STATE OF HAWAIʻI DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

pūpūkahi

pūpūkahi: "harmoniously united"

HAWAII STATE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

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HING RESPONDS TO LALA, LOWELL

Guardsmen join storm recovery efforts

The Hawai'i National Guard was ready when called in to support the state's response to Tropical Storm Lala and Hurricane Lowell

FULL COVERAGE ON PAGES 2-14

The Hawaiʻi National Guard's 93rd Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear Enhanced Response Force Package team conducted wide-area search operations on Kauaʻi following Hurricane Lowell on Sept. 9, above, and in the Kaʻū District on Hawaiʻi Island following Tropical Cyclone Lala on Aug. 18. *(Above, Hawaiʻi National Guard photo; below, U.S. Army National Guard photo by Spc. Daniel Barcenas)*

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Hawai'i National Guard helps communities affected by Hurricane Nolo







HING sawyer teams assist Kaua'i County with debris removal

The Hawai'i National Guard supported state and county recovery efforts on Kaua'i in September, while simultaneously continuing recovery operations from Tropical Storm Lala on Hawai'i Island. Above, Guardsmen supporting Task Force Kaua'i walked up a debris-laden road in Kōke'e State Park on Sept. 10. Left middle, Spc. Isaac Nadarisay used a chainsaw to cut a damaged tree in Waimea. Left bottom, Sgt. Brandon Ilaban, left, and Nadarisay clear eda fallen tree from the road in Waimea.

– U.S. Army National Guard photos by Staff Sgt. John Schoebel



The Hawai‘i National Guard’s 93rd Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear and Explosives Enhanced Response Force Package team walked over a damaged road to conduct area searches and wellness checks in the Ka‘ū District on Hawai‘i Island on Aug. 19 following impacts by Hurricane Lala. *(U.S. Army National Guard photo by Spc. Daniel Barcenas)*

Hawai‘i National Guard supports Tropical Cyclone Lala response

By Rachel Blaire
State of Hawai‘i Department of Defense Public Affairs

HONOLULU — The Hawai‘i National Guard (HING) has concluded its response operations on Kaua‘i and O‘ahu following the impacts of Tropical Cyclone Lala, while soldiers and airmen continue supporting recovery efforts on Hawai‘i Island and Maui.

At the height of the response, as many as 250 HING soldiers and airmen were activated on state active duty to support state and county emergency management agencies and provide critical capabilities to communities affected by the storm.

“Our soldiers and airmen answered the call to service, putting community first in support of response and recovery efforts during Tropical Cyclone Lala,” said Maj. Gen. Stephen Logan, adjutant general of the state of Hawai‘i. “Their commitment to helping neighbors in need, from lifesaving rescues to damage assessments, reflect their dedication to help families begin to recover.”

HING personnel worked alongside county emergency management officials and first responders as conditions improved and recovery operations began. National Guard liaison officers were embedded within county Emergency Operations Centers, the Hawai‘i Emergency Management Agency (HIEMA) and the Honolulu Police Department Joint Operations Center to help coordinate requests for assistance and connect HING capabilities with local needs.

As Tropical Cyclone Lala moved through the Hawaiian Islands, HING personnel provided a range of emergency response and recovery capabilities, including high-water rescues and evacuations, debris clearance, delivery of donated supplies, damage assessments and aerial reconnaissance.

High-wheeled vehicle teams positioned on Hawai‘i Island assisted 16 residents and rescued two emergency medical paramedics who became stranded by the floodwaters.



On Hawai‘i Island, the response continues in the remote Ka‘ū District, where soldiers and airmen assigned to the Hawai‘i National Guard’s 93rd Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Enhanced Response Force Package (93rd CERFP) partnered with the Hawai‘i Fire Department to conduct door-to-door safety and wellness checks.

“What we saw when we first came out to site was all the landslides from the top of the cemetery and down to the main road. So we knew that already that there are going to be a lot of uneven spaces, a lot of rubble piles,” said Senior Master Sgt. Hyurn Chu, 154th Force Support Squadron, a member of the 93rd CERFP.

As of Aug. 21, teams visited over 320 homes, checking on residents and helping identify needs in communities affected by the storm.

The HING continues to support Maui County’s recovery efforts with personnel integrated into eight joint damage assessment teams. The teams completed 11 comprehensive assessments of storm-affected areas, providing local officials with information to help arrange recovery needs.

Senior state and county leaders also conducted an aerial assessment flight to survey widespread storm damage. The flight included the governor, Hawai‘i County mayor and the adjutant general, providing an aerial perspective of affected communities and infrastructure.

While the HING has concluded its response operations on Kaua‘i and O‘ahu, personnel remain ready to



The Hawaii National Guard’s 93rd Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear and Explosives Enhanced Response Force Package team loaded essential equipment onto a U.S. Coast Guard C-130 in support of recovery operations at Barber’s Point on O‘ahu on Aug. 16. At top, a Guardsman assessed damage in the Ka‘ū District on the Big Island alongside a Hawai‘i Fire Department member on August 20. *(U.S Army National Guard photos by Spc. Daniel Barcenas)*





Members from the Hawaii National Guard's 93rd Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear and Explosives Enhanced Response Force Package team greeted children in the Kaʻū District on the Big Island on August 18. At top, Guardsmen assessed the damage at the fire station in Nāʻālehu on the Big Island on Aug. 19. *(U.S. Army National Guard photos by Spc. Daniel Barcenas)*

support Hawaiʻi and Maui counties as recovery efforts continue.

The HING continues to coordinate with county emergency management agencies and HIEMA for additional requests for assistance. At the same time the HING is monitoring incoming Tropical Storm Moke and has begun pre-positioning assets in preparation for potential impacts to the state.

"We are preparing for Tropical Storm Moke by proactively repositioning personnel and equipment based on the latest forecast. This deliberate staging of our capabilities ensures we can rapidly respond to the hardest-hit areas the moment emergency requests for assistance are received from state and county managers," said Brig. Gen. Damon Hogsten, Director of the Joint Staff, Hawaiʻi National Guard.

The experience gained from previous disaster responses, such as the Kona Low Storms in March, is helping shape the HING's approach to Tropical Storm Moke.

"By continuously applying lessons learned from previous disasters, we have refined our response tactics. A key example is the close integration of our high-wheeled vehicle teams with local police and fire departments, ensuring life-saving assets are deployed precisely where they are needed most," said Hogsten.

The response reflects the Hawaiʻi National Guard's dual mission of serving the people of Hawaiʻi during times of crisis while maintaining readiness to fight and win America's wars as part of the nation's defense.

HING rescues paramedics during Hurricane Lala





The Hawai'i National Guard's Task Force Hawai'i responded to a dangerous high-water crossing to rescue two paramedics whose county truck became stranded by rapidly rising water in Nā'ālehu on the Big Island on Aug. 15. Watch the video at www.shorturl.at/eJBh5 *(Hawai'i National Guard video footage)*

By Rachel Blaire
State of Hawai'i Department of Defense Public Affairs

KA'Ū DISTRICT, Hawai'i — As floodwaters rose across the Ka'ū District during Hurricane Lala, a Hawai'i National Guard high-water vehicle team was already returning from one rescue when another call came in: two emergency medical responders were stranded in their ambulance and needed help.

The soldiers were about a mile away when they received the request for assistance on August 15.

"They had just completed an individual rescue of a gentleman and were headed back to the fire station when we received the follow-on call requesting our assistance with the stranded EMS," said Sgt. Darrick Salinas, 1st Squadron, 299th Cavalry Regiment. "We didn't really have a lot of information on the full circumstances of their situation, just that their vehicle had stalled in high water."

The team turned toward the stranded paramedics and as they approached, the conditions deteriorated. What had been roughly 2 feet of water earlier in their mission had risen to at least 5 feet by the time they reached the EMS personnel.

Floodwater spilled into the cab and bed of their high-water vehicle, while heavy rain and widespread power outages limited visibility. The soldiers also encountered debris carried by the floodwaters, including trees, rocks, furniture, trash cans and a county pickup truck.

"The biggest challenge was just the sheer velocity and volume of water that was coming at us," Salinas said. "We were traveling from the bottom of the hill, kind of working our way up in elevation, so all of the floodwaters were essentially converging on our location."

At times, the soldiers could not see the road beneath them.

"There was a huge risk of driving off the road along the entire duration of our route," Salinas said. "The greatest risk was our vehicle being overwhelmed by water and becoming inoperable."

When the soldiers reached the ambulance, the two paramedics climbed into the Guard vehicle.

Salinas, who was driving, immediately shifted his focus from reaching the stranded responders to getting everyone safely out of the floodwaters.

