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Congress of the United States
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May 20, 2021

The Honorable Louis Lauter
Assistant Secretary of Defense for Legislative Affairs
1300 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301

Dear Acting Assistant Secretary Lauter,

I write again on behalf of many residents of Hawai'i who have continuing and increasing concerns with noise, vibration and other ground disruptions caused by our military's helicopter and tiltrotor flight paths over the Island of O'ahu. I have previously written some of the local military branches, but their responses and related actions have not shown an understanding of these concerns nor a commitment to improvement,

When the COVID-19 pandemic halted the civilian commercial helicopter tour industry, military aircraft drew increased scrutiny from the community because during parts of 2020 they were the only aircraft still flying and altered prior flight paths to occupy zones previously largely utilized by civilian aircraft. My office received and continues to receive an abnormal number of complaints from Hawai'i residents about the increase in military aircraft overflying their communities. They are concerned about the noise and safety of such military overflights. My constituents describe instances where helicopters or tiltrotors operate day and night low over their houses with deafening noise that shake their foundations. In addition to the letters and calls to my office, several Hawai'i news outlets have also covered this issue.

This issue is nearing a crisis point as many in Hawai'i say they feel unsafe given the various commercial aircraft that recently crashed in Hawai'i, and some residents are now lazing military aircraft with commercial laser pointers when they operate close to communities. While law enforcement is doing its best to track down the offenders, our service members are still at risk every day. We cannot allow this to continue.

I share my constituents' concerns about both the noise and safety of aircraft flying over neighborhoods, and I am committed to finding a solution that both protects our local communities and preserves our military's training and readiness. I am confident that this can be accomplished through rerouting flight paths over the ocean to the maximum extent possible, eliminating pilot discretion to deviate to overland flight paths unless absolutely necessary, expanding noise abatement procedures, applying programs such as the Department of Defense's noise mitigation community partnerships, and more closely cooperating with local Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) authorities.

To better understand what options exist to address the concerns of Hawai'i residents, will you please answer the following questions by July 1, 2021:

- Has there been a change in recent military flight paths requiring aircraft to transit over land especially populated communities?
- What are the local noise abatement procedures, and has there been a change to them in the last year?
- What discretion is currently provided to pilots to fly over land when an over-sea route is available?
- How does the Department of Defense (DoD) coordinate with the FAA to prescribe flight routes for helicopters and tiltrotors to mitigate noise to the local community?
- What steps has the DoD taken to address the rise of lasing incidents in Hawai'i?

Hawaii residents are supportive of the military's presence in Hawai'i and recognize the need for strong national security. However, we all need to take positive steps to minimize the negative effects of military activities throughout Hawai'i and maintain the strong civil-military relationship that we currently enjoy. Ground disruption and safety concerns are a growing negative effect that can, with mutual effort, be minimized.

I thank you for your time and consideration in reviewing this matter and responding to my inquiry. Please let me know of any questions.

With aloha,



Congressman Ed Case
Hawai'i-First District

EC/MB