

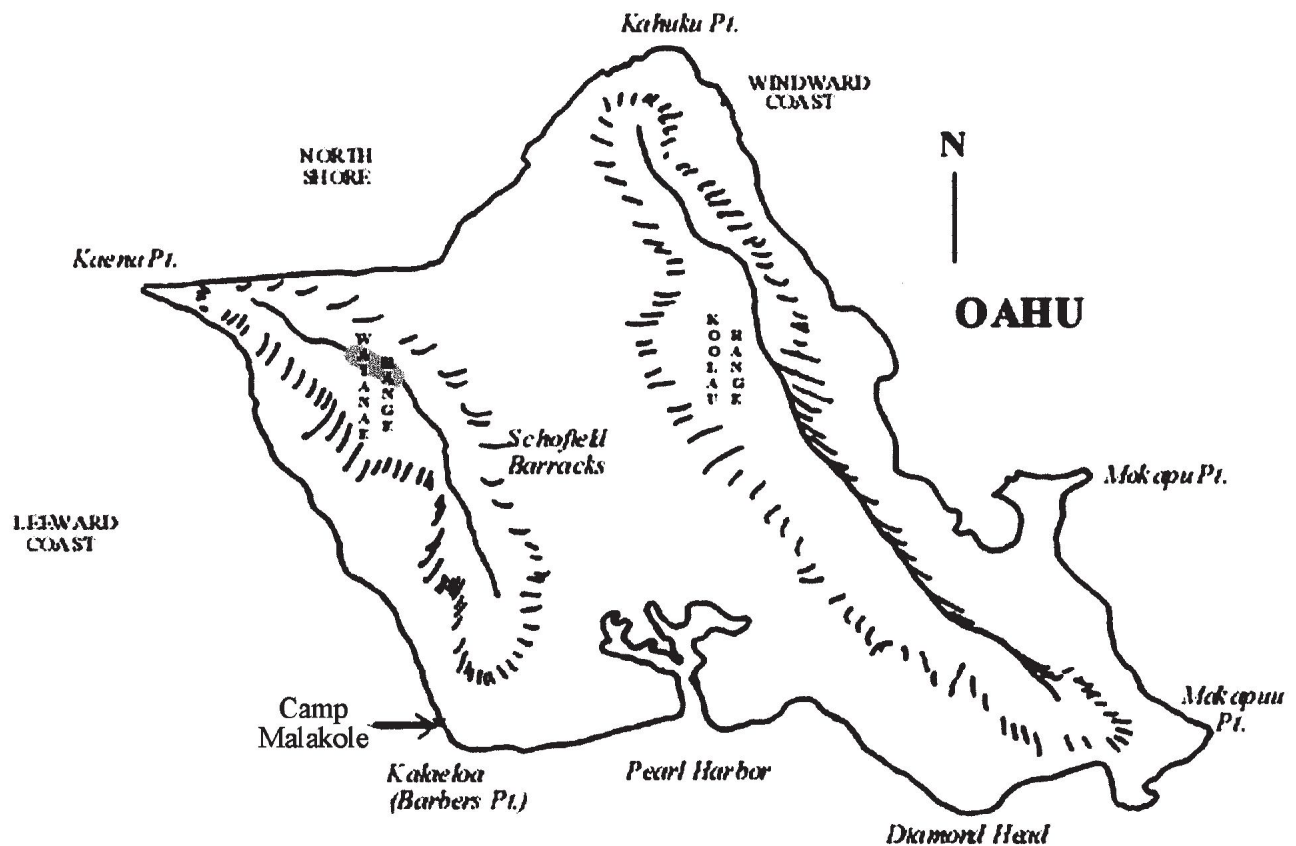
Camp Malakole, Oahu, T.H.

