

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 7, 2023

VIA ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION

The Honorable Lloyd J. Austin III
Secretary
Department of Defense

The Honorable Deb Haaland
Secretary
Department of the Interior

The Honorable Thomas J. Vilsack
Secretary
Department of Agriculture

Dear Secretary Austin, Secretary Haaland and Secretary Vilsack:

The Brown Treesnake (BTS) has caused significant damage to the island of Guam and surrounding islands and, according to the Department of the Interior (DOI), the damage done by the BTS “often interfere[s] with national defense activities on the island.”¹ The DOI, the Department of Agriculture (DOA) and the Department of Defense (DoD) have spent millions of taxpayer dollars to combat the problems caused by this snake.² For example, between 1993 and

¹ Thomas H. Fritts, *Economic costs of electrical system instability and power outages caused by snakes on the Island of Guam*, SCIENCE DIRECT (Nov. 8, 2001),

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0964830501001081>;

² Office of Insular Affairs et al., *Fiscal Year 2023 Budget Justifications and Performance Information* Fiscal Year 2023, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR at 40 (Mar. 28, 2022), <https://www.doi.gov/sites/doi.gov/files/fy2023-opia-greenbook.pdf>; Press Release, U.S. Department of the Interior, *Assistant Secretary Babauta Supports Brown Treesnake Control Program On Guam* (2010), <https://www.doi.gov/opia/press/2010/Assistant-Secretary-Babauta-Supports-Brown-Treesnake-Control-Program-On-Guam>; U.S. Department of the Interior, *OIA and USGS Continue Partnership to Combat the Brown Treesnake* (2011), <https://www.doi.gov/opia/press/2011/OIA-and-USGS-Continue-Partnership-to-Combat-the-Brown-Treesnake>; U.S. Department of the Interior, *Interior Provides \$3.7 Million for Brown Tree Snake Control, Interdiction, and Prevention in Western Pacific and Hawaii* (Aug. 12, 2015), <https://www.doi.gov/sites/doi.opengov.ibmcloud.com/files/uploads/08122015-Brown-Tree-Snake-Press-Release-FINAL.pdf>; U.S. Department of the Interior, *\$2.8 million Provided to Combat Brown Tree Snake* (Jul. 18, 2018), <https://www.doi.gov/opia/press/28-million-provided-combat-brown-tree-snake>; U.S. Department of the Interior, *Interior Announces \$3.4 Million for Brown Tree Snake Control on Guam* (Jun. 3, 2020), <https://www.doi.gov/opia/press/interior-announces-34-million-brown-tree-snake-control-guam>; U.S. Department of the Interior, *Interior Announces \$4.1 Million to Fight the Brown Tree Snake on Guam* (Oct. 14, 2021), <https://www.doi.gov/opia/press/Interior-Announces-%244.1-Million-to-Fight-the-Brown-Tree-Snake-on-Guam>; U.S. Department of the Interior, *Interior’s Office of Insular Affairs Announces \$3.8 Million to Counter the Brown Tree Snake on Guam* (Aug. 16, 2022), <https://www.doi.gov/opia/press/Interior%20%99s-Office-of-Insular-Affairs-Announces-%243.8-Million-to-Counter-the-Brown-Tree-Snake-on-Guam>

2015 DoD spent over \$40 million to address problems caused by the BTS³ and combined with DOI, since 1993 the American taxpayer has paid at least \$84 million in an attempt to eradicate the BTS and prevent damage to U.S. Government facilities.⁴ Similarly, DoD spent over \$50 million in FY23 to continue those efforts.⁵ Based on the President's FY24 Budget, DOI has requested an additional \$4 million. It is abundantly clear that eradication is not taking place even as taxpayers continue to shell out millions of dollars each year.

In order for Congress to perform an objective and independent review of this matter and to better understand how taxpayer money has been spent, please respond to the following questions no later than June 21, 2023.

1. How much taxpayer money has your department spent related to the Brown Treesnake, including eradication, control, and research? Please provide a yearly breakdown from 1993 to the date of this letter.
2. For each project related to the Brown Treesnake, including eradication, control, and research, describe and name each project, the government agency and/or contractor involved, and its results. Provide all records.
3. How many Brown Treesnakes are estimated to be on the island of Guam? What was the estimate in 2005, 2010, 2015, and 2020?
4. What is your estimated timeline to complete the stated goal of eradicating the Brown Treesnake from Guam?

If you have any questions, please contact my Committee staff at (202) 224-0642.

Sincerely,



Charles E. Grassley
Ranking Member
Committee on the Budget

³ Office of the Secretary of Defense et al., *Report to the Congress: Control of the Brown Tree Snake (BTS)*, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE at 5-6 (Aug. 2008), <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/ADA609424.pdf>

⁴ Brown Tree Snake Control and Eradication Act of 2004, H.R. 3479, 108th Cong. § 3 (2004), <https://www.congress.gov/108/plaws/publ384/PLAW-108publ384.pdf>

⁵ Office of the Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller), *Department of Defense Budget Fiscal Year 2024 : Construction Programs (C-1)*, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE at 177 (Mar. 2023), https://comptroller.defense.gov/Portals/45/Documents/defbudget/FY2024/FY2024_c1.pdf