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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Red Hill four years later; drinking water safe**

*By Rear Adm. Brian Fort  
Commander, Navy Region Hawaii and Naval Surface Group Middle Pacific*

The Navy's Red Hill fuel facility is an amazing engineering wonder built during World War II. It is truly rock-solid and modernized and absolutely essential to our national defense strategy. While the fuel at Red Hill is key to protecting our state and nation, protecting our precious water supply – the water we all share – is equally key.

Nearly four years ago, poorly performed work by a contractor and insufficient oversight by the Navy resulted in the release of 27,000 gallons of fuel at Red Hill. Since then, we accelerated upgrades to the facility and updated operator procedures. Since 2006 we invested more than \$200 million to continue modernizing Red Hill. We are committed to using the latest science and technology in our approach as we move forward.

In recent years, we improved government oversight and instituted additional safeguards, checks and alarms. We also increased groundwater monitoring wells and sampling points from 10 to 14, with an additional 11 planned.

Tests at these monitoring wells and other sources confirm our drinking water continues to be safe to drink. In fact, the Navy's Red Hill shaft, the closest drinking water well to the fuel facility, provides water to Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam – the same water my family and I drink. The nearest Board of Water Supply well is almost a mile away.

The Environmental Protection Agency and State of Hawaii Department of Health regulators oversee our initiatives under an administrative order on consent (AOC). Under the AOC, which is

a legally enforceable roadmap and timeline, we are working to find the best available, practicable solutions at Red Hill – to prevent another leak and keep our water safe to drink for many years to come.

The AOC's Statement of Work brings stakeholders, engineers and the public together to evaluate options and alternatives as we continue to upgrade the Red Hill facility. Engineers and other technical experts are discussing the advantages and practicalities of six tank upgrade alternatives and thoroughly analyzing data to determine their recommendations. We think it is extremely important to do a comprehensive analysis and not rush to a decision on the tank upgrades. Rushing to an assumed "best" solution may only result in rushing to failure.

We also think it is important to keep the public updated with the facts. We welcome public comments and requests for briefings to community groups, including neighborhood boards. I think as people learn about the built-in safeguards and modernization initiatives at Red Hill – and our continued track record of ensuring safe drinking water – there will be more understanding and less concern about this important facility. Please take a few moments to visit our website: [www.cnmc.navy.mil/redhill](http://www.cnmc.navy.mil/redhill) or the EPA's website, which has a copy of the AOC: [www.epa.gov/red-hill](http://www.epa.gov/red-hill).

As my predecessor, Rear Adm. John Fuller, said in August 2015, someday we will no longer rely on fossil fuels, and we are moving as swiftly as we can toward that day by embracing renewable, sustainable energy.

In the meantime, as the House conference report to the 2018 Defense Authorization Act states, we need Red Hill "to support the National Military Strategy." We need to be able to "go tonight" if called upon to make a difference – whether in our nation's defense or in humanitarian missions in Asia-Pacific.

Red Hill fuels all our military services here in Hawaii, including the National Guard and the U.S. Coast Guard. Thanks to Red Hill, we are able to protect sea lanes and commercial shipping to and from Hawaii. As important as keeping us safe is keeping our drinking water safe. Our Navy is prepared and proud to do both.