The Navy is nearly complete with a project to remove ordnance and cleanup a former bombing range on Kaho’olawe, HI.

Kaho’olawe (ka-who-LA-way) is the smallest of eight major islands of the Hawaiian archipelago, and is located approximately six miles southwest of Maui. The island is 11 miles long, seven miles at the widest point, and comprises 28,788 acres. Earliest evidence indicates Hawaiian presence on the island around 1000 A.D. The island’s terrain is rugged and remote with limited infrastructure. It has dry land, woody vegetation, hardpan topography, and no natural water resources.

The use of Kaho’olawe as a bombing and ship artillery range began after the attack on Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941. The island was used as a weapons range from then until 1990, when then-President George H.W. Bush directed the use of Kaho’olawe as a weapons range to be discontinued.

Kaho’olawe was conveyed to the State of Hawaii under the FY 1994 Department of Defense (DoD) Appropriations Act. Clearance of unexploded ordnance and environmental restoration began at that time, with the goal of providing meaningful and safe use of the island for appropriate cultural, historical, archaeological and educational purposes as determined by the State.

Between 1994 and 1997, the Navy partnered with the Kaho’olawe Island Reserve Commission to develop a cleanup plan for ordnance removal and environmental cleanup of the island. A contract was awarded in July 1997 to a joint venture of Parsons Infrastructure & Technology Group of Pasadena, CA and UXB International of Ashburn, VA. The focus is on ordnance clearance, but also includes base camp operations, construction, architect-engineering services, historical/cultural resources, natural resources, and transportation. Work began June 1998. The Program Manager is the Commander, Navy Region Hawaii, and the contracts and technical support is provided by the Commander, Naval Facilities Engineering Command, Pacific Division.

The Basics About the Kaho’olawe Cleanup

- The Kaho’olawe cleanup project is the largest and longest continuous unexploded ordnance (UXO) project ever attempted by DoD.
- One of eight dedicated helicopters takes off from Maui every five minutes beginning at about 5 a.m. The helicopters ferry 380 workers to and from the island Monday through Thursday for 10-hour workdays. Fridays are reserved for exploding UXO that was gathered during the week.
A sophisticated radio system pinpoints the movement of every individual on the island.

A global positioning system (GPS)-based map keeps track of every piece of UXO in each of the 11,000 grid units, each 100 meters by 100 meters.

A three-member team surveys every grid on the map: a UXO technician identifies ordnance; a natural resources specialist identifies and logs endangered species of plants and animals; and an archaeologist documents significant historic, cultural or religious artifacts.

The Clearance Process

The UXO clearance process for any area takes about six to nine months and includes survey, archaeological investigation, examination for natural resource features, brush and tree clear-

Range clearance teams with a higher UXO technician-to-support worker ratio do surface clearance in high hazard areas. Use of magnets on a stick provided a significant increase in production and decrease in injuries.

Photo by Jim Putnam
ance, surface pickup of scrap and debris, subsurface
detection with instruments, excavation and, ultimately,
UXO disposal. The preferred method of UXO disposal is
to blow it up where it is found unless there would be
harm to archaeological sites or natural resources. In this
case, special protective barriers are considered or the
UXO is moved to another area for demolition (if
possible). The Navy performs constant monitoring of
contractor work with full-time staffs.

Cleanup Status
As of 15 August 2003, the following statistics have been
recorded:

- 19,500 acres cleared (net) to the Tier I ordnance
clearance standard of which 2,500 acres (net) were
further cleared to the Tier II standard.
- Over eight million pounds of fragments, remnants
and target material were collected and sorted.
- 3.1 million pounds of the above have been “heat
treated” on-island to remove any ordnance
remnants/contamination and sent off-island for
recycling.
- 2,200 cubic yards of tires have been collected,
inspected and shipped to a recycler.
- Approximately 100,000 UXO items have been iden-
tified and disposed of.
- Approximately 4.5 million work hours were logged
without an explosive safety-related injury or accident.

The UXO and environmental restoration of Kaho’olawe
is now winding down. The Navy plans to transfer
access control of Kaho’olawe to the State of Hawaii in
November of 2004 and should have demobilization
completed by March 2004.

CONTACT

Dave Olson
Chief of Naval Operations
Environmental Readiness Division
703-602-2571
DSN: 332-2571
david.l.olson@navy.mil