



NOTE: The following are answers to questions presented at Senator Kim's Town Hall (Dec. 12, 2022) that specifically reference Joint Task Force-Red Hill's "Defueling" efforts only. Once all answers are made available from Commander Navy Region Hawaii, Naval Facilities Engineering Systems Command Hawaii, and the Defense Health Agency Indo-Pacific that address the topics of Closure, Water/ Environmental Monitoring and Remediation, and Medical/ Healthcare, we will update this document to include these responses.

Questions were submitted to the moderators and consolidated when asked more than once; text was edited for ease of use.

Defueling: Joint Task Force - Red Hill (JTF-RH)

I understand your chain of command but who will be ultimately responsible? There have been so many changes since all these problems and accidents have occurred. It seems like they are passing the buck again. Please clarify who we can trust to make sure all measures will be completed.

JTF-RH is responsible for the safe and expeditious defueling of the Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility (RHBFSF). The Navy (Commander, Navy Region Hawaii) is responsible for the facility closure. The Navy (Commander, Navy Facilities Engineering Command – Hawaii) is responsible for environmental remediation and aquifer restoration. Commander, Defense Health Agency Indo-Pacific is responsible for medical care for eligible military, government civilians and dependents. All involved commands understand the enormity and importance of their missions, and are committed to excellence every step of the way.

Why is Red Hill still open? Why did it take you guys so long to close the tanks, and why did you guys not shut it down when you guys know it is affecting families and people?

The Secretary of Defense ordered the defueling and permanent closure of the RHBFSF on March 7, 2022. Since that time, the Department of Defense (DoD) established a Joint Task Force to safely and expeditiously defuel the facility following mandated repairs, enhancements and modifications per Hawaii Department of Health Superseding Emergency Order dated May 6, 2022. The Navy (Commander, Navy Region Hawaii) will close the RHBFSF once it is defueled. [Link to the SECDEF's statement: Statement by Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III on the Closure of the Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility > U.S. Department of Defense > Release](#)



Are there any penalties if the Navy delays defueling? How will you be held accountable? Are there penalties?

First, it's important to note that JTF-RH is responsible for defueling the RHBFSF, not the Navy. Second, these questions should be directed to the Hawaii Department of Health (DOH) and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the state and federal regulators who will provide oversight for the defueling process. With this said, the DOH issued its Superseding Emergency Order on May 6, 2022 to enforce the defueling and closure of the RHBFSF in a manner protective of public health and the environment. Consistent with these orders, the DoD has directed the defueling and closure of the RHBFSF. The EPA is also finalizing a draft Consent Order that will regulate the defueling and closure of the RHBFSF. The EPA is currently accepting public written comments regarding its Consent Order through February 6, 2023. The Consent Order as currently drafted includes penalties for delays and non-compliance.

Why won't Admiral John Wade use the word "emergency" when referring to the continuing leaks of toxins in our water?

DOH in issuing its Emergency Order, determined that the fuel within the facility is a threat to the people of Hawaii, our community and the environment. The DoD acknowledges the state of Hawaii Emergency Order, and is complying with it. As Secretary of Defense Austin has said, defueling and closing the facility is the right thing to do for the people of Hawaii, military families, the environment and national security. JTF-RH remains committed to safely and expeditiously defueling the RHBFSF, and setting conditions for closure.

Why was it said that they can defuel the tanks in five days previously but now it's more than two years?

The defueling plan submitted to DOH and EPA proposes defueling Red Hill tanks in 120 days. However, there are 253 repairs, enhancements and modifications to the RHBFSF that must be completed to reduce risk before defueling operations can commence per the DOH Superseding Emergency Order dated May 6, 2022. As of January 31, 2023, 31 repairs have been completed and 222 repairs, enhancements and modifications are in progress. These maintenance actions are expected to be completed in December '23. Defueling is expected to commence in February '24 and complete by June '24. This said, our intentions are to work in partnership with the DOH and EPA to find ways to shorten the timeline as appropriate, and commence defueling operations as soon as possible, prioritizing safety to the community and environment.



Why did the Navy agree on January 11, 2022 that they would comply with DOH and drain the tanks in 30 days and now say it will take years? Which is the lie?

The DOH Superseding Emergency Order dated May 6, 2022 mandates repairs, enhancements and modifications to be completed before defueling operations can commence.

Would you move faster if this was your only source of drinking water?

JTF-RH is working as safely and expeditiously as possible to begin defueling operations. The JTF will continue to work with DOH and EPA to identify opportunities to potentially identify ways to improve schedules, while still adhering to state and federal laws to ensure the safety of the community and environment.

Why can't the fuel be drained from the tanks using trucks instead of the planned facility repairs and pipeline defueling? The longer you wait to drain, the more risk to our water and soil.

Using trucks to defuel the facility introduces significant risk for release and potential other environmental impacts. The Department of Defense (DOD) believes those risks to be unacceptable. Given the amount of fuel at Red Hill, it would take thousands of trucks to move the fuel to other locations. Moreover, it would require thousands of new connections, and disconnections, of flexible hoses to pump fuel from tanks and transfer it above ground to truck tanks. These connectors do not currently exist and would have to be fabricated, installed and tested. Furthermore, trucks coming in and out of the facility must navigate sharp turns on a steep, narrow road – thousands of times. These significant safety and environmental concerns make this option untenable. We continue to review and refine the current defueling plan to ensure we can accomplish it as safely as possible.

Where will the fuel be relocated?