"We knew we were their last hope of escaping the rising water, and we just had to do whatever it took to bring them into our vehicle," Salinas said.

The original plan was to extract the paramedics and continue toward the fire station. But with water rapidly rushing toward them, the team determined that continuing forward was no longer a viable option.

Instead, they decided to reverse out of the flooded roadway. Everyone aboard the vehicle helped guide Salinas as he backed through approximately a mile of floodwater toward a police station.

With severely restricted visibility, the soldiers and paramedics called out road edges and used power lines, fences and speed-limit signs to help determine where the road was beneath them.

"For me, as the driver of the vehicle, it was simply getting everybody to where they needed to be, safely," Salinas said. "Making sure that we mitigated that risk as best we could, and then once we were out, just trying to get everyone to safety was on my mind."

Afterwards, the paramedics returned to their mission of helping others affected by the storm. Looking back on the rescue and the escape from the flood waters, Salinas credited his team who worked alongside him in the flooded vehicle.

"My soldiers were awesome that night," he said. "For me, the success behind that mission was 100% on them."

HING clears path to recovery after Hurricane Lala

By Rachel Blaire
State of Hawai'i Department of Defense Public Affairs

KA'Ū DISTRICT, Hawai'i — In the aftermath of Hurricane Lala, roads across Hawai'i Island were buried beneath mud, rocks, trees and other debris, making it difficult for residents, emergency responders and utility crews to move through some of the hardest-hit communities.

For soldiers and airmen of the Hawai'i National Guard, the mission shifted quickly from rescuing people trapped by floodwaters to helping communities begin the long process of recovery.

Guardsmen worked alongside Hawai'i County personnel to clear debris from roadways and homes, helping restore access for emergency vehicles and the delivery of critical supplies.

Each morning, teams linked up with county personnel and moved into assigned areas of operation to clear roads and make them more accessible.

"We sent our trucks out with them, assisting with kind of clearing roadways and make everything a little more passable for emergency vehicles and supplies to get delivered," said Sgt. Dearrick Salinas, 1st Squadron, 299th Cavalry Regiment.

The conditions left behind by the storm presented a different set of challenges.

"When we first arrived, a lot of the roads were covered in dirt and debris, trees were down, there were a lot of rocks and rubble all over, so it was really hard to get through the roads," said Spc. Brianna Diazescobar, 1st Squadron, 299th Cavalry Regiment.

The debris was not limited to natural materials, Guardsmen encountered appliances, as well as vehicles and other belongings that had been displaced by the flooding.



Hawai'i National Guard worked near a debris-filled area in the Ka'ū District on Hawai'i Island on Aug. 19 following impacts by Hurricane Lala. *(U.S. Army National Guard photo by Spc. Daniel Barcenas)*

Some of the most difficult work took place away from the roads, they entered muddy yards and garages to help residents regain access to their homes.

Diazescobar recalled helping one resident whose garage was filled with mud more than ankle-deep. The Guardsmen used shovels to clear a path through the mud, which contained debris, allowing the resident to reach the back of his home.

"It definitely feels like an honor to help out the community and make things easier for them," Diazescobar said. "I know it's a very difficult time, so it just feels really good to help out, especially being here from the Big Island."

The work required Guardsmen to balance speed with safety. Muddy conditions, unstable debris and difficult-to-reach areas created hazards as teams worked around homes and properties.

"I feel like the hardest part was trying not to fall and slip, minimize the safety hazards we had out there," Diazescobar said.

The debris-clearance mission was one part of a broader Hawai'i National Guard response to Hurricane Lala. At the height of the response, as many as 250 Guardsmen were activated on state active duty to support state and county emergency management agencies. Missions included high-water rescues and evacuations, wellness checks, debris clearance, damage assessments, aerial reconnaissance and delivery of donated supplies.

On Hawai'i Island, debris teams cleared more than 11,150 meters that had over 58 tons of debris from roadways and homes as of Sept. 4, 2026.

The Guard's recovery mission also extended to Maui County, where Task Force Maui personnel worked alongside county partners to assess 80 homes with storm damage and support debris-removal efforts clearing 700 meters of road.

The Hawai'i National Guard continues to work with Hawai'i county as communities recover from Hurricane Lala, providing manpower and specialized capabilities where requested.

For Guardsmen like Salinas and Diazescobar, the work is more than moving debris. It is about helping residents regain access to their homes and creating a safer path forward after the storm.

"I'm proud to have been a part of a team that could come and help out the community," Diazescobar said.

HING supports Nā‘ālehu Cemetery reclamation

By Rachel Blaire
State of Hawai‘i Department of Defense Public Affairs

NĀ‘ĀLEHU, Hawai‘i — Hurricane Lala brought heavy rain, flooding and damaging winds to Hawai‘i Island in August 2026, impacting communities across the island and triggering rescues and widespread response efforts. In the Ka‘ū District, floodwaters inundated roads and low-lying areas, damaged property and infrastructure, and caused landslides and debris flows.



The Hawai‘i National Guard set up an area of operations with first responders in the Ka'u District on the Big Island on Aug. 19. The Guardsmen assisted in recovering displace burials. *(U.S. Army National Guard photo by Spc. Daniel Barcenas)*

Among the storm's impacts was significant damage to Nā‘ālehu Cemetery, where floodwaters disturbed burial sites and carried human remains and other cemetery materials beyond the cemetery grounds.

In the storm's aftermath, the Hawai‘i National Guard joined Hawai‘i County, cultural practitioners and subject-matter experts in a coordinated effort to document, recover and protect the displaced burials.

"The discovery of burials within the flood area was heartbreaking for the Nā‘ālehu community, and their pain is shared by our entire island," said Hawai‘i County Mayor Kimo Alameda. "We want to assure the community that every step of this recovery process is being carried out with compassion, care and respect for the deceased and their descendants."

The documentation efforts as of Sept. 1, 2026, have identified over 140 remains in the Nā‘ālehu area and the multi-agency effort is still finding more remains in its second month of work.

For members of the Hawai‘i National Guard's 93rd Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear Enhanced Response Force Package (93rd CERF-P), the mission required more than specialized search and recovery skills. It required patience, coordination and respect for a site that holds deep cultural and personal significance for the Nā‘ālehu community.

Chief Master Sgt. Hyurn Chu, a member of the 154th Force Support Squadron and the 93rd CERF-P's fatality search and recovery team, recalled the conditions when the team first arrived.

"We saw all the landslides from the top of the cemetery and down to the main road," Chu said. "We knew already that there are going to be a lot of uneven spaces, a lot of rubble piles, and knowing that most of the debris came from the cemetery, that there's possible remains underneath all the rubble."

Before beginning recovery operations, the Guard coordinated with community members and local responders to ensure the work was conducted appropriately and that access to sensitive areas was authorized.

"We want to make sure that we give proper respects and we're not damaging anything that's respected by the community," Chu said.

The recovery effort brought together a range of expertise, including cultural practitioners, archaeologists, forensic anthropologists and osteologists, with guidance and support from the Maui Department of ‘Ōiwi Resources and the Hawai‘i State Department of Health.

The 93rd CERF-P's training prepared its members to safely navigate unstable debris while carefully processing and recovering remains.

"Learning the skill sets of properly processing remains, being very respectful, knowing that they are part of our loved ones, and knowing that we want to make sure that we take care of others like how we want to be taken cared of," Chu said.

Cultural practices were incorporated throughout the operation. Before work began, participating agencies gathered for an opening ceremony and blessing in recognition of the sacred nature of the site.

When remains were recovered, Hawaiian cultural practitioners were given the opportunity to conduct appropriate practices and pay their respects before the remains were removed and transported. At the end of operations, the team conducted a closing ceremony.

For Chu, the process demonstrated the importance of bringing different agencies and communities together during a disaster.

"Even though we may not all have the same spiritual mindset, we all can come together and understand that we want to make sure that we help each other," Chu said.

The area around the displaced burials was protected from debris removal while the recovery effort is underway.

The effort reflects a broader reality of disaster response in Hawai‘i, where recovery can involve not only restoring roads and infrastructure, but also protecting cultural sites and helping families recover what was lost.

For the Hawai‘i National Guard, the mission at Nā‘ālehu Cemetery provided an opportunity to apply specialized capabilities in support of local authorities while honoring the people and traditions connected to the site.

"We want to make sure that we're giving proper closure here and to the loved ones," Chu said.

From the Middle East to Waiʻōhinu: Deployed soldier expresses deep gratitude for Hawaiʻi National Guard

By Rachel Blaire
State of Hawaiʻi Department of Defense Public Affairs

WAIʻŌHINU, Hawaiʻi — While serving thousands of miles away in the Middle East, U.S. Army 1st Lt. Makena Galimba experienced the anxiety that comes with watching a natural disaster strike your hometown from afar.

