



Feinstein and Boxer Raise Concerns about Transfer of Santa Rosa Island to Defense Department

- *Senators oppose inserting measure that would establish island as a 'morale operation' for the military in the DOD authorization bill -*
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Washington, DC – U.S. Senators Dianne Feinstein and Barbara Boxer (both D-Calif.) today raised concerns about the possible inclusion of a provision into the FY 06 Defense Authorization bill that would effectively transfer Santa Rosa Island from the National Park Service to the Department of Defense.

Under the provision, Santa Rosa Island, which is currently part of Channel Islands National Park, would be managed for recreational purposes--including hunting--for members of the Armed Forces, veterans, and their guests.

In a letter to the Chairman and Ranking Member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, John Warner and Carl Levin, the Senators wrote:

“We are writing to express our concern about the possible inclusion of a provision in the FY06 Defense Authorization bill that would transfer Santa Rosa Island off the Southern California coast from the National Park Service to the Department of Defense.

The proposal put forward by Congressman Duncan Hunter would seek to establish Santa Rosa Island, which is currently part of the Channel Islands National Park, as a ‘morale, welfare, and recreation operation’ for the military. More specifically, the language would open the island for recreation purposes, including hunting, to members of the Armed Forces, Veterans and their guests.

While we support enhancing both training and recreational opportunities for our military, we believe inserting such a provision at this late date into the Defense Authorization bill would be premature and rash for several reasons.

First, it is our understanding that the Defense Department has not requested the provision; while conversely, the National Park Service is very much opposed to it. Secondly, the Hunter proposal would clearly alter a court settlement that requires the phasing out of elk and deer hunting on Santa Rosa Island starting in 2008. Thirdly, the language could restrict public access to the island, which the federal government purchased with taxpayer money for \$30 million in

1986. And finally, there might well be a negative environmental impact that could result from the land transfer.

Therefore, we would ask that before any further consideration of the proposal is given, that a comprehensive and careful review process take place that provides for both public comment and Congressional hearings. Consequently, we oppose the inclusion of the Hunter provision in the Defense Authorization bill at this time.”

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