

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

October 22, 2025

The Honorable Pete Hegseth  
Secretary of Defense  
United States Department of Defense  
1000 Defense Pentagon  
Washington, D.C. 20301

Dear Secretary Hegseth,

The 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the United States Marine Corps (USMC) is an extraordinary milestone. We are incredibly proud of the two and a half centuries of valor, excellence, and devotion of our Marines.

On Saturday, October 18, 2025, an amphibious assault demonstration – which included a variety of aircraft, ships, and amphibious vehicles – was held on Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton to celebrate this milestone. The demonstration also involved firing artillery from M777 Howitzers at land-based points west of Interstate 5 into impact areas east of the Interstate. Interstate 5 is the primary transportation route that connects Los Angeles and Orange County with San Diego, and it carries approximately 80,000 drivers each day.<sup>1</sup>

Prior to the event, official communications from the USMC stated that “all training events will occur on approved training ranges and comport with established safety protocols. No public highways or transportation routes will be closed.” Additional communication confirmed that a “detailed risk assessment” was conducted before the training event and demonstration.<sup>2</sup> Our understanding is that the artillery demonstration required a deviation from standard safety rules.

Out of an abundance of caution and to minimize public safety risks, the California Highway Patrol (CHP), closed a section of Interstate 5 during the live fire demonstration. Similarly, rail service connecting passengers between Orange County and San Diego County was disrupted for several hours or canceled entirely by federal authorities.<sup>3,4</sup>

Despite numerous assurances of safety from the White House and Headquarters Marine Corps, initial reports indicate that shrapnel from artillery hit at least two vehicles during the demonstration.<sup>5</sup> As a result, the remainder of the planned artillery demonstration was canceled.

While we are relieved no one was injured, we are deeply concerned by the decision making that led to this incident. CHP Border Division Chief Tony Coronado – who is also a Marine – added

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<sup>1</sup> CBS News, <https://www.cbsnews.com/losangeles/news/5-freeway-close-camp-pendleton-live-fire-event/>

<sup>2</sup> United States Marine Corps, <https://www.marines.mil/News/Press-Releases/Press-Release-Display/Article/4323899/marines-showcase-amphibious-capabilities-for-marine-corps-250th-birthday/>

<sup>3</sup> Amtrak, <https://www.pacificsurfliner.com/plan-your-trip/alerts/travel-advisories/>

<sup>4</sup> Metrolink, Orange County Transportation Authority, <https://www.octa.net/getting-around/rail/metrolink/rider-alerts/>

<sup>5</sup> CBS News, <https://www.cbsnews.com/losangeles/news/camp-pendleton-live-fire-demonstration-shrapnel-5-freeway-california-highway-patrol/>

that “it is highly uncommon for any live-fire or explosive training activity to occur over an active freeway.”<sup>6</sup>

We request responses to the following questions by October 29, 2025:

1. How did the USMC and relevant components prepare for this event? When did the USMC and relevant components begin preparing for this event?
2. Please describe the process the USMC conducted under the “detailed risk assessment.”
3. Who directed the USMC to conduct the artillery demonstration over Interstate 5? Who made the final decision that the live fire demonstration was considered to be safe? When was this decision made?
4. Who made the final decision that the federal government would not require the closure of Interstate 5?
5. What caused the round to detonate prematurely? Are there any plans to update safety protocol to prevent future incidents from occurring?
6. Has any other damage – including damage to property or infrastructure – been reported, beyond damage to the two CHP vehicles?
7. Was there additional shrapnel found on the Interstate 5, and if so, when exactly was the freeway cleared of said shrapnel?
8. If the freeway had not been closed to civilian traffic at the time of the incident, how does the USMC evaluate that civilian vehicles would have been impacted by it?
9. Were there any contingency plans in place outlining protocol to respond to this type of incident?
10. How often has the USMC conducted similar live fire demonstrations and trainings over Interstate 5 and the rail corridor?
11. Was this event funded by Department of Defense annual appropriations? If not, what was the funding source? From which account did the funding come?
12. How much did this event cost in total? Please include costs for maintenance of all vessels, aircraft, amphibious combat vehicles, landing craft air cushions, light armored vehicles, and hardware used during the demonstration.
13. Which agency is going to cover the costs associated with the damage to the two impacted vehicles?