The Defense Logistics Agency (DLA), in support of JTF RH, will execute bulk fuel transportation. They will be responsible for transferring fuel currently held at the RHBFSF onto tankers for redistribution off island. DLA has identified five locations to relocate the fuel, including facilities outside the United States and on the West Coast. We do not intend to move Red Hill fuel to on-island commercial locations. The final decision and locations where the fuel will be relocated is forthcoming, and will be informed by operational requirements. DLA will continue to communicate to the public.



EPA and DOH are the two main regulators and you said that the Board of Water Supply is not. Did you know that they stand up for and with us? Did you know that these two regulators slinked out of the BWS meeting on December 12, 2022? They heard zero testimonies. We cannot trust them nor you. Who are you all protecting? No one.

JTF-RH is committed to safely and expeditiously defueling the RHBFSF. By law we are required to work with the DOH and EPA, the state and federal regulators, respectively. We are also coordinating with the Board of Water Supply, and are dedicated to open and transparent communications.

Why can't a representative from another agency like Board of Water Supply, EPA, or DOH be present every day of the operation and oversee all requests by state? Will you respect and fully accept all requests and inputs by them?

By law, JTF-RH defueling operations are approved and overseen by DOH and EPA. We are also committed to maintaining open and transparent communications with the Board of Water Supply. Additionally, Mr. Ernie Lau, Chief Engineer from the Board of Water Supply, is a member of JTF-RH's Defueling Information Sharing Forum which brings local community members, elected representatives and other stakeholders together with JTF leadership to discuss the defueling mission and to provide critical community feedback. Specifically, the forum provides members an opportunity to share insights, knowledge, and professional expertise through meaningful feedback, dialogue and discussions. Mr. Lau is an active and valued participant in this important process.

Why have you refused to allow a civilian to join Joint Task Force-Red Hill? As Red Hill is no longer in operation, there is no good reason to deny this request. The fact that Board of Water Supply was not alerted to the Nov. 29 AFFF spill for six hours is exactly why we demand civilian representation immediately.

Civilian control and oversight of the military is mandated by the Constitution. The Secretary of Defense, a civilian appointed by the President and confirmed by Congress, directed the establishment of JTF-RH. In executing its mission, the JTF-RH reports to the Secretary of Defense through US Indo-Pacific Command. By law, the JTF must adhere to state and federal laws and oversight provided by the DOH and EPA – civilian led organizations. The JTF has and will continue to keep federal, state and local elected officials informed. Lastly, the JTF is also committed to listen to and communicate with the community through a variety of means to include our Defueling Information Sharing Forum, Town Halls, other speaking events, and the media.



What communication has JTF-RH had with newly elected leaders in Hawaii at the federal and state levels?

When the JTF was established, Vice Admiral Wade immediately reached out to federal, state and local elected officials to establish relationships and start an open line of communication for regular updates. Brigadier General Okamura (JTF-RH Director for Strategic Engagement) has lead for legislative engagements. Following the election, both Vice Admiral Wade and Brigadier General Okamura introduced themselves to the newly elected officials. Keeping elected officials informed is critical to the JTF mission. This will continue.

Joint Base Pearl Harbor Hickam panel, I am of both worlds--native Hawaiian born and raised on Oahu. I was also a seventeen-year Navy wife now retired. Listen to our Sierra Club and Oahu Water Protectors and invite them to your seat.

Brigadier General Okamura (JTF-RH Director of Strategic Engagement) and Captain Steve Stasick (JTF-RH Repair & Maintenance Division Director) have both met with Mr. Wayne Tanaka of the Sierra Club. Furthermore, JTF-RH staff have had cursory conversations with members of Oahu Water Protectors, with plans underway for JTF-RH leadership to engage further. Maintaining two-way open and transparent dialogue with the local community is of critical importance to the JTF-RH mission and the ultimate defueling of the RHBFSF.

Who are the native Hawaiians working with JTF-RH on the Defueling Information Sharing Forum?

Defueling Information Sharing Forum members representing Native Hawaiians interests are, Dr. Kaeo Duarte, Chair of Hawaii Fresh Water Council, Dr. Sylvia Hussey, Chief Executive Officer of Office of Hawaiian Affairs and Mr. Kuhio Lewis, Chief Executive Officer of the Council for Native Hawaiian Advancement. The complete list of the Defueling Information Sharing Forum members is posted on the JTF-RH website. Further, JTF-RH's Director Strategic Engagement, Brigadier General Lance Okamura, is of native Hawaiian descent and was raised in Hawaii.

With the amount of safety measures that are already put in place for the military to operate, how was it possible for the November 29, 2022 AFFF mishap occur?

The AFFF mishap on November 29, 2022 was a very serious setback, and it highlighted valid safety and environmental concerns at RHBFSF. There is an ongoing investigation to determine the cause of the discharge and lessons learned will be applied to reduce



risk. When complete, the results of the investigation and adjustments made to reduce risk will be made public.

Given the November 29, 2022 AFFF mishap, how do you plan for future operations so that the operations are safer and would cause less damage?

JTF-RH has taken proactive measures to establish centralized control and oversight of the RHBFSF to improve maintenance oversight practices, and to improve response time and response effectiveness. Additionally, in preparation for defueling, we have enhanced spill response training at a greater frequency and revised and updated spill response plans with a continuous focus on safety. Lastly, we have also increased manpower at the facility, to include additional safety personnel to ensure that we are prepared for safe defueling.

Will you come to Waianae??

JTF-RH leadership is engaging with community members from all parts of the island of Oahu, and we look forward to diverse participation and representation from across the island and local community.