

US Military Must Remove Fuel from Massive Red Hill Underground Fuel Tanks

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"Repacking" of 3.5 miles of U.S. Military Red Hill Fuel Pipes in Hawaii Begins with October 16, 2023 as the Target Date to Begin "Defueling" the dangerous Underground Tanks

U.S. Military Now Has New Capacity to Store Above Ground 104 million gallons of fuel that Must be Removed from Massive Red Hill Underground Fuel Tanks

With the announcement on August 31, 2023, by [Island Energy of Honolulu, of the completion of 63-million-gallon capacity for military fuel](#) in five newly constructed above ground fuel tanks at Kapolei, a few miles from Pearl Harbor and the Red Hill underground tanks, the U.S. military has constructed sufficient storage capacity for the 104 million gallons of military fuel that is to be removed from the massive underground Red Hill fuel tanks.

Families Still Suffering from Effects of Toxic Fuel Poisoning

The May and November 2021 fuel leaks of 19,000 gallons of fuel at the 80-year-old Red Hill fuel storage facility into the drinking water aquifer of Honolulu gave toxic exposure to over 93,000 persons. Many are suffering from toxic poisoning that will have lifelong effects.

27,000 gallons of fuel had "leaked" in January 2014. Some families who have lived in the 19 residential areas served by the Red Hill well report they have had health conditions for many years prior to the November 2021 spill that went directly into the Red Hill well. They feel that these health issues may be attributable to the leak in 2014, nine years before.

After the November 2021 leak, on March 7, 2022 [Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin ordered the Red Hill facility](#) to be closed. The 2023 National Defense Authorization Act required an additional certification that closing would not negatively affect U.S. national security. That certification has not been issued.

[“Repacking,” or filling the pipes to force air](#) out of the 3.5 miles of pipes at the Red Hill fuel facility began on August 28. [According to Joint Task Force Red Hill](#),

“During repacking, fuel operators will fill the lines using fuel from the upper tank farm and remove all air to ensure a stable flow of fuel when defueling the main underground storage tanks. The process is expected to take several days.”

“Defueling” of the 14 of 20 huge underground tanks that hold 104 million gallons of fuel is [scheduled to begin on October 16, 2023](#) and should be completed by January 19, 2024. 6 tanks have been empty for several years. Between 100,000 and 400,000 gallons could remain in the tanks and low parts of the pipes at the conclusion of defueling and would still need to be removed, a process that the Red Hill Task Force has said is outside its scope of responsibility. The [removal of this large amount of residual fuel](#) has yet to be specifically addressed by the military.

80-Million-Gallon U.S. Military Fuel Storage Facility Constructed in Australia

Another U.S. military fuel storage facility in Darwin, Australia has been completed under contract with the Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) and provides an additional 80-million-gallon capacity for the Red Hill fuel. The \$270 million project has eleven fuel storage tanks constructed on East Arm of Darwin Harbor.

The [contract for the Darwin facility](#) was awarded in September 2021, the same time the Australia, United Kingdom, United States (AUKUS) pact was signed. The contract to provide energy logistics management and services to receive, store, protect and ship aviation-grade JP-5 turbine fuel and commercial grade Jet A-1 fuel for military forces was awarded to Florida-based Crowley Government Services Inc. The contract is for four years, with a five-year option period.

One complicating factor for the US military is that [Darwin port was leased in 2015 for 99 years](#) by the cash strapped Northern Territories provincial government to Chinese billionaire Ye Cheng’s Landbridge Group for about \$355 million without notifying the Australian federal government. China is [Australia’s largest trading partner](#), bigger than the next three — Japan, the U.S. and South Korea — combined.

Massive Increase in Military Facilities in Australia Used by U.S. Military

Military ties between the U.S. and Australia continue to increase with the heated rhetoric of the West towards China. The U.S. and Australia have just completed [Talisman Sabre, the largest land exercise in Asia](#) with 34,000 military from 13 countries conducting war exercises throughout Australia. A [massive build-up of Australian military facilities](#) included a \$317 million upgrade to Darwin harbor wharf facilities with a 820-foot-long wharf at Larrakeyah Defence Precinct which will support surface warships, submarines, mine hunters and hydrographic ships.

Australian air bases in the Northern Territory frequently used by visiting U.S. aircraft are also being improved. At Royal Australian Air Force [\(RAAF\) Darwin \\$88.65 million](#) was allocated to construct more fuel tanks, expand the airfield and erect maintenance facilities while 200 miles south of Darwin, a \$496 million project at RAAF Tindal upgraded the airfield

and increased aviation fuel storage to accommodate U.S. B-52 bombers and U.S. stealth fighters including [Marine Corps F-36B Lightning IIs deployed from Iwakuni, Japan](#), and [Air Force F-22 Raptors from Hawaii](#).

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Ann Wright served 29 years in the U.S. Army and Army Reserves and retired as a Colonel. She was also a U.S. diplomat for 16 years and served in U.S. Embassies in Nicaragua, Grenada, Somalia, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Sierra Leone, Micronesia, Afghanistan and Mongolia. She resigned from the U.S. government in March 2003 in opposition to the U.S. war on Iraq. In Hawaii, Ann is a member of Oahu Water Protectors, Shut Down Red Hill Coalition, Hawai'i Peace and Justice and Veterans For Peace Chapter 113-Hawai'i.

Featured image: Inside Red Hill Fuel Storage Facility. (Licensed under the Public Domain)

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