



PERSONNEL AND
READINESS

OFFICE OF THE UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

4000 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-4000

APR 26 2017

The Honorable Matt Gaetz
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Gaetz:

Thank you for your letter dated March 24, 2017, regarding maintaining the moratorium on oil and gas activities in the Gulf of Mexico beyond 2022. Since military readiness falls under my purview, I have been asked to respond to your letter on behalf of the Secretary of Defense. The Department of Defense (DoD) cannot overstate the vital importance of maintaining this moratorium.

National security and energy security are inextricably linked and the DoD fully supports the development of our nation's domestic energy resources in a manner that is compatible with military testing, training, and operations. As mentioned in your letter, the complex of eastern Gulf of Mexico operating areas and warning areas provides critical opportunities for advanced weapons testing and joint training exercises. The moratorium on oil and gas "leasing, pre-leasing, and other related activities" ensures that these vital military readiness activities may be conducted without interference and is critical to their continuation. Emerging technologies such as hypersonics, autonomous systems, and advanced sub-surface systems will require enlarged testing and training footprints, and increased DoD reliance on the Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act's moratorium beyond 2022. The moratorium is essential for developing and sustaining our nation's future combat capabilities.

Since signing the 1983 "Memorandum of Agreement Between the Department of Defense and the Department of the Interior on Mutual Concerns on the Outer Continental Shelf," the two departments have worked cooperatively to ensure offshore resource development is compatible with military readiness activities. During recent discussions between the DoD and the Department of the Interior's Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, a question arose concerning whether Congress intended the moratorium to prohibit even geological and geophysical survey activities in the eastern Gulf. We would welcome clarification from Congress concerning this matter.

On behalf of the Secretary, I appreciate your interest in sustaining our testing and training activities in the eastern Gulf of Mexico.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "A. M. Kurta".

A. M. Kurta
Performing the Duties of the Under Secretary of
Defense for Personnel and Readiness