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THE HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON READINESS

STATEMENT OF

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RED HILL BULK FUEL STORAGE FACILITY: THE CURRENT CRISIS, THE RESPONSE,
AND THE WAY FORWARD

BEFORE THE

HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON READINESS

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Chairman Garamendi, Ranking Member Lamborn, and distinguished members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to discuss the Department of Navy's efforts to restore safe drinking water to the Joint Base Pearl Harbor Hickam (JBPHH) water distribution system, remove contaminants from the Red Hill well, and protect the surrounding aquifer. We fully recognize the severity of the matter and its impact to the residents of Hawaii. The Navy is working in close partnership with key stakeholders from the state of Hawaii, federal agencies, and the Department of Defense. This matter has our utmost attention; we are committed to delivering a safe, reliable, and secure water distribution system, as well as re-establishing trust and confidence with the local community. With the support of key stakeholders, the Navy is undertaking this effort with a shared sense of urgency. The strong support that the members and staff of this committee have shown in helping the Navy is sincerely appreciated.

As Commander, U.S. Naval Facilities Engineering Systems Command (NAVFAC), I am responsible for providing engineering, design and construction, acquisition, and expeditionary expertise across the Department of the Navy. NAVFAC is accountable for the operation and maintenance of the Navy's drinking water systems on Oahu. The JBPHH system includes three water wells located at Waiawa, Aiea Halawa, and Red Hill. The transmission and distribution system that conveys water throughout the complex consists of approximately 250 miles of pipelines ranging in size from 4 to 42 inches in diameter. On a daily basis, these three sources provide approximately 12 to 22 million gallons (MG) of potable water to consumers throughout JBPHH, which includes over 60,000 personnel (military and civilian). The Navy has operated this system since 1937. As an immediate response to the crisis, I report directly to Commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet and I have specific responsibilities to restore the water distribution system, remediate the Red Hill well, and protect the aquifer.

THESE ITEMS ARE OF THE HIGHEST PRIORITY AND HAVE MY FULL ATTENTION AND COMMITMENT

RESTORE THE WATER DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM WITH SAFE DRINKING WATER

As the assigned Command to restore the water distribution system, NAVFAC has responded with firm resolve and a sense of urgency to deliver safe drinking water to affected communities. This effort is being executed in collaboration and coordination with state, federal, and DOD partners. The Hawaii Department of Health and EPA Region 9 have been instrumental in this response. Key actions include:

- Rapid establishment of an inter-agency drinking water system team (IDWST) to facilitate the immediate response to this event. The team is comprised of on-scene coordinators from the Hawaii Department of Health and EPA Region 9 and subject matter experts from the Navy, Army, and the Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Center. The IDWST has developed a sampling plan necessary to confirm the safety of the drinking water being delivered, a drinking water distribution system recovery plan, and single family home (resident) and other building (non-resident) flushing standard operating procedures. Our team is executing these plans with oversight from the IDWST.
- Contracted for filtration systems:
 - 25 one million gallon per day (MGD) Granulated Activated Carbon (GAC) filtration units distributed throughout the water distribution system to support a complete flushing of the entire Navy water distribution system
- Commenced system recovery:
 - On 20 December sequential flushing of the distribution system initiated
 - As of 30 December, 8 of 19 distribution zones flushed
 - On 29 December, started flushing of homes and buildings
- Expanded testing capacity:
 - In cooperation with the Department of Health and EPA Region 9, brought additional certified laboratories online, which tripled testing capacity
 - Worked with the EPA to mobilize their modular lab to the west coast to support sampling efforts
 - Created a partnership agreement with the University of Hawaii to develop on-island advanced testing capability

- Implemented a web based platform for electronic data management of test results which provides testing transparency for the IDWST and promotes better communication with the public.

REMEDiate THE NAVY'S RED HILL WELL AND PROTECT THE AQUIFER

In parallel with restoration of the drinking water system, NAVFAC is working to restore the Red Hill water well and protect the aquifer. We are in close collaboration with local and federal stakeholders, academia, and subject matter experts. Key actions taken:

- Established an “Aquifer Recovery Focus Group” with participation from state of Hawaii, city of Honolulu, University of Hawaii, EPA Region 9 and others to identify recommendations.
- Conducted skimming operations and deployed absorbents to remove contaminants from the Red Hill Shaft.
- Installed one 5 MGD GAC system at the Red Hill Shaft for water filtration operations to create a capture zone for contaminants in the aquifer.
 - The IDWST is finalizing the plan and obtaining the required discharge permits
 - Operations planned to commence the second week of January
- Contracted with local experts to:
 - Expand ground water sampling and soil vapor monitoring to assist in determining the location and extent of the contamination
 - Improve the aquifer modeling at the suspected point of release
- Analyzing options for permanent water treatment.

Additionally, as prescribed by the FY 2022 NDAA, NAVFAC will support the requirement to prepare a life-cycle sustainment plan of the Red Hill Fuel Storage Facility in conjunction with a full inspection of the pipeline system, supporting infrastructure, and appurtenances in accordance with American Petroleum Institute and Unified Facilities Criteria inspection standards.

The importance of restoring safe drinking water on O’ahu is absolute. Our service members, civilian workforce, families and the communities who support our military are our greatest assets. I pledge my commitment to restore safe drinking water, return our families to their homes, remediate the Red Hill well, and protect the aquifer. I will continue to work alongside my Navy and other service counterparts and our regulatory partners.

I also would like to express my sincere appreciation to Hawaii’s Department of Health and EPA Region 9 responders for their dedication and mutual commitment to provide safe drinking water and protect the environment. I am grateful for the multi-agency team approach and flexibility of our local civilian counterparts. Their contribution has been paramount.

On behalf of the Naval Facilities Engineering Systems Command and the Department of the Navy, I thank the leadership and membership of this Committee for your ongoing commitment to resolve the drinking water issue on O’ahu. It is a high honor to work with each of you, and I look forward to your questions.