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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Honolulu Engineer District Opens Pacific Regional Visitor Center

By Dino W. Buchanan and Joseph Bonfiglio, HED Public Affairs

(Honolulu, Nov. 19, 2004 – NR-06-04) – The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Honolulu Engineer District (HED) held the Grand Opening Ceremony and Open House in honor of its recently renovated Pacific Regional Visitor Center (RVC) today at Ft. DeRussy in Waikiki.

More than 30 city, state and local government officials, contractors, as well as a representative from U.S. Senator Daniel Akaka's office gathered at the facility to view the new interactive displays and the ceremonial ribbon-cutting.

The ceremony featured a Hawaiian blessing, remarks by Honolulu District Engineer and Commander, Lt. Col. David E. Anderson and tours of the renovated center.

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“Our Regional Visitor Center shows in great detail our commitment to the nation, the Pacific Region and Hawaii and tells the story about its people – the people of the Corps and the people of the Pacific Region - all “Partners in the Pacific,” said Lt. Col. Anderson.

The new theme of the RVC, which is located on the second floor above the U. S. Army Museum at Battery Randolph, is "Partners in the Pacific" and the Corps’ story is told through the new state-of-the-art interactive exhibits, a seven- minute documentary narrated by Michael W. Perry and the visitor center staff.

“The new interactive displays and videos are an awesome addition to the visitor’s center, “said John McLaughlin, director of the U.S. Army Museum at Ft. DeRussy. “The new displays provide visitors a clear understanding of the Corps’ accomplishments and commitment to Hawaii and the Pacific Region.”

In a letter sent to HED for the opening ceremony, U.S. Senator Daniel K. Akaka commended “America’s Engineers in the Pacific for their dedicated service to the people of the Hawaii, Guam, American Samoa, Kwajalein and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. Your service speaks highly of the long history and proud traditions of the Army Corps of Engineers in the Pacific.”

Ed Texeira, director of Hawaii Civil Defense who attended with several members of his staff said the RVC is a great educational tool for all center visitors.

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“The interactive displays invite you to learn more about the importance of the Corps, their work and mission in Hawaii,” Texeira said. “There are great educational opportunities here.”

The new displays were designed and installed by Interpretive Exhibits, Inc. of Salem, Oregon and the renovation was coordinated by HED Civil Works Technical Branch. Referentia Systems Inc. of Honolulu created the HED documentary and educational videos for the plasma screen TVs, installed all the Audio-Visual equipment in the Center and the backlight mural of the Kaneohe Flood Control Project.

The Visitor Center first opened its doors at Battery Randolph in 1983. Battery Randolph is listed on the National Register of Historic Sites and is one of 16 coastal fortifications built by the Corps between 1906 and 1917 for the protection of Honolulu and Pearl Harbors.

The RVC’s mission is to help visitors understand the Corps’ water resources and environmental missions in Hawaii and in other Pacific areas. The RVC places particular emphasis on civil works and water resources development and seeks to foster the spirit of personal stewardship of public lands throughout Hawaii and the Pacific region.

The Center averages about 1,200 visitors per month, primarily from the U.S. Mainland, Japan and Australia.

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The RVC staff members plan and coordinate many educational and outreach programs including: interpretive tours for school and community groups, the Young Engineers and Scientists Program, World Water Monitoring Day, National Public Lands Day, Earth Day and various volunteer programs.

Participating students come from several local middle and high schools and study: a watershed approach to planning, environmental stewardship of water resources and sustainable development with a focus on comprehensive, collaborative, integrated projects that balance economic, environmental and social considerations.

The RVC is open to the public Tuesday through Sunday from 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and closed on Mondays, Christmas Day and New Year's Day.

Honolulu Engineer District traces its beginnings to the turn of the 20th Century when Lt. John Slattery established the first Corps Honolulu office in 1905. His mission was to improve the territory's harbors and to construct Hawaii's coastal defenses.

The Corps' first harbor project in Hawaii was dredging the entrance to Pearl Harbor. Over the years, the Honolulu Engineer District has built many of the structures that define Hawaii to the world including: the National Cemetery of the Pacific at Punchbowl, the Hale Koa Hotel, Tripler Army Medical Center all the coastal lighthouses and fortifications.

Today, with a staff of approximately 400, HED is the nation's design and build agency in the Pacific, executing all Corps missions in Hawaii and many other Pacific Region locations.

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The District's area of operations stretches from Hawaii through Polynesia and Micronesia across the International Date Line to Guam and Palau and throughout South Asia to the coast of Africa.

HED performs design, construction and real estate management for the Army and Air Force in Hawaii and for all Department of Defense agencies at Kwajalein Atoll in support of the U.S. Army Space and Missile Defense Command.

The District provides engineering and construction support to other federal agencies on a reimbursable basis, such as the Department of Interior by supervising projects throughout Micronesia.

HED administers the federal water resources developmental program centered on navigation, flood damage reduction and environmental protection and restoration in Hawaii, Guam, American Samoa and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

The District provides technical engineering services to insular states in the Pacific region and elsewhere as approved by the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works. HED exercises regulatory jurisdiction governing work in waters and wetlands of the United States within its area of operations. The District also provides assistance in times of emergency and natural disaster and environmental support and services to our customers.