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# Navy may expand at Niihau

Missile test sites being considered on atolls as well

By Jan TenBruggencate  
Advertiser Kauai Bureau

**BARKING SANDS, Kauai** — Seeking sites for new missile launch testing operations, the Navy is considering expanding its presence on remote Niihau to include one or two locations there, along with a 6,000-foot runway.

Other possible launch sites

under consideration are on Kauai, Johnston Atoll, Kure Atoll and French Frigate Shoals.

The list of launch sites — eight of them on Niihau — represents possible alternatives for the Navy's Theater Ballistic Missile Defense program. The Navy said yesterday that it does not expect to build at all of them.

At most, one or two launch sites would be built on Niihau, each consisting of a 150-foot-square concrete pad and a few containers of equipment. The runway would be convenient to support operations but is not

essential, Navy officials said. While Niihau is a privately owned ranch, Kure, Johnston and French Frigate Shoals all are state or federal wildlife refuges, and that could present problems for military expansion.

Military programs already make up the biggest portion of Niihau's economy. But any development there would not include a residential military presence, said Bruce Robinson, one of the island's owners and manager of Niihau Ranch.

The arid island 17 miles off

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## Proposed missile launch sites

The Navy is looking at several sites, including Niihau, to expand its missile launch testing program.



Advertiser graphic

# Niihau: Missile testing possible

FROM PAGE ONE

the west coast of Kauai has 200 to 250 residents who live a rural existence in homes with catchment water systems and no communitywide electrical service. At least one member of each household living on the island works for Niihau Ranch and in return receives free housing, Robinson has said.

The Robinson family has veto power over any expansion of Navy activities on the island.

"It's got to make sense. If it doesn't make sense for the owners and residents of Niihau, then we don't do it. And if it doesn't have jobs for the Niihau people, there is no benefit," Robinson said.

The Pacific Missile Range Facility is preparing an environmental impact statement on the proposals for new missile launch sites, and has scheduled public meetings on Kauai and Oahu, starting next week.

While no formal meeting is scheduled on Niihau, "there are plans to ensure that the concerns of the people of Niihau are addressed," said range Capt. Jim Bowlin.

The Navy has hired a consultant to work with the Hawaiian-speaking residents of Niihau. Public school teachers on the island will serve as translators, Bowlin said. The consultant, selected with the approval of the island's owners, is conducting a socio-economic study of the island as part of the environmental study, he said.

Robinson said his family was severely criticized by Niihau residents during World War II when it allowed a full-time Coast Guard presence on the island, and has learned to consult island elders and other residents before making plans that could affect them.

Residents now do some Navy work through their ranch employment.

A radar site that looks across the channel to Kauai is used pri-

## Public meetings planned

In preparation for the Theater Ballistic Missile Defense program environmental impact statement, the Navy has scheduled public meetings on Kauai and Oahu:

- June 17, 4 to 8 p.m., Waimea Neighborhood Center.
- June 19, 4 to 8 p.m., Kilauea Neighborhood Center.
- June 21, 1 to 4 p.m., Wilcox Elementary School.
- June 23, 4 to 8 p.m., Army Reserve Center Assembly Hall, Room 101, Fort Shafter Flats, Fort Shafter.

The meetings are aimed at identifying issues that should be addressed in the statement. The Navy will accept written comments from the public.

marily to ensure that the skies and ocean between the islands are clear of private craft when a missile operation is scheduled.

Pacific Missile Range Facility public affairs officer Vida Mossman said the Navy has a \$270,000 annual contract with Niihau Ranch for the maintenance of the radar site.

Bowlin said the Theater Ballistic Missile Defense program is a "small, incremental increase in what we're already doing." But he said it could involve as much as \$50 million in construction of new facilities at the West Kauai range.

The Pacific Missile Range Facility employs 900 civilian and military people. In 1996, it was a major contributor to the Kauai economy, with a payroll of \$45 million, contracts of \$41 million, \$8 million in construction and \$12 million in purchases, Bowlin said.

The new program would likely involve four to six launches annually, said range operations program analyst Ave Soto. The range has launched an average of 88 rockets of various kinds each year since 1980.

Theater ballistic missiles are rockets used in limited-area conflicts such as the Gulf War.

They travel a few hundred miles, as opposed to intercontinental missiles, which go thousands of miles. Iraqi SCUD missiles are theater missiles.

