



**COMMANDER, NAVY REGION HAWAII**  
PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE  
850 TICONDEROGA STREET, SUITE 110  
PEARL HARBOR, HAWAII 96860  
PHONE: 808-473-2888 FAX: 808-473-2876  
[www.cnrc.navy.mil/hawaii](http://www.cnrc.navy.mil/hawaii)



**FINAL**

**Honolulu Star-Advertiser Op-Ed**

**Oct. 1, 2018**

**Release # 18-037**

## **Facts not Fear Drive Investments, Improvements at Red Hill**

*By Capt. Marc Delao*

*Commanding Officer, Naval Facilities Engineering Command Hawaii*

Water is the essence of life. Protecting our shared drinking water is a duty we take seriously.

I say this not only as a purveyor and provider of clean and healthy drinking water for the thousands of military family members who reside in military housing on Oahu including my wife, children and pets, but also as a consumer of that very same water.

In January 2014, Tank 5 at the Red Hill Fuel Facility experienced a release of 27,000 gallons of fuel due to a contractor's error and an ineffective response and oversight.

Since then, under an Administrative Order on Consent (AOC) with regulators – Environmental Protection Agency and Hawaii Department of Health – we have spent \$45.3 million to improve the facility and protect the environment. Since 2006, DOD has invested \$260 million to upgrade and improve Red Hill. At the same time, we are fiscally responsible, recognizing that spending taxpayer money on the most expensive option is not the best solution.

Among our initiatives, we invest in a rigorous, ongoing clean, inspect and repair maintenance program. Each tank is inspected and repaired every 20 years strictly following the industry standard set by the American Petroleum Institute (API).

In June, the Navy began work to validate the effectiveness of the non-destructive examination (NDE) processes for identifying areas within a tank in need of repair.

This work began with the Navy, along with EPA and HDOH, reviewing the data from a tank in the middle of its maintenance program – Tank 14 – to identify and collect samples, called “coupons,” from the tank's steel liner.

Among the samples deliberately selected were some from several different areas within the tank suspected of having back-surface corrosion as evidenced by wall thinning from the NDE.

Contrary to some media accounts, the findings were not inconsistent with what was expected. Upon removal of the coupons, some of the locations predictably had corrosion and suspected thinning. However, the study is not yet complete. Results of a detailed laboratory analysis are expected at the end of October.

Drawing conclusions in the middle of a study from preliminary samples removed from the empty tank misinforms public understanding and compromises the integrity of the process.

Extrapolating incomplete information and applying a worse-case-scenario for all tanks at Red Hill unnecessarily creates fear. It also undercuts the important ongoing work to safeguard our water and our security in Hawaii.

It is worth noting that the Navy employs strict safety factors for its repair standards. For example, Navy *doubles* the API-approved industry standard for tank wall thickness at Red Hill. We double the standard because *we are committed to keeping our water safe*.

In the case of Tank 14, only about two percent of the tank's surface requires repairs. The same – or fewer repairs – is true for other tanks inspected.

The Navy is committed to completing scientific and engineering-based studies and performing thorough, informed analysis.

We are committed to taking a science-based approach to properly consider upgrade alternatives and other options for Red Hill as we continue investing in modernization and upgrades of the facility and infrastructure.

We take our environmental stewardship seriously and are committed to these precious islands we all live, work and play in.

We are committed to continuing to work with the regulators under the AOC to ensure we do everything possible to prevent another lapse at Red Hill.

Most important: We are committed to protecting the drinking water we all share. We are all in this together.

For more about the history, technology and advancements at Red Hill, visit [www.cnmc.navy.mil/redhill](http://www.cnmc.navy.mil/redhill).