



KAUAI TODAY: NUCLEAR & MISSILE- RELATED ASPECTS

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Nuclear Aspect of Kauai

- **All nuclear weapons were completely withdrawn from the Hawaiian Islands to the continental United States in the early 1990s;**
- **In 2025, the United States discussed a decision to return nuclear cruise missiles to the arsenal of nuclear-powered submarines.**



Kauai Test Facility (KTF)

Managed by SNL on behalf of the U.S. Department of Energy and supports the work of the NNSA;

Its tasks include:

- Missile defense testing;**
- Developing re-entry vehicle technologies;**
- Testing materials and components;**
- Developing onboard sensors and telemetry.**



Pacific Missile Range Facility (PMRF)

- **PMRF, also known as "Barking Sands," is the main facility that supports testing. It is the "world's largest instrumented multi-environment range" for testing in underwater, surface, air, and space environments;**
- **The range covers about 1,100 square miles of ocean area and 42,000 square miles of controlled airspace;**
- **PMRF is Kauai's largest high-tech employer.**

Missile Tests and Missile Defense Systems

- May 10, 2012: First intercept of SM-3 Block IB. The destroyer USS Lake Erie (CG 70), using the Aegis BMD 4.0.1 system, successfully intercepted a short-range missile launched from PMRF.
- February 3, 2017: First successful interception of SM-3 Block IIA. The destroyer USS John Paul Jones (DDG 52), using the Aegis Baseline 9.C2 system, successfully intercepted a medium-range ballistic missile launched from PMRF.
- March 24, 2025: Successful NATO missile defense test. During test FTX-40, the Aegis Ashore system at PMRF launched an interceptor missile and shot down a medium-range target missile launched from a C-17 aircraft.
- September 2025: The U.S. Navy signed a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) to continue ground-based testing and training at PMRF based on an environmental assessment.

Missile Tests and Missile Defense Systems

- October 29, 2025: The Russian intelligence ship "Karelia" was spotted about 15 nautical miles from Oahu, Hawaii. The U.S. Coast Guard tracked its activities and confirmed it was near U.S. waters.
- Early 2026: The U.S. Army announced plans for a "massive experiment" in the Indo-Pacific region, involving high-altitude balloons, solar gliders, and other technologies for collecting intelligence at high altitudes.
- February 2026: Failed test of SM-3 Block IIA. An interceptor missile launched from the destroyer USS John Paul Jones from PMRF failed to hit its target. The Missile Defense Agency (MDA) investigated.
- February/March 2026: Anti-ship missile exercises. Exercises took place with the participation of the 3rd Marine Littoral Regiment, which practiced deploying mobile NSM (Naval Strike Missiles) launchers at PMRF to hit mock enemy ships as part of a strategy to deter China.



Space and Anti-Ship Activities

- The 293rd Space Forces squadron based at PMRF;
- NSM exercises at PMRF aim to improve the U.S. ability to counter the Chinese navy as part of an "island chain" strategy;
- The Marines are fielding remotely operated NMESIS systems with NSM missiles.



Modernization Programs

- KTF is a key site for the HOT SHOT (High Operational Tempo Sounding Rocket) program;
- The deployment of the new HDR-H (Homeland Defense Radar-Hawaii) radar at PMRF on Kauai is being actively discussed.



Lease Extension

- The agreement with state authorities runs until 2027–2030 and was signed in the 1960s at a symbolic price of \$1 for 8,172 acres of land;
- As of May 2026, the lease extension has not yet been officially decided – negotiations between the US Navy and the state of Hawaii are ongoing;
- Negotiations are made more difficult by the state's recent refusal to extend the lease for another large military facility, the Pōhakuloa Training Area on the island of Hawaii.



THANK YOU
FOR YOUR
ATTENTION!