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Dear General Brown,

I recently learned of the enormous, industrial offshore wind complexes planned for the pristine ocean off Rhode Island and Massachusetts. I am shocked that some of these projects are already under construction, and others are being ramrodded through a deficient regulatory process despite the controversy over their acknowledged impacts and questionable benefits.

The Government Accountability Office (GAO) is currently investigating the potential impacts of planned offshore wind developments on maritime activities. The Inspector General of the Department of Transportation (DOT) is also conducting an audit of the effects of offshore wind on radar, commercial air, and military traffic and the sufficiency of the review process on these issues. The North Atlantic offshore wind projects should be halted until the results of the GAO and the DOT investigation are published.

I fail to understand why our coastal states' leadership seems to welcome the destruction of their oceans for foreign profit, as it has become clear that offshore wind developments do not reduce carbon emissions or dependence on fossil fuels. Instead, they destroy pristine ocean habitats, decimate fishing industries, cause economic hardship, and create significant navigation and security hazards. According to the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM), the projects will significantly affect our fishing, the economy, employment, and environmental justice in Rhode Island (RWF DEIS, Table 2.3-1). Even overall air quality will deteriorate (Ibid).

Because wind is intermittent, and neither the technology nor manufacturing ability exists to provide adequate battery storage, the grid needs fossil fuel generators ready to supply 100% of electricity needs. These projects will not replace a single fossil fuel power plant. Moreover, on-demand cycling from low production to full capacity means backup fossil fuel generators will emit more CO₂ than they would under a consistent demand scenario. BOEM itself has stated that the turbines will have "no measurable influence on climate change" [RWF DEIS, 3.811].

Most alarming, the turbines interfere with radar and marine navigation systems, disrupting military operations, search and rescue, and surveillance. This threatens national security. Multiple federal lawmakers have issued warnings about this issue. A 2022 National Academy of Sciences study concluded that offshore wind development will create "interference with marine vessel radar, which is a critical instrument for navigation, collision avoidance, and use in search and rescue missions." (<https://doi.org/10.17226/26430>.) A 700 square mile zone off North Carolina was recently taken out of consideration by BOEM due to US Navy and Air Force concerns that wind turbines will interfere with military operations in the area, including training. The same concerns apply to the North Atlantic projects.

Offshore wind contributes to grid instability, itself a national security vulnerability, and generates cybersecurity concerns regarding remote control and maintenance. Multiple entities can control and collect data on wind installations remotely, providing more ways to penetrate the system. A hurricane barreling up the east coast, which happens with increasing frequency as the earth warms, could not only disable but destroy thousands of turbines, leaving a fractured grid and an ocean strewn with huge pieces of debris. Who will bear these costs? Not the energy companies who are developing these offshore wind complexes, but American taxpayers.

Offshore wind is not "green," it is not safe, it is not cost-effective, it will not help climate change, and its impacts on marine life and livelihoods are dire. Forcing these projects through an inadequate regulatory framework because the tax incentives expire, and the power purchase agreements were negotiated before the environmental impact statements, is unacceptable. The turbines will be with us for decades, poisoning our seas and scarring our shorelines, a haunting reminder of the folly of prioritizing political expediency over our citizens and our natural resources.

Offshore wind developments off Rhode Island and Massachusetts will destroy the ocean habitat, decimate marine animal populations, cripple ocean-dependent industries, and obliterate the quality of life that proximity to the ocean gives residents and visitors. They will also enrich foreign national energy companies at the expense of American taxpayers and jeopardize national security, military operations, and maritime safety. Offshore wind complexes will raise energy costs and create an enormous environmental liability that will endure until the last turbine falls-- all without ever reducing our carbon emissions or taking a single fossil fuel plant offline.

The devastation these projects will wreak on marine ecosystems, animals, and human lives and livelihoods is irreversible. We must not allow these projects to proceed without fully understanding their ramifications.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of these grave and pressing issues.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Amb. J. William Middendorf II". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "A" and a prominent "II" at the end.

Ambassador J. W. Middendorf II,
62nd Secretary of the Navy