MOKULEIA ARMY AIR FIELD AND MILITARY RESERVATION, WORLD WAR II HISTORY

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Mokuleia Army Air Field (AAF) and Military Reservation (MR) were located in the Kawaihāpai Ahupua'a (ancient Hawaiian land division) of the District of Waialua on O'ahu's North Shore. It was established as the Kawaihapai MR between 1925 to 1927 as a bivouac, and artillery firing point for army units stationed at Schofield Barracks and at Coast Artillery forts on O'ahu.¹ General coordinates are: 21.578433°N - 158.200834°W courtesy of "Google Earth" ©2010 Google[™] including other coordinates and linear measurements mentioned in this essay.

The original reservation consisted of 67 acres built along the Oahu Railway and Land Company main line to Kahuku from Honolulu, an additional 583 acres was officially acquired by the Army in 1946 by means of a "Declaration of Taking" filed in court. Secretary of War, Robert P. Patterson signed the legal instrument in 1946 which stated that the land of Mokulēia, Aku'u, Kawaihāpai, Keālia, and Ka'ena, Waialua, O'ahu, Territory of Hawaii; Mokulēia Ranch and Land Company, et al. "is taken...to provide for a military airfield, an ordnance storage area, and related military purposes incident thereto. The said land has been selected by me for acquisition by the United States for use in connection with such purposes, and such other use as may be authorized by Congress or by Executive Order, and is [r]equired for immediate use." ²

The reservation is positioned on the narrow western end of the Waialua Plain between the Waianae Mountain Range and the ocean. The coastline is relatively flat which rises to a maximum elevation of 20 feet in some areas. The terrain rises gradually to a steep scarp at the southern boundary of the reservation.³

The airfield was a satellite field of Wheeler AAF for the Army Air Forces with construction starting in 1941. It was occupied by aircraft of the Hawaiian Air Force seven days after the bombing of Pearl Harbor and officially activated in 1942 and used extensively for training of Army Air Forces airmen.

The reservation is currently known as the Dillingham MR having been redesignated as Dillingham Air Force Base in 1948.⁴ The main runway (4 - 26) area is currently leased to the State of Hawai'i for general aviation and skydiving.

Airfield Construction

Mokuleia AAF was built during World War II by army engineers of the Honolulu District Engineer's Field Area 13, headquartered in the former R.C.A. building at Kahuku Army Air Base (AAB). Field Area 13 was created to construct Haleiwa AAF and Kahuku AAB, later assigned to develop Mokuleia AAF.⁵

The airfield was one of a number of dispersal aircraft landing fields built on O'ahu and the neighbor islands for the Hawaiian Air Force, predecessor of the 7th Air Force headquartered at Hickam Field, O'ahu. Plans for the development of military airfields on the outer Hawaiian Islands went back to the 1920's and 1930's for the construction of bases on Hawai'i and Kaua'i. Airfield

construction began in June of 1940 for dispersal fields on the outer Hawaiian Islands using Works Progress Administration (W.P.A.) funds. By June of 1941, the War Department (presently Department of the Army) approved new construction for heavy bomber fields on Kaua'i (two) and Hawai'i (three) and for pursuit planes to operate from fields on Moloka'i and Lana'i. Although the newly constructed airfields were built to allow dispersion of pursuit and bomber planes from Hickam Field, no Army aircraft occupied the airfields prior to December 7, 1941.

Runways

The original runway consisted of a small grass strip, which had been paved and lengthened by April 1942.⁶ Army engineers built the longest paved runway on the island at Kawaihāpai, about 9,000 by 75 feet (Runway 8 - 26) and a shorter cross-runway used to scramble fighter aircraft in the air-interception role, $(4 - 22) \pm 3,700$ feet. Parallel taxiways were built north and south of the main runway. Runway 8 - 26 was filled with rocks quarried from the hillside just west of the field and paved with asphaltic-concrete. A drainage tunnel was built under it to mitigate runoff during inclement weather. Lights were installed to facilitate night flight operations and parking aprons built.

