contamination directly into the Board of Water Supply's water distribution system.

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By December 3, 2021, the Department of Health received nearly 500 complaints of fuel or chemical odors from the drinking water. There were daily headlines and strong calls from the public and public officials for investigations, defueling, and closure of the facility. On December 6, 2021, the Department of Health issued an emergency order requiring the Navy to immediately suspend operations, deeming the facility to be “an imminent peril to human health and safety or the environment”, and to take measures to treat contaminated water and remove all fuel. The emergency order stated that the Navy had not demonstrated and could not ensure that immediate and appropriate response actions are available or will be available should another fuel release occur in the future.

On March 7, 2022, the Secretary of Defense issued a memorandum directing all steps necessary be taken to defuel and permanently close the facility. On August 31, 2022, a class action lawsuit was brought on behalf of military families in U.S. District Court.

Joint Task Force-Red Hill was established to oversee the defueling process in early 2023. Defueling began on October 16, 2023, and was completed in March 2024. The Navy Closure Task Force-Red Hill was established in November 2023 to take over the mission to remove the residual fuel and other contaminants, which is expected to take an additional three to five years.