Galimba, a 66H Medical-Surgical Nurse with the 131st Field Hospital, was deployed supporting Operation Epic Fury, when Hurricane Lala swept through the Hawaiian Islands. Her thoughts immediately turned to her family in the remote town of Waiʻōhinu on Hawaiʻi Island, one of the areas heavily impacted by the storm and where her family has lived for four generations.

For the first few days after the storm, a complete power and cellular blackout left Galimba, unable to reach her loved ones.

"Like many others, they were impacted by Hurricane Lala," Galimba said. "For the first few days after the storm, I had no contact with them due to power and cellular outages."

Despite the communication blackout and the distance, Galimba found comfort in knowing who would be responding to the crisis back home.

"Throughout that time, it gave me great peace to know that the National Guard was being called in to assist the community," she said.

Relief arrived when communications were finally restored, her father sent her a photograph from their home in Waiʻōhinu.

The image showed Sgt. Paul Gallardo and Spc. Elvis Lorenz Salinas, soldiers assigned to the Hawaiʻi National Guard's 29th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (29th IBCT), standing in her family's driveway where they had been assisting with cleanup and checking on the family's welfare.



U.S. Army Spc. Elvis Lorenz Salinas, left, and Sgt. Paul Gallardo, both assigned to the 29th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, Hawaiʻi Army National Guard, stood in the driveway of the Galimba home with the family dog, during disaster response operations in Waiʻōhinu, Hawaiʻi, August 2026. *(Photo courtesy 1st Lt. Makena Galimba)*



1st Lt. Makena Galimba *(U.S. Army photo)*

"I cannot express in words how much gratitude I have for them, the entire 29th IBCT and the Hawaiʻi National Guard," Galimba said.

For Galimba, seeing her fellow service members helping her family bridged the gap between her mission overseas and the recovery efforts at home.

"I am beyond proud to serve in an organization that comes together to take care of its own, both at home and overseas," she added.

The response in Waiʻōhinu was part of a larger mobilization by the Hawaiʻi National Guard, whose members deployed throughout the Kaʻū District to assist residents with wellness checks, and debris clearance in the wake of Hurricane Lala.

Recognizing the long hours and preparation that go into disaster response, Galimba sent a message of deep gratitude back to the islands to thank those working on the front lines of the recovery effort.

"I want to extend a big mahalo to everyone with boots on the ground in Kaʻū, as well as those working behind the scenes," Galimba wrote. "Please know that your sacrifice and dedication have not gone unnoticed — not only today, but in all the drill weekends and training exercises that led to this moment. Again, I send a big mahalo to my brothers and sisters helping at home."

Hawai‘i National Guard sustains recovery efforts, mobilizes for Hurricane Lowell

By Rachel Blaire
State of Hawai‘i Department of Defense Public Affairs

The Hawai‘i National Guard (HING) remains actively positioned across the state, balancing recovery operations from Tropical Cyclone Lala with urgent preparation efforts for Hurricane Lowell, the third tropical system to threaten the Hawaiian Islands within a month.

As of Sept. 7, 2026, 194 HING personnel are on state active duty to support statewide response and recovery operations. By working closely with county emergency management agencies and the Hawai‘i Emergency Management Agency (HIEMA), HING personnel are ensuring communities receive support while proactively positioning resources for the incoming storm.

The Guard is focusing in on Kaua‘i County, where the forecasted impacts of Hurricane Lowell are expected to begin today.

“We are working very closely with the Kaua‘i Emergency Management Agency and Mayor Kawakami’s office. They are really good partners, we have a good rich history, and we are postured accordingly,” said Maj. Gen. Stephen Logan, Adjutant General of the Hawai‘i National Guard.

To manage the dual demands of recovery and preparedness, HING has strategically distributed its personnel and specialized equipment across the islands.

Task Force Hawai‘i is actively assisting Hawai‘i County with personnel including liaison officers in the local emergency operations center, debris clearance teams, and cemetery support. This task force has removed over 72,000 pounds of storm debris as of Sept. 4, 2026, and has conducted 421 safety and wellness checks for local residents.



Maj. Gen. Stephen Logan, Adjutant General for the state of Hawai‘i, center, received a brief from Maj. Mike Tanaka, left, Hawai‘i National Guard (HING) Joint Staff battle major, and Brig. Gen. Damon Hogsten, director of the HING Joint Staff, on Hurricane Lowell storm preparations on Sept. 7. In preparation for Hurricane Lowell, the HING pre-positioned personnel, equipment and high-wheeled vehicles on Kaua‘i and were ready to respond to requests. *(U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. John Schoebel)*

Meanwhile, Task Force Maui has deployed personnel to assist Maui County, including liaison officers in the emergency operations center and high-wheeled vehicle teams. They have already conducted 80 damage assessments and cleared 2,295 feet of roadway to restore access for local communities after Tropical Cyclone Lala.

On O‘ahu, HING personnel are assigned to the Joint Staff, aviation crews and liaison roles within HIEMA to coordinate state-level logistics and synchronize interisland assets. Additionally high-wheeled vehicle teams are being positioned in preparation for the incoming weather.

Task Force Kaua‘i is currently staging with 47 personnel ready to support emergency operations. HING has shipped over six vehicles for high-wheeled vehicle team rescues, along with one wrecker and one water buffalo. To further bolster Kaua‘i’s defenses additional personnel deployed to the island to assist with staging and localized response, ensuring rapid response times when the storm hits.

The prolonged operations highlight the resilience of HING’s rotational force structure. Personnel are continuously transitioned onto and off State Active Duty orders to sustain long-term operations without compromising readiness. The entire response remains staffed by volunteers; however, HING has a pool of approximately 5,500 personnel available for mobilization.

“As recovery efforts continue as a result of Hurricane Lala another severe weather event challenges our state with Hurricane Lowell. Hurricane season is dynamic we must remain agile and responsive,” said Brig. Gen. Damon Hogsten, Director of Joint Staff, Hawai‘i National Guard.

Furthermore, HING maintains close coordination with active-duty military partners in Hawai‘i and the National Guard Bureau. All 53 other states and territories, alongside local active-duty forces, have pledged their support and stand ready to assist the state of Hawai‘i if additional resources are required.



Members of the Hawai‘i National Guard’s Task Force Kaua‘i assisted with debris cleaning in Kapa‘a on Sept. 10. The Hawai‘i National Guard was actively supporting state and county recovery efforts on Kaua‘i from Hurricane Lowell, while simultaneously continuing recovery operations from Tropical Storm Lala on the Big Island. *(U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Randall Corpuz)*

HING provides critical support on Kaua‘i after Hurricane Lowell

By Rachel Blaire
State of Hawai‘i Department of Defense Public Affairs

Following the devastating landfall of Hurricane Lowell late Monday night, Sept. 7, 2026, the Hawai‘i National Guard (HING) was ready to respond. Within the critical first 48 hours of the disaster, the Guard executed life-saving search and rescue missions, started clearing storm-battered roadways, and is assisting with restoring emergency power to critical medical infrastructure.

The initial impact of Hurricane Lowell unleashed hazards across the Hawaiian Islands, with Kaua‘i bearing the brunt of the storm’s destructive forces. Torrential rainfall and localized flooding saturated the soil, while sustained winds and violent gusts brought down thousands of trees, utility poles and live electrical lines. This widespread devastation crippled the island’s electrical grid, leaving more than 90 percent of the island without power. The destruction of the power distribution network had cascading impacts on critical municipal services, degrading water pumping and treatment facilities. Main roadways are choked with storm debris and fallen trees.

“People are really struggling. Keep them in your prayers,” said Gov. Josh Green. “We’re going to care for people the best way we can as we build our infrastructure back. There’s a lot of damage on Kaua‘i and it’s going to take quite some time to get back to normal.”

Day 1: Sept. 8, 2026 – Lifesaving Operations

During the first 24 hours of response on Sept. 8, 2026, state emergency officials launched immediate planning to send additional critical personnel and heavy equipment to Kaua‘i. UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters from O‘ahu deployed to Kaua‘i and conducted three critical missions.

On their first mission, the aircrews transported Transportation Security Administration personnel to the Līhu‘e Airport to facilitate it’s reopening later that afternoon, securing a vital aerial lifeline for subsequent relief. The aircrews then conducted a second mission, executing detailed aerial damage assessments in coordination with Kaua‘i Island Utility Cooperative officials. On their third mission, the aircrews conducted an aerial search of Kaua‘i, scanning the storm-swept terrain for signs of distressed individuals.