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<sup>6</sup> California Highway Patrol, <https://www.chp.ca.gov/news-alerts/news-list/chp-produces-incident-report-after-artillery-round-from-camp-pendleton-prematurely-detonated-midflight-with--debris-striking-patrol-vehicle/>

The State of California prides itself on its strong relationship between Marines and neighboring communities. Maintaining public safety has been a central pillar of that relationship, which is built on trust and confidence. Our Marines deserve to be celebrated without compromising these ideals.

We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



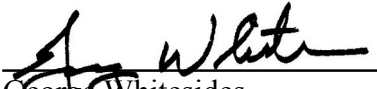
Mike Levin  
Member of Congress



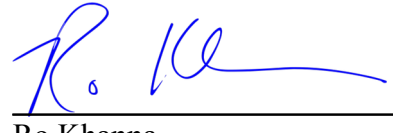
Alex Padilla  
United States Senator



Adam B. Schiff  
United States Senator



George Whitesides  
Member of Congress



Ro Khanna  
Member of Congress



Ted W. Lieu  
Member of Congress




Derek T. Tran  
Member of Congress



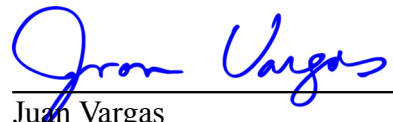
Scott H. Peters  
Member of Congress



Judy Chu  
Member of Congress



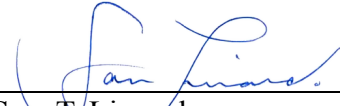
Dave Min  
Member of Congress



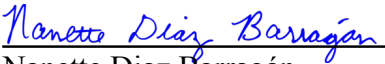
Juan Vargas  
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Raul Ruiz, M.D.  
Member of Congress



Sam T. Liccardo  
Member of Congress



Nanette Diaz Barragán  
Member of Congress



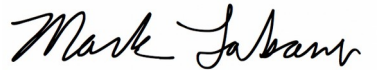
Doris Matsui  
Member of Congress



Zoe Lofgren  
Member of Congress



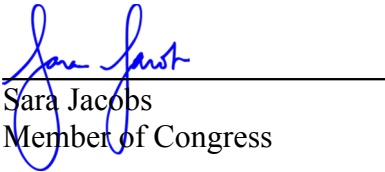
Lateefah Simon  
Member of Congress



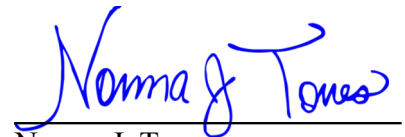
MARK TAKANO  
Member of Congress



Brad Sherman  
Member of Congress



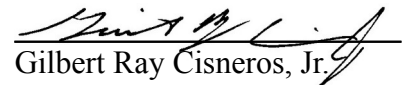
Sara Jacobs  
Member of Congress



Norma J. Torres  
Member of Congress



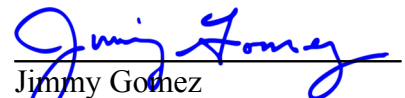
Kevin Mullin  
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Gilbert Ray Cisneros, Jr.  
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Mike Thompson  
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Jimmy Gomez  
Member of Congress

  
Luz M. Rivas  
Member of Congress

  
John Garamendi  
Member of Congress

  
Jim Costa  
Member of Congress

  
Mark DeSaulnier  
Member of Congress

CC: The Honorable John Phelan, United States Secretary of the Navy  
General Eric M. Smith, Commandant of the United States Marine Corps