John D. Bennett

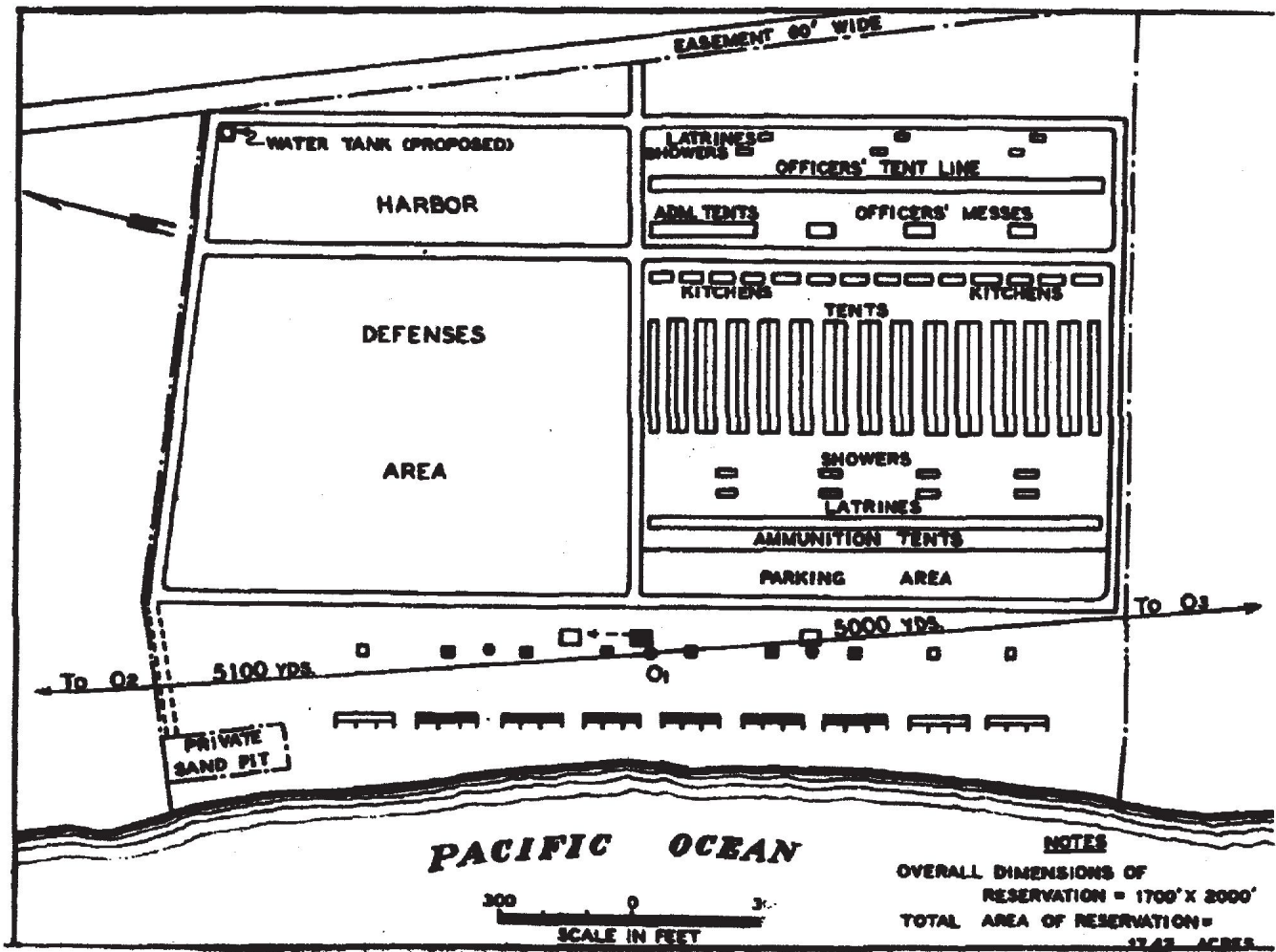
(All photographs courtesy of John Iantorno, 251st CA (AA) Regimental Historian, unless specified otherwise.)

