



Update from Congressman NEIL ABERCROMBIE

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March, 2006

Chemical Weapons at Sea

Dear Friend:

Recently the Hawaii news media discovered Army documents revealing that more than 15 million pounds of chemical weapons were dumped at sea in at least three locations off Hawaii during and after World War II.

This news raised serious questions about the extent of the undersea munitions disposal, what types of chemical agents they contain, and the potential hazards to the environment, safety and public health. I asked the Army for further information on chemical weapons dumped near Hawaii. It turned out that no one, including the Army, has a complete answer to these questions.

The Army is making an effort to compile the information, but it is clear that it will be a monumental task. It is highly likely that legislative authorization will be required to ensure that the Army has the resources needed to complete the work.



Congressman Neil Abercrombie, Senator Daniel Akaka and State Representative Maile Shimabukuro at a press conference to introduce H.R. 4778.

That's why Senator Akaka and I- as senior members of the House and Senate Armed Services Committees- decided to introduce the Hawaiian Waters Chemical Munitions Safety Act of 2006 ([H.R. 4778](#)) *link to text*.

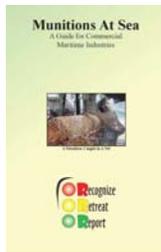
Our bill authorizes the Army to:

- Conduct an underwater survey of sites where chemical munitions are believed to have been dumped;

- Monitor confirmed dump sites and Hawaii coastal waters for possible release of harmful agents;
- Undertake a research program to study the long-term effects of sea water on chemical weapons; and
- Report to Congress on the public health and environmental risks posed by the dump sites, and the feasibility and estimated costs of remediation.

We plan on incorporating the Hawaiian Waters Chemical Munitions Safety Act into the 2007 National Defense Authorization Act, the annual bill which sets policies and priorities for the Armed Services. That way, if the Army needs extra funding to complete the job, the legislative authorization will already be in place.

No one knows exactly where these weapons are, how many tons are out there, their effect on health and the environment, or what options exist for dealing with them. Our bill will help us answer these questions. Operating from ignorance is the worst thing we can do. Our approach is to get the facts first, then move forward.



[Munitions at Sea - A Guide for Commercial Maritime Industries \(pdf\)](#)

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Neil Abercrombie".

Neil Abercrombie
Member of Congress

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Congressman Neil Abercrombie

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