



News Release

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PTA training ranges benefit from solar energy

POHAKULOA TRAINING AREA, Hawaii—If you have not noticed, alternative energy resources to gas and oil-based energy are surging forward. One of the benefits here in Hawaii is the constant exposure of the sun's elements and the use of solar energy through solar panels.

Pohakuloa Training Area (PTA) has benefitted from the sun's exposure and currently uses solar panels to operate its 16 ranges.

"More than 450 solar panels are installed at various small arms ranges and power the range towers and pop-up targets," said Gerrit Pasco, PTA Range Maintenance supervisor.

"All our ranges are solar-equipped, and we use generators only as a back-up," he added. "Generators are used at night if the usage continues all day for a week and if there is insufficient sun time to recharge the solar panels."

Range Maintenance personnel see the benefits of solar panels.

"Before solar panels, we used to replace generator batteries, sometimes three times a day, and run generators for 24 hours to operate the ranges," Pasco said. "Solar panels

have greatly made an impact on the operation of PTA ranges greatly. With solar energy, ranges are more dependable as we spend fewer hours on maintenance and there is tremendous cost savings on gasoline to run the generators.”

There are two ways that the solar panels work in providing efficient operation of the ranges.

“Solar panels charge-up batteries (DC battery power) which are converted to AC power by an inverter, and are used to power the range tower computer and lights,” Pasco said. “The other way, solar panels are used to power the pop-up targets.”

Solar panels exhibit less problem issues with manufacturer warranties ranging from 10 to 25 years.

“Solar panels are maintenance-free, but problems may occur in the battery storage area as it may not have the capacity to run the system on a 24-hour basis,” Pasco said.

With zero emission and zero electrical costs, solar energy has provided efficient and effective military training operations at PTA ranges, thanks to the sun and solar panels.

“It’s the way to go with the amount of sun exposure that we get here all year round,” Pasco said. “The next step is to capture the wind that flows through PTA. These natural resources are free and accessible, so why not use it to our benefit.”