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Veterans Respond to the Desert National Wildlife Refuge and Nevada Test and Training Range Withdrawal and Management Act

The introduction of the [DNWR and NTTR Withdrawal and Management Act](#) by Senator Catherine Cortez Masto is an important first step in curtailing the expansion of Nellis Air Force Base and the Nevada Test and Training Range (NTTR). We are heartened to see Senator Cortez Masto joining in the efforts of a broad coalition of community organizations, Nevada neighborhoods, conservationists, indigenous communities, and the Nevada state legislature, who have been working on this issue for the last year.

We are grateful to Senator Cortez Masto for introducing legislation that would grant the U.S. Air Force less than one third of the public land they had asked to take over to expand the Nellis Test and Training Range north of Las Vegas. The bill also protects the vital wildlife habitat of the Desert National Wildlife Refuge (DNWR), archeological sites, and important cultural history of the Refuge. Most importantly, we are grateful that the legislation removes all language around "ready access". The removal now denies the military the opportunity to use much of the land for bombing and denies the military its request for primary jurisdiction over all of the Refuge they currently co-manage with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. We also commend Senator Cortez Masto's bill for requiring that Congress review the military operation on public lands in 20 years rather than the permanent withdrawal the military had requested.

As an organization of veterans from all branches of service dedicated to building a culture of peace and exposing the costs of war, we know how challenging it can be to limit the military's constant attempts at expansion. The military's expansive appetite for land and resources is unparalleled and surpasses our next 7 allied countries combined. The Air Force currently already controls 2.9 million acres for the Nevada Test and Training Range, a sprawling expanse of public land that has already been withdrawn for military use. These lands provide ample opportunity for aerial gunnery, flight testing, and other military readiness activities. With so much public land already available to the Air Force, Veterans For Peace continues to believe that the Air Force does not need any more land to meet its needs.

This legislation is an important first step in protecting the Desert National Wildlife Refuge and we look forward to working with Senator Cortez Masto and the many groups and individuals, nationally, regionally and locally that have come together to protect the DNWR.