

House Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies

By: Mr. Paul Cramer
Performing the Duties of
Assistant Secretary of Defense for Sustainment

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Chairwoman Wasserman Schultz, Ranking Member Carter, and distinguished members of the Sub-Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the Department of Defense's (DoD) actions related to per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS).

In July 2019 DoD stood up a Task Force to provide strategic leadership and direction to ensure a coordinated, aggressive, and holistic approach on DoD-wide efforts to proactively address PFAS. The Task Force has focused on three goals:

1. **Mitigating and eliminating the use of the current Aqueous Film Forming Foam (AFFF)**
2. **Understanding the impacts of PFAS on human health; and**
3. **Fulfilling our cleanup responsibility related to PFAS**

To accomplish these goals and support the Department's commitment to the health and safety of our Service members, their families, the DoD civilian workforce, and the communities in which DoD serves, priority Task Force actions include:

- Evaluating PFAS-free alternatives for firefighting;
- Supporting the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry's (ATSDR) PFAS exposure assessment and health study efforts and providing information on health effects to DoD stakeholders;
- Monitoring our on-base drinking water and ensuring consistent investigation and cleanup of past releases; and
- Coordinating DoD efforts with other Federal agencies.

Fulfilling DoD's Cleanup Responsibility

DoD follows the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA), as amended, and long-standing EPA regulations for all chemicals in our cleanup program, including PFAS. CERCLA provides a consistent, science-based approach across the nation for cleanup and includes environmental regulators and public participation. As of September 30, 2020, DoD has identified 108 Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) locations where DoD may have used or potentially released PFAS, and is conducting a PFAS assessment

at these installations. While DoD does not expect to add a significant number of installations to this list in the future, DoD will continue to update the list of all of its installations conducting a PFAS assessment and post it on www.Defense.gov/PFAS quarterly. These investigations include assessing potential off-installation migration into drinking water.

DoD's priority is to quickly address PFOS and/or PFOA found in drinking water above the EPA 2016 final lifetime Health Advisory levels (HAs)¹ from DoD activities, under the CERCLA process. No one is drinking water, whether on or off base, with PFOS and PFOA above the HAs, where DoD is the known source. DoD's actions are consistent with EPA's recommended actions, which include treatment of drinking water or providing alternative water supplies, such as bottled water or connecting residents served by private wells to public drinking water systems. DoD works in collaboration with EPA, other Federal agencies, and communities throughout this process.

The Defense Environmental Restoration Program and BRAC statutes provide authorities to DoD to perform and fund these actions, and requires they be carried out in accordance with CERCLA. DoD, like other Federal agencies, is specifically authorized under CERCLA Section 104 to take cleanup action to address "pollutants or contaminants" like PFAS. DoD is thus taking cleanup actions, even though PFAS are not designated as a CERCLA hazardous substance.

DoD follows the CERCLA process to fully investigate a release and determine the appropriate cleanup actions based on risk. Under this process, the Military Departments will address sites that pose a greater potential risk to human health and the environment first. DoD uses the most appropriate and relevant toxicity information when assessing PFOS and PFOA risk to human health under CERCLA. Under the CERCLA process, risk-based toxicity information is used nationwide to determine if a response is required. As the Military Departments move through the CERCLA process, we follow the December 2019, EPA "Interim Recommendations for Addressing Groundwater Contaminated with Perfluorooctanoic Acid and Perfluorooctanesulfonate [PFOA and PFOS]."

The Department recognizes the importance of addressing PFAS in a consistent manner across DoD. To that end, we evaluated and established policies and reporting requirements to track progress toward and ensure a proactive and consistent approach to investigating and cleaning up PFAS. As a result of the DoD PFAS Task Force's efforts, the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Sustainment issued the following:

- Clarifying technical guidance to ensure a consistent approach to investigating PFAS within the DoD cleanup program;
- Guidance on the use of analytical methods for analyzing PFAS concentrations in media other than drinking water;
- A requirement for the DoD Components to report actual and planned obligations and estimated costs to investigate and clean up PFAS; and

¹ All references to HAs in this testimony refers to the 2016 final lifetime Health Advisory levels unless specifically noted otherwise.

- A requirement for the DoD Components to report quarterly on cleanup progress and drinking water responses at installations with known or suspected PFAS releases.

While these policies and guidance documents will ensure consistency across DoD and help DoD track its PFAS cleanup progress and investments, DoD is also investing in research and development technologies in an effort to accelerate our PFAS responses.

DoD's Strategic Environmental Research and Development Program initiated research into the fate, transport, and cleanup of PFOS and PFOA shortly after EPA released the 2009 Provisional Health Advisories for these compounds. Beginning in 2014, follow-on research has targeted developing several approaches for treating groundwater containing PFOS and PFOA. These efforts have matured from the small scale to field demonstrations that began under the Environmental Security Technology Certification Program in 2017 and have continued into 2021 as new technologies mature and are ready for field demonstration. We also have several active field demonstrations of treatment methods for PFAS in soil and water; these demonstrations should be near completion within the next 18-24 months.

Disposal Challenges

Currently there are limited options for disposal or treatment of AFFF and other PFAS materials, and DoD is not alone in facing this challenge. PFAS cleanup activities generate PFAS materials that require immediate disposal options with appropriate management to prevent further environmental releases. These proactive DoD activities to address PFAS cannot be halted. We do not have the capability to store these PFAS materials, and any long-term storage would have significant mission impacts. This challenge is but one of the reasons that PFAS is a national issue involving a wide array of industries and communities, as well as many Federal and state agencies. Therefore, it needs nation-wide solutions. As the Department addresses its part in responding to this national issue, we continue to work in collaboration with regulatory agencies and communities to ensure our resources are applied effectively to protect human health as part of a national effort.

Conclusion

Under CERCLA, DoD will continue its investigations and quick responses to PFAS releases, caused by past DoD activities, and move into long-term cleanup phases. The Department recognizes the importance of addressing PFAS in a consistent manner across DoD. To that end, DoD will continue to monitor, track, and report progress and ensure a proactive and consistent approach to investigating and cleaning up PFAS. In addition, DoD will continue to work in collaboration with EPA, other Federal agencies, and communities as we move through the cleanup process.

In summary, DoD is taking action to reduce the risks posed by PFAS to human health. The Department is committed to addressing releases to the environment under CERCLA that are the direct result of DoD's activities. DoD is also investing in research to develop technologies to

quantify and clean up PFAS. These combined efforts reinforce DoD's commitment to meeting critical mission requirements while protecting human health.