The Theater Ballistic Missile Defense program would launch target missiles from island launch sites and then try to shoot them down from Aegis-class Navy ships to test the capabilities of new anti-missile systems. Land-based mobile missile interceptors might also be tested, Navy officials said.

Bowlin said the Navy is considering multiple launch pads so it can test its defensive equipment in a range of different locations and with different trajectories. Some of the possible launch sites might ultimately be used only for instrumentation, allowing the tracking of missiles and interceptors from various angles.

Bowlin's staff said that the environmental statement should be complete by the end of next year. Not until then will the final decisions be made about where launch and instrumentation sites will be located.



U.S. Navy photo

A "Vandal," which simulates a supersonic cruise missile, is launched from the Pacific Missile Range Facility at Nohili.

6/13/97 Honolulu STAR Bulletin A2

# Kauai at odds over missile tests

Officials like the economic benefits, but protesters have many concerns

By GREGG KAKESAKO  
Star-Bulletin

**BARKING SANDS, Kauai** — The sand-swept dunes and vast ocean waters of the Pacific Missile Range Facility are in a crossfire as a new round of hearings begins next week on the Navy's proposal to test its newest defense against ballistic missiles beginning in 1999.

The battle lines once more are drawn:

■ The Navy maintains that the 42,000-square-mile ocean and aerial test facility northwest of Kauai is best suited for this type of operation. Officials say the new tests will add only a half-dozen launchings to a facility that averages 80 a year.

■ Environmentalists say the proposal "is just continuation of the

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- Niihau is being considered as a site for launching missiles.
  - Navy will hold informational meetings on Kauai about the missile program.
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# Niihau is an important part of Navy's plans

BY GREGG K. KAKESAKO  
*Star-Bulletin*

**BARKING SANDS, Kauai** — The private-owned island of Niihau would play a crucial role in the proposed test of the Navy's new missile defense system.

The sparsely inhabited 72-square-mile island, located about 19.5 miles southwest of Kauai, is owned by the Robinson family and houses an unmanned Navy radar site. Visitors are rarely allowed on the island.

Niihau is being eyed as one of three sites that would launch drone target missiles to be intercepted by Aegis cruisers or destroyers sitting offshore.

The other two launch sites would be the Pacific Missile Range Facility and Kure Atoll, located 1,350 miles northwest of Honolulu in the Northwestern Hawaiian chain. Future launch sites could be built on Johnston Atoll, Tern Island in the French Frigate Shoals, Wake Island and Midway Island.

More than one launch site is needed to test the capability of a Navy warship to shoot down missiles coming from all directions at different altitudes and at different times.

On the southern end of Niihau, the Navy also would like to build a 6,000-foot runway that would be used to bring materials needed for a missile launch, said Capt. Jim Bowlin, Pacific Missile Range Facility commanding officer.

The Navy also is proposing to:

- Build two new ordnance storage magazines at Kamokala Caves, located three miles east of Barking Sands.

- Refurbish an existing radar site on Makaha Ridge overlooking the test range.

- Construct an additional radar site on Kokee.

On Kure Atoll, the Navy wants to build a launch site on 321-acre Green Island, one of three in the group, located 56 miles southeast of Midway Island.

Averiet Soto, operations officer for the



**Jim Bowlin:**

*The commanding officer of the Pacific Missile Range Facility says the Navy would like to build a 6,000-foot runway on the southern end of Niihau.*

have been worked out with the owner of Niihau, Bruce Robinson, although Bowlin believes it would be "a mutually beneficial relationship."

Eight potential launch sites — five on the northern portion of Niihau and three on the southern end — are being contemplated, Soto said.

The Navy would like to have one or two sites, each sitting on a concrete pad measuring 150 feet by 150 feet.

Bowlin said Robinson has told the Navy any facility on Niihau must have some "economic benefit and cannot disrupt the lifestyle" of the more than 200 native Hawaiians living there, the majority of whom speak only Hawaiian.

There are no utility systems on the island. Each household has water catchment and septic systems and portable generators.

The Navy has been paying Robinson \$1 a year since 1984 to lease the land where the radar unit is now located and \$275,000 for logistic and other maintenance services.

range, said future missile tests may not involve Johnston Atoll, Tern Island, Midway Island and Wake Island if the Navy can come up with suitable substitute mobile air and sea launching systems.

Soto does not believe that the Kauai missile intercepts will be "visible to the naked eye" since he estimates that the ships firing the interceptor missiles would be at least 100 miles off the island.

