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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Defense Department to Study Ocean Currents Near Two Underwater Munitions Disposal Sites in Hawai'i**

**(FORT SHAFTER, HI NR 17-09)** The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), under an agreement with the Department of Defense (DoD), will place ocean current monitoring sensors at two munitions sea disposal sites off O'ahu this week as part of DoD's ongoing efforts to assess the potential impact of sea-disposed munitions on human health and the environment. Researchers will use data from these sensors to determine the potential fate of munitions constituents that may be released from sea disposed munitions into Pacific Ocean currents at these two locations.

“We are pleased that after months of planning, NOAA will initiate this year-long effort to collect critical information about the Hawai'i marine environment that will be useful to DoD as it continues its research efforts to understand the potential impact of sea-disposed munitions on the ocean environment. We believe this collaborative effort will also provide information about the currents off the Wai'anae coast of O'ahu that will be useful to NOAA, the State of Hawai'i and the local community,” said Tad Davis, Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army for Environment, Safety and Occupational Health, who has been leading this effort for the DoD.

During the period of July 24 - 25, NOAA's researchers will deploy four high-precision sensor arrays at a conventional munitions disposal site (known as HI-06) off Wai'anae known locally as “Ordnance Reef” and one sensor array at a deep-water chemical munitions disposal site (known as HI-01) approximately 10 miles off Wai'anae. Crews aboard the NOAA Ship *Hi'ialakai* and University of Hawai'i Research Vessel *Klaus Wyrski* will deploy the submerged ocean current monitoring sensors at depths ranging from 50 to over 300 feet at Ordnance Reef (HI-06), and at a depth of approximately 8,000 feet at Site HI-01, the deep water munitions disposal site.

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## **2-2-2 DoD OCEAN STUDY**

The sensors will record the speed and direction of ocean currents over a one-year period. The data provided by the sensors will assist the DoD in determining where Pacific Ocean currents at these two sea disposal sites might carry munitions constituents in the event of a release. The data will also be used in an integrated observation and prediction system that currently monitors ocean circulation, water quality, and biological productivity off the south shore of O'ahu.

The sensor deployment is part of a broader effort by DoD and other federal agencies, NOAA, and University of Hawai'i to assess the potential impact of sea disposed munitions on the marine environment and of the environment on sea disposed munitions, and to provide information to the community and federal, state and local officials. NOAA conducted a screening-level assessment of Ordnance Reef in 2006 to determine whether the presence of munitions posed an immediate and unacceptable risk to the public. DoD has not identified any immediate risk or unacceptable threat to the public health or the environment from the munitions sea disposed at these two sea disposal sites.

NOAA developed the data collection plan with input from DoD and in consideration of input provided by the Ordnance Reef Coordinating Council. Tad Davis chairs this committee, which includes representatives from DoD; the State of Hawai'i, including the Department of Land and Natural Resources, and the University of Hawai'i; community members; and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. NOAA will make the reports of data collected by these sensors available to the coordinating council and the public.