The Honouliuli Military Reservation was situated on the island of Oahu between Barbers Point and the village of Nanakuli, with an area of 1,742 acres. It was selected in 1939 as a firing point for the Hawaiian Separate Coast Artillery Brigade (HSCAB). The 64th Coast Artillery (AA) Regiment (headquartered at Fort Shafter in Honolulu) relocated their firing point from the Kawaihoa Military Reservation on Oahu's north shore to the beach south of Nanakuli on the south shore on March 22, 1939.(1)

The land on which the camp was to be built was situated 27 miles west of Honolulu and 1.6 miles northwest of the Barbers Point (Kalaehoa) Lighthouse, adjacent to the ocean on flat coastal land of the Ewa Plain. The ground consisted mainly of limestone-coral and sand, with large growths of algaroba trees (*Prosopis pallida*), a thorny relative of the mesquite that grows in America's southwestern region. This was a very arid region that was prone to flooding during the rainy winter season.



Map of Oahu Island, Hawaii



Camp Malakole Map. William C. Gaines.

The 64th CA (AA), under the command of Colonel Charles W. Wing, who assumed command of the regiment upon arrival on June 30, 1939, began clearing a 70-acre area of algaroba trees for use as a firing point by the Hawaiian Department's mobile guns. The installation eventually included a beach-front of about 2,000 feet and a depth of 1,700 feet for a total area of 78 acres.

Firing positions were prepared for six batteries along the shoreline, and plans were prepared to add another three positions to accommodate three battalions to conduct firing practice at the same time. The location provided adequate space to exercise the searchlight and sound locator units to work with the guns in tracking targets that were towed off-shore by towing aircraft consisting mostly old bi-planes, according to John Iantorno, a member of Battery H, 251st CA (AA).(2)

Specifications for Antiaircraft Guns Fired at Camp Malakole 1939-1942

37 mm AA Automatic Gun M1

Wt.: 6,124 lbs
Wt. of shell: 1.34 lbs
Muzzle velocity: 2,600 fps
Max. rate of fire: 120 rpm
Horizontal range: 8,875 yds
Vertical range: 4,000 yds
Elevation: 0° to +85°
Traverse: 360°
Normal towing speed: 25 mph max.

3 in. AA 50 cal. Gun M3 on Mount M2

Total wt. of gun and mount: 15,915 lbs
Wt. of projectile: 15 lbs
Wt. of fixed round: 27 lbs
Wt. of powder charge: 5 lbs
Muzzle velocity: 2,800 fps
Rate of fire: 20 rpm in bursts, 10 rpm in sustained fire
Max. horizontal range: 14,200 yds
Max. vertical range: 9300 yds
Elevation: -1° to + 80°
Traverse: 360°
Normal towing speed: 25 mph max.

90 mm 50 cal. AA M1 Gun on Mount M1

Wt.: 19,000 lbs
Wt. of projectile: 23 to 24 lbs
Muzzle velocity: 2,700 fps
Max. horizontal range: 18,900 yds
Max. vertical range: 11,333 yds
Max. rate of fire: 22 rpm
Elevation: -5° to + 80°
Traverse: 360°
Normal towing speed: 30 mph max.



3-inch AA guns of the 64th CA (AA) at Camp Malakole. *Author's Collection.*

The installation initially consisted of a tent camp situated on the southern half of the tract for the 64th CA (AA) Regiment, headquartered at Fort Shafter in Honolulu. The officers were quartered on the east side with their mess, showers, and latrines. The post kitchen and bakery tents were located across the roadway from the officer's encampment. Enlisted men were quartered in fifteen tents located seaward of the mess tents. Closer to the beach were the ammunition storage tents. The camp's primary observation station (O¹) was located to the rear of the firing line atop a steel-frame tower with railings and no roof, the O² and O³ stations were located north and south respectively, along the shoreline.

In October 1939, the encampment was flooded up to three feet deep from the heavy rainfall, which fell on the primarily dry southwestern portions of the island. The 64th CA Headquarters Battery camp suffered from the effects of the heavy rainfall.(3)

Arrival of the 251st Coast Artillery (AA)

Personnel of the 64th CA started work on the expansion of the camp on October 1940; by November 5 the advance elements of the 251st CA (AA) Regiment, California National Guard which had been federalized on September 16, 1940, by Executive Order 8530, arrived in Honolulu aboard the S.S. *Washington*, after sailing like civilian passengers, with stewards to make their beds and meals served in the dining room, complete with an orchestra, They set up provisional headquarters at Fort Shafter; the 1st Battalion went to Fort Ruger, and the two 2nd Battalion Batteries were transported to the new campsite on the southwest coast of the island and took over from the 3rd Engineers and 64th Coast Artillery who had begun construction.(4)