Construction of the original airstrip began in 1941, and from 1942 to 1946 it was lengthened and paved and a crosswind runway added as well as revetments.⁷ Airfield construction after October 1, 1942 was supplemented by Company A, 1st Battalion, 370th Engineer Special Service Battalion attached to the 367th Engineer Special Service Regiment until June 1943 when attached to the 47th Engineer Regiment (General Service). On March 21, 1944, the 1st Battalion, 367th Engineers was redesignated as the 1399th Engineer Construction Battalion.⁸

A base camp was set up to accommodate the engineers who were quartered at Schofield Barracks in Wahiawa.

Other defense projects completed by the engineers included construction of Kahuku Army Air Base, and Kipapa and Haleiwa AAFs; constructing a 500,000 gallon water reservoir in Wahiawa, digging ammunition tunnels, completion of a network of roads and bridges in Pūpūkea, building gun emplacements, and constructing fortifications used at the Unit Jungle Training Center at Kahana Bay.

The 370th Engineers was a Nisei outfit which consisted of Headquarters and Companies A, B and C later supplemented by 1525th Base Equipment and 1536th Dump Truck Companies.

Two soldiers of the1399th, Susumu Motonaga and Jack E. Miura, were killed at Mokuleia AAF when the truck they were riding in was hit by a radio-controlled target aircraft.⁹

Revetments

Some 42 aircraft revetments were built of earth at Mokuleia AAF, they were horseshoe shaped; three multi-compartmented revetments were constructed of reinforced concrete, and one was built of pierced steel planking (psp) or landing mat revetted with earth.¹⁰ Revetments provided a minimum of protection to aircraft and personnel from flying shards of metal during an aerial bombardment.

Buildings

Numerous theater of operations (temporary) buildings and Quonset huts, were constructed to support airfield operations and a population of 5,000 that included, but were not limited to, the following:¹¹

Headquarters, barracks, Officers' quarters, NCO quarters, latrines, mess halls, chapel, infirmary, movie-theater, telephone exchange, transformer housing, control tower, crash/rescue station, fire station, bomb storage building built of galvanized steel, motor pool, and radio building.

The control tower was perched atop a steel tower, and was square shaped with a 360° view. The crash/rescue station was located some 200 yards west of the control tower; it was a single story wood structure with a gable roof and accommodated two trucks. The fire station was a single story wood structure with a gable roof and probably accommodated one fire truck based on its size.¹²

Air Operations Bunker

A single splinterproof "cut and cover" reinforced concrete bunker was found by the writer in 2000 near the gated entrance of the Keālia Trail maintained by the State Forestry and Wildlife. The bunker was accessed via descending concrete stairs located on the west side of the structure, which arrived at a reinforced metal door on the left. The bunker was elongated and ran in a east to west direction measuring some 21 feet long by 9 feet 8 inches wide by 8 feet high (interior measurements). Included in the design was an escape/ventilation hatch at the northeast corner accessed via a series of metal rungs imbedded in the wall, A small housing covered the shaft, ingress/egress was blocked by a metal plate door on the west wall of the housing. The design of the bunker was duplicated at other airfields on O'ahu; the writer inspected several at Kualoa Ranch, and one at Pua'ena Point in Haleiwa, both sites of WWII army airfields. It is not known if other examples exist on the military reservation as we were not privileged to have examined the property in its entirety. Most of the land is covered by copious growths of koa haole (*Leucaena leucocephala*) and other non-native invasive species which greatly inhibit examinations.

Civil Engineering Projects

Civil engineering works included but not limited to the following: a well and pumping station, water chlorination plant, storage tanks (100,000 gallon and a smaller wooden tank), and lines. The large capacity water tank was built at a higher elevation to allow for gravity fed distribution. Cesspools and sewer lines; network of roads and trails; electrical distribution lines, transformers, and poles.¹³

Communications System

Communications consisted of tactical and post systems which emanated from a communications bunker located on the airfield. The structure was known as the telephone exchange, an integral part of any army airfield and base. It was disguised with the addition of a gable roof as depicted in a 1949 photograph.

The telephone exchange was connected by subterranean communications cable to the Islandwide tactical communications system of buried "armored" cables maintained by the Army Signal Corps known as the "Command and Fire Control Project" of the prewar "Hawaiian Defense Project" warplans.¹⁴ Additional communication systems would have included cryptographic, teletype, several commercial landlines and radios.

