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## LETTERS

*The following was submitted to Bath Iron Works president Frederick Harris on Thursday by members of Maine Walk for Peace:*

Dear Mr. Harris:

Maine Veterans for Peace and a group of other organizations from our region are walking from Ellsworth, Maine to Portsmouth, New Hampshire from Oct. 9-24 to shine a light on the Navy's impact on the oceans.

The Pentagon has the largest carbon footprint on our Mother Earth. Waging endless war consumes massive amounts of fossil fuels and lays waste to significant environmentally sensitive places on the planet — particularly the oceans.

The oceans are inhabited by a multitude of different life forms, from microorganisms to whales, many of whom are able to sense sound and use it to find food, navigate, communicate, and avoid predators. Navy sonar blasts wreak havoc on these creatures, disrupting their lives, leaving animals more susceptible to disease and lowered reproductive success, and sometimes injuring and killing them.

Pier-side testing of sonar occurs at Bath Iron Works (BIW) and at the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in Kittery which results in significant fish kills. Navy off-shore weapons testing exercises puts toxic chemicals and hazardous materials and waste into the marine environment.

The Kennebec River that BIW fronts is often dredged in order to allow the deep hulled destroyers built here to get into the ocean. Dredging takes a heavy toll on aquatic life.

As a result of the current U.S. 'pivot' of 60 percent of military forces into the Asia-Pacific more ports-of-call are needed for Navy warships. One such place is Jeju Island, South Korea where a 500- year-old fishing and farming community is being torn apart to build a Navy base for visiting U.S. warships like the destroyers made at BIW. Just offshore Jeju Island a UNESCO recognized endangered soft coral forest is being destroyed by dredging to make it possible for U.S. vessels to port there.

In early 2014 Maine's Sen. Angus King went on a nuclear submarine ride under the Arctic Sea ice which is now melting due to climate change. Admiral Jonathan Greenert, former chief of naval operations was on the sub and said, "In our lifetime, what was [in effect] land and prohibitive to navigate or explore, is becoming an ocean ... We need to be sure that our sensors, weapons and people are proficient in this part of the world," so that we can "own the undersea domain and get anywhere there."

When Sen. King returned from the trip he told his constituents that there has been “a 40% reduction in ice as a result of global warming.” He reported that “previously inaccessible” gas and oil reserves were now going to create “new opportunities.” King concluded, “I am convinced we need to increase our capacity in the region, something I intend to press upon my colleagues on the Armed Services Committee as we work on our military priorities for the coming years.”

Rather than drill for more fossil fuels in the Arctic, and create a new arms race in that environmentally sensitive region, the U.S. should be working to convert our military industries to build offshore wind turbines, rail, solar and tidal power. According to studies done by the UMASS-Amherst Economics Department shipyards in Bath and Portsmouth could nearly double their number of jobs by building rail or wind turbines. The Gulf of Maine has more wind power generating potential than any other place in the U.S.

If the seas die so do humans on Earth and much of the wildlife. Now is the time for each of us to speak out for ending the massive military impacts on the world’s oceans and for conversion of our fossil fuel dependent military industrial complex to sustainable technologies. We are walking to bring attention to these crucial issues.

Please help us protect the future generations on Earth, and our relations in the oceans, by working now to convert BIW to peaceful and environmentally sustainable purposes. We’d be happy to meet with you any time to discuss this urgent situation.

**Maine Veterans for Peace PeaceWorks; CodePink Maine; Citizens Opposing Active Sonar Threats (COAST); Peace Action Maine; Veterans for Peace Smedley Butler Brigade (Greater Boston); Seacoast Peace Response (Portsmouth); Maine Green Independent Party; Global Network Against Weapons & Nuclear Power in Space**