The last contingent of 415 men arrived aboard the USAT *Leonard Wood* on November 23, 1940, and was housed temporarily at Fort Shafter until their new quarters were completed at Camp Malakole. This brought the regiment's peacetime strength to 1,200 men, which were to be brought up to authorized strength of 1,500 mostly with draftees, according to an interview of Colonel Sherman by a local newspaper. The wartime authorized strength of both the 64th CA (AA) and the 251st CA (AA) was 1,800 men, according to Colonel Sherman.(5)

Major General Fulton Q.C. Gardiner, commanding HSCAB, informed Colonel Sherman upon his arrival that forty 3-inch AA guns from every part of his command were massed at Camp Malakole and conducted firing exercises, termed "the biggest massed group of anti-aircraft guns ever assembled by the American Army in time of peace."(6)

The regiment lived under canvas pending completion of their new quarters, which they were tasked to build under the supervision of engineers from Schofield Barracks.

Upon being mobilized, the 251st CA (AA) included the following units: Regimental Headquarters; 1st Battalion: Headquarters Battery, Batteries A (Searchlight and Sound Locators), B, C, and D (3-inch AA guns) from San Diego.; 2nd Battalion: Headquarters Battery, Batteries F, G, and H (37 mm AA guns) located at Long Beach and Company E (machine guns) from San Pedro. The motto of the 251st CA was "We Aim To Hit." Heavy rainfall on November 19, 1940, forced the newly arrived members of the 251st to seek safety in higher ground. As a result of the flooding, a large sand berm was built between the firing line and the beach that ran parallel to the beach.



Arrival at Honolulu aboard S.S. *Washington*.



Flood of 1940. 185th Armor Regt. Museum.



Raising the colors at Camp Malakole.

The 1st Battalion moved to the camp on January 1, 1941, which was named Camp Malakole on January 9, 1941; lights came on for the first time on January 23 of that year. The flag was raised on February 18, 1941 by Charles M. Runyon of Battery F.(7)

Upon completion in early 1941, the camp consisted of temporary theater of operations-type structures. There were 48 barracks structures approximately 90 feet by 24 feet, (the first two were 90 feet by 25 feet), 12 mess halls, 9 magazines and storehouses, 5 officers quarters, 7 showers (equipped with only cold water) and latrines, plus a dispensary, officers' mess, headquarters building, post office, regimental day room, movie theater, laundry, motor repair shop, gasoline station, fire house, guard house, photo laboratory, quartermaster, and engineers' buildings. The majority of the buildings were built on piers with the footings buried in the coral ground.(8)

The barracks were equipped with a single door at each end and the single sidewalls were constructed of board and batten using rough-cut lumber. All framing was exposed on the inside. The walls went up to about three feet from the roof, and from there to the top a long line of screen covered the length of the building on both sides with windows at the ends. The screens were covered by shutters propped open by one by four-inch timber.

Regimental headquarters was housed in the first building on the left as the camp was entered, the only building with a lawn in front of it. Two World War One 75 mm guns mounted on spoke-wheeled carriages were placed fronting the flagpole at headquarters. One of the guns was fired daily during retreat or parade ceremonies using blank ammunition, as a precaution, both guns were loaded in case one misfired.



Cement Crew of Battery H, 251st CA (AA).]



Installing shutters.

On February 21, 1941, the regiment participated in its first alert when the 1st Battalion moved out with their 3-inch guns and searchlights to field positions around the island; joining them were some units of Batteries G and H.

The camp newspaper titled the “Algaroba Rag” made its debut on February 23 under the efforts of Charles Runyon, Joseph Jenny, and Bob Carlsberg. Morale was boosted at the isolated camp by a library run by the chaplain, a movie theater, and concerts by the regimental band. The dance band entertained the officers and two enlisted men’s dances, and local entertainment groups also performed at the camp.

The regiment received its first .50-caliber machine guns on February 26 when Sgt. Frank Doran of Battery F was sent to the Ordnance Depot to pick up 16 guns and mounts.