Signal Corps Cable Hut "S1," a splinterproofed concrete one story bunker with walls of a minimum thickness of 12 inches, was situated just off the north shoulder of Farrington Highway some 307 yards east of the present west entrance to the airfield. Cable Nos. C-153 and C-156 connected to a cable vault located in the floor of Hut S1 equipped with switching terminals.¹⁵

Cable Hut S1 has been redesignated to Hut "21S," an active installation of the "Joint Trunking System" or JTS maintained by the Army Signal Corps based at Wheeler Army Air Field.

Radio Station

The airfield radio station building predated the building of the airfield. It was the former "Globe Wireless" wireless receiver building taken over by the U.S. Army right after the attack on December 7, 1941. The structure was a tall one story gable-roofed red brick building with a tall door

on the front and tall narrow windows on the only visible side wall as shown in a August 2, 1949 Air Force photograph, which contrasted greatly with the olive drab tents and mobilization buildings. Globe Wireless was formed in 1938 to communicate with the former Dollar Steamship liners, which became the American President Lines when the federal government took over the Dollar Steamship Lines. In effort to disguise the features of the building, camouflage netting was placed over the structure. The radio station at Kawaihāpai was assigned call sign: KYG.¹⁶

Fuel Storage

The airfield was provided with a total fuel storage capacity of 300,000 gallons built by the army engineers under Job Order 166W and Work Orders 600.118-I-16.0 and 600.118-I-16.2.¹⁷

Aviation Gasoline (AVGAS) was dispensed by means of a mechanical pump system through a fuel dispensing station equipped with two nozzles to fill tank trucks from underground storage tanks. It is the writer's hypothesis that diesel fuel and motor gasoline (MOGAS) was stored at the airfield in keeping with fuel storage systems at other Army Air Forces airfields on O'ahu. MOGAS was typically stored in 5,000 gallon tanks at other airfields.

Ordnance Storage

An ordnance storage area containing an area of 40.59 acres was located at the base of the Waianae Mountain Range that was acquired by the Army in 1944. The site was approximately 1.25 miles southeast of the southeast portion of the military reservation at general coordinates: 21.564837°N - 158.172508°W. An access road was built from the airfield, and a number of storage bunkers were built around a looping paved road. The bunkers consisted of earthen berms with an opening at one end.¹⁸

Assigned Ground Units

The following list represents units known to the writer which were assigned to Mokuleia AAF:

Detachment 15, 145th Army Airways Communications Systems (AACS) Sq., December 15, 1942 to August 1945; provided manning of air traffic control tower and radio and teletype communications systems.

363rd Service Gp. arrived November 14, 1944. Consisted of the following: HQ and Base Services Sq., 334th Station Complement Sq., 621st Material Sq., and 614th Engineering Sq.¹⁹

556th Air Service Gp., 7th Fighter Wing: April 7 to September 29, 1945. Activated December 7, 1944 at Robbins Field, Georgia. Maintained aircraft of the 508th Fighter Gp. (P-47s). Processed P-47 and P-51 aircraft being taken to combat area, and processed personnel being returned to the Zone of Interior (Z.I.). Included the following units: 984th Air Engineering and 1004th Air Material Squadrons, commanded by Colonel Charles W. Coleman in April 1945.²⁰ The group assumed command of all firefighting operations at Mokuleia AAF on July 13, 1945.

Detachment 43, 145th AACS, listed as being assigned to Mokuleia AAF as of June 1945.²¹

Tactical Air Units Assigned to Airfield

The following is a list of air combat and other air organizations assigned to Mokuleia AAF and may not be complete:

72nd Pursuit Squadron (15th Pursuit Gp.): assigned to Wheeler AAF, several aircraft dispersed to Mokuleia, flew P-40Ds. Redesignated to fighter squadron on May 15, 1942 and assigned to the 318th Fighter Gp.²²

23rd Bombardment Sq. (Heavy) (5th Bombardment Gp. [H]): March 24 to November 3, 1942, flew B-17s.