On Maui, Task Force Maui worked with Maui Emergency Management Agency to send High Water Vehicle Teams to the flooded Honoapi‘ilani Highway in Olowalu area. Guard members transported four civilians over the inundated roadway and utilized a heavy wrecker to recover a local ambulance stuck in a roadside ditch.

Day 2: Sept. 9, 2026 – Surge to Kaua‘i

The overall response shifted its primary focus to Kaua‘i. On the ground, Task Force Kaua‘i operated with 77 personnel including an integrated search and extraction team from the 93rd Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear Enhanced Response Force Package. The search and extraction teams divided their operations to maximize coverage, with one team integrating directly with the Kaua‘i Fire Department to launch a land-based search and rescue mission in Hanapēpē for a missing civilian, while Team Two conducted wide-area searches and damage assessments in Kōloa and Po‘ipū.

In Kīlauea, HING personnel established a bulk water distribution station, utilizing potable water trailers to deliver 800 gallons of clean water to 275 residents in the first day of operation.



Sgt. Philip Lapid, assigned to Task Force Kaua‘i, Hawai‘i National Guard, closed the lid on a 400-gallon water buffalo in Keālia on Sept. 8. Providing safe drinking water was one of the tasks to help the community after Hurricane Lowell. *(U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Randall Corpuz)*

Gov. Josh Green and the Adjutant General Maj. Gen. Stephen Logan visited the Kaua‘i Emergency Management Agency Emergency (KEMA) Operations Center and drove around Kaua‘i to inspect the damage firsthand. Along with Kaua‘i County Mayor Derek Kawakami, they visited Ho‘ona Road, where the storm surge damaged houses and the Kilauea Neighborhood center which is currently serving as a shelter, to speak with residents and listen to their concerns.

Day 3: Sept. 10, 2026 – Critical Infrastructure Support

Task Force Kaua‘i was further reinforced by personnel and essential equipment surged from the neighboring islands. The Task Force is working several missions including damage assessments, debris clearance and supporting critical infrastructure restoration.

As the recovery efforts continue to expand and the full extent of the storm’s damage becomes clearer, the KEMA is generating additional requests for assistance to meet the evolving needs of the county. In response to these incoming taskings, the HING is actively postured and fully prepared to scale its operations to support local partners.

“When a disaster of this scale strikes our islands, it impacts our Families, our friends and our neighbors,” said Logan. “As local citizens, our Soldiers and Airmen possess a deep, personal dedication to the communities they serve. While we focus on our mission to defend this nation, we also train extensively for these exact scenarios. Our rapid mobilization and immediate mission capable capacity to support Kaua‘i on the first day, is a testament to that high state of readiness.”



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Hawai‘i Guardsmen reinforce Kaua‘i community food distributions after Hurricane Lowell

By Staff Sgt. John Schoebel
117th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

‘ELE‘ELE, Kaua‘i — The Hawai‘i National Guard (HING) provided a helping-hand to community partners during a major food drive at the ‘Ele‘ele Baptist Church this morning on Sept. 12, 2026.

In the aftermath of recent storm damage and supply chain disruptions from Hurricane Lowell affecting local grocery store shelves, HING Personnel stepped in alongside state, county and community organizations to assist with food drives at the Lihue Hale, Holy Cross Church and King’s Chapel over the past few days.

The ‘Ele‘ele food drive expanded its regular monthly footprint to meet a surge in community needs following Lowell’s impacts, handing out food to 225 vehicles.

“This is something we usually do once a month; we usually serve anywhere from 75-125 families,” said Larry Hale, the pastor of ‘Ele‘ele Baptist Church. “But because of the hurricane, obviously there’s more people that need food.”

The island-wide effort relies on close coordination with the Hawaii Food Bank and community organizations. HING personnel assisted with the volunteers to ensure rapid distribution of water, meals, ready to eat, fresh produce and other shelf-stable goods.

For Spc. Taylor Calixterio-Martinez, a Kauai native assigned to Echo Company, 29th Brigade Support Battalion, 29th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, serving at the food drive hits close to home. Though she routinely flies to Oahu for monthly drill weekend duties, state active duty orders provided a direct way to support her home island.





Above, Spcs. Lopaka Gutierrez-Kelley, left, and Johnny Pimental of the Hawai‘i National Guard‘s Task Force Kaua‘i, loaded groceries into a vehicle at the ‘Ele‘ele Baptist Church food drive in ‘Ele‘ele on Sept. 12. At left, U.S. Army Spc. Taylor Calixterio-Martinez handed groceries to a volunteer. *(U.S. Army National Guard photos by Staff Sgt. John Schoebel)*

Most of my friends and family have been affected by the hurricane, and with the barge having delays and grocery stores not having food, it’s really good to see everybody being helped,” Calixterio-Martinez said. “It’s really nice that I get to be on orders and stay home for it.”

The food drive efforts also offered an early hands-on experience for a future Soldier enrolled in the Hawaii Army National Guard’s Recruit Sustainment Program (RSP). Recruit Ryan Murata volunteered to assist alongside activated HING personnel while attending his RSP weekend duties.

“It means a lot for me because I can feel like I’m in the Guard while helping out, and I just feel like I belong with everyone,” Murata said.

While the HING provided additional surge capacity during this critical response window, regular community food distribution operations at Eleele Baptist Church remain an ongoing, monthly resource. The church hosts its routine food distributions on the second Saturday of every month from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 a.m., while also maintaining emergency food supplies on site for local families in need throughout the month.

As the recovery efforts continue to expand and the full extent of the storm’s damage becomes clearer, the HING is actively postured and fully prepared to scale its operations to support local partners. The HING response so far to Hurricane Lowell has included road clearance, transportation of vital equipment and personnel, search and recovery, water distribution and emergency power support.

HING delivers emergency lifeline to Kaua‘i patients following storm power outages

By Staff Sgt. John Schoebel
117th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment





Critical care patients boarded a Hawai‘i National Guard (HING) CH-47 Chinook helicopter in Līhu‘e, Hawaii, on Sept 10. The HING assisted with transporting patients to O‘ahu after extended power outages on Kaua‘i caused delays in essential medical treatment. At left, the helicopter left Līhu‘e for O‘ahu. *(U.S. Army National Guard photos by Staff Sgt. John Schoebel)*

LĪHU‘E, Kaua‘i — The Hawai‘i National Guard deployed a CH-47 Chinook helicopter to transport critical-care dialysis patients, caregivers and staff from Kaua‘i to O‘ahu on Sept. 10, 2026, following widespread power outages caused by Hurricane Lowell.

Power disruptions left a local dialysis facility unable to operate, making it impossible to treat critical patients on island. While authorities initially planned to transport patients using commercial flights, reoccurring blackouts at the airport disabled Transportation Security Administration screening equipment. The delays inside and outside the terminal forced health officials to seek alternative transport options to prevent vulnerable patients from extended disruptions to their treatment.

Working directly with the Kaua‘i Emergency Management Agency, Chief Warrant Officer 2 Robin Eiland, an aviation liaison assigned to Bravo Company, 2nd Battalion, 211th Aviation Regiment, assisted the State of Hawai‘i Department of Health representative in submitting a formal Request For Assistance to mobilize military air assets.

Once approved, the Chinook flew the patients from Līhu‘e Airport directly to the Hawai‘i Army National Guard aviation hangar in Kalaeloa bypassing the airport congestion. Upon landing on O‘ahu, Honolulu Emergency Medical Services (EMS) personnel met the aircraft and transported the patients directly to local facilities for treatment.

“Dialysis is not something patients can simply postpone without serious consequences,” said Honolulu EMS Director Jim Ireland. “Our teams understand how critical these treatments are, and we are committed to doing everything we can to help ensure patients get the care they need. This response is a great example of multiple agencies working together to support our most vulnerable residents.”

The multi-agency life-safety mission moved from an idea to wheels-up execution within a matter of hours, with the critical-care dialysis patients leaving Kaua‘i at 5:50 p.m. and leaving the airfield on Oahu in the EMS by 7:00 p.m..

“The mission went from a request to reality within hours,” said Maj. Jerrod Avegalio, acting State Army Aviation Officer of the Hawai‘i Army National Guard. “We were tracking the importance of the transport and that decisive action was needed. The combined efforts of our aviation maintenance to ensure ready aircraft, crews, flight operations, fuelers and every other ground support entity on both islands ultimately enabled us to respond safely and effectively when needed the most.”

Avegalio emphasized that Guard aviators and support staff remain on standby as recovery efforts continue across the island chain.

“I am extremely proud of what our team accomplished,” Avegalio added. “We will continue to stay ready to answer the call for our Kaua‘i ‘ohana during this difficult time.”