On June 14, 1941, a navy TBD-1 “Devastator” flying out of nearby Ewa Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) was involved in a mid-air collision with another aircraft and suffered damages to the tip of its tail. The aircraft made a forced-landing onto the camp’s firing line; the aircraft was too large to take off again and had to be towed to the Ewa MCAS.

The regiment held several alerts in 1941; on May 12 all units were mobilized with some units sent to Schofield Barracks to set up positions. Headquarters was set up at the CCC Camp near the Schofield airfield. On the 13th the regiment was tested on their camouflage techniques by having airplanes fly over to spot the gun positions. A report later revealed that they had gone to great lengths to conceal the weapons.(9)

Besides carrying out extensive training, e.g., firing exercises, field maneuvers, and gas attack drills, several members of the regiment participated in sports activities and entered the Hawaiian Department track meet on May 29, 1941, winning several first places and some second and third places. This was a testament to their physical conditioning acquired by the strenuous work in building the camp.

FIRST EDITION

"ALGAROBÁ RAG"

Vol. 1, No. 1 - February 23, 1941 - Camp Malakole, Oahu, T.H.

THE BIRTH OF A NEWSPAPER!!!!!!

Agreements-agreements-War-war-Draft-draft-Induction-induction-we are in the Army now. So-is born the Algaroba Rag -- and it is with great honor, glory and such that the Algaroba Rag staff swings into action.

Keep posted on the bulletin board for further issues, (along with the monthly supply of toilet paper)

Now on to the news..

LOST!!!!!!

One pipe (smoking type, model 1903, cal. 100, muzzle velocity 1000 ft., approximate weight 10 pounds). Finder please return to 1st Sgt, as the owner has been reported AWOL, the pipe was last seen carrying Sgt. Brown or vice-versa.

Check the latest news.

* * * * *

FLASH!!!!!!

R R R
U U U
M M M
C O O
R R R
S S

!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

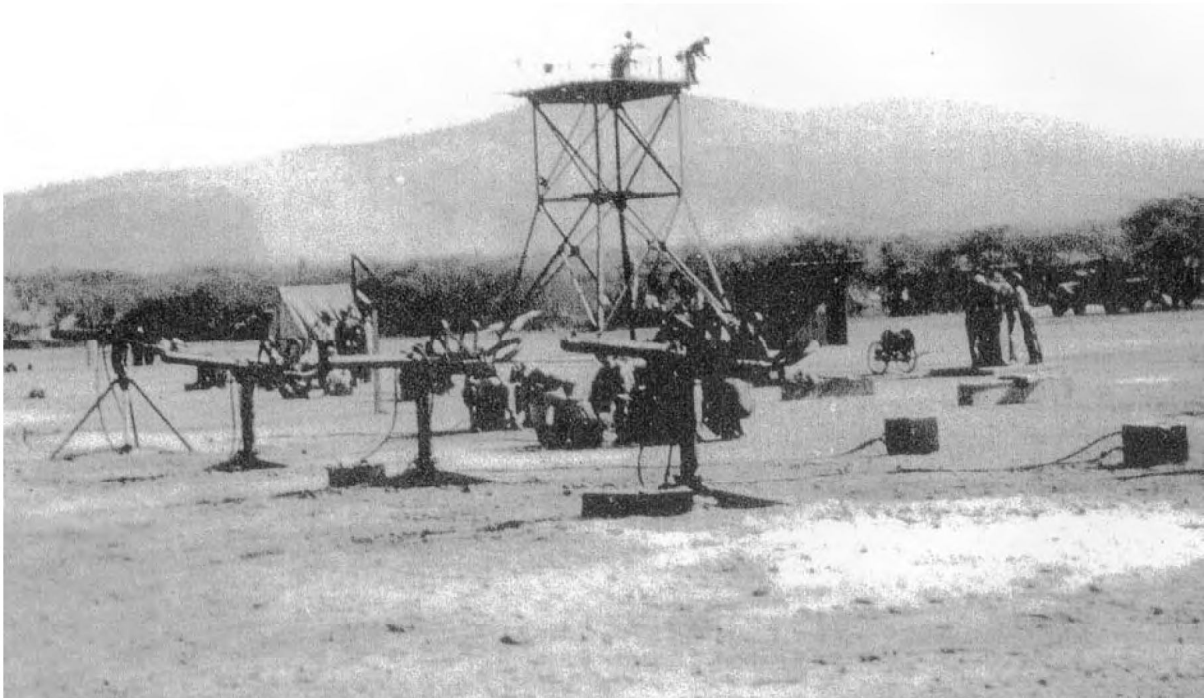
Through direct channels we have just heard that Hawaii is due for a storm, check your local paper, The Third Hole for latest developments