Bowlin said no financial arrangements

# PROTESTERS: They say area is sacred, tests hurt environment

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typical greed of the military, industrial and scientific complex" to invent new enemies to fight. They worry not only about the environment of the Garden Island, but also the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands breeding grounds for the green sea turtle and monk seals.

■ State and county officials view the new phase as not only bringing more civilian jobs to the base, which is the island's third largest government employer, but also as a key to its survival.

■ Hawaiian activists consider the Nohili dunes — which lie within the area — to be sacred burial grounds. In the past, protests and arrests occurred as groups demanded access to the dunes. The Navy maintains access is forbidden only during a missile launch.

## Navy says system is needed

Several years ago when the Army's Strategic Target System, or STARS, missile program, was planned, Kauai protesters unsuccessfully tried to block it through lawsuits, charging that it was illegal and wasteful and improperly used Hawaiian lands. The first launch took place in August 1993. But only four of the planned 40 payloads materialized.

Under the current proposal, the Navy is eyeing Barking Sands to test its primary weapon system against short-range ballistic missiles. The Theater Ballistic Missile Defense, located on Aegis cruisers and destroyers, would provide umbrella protection for a flotilla of amphibious landing ships and accompanying Marine Corps beachhead forces.

The system is needed, Navy planners say, because of the proliferation of short-range missiles capable of nuclear, chemical and biological destruction by more than 30 countries.

The Navy wants to launch and track target drones fired from the air, land and sea, following them until they are intercepted over the ocean.

ian contractors added \$4 million.

The base has a labor force of 900, only 113 of whom wear Navy blues.

Bob Mullins, Mayor Maryanne Kusaka's administrative assistant, said: "The real value also is what goes on outside the fence and outside the gate and the base does so much for people of the island, especially on the west side."

Mullins said that in 1992 after Hurricane Iniki devastated Kauai, Barking Sands personnel "did a lot to get the west side of the island back up and on its feet."

## Hawaiians say site sacred

But Raymond Chuan, spokesman for the Kauai Friends of the Environment, said, "It is absolutely ridiculous to think that we are facing such a bigger threat with the demise of the Soviet empire to require the massive new developments of missile systems.

"Like the ultimate chameleon, the military changes color to suit every change in the geopolitical scene to justify its insatiable appetite to continue feeding billions into the military-industrial-scientific complex, while cutting the red meat out of the nation's defense strength by continually reducing troop strength," Chuan said.

He added that "the bait as always is jobs."

"But are a few dozen extra jobs — mainly held by improved technicians — enough to sacrifice the still pristine state of Kauai and the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands?"

The Rev. Kaleo Paerson, spokesman for the Hawai Ecumenical Coalition, pointed out that the STARS missile launch site was "built at the foot of the dunes," which Hawaiians consider to be a sacred site.

"Hawaiians believe that the northern and westernmost part of any island was sacred. It was where spirits of a dead person leaped off into the other world. Many Hawaiians buried their dead there."

## Threat of base closure

Mullins said Barking Sands has been lucky to survive the last four base closure commissions, which since 1988 have shut down 97 facilities. It beats its mainland competition because of its expansive ocean and air space that isn't constricted by airline and shipping traffic.

Mullins, who was commander of the Pacific Missile Range Facility from 1991-94, said: "We always made it known that the future of the base was to market itself for test and evaluation programs" like the one being proposed now.

Because Congress now seems to support the development and test-

## Cayetano backs project

Gov. Ben Cayetano supports the plans to enhance Barking Sands testing capabilities.

"The people on Kauai will benefit economically because of the federal money and jobs resulting from this project," Cayetano said.

Kauai County officials see the range as the largest and most stable economic element on the island. Last year Barking Sands contributed \$45 million in wages and salaries, \$8.2 million in construction spending, \$41 million in contracts, \$12 million in purchases and \$3.1 million in utility payments. Visits by military and civil-



### Arleigh Burke destroyer

- Displacement: 9,200 tons
- Length: 509 feet
- Width: 66 feet
- Speed: 32+ knots



### The SM-2 Variant

- Unit cost: \$409,000
- Length: 26.2 feet
- Weight: 2,980 pounds
- Range: 65-100 nautical miles
- Warhead: Proximity fuse, high explosive