424th Bombardment Sq. (H) (307th Bombardment Gp. [H]): November 2 to December 22, 1942, flew B-17s.

47th Fighter Sq. (15th Fighter Gp.): November 8, 1943 to June 8, 1944, flew P-47 and P-51s.²³

98th Bombardment Sq. (H) (11th Bombardment Gp. [H]): April 8 to November 11, 1943, flew B-24s.

73rd Fighter Sq. (318th Fighter Gp.): May 5 to November 8, 1943, flew P-47s.²⁴

78th Fighter Sq. (15th Fighter Gp.), assigned from April 1 to June 8, 1944, flew P-47 aircraft.²⁵

45th Fighter Sq. (15th Fighter Gp.): April 6 to June 19, 1944, flew P-40 and P-47s.

4th Emergency Rescue Sq.: October 1, 1944 to ? Flew air-sea rescue missions.

531st Fighter Sq. (21st Fighter Gp.): October 8, 1944 to March 26, 1945, flew P-39 and P-38s.²⁶

46th Fighter Sq. (15th Fighter Gp.): October 13, 1944 to March 26, 1945, flew P-38 and P-51s.

27th Bombardment Sq. (H) (30th Bombardment Gp. [H]): October 20 to November 10, 1943, flew B-17s.²⁷

42nd Bombardment Sq. (H) (11th Bombardment Gp. [H]): January 9 to March 19, 1944 and June 23 to September 22, 1944, flew B-24s.²⁸

72nd Fighter Sq. (21st Fighter Gp.): June 8, 1944 to March 26, 1945, flew P-39 and P-38s.²⁹

466th Fighter Sq. (508th Fighter Gp.): February 25 to September 16, 1945, flew P-47s.

467th Fighter Sq. (508th Fighter Gp.): March 3 to September 16, 1945, P-47s.

468th Fighter Sq. (508th Fighter Gp.): March 3 to September 21, 1945, P-47s.³⁰

While assigned to the airfield, aircrews trained in preparation to being sent to forward combat areas in the Central Pacific. Aerial gunnery practices were conducted firing on towed aerial target

sleeves and radio-controlled (RC) aircraft. Bombers conducted anti-submarine patrols off O'ahu, and practiced bomb runs using live and dummy bombs. Bombers often acted in the role of aggressors escorted by Navy planes. Fighter aircraft provided aerial defense of O'ahu, and conducted air to air and air to ground gunnery sessions as well as low level bomb runs, interception, and escort missions.³¹

Other units that passed through Mokuleia AAF were being rotated back to the Zone of the Interior from combat in preparation for demobilization.

Area Defenses

The reservation was situated in O'ahu's World War II "North [Defense] Sector," one of two island defense sectors. The Hawaiian Department 's 24th Infantry Division, Hawaiian Seacoast Artillery Command and Hawaiian Antiaircraft Artillery Command manned infantry positions, field artillery positions, coast and anti-aircraft gun batteries, in the vicinity of the airfield to protect the airfield and shore from enemy attack.

On December 7, 1941, Company C, 19th Infantry Regiment, 24th Infantry Division manned beach defense positions and Company D, 19th Infantry manned trail-blocking defense positions atop the Waianae Mountain Range above the airfield in preparation of small-party raids or invasion; Battery C, 13th Field Artillery covered the area from Pua'ena Point to just west of the airfield. After the 24th Division was forwarded to the war zone, it was replaced by another division that arrived on O'ahu for training in preparation to being forwarded to the war zone.

Three seacoast artillery batteries: Dillingham, Kaena and Mokuleia, armed with 155-mm Grande Puissance Filloux (GPF mobile guns each were emplaced near the reservation. Battery Dillingham was situated some 0.9 mi. southeast; Battery Mokuleia was located at the 500-foot elevation of the Waianae Range above Dillingham Ranch, some 2.6 mi. southeast of the airfield and Battery Kaena was located about 3.8 mi. west. Batteries Dillingham and Kaena were first armed with two 4-inch naval pedestal mounted guns each, on loan from the Navy that were recalled about one year later; two 155-mm GPF guns mounted on Panama Mounts replaced the 4-inchers. Four 75 mm field artillery pieces were emplaced near the beach between Mokulēia and Kawaihāpai after the December 7, 1941 attack by naval aircraft of the Imperial Japanese Navy.

