



United States Department of the Interior



NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park
Post Office Box 52
Hawaii National Park, Hawai'i 96718

IN REPLY REFER TO:
HAVO 1.D. (L7621; 8300)

October 23, 2012

To All Respective Military Representatives:

Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park is the premier tourism destination for visitors to Hawaii, receiving approximately 1.5 million visitors annually who are here for a once in a lifetime experience. The summit eruption continues to attract crowds of visitors on the ground.

We appreciate the military's need to train pilots and crew to maintain readiness. Our primary concerns lie with the potential for impacts from aviation activities that may occur over the park or from incidental travel in park airspace by military aircraft. We are especially concerned with safety as well as noise that could potentially travel across park lands and could impact park resources and values including visitor experience, cultural resources including cultural landscapes, Congressional designated wilderness, and threatened and endangered wildlife.

Kīlauea Volcano continues to experience an ongoing summit eruption at Halemaumau Crater. There is an existing Kilauea TFR/NOTAM (NOTAM: Hilo Vortac ITO) 209 degree radial at 24.6 miles (Latitude 19°24' 20" N, Longitude 155° 17'26"W) for a radius of 3 nautical miles at 4,000' AGL and below, within park airspace. The FAA has issued a Temporary Flight Restriction, (TFR) for aircraft safety due to unexpected explosive eruptions and the presence of ejected volcanic particulates. Eruptive activities are continuing to produce a hazardous ash cloud which may cause aircraft engine damage/failure and abrasion damage due to airframe and windshield surfaces. Plume size fluctuates. Explosive events with large amounts of ash can appear with no warning.

Additionally, we would like you to request that pilots operating military aircraft observe a voluntary standoff from the airspace over Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park. The park and the USGS Hawaiian Volcano Observatory conduct routine and often daily flights for monitoring of our active volcanoes and other administrative activities. In addition, commercial air tours are frequently flying over portions of the park with 60-80 flights per day or more, depending on volcanic activity. The park receives prevailing weather conditions that often create poor visibility for administrative flights and tour aircraft.

From 2010-2012, the NPS has documented 14 incidents involving military helicopters and fixed wing aircraft. One incident in 2010 involved two F-18 Fighter Jets at high speed and only 1200' AGL above the park helipad, inside the TFR, and within minutes of an incoming geologic monitoring helicopter. In another incident on 03/10/12, four F-15 jets were observed flying into the TFR at low altitudes then increasing to about 4,000'-6,000' AGL and circled above Halemaumau Crater, rattling windows in the buildings of the nearby Hawaiian Volcano Observatory and Jaggar Museum. There were several complaints reported from park staff and visitors.

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More recently, on 9/14/12, four F-16 jets were observed flying into the TFR and circling above Halemaumau Crater multiple times. On the third pass, they flew at the lowest altitude (1,000-1,500' AGL) at a high rate of speed, in a nose to tail formation and appeared to fly through the volcanic plume as they exited the area. The flights cause a deafening sound, windows to rattle on buildings, and complaints from 50 or so visitors at Jaggar Museum, as well as complaints from park staff from various locations in the summit area of the park.

We are happy to participate in any future pilot briefings and send information regarding our natural and cultural resources. Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park has unique issues related to park resources, as well as the NOTAM for Kilauea Volcano. The park has held briefings with Pōhakuloa Training Area (PTA) on Hawaii Island and Kaneohe MCAB regarding pilot briefings and consultations with the park regarding resource concerns. We would like to extend this to other branches of the military operating on Hawaii Island, particularly near Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park and in the state.

Visitors come to their national parks to experience the natural quiet and solitude. Park managers are legally charged with protecting these critically endangered species, designated wilderness and park soundscapes as well as limiting activities that cause unnecessary noise or threaten the natural quiet. Both the military agencies and the National Park Service are jointly engaged in protecting our country and its resources. We appreciate your assistance in getting the word out regarding our aviation issues at Hawaii Volcanoes National Park.

The park serves as the cornerstone for conservation of Hawaiian bird species found nowhere else in the world. There are special status nesting and recovery activities on-going year-round within the park. The park also contains 123,100 acres of congressionally legislated Wilderness and 123,100 acres eligible for wilderness designation, which provides special protection to these areas within the park. The summit of Kilauea is also considered the home of Pelehonuamea, a sacred deity to Native Hawaiians.

We would also like extend a special invitation to military personnel who intend to visit the park during their time in the islands. For further information or clarification on these comments, please feel free to contact either myself or Park Planner Danielle Foster at (808) 985-6073.

Sincerely,



Cindy Orlando
Park Superintendent