

## 60 year old missile debris removed from homelands

Wednesday, March 12, 2025 12:05 am



Volunteers prepare to clear the Niu Valley missile crash site on Wednesday, Dec. 18, 2024 with a protocol ceremony.

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WAIMEA — U.S. Navy personnel, along with volunteers with the Pacific Missile Range Facility PMRF Barking Sands, successfully cleared debris from a decades-old missile crash landing that occurred nearly 60 years ago.

On Thursday, December 19, 2024, around two dozen volunteers drove on all-terrain vehicles (ATV) atop Niu Valley, a nearly 24-mile drive to clear debris left behind from an inert testing missile that crashed more than 60 years ago on a Department of Hawaiian Home Lands (DHHL) parcel as part of Operation Regulus.

With assistance from Jack Harter Helicopters, crews cleared and airlifted around 2,300 pounds of debris and properly recycled the debris at the

Resource Recovery Solutions in Lihue. The successful removal of the missile debris will allow for effective land use.

Between 1956 and 1964, PMRF was operated and used for missile launch and guidance training. The Regulus fleet training missile was a jet-powered, radio-controlled aircraft featuring a thick fuselage painted red for enhanced visibility during flight. The version was removed from service in August 1964.

The missile debris, however, was initially uncovered in December 2022 after continuous herds of feral goats grazed the region over the years. A DHHL lessee then uncovered the debris while exploring the 14,500 acres of land owned by DHHL.

Once discovered, the debris field was examined by the Kauai Police Department, Navy Security and Spill Prevention and Control, and Countermeasures personnel, who determined that the missile posed no threat to the environment.

Further investigation from the Oahu unexploded ordinance crew revealed no explosives were found in the area and deemed it acceptable to keep the debris in place.

Public Works and Stewardship Deputy Officer Thomas Nizo of PMRF Barking Sands explained that removing the debris wasn't just a task; it was his kuleana, regardless of the findings.

"If can, can; if no can, how can? Getting to a 'yes' response is the goal!" said Nizo.

Nizo is the first native Hawaiian to hold his current position and explains that his unwavering dedication to the cleanup is firmly rooted in his love for the aina.

"E pane mai ka nonoi o Nohili" – answering the requests of Nohili. First, answering the requests of others to utilize the area of Nohili for testing, training, and subsistence. Second, answering the request of Nohili to do what is pono for her and her aina," Nizo shared.

E pane mai ka nonoi o Nohili, PMRF's slogan, reflects the installation's awareness of the importance of Native Hawaiian cultural values. Nohili refers to the high sand dunes at Nohili Point, the famous Barking Sands of Kauai.

The DHHL commends Nizo and his team for their outstanding efforts in Kekaha and the Mana Plain. Their actions align with Prince Jonah Kuhio Kalaniana'ole's mission and benefit the broader community.

Two-thirds of DHHL's land is steep mountainous terrain and isolated valleys. According to the Department's Kauai Island Plan (KIP), future development in Waimea will center around residential and subsistence agricultural homesteads.

The surrounding parcels may include community-use spaces, a puhonua or retreat, conservation areas, and kalo cultivation opportunities.

The KIP is designed to establish a self-sustaining community where residents can cultivate agricultural products for personal use and sale, create traditional Hawaiian crafts, and run shops and restaurants. Commercial activities will cater to residents and visitors traveling through the area.