Other defense measures included emplacing 37 mm automatic weapons (AW) later replaced with 40 mm AWs, and .50 caliber antiaircraft machine guns. One mass-produced metal-turreted machine gun pillbox was placed on the airfield. It is not clear if there were others. Metal pillboxes were also emplaced at other locations on O'ahu: at the former Army Camp Malakole on the grounds of the Chevron Refinery's office at Kalaeloa (Barbers Point), and outside the fence of the Lualualei Naval Reservation; one example is on static display at Battery Randolph of the U.S. Army Museum of Hawaii at the Fort DeRussy Recreational Area in Waikiki.

Anti-aircraft and base defenses were initially provided by the newly arrived 95th Coast Artillery (Antiaircraft) Regiment, with Batteries I and K sent to the north shore in February 1942. Both batteries were equipped with 37 mm automatic weapons and .50 caliber antiaircraft machine guns. It is presumed that Battery I provided defense of Mokuleia Airfield as Battery K was at Haleiwa Field. The 369th Coast Artillery (Antiaircraft) (Colored) Regiment, a federalized New York National Guard regiment arrived on O'ahu on June 21, 1942 and was subsequently posted to the north shore where they manned AA defenses at Kahuku Army Air Base, Opana Radar Station, and Haleiwa and Mokuleia Airfields.

A 4x4 jeep trail was built at the southwestern edge of the reservation that consisted of seventeen switchbacks, which culminated above the 980-foot elevation at a plateau on the Waianae Range. The upper reaches of Ka'ena Point and Mākua Valley could be accessed by the trail known

as the "Keālia Trail" that connects with the Kuaokalā Trail accessed from Keawa'ula on the Waianae Coast. The trail allowed movement of men and equipment from sea level to the heights above the airfield to bolster defenses.

Post WWII

The culmination of the war with Japan greatly reduced the need for the Army Air Forces to maintain airfields built on O'ahu during World War II. As a result, most were placed on a reduced manning or "caretaker" status. Mokuleia AAF continued to soldier on and became an installation of the United States Air Force with the creation of the new military branch on September 18, 1947.

The Territory of Hawaii Air National Guard utilized the airfield after the war and made several improvements thereon.

By 1948, the former airfield was redesignated as Dillingham Air Force Base in honor of Captain Henry Gaylord Dillingham, a B-29 pilot killed in action over Kawasaki, Japan on July 25, 1945. Captain Dillingham was the son of railroad and business magnate, Walter F. Dillingham. The airfield was closed sometime in 1948 by the Air Force, by then most of the buildings had fallen into states of disrepair.

Almost all of the mobilization buildings and Quonset huts have been demolished including the former Globe Wireless radio building.

Cold War Missile Launch Site

Dillingham Air Force Base saw the establishment of a Nike-Hercules Missile Launching site in January 1961, designated as site "OA-84." One of four sites located on the island. The Nike-Hercules guided missile was a nuclear-capable weapon.

Administration headquarters and acquisition radar were located in the Waianae Range near "Peacock Flats" at general coordinates: 21.545851N - 158.194944W (2018 feet elevation).

Twelve portable missile launchers were located at the airfield manned by a Platoon of Battery C, 2nd Battalion, 298th Air Defense Artillery Gp., Hawaii Army National Guard, who manned the battery. Each Launcher Platoon consisted of three sections, manned by a crew chief plus eight to ten crewmen each section was responsible for maintaining and preparing four missiles for launching.

Typical launch sites were equipped with emergency power supplied by two diesel-powered Cummins V-12s, each about 12 feet high, rated at 150 kW each. Each launcher included a 30 kW motor generator that provided the means to elevate and depress the missile launcher. The administration, barracks and mess hall buildings were provided commercial power supplied by the Hawaiian Electric Company.

The missile battery launch and acquisition sites closed down in March 1970.

State of Hawai'i Leased Airfield

In 1962, the State of Hawai'i leased the runway portion of the military reservation for general aviation use, although the military retained the right to conduct training exercises with fixed wing and helicopter aircraft.

