



**US Army Corps
of Engineers®**

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America's Engineers in the Pacific

Story and Photos by Heike Hasenauer, Senior Editor SOLDIERS Magazine

(HONOLULU NR-023-05) Since the beginning of the 20th century, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Honolulu District, headquartered at Fort Shafter, Hawaii, has made "phenomenal" contributions to the United States and its military forces, said LTC David E. Anderson, Honolulu District commander.

The district celebrated 100 years of service to Hawaii, the Pacific region and the nation in April 2005.

Supporting Soldiers, Islanders and Island Habitats

"We've helped so many people in so many ways. One of the best is our support of the people of Hawaii and other areas in the Pacific during natural disasters," Anderson said.

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“During response and recovery efforts, we do infrastructure-reconstruction, road work, whatever it takes to get things back up and running. Right now, Honolulu District personnel are deployed to support recovery efforts in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in the Mississippi Valley Region.”

The biggest mission of the district is military construction.

As part of the Army Transformation process in Hawaii, the District successfully completed one of the most extensive and detailed Environmental Impact Statements ever done for the Army.

The district did the EIS to support the transformation of the 25th Infantry Division (Light)’s Second Brigade into a Stryker Brigade Combat Team.

In addition, Corps engineers studied the environmental impacts of positioning a Stryker Brigade in Alaska.

On Oahu, the district is also focused on the 10-year, \$865-million Whole Barracks Renewal Program to improve the quality of single soldier housing.

A big future challenge will be to implement the Army’s vision of MILCON Transformation.

“We’re doing a lot of good for our Soldiers and their families. Executing projects to improve their quality of life is very gratifying,” Anderson said.

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Other military-funded work includes environmental missions, such as clean up of formerly used defense sites, including a massive project at Waikoloa on the island of Hawaii; and real-estate work for the armed forces, such as administering leases for 34 recruiting stations in the Pacific.

The Honolulu District is responsible for an area that spans 12,000,000 square miles, from Hawaii to the east coast of Africa.

Seventy to 80 percent of the district's mission is military construction for the Army and Air Force. Ten to 20 percent of the district workload involves civil works projects, including harbors, shore protection, flood control and projects funded by other civilian agencies.

These non-military services of the Corps include work for agencies such as the U.S. Department of the Interior and the U.S. State Department; various nations and state, county, and territorial agencies of the Pacific; regulatory work, to enforce laws ensuring that prospective builders secure required permits; and emergency-management services, in response to natural disasters and wars.

Palau Compact Road

One of the Honolulu District's largest projects is a 53-mile, two-lane road-construction project in the Pacific nation of Palau, where 80 percent of the population lives in the southern part of Babeldaob Island, the largest of Republic of Palau's more than 300 islands.

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The remainder of the island is largely uninhabited because there's no infrastructure, making it impossible for many Palauan families to live on their families' land, and forcing them to rent quarters in the capital city of Koror to get to and from work each day.

The road is being cut through triple-canopy jungle – a tough test of even the most modern equipment – and, when completed, will allow islanders to access areas they've never before explored, according to Anderson.

Before construction of the road, the islanders had no means of exploring their main island, mainly because Palau's jungles were so dense and they weren't equipped to clear land and build their own roads. Complicating matters further is the 200 inches of rain that falls on Palau annually.

“The road is badly needed and as envisioned by the writers of the Compact of Free Association will change the economic future of Palau,” said Alex Morrison, the Honolulu District's resident engineer and administrative contracting officer for the Palau road project. He has been on the island since the project began in 1999 and will be there until the project is completed.

When the road's finished, Palau's people will be able to expand north.

“They've already built a new capitol building that looks much like the U.S. capitol,” Anderson said.

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“Right now you can drive through the jungle and see nothing else. Suddenly, you round a bend, and there it is, this big domed building.”

“This district’s civil works program is small, compared to some mainland engineer districts” Anderson said, “but what we do for Pacific Island communities, including those on American Samoa, Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands, is extremely important. It includes improving ports and harbors and safeguarding the communities from storm and flood damages and protecting shorelines from the destructive power of the sea.”

“In American Samoa many people get on boats to go to work, school and church,” he added. “Without decent harbors, they couldn’t do that.”

Pacific Ocean Division’s role in the Corps

Pacific Ocean Division, headquartered at Fort Shafter, is one of nine U.S. Army Corps of Engineer divisions located around the world, which manage and assist a total of 45 districts dispersed throughout those divisions.

POD itself consists of four districts: Honolulu, Japan, Alaska and the Far East (Korea).

