



News Release

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Engineers ahead of schedule in clearing Waikoloa ordnance

By Joe Bonfiglio, HED chief of Public Affairs

HONOLULU, Hawaii (July 12, 2004) -- The Army Corps of Engineers is ahead of schedule in clearing unexploded ordnance on the big island of Hawaii, at the 123,000-acre former Waikoloa maneuver area.

The area is located between the villages of Waimea and Waikoloa on the northwest part of the big island, running roughly from the ocean on the west to the foothills on the east.

The Navy used part of the area for artillery firing during World War II and the remaining acres were used for troop maneuvers. Waikoloa included the largest encampment on the island of Hawaii, camp Tarawa, consisting of about 467 acres of tents and Quonset huts. The 2nd Marine Division was assigned to Waikoloa in December 1943 for five months of training, in preparation for the Saipan-Tinian campaign. Up to 40,000 troops passed through Waikoloa during World War II.

Now the Honolulu Engineer District is working to clean up the Waikoloa Formerly Used Defense Site, known in some circles as FUDS.

"It's going much better than we anticipated," said Chuck Streck, the district's project manager for Waikoloa FUDS.

Innovations have allowed more land to be cleared than originally projected.

"Originally, it was anticipated that 340 acres would be cleared around the perimeter of Waikoloa Village; yet due to project efficiencies, the total clearance around the village exceeded 473 acres," Streck said. To date, about \$29.6 million has been spent on the project.

The latest innovations include: the use of approved open front blast barricades, the application of recently developed geophysical detecting instruments, the development of finer and more specific anomaly discrimination methods, the refinement and adaptation of program management procedures specific to the project and the active participation of local communities.

These innovations have helped to avoid community disruptions such as evacuations and road closures and gained more comprehensive support for local development, officials said.

The Honolulu Engineer District is working with the Huntsville Center of Expertise for Ordnance Studies to clean up Waikoloa, and has contracted with American Technologies Inc., or ATI, to locate and remove the unexploded ordnance.

Waikoloa FUDS is the largest project in the FUDS system nationwide. Its clean-up is part of the Defense Environmental Restoration Program, a DOD program administered by the Corps of Engineers. About \$50 million has been programmed for ordnance clearance in Waikoloa during the period 2002 to 2007.

This month efforts will focus on 340 acres around Waimea and Lalamilo, according to Roger Van Huss, Pacific Rim UXO program manager for ATI. Due to project efficiencies, he estimates that up to 450 acres may actually be cleared in this area.

On April 12, Rep. Ed Case, of Hawaii's Second Congressional District, met with Streck and workers from ATI to receive an update on the project. Case spoke highly of the Corps' efforts and has made funding of the clean-up his top defense-related priority.

In order to continue informing the public on the status of the clean up, the Honolulu Engineer District and ATI have established a public Web site that highlights which areas have been completed and which are currently being worked

This Web site includes project updates, background, maps of current and completed work areas, links to other Web sites, and current media reporting on the project. The Web site can be accessed at: www.atipacificrim.com.

The Honolulu Engineer District also runs a Restoration Advisory Board, composed of local residents and representatives from the police and fire departments. The RAB is very active in all stages of project execution and development.

The district initiated a program to inform the public about the health and safety risks from UXO. This includes an active public outreach program complete with posters, brochures, school/community group educational packages, a safety video, permanent displays, and warning signs. In addition, the district started a program for UXO health and safety support during construction within the project area.