

House Committee on Transportation Hearing
Friday, March 19, 2021
10:30 AM VideoConference
Room 423

LATE

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 95 / HOUSE RESOLUTION 80
Testimony in Strong Support with Recommendations from
O'ahu Tour Helicopter Safety and Noise Inter-Action Group

Aloha Chair Aquino, Vice Chair Ilagan and Transportation Committee Members:

Excessive aircraft noise compromises the health and well-being of the Hawaii 's people, and remedies are long overdue for the safety protection and quality of life relief to thousands of suffering citizens in Hawai'i, particularly on O'ahu and Hawai'i Island as well as Kaua'i and Maui.

Tour helicopters have been increasingly inundating and impacting established communities with incessant noise invasion. The crescendo of island-wide community complaints across the State over the past four years has demonstrated this. Despite this public outcry, *tour helicopter operators have been unwilling to change their flight paths to prevent the significant negative effects of helicopter noise within and around these impacted communities.*

Further, tour helicopters are an inherent safety risk to Hawaii's island communities, natural habitats and coastal defense areas. The following commercial helicopter crashes and emergencies have occurred in Hawai'i since September 2018:

- September 18, 2018- Novictor Robinson-44 crash in Wahiawa, O'ahu;
- October 22, 2018- Novictor Robinson-44 crash at Kaneohe Bay recreational sand bar;
- February 21, 2019- K&S "Paradise" Hughes-369E crash in Waipio Valley, Hawai'i Island;
- April 16, 2019- K&S "Paradise" Hughes-369E crash in Sacred Falls State Park, Oah'u;
- April 29, 2019- Novictor Robinson-44 crash with 3 fatalities on a Kailua town street;
- May 21, 2019- Schuman "Magnum" 369D emergency landing in the Diamond Head National Natural Landmark and State Historic Monument Crater Park with 3,300 daily visitors;
- December 26, 2019 - Safari Eurocopter-AS350 crash with 7 fatalities on a Kauai cliff face near the Na Pali Coast;
- March 5, 2020 - Blue Hawaiian Eurocopter 130 crash in Puna, Hawai'i Island;

In 2016, a fatal tour helicopter crash occurred near the USS Arizona memorial and Pearl Harbor nuclear submarine base.

As the National Transportation Safety Board Chairperson has notably stated, "each crash underscores the urgency" for effective tour helicopter safety improvements.

Protection of the Safety, Health and Well-Being of Hawai'i's Communities is Paramount

Effective self-regulation, if ever, by Hawaii tour operator associations, especially the Hawaii Helicopter Association among whose members are the most egregious offenders, as well as TOPS (Tour Operators Program of Safety) members, will serve to eliminate ground disruptions by tour helicopter operations that presently relentlessly disrupt Hawaii 's communities, which will be safer with far fewer disruptions if existing regulations are used and enforced to their full extent via tour helicopter management plans.

Recommendations

As the record demonstrates, it is unlikely that tour helicopter companies will “take disciplinary action against (their own) pilots” who violate requested restrictions. Therefore an independent oversight and disciplinary mechanism would be necessary, such as an independent State airport reporting and recording data base system that is publicly accessible with viewable data, and capable of direct reporting to the FAA Flight Standards Office for enforcement with tiered penalties.

In addition to the above recommendations for incorporation within both House Concurrent Resolution 95 and its companion House Resolution 80, we recommend that certified copies be additionally transmitted to the Tour Operators Program of Safety (TOPS) membership, the FAA Western Region Administrator, the Honolulu Airports Air Traffic Control (ATC) Chief Manager, the Honolulu Flight Standards District Office (FSDO) Managers, the Co-Chairs of the Hawaii Air Noise and Safety Task Force (HANSTF) , the Mayors and County Councils of each island, and each O’ahu Neighborhood Board Chairperson.

HR-80

Submitted on: 3/17/2021 9:14:03 AM

Testimony for TRN on 3/19/2021 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Victor K. Ramos	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I live near the base of the West Maui Mountains. During the COVID travel restrictions, the tour helicopters are nearly non-existent. Peace and quiet has returned to our home and our neighborhood.

Tourism (The only egg in our Maui-basket): We've become a victim(s) of our own success.

I support this Resolution.