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Turtle protection

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HAWAII NEWS

1997 has proved to be a banner year for the Hawaiian green sea turtle. In April, the Hawaii Senate passed a bill acknowledging fibropapilloma disease as a serious threat to the honu, and now the U.S. Navy is doing what it can to help this threatened species.

I am a Canadian citizen who has been at times puzzled by Americans and their ways. However, my bafflement has reached new heights with the U.S. Navy's intentions of expanding its defense base to include the French Frigate Shoals, the primary nesting site of the Hawaiian green turtle.

The Navy insists their new system is needed "because of a proliferation of short-range missiles capable of nuclear, chemical and biological destruction by more than 30 countries" and the French Frigate Shoals are part of the Great Picture. I am trying to believe them.

Perhaps it is because I am Canadian and just don't get it, but why would 30 countries want to attack the Hawaiian green sea turtle in its primary nesting habitat?

I submit few people feel the honu need rigorous defending more than I do and I certainly applaud the benevolence of your Navy, but I think the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is doing a splendid job right now protecting the French Frigate Shoals from intrusion.

On a more serious note, I ponder with some bitterness how funding for sea turtle research has stagnated while costs go up. And then I think of military spending. I am left to wonder what advances could be made if a mere fraction of a decimal place the Navy spends on defense were directed to finance the much-needed research into fibropapilloma disease — the greatest single threat to Hawaii's sea turtles.

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