



Native Hawaiians Fight US Navy for Polluting Island's Water

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Text: The US Navy stores 200 million gallons of fuel in tanks buried 100 feet above O'ahu's biggest aquifer.

Known as Red Hill, the facility has leaked fuel regularly for decades.

In November, leaked fuel was found in tap water at 350 times the safe limit.

The Navy has tried to cover up the disaster, which mostly poisoned military families.

Another leak is inevitable- one that could permanently contaminate the island's largest water source.

Yet the Navy is rejecting calls to Shut Down Red Hill.

On Dec. 12, 2021, Native Hawaiians went to the gates of the US Navy Command.

Dr. Kalehua Krug (Dr. KK): We are building a structure. A related structure called a koa. And a koa is a traditional structure that when resources are low, it's a structure and a process by which we draw resources to us. And the resource for this koa that we are looking for, we are looking for awareness, we are looking for people, we are looking for solidarity to make sure that we all, all the people of Hawaii who live, especially on O'ahu, can unify around stopping the desecration of our aquifer.

Vicky Holt Takamine (VHT): The way we protest, the way we *kū 'ē* is by honouring our land and our gods and our people by mele and chants and songs and dances. We sound like we're singing joyfully and we are. But a lot of that is hidden meaning, that we're not really talking about the beautiful flower or the rain. We're talking about the pouring rain, the impact that it has on our land. We're talking about people that have been detrimental to our land. So while that may be cultured or hidden in the way we sing, in the way we dance, it's still very stinging to those of us in the know.

Hinaleimoana Wong- Kalu (HWK): We have seen that the United States military has not been the appropriate partner to take care of our most precious resource. That every person around the world knows it is water. This koa will remain up until such time that the US

military moves all of the fuel out of those tanks and removes those tanks.

VHT: I live in this *Ahupua'a*. I live in Aiea, so the aquifer Halawa and Aiea is my watershed. That's my land. And to have somebody polluting my water, you know where I raised my kids, where I expect my grandchildren to be living. So this is important to me and the future generations of my family. I mean, we're not planning to leave. We wouldn't give up and are not going to now.

Ilima- Lei Macf Rlane (ILMR): This was the product of the Navy. The US military is contaminating our drinking source here on O'ahu. This isn't the first time that they've done that. They've done that to the island of Kahoolawe. They are doing it anywhere that the military is based in the islands, there is some kind of environmental degradation.

Kawena' Ulaokala Kapahua: Yes, on this island, the US military occupies about 22 percent of the land, so it's one of the largest landholders by far, and most of its land is Superfund sites, or it's super contaminated. So not only is Red Hill or Kapukaki one of those places that's being contaminated, Pearl Harbour, which is directly across from us, is also a Superfund site. It was also found several years ago that they had buried chemical weapons on our lands as well to dispose of them. They also have bombed and left live ordnance all over our land, including Pohakuloa and Makua Valley. Whenever they bomb land that is sacred to us, they continue to bomb even after our protests. This is the same they've been doing since they occupied Hawaii and overthrew our kingdom. They did it to Kahoolawe and we pushed them off there. They've done it to Makua valley and Pohakuloa and other sacred lands. And of course, they're gonna continue doing it here because to them their need to wage imperialist wars across the Pacific supersedes their need to provide freshwater even to their own troops, but especially to the people they occupy.

Mike Prysner (MP): And what do you say to the Navy command, the military command who is saying they don't need to shut down the tanks, they'll just make sure this doesn't happen again and assure you that the problem is going to be fixed?

ILMR: Yes, they've been saying that for decades now. And I mean, I just- at what point is enough enough?

Shelley Muneokoa: I think they're used to getting away with whatever they want to without repercussions. That there's so many exemptions and exceptions for the military. And I think that for a lot of people, it's shocking to know that they consider the people of the community here to be just the cost of doing business. That it's more important for them to be, quote unquote mission ready, which you know for us is not a small thing that they're using our islands to practise killing other people, we're not OK with that. But I think people are really shocked to know that they're willing to risk the health of the people here as well who they claim to protect.

Text: Days earlier, the U'ahu Water Protectors staged a die-in to protest the Navy's criminal pollution.

Andre Perez: And what it boils down to, I mean, let's not dance around the issue: money. It's like putting a price tag on our drinking water, which is ultimately putting a price tag on our lives. These Navy folks, these Navy personnel, these commandos and admirals and lieutenants and captains, they leave, they're here for four years. They're temporary. This is our home. This is where we come from. The Navy has got to shut down Red Hill immediately for good, or they're going to have this entire island against them. They're going to have the entire island of O'ahu resisting against them, engaging in civil resistance and civil disobedience. Everyone drinks water. No one can drink jet fuel.

HWK: The only appropriate resolution to this is that they remove the fuel from those tanks and remove those tanks from up above. Because those tanks will continue to leak and leach whatever residue they have. So anything less than that is not acceptable.

ILMR: You know, a lot of people think I'm really radical when I say we need to demilitarise Hawaii, but that's the truth. I mean, unless the military leaves, then it's just going to be the same.

Dr. KK: For many cases it's constructed that the military is here to protect us, but we've been nothing but a target since they've arrived here. And it's very poignant that the Navy is poisoning our aquifer because the Navy is actually the folks that overthrew our government on the USS Boston and pointed guns at our queen.

MP: What do you say to the Navy command who says, Oh, we'll just make sure this doesn't happen again? We'll clean up the leak and then we'll put in some new safety measures to make sure that there's not another leak.

Dr. KK: First and foremost, go home. We never asked you to stay here and they don't care for the land.

KUK: We've been saying the Red Hill tanks were going to leak for years, decades even. And so now that it's affecting military families, it's getting a lot of attention. But this is how the US military treats Hawaiians every single day. And I hope that US military families understand now what their presence does to our land. And you know, I think one of the primary things is the calls that are coming from the Hawaiian nation to demilitarise Hawaii and push the US out. It's holding the people who poisoned these families also accountable.

VHT: We're an occupied nation. We never agreed to this. So you want to go back to that? It's like we never agreed to have you. And we knew that one of the reasons they really wanted Hawaii was because of Pearl Harbour. They saw Pearl Harbour. They saw the opportunity to occupy and control all of the Pacific with their military, with their Navy base here. So, you

know, it goes back for centuries and we've still been, I'm still not American, "I was born in the territory". But I was born Hawaiian. My DNA is Hawaiian. American is a political status that I did not choose.

MP: It's been military personnel and families who have been poisoned with the drinking water. Of course, the whole island is going to feel it for generations. But what do you say to the people who are living on base who have been drinking the contaminated water from the Navy, who now might have a better idea of what you've been enduring here on the island?

Dr. KK: Join us. I feel for them, our *Aloha* is for everyone and everything. Our teachings from our ancestors that everything human and non-human gets a place in the ecosystem. Everybody has *mana*. Everybody has spirit. Everybody deserves respect. And for them, drinking the water, we're sad about that. We feel for those *Ohana*. Join us! Come be a part of our *Ohana*, our family.

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