



News Release

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Community council strives for better communication
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POHAKULOA TRAINING AREA, Hawaii—Leadership from this U.S. Army installation is reaching out to the Big Island community to provide better understanding of its activities and enhance the community's awareness of the Army's mission at PTA.

The initial meeting of the PTA Community Advisory Council, with four of five community leaders in attendance, went well, according the Lt. Col. Warline Richardson, PTA garrison commander.

“It's important to establish better partnerships and good relations with the community, because like a family, I see PTA and our neighboring communities as one family here on the Big Island,” said Richardson. “Generally, we need to listen better and hear more of each other.”

CoAC was created so that representatives of the Big Island community can provide feedback to the PTA command on community concerns and issues. Those who attended the July 31 meeting at St. James Church in Waimea, came from different locations on the Big Island, and worked on the council's goals, objectives, and group structure.

They were Steve Troute, PTA's community relations and operations officer, T.J. McAniff from nearby Waiki'i Ranch, Pete Hendricks from Waimea, Pastor Sharon

Davis from Waikoloa, and Cory Harden from Puna. John Maute of Laupahoehoe could not attend.

“These individuals gave the military and PTA command a substantive start,” Richardson added. “They even said that this is a wonderful thing that the Army has initiated and the best thing we could have ever done. I have the impression they were overjoyed and appreciative of the Army’s effort.”

It is important for the Army to acknowledge its primary mission at PTA since 1956.

“PTA’s mission has been, and remains, as a important combat training center, where active and the local reserve component Soldiers and Marines can experience realistic combat maneuver training before they deploy to any combat region,” McAniff said.

The council can become a communication bridge to the community.

“The military is part of our island community and will continue to be for many years to come,” said Davis. “Communication is the biggest issue in any relationship, and for the civilian community and the military to best coexist we need to have honest communication. We are a diverse group of people, and my concern is to know how the community feels.”

Two other council members concur with Davis.

I am encouraged by PTA’s willingness to listen to community concerns, hopefully have more members who reflect our diverse community, and begin dialogue on various issues, according to Harden.

“I believe this council can provide the basis for a two-way communications link between the PTA command and the Big Island community in an attempt to understand each other’s views concerning the Army presence and mission on the Big Island,” McAniff said

“Most civilians would be amazed to learn that PTA has only four military staff and more than 190 civilian and contract employees,” he added. “They include more than 50 civilian personnel, who are biologists, archaeologists and other cultural and natural resources field staff, working there to make sure the Army is in compliance with Federal laws,” he added.

“Furthermore, most people are unaware that Soldiers and Marines provide labor in support of community organizations and activities, such as the Waimea Nature Park, North Hawaii Community Hospital, and school partnerships,” McAniff said.

The next meeting is scheduled to be held at Pohakuloa on Sept. 3.

“Once the council gets structured and the group determines how to best operate, we will let people in the community know how to get in direct contact with these community members and myself,” Troute said. “I believe our first meeting was a good start. There’s more work to do, but we are up and running. We appreciate the community’s involvement, and this council will enable us at PTA to have a better understanding of the Big Island community’s concerns.”

“For now, we will probably meet monthly until we define our objectives and general council structure,” Troute added, “Afterwards, we will meet bi-monthly. We will go to a different location on the Big Island when we meet, so it will be convenient for everyone.”

Richardson noted that the meeting was extremely productive and well received.

“This council will be a renewed partnership for some community organizations and veterans groups, like the VFW, and for others, this will be an opportunity to establish new relationships with PTA,” Richardson said.

Credibility is the key to ensure mutual benefit to PTA and the Big Island community.

“For the council to have credibility, it must also represent community views that are not supportive of the Army’s mission and activities,” said McAniff. “We can listen and learn from other people’s points of view.”

“We will all benefit from this council because there will always be issues that we agree on and issues that we won’t agree on,” Richardson concluded. “What is important is that the Big Island community will have a voice, and we are encouraged to hear the community’s voices.”