



MARINE CORPS BASE HAWAI'I

Preserving heritage and habitat: MCBH continues fishpond and shoreline restoration

Story by **Capt. Hailey Harms**

MARINE CORPS BASE HAWAI'I – The Environmental Division at Marine Corps Base Hawai'i (MCBH) has worked extensively over the years to remove invasive mangrove from the historically and culturally significant Nu'upia Fishponds, restoring ecological balance and vital coastal ecosystems. These fishponds hold deep cultural importance and provide critical habitat for native species. As environmental stewardship moves forward with caring for the Nu'upia Fishponds, MCBH is grateful for the opportunity to continue working alongside Paepae o He'eia and our broader community partners to further enhance restoration efforts, strengthen cultural connections, and ensure these treasured resources thrive for generations to come.

The American mangrove, one of the most common species found on O'ahu, was originally introduced in

1922 for sediment control but has since expanded across many coastal areas of the island. Mangroves are considered invasive species in Hawai'i and spread quickly overcrowding shallow coastal areas diminishing water oxygen levels.

"From 1994-2000, 30 acres of mangrove were removed from the Nu'upia Fishponds to restore and enhance wetland ecosystems," said Lance Bookless, natural resources program manager with MCBH's Environmental Division. Since the mangrove removal, MCBH's Environmental Division has continued to tend and monitor the Nu'upia Fishponds and surrounding areas twice a year through events such as Weed Warriors, further preventing the resurgence of mangrove in the area.

To continue protecting and preserving the Nu'upia Fishponds, MCBH and Paepae o He'eia, a nonprofit organization that cares for

the He'eia Fishpond, an ancient Hawaiian fishpond located in He'eia, Ko'olaupoko, O'ahu, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on May 15, 2023, officially establishing an educational, restorative, and environmental centric partnership. The first community workday at Nu'upia Fishponds from the MOU was on Oct. 7, 2023, and was centered around the first steps of restoring an archeological site within the Nu'upia Ponds, a fish wall, by removing an invasive species known as pickleweed.

"Here, at the Nu'upia Fishpond complex, there's not a whole lot of mangroves left within the fishpond, due to the MCBH environmental department doing a good job of tackling mangrove and the other invasive species that we have surrounding the ponds," said Angela Hi'ilei Kawelo, executive director of Paepae o He'eia. [Read More](#)

COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT



SPOTLIGHT: Volunteers Remove Invasive Mangrove Species During a Weed Warriors Event at MCBH

U.S. Navy Hospital Corpsman 2nd Class Ralph-Vincent Velasquez, right, with 3rd Marine Littoral Regiment, Marine Corp Base Hawai'i (MCBH), hands mangrove roots to an MCBH community member during a Weed Warriors event held at MCBH, Feb. 14, 2026. MCBH's Environmental Compliance and Protection Division established the Weed Warriors program to aid in the management of invasive plant species with the support from community members.



(U.S. Marine Corps photos by Lance Cpl. Dezmond Browning)

Securing the scene and saving lives: Corpsermen-centric mass-casualty training enhances readiness at MCTAB

Story by **Cpl. Jade Venegas**

MARINE CORPS BASE HAWAI'I - U.S. Navy Sailors with 21st Dental Company, 3rd Dental Battalion, and Marines with 3rd Littoral Combat Team (LCT), 3rd Marine Littoral Regiment (MLR) trained in a collaborative effort to enhance medical readiness and coordination between infantry security forces and hospital corpsmen by responding to simulated mass casualties in an austere environment at Marine Corps Training Area Bellows (MCTAB), Marine Corps Base Hawai'i, Feb. 4, 2026.

This training scenario was a large-scale medical exercise designed to prepare Sailors and Marines to respond to casualties in a combat environment. The use of MCTAB's Military Operations on Urbanized Terrain helped simulate complex,

real-world scenarios that challenged security, movement, and medical response time.

"This is the first time I did an exercise with this magnitude, with this model and realistic elements," said U.S. Navy Chief Petty Officer Eduardo Canales, a dental laboratory advisor with 21st Dental Company, 3rd Dental Battalion. "I'm very excited about what we're doing here—actually training in a realistic environment."

The scenario involved 12 role players with various injuries ranging from massive hemorrhages, blunt force trauma, respiratory distress, and shock. The chaos of battle sounds, smells, smoke machines, and role players created a real-life simulation of what to expect on the battlefield.

This simulated mass-casualty event took place across two separate sites, each presenting unique tactical and medical challenges for the infantry Marines and Navy corpsmen.

