



November 13, 2025

The Honorable Dale R. Marks  
Assistant Secretary of Defense  
Energy, Installations, and Environment  
1000 Defense Pentagon  
Washington, DC 20301

Dear Assistant Secretary Marks:

I am writing today to voice my concern over recent reports that the Department will be delaying its planned investigations and remediation efforts for perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS).<sup>1</sup> PFAS contamination has been a serious issue at hundreds of military installations and communities nationwide, including Naval Air Station (NAS) Whidbey Island, Naval Base Kitsap, Joint Base Lewis McChord, Yakima Training Center, and Fairchild Air Force Base (AFB) in my home state of Washington. Any delay in remediation efforts is a setback to the progress the Department has made to provide clean drinking water for servicemembers, their families, and the surrounding communities.

Since 2017, Congress has appropriated nearly \$2.5 billion to address the crisis created by the use of aqueous film-forming foam in and around military communities and enacted several measures to support remediation efforts.<sup>2</sup> Annual appropriations bills have included PFAS remediation funding, and every National Defense Authorization Act has granted new authorities to help the Department meet its responsibility to clean up more than 500 identified locations where PFAS chemicals have been detected. Given the urgency of addressing toxic PFAS contamination and the funding Congress has provided for this work, I am alarmed by the Department's abrupt decision to delay cleanup efforts. Americans deserve to know why the Department is suddenly delaying efforts to provide clean drinking water for military families and the communities that support them.

This administration's delay is already hurting many of the installations in my home state of Washington, including at Fairchild Air Force Base and Naval Air Station Whidbey Island. For example, in the initial investigation and planning for PFAS cleanup at Fairchild Air Force Base, it was determined that the forever chemical cleanup would be completed by 2026. That date has

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<sup>1</sup> Tabuchi, Hiroko. (2025, Sept. 23). Defense Department Delays Cleanup of 'Forever Chemicals' Nationwide. The New York Times, Climate. <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/09/23/climate/military-defense-pfas-forever-chemicals-cleanup-delay.html?emci=b2ca9ed1-8f98-f011-b484-6045bdeb7413&emdi=1ba0caf5-9298-f011-b484-6045bdeb7413&ceid=308193>.

<sup>2</sup> Czyz, Alissa H. (2025, Feb. 24). Persistent Chemicals: DOD Needs to Provide Congress More Information on Costs Associated with Addressing PFAS. U.S. Government Accountability Office, GAO-25-107401.

since been pushed to June 2032 for Fairchild and March 2034 for Whidbey, without public announcement or consultation with community leaders.<sup>3</sup> The Spokane and Whidbey Island communities have long partnered with their respective installations in a spirit of mutual support; however, this delay means that at least 15 years will pass between the initial discovery of contamination in 2017 at both Fairchild AFB and NAS Whidbey Island and the beginning of cleanup. The lack of communication is eroding trust between the communities and the military installations they have proudly supported for more than 80 years.

In order to provide greater clarity for residents affected by these delays, I request a briefing no later than December 15 with an explanation for the recent delays and an overview of the Department's current actions to address PFAS contamination. Additionally, please provide written responses to the following questions:

1. Why did the Department extend the timelines in the investigation of PFAS contamination at Fairchild AFB and Whidbey NAS?
  - a. How was it determined which bases would be impacted by the delay?
  - b. How is the Department working in the short-term and the long-term to support the communities impacted by the delays in PFAS clean up?
2. Does the Department plan to continue funding the cleanup of toxic sites?
  - a. How has the Department spent the \$2.5 billion dedicated to PFAS contamination remediation over the last eight years?
  - b. Has any of the funding been redirected to other priorities unrelated to PFAS?
3. Will the Department still ban the purchase and use of PFAS firefighting foam by September 30, 2026?
  - a. What is the Department doing to research less harmful chemicals that can be used to put out fires on the airfield in lieu of PFAS?
4. How were the changes in timelines associated with PFAS investigations communicated to the affected military installations?
  - a. Who was notified of the timeline changes?
  - b. When do you plan to reach out to the community leaders near affected installations?
  - c. Why was there no public announcement prior to the adjustment of the timelines?

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<sup>3</sup> Tabuchi, Hiroko. 2025 September 23. "Defense Department Delays Cleanup of 'Forever Chemicals' Nationwide." *The New York Times*.

United States Senate  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4704

COMMITTEES:  
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AND PENSIONS  
VETERANS' AFFAIRS

Eliminating toxic PFAS contamination at our military bases and ensuring military families have safe drinking water must be a top priority for the Department—any attempts to delay or slow-walk this important cleanup work is unacceptable. Thank you for your attention to this matter, and I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Patty Murray  
United States Senator