

United States Senate

November 15, 2022

The Honorable Lloyd Austin
Secretary of Defense
7300 Defense Pentagon
Washington, D.C.
20301

Dear Secretary Austin,

We write today to express concerns regarding the ongoing plight of members of the Oahu community affected by the November 2021 release of fuel from the Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility. We are requesting answers to a series of questions that will begin to bring some clarity to community members.

While the Navy and the Department of Defense (DoD) have taken important steps toward addressing the fuel release by remediating the water supplies, deciding to shut down and budget for the facility's closure, and standing up a Joint Task Force (JTF) to steward the facility's defueling, the community remains confused and frustrated. Many servicemembers, families, and community members have valid concerns and questions about how they will be compensated for the various impacts of the fuel release, how they can access adequate medical support, and how the military will address long term impacts from the fuel exposure, among many other issues. To date, these questions have no clear answers.


Organizations and representatives from among the over 93,000 affected residents continue to ask the Navy and DoD for transparency and accountability. Public trust in the Navy and DoD in Hawaii has severely eroded. Public engagement and consideration of community voices in decision-making are critical for restoring trust. As members of the Senate Armed Services Committee, it is of great importance to us to know what the DoD is doing to address the specific issues and concerns raised by organizations and families affected by the November fuel spill at Red Hill. It is imperative that the Department recognize that a one size fits all approach for all impacted will not work as jet fuel exposure does not impact all individuals in the same manner or to the same degree. Individuals may have unique medical responses from consuming and bathing in contaminated water. Their access to information and care may also vary depending on their relationship, or lack thereof, with the Department.

We thereby ask you to provide answers to the following questions:

1. What is the DoD doing to assure affected individuals of the validity and accuracy of the water samples used to clear their homes for return?
2. How is information for individual homes and facilities being communicated to those living in or utilizing those water sources?

3. What information is being provided to the affected individuals concerning the chemical breakdown of contaminants they ingested or used in the homes' water?
4. If the chemical breakdown is protected by national security interests, how is the Department providing adequate information to physicians to provide sufficient treatment to patients, particularly those with non-traditional responses to the contamination?
5. What information is being provided to future tenants concerning a given home's contamination history?
6. Are there any homes that require further remediation, including but not limited to replacing fixtures that have been damaged or corroded due to having contaminated water in its system?
7. Are tenants in affected homes being given the opportunity to permanently relocate without penalty?
8. What current, supplemental, and long-term medical care is being provided to those who were affected or suspect they may have been affected by the fuel release, including both those who have access to TRICARE and those who do not?
9. Is the DoD providing the same information and communication to individuals utilizing the impacted water systems regardless of whether they are military personnel, DOD civilians, DOD contractors, or have no affiliation with the military?
10. Has the DoD considered providing personnel who assisted with the flushing process hazardous duty pay?
11. What has the DoD done with regard to whistleblower policies related questioning the Department about the mishap and its response?

Sincerely,



Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator



Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator