

## Other Side of the Story

# Navy's Answers to Bombing Dispute

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Why does the Navy need Kahoolawe?  
If kicked out, where would it bomb?  
Why must it bomb?

The Navy's 1972 environmental impact statement on Kahoolawe addresses these questions and Navy officials at Pearl Harbor recently elaborated for the Star-Bulletin.

Q. Where else can the Navy bomb?

A. The impact statement rules out six other sites: San Clemente Island off the California Coast, Kaula Rock off Kauai, the Barking Sands Underwater Tactical Range, Pohakuloa on the Big Island and Schofield Barracks and Makua Valley on Oahu.

The Navy says San Clemente is too far away for ships in Pearl Harbor; that Kaula is too small to set targets with little room for men to get around; Schofield and Pohakuloa are ruled out as regulations prohibit live bombs from being carried by aircraft over populated areas; Makua has limits set by the Army on the size of ordnance that can be used; the Barking Sands range being water offers no variety in targets although there are sensors to obtain accuracy data.

Q. Do Navy or Marine Corps bombers practice elsewhere?

A. Yes. Navy planes flying off aircraft carriers outside San Diego can bomb Chocolate Mountain near the Salton Sea or other desert targets near Yuma. Marine aircraft at El Toro can bomb desert targets.

Q. WHAT IS SO GOOD about Kahoolawe as a target?

A. It offers aircraft, ships, and even submarines, a chance to use a variety of ordnance on a variety of targets.

Q. What variety of targets?

A. Point, area and ringed. In other words, a convoy of trucks, hidden targets that can be seen only from certain angles, a specific defended site (such as a mock Soviet SAM missile complex), bull's-eyes to assess miss factors.

In addition, different kinds of ordnance do different things: penetrating bombs, shrapnel scattering bombs. And targets on a reverse slope of the island, out of the view of surface ship gun crews, can be attacked with the aid of a aerial spotters.

None of these things can be simulated on the open ocean Barking Sands range. War, says the Navy, is not trying to hit a spot in the ocean.

Q. Why is practice needed?

A. Jet pilots and gun crews on ships always need training. Gun crews are in constant state of turnover and new personnel must know how to do their jobs in the teamwork of operating deck guns.

Pilots must know the hazards of flying through a target area and how to avoid the shrapnel of explosions.

No military element is ready for combat if it has

never experienced training, never shot a gun or bombed a target. This is compared with University athletic teams playing games without a single practice. It is nonsense.

Q. WHY NOT BOMB THE Northwest Islands?

A. They are too small. Kahoolawe is 7,750 acres. Lisianski has 432 acres, Laysan Island 981 acres. Kaula only 136 acres and French Frigate Shoals only 57 acres, mostly usable runway.

Besides being too small these islands are wildlife areas (which would put the federal government in conflict with itself) and are too far from Pearl Harbor.

Training costs would jump greatly to reach these sites.

If ships have gun failures and can't fire they must return to Pearl Harbor for work by technicians. This is no problem using Kahoolawe but becomes a problem in going as far away as Midway or Kure stoll.

Q. Why not use inert bombs on Kahoolawe?

A. They are used but they limit training because of their characteristics. Crews on aircraft carriers and ships must have experience handling live ordnance. Wars are not fought with inert bombs.

Q. What about shallow shoal waters northwest of Kauai and closer to Barking Sands than Pearl Harbor is to Kahoolawe?

A. Again targets would be water targets and that is not always a problem in war.

Q. What about building an artificial island?

A. It would cost upwards of \$500 million. Will Congress pay the bill?

Q. Why not use targets towed by ships.

A. Naval gunfire support calls for hitting land targets; tows cannot be hidden from fliers.

THE NAVY INFORMED Sen. Hiram L. Fong that it has started its feasibility study on cleaning up Kahoolawe as ordered by Congress and as required by agreement if the Navy no longer needs the target.

In its impact statement the Navy considered seven alternate uses for the island if and when it reverts to State control.

It considers Kahoolawe of limited agricultural value because of poor soil and little water. Grazing is not feasible judging from earlier ranching efforts, reforestation is doubtful but hunting is possible only after the island is safe (though animals would eat away the ground cover).

Fishing would be good but it is doubtful a commercial packing plant on the island would be economical. A University scientist once recommended a nuclear power plant, but the Navy asks where would the power come from? Commercial or industrial development opportunities appear limited.

Smuggler's Beach is excellent for recreation except that Maui has many better beaches with fresh water available and with accessibility.

The impact statement did not discuss hotel development.

A 500-ton charge of TNT is exploded in April 1965 by the Navy to test the effect of nuclear-sized blasts on warships moored close to the shoreline of Kahoolawe. Billowing smoke from the base of the mushroom cloud obscures the Navy ships.

U.S. NAVY/PHOTO

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