



Water Cannon at Ulupa'u Crater weapons training range. PC: Karen Bryan

A Company of Four by Karen Bryan

MCBH is the permanent duty station for a stoic, sturdy, battle-ready company of four. They are indifferent to the harsh blazing sun and brutal winds that batter the coast of the Mokapu Peninsula. These Marines are tolerant and unwavering during winter squalls that cause meagre humans to scurry for shelter. They are silently standing proud—although never an “oohrah” is shouted, these troops are the epitome of “always faithful.” These Marines are continually at the ready, and they literally stand fire watch 24/7. They are the few, the proud, the water cannons at Ulupa'u Crater.

If you've ever been to the weapons training range at MCBH, you may have seen the rather benign white statues scattered across the hillside towards Battery Pennsylvania. More than 10,000 Marines, Sailors, Soldiers, Federal Law Enforcement Officers, and Reservists utilize Ulupa'u Head for weapons training. And, on the outskirts of the range you will also see up to 2,000 federally protected seabirds called Red-footed Boobies resting from long foraging voyages or nesting in the low-growing trees dispersed throughout the Wildlife Management Area. Where there's weapons training, there's a fire risk. And, where there are dry, introduced plants that fuel fires quickly with the blustery tradewinds blowing towards the remaining crater wall, the risk of fire is exponentially elevated. The remoted-controlled water cannons each have a range of about 100 feet. In case of fire, no flame is left to flicker. The water cannons conduct monthly training exercises assisted by Natural Resource Managers, EOD, Corpsmen, Facilities and Range Training Facility staff to ensure they are ready to dowse flames at the drop of a cover. An advantage to this duty station is never ever having to field day. Mere humans do all of the clean-up including maintaining fire breaks in the vegetation and making sure the Booby birds are at ease. Next time you are at the range, give a salute to the water cannons for helping to ensure our troops and federal agents can continue to train at MCBH.

Activity: What is the white figure in the photo? Do you think the gravel roads in the photo could serve another purpose other than passage? Bonus: What is the structure in the background? Comment below. Random drawings for prizes will be held when social distancing measures have been lifted.

Mālama i ka 'āina—care for and live in harmony with the land. Earth Day every day at MCBH.