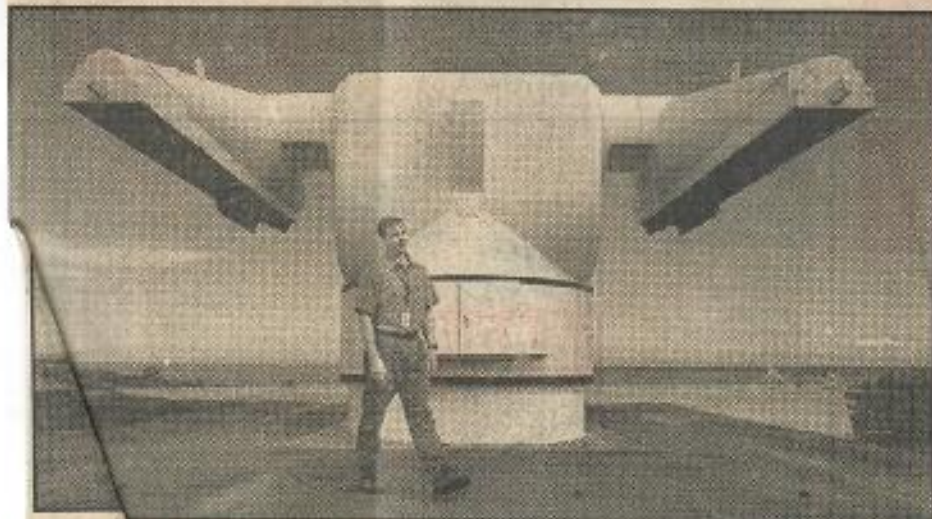
### The test range

The three facilities are part of the U.S. Navy's Pacific Missile Range Facility that covers 42,000 square miles. It also includes:

- South Point on the Big Island
- Midway Island
- Wake Island
- Eniwetok Island
- Christmas Island
- Canton Island

Source: Public Affairs Office, Naval Sea Systems

Star-Bulletin



*Eric Dunn, public affairs officer at the Pacific Missile Range Facility, stands at the rail launcher at the Navy's launch site at Nohii.*

By KEN IGE,  
Star-Bulletin

ing of a defensive missile designed to knock down missiles with less than a 100-mile range, Mullins said, "then you need a place where you can test these weapons systems safely."

"The perfect test environment

is what they have west of Kauai at Barking Sands range and beyond."

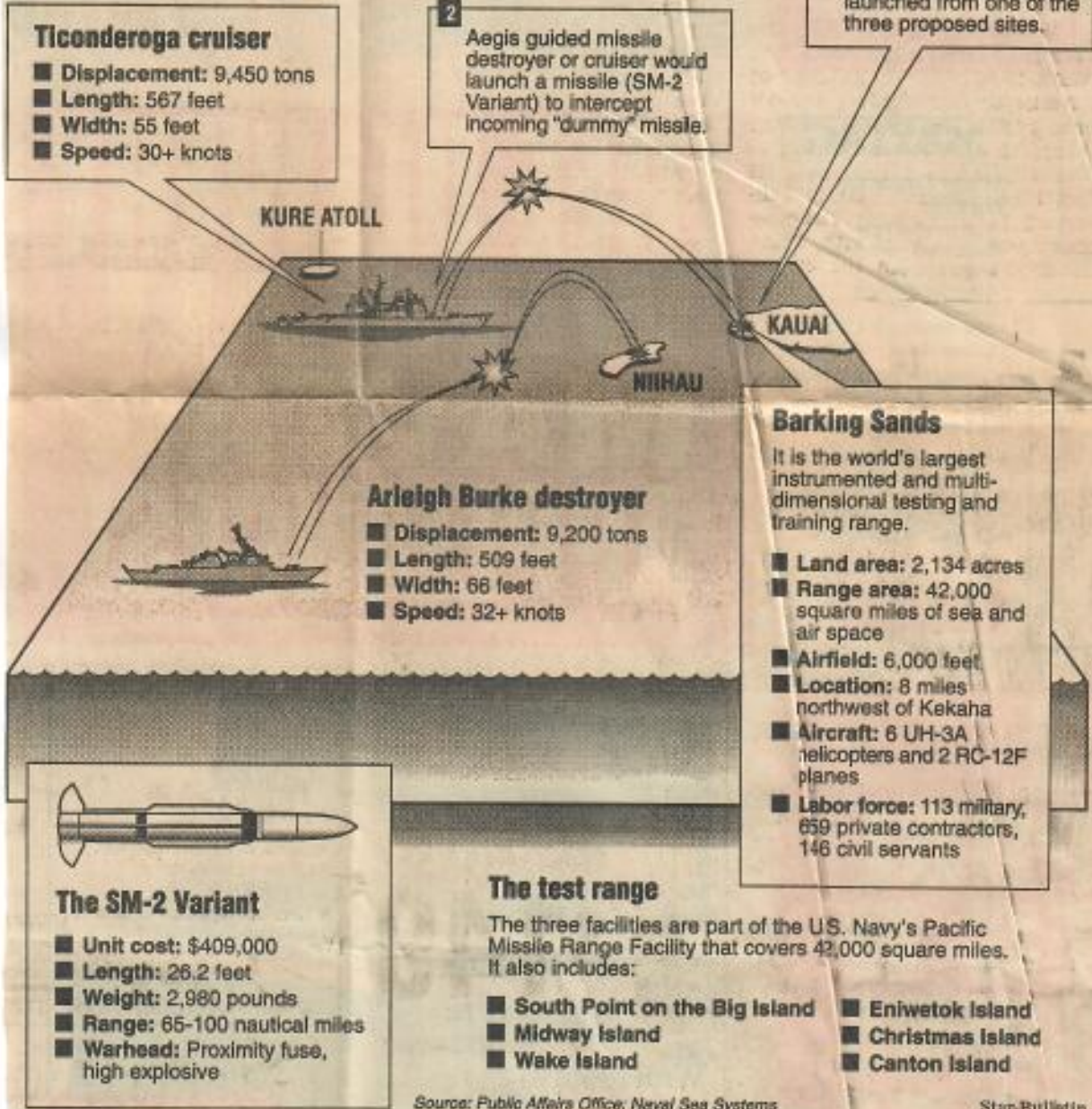
Mullins predicted that if Barking Sands doesn't get the missile testing program, there will be major cutbacks that could result in

