

Joint News Release



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Army, State Take to the Skies, Summit to Protect Native Species

(SCHOFIELD BARRACKS, Hawaii) – The U.S. Army and the Hawaii Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) conducted a joint airlift operation, Wednesday, to protect Oahu's native plants and animals.

More than 95,000 pounds of fence panels, poles and associated equipment were carried from Schofield Barracks to the summit of the Ko'olau Mountains, suspended beneath the belly of a CH-47 Chinook, the Army's cargo transport helicopter.

The "green" mission was executed by a team from the Army's Oahu Natural Resources Program and DLNR's Division of Forestry and Wildlife (DOFAW), joined by Soldiers from the Army's 25th Combat Aviation Brigade (CAB), 25th Infantry Division,

The materials will be used to erect watershed protection fencing in the Poamoho Forest Reserve and the Kaluanui Natural Area Reserve.

According to DOFAW, these areas are home to numerous rare and/or endangered plants and animals. Fencing projects have proven successful in protecting these plants and animals from destructive invasive species, like feral pigs.

"The Kaluanui Natural Area Reserve was created to preserve the unique wet forest, cliff habitat and high quality stream system it encompasses," said Marigold Zoll, DOFAW Native Ecosystems manager. "Many of Oahu's native fish, shrimp and aquatic snails rely on this stream system to complete their life cycles."

By combining efforts, DLNR and the Army are not only improving support to these species, they're also saving time and money.

Normally DLNR would use a Hughes 500 civilian helicopter for this kind of operation. The Hughes 500 can carry approximately 800 pounds per load, at a cost of \$1,000 per hour.

By taking advantage of the Chinook helicopter's heavy-load capabilities, the team can get the mission done much quicker. The Army's Chinook can transport the materials in significantly less time: 10 trips, instead of the Hughes 500's more than 120 trips. This translates to saving the State more than \$120,000 in transport costs and anywhere from six to 15 days of labor.

The Army also benefits because Soldiers use the operation as a training mission, enhancing their sling load skills with the unique cargo, and the natural resources staff improve protection for the species the Army manages in the Ko'olau. These species include the Hawaiian gardenia and the kahuli tree snail.

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“For the last 15 years, the State and the Army have been partnering to protect threatened and endangered species and their habitat,” said Kapua Kawelo, biologist, Army’s Oahu Natural Resources Program. “This effort is just an extension of our longstanding partnership.”

This is the second fencing airlift the Army has supported in recent months. In December, the Hawaii Army National Guard supported a similar mission to the Ko’olaus with two of their Chinooks.

RESOURCES:

Photographs and video of sling load operation:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/7b0qfbzss2iqwtg/AADjAeARTgKnlaXb4EPC2U9Wa?dl=0>

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The U.S. Army’s Oahu Natural Resources Program carries out the Army’s natural resource responsibilities on Oahu, managing more than 40 threatened and endangered species. The program applies an ecosystem-based approach to ensure Hawaii’s native species and their habitats are restored and protected, while also supporting the Soldiers’ needs for realistic, sustainable training environments. For more information, visit <http://go.usa.gov/cpHM3>.

The mission of the Hawaii Department of Land and Natural Resources is to “Enhance, protect, conserve and manage Hawaii’s unique and limited natural, cultural and historic resources held in public trust for current and future generations of the people of Hawaii nei, and its visitors, in partnership with others from the public and private sectors.” For more information, visit www.dlnr.hawaii.gov or at [facebook.com/hawaiiDLNR](https://www.facebook.com/hawaiiDLNR).

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