* * *

First Issue of the "Agaroba Rag." Robert E. Carlberg



Left to right, Anthony Iantorno, cousin Joe Pizatta, and John Iantorno, three of four family members, all of Battery H.



O¹ Tower.



Surprise visitor, TBD-1 "Devastator."

The Hawaiian Department's anti-aircraft units used Camp Malakole considerably in 1941. Battery A, 251st CA, equipped with the old M1A1 four-horn sound locators, had received the new M2's and Frank Van Oosbree reported that he had just become proficient with the new sound locator when they were provided with an SCR-268 radar set about one month before the Pearl Harbor attack. He had been an infantry officer and was just mastering the sound locator when he was made radar officer. He was given a book about two inches thick marked "Top Secret" that had to be checked in every two hours, and the radar was also top secret and kept behind a barbed wire perimeter.(10)

December 7, 1941

The new post chapel was to be dedicated during special services at 1100 hours on December 7, 1941, by Major Earl B. Clark, post chaplain; however, the post came under strafing attack by IJN aircraft as they passed by after attacking Pearl Harbor and Hickam Field.

The men had recently returned from the firing range with the .50-cal. machine guns and thousands of rounds in a "state of readiness," however, Hawaiian Department regulation required that all unused belted ammunition be removed and stored in boxes; all 90 mm and 37 mm AA guns were in traveling position and were not able to be fired. Several machine guns were eventually set up and fired at the attacking aircraft using the belted ammunition that had not been stored, along with M1903 Springfield rifles.

Jack Burns, who was assigned to Battery A as a searchlight operator was assigned to guard duty at 0800 hours on Tower 1 (25 feet high with pipe railings), along with Private Brookwalter, armed with Browning Automatic Rifles. They relieved the previous watch at 0745 hours and saw a flight of aircraft coming in from the northwest a few minutes later and did not give it much thought. Shortly afterwards they heard explosions coming from Pearl Harbor and saw huge clouds of black smoke rising over the harbor. Their first thoughts were that the fuel tanks were exploding; then some of the planes leaving the harbor started to strafe the camp. As one Japanese plane flew by, they took some shots at it.(11)

The 251st was assigned AA positions at Pearl Harbor and elsewhere. Shortly afterwards, the firing batteries headed to their mobilization positions. Batteries E, F, G, and H with sixteen 37 mm and twelve .50 cal. AA machine guns were set up around the harbor; Battery A (searchlights), and Batteries B, C, and D with twelve 3-inch guns also deployed to pre-assigned positions. The men had to hook up the guns to the prime movers while the camp was under attack.

The regiment was credited with destroying two Japanese aircraft. Sergeant Ray Hansel of Battery E received credit for shooting down the first Japanese plane over Camp Malakole.

Three members of the 251st CA were killed near John Rogers Airport when their private planes were shot down by Japanese aircraft during the attack; killed were Sergeants Henry C. Blackwell, Warren D. Rasmussen, and Corporal Clyde C. Brown.

Survivors of the U.S.S. *Oklahoma* were clothed and fed by one of the 2nd Battalion automatic weapons batteries at Pearl Harbor, with the sailors eventually being integrated into the unit. Christmas 1941 found most of the regiment in the field except for headquarters personnel.

Shortly after the December 7, 1941, attack, the new commander of Battery A moved the SCR-268 radar from the beach at Camp Malakole to a position beyond the end of the road at Kaena Point. Thirteen men under the command of Frank Van Oosbree built a rock shelter using a 6 x 12-inch beam and corrugated iron for a roof.(12)

By January 1, 1942, the regiment had been deployed to various locations around the island, including: Schofield Barracks, Wheeler Field, Ewa Plain, Ford Island, Hickam Field, Fort Kamehameha, Bellows Field, and Haleiwa.

