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November 14, 2025

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

RE: Urgent Federal Action Needed to Protect National Security, Military Readiness, and Recognize Kern County as a National Resource Development Zone

Dear Mr. President,

On behalf of the Kern County Board of Supervisors, we write to call on you to take decisive and bold action to address California's rapidly collapsing energy production, refining capacity, and fuel infrastructure. We are deeply concerned about the growing risks posed to U.S. military readiness and national security by California's diminished energy production. Your leadership can reverse this decline, greatly improve the safety and security of our nation, and deliver a win for American military readiness.

Kern County serves as one of the nation's most strategically important energy and resource-producing regions, directly supporting critical military installations such as Edwards Air Force Base and Naval Air Weapons Station China Lake. The continued erosion of California's energy infrastructure threatens not only our local economy but the operational capacity of our armed forces across the Indo-Pacific and western United States.

Strategic Risks to Military Readiness

A recent defense-focused energy security analysis identifies four escalating vulnerabilities affecting the ability of California-based and California-supplied military installations to sustain operations during crisis or conflict:

1. **Refinery Closures** — California has lost a substantial share of its refining capacity since the early 1990s, with additional closures and conversions underway and no new facilities being built to replace them.
2. **Pipeline and Fuel Transport Fragility** — California lacks inbound crude pipelines from other states. Fuel is heavily dependent on marine imports and single-threaded distribution routes that are already strained and vulnerable to disruption.

3. **Declining In-State Production** — Oil production in California, most of it from Kern County, has fallen by more than 68% from historic peaks. This has increased reliance on foreign crude, including from nations that do not share U.S. strategic interests.
4. **Minimal Refined Fuel Reserves** — Unlike the federal Strategic Petroleum Reserve, California has no refined-fuel reserve system. In the event of a disruption, many military installations have only 48–72 hours of fuel supply on hand.

These risks are already affecting defense operations and supply logistics for installations such as Edwards AFB, China Lake, Fort Irwin, and Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, as well as facilities across Arizona, Nevada, Hawaii, and the greater Indo-Pacific Command.

Kern County’s Strategic Role

Kern County remains the backbone of California’s energy, agriculture, and mineral production. Few places in America combine such a concentration of resources critical to national defense and economic stability:

- **Oil and Natural Gas** — Kern produces over 70% of California’s in-state oil supply—fueling military bases, aviation operations, and strategic transportation corridors.
- **Renewable Energy** — Kern is a consistent leader across the nation in renewable energy generation, including wind, solar, and battery storage, making it indispensable in grid reliability and energy diversity.
- **Critical Minerals** — Home to the nation’s largest boron mine and rare earth elements vital to aerospace, munitions, semiconductors, and clean energy technologies.
- **Agriculture and Water** — One of the nation’s most productive agricultural counties, sustained by the Kern River watershed and groundwater infrastructure.

Despite these contributions, Kern County’s ability to support national defense is being undermined by state-level permitting delays, abrupt regulatory shifts, and policies that restrict responsible production of domestic energy and minerals.

Federal Actions Requested

To address these vulnerabilities, we respectfully urge your Administration to:

1. Invoke the Defense Production Act (DPA) to Protect Domestic Fuel and Energy Supply for National Defense.

Title I, Section 101(c) of the DPA authorizes the President to prioritize and allocate materials, services, and facilities necessary to maximize domestic energy supplies for national defense. Past administrations, from Presidents Ford and Carter during the Trans-Alaska Pipeline era to recent DPA actions on critical minerals, have used this authority for similar challenges.

2. Establish Kern County as a National Resource Development Zone (NRDZ).

Consistent with language advanced by members of the California State Legislature, this designation would formally recognize Kern County as a strategic hub for energy, agriculture, and critical minerals vital to national security. An NRDZ would:

- Expedite federal permitting and environmental reviews under NEPA and the Clean Water Act
- Prioritize federal investment in energy infrastructure, pipeline modernization, transmission lines, and fuel resilience projects

- Support advanced technologies such as carbon capture, enhanced oil recovery, geothermal, and defense-related synthetic fuel production
- Provide a federal framework for balancing environmental stewardship with national security imperatives

3. Create a Federal-State Energy Security and Military Readiness Task Force.

This task force would include the Department of Defense, Department of Energy, Department of the Interior, and state and county-level leadership to develop contingency plans for fuel supply interruptions and ensure that installations like Edwards AFB and China Lake maintain uninterrupted operational capability.

In summary, America cannot project strength abroad if we cannot secure the fuel, energy, and critical resources necessary to operate military bases here at home. Kern County has powered California and the nation for generations, and we stand ready to continue doing so. But without immediate federal action, California's current trajectory will jeopardize not only our local economy, but also national defense and energy independence.

We respectfully urge you to act swiftly and decisively. We stand ready to partner with your Administration, Congress, and the Department of Defense to implement these solutions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Leticia Perez', with a stylized, cursive script.

Leticia Perez, Chair
Kern County Board of Supervisors

cc: The Honorable Gavin Newsom, Governor of California
Honorable Members, Kern County Congressional Delegation
Honorable Members, Kern County Legislative Delegation
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