The property was turned over to the Army by the Air Force in the 1970s. New leases were signed by the State and the Army in 1974 and 1983. The Airports Division, Department of Transportation, State of Hawai'i constructed a tower, fire station and hangers in the 1980s.³²

The airfield is open for day use only to light aircraft, commercial glider flights with only 5,000 feet of Runway 4 – 26 open for fixed wing aircraft; the north end of the field is reserved for sky

diving activities. The Army uses the airfield at night, and conducts exercises up to platoon sized (14 to 16 men) units on the reservation.

Acknowledgement

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Report dated: October 20, 2010. Any omissions or errors are the responsibility of the author. All rights reserved.

Notes

- Diacritical marks have been intentionally left out of military names of installations on the Island of O'ahu. John D. Bennett, "Mokuleia/Dillingham Airfield, and Camp Site: Site Visit Report, May 7, 2009, p. 1. (Hereafter: Bennett, May 7, 2009.) Author's note: sources vary as to when the Kawaihapai Military Reservation was established which vary from 1925 to 1927.
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- 3. Global Security.org, "Dillingham Military Reservation; Dillingham Army Airfield," http://www.global Security.org/military/facility/Dillingham.htm.
- 4. Bennett, May 7, 2009, p. 3.
- 5. Ibid., p. 2.
- 6. Pennie Moblo, M.A., "Literature Review And Archaeological Reconnaissance Survey For Dillingham Airfield Master Plan Area, O'ahu, Hawaii;" Prepared for: Edward K. Noda and Associates, Inc. by International Archaeological Research Institute, January 1991, p. 4.
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- 10. The total number of aircraft revetments was determined from an aerial photograph of Mokuleia AAF dated September 12, 1947 at "Hawaii Aviation: An Archive of Historic Photos and Facts: Mokuleia Airfield. http://hawaii.gov/hawaiiaviation/aviation-photos/1940-1949/oahu-airfields/mokuleia-field/.
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Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam on the Hawaii Aviation Preservation Society's (HIAVPS) website http://hiavps.com/ were used to identify a number of buildings built at Mokuleia AAF.

- 12. Photographs identified as "1 Aug. 1949 Crash Sta. Dill. A.F.B." and "1 Aug. 1949, Fire Sta. Dill. A.F.B." archived in the 15th Air Wing History Office, Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, courtesy of the HIAVPS.
- Edward K. Noda and Associates, "Dillingham Airfield Improvements; Waialua District of Oahu, Tax Map Keys: 1:6:802:16. 1:6:8:14:1 through 23 and 25, State Project No. AO2022-01," Proposing Agency: State of Hawaii, Department of Transportation, Airports Division, Honolulu International Airport, Honolulu, Hawaii 96819, July 2000, p. 14.
- 14. John D. Bennett, "Oahu's Command and Fire Control Cable System," *The Coast Defense Journal*, Vol. 16, No. 2 (May 2002), pp. 42-54.
- 15. Measurements courtesy of "Google Earth" ©2010 Google™ satellite imagery. Department Engineer Office, H.H.D., Ft. Shafter Revisions, Hawaiian Defense Project 1940: Command and Fire Control Project," map, File 10+10 M39, Case A, August1939.
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- 17. Robert C. Richardson, Jr., *Historical Review, Corps of Engineers, United States Army, Volume I, Covering Operations During World War II, Pacific Ocean Area,* Records Gp. 494, National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), College Park, Maryland.
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- 23. Ibid., p. 206.

- 24. Ibid., p. 269.
- 25. Ibid., p. 279.
- 26. Ibid., p. 638.
- 27. Ibid., p. 137.
- 28. Ibid., p. 194.
- 29. Ibid., p. 266.
- 30. Ibid., pp. 573-74. The 508th Fighter Gp. returned to O'ahu from overseas, and was responsible for aerial defense of the island.
- 31. W.F. Craven and J.L. Cate (eds.), "The Army Air Forces in World War II: The Pacific; Guadalcanal to Saipan, August 1942 to July 1944," IV, p. 287. http://ibiblio.org/hyperwar/AAF-IV-9html.
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