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Testimony Opposing the Army's Draft Environmental Impact Statement to Retain 6,322 Acres of Hawaiian Kingdom Lands at Makua, Poamoho, and Kahuku in Oahu, Hawaii

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to voice my strong opposition to the Army's Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) concerning the retention of 6,322 acres of Hawaiian Kingdom lands at Makua, Poamoho, and Kahuku in Oahu, Hawaii. The DEIS fails to address the historical injustices, ongoing environmental degradation, and cultural violations that continued military control of these lands would perpetuate.

Historical and Legal Concerns

The lands in question were originally part of the Hawaiian Kingdom and were unlawfully taken during the overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy. This historical context is critical and must be acknowledged. The retention of these lands by the Army represents a continuation of the illegal occupation and exploitation of Hawaiian lands. The DEIS fails to consider the legal and moral implications of retaining lands that were never ceded willingly by the Hawaiian people.

Restitution and return of these lands to their rightful owners, the Native Hawaiian people, should be a priority. The DEIS should include a comprehensive examination of the historical context and provide a framework for returning these lands to Hawaiian stewardship.

Environmental Impact

Makua, Poamoho, and Kahuku are areas of immense ecological importance, hosting unique and endangered species found nowhere else on Earth. The Army's use of these lands for military exercises has already caused significant environmental damage, including contamination from unexploded ordnance, destruction of native habitats, and increased wildfire risks. The DEIS inadequately addresses the cumulative environmental impacts of continued military activities and fails to provide a robust plan for restoration and mitigation.

Preserving these areas' natural integrity is vital for the survival of endemic species and the overall health of Oahu's ecosystems. The Army must relinquish control of these lands to allow for their restoration and protection under responsible and sustainable management.

Cultural and Spiritual Significance

Makua Valley, in particular, is a site of profound cultural and spiritual importance to Native Hawaiians. It contains numerous sacred sites, including heiau (temples) and burial grounds, that have been desecrated by military activities. The DEIS fails to adequately protect these cultural resources and disregards the cultural rights of Native Hawaiians. Continued military control and use of these lands would perpetuate the cultural genocide initiated during the illegal overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom.

It is imperative that the Army recognizes and respects the cultural significance of these lands to Native Hawaiians. Returning these lands to Native Hawaiian stewardship would honor and preserve

their cultural heritage, allowing for the continuation of traditional practices and the protection of sacred sites.

Social and Economic Impacts

The social and economic well-being of local communities is also at stake. The presence of military installations and activities disrupts the daily lives of residents, affecting their health, safety, and quality of life. Moreover, the tourism industry, which is vital to Oahu's economy, is jeopardized by the environmental and cultural degradation caused by military activities.

The DEIS does not adequately address these social and economic impacts. A comprehensive evaluation of the benefits of returning these lands to the Hawaiian people, including potential economic revitalization through eco-tourism and cultural tourism, should be conducted.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Army's retention of 6,322 acres of Hawaiian Kingdom lands at Makua, Poamoho, and Kahuku is unjust and unsustainable. The DEIS fails to address the historical, environmental, cultural, and social impacts of continued military control. I strongly urge the Army to withdraw the current DEIS and instead develop a plan to return these lands to Native Hawaiian stewardship.

The restoration of these lands to their rightful owners is not only a matter of justice but also essential for the preservation of Hawaii's unique environment and cultural heritage. It is time for the Army to acknowledge the historical wrongs and take meaningful steps toward restitution and healing. Thank you for considering my testimony.