

# United States Senate

September 24, 2025

The Honorable Pete Hegseth  
Secretary of Defense  
U.S. Department of Defense  
1000 Defense Pentagon  
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Hegseth,

We write to demand answers on the Department of Defense's (DOD) decision to delay its clean-up of per- and polyfluoroalkyl (PFAS) pollution from military bases in Massachusetts and around the country. Certain PFAS—known as “forever chemicals” for their ability to persist in our environment and in our bodies without breaking down—are linked to cancer, fertility issues, diabetes, liver and thyroid disease, developmental delays in children, and other harmful health outcomes. Communities on and near military bases are exposed to these dangerous chemicals at a higher rate, due in large part to the military's longstanding use of PFAS-containing firefighting foams and other industrial solvents. We urge the DOD to reverse its decision and restore the original remediation timetable, so our military families and neighbors will not have to worry about what additional years of exposure to PFAS will mean for their health.

DOD testing has confirmed that 586 military sites are contaminated by PFAS to the point to which a remediation process must be initiated.<sup>1</sup> This includes sites in Devens, Natick, Westfield, Sudbury, and Mashpee, Massachusetts. Under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA), also known as the Superfund law, DOD must investigate and take action when it suspects a PFAS release.<sup>2</sup> In December 2024, the DOD laid out a plan to clean up these sites—but under your leadership, the Department released a new timetable this year that details its newfound intent to leave communities exposed to these chemicals for years to come.<sup>3</sup> Despite the DOD's responsibility to remediate and clean up its toxic pollution, the DOD is delaying its preparatory clean-up work at around 140 military sites with known PFAS releases. The average delay at these sites is five years, but some communities

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<sup>1</sup> Environmental Restoration and Compliance, *PFAS Data: Cleanup of PFAS*, Office of the Under Secretary of Defense (2025), <https://www.acq.osd.mil/eie/eer/ecc/pfas/data/cleanup-pfas.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Environmental Restoration and Compliance, *PFAS 101: Overview of CERCLA*, Office of the Under Secretary of Defense (2025), <https://www.acq.osd.mil/eie/eer/ecc/pfas/pfas101/cercla.html>.

<sup>3</sup> *Progress at the 723 Installations Being Assessed for PFAS Use or Potential Release*, Department of Defense (Mar. 31, 2025), <https://www.acq.osd.mil/eie/eer/ecc/pfas/docs/data/DoD-PFAS-Progress-31MAR25.pdf>.

will be left waiting for help for nearly a decade.<sup>4</sup> No clean-up work will begin until this preparatory work is complete, leaving communities exposed to chemicals for the duration of this effort.

The DOD should provide answers to its military families and to those living near military installations on what these delays mean for them, as well as why the DOD has decided to slow its effort to protect their health. For that reason, we ask for written answers to the following questions by October 8, 2025:

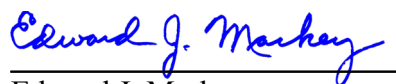
1. Why did the DOD release an updated timetable in March 2025 that pushed back estimated end dates for remedial investigation and feasibility studies at military sites with PFAS contamination?
2. Have there been further updates to this timetable since March 2025? If so, please provide the latest information.
3. Has the DOD assessed the degree to which people on and near military facilities will be further exposed to harmful levels of PFAS as a result of this delay? If yes, please provide that assessment. If not, why not?
4. Is the decision to delay preparatory clean-up work the result of a lack of funding, a lack of personnel, new information regarding the prevalence of toxic chemicals, or a separate political motive? Please explain the decision.
5. Has DOD communicated these delays to residents on or near contaminated installations? If yes, please provide dates, the form of communication, and the list of communities contacted. If not, why not?
6. In the DOD's view, are the provisions relating to PFAS in the current versions of the Fiscal Year 2026 National Defense Authorization Act under consideration in the House and Senate likely to accelerate or slow down the already delayed DOD efforts on PFAS remediation?

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

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<sup>4</sup> Hiroko Tabuchi, *Defense Department Delays Cleanup of 'Forever Chemicals' Nationwide*, N.Y. Times (Sept. 23, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/09/23/climate/military-defense-pfas-forever-chemicals-cleanup-delay.html>.



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Edward J. Markey

United States Senator



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Elizabeth Warren

United States Senator