



Media Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Army Signs Covenant with Native Hawaiians

Fort DeRussy, Hawaii – Leaders from across Hawaii, representing various Native Hawaiian organizations, community groups, political and civil interests will join Army leaders at Fort DeRussy, here, March 24, at 12:30 p.m., to formally sign a Native Hawaiian Covenant.

“The covenant recognizes that Hawaii’s rich cultural and historical experiences are shaped by the land and surrounding ocean.” said Maj. Gen. Michael J. Terry, commanding general, 8th Theater Sustainment Command. “We acknowledge that the Army has the responsibility of being good stewards for the lands we maintain and that we must be mindful to protect and preserve this fragile environment for future generations”.

The pledge is a symbolic joint accord between the Army and the Native Hawaiian community signifying the commitment to forging a stronger relationship of cooperation, appreciation and understanding of Hawaii’s native culture and resources, as well as the Army’s role in Hawaii and the inclusiveness of its Soldiers in the local communities.

“The army in Hawaii is capable of and committed to providing sustainable installation support and services for our Soldiers, our army families, and our local communities of which we are a part.” said Matthew T. Margotta, commander of U.S. Army Garrison-Hawaii. “We firmly believe that it is possible to protect Hawaii’s precious cultural and natural environmental resources while still meeting the mission and goals of the Army. The covenant outlines our pledge to do just that.”

Over the past 15 years, the Army has developed a variety of outreach programs through its Partnership of Ohana program involving neighborhood boards, civic clubs and schools across Oahu and the Island of Hawaii.

To strengthen mutual understanding and awareness between the Native Hawaiian community and the Army, the Native Hawaiian Advisory Council was created to guide the Army in effectively working with the Hawaiian community. As part of our effort to reach out and engage the Hawaiian community, we established several new programs to facilitate

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education, understanding and mutual trust. Most notably the Distinguished Lecture Series in which prominent Native Hawaiian guest speakers share the history, culture and customs of Hawaii with Soldiers and their families.

“These programs give our Soldiers and family members living in Hawaii a greater understanding and appreciation for Native Hawaiian issues and culture, and provided opportunities for our neighbors to see that we share many of the same goals, values and experiences.” Margotta said.

Prior to the ceremony commencement, Members of the Royal Order of Kamehameha and Benevolent Societies will Hookupu in front of Fort DeRussy’s Kukalepa Memorial to commemorate fallen Maoli warrior ancestors who have died in Native Hawaiian conflicts. Hookupu is a traditional Hawaiian offering or gift ceremony showing respect to a host, land, ancestors or gods in exchange for knowledge and spiritual or physical growth in one’s life.

Rev. William Kaina, well known as the Senior Pastor of Kawaihao Church, Oahu’s oldest Christian church, and also for his work with the Papa Makua Kui Kawa of the Hawaii Conference United Church of Christ, will give the opening invocation, or Pule.

Neil Hannahs, Kamehameha Schools and Bishop Estate land manager and member of the Native Hawaiian Advisory Council, will join Terry and Margotta as guest speakers.

The ceremony will conclude with the ceremonial planting of an Ulu tree. The tree will stand as both an offering and a reminder of the partnership between the Native Hawaiian community and the U.S. Army in Hawaii.

“The Ulu is one of the trees brought by canoe to Hawai’i by the first Hawaiians, as evidenced by the many Hawaiian legends about the Ulu.” said Annelle Amaral, Native Hawaiian Liaison to USAG-HI. “It served as a vital source of subsistence and is viewed to Hawaiians as the ‘kinolau of Kukailimoku,’ which is the body form of the Hawaiian god Ku. We selected the Ulu (for the planting) to symbolize the significance and rewards of having strong cohesive relationships between the Army and Native Hawaiians”

“Ultimately, the goal of our coming together to sign the Native Hawaiian Covenant is to build bridges of understanding and cultural exchange between Kanaka `oīwi (Hawaii’s native peoples) and create opportunities for mutual enrichment,” Margotta said.

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MEDIA NOTE: Media wishing to attend should R.S.V.P no later than 5:30 p.m., Tuesday, March 23, and should meet Army escorts at Fort DeRussy’s U.S. Army Museum of Hawaii at noon, March 24. Camera equipment may be unloaded on the circle in front of the museum and reserved parking is available across the street from the museum. For further information, please contact Loran Doane, Media Relations chief, U.S. Army Garrison-Hawaii Public Affairs at (808) 656-3157 or cell (317)-847-2222.