Patrick Tangonan honored for 50 years of service

By Ruben Duldulao
State of Hawai'i Department of Defense Public Affairs

Patrick Tangonan, the General Maintenance and Services Supervisor in the Engineering Office, was honored for his 50-year career with a surprise presentation by Adjutant General Maj. Gen. Stephen Logan on Aug. 28.

He was recognized for his 50 years of dedication, professionalism and unwavering service with the State of Hawai'i Department of Defense (HIDOD).

He began his career in 1976, rising through positions within the maintenance branch, ultimately earning his role as General Maintenance and Services Supervisor II, where he has served for the past 20 years. His entire career has been committed solely to the HIDOD, giving him unparalleled knowledge and experience of its facilities, people and mission.

"What I like most about working for HIDOD is the people," says Tangonan. "I am truly proud and honored to be part of a team that's dedicated to serve the people of Hawai'i."

Throughout five decades of service, his steady and dedicated leadership ensured that HIDOD facilities remained functional and mission ready. Supporting 10 adjutants general and two chief engineering officers, he played an involved role during the department's critical moments.

Tangonan provided statewide oversight for maintenance personnel during the 29th Brigade's first deployment and numerous subsequent deployments, reorganized operations to repair and revitalize the Hawai'i State Veterans Cemetery at Kāne'ohe and led the entire state maintenance apparatus before the Hawai'i Air and Army National Guards established their own engineering operations. Furthermore, his leadership fostered excellence, guiding his branch members to earn recognition as both team and individual employees of the year.





Above, Patrick Tangonan, second from right, posed for a photo with fellow Hawai'i Department of Defense Engineering Office co-workers Irwin Gamboa, left, Harlan Tasaka and Kevin Ancog on Aug. 28. At left, Tangonan received his certificate of recognition from Adjutant General Maj. Gen. Stephen Logan. *(Photos by Ruben Duldulao)*

"I've had the privilege and pleasure of working with this honoree throughout my 27 years with the HIDOD," says former Chief Engineering Officer, retired Brig. Gen. Neal Mitsuyoshi.

"He is an exceptional leader and an expert in the maintenance arena, but what has always distinguished him is his unwavering commitment to his people. He builds strong, trusting relationships with his team, invests in their success and genuinely cares about their well-being. He truly embodies the philosophy of 'Mission First, People Always.'"

Tangonan is widely respected for his ability to lead, mentor and get the job done —embodying the work ethic behind his own mottos and earning the trust placed in him by his peers and supervisors. His contributions have shaped the maintenance branch and strengthened the HIDOD, leaving a legacy defined by commitment, integrity and service to the state of Hawai'i.

Tangonan shared some words of advice: "To all the men and women who come to work, do your best and do what's right, from Hilo to Kapolei — just go with the flow."

State of Hawai‘i Department of Defense Incentive Service Awards winners

The State of Hawai‘i Department of Defense (HIDOD) Incentive Service Awards winners attended the Governor’s Award Ceremony at the Hawai‘i State Capitol Auditorium on Sept. 15. Recognized at the event, at right, were retired Col. Rusty Spray, Administrator, Administrastive Services Office (Manager of the Year), left; Ken Smith representing STARBASE Hawai‘i (Team of the Year) and Ronnie Torres, Geographic Information Systems Manager, Facilities and Management Branch, Hawai‘i Army National Guard (Adjutant General’s Award). Joining them for a photo after the ceremony was Adjutant General Maj. Gen Stephen Logan. (*Photo by Crystal Payanal)*



Below from left, Torres, the STARBASE Hawai‘i team and Spray took photos with Deputy Adjutant General Brig. Gen. Phillip Mallory at the HIDOD Incentive Service Awards Ceremony held at the 29th IBCT Readiness Center in Kalaeloa on Aug. 7. At bottom, attendees are seen inside Buidling 29 Auditorium, left, and the awards were laid out before the ceremony. *(Photos by Rachel Blaire)*

















Hogsten promoted to general

Hawai'i Army National Guard Commander and Joint Staff Director Col. Damon Hogsten was promoted to Brigadier General during an outdoor ceremony at the 298th Regiment, Multi-Functional Training Regiment facility on Sept. 3. Gov. Josh Green and Adjutant General Stephen Logan took part in the presentation. Hogsten was joined by family, friends and fellow Guardsmen and the event was streamed live on Facebook.

— Photos by U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Thomas Foster

HIANG establishes its first Recruiting and Retention Flight at Pearl City office

By Tech. Sgt. Orlando Corpuz
Hawai'i Air National Guard Headquarters

The Hawai'i Air National Guard activated its first Recruiting and Retention Flight during a ceremony Aug. 1 at the HIANG recruiting offices in Pearl Highlands Center establishing a dedicated organization designed to strengthen recruiting, improve retention and increase force readiness across the state.

The ceremony included three significant events: the formal activation of Headquarters, Hawai'i Air National Guard Recruiting and Retention Flight; the assumption of command by Lt. Col. Michael Buendia; and the assumption of responsibility by Senior Master Sgt. Todd Shak.

Together, the events formally established the recruiting flight as a dedicated organizational unit operating under HIANG Headquarters and marked the beginning of a new command team responsible for it.

Although the activation order officially took effect July 11, the ceremony provided an opportunity for HIANG leaders, Airmen, families, retirees and community members to recognize the significance of the new organization and its role in strengthening the force.

"This activation is more than an organizational change, a new guidon, or a line on a chart," said Brig. Gen. Phillip L. Mallory, commander of the Hawai'i Air National Guard. "It is a clear statement that recruiting and retention are readiness missions, and recruiting to our full end strength is my top priority."

Before the flight's activation, recruiting and retention activities operated under the HIANG's personnel directorate. Establishing it as a standalone flight provides the justification and resources needed to assign dedicated support personnel.



Brig. Gen. Phillip Mallory, Hawai'i Air National Guard commander and Lt. Col. Michael Buendia, Headquarters Hawaii Air National Guard Recruiting Flight commander, unfurled the Headquarters Hawai'i Air National Guard Recruiting and Retention Flight guidon during the unit's activation ceremony held at Pearl Highlands Center in Pearl City on Aug. 1. *(U.S. Air National Guard photo by Tech. Sgt. Orlando Corpuz)*

The flight now consists of nearly 20 full-time Guardsmen responsible for recruiting new members, retaining experienced Airmen, and supporting accession and in-processing requirements across the HIANG.

Mallory said reaching full end strength would require more than filling vacant positions. He emphasized the importance of building trusted relationships throughout the state, improving the accession process, and fostering a culture that encourages Airmen to join and continue serving.

"Every aircraft we launch, every cyber network we defend, every command-and-control mission we execute, and every response we provide to the State of Hawai'i begins with people," Mallory said. "We cannot generate combat power, serve our communities, or remain ready across the Indo-Pacific unless we bring in talented Airmen, develop them, support their families, and give them compelling reasons to continue serving."

The establishment of the flight followed efforts by recruiting and retention leaders at the National Guard Bureau to secure additional manpower and resources for recruiting organizations across all 54 states and territories.

Before the flight's activation, recruiters were often responsible for transporting applicants to and from the Military Entrance Processing Station, coordinating unit orientations and enlistments, completing in-processing and administrative tasks, and supporting marketing and social media efforts.

Although those duties were necessary, the time spent supporting transportation and administrative requirements reduced the amount of time recruiters could dedicate to meeting applicants, generating leads, visiting schools, and developing relationships within local communities.

The flight's additional support personnel will assume many of those responsibilities, allowing recruiters to remain focused on finding and engaging prospective Airmen.

Following the activation of the flight, Buendia formally assumed command as its first commander. During the assumption-of-command portion of the ceremony, he accepted the unit guidon, sym-



Tech. Sgt. Breyhanna Magusara, Hawai'i Air National Guard recruiter, offered the symbolic first salute to newly appointed Headquarters Hawai'i Air National Guard commander, Lt. Col. Michael Buendia during the unit's activation ceremony held at Pearl Highlands Center in Pearl City on Aug. 1. *(U.S. Air National Guard photo by Tech. Sgt. Orlando Corpuz)*

bolizing his authority and responsibility for the flight's personnel, mission, and resources.

Buendia previously served in a variety of enlisted and officer positions throughout his HIANG career. He enlisted in the HIANG in 1995 before earning his commission and serving as an air battle manager, director of operations, and commander of the 169th Air Defense Squadron.

Mallory said Buendia's career reflected the opportunities available through Guard service and gave him an understanding of both the decision to enlist and the responsibility of leading and retaining Airmen.

"Command is not about possession of a guidon; it is about accountability for people and mission," Mallory said. "I charge you to build a flight that recruits with purpose, retains with care, removes unnecessary barriers, and strengthens the connection between every Airman and the mission they serve."

