



News Release

U.S. Army Garrison, Pohakuloa

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Hawaii State Senator Kokubun visits PTA

POHAKULOA TRAINING AREA, Hawaii—The Hawaii State Senator of District 2 (Hilo, Puna, and Ka’u), the Honorable Russell S. Kokubun, was interested in gaining firsthand knowledge about the U.S. Army installation on the Big Island, so he came to PTA recently.

“I really wanted to know what’s going on here,” Kokubun said. “PTA is such a significant part of the Big Island community, and we drive by PTA on Saddle Road, read about Pohakuloa in the newspapers, and yet you cannot beat coming onsite, meeting the people who work here, and understanding their mission. For me, this is a personal and educational issue.”

Two things come to mind about Senator Kokubun’s impression of PTA.

“One is seeing the military capabilities and expertise,” Kokubun said. “It just gives me a better sense of how our military operates and the opportunity of meeting the men and women of the armed forces, getting to know them as people, and also understanding their mission, no matter how dangerous that may be, and their dedication in completing their mission.”

Kokubun appreciated PTA’s environmental work and outreach program.

“The other thing that impressed me was the work that is being done here at Pohakuloa in respect to cultural and natural resources and the preservation of these resources,” he added. “The fact that not only is it being done on the military

installation and the surrounding areas, PTA has an [environmental] outreach for young school-age children to inform them on these disciplines.”

“I think the outreach program provides tremendous learning opportunities for young people, not only to understand the military and its mission, but to learn of other disciplines generated from this Army base,” Kokubun said. “I think these are excellent career opportunities for young people to get involved in and discover.”

PTA staff, led by Lt. Col. Warline Richardson, garrison commander, Pohakuloa Training Area, and Command Sgt. Maj. James Murray, PTA command sergeant major, provided Senator Kokubun an overview of this Army installation’s garrison, its ranges, and Bradley Army Air Field from PTA’s hilltop, better known as Pu’u Pohakuloa.

After a PTA command brief presentation, Lt. Col. John Goff, battalion commander, 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marines and his staff from Kaneohe Marines Corps Base, Kaneohe Bay gave the senator a command briefing, too. The unit is currently training at PTA.

PTA’s Environmental staff Bill Godby and Steve Evans escorted Senator Kokubun to PTA’s Interpretive Garden and also showed him various rare and unique Hawaiian plants found at the installation and propagated at PTA’s Propagation Facility.

Later, Goff, along with Sgt. Major Walter Baldwin, sergeant major, 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marines, 1st Lt. Wyatt Loehy, company commander of Combat Logistics Company-33, and Gunnery Sgt. Roberto Alvio, operations chief of CLC-33, accompanied Senator Kokubun to the field site where their Forward Operating Base was located.

The Marines provided Senator Kokubun a firsthand look at their operations, meet and talk to Marines working at their fuel and maintenance sites, and even learn how Marines operate their field dining facility, where he was given the opportunity to serve lunch and even eat lunch with the Marines and PTA staff.

Kokubun gave credence to Big Island community and PTA’s relationship.

“The community needs to know more and gain a better understanding about what is going on at PTA,” Kokubun said. “We need to develop a relationship between the Big Island community and PTA because I think we need to humanize the military objective here in a way where the community can understand the benefits of what is going on here.”

Kokubun sees the Big Island community and the PTA as good neighbors.

“Although there are not many issues that should concern people,” he said. “I think more direct communication and opportunities in sharing and gaining information (about PTA) between the Big Island community and PTA will go a long way in developing a common ground.”