Each casualty site had a unique set of challenges; one site, located along a narrow roadway, was surrounded by vendor tents, tables, and small food stands. [Read More](#)



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MCBH DIGITAL MEDIA SPOTLIGHT



U.S. Marine Corps Maj. Gen. Brian Wolford, commanding general, Marine Corps Installations Pacific (MCIPAC), responds to a Marine's question during a town hall at MCBH, Feb. 12, 2026. The town hall provided an opportunity for Marines to receive updates, ask questions and engage directly with MCIPAC leadership. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Lance Cpl. Tania Guerrero) [More Imagery](#)



The Honorable Brendan Rogers, center, Assistant Secretary of the Navy (ASN) for Energy, Installations, and Environment, discusses current building projects with MCBH leadership at MCBH, Feb. 20, 2026. The ASN for Energy, Installations and Environment directly supports the mission, the warfighter, and their families. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Lance Cpl. Carlos Daniel Chavez-Flores) [More Imagery](#)

3RD MARINE LITTORAL REGIMENT

<https://www.3rdmardiv.marines.mil/Units/3d-mlr/>



Investing in Air Defense: 3rd LAAB certifies ADAFCOs

Story By 1stLt. Duncan Stoner

MARINE CORPS BASE HAWAII – 3rd Littoral Anti-Air Battalion, 3rd Marine Littoral Regiment, certified Air Defense Artillery Fire Control Officers following a three-week course taught by the Army’s Fires Center of Excellence aboard Marine Corps Base Hawaii, Jan. 23, 2026. Manned and trained with ADAFCOs, 3rd LAAB is better postured to integrate into joint air and missile defense systems and operations.

The three-week course that was hosted by 3rd LAAB, brought together service members from across Hawaii. Students engaged in in-depth training on mission analysis, advanced battle management, command and control, and joint operations through classroom and practical exercises. The course was a result of a shared

understanding across military branches in Hawaii that having ADAFCOs in the Indo-Pacific would lead to greater mission success.

“3rd LAAB has previously sent students to the ADAFCO course at Ft. Sill, Oklahoma,” said U.S. Marine Corps Capt. Darnell Burton, a low-altitude air defense officer and the assistant operations officer with 3rd LAAB. “We worked diligently with the Army’s Fires Center of Excellence and the 94th Army Air and Missile Defense Command, along with the Air Force’s Distributed Training Operation Center and the Air National Guard’s 169th Air Defense Squadron, to coordinate conducting a course at 3rd LAAB because we all recognized the importance of what having trained ADAFCOs provides our mission in the Indo-Pacific.”

The certification of ADAFCOs within 3rd LAAB’s formation equips 3rd MLR with skilled Marines that are capable of managing and coordinating complex air defense operations, seamlessly integrating with joint service air and missile defense systems.

“ADAFCOs provide the MLR with a greater depth of air battle management, including direct incorporation with the Sector Air Defense Commander,” said Burton. [Read More](#)



3RD MLR DIGITAL MEDIA SPOTLIGHT



U.S. Marine Corps Sgt. Nigel Palmer, a team leader with 3rd Littoral Combat Team, 3rd Marine Littoral Regiment, 3rd Marine Division, observes simulated targets during a live-fire training event at Pōhukuloa Training Area, Hawaii, Feb. 3, 2026. The training exercise at PTA refined weapon system and tactical proficiency, strengthening overall combat readiness and preparing 3rd LCT for future operational requirements. Palmer is a native of Rhode Island. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Sgt. Iyer Ramakrishna)

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MARINE AIRCRAFT GROUP 24

<https://www.1stmaw.marines.mil/Subordinate-Units/Marine-Aircraft-Group-24/>



Exercise Bright Horizon

Story By Cpl. Anabelle Reed-O'Brien

FORT WORTH NAVAL AIR STATION JOINT RESERVE BASE, TEXAS – From Jan. 29 to Feb. 17, fifty-nine Marines and two KC-130J aircraft assigned to Marine Aerial Refueler Transport Squadron (VMGR) 153 deployed to Texas for exercise Bright Horizon. The Detachment for Training (DFT) had one clear purpose: strengthen combat readiness away from home station and prepare the squadron for full operational capability.

The DFT focused on improving aircrew progression, advancing maintenance training, and operating in a simulated contested environment. Crews executed aerial refueling, tactical navigation, assault landing zone operations, air delivery,

battlefield illumination, threat reaction drills, and aviation delivered ground refueling, both day and night. Large division flights practiced mass aerial delivery to sharpen leadership and resupply capabilities.

Maj. Joshua Soltan, executive officer of VMGR-153, emphasized the importance of training away from home. “This is a true ‘practice as you fight’ environment,” he said. “Operating outside of Hawaii forces us to adapt, rely on each other, and execute without the comfort of our normal support systems.”

Training under realistic threat conditions, Marines practiced light discipline at night, secure communications, anti-drone awareness, and indirect fire drills. They also operated in mission oriented protective posture gear to simulate

working under a chemical attack.

“This wasn’t just about flying hours,” Soltan explained. “It was about integrating ground and air operations in a ‘Road to War’ scenario and preparing our Marines for modern threats.”

The training was especially valuable because it replicated distributed aviation operations, something not easily achieved in Hawaii. Specialized ranges allowed for terrain-following and large-scale delivery exercises that cannot be duplicated at home station. [Read More](#)



MAG-24 DIGITAL MEDIA SPOTLIGHT



Senior leaders pose for a photo with Maj. Gen. Marcus B. Annibale, commanding general, 1st Marine Aircraft Wing during a Senior Leaders Conference at Camp H. M. Smith, Hawaii, Feb. 10, 2026. The conference brought together Marine Corps commanders from across the Indo-Pacific region for a series of briefings focused on strengthening operational readiness, enhancing regional posture, and improving coordination across the joint force. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Staff Sgt. Heather Atherton)

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