Shak then formally assumed responsibility as the flight's first senior enlisted leader. The assumption-of-responsibility ceremony recognized his role as the commander's principal enlisted adviser and his responsibility for the standards, readiness, development, and well-being of the flight's enlisted members.

Shak, who enlisted in the HIANG in 2002, has served as a production recruiter and recruiting superintendent before assuming responsibility as the senior enlisted leader of the recruiting unit, helped guide the recruiting and retention enterprise through the transition leading to the flight's activation.

Mallory charged Shak with serving as Buendia's trusted adviser, representing the flight's enlisted force, and helping the new organization establish its identity and integrate additional personnel.

"No commander succeeds alone," Mallory said. "Your experience and credibility will be essential as this new organization establishes its identity, integrates its new personnel, and turns strategic goals into daily action."

During the ceremony, Mallory also recognized the families of Buendia and Shak, thanking them for their support and acknowledging the demands associated with command and senior enlisted leadership.

Mallory said the flight's mission extends beyond meeting recruiting goals. Its members will also help preserve the experience already within the HIANG and shape the organization's future by connecting qualified applicants with opportunities to serve.

"You are not simply filling vacancies," Mallory told the flight's members. "You are finding Hawai'i's next generation of Airmen, preserving the experience already within our formations, and shaping the future of this force one person at a time."

As the HIANG's first dedicated Recruiting and Retention Flight, the organization will serve as the central force behind efforts to attract, access, and retain the Airmen needed to support state and federal missions.

"Build an organization worthy of the Airmen it serves and the future it is charged to secure," Mallory said. "Lead with humility, purpose, resilience and aloha."

Hawai‘i SAA is now five years old; new director reflects on his first year

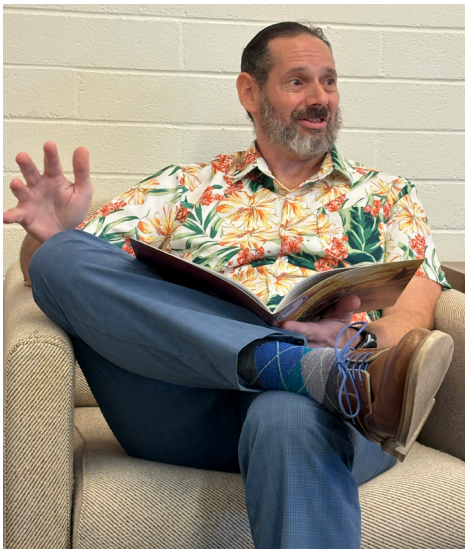
By Ruben Duldulao
State of Hawai‘i Department of Defense Public Affairs

The Hawai‘i State Approving Agency (SAA) traces its roots to the passage of the original GI Bill of Rights in the aftermath of World War II. Officially authorized under Title 38, U.S. Code, Chapter 36, the SAA was established to safeguard the quality and integrity of educational and training programs accessible to veterans utilizing federal education benefits. Every U.S. state maintains its own SAA, responsible for approving programs within its jurisdiction and ensuring compliance with Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) requirements.

The SAA's core responsibilities include inspecting and supervising educational institutions, approving or disapproving training programs for GI Bill eligibility, and reviewing institutions' compliance with federal standards. These functions are codified in 38 CFR §21.4151(b), which defines the agency's role in collaboration with the VA.

In Hawai‘i, the SAA has evolved over the decades. For many years, the agency was housed within the University of Hawai‘i system, until a pivotal transition in 2021. The Isakson-Roe Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act mandated that SAAs be independent of state universities to avoid potential conflicts of interest. In response, the Hawai‘i SAA was officially transferred to the State of Hawai‘i Department of Defense on Oct. 1, 2021.

The Hawai‘i SAA engages with educational training institutions across the state, at various stages of the approval process. These include institutions of higher learning that offer degree programs ranging from associates to doctoral levels. Other non-college degree schools offer vocational or certification programs in areas such as massage therapy, cybersecurity, esthetics, flight school and yoga instruction. The approval process is thorough and can take months to complete, especially for new institutions.



HAWAI‘I STATE APPROVING AGENCY

For VA education benefits assistance, call **(808) 369-3559**

Stephen Rudnick shared his thoughts on his first year as director of the Hawai‘i State Approving Agency. *(Photo by Ruben Duldulao)*

In addition to program approvals, the agency conducts outreach engages in supervisory and compliance related school visits, processes reapprovals, modifications, suspensions and withdrawals. Withdrawals can be due to factors such as school closure, inactivity, voluntary withdrawal, non-participation in federal financial aid programs or federal compliance violations.

Today, the Hawai‘i SAA continues its mission to approve and monitor education and training programs, ensuring that veterans and their families receive the full value of their hard-earned GI Bill benefits. It also assists veterans in identifying appropriate programs locally and nationwide, affirming its role as a vital resource within the broader network of veterans' services.

Director Rudnick reflects on his first year

Stephen Rudnick is the director of the Hawai‘i SAA, a position he has held since Oct. 1, 2025. SAA and what the future holds for him.

Describe your position and what the SAA is and does. SAAs are often referred to as the defenders of the G.I. Bill as our duties help to ensure eligible service members, veterans, and other beneficiaries receive high-quality training, and taxpayers are protected from fraud, waste and abuse.

What do you enjoy about the position? This is a tough question. I enjoy so much about this job. I started in the SAA in another state because I wanted to bridge the communication gaps between the VA, SAAs, schools and employers offering training, and the folks who we all serve. My efforts have been rewarded by policy changes, quality improvements, elimination of waste, better service, and yes, an actual award here and there. However, I figured out very quickly as an SAA that my favorite thing was learning about the schools and employers that offer training. It's a lot of fun seeing what kind training is out there. It's very satisfying approving new programs that will ensure folks have good opportunities.

What did you do before being the SAA director that helped you in the position? I was a school official at a major university and served as an SAA staff member prior to joining the Hawai‘i SAA. I have also been active member of the Veterans' Education Services Community. Before joining the SAA, I served in various positions of state and regional organizations, including as the president of the Oklahoma Veterans Education Specialists Association. Later, as an SAA, I began serving as the National Association of State Approving Agencies Cooperative Agreement Committee Chair, acting as the chief negotiator between VA and SAAs of the states.

What are some of the challenges you have faced in the past year? Maybe it's because I was taught to view problems and challenges as opportunities, or maybe it's because I was the typical Gen-X, latchkey kid, but the greatest challenge I have faced this year has been answering this question. LOL! It's been quite the year. Although I knew the job, I still had, and have, a lot to learn about Hawai'i. That said, I have been blessed by kindness of the folks I work with here at HIDOD and with the schools and employers that I oversee. I have never felt so welcome.

What is the most interesting school that you were able to get someone into? This is one of those questions that sets off the alarm in my head, "Danger, Will Robinson!", because it is so easy to play favorites. If I were to try pick favorites of what I have approved in the past, though, I would likely happily chat for hours. I have approved literal rocket science, farrier training, leading edge agronomy programs, gunsmithing, economics, fire-science, nursing, cosmetology, and so much more training that will help folks get employed and boost our economy. I can't pick one, because I'm excited about what I'm going to approve next.

Hawai‘i National Guard protected airports after 9/11 attacks



Soldiers from the Hawai‘i Army National Guard’s 1st Battalion, 487th Field Artillery, turned over the supplemental security mission to the Transportation Security Administration in April 2002. *(State of Hawai‘i Department of Defense archive photo)*

By Rachel Blaire
State of Hawai‘i Department of Defense Public Affairs

The terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, forever changed the United States. As commercial aviation across the U.S. came to an abrupt halt, the Hawai‘i Air National Guard was among the first military organizations to respond. The 199th Fighter Squadron launched F-15 Eagle fighter aircraft to safely escort civilian airliners still airborne into Honolulu and Kona’s International Airports. Meanwhile, the 169th Aircraft Control and Warning Squadron maintained continuous surveillance of Hawai‘i airspace, ensuring military leaders had real-time awareness of every aircraft operating near the islands.

On the ground, Gov. Benjamin Cayetano ordered the partial activation of the Hawai‘i National Guard on Sept. 11, making Hawai‘i the first state in the nation to deploy National Guard personnel to secure an international airport following the attacks. Soldiers established a Quick Reaction Force at Honolulu International Airport, working alongside state and local law enforcement agencies. When the airport reopened on Sept. 13, Guardsmen stood watch throughout the terminals and at curbside locations, providing a visible security presence intended to reassure travelers and deter additional threats.

