



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY

COMMANDER
NAVY REGION HAWAII
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10 Oct 17

Aloha, Stakeholder,

Thank you for the warm “welcome home” over the past two months since assuming command at Navy Region Hawaii and Naval Surface Group Middle Pacific (MIDPAC). Earlier in my Navy career I had the privilege of serving aboard three Hawaii homeported ships: USS INGERSOLL, USS LAKE ERIE and, right after 9/11, as executive officer of USS PORT ROYAL. It took 14 years for my family and me to return to the islands, but it was well worth the wait. We love Hawaii: the nature, the weather, and most of all the people and the feeling of aloha. If we haven’t met you personally yet, we look forward to talking story with you soon.

Rear Admiral Fuller and I had only a very brief time together during our transition. We didn’t have the opportunity to discuss many of the issues affecting the Navy in Hawaii, but one topic we discussed in depth was the Red Hill Bulk Fuel Facility. Each of us is committed to improving public trust, ensuring safe drinking water, preventing fuel leaks, and demonstrating the strategic importance of fuel to the fleet. As the Navy Region and MIDPAC Commander, I have a responsibility to ensure our Sailors are always ready to sail into harm’s way while also always being ready to provide humanitarian assistance and disaster relief across the entire Pacific. Maintaining a strategic and secure fuel reserve is absolutely essential for Hawaii, our nation and our Navy.

Those who know me well know that I never make promises I cannot keep; that’s not how you maintain public trust. What I will promise, to earn and maintain your trust, is to keep the lines of communication open, listen to your questions and concerns, and share the latest information we have about our national strategic asset at Red Hill. Like my predecessor, I am pleased to report that after nearly four years, the tanks at Red Hill have not and are not leaking, and our drinking water continues to remain safe to drink.

One week after assuming command, I personally toured the Red Hill Facility. Driving on the narrow road, through the industrial areas and along the ridge, I began to understand the challenges miners and engineers faced 75 years ago. Walking through the double doors, barely big enough for a car, I was surprised at the length and complexity of the tunnels leading to the fuel tanks. My team and I entered an empty, off-service tank and I got an appreciation of its massive size. Each steel tank is built into solid rock, surrounded by thick concrete and gunite. Judging by the great condition of the tank, it wasn’t clear how one could leak. An engineer explained how Tank 5 leaked in January of 2014: “The Navy contracts a company to inspect the tank to ensure the highest standards are maintained. Tank 5 was emptied for such an inspection. A new contractor began a two-year, hand-over-hand inspection of the tank wall. During that inspection, the contractor drilled 17 holes in the tank wall as part of an inspection but didn’t properly repair those holes. When the tank inspection was complete and the Navy placed the tank back in service it leaked from those holes.” The reality I saw on my tour is that the facility is well maintained, modernized and monitored 24 hours per day, each and every day. The tanks do not leak, and they are not in jeopardy of leaking.

One way the Navy ensures operational fuel tanks do not leak is by conducting inspections and monitoring tank levels. The most detailed inspection, which requires months to accomplish, scans every square inch of the tank wall using electromagnetic, ultrasonic analysis, and visual verification. Control room operators, using the automated fuel handling equipment system, continually monitor fuel level of every tank as well as check tank levels manually. Another measure the Navy takes to ensure tanks do not leak is our annual tank tightness test, which has undergone a third-party review by the National Working Group on Leak Detection Evaluations. This month, we began this test again on all operational tanks in Red Hill. Since 2014, the military spent over \$25.4 million on Administrative Order on Consent (AOC)-related issues in support of our efforts to monitor and upgrade the facility, and since 2006 we invested more than \$240 million on other Red Hill projects. We have also not let up on tank maintenance. We awarded two contracts worth \$39 million dollars to clean, inspect and repair five tanks, employing lessons learned from the 2014 release. Two of those tanks are currently in the inspection phase of the contract. We are always looking to improve the sensitivity and accuracy of our release detection systems as outlined in Section 4 of the AOC. We are currently developing test procedures to evaluate the performance of three state of the art release detection systems at Red Hill. The tests will be run early next year with the plan to install the top performer's system in all Red Hill tanks.

Since Rear Admiral Fuller's last stakeholder letter, we held an open house public meeting at Moanalua Middle School, co-hosted with the Defense Logistics Agency, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and State of Hawaii Department of Health (DOH). Turnout was higher than at previous meetings, and attendees expressed their appreciation at being able to speak one-on-one directly with subject matter experts. By the way, also since our last stakeholder letter, we posted an information video on YouTube to explain the AOC process. I hope you'll take a look: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NTj9VgcZTII> . The animation video is a clear and concise way to explain the AOC process and how it came about.

We continue to make significant progress in meeting our obligations under the AOC. For example, EPA and DOH regulators approved our Tank Inspection, Repair, and Maintenance Decision Document/Implementation Plan (Section 2 of the AOC) in early September, and we are already successfully implementing the improvements on four tanks currently undergoing maintenance. Late last month, we participated in face-to-face meetings with experts and stakeholders in San Francisco hosted by EPA and DOH. We discussed several items including progress on Section 3's Tank Upgrade Alternative (TUA) report, which is on track for completion December 8, 2017.

Since the January 2014 fuel release, the Navy increased groundwater monitoring wells from eight to 13 with an additional 11 planned. These monitoring wells show no threat of contamination to our drinking water. The Joint Base Red Hill drinking well is the closest drinking well to the fuel facility, with the closest Board of Water Supply (BWS) well nearly a mile away. One aspect of the AOC is to evaluate if groundwater beneath Red Hill flows in the direction of Halawa or Moanalua. To meet this analysis requirement, we are collaborating with outside agencies and experts on our groundwater modeling, including the BWS. The Navy's analysis should be completed early next year. Meanwhile, it bears repeating: BWS and Navy drinking samples continue to show the water is safe to drink. This is the same drinking water my family and I drink.

Since this is my first stakeholder letter I've tried to keep it somewhat brief and general. However, if you or your constituents would like more technical details, please consider contacting my Red Hill Program Project Director/Project Coordinator, Mark Manfredi, at 808-473-4148. Mark and his team can arrange detailed briefings about TUA, Quantitative Risk and Vulnerability Assessment, and groundwater monitoring effects, etc., to interested groups, including neighborhood boards. We will consider sending out a more technical update in our next stakeholder letter in December. Until then, you can find our previous correspondence, press releases, photos and other information at www.cnic.navy.mil/redhill. The EPA also has a Red Hill information page, along with the AOC, at <https://www.epa.gov/red-hill>. My team and I look forward to hearing from you and answering any of your questions.

Very Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "B. P. FORT", is written over a solid horizontal line.

B. P. FORT
Rear Admiral, U. S. Navy