The new M-1 “Garand” rifle was issued to the regiment on March 12, 1942, which necessitated familiarizing themselves and qualifying with the new weapon.

On May 21, 1942, the 251st CA (AA) shipped out of Oahu and was forwarded to Viti Levu, Fiji where they set up camp to protect the airfield. The regiment went on to campaigns on Guadalcanal, Bougainville, and the Philippines. Upon arrival at Torokina Island, Bougainville, on December 4, 1943, and assignment to XIV Corps, HHB was redesignated as 251st AAA Gp; on March 1, 1944, the 1st and 2nd Battalions were redesignated 746th AAA Gun and 951st AAA Gun Battalions and 3rd Battalion was disbanded.(13)

Camp Used By Antiaircraft Units During World War Two

Newly arrived coast artillery units on Oahu in 1942 were quartered at the camp during the early months of the war. In January 1942, the 57th CA (TD) Regiment was housed there for a short period before heading to their new positions on the north shore of the island. Later in the war, the Hawaiian Antiaircraft Artillery Command (HAAC) took over operation of the camp, which was used completely as the principal facility for training antiaircraft units on Oahu during the war. Upon arrival of 90 mm M1 antiaircraft guns on Oahu in 1942, several of them were emplaced along the beach to train units that had been equipped with the older-model 3-inch antiaircraft guns. Close to the end of the war, 120 mm AA guns were emplaced at the camp’s firing point. The 120 mm AA guns were deployed only to Hawaii in the Pacific Theater during World War Two.(14)

Concluding Remarks

Camp Malakole was used as the main facility for antiaircraft training on Oahu during the postwar period. The old camp has been demolished and almost nothing remains of Camp Malakole today. The area has been rezoned for light industrial as the new Kalaeloa Deep Draft (Barbers Point) Harbor is located nearby. The Barbers Point area has been renamed to its ancient Hawaiian name of Kalaeloa, or “long cape,” and the Chevron Oil Refinery occupies the land to the south of the old camp. Located on the grounds of the refinery is one of many mass-produced steel-turreted machine gun pillboxes emplaced on Oahu during World War Two.



Pillbox on grounds of the Chevron refinery at Kalaeloa. *Author*

Acknowledgements

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Endnotes

1. William C. Gaines, "Honouliuli Military Reservation, Camp Malakole," unpublished manuscript in author's collection. (Hereafter: Gaines, Camp Malakole.)
2. Ibid. Personal conversation with John Iantorno in March 2003.
3. Gaines, Camp Malakole.
4. "California Coast Defenders Making Malakole Real Home," *Honolulu Star Bulletin*, April 7, 1941, p. 14.
5. "Final Group Of Antiair Reinforcements Arrive," *Honolulu Advertiser*, November 24, 1940, p. 1.
6. "California Regiment Does Pioneering Job At Malakole," *Honolulu Star Bulletin*, April 7, 1941, p. 11.
7. "Saga of the 251st CA (AA), Robert E. Carlberg (comp.). (Hereafter: Saga of the 251st CA.)
8. Ibid. Gaines, Camp Malakole. Richard H. Borden, letter to author, June 10, 2003. The width of the first two barracks were 25 feet; the others were reduced to 24 feet by order of 1st Lt. Orlo Peugh in effort to save lumber.
9. Saga of the 251st CA.
10. Frank Van Oosbree, Major, AUS (Ret.), "Some Reminisces About Camp Malakole." Four-page typewritten account, n.d. John Iantorno Collection. (Hereafter: Van Oosbree, Reminisces.)
11. Jack B. Burns, "December 7, 1941, Experience by Jack B. Burns," Single-sheet typewritten account, n.d. John Iantorno Collection.
12. Van Osbree, Reminisces.
13. Saga of the 251st CS.
14. Gaines, Camp Malakole.

Additional Sources

Iantorno, John, 251st CA (AA) Regimental Historian, collection of Camp Malakole photographs and memorabilia.
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