The mission expanded significantly on Oct. 7, 2001, after President George W. Bush authorized federally-funded National Guard support for airport security nationwide as part of Operation Noble Eagle. Hawai‘i National Guard soldiers and airmen assumed security duties at airports across O‘ahu, Hawai‘i Island, Maui, Kaua‘i, Moloka‘i and Lāna‘i. At its peak, more than 200 Guardsmen were assigned to airport security.

The 1st Battalion, 487th Field Artillery became the principal unit responsible for airport security on O‘ahu, while the 2nd Battalion, 299th Infantry provided most of the personnel for airports on the neighbor islands. Guardsmen received specialized training on Federal Aviation Administration security procedures before taking their posts. Armed with M-16 rifles, they stood alongside airport security personnel at screening checkpoints, monitored access points, and remained prepared to assist law enforcement if needed.

While airport security became the most publicly visible mission, it represented only one part of the Guard’s broader homeland defense effort. The 154th Security Forces Squadron strengthened installation security, while the 203rd Air Refueling Squadron remained prepared to launch at a moment’s notice in support of combat air patrols. Hundreds of Guardsmen volunteered for additional duty, balancing civilian careers and family responsibilities while helping defend Hawai‘i.

The airport security mission officially concluded in the spring of 2002. On April 15, members of the 1st Battalion, 487th Field Artillery marched away from their checkpoint at Honolulu International Airport as responsibility transitioned to the newly established Transportation Security Administration (TSA). Honolulu became the first major airport in the nation to complete the transfer of supplemental security duties from the National Guard to TSA personnel. Airport security operations on the neighbor islands concluded on May 10, ending seven months of continuous Guard presence at Hawai‘i’s airports.

Read more about the 2001-02 airport security mission at https://shorturl.at/lAD3u









HIARNG America 250 team returns from D.C. mission

By Ruben Duldulao

State of Hawai'i Department of Defense Public Affairs

Twenty-seven soldiers from the 1st Squadron 299th, Cavalry Regiment (1-299th CAV) were greeted by Hawai'i National Guard leadership at Daniel K. Inouye International Airport after supporting the America 250 team at the National Mall in Washington, D.C., from July 7 to Sept. 4.

"Supporting America 250 in Washington, D.C., was a valuable opportunity for our team," said 1st Lt. Kelie Cho, who led the Hawai'i Army National Guard (HIARNG) team. "Working alongside our task force counterparts from the Mississippi and South Carolina National Guards strengthened our ability to support a dynamic mission."

The HIARNG team consisted of cavalry scouts, along with two signal operations support specialists, one combat medic, two armor officers and one ordnance officer. They provided security support during event setup, execution and breakdown for Freedom 250 activities, including the Great American Farmers Market and the Freedom 250 Indy Grand Prix. The two signal operations support specialists supported this effort at the D.C. J6.

The soldiers supported Freedom 250 events by helping to ensure the events were conducted safely and efficiently in recognition of the 250th anniversary of the United States. As mission requirements changed frequently between events, the team remained flexible and ready to support wherever and whenever needed. The soldiers also assisted with medical responses involving civilians on multiple occasions.

"During our time in Washington, D.C., we had the opportunity to visit national museums and historic landmarks, which provided a meaningful reminder of the history and service behind the mission we supported," said Cho.

U.S. Army National Guard photos by retired Master Sgt. Andrew Jackson





HING presents Hawaii Baptist Academy leaders with Patriot Awards

The Hawai'i National Guard (HING) presented the Patriot Award to both Hawaii Baptist Academy President Ron Shiira and High School Principal Elton Kinoshita at the academy's high school campus on Sept. 15. Col. Christopher Guadiz, Hawai'i Army National Guard (HIARNG) state command chaplain, and Col. Regina Komine, HING chief of the Joint Staff, took part in the presentation.

HIARNG Chaplain and Hawaii Baptist Academy Christian Ministries Coordinator Charles Poore nominated them for their support to him during the unscheduled activations due to the storms starting with the Kona Lows in March.

"Since coming to Hawaii Baptist Academy in 2022, Ron and Elton have supported my military obligations, and assisted me in working through the times I have had to be away," said Poore. "Through the Kona Lows and Hurricane Lala this year, both men have affirmed the importance the presence of a military chaplain can add to the HIARNG mission and providing the religious support for our service members."

The ESGR Patriot Award is a Department of Defense award created by Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR). It honors individual civilian supervisors and bosses for exceptional support given to employees who serve in the National Guard and Reserve, as well as to their military families. It reflects efforts such as flexible schedules, time off prior to and after deployment, caring for families, and granting leaves of absence if needed.

"I believe I am the first HIARNG member to work at Hawaii Baptist Academy, so this is a new experience for these supervisors, and they have graciously support the Guard's efforts to help our neighbors during trying times," said Poore.

Pictured at top: ESGR Representative Deb Uemura, left, Col. Komine, President Shiira, Principal Kinoshita, Chaplain Guadiz and Chaplain Poore.

– Photos by Deb Uemura







Youth Challenge cadets take to the air in HIARNG orientation flight

The Hawai'i Youth Challenge Academy participated in a Hawai'i Army National Guard (HIARNG) orientation flight on Aug. 12. Twenty-two cadets and six cadre members boarded the late-morning flight aboard a CH-47 Chinook helicopter. This was the second flight of this kind held for the program. The experience offered students a new perspective and a glimpse of what the HIARNG has to offer.

"The main purpose is to try and give these kids experiences that they wouldn't get anywhere else provide them that once in a lifetime opportunity," said Sgt. First Class Chris Cluney, HIARNG Recruiting Retention non-commissioned officer. "At the same time, try to show them that you know there's different avenues that they could go in their life, utilizing the National Guard (and) the careers that are provided in that and the benefits that can come out of that."

— U.S. Army National Guard photos by Spc. Daniel Barcenas







Hawai'i Air National Guard's 199th Fighter Squadron hosts Republic of Korea Air Force

The Hawai'i Air National Guard's 199th Fighter Squadron (199th FS) hosted a delegation of Republic of Korea Air Force Officers on Sept. 10 at the Daniel K. Inouye Fighter Squadron Operations Facility and Aircraft Maintenance Facility on Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam.

During the trip, 199th FS Commander Lt. Col. Curtis Yoshimoto exchanged gifts with Lt. Gen. Jun Sun Cha, Republic of Korea Air Force Operations Command Commander, embodying the Aloha spirit.

The tour was coordinated with the State Partnership Program whose mission is to link National Guard units with military, security forces and disaster response organizations of partner nations to build long-term, mutually beneficial relationships and enhance global security.

– Photos by retired Master Sgt. Andrew Jackson



A view overlooking Hawai‘i State Veterans Cemetery in Kāne‘ohe. *(Photo courtesy of VA Pacific Islands Health Care System)*

Hawai‘i State Veterans Cemetery marks its 35th anniversary, legacy of John Henry Felix

By Jayme Nagamine
State of Hawai‘i
Office of Veterans’ Services

and State of Hawai‘i Department of Defense Public Affairs staff

Every Memorial Day, families, fellow veterans, civic leaders and community members gather at the Hawai‘i State Veterans Cemetery (HSVC) to pay tribute to those who answered the call to serve. It is but one of the annual traditions that bring families, friends and veterans to the cemetery off Kamehameha Highway in Kāne‘ohe.

The peaceful landscape, framed by the majestic Ko‘olau Mountains, offers visitors a place for quiet reflection and a reminder that freedom carries a lasting cost. The cemetery has made its 35th year of operation since its opening.

The cemetery is run by the State of Hawai‘i’s Office of Veterans’ Services (OVS). A division of the State of Hawai‘i Department of Defense. Lt. Col. John Alamodin, Director of OVS, sees the cemetery as one of the most valuable benefits that a veteran can have.

“The cemetery provides moments of respite and peace as families experience some of the most difficult times in their lives when a veteran in their family passes,” said Alamodin. “The benefit of having a dedicated cemetery for veterans and their families removes some of the final worries a veteran can have. They know that their family can lay them to rest amongst fellow warriors and visit them when they want.”

There are currently 17,634 veterans buried at the HSVC as of June 30. The cemetery averages about 50 burials or inurnments a month. One concern many cemeteries have is capacity.

“The capacity of the Hawai‘i State Veterans Cemetery is about 76,000 burial plots,” said Cemetery Operations Manager Daniel Chung. “That will get us to year 2561 for casketed burials. Our cemetery will not reach capacity any time soon.”

“There are other options for veterans, but the HSVC must be operated solely for the interment of veterans (as defined in 38 CFR part 39.2) and their eligible family members,” said Chung. “This ensures veterans are protected and respected long after they pass.”

While thousands of veterans and their families know it as a place of remembrance, few know the remarkable story of the people whose vision and generosity helped make it possible.