closing the range and the base.

"Like any business," Mullins said, "to stay in business you have to grow and change with the times. That is what Barking Sands is trying to do by bringing in the missile defense business."

## Proposed missile testing sites

The U.S. Navy hopes to test its Theater Ballistic Missile Defense System at three locations – Kauai's Barking Sands, Kure Atoll, and Niihau (distance between islands not to scale). Here's how it would work:



Source: Public Affairs Office, Naval Sea Systems

Star-Bulletin



## Four hearings on Kauai, Oahu

*Star-Bulletin staff*

The Navy will conduct four informational sessions on Pacific Missile Range Facility for testing of the Navy's Theater Ballistic Missile Defense program.

The Navy wants feedback on issues that should be addressed in the environmental impact statement on the project.

Three hearings will be held on Kauai:

■ Tuesday, at Waimea Neighborhood Center beginning at 4 p.m.

■ Thursday at Kilauea Neighborhood Center at 4 p.m.

■ June 21 at 1 p.m. in the Wilcox Elementary School cafeteria.

The last hearing will be held at 4 p.m. June 23 at the U.S. Army Reserve Center in Fort Shafter Flats.

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## Navy took over in 1964

World's largest instrumented and multidimensional testing and training range

- **1921:** Acquired by Kekaha Sugar Co. from the Knudsen family. Private planes used the grassy field as a landing strip.
- **1932:** Australian Kingsford Smith made a historic flight from Barking Sands to Australia in a Ford Trimotor.
- **1940:** First acquired by the Army, 549 acres including the grassy landing field through executive order. The installation became known as Mana Airport and the Army paved the runway.
- **1954:** Named changed to Bonham Air Force Base
- **1962:** Pacific Missile Range Facility officially commissioned
- **1964:** Barking Sands and 1,885 acres transferred to Navy

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## Barking Sands: Hawaiian legend

**BARKING SANDS, Kauai** — The legend of Barking Sands deals with an old Hawaiian fisherman who lived in a hut near the beach with his nine dogs. When he went fishing, the man would stake his dogs in the sand, three to a stake.

After one exhausting fishing expedition involving a bad storm, the fisherman forgot to untie the dogs after returning to the beach.

When he awoke the next morning, the dogs were gone. In their place were three small mounds of sand. As he stepped on a mound, he heard a low bark.

Believing that the dogs had been buried in the sand because of the storm, the fisherman began to dig.

The digging was futile. Each shovelful just meant more sand. The fisherman finally gave up and every day after that when he crossed the beach, he could hear the low barking.

To this day the sands of Mana have been known as Barking Sands.

*Gregg K. Kakesako, Star-Bulletin*