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# Rangers put to test on Oahu

*The elite special operations troops find Wahiawa's jungle setting to be an especially challenging training ground*

By Kevin Knodell  
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The soldiers were methodical as they went through their gear and prepared to venture into the jungle Tuesday. They had just arrived by helicopter at the Army's jungle warfare school in Wahiawa — known as the Lightning Academy — after conducting a beach landing by boat and launching a simulated raid at Marine Corps Training Area Bellows.

After they accounted for their equipment, they moved carefully into the thick jungle as rain began to fall and humidity gripped the air.

They're members of the Army's elite 75th Ranger Regiment who have been in Hawaii the past two weeks. In the past two decades, the unit was continually deployed, conducting dangerous raids in Iraq and Afghanistan as Rangers were



PHOTOS BY KEVIN KNODELL / KKNODELL@STARADVERTISER.COM

thrust into some of the most intense battles of those conflicts.

Rangers are considered some of the Army's best-trained and most capable soldiers. But for members of the 2nd Ranger Battalion's Bravo Company out

of Joint Base Lewis-McChord in Washington state, training in Hawaii proved to be a humbling experience. The Pentagon has been shifting its attention to the Pacific amid tensions with China, and soldiers are training for the potential

The Army Rangers spent two weeks on Oahu to train for Pacific operations after decades of intense Middle-east deployments. Above, members of the 2nd Ranger Battalion boarded a Black Hawk helicopter Tuesday at a Marine Corps training area at Bellows Beach before making their way to the Army's jungle warfare school in Wahiawa. At left, the troops landing at Bellows Beach.

of a very different sort of war.

As a special operations formation that conducts sensitive missions, members of the unit are normally not authorized to speak to news media, but an officer with Bravo Company spoke to the Honolulu Star-Advertiser on the condition that his name not be used.

"The intent of the trip was to get Bravo Company Rangers exposed to a jungle environment because we have relatively minimal exposure," the officer said. "We've got a lot to learn, for sure. I think we've got to force ourselves to kind of fight some institutional knowledge

Please see **RANGERS, A6**

# Miscommunication creates confusion as scrutiny is raised for Ala Wai project

By Timothy Hurley  
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The plan for a multimillion-dollar flood control project that aims to prevent a disaster in Waikiki and the Ala Wai watershed now will include a more comprehensive environmental study, according to a notice filed by the Army Corps of Engineers.

That's good news for those who

have urged the federal agency to take a closer look at the environmental impacts of the project.

The problem, according to community members, is that project officials didn't notify the dozens of people who have been participating in the public planning process and who signed up for an email list to hear about the latest developments. The action also wasn't described on the project's website.

Instead, the agency on Feb. 22 put a notice only in the Federal Register, the voluminous daily bulletin of U.S. administrative and executive rules, regulations, orders and notices.

When members of Protect Our Ala Wai Watersheds and other interested parties found out about the notice by chance weeks later, they were a bit steamed, confused and left wondering if the federal

agency was planning an end-run around the public.

"It was upsetting," said Sidney Lynch, president of Protect Our Ala Wai Watersheds. "They talk about being transparent and wanting public participation. Then this thing comes along and blows the whole transparency thing out of the water."

The corps is now expressing regret for the miscommunication.

"Unfortunately, we failed to let you all know about this notice at the time of the publication. We apologize sincerely for that lapse," the agency said in a message sent Thursday to the project's email list describing the decision to conduct

a more comprehensive environmental impact statement rather than a less comprehensive environmental assessment.

The email was sent nearly one month after the Federal Register notice appeared. The project website was updated just days earlier.

The agency not only apologized, but extended the 30-day comment period on the proposal from the original March 24 deadline to May 8.

In addition, the corps, along with its partners at the city, will conduct an additional public meeting in April to explain the state and federal environmental planning

Please see **ALA WAI, A6**



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