Retired Maj. Gen. Edward V. Richardson worked with Hawai‘i Gov. John Waihee to bring about the completion of HSVC.

“At the time, one of my priorities as the state adjutant general was to enhance and strengthen veterans’ services and facilities throughout the state,” Richardson said.

The state had searched extensively for affordable land but had been unable to secure a suitable location, until Dr. John Henry Felix solved the problem.

Dr. John Henry Felix lived a life defined by public service and philanthropy. He was a decorated Korean War Army veteran, former Honolulu City Council member, educator, businessman, humanitarian and lifelong volunteer.

One issue particularly concerned him during the 1980s was Hawai‘i’s veterans were running out of burial space. The National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific at Punchbowl was nearing capacity, leaving the state without

an adequate long-term resting place for future veterans.

Rather than simply advocate for a solution, Felix became part of it. In 1986, he donated more than 35 acres of land adjacent to Hawaiian Memorial Park in Kāneʻohe to the state of Hawaiʻi for the creation of a new veterans' cemetery.

"Finding land for the cemetery was a major undertaking, thankfully Dr. John Henry Felix donated the land that the Hawaiʻi State Veterans Cemetery sits on," said Alamodin. "His dedication to the creation of this facility is unmatched."

Retired Col. Jason Seal who spent three years serving as Felix's executive assistant co-managed the two plaque-unveiling ceremonies for Felix at the Hawaiʻi State Veterans Cemetery. While preparing for the ceremonies, Seal recalled Felix saying, "This is where my home was going to be. It would have had a great view, but what a waste it would have been. This was meant for greater things, a beautiful resting place for our veterans."



Dr. John Henry Felix


Retired Col. Jason Seal

Photos courtesy of VA Pacific Islands Health Care System

Construction began in 1989, and the cemetery officially opened in August 1991. Since then, it has expanded over multiple phases and has become the primary veteran's cemetery on Oʻahu, serving thousands of veterans and eligible family members.

When the cemetery first opened, the staff were stationed in trailers and temporary facilities. Since then, an administration office/visitor center, flag plaza, maintenance facility, committal shelter and memorial plaza with columbarium have been built.

Today, visitors entering HSVC encounter a place of quiet reflection where rows of white markers overlook the lush Windward landscape.

On this 35th anniversary, we honor every veteran laid to rest at HSVC, every family that continues to cherish their memory, and every individual whose efforts have preserved this hallowed ground with dignity and respect. Their service will never be forgotten. Their sacrifice will always be remembered. Their legacy will continue to inspire generations to come.

HISTORICAL RECORDS

The Hawaii National Guard History records span over 150 years, and it is our responsibility to preserve and make available these historical records. A summary of the Hawaii National Guard history is currently available online as well as the chronological history which is currently a work in progress. The history features annual reports, newsletters, photos, publications and news articles from the major events that have occurred over the years. Please take a look and check back to see the website expand as we digitize our large historical collection.

dod.hawaii.gov/hawaii-national-guard-history



pupukahi

COLOR GUIDE

- Hawai‘i National Guard
- Hawai‘i Army National Guard
- Hawai‘i Air National Guard
- Hawai‘i Emergency Management Agency
- State of Hawai‘i Office of Veterans’ Services
- Civilian Military Programs
- Hawai‘i Department of Defense Public Affairs

RESOURCE GUIDE

VA Support, Benefits
Oahu: (808) 433-0420
Hilo: (808) 369-3538
Kona: (808) 844-6664
Kaua‘i: (808) 369-3535
Maui: (808) 369-3541

VA Education Benefits
Hawai‘i State Approving Authority: (808) 369-3559

Military Records
HIARNG: (808) 844-6454
HIANG: 1 (800) 525-0102

Common Access Card
O‘ahu: (808) 844-6425
Big Island: (808) 844-6616
Maui: (808) 789-0637
Kaua‘i: (808) 844-6735

Support Services/Units
dod.hawaii.gov/jstaff/hawaii-department-of-defense-community-support/

Contact list of departments and divisions
dod.hawaii.gov/contact-us/

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(808) 441-7000
dod.pao.all@hawaii.gov

Retired Maj. Jeff Hickman
Director, Public Affairs

Rachel Blaire
Public Affairs Specialist

Retired Master Sgt. Andy Jackson
Photojournalist/Videographer

Ruben Duldulao
Information Specialist

NEW HIRES & TRANSFERS – STATE

EMPLOYEE	DATE	POSITION	PROGRAM
Garingo, Jermaine	7/16/26	EOC Warning Officer	HIEMA
Moon, Preston	7/16/26	State Warning Point Senior Warning Officer	HIEMA
Ching, Darrick	7/16/26	Administrative Manager	HIEMA
Hatch, Marychol	7/16/26	DA Accountant (May 18 - Kilauea)	HIEMA
Gaison, Julian	7/16/26	State Warning Point Senior Warning Officer	HIEMA
Scott Spinner	7/16/26	Emergency Management Reserve Corp Specialist	HIEMA
Yamamoto, Edward	8/3/26	Tractor Operator	ENG
Baltazar, Nicole	8/3/26	ITAM Planner	HIARNG
Colon, Daniel	8/3/26	Logistics Planner (Wildfires)	HIARNG
Littlecreek-Schmidt, Leshaya	8/3/26	Shift Leader	YCA
Murai, Jennifer	8/3/26	RPM Case Manager (fka Cadre - Kalaeloa)	YCA
Lewis-Blades, Cyress-Angelo	8/3/26	General Laborer II	ENG
McKeague, Leslie	8/3/26	Lead Counselor	YCA
Barientos, David	8/17/26	General Laborer I	ENG
Mamaril, Jaimelyn	8/17/26	Human Resources Specialist - WF	HIEMA
Takahashi, NeiAnn	8/17/26	Shift Leader	YCA
Gonsalves Jr., James	9/1/26	General Laborer II	ENG
Mattos, Michael	9/1/26	General Laborer III	ENG
Cabrera-Soares, Alyssa	9/1/26	RPM Assistant (fka Placement Mentor Coordiantor)	YCA
Shigemasa, Sheryl	9/1/26	Administrative Assistant I	OVS / HSVC
Savaaetasi, Neomi	9/1/26	RPM Lead Case Manager (fka Assistant Mentor Coordinator)	YCA
Kawakami, Brandon	9/1/26	Grant Account Clerk (EMPG)	ASO
So, Timothy	9/1/26	Emergency Management Reserve Corp Specialist	HIEMA
Rodriguez, Benjamin	9/16/26	General Laborer I	ENG
Morishige, Robert	9/16/26	Engineer III	ENG
Silva, Deanne	9/16/26	Medical Assistant (fka Nurse Assistant)	YCA
Vaimetua, Kamakele	9/16/26	Cadre	YCA
Aukelenuiaiku, Cuarism	9/16/26	Cadre	YCA
Keomalu, Marc	9/16/26	IT & ESS Assistant	HIARNG
Grdjan, Karissa	9/16/26	Siren Program Assistant (WF)	HIEMA
Blas, Ryan	9/16/26	Operation Specialist (WF)	HIEMA
Pasco, Angelic	9/16/26	Case Manager	YCA
Husaini, Minha	9/16/26	Emergency Management Reserve Corp Specialist	HIEMA

NEW HIRES & TRANSFERS – FEDERAL

EMPLOYEE	DATE	POSITION	ORGANIZATION
Badon, Calyx	7/27/26	Human Resources Specialist (Military)	HIARNG REC RET CMD
Basnet, Sagar	7/27/26	Human Resources Specialist (Military)	JOINT FORCE HQ - HI
Bustillo, Ryan	7/27/26	Human Resources Assistant (Military)	JOINT FORCE HQ - HI
Umiamaka Jr, Kukela	7/27/26	Military And Family Readiness Specialist	HIARNG FULL TIME SUPPORT
Bacalso, Leimari	8/10/26	Supply Management Specialist	JOINT FORCE HQ - HI
Escano, Jeff-Lawrence	8/10/26	Aircraft Mechanic	154 AIRCRAFT MAINTENANCE SQ
Puchert, Adam	8/10/26	Aircraft Mechanic	154 AIRCRAFT MAINTENANCE SQ
Sarinas-Farmer, Mikayla	8/10/26	Human Resources Assistant (Military)	154 FRS SQ
Amian, Anuhea	8/24/26	Supply Technician	154 LGR SQ
Salazar, Jordan	8/24/26	Tools And Parts Attendant	HIARNG CSMS 1
Carnate, Ronald	9/9/26	Electronic Integrated Systems Mechanic	154 MAINTENANCE SQ
Chung, Suzy	9/9/26	Air Traffic Control Specialist (Terminal)	297 ATA SQ