“Altogether the Corps has about 37,000 employees and all but about 600 of them are Civilians. They operate in more than 90 countries,” Col. (P) John W. Peabody, the Division Engineer and Commanding Officer said. Of the roughly 1,750 people in the Division, about thirty are Soldiers.

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“Our Civilians, like our Soldiers, go everywhere and do everything,” Peabody said.

“Many of our civilians and Soldiers have volunteered to deploy in support of the Global War on Terrorism and we currently have Civilians and Soldiers deployed world wide, but most notably to Iraq, Afghanistan, and Indonesia,” Peabody said.

Yet Corps employees can and do stay in one location for a very long time. For example, Frank Dayton mans a one-person USACE office on Guam. He’s been there for some 30 years, handling Corps business in the Marianas Islands and American Samoa.

“We’ve helped the people of Hawaii and elsewhere in the Pacific following natural disasters. The Pacific Ocean Division often teams with the Federal Emergency Management Agency to provide water, ice, power, debris clean-up, and other essential engineer services, such as the de-watering of New Orleans all of us have witnessed following Hurrigan Katrina,” Peabody said.

Recently the Pacific Ocean Division dispatched engineers to South Asia, following the tsunami that killed more than 300,000 people. The engineers visited devastated regions to help local officials determine how to rebuild.

“The nations we are involved in encompass the U.S. Pacific Command’s area of responsibility, especially Japan and Korea, but others that may surprise you as well, such as Thailand, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, the Philippines, and even Mongolia, among others. Peabody said. “As engineering leaders in responding to natural disasters, we have a positive impact on the quality of life in many Pacific nations.”

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“Additionally, if something is built in Hawaii or Alaska, the Division is usually the design and construction agency that works on the projects,” Peabody said. “In Japan and Korea, the Pacific Ocean Division is responsible by Department of Defense directive to build all facilities for each of the U.S. military services.”

Early Role

The Corps’ role in the Pacific began in 1904 when Army Lt. John Slattery traveled from Pacific Division headquarters, then located in San Francisco, to Oahu to establish the Honolulu District.

Soon after, the Corps began building lighthouses and coastal artillery emplacements and dredged Honolulu Harbor, paving the way for larger commercial trade ships to enter the island port with goods from far away.

To protect the island from attack, the federal government purchased Diamond Head Crater in 1904 and began fortifying it in 1908 for the coastal defense of the Oahu.

Engineers built five batteries between 1908 and 1943, as well as a fire-control station that was completed in 1919, with gun emplacements and a tunnel through the crater’s north side. From the crater, Army scouts had a panoramic view of south Oahu.

When Slattery established a permanent Honolulu District in 1905, he acquired 74 acres of what was, according to historical records, a mostly swampy and usually flooded area of duck ponds.

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Today that land is some of the world's choicest real estate on Waikiki Beach; the site of the Armed Forces Recreation Center's Hale Koa Hotel, which was completed by the Honolulu District in 1975.

In the 1920s and '30s, Corps engineers worked on beach erosion projects and built military installations. In 1941, in just 90 days, 25,000 Corps employees completed a chain of island airfields along routes from California through Hawaii, Australia and the Philippines.

The day after the attack on Pearl Harbor, the division reported 63 construction projects. And after America entered World War II, the Corps completed 17 additional airfields in Hawaii and nearly 500 aircraft bunkers.

After the war, the district was responsible for construction of the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific, known as "Punchbowl," atop an extinct volcanic crater overlooking Honolulu and the largest military hospital in the Pacific, Tripler Army Medical Center, known as the "Pink Lady," because of its pink color that can be seen from miles away.

As always, the Corps is still involved in a wide range of projects in Hawaii and the region, from flood control, harbor development, shoreline protection, military construction and barracks renewal to environmental cleanup.

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Honolulu District completed construction of a (now closed) chemical weapons disposal plant on Johnston Atoll, a \$20 million telescope facility for the Air Force atop Haleakala (Maui's 10,000-foot dormant volcano) and opened up the second major port on the island of Oahu, Barber's Point Harbor.

At the same time the Corps provides land for recreation, it secures and protects valuable training land for the Army and is a major player in quality-of-life improvements for Soldiers and families.

The Pacific Ocean Division's four districts have also been major players in ecosystem protection projects, including cleanup following the Exxon-Valdez oil spill in Alaska in 1989 and preserving Alaska's wetlands, which compose half of the state's land area.

The Corps continues to serve a variety of missions and construction projects in one of the largest areas of responsibility on Earth - millions of square miles from Hawaii to the East Coast of Africa – an area of operations spanning multiple time zones, the equator and the international dateline.

“We are ‘America’s Engineers in the Pacific,’ and we look forward to continuing to serve the nation as we begin our second century of service,” Anderson said.

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