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Press Statement: Offshore Wind Projects and Military Radar Interference

Save Long Beach Island, Inc. (Save LBI) finds statements coming from wind energy companies in response to recent stop work orders that they didn't know there was a problem with their wind complexes interfering with onshore U.S. military radars, and if there is a problem they can fix it, disingenuous and reckless.

The claim that wind developers "didn't know" about this radar interference is not credible. The problem has been raised repeatedly by the Department of War, numerous commentors, and the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management itself in its 2020 Report titled, "Radar Interference Analysis for Renewable Energy Facilities on the Atlantic Outer Continental Shelf." OCS Study, 2020-039.

More importantly, the assertion that this serious problem can readily be corrected is wrong. Basic geometry and publicly available information make clear that large offshore wind complexes inevitably interfere with long-range radar systems, and that no corrective action is in sight.

The Problem

Modern offshore wind complexes pose a serious risk to the effectiveness of ARSR-4 long-range military radars. The immense size of turbine structures arranged in dense rows creates a radar cross-section thousands of times larger than that of the smaller aircraft or objects these systems are designed to detect. This results in significant blind spots behind wind complexes that are invisible to radar coverage.

In addition, ARSR-4 radars rely on Doppler processing (changes in detected frequency from moving objects) to identify moving targets. The outer part of turbine blades can approach speeds of 200 mph, closely matching the Doppler signatures of real airborne targets, making it extremely difficult to distinguish legitimate objects from turbine blade interference.

The Purported Fixes

The publicly released "Summary of Test Results for the Interagency Field Test and Evaluation of Wind Turbine–Radar Interference Mitigation Technologies" (September 2013) concluded that software or mitigation measures on the radar itself cannot restore its capability. The only possible

remedy was the installation of new “infill” radars to see behind the wind complex (or smaller turbines which, for economic reasons, the companies don’t want to consider).

Shoreline and ocean geometry makes effective placement of onshore infill radars impractical. Radars would need to be positioned far from the blind spots to see them, which introduces their own coverage gaps due to the curvature of the earth. For example, at 45 miles, a target below 1,100 feet in altitude would not be visible to a radar antenna positioned 100 feet above ground level.

Proposals to place sensitive “infill” military radars on offshore wind turbines, substations, or platforms are unacceptable. These facilities are owned and operated by foreign corporations—often supported by foreign governments—and may be co-located with electronic equipment from potential adversaries. This raises serious national security concerns.

Sea-based radars introduce further problems, including corrosion, harsh operating environments, sea clutter, maintenance challenges, platform motion instability, and the need for guaranteed power and secure communications. Floating radar platforms would require complex stabilization systems and currently present no reliable solution.

The federal SENSR program, intended to replace legacy radars, remains in development, has released no public testing data demonstrating effectiveness against wind turbine interference, faces uncertain funding, and would still require offshore infill radars. It offers no viable solution now or in the foreseeable future.

Conclusions

The ARSR-4 radar interference problem cannot be adequately corrected now or in the foreseeable future. If workable solutions existed, they would have already been incorporated as mitigating measures into approved offshore wind projects. They were not.

Where offshore wind projects interfere with military radar, lease area cancellation is the only responsible solution. The problem arises from earlier, willfully blind to the problem, siting decisions, and any modern wind project in the same area—with tall towers, long blades, and tight spacing—will recreate the same hazards.

Sponsoring states have shown a willingness to sacrifice pristine seascapes, coastal tourism, whales, dolphins, fish, other marine life, birds, and now national security, in pursuit of an unrealistic narrative about climate solutions. It is time to end this quixotic approach, terminate these leases, and chart a new course toward reliable, affordable energy and meaningful climate strategies, as outlined in our recent White Paper at: https://www.savelbi.org/communications

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