

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

January 23, 2024

The Honorable Mr. Carlos Del Toro
Secretary of the United States Navy
1000 Navy Pentagon, Room 4D652
Washington, DC 20350

Dear Secretary Del Toro,

We write to request that the Department of the Navy provide the San Diego Congressional Delegation with additional information regarding the effects that cross-border pollution in the Tijuana River Valley (TRV) and Pacific Ocean, have had on Naval operations.

As you know, the transboundary pollution flowing from Mexico into the United States is currently carrying untreated wastewater into San Diego County's shoreline and ocean. These flows have impacted water quality at beaches in our region—including those where Navy Seal Teams regularly train.

In February 2023, the Navy provided information on how TRV sewage has impacted naval training in Coronado, California. According to the provided data, the number of in-water training sessions cancelled due to water quality at the Silver Strand Training Complex increased from zero in FY2021 to more than 20 in FY2022. If the pollution in the TRV is not addressed, we are concerned that further training cancellations due to water quality concerns could harm the Navy and our military readiness.

Additionally, recent data from the new monitoring station run by the San Diego Air Pollution Control District have revealed that unhealthy levels of hydrogen sulfide and other gases contributing to poor air quality are present in communities near the TRV.¹ Since the monitoring station began measuring air quality in late September 2023, the data collected show hydrogen sulfide concentrations have repeatedly exceeded state and national air quality standards. This is especially alarming because prolonged exposure to this noxious gas in high concentrations can lead to nausea, headaches, and--in extreme cases--death.²

In light of this new information, we are concerned and want to ensure our Naval personnel are not at risk of exposure to these harmful gases. It is our understanding that the Navy would agree with this concern, as multiple trainings were cancelled and quality of life is a priority of the Navy. Therefore, we respectfully request that you comprehensively answer the following questions regarding contamination in the San Diego region. Please provide statistics for 2022 and 2023.

- How many instances has the Navy suspended trainings or operations due to beach closures and/or water contamination?
- How many instances and/or days has the Navy relocated trainings or operations due to beach closures and/or water contamination?
- What is the estimated cost of relocating and/or cancelling training or operations due to beach closures and/or water contamination?

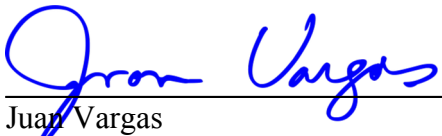
¹ <https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/news/environment/story/2024-01-07/heres-what-the-new-gas-monitors-are-showing-and-saying-about-the-tijuana-sewage-crisis>

² https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2017-12/documents/appendix_e-atsdr_h2s_factsheet.pdf

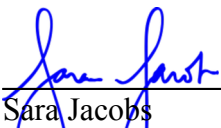
- How many Navy personnel have raised concerns about sickness or injury following a training in contaminated water or sand in the region? If there have been reports, what type(s) of illnesses have been reported?
- How is the Navy currently collecting data on the effects of sewage on training sessions? How does the Navy plan to collect such data in the future?
- Please provide the results (if complete) or title with expected completion date (if ongoing) of any Navy or Department of Defense-led or commissioned study that assesses the training, health, or readiness impacts resulting from, or related to, contaminated waters in San Diego.

We are grateful for your attention to these questions and look forward to working with your office on these and other issues in the future.


Sincerely,



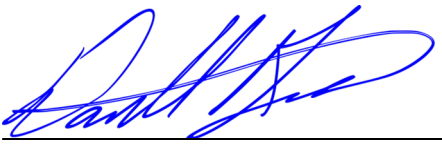
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