

## **HAWAII MEDAL OF HONOR**



### **SUMMARY OF THE HAWAII MEDAL OF HONOR**

In 2005, the state legislature passed House Bill 8, designated as Act 21, which provided for a “Hawaii Medal of Honor that would help express the deep appreciation and gratitude of the people of Hawaii to the loved ones of members of the military who sacrificed their lives in defense of our nation and its freedom”. A planning committee chaired by Representative Ken Ito, Major General Robert Lee and Senator Norman Sakamoto met during the interim to design and create the medal and to coordinate the ceremony. The medal is believed to be the first in the country by a state to honor service members killed in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Recipients of the medal include members of the United Armed Forces, the United States Military Reserves, and the Hawaii National Guard who were either residents of the State of Hawaii, attended an educational institution in Hawaii, or were stationed in Hawaii by order of the United States Department of Defense.

The first awards ceremony was held on April 18, 2006 at 10:00 AM before a joint session of the State Legislature in the House Chambers. The medals were presented to family members by Governor Lingle, Senate President Robert Bunda, Speaker Calvin Say and General Robert Lee. For those unable to attend the ceremony, General Lee arranged with other Adjutant Generals across the country to have the medals delivered personally to family members. In addition, Certificate of Appreciation on behalf of the State Legislature was also presented to each recipient by Senator Norman Sakamoto (Chair, Senate Committee on Education and Representative Ken Ito (Chair, House Committee on Public Safety and Military Affairs).

At the conclusion of the 2006 ceremony, family members, the Hawaii military community, and special guests joined legislators for a luncheon reception at the State Capitol.

Since the initial presentation in 2006, a total of 242 Hawaii Medal of Honor recipients have been or will be honored. As of January 15, 2009:

2006 Year .....	120
2007 Year .....	68
2008 Year .....	31
2009 (2-1-08 to 1-15-09).....	23

Total To-date (01-15-09) ..... 242 Recipients



## DESCRIPTION OF THE HAWAII MEDAL OF HONOR

The concept of a Hawaii Medal of Honor was conceived by the State Legislature and coordinated through the office of Representative Mark Takai. The vehicle for the implementation of Hawaii Medal of Honor was the passage of HB 8 HD1, Act 21, which created the Hawaii Medal of Honor to express the people of Hawaii's deep appreciation to the loved ones of military members who sacrificed their lives in defense of our nation and its freedoms.

The Act lists the names of 122 Hawaii military members killed in action while serving in dangerous and volatile areas of the world, including Iraq and Afghanistan. The planning process and the culmination of this significant event started with the first Hawaii Medal of Honor (HMOH) planning meeting on May 17, 2005. Subsequent meetings and the implementation process follow:

1. **PLANNING:**

- a. **DESIGN OF THE MEDAL.** A meeting was held on May 17, 2005 to propose a design for the medal. Attending the meeting were: Senator Sakamoto, Col. Gary Ishikawa (DOD), Cpt. K. Mark Takai (HIARNG), Aaron Pollick (HIARNG), Lisa Vargas, Bobby Chi (Honolulu Mint), Henry Cordiano (Honolulu Mint), with Repr. Ito absent. The estimated cost is \$80-\$100/medal and the costs to come out of the legislature's budget.

The medal design consists of six components:

**Circle of Kalo Leaves-** The kalo leaves represents the family or Ohana. The leaves are designed in an encircled fashion and represents the concept of Ohana, which we strive to embrace.

**Coat of Arms-** The Great Shield is the keystone of the design. The eight bars represent the eight major islands of the State of Hawaii. The kapu sticks, or Pulo'ulo'u, symbolize authority and protection. The star in the center of the medallion is the Star of Hawaii, the 50<sup>th</sup> star on the flag of the United States. This star also represents the honorees of this prestigious award.

**Maltese Cross-** The Maltese Cross represents the four directional axes of the globe, denoting Hawaii as the Crossroads of the Pacific.

**Sun Rays-** The irradiant sun is symbolic of the new era. Its position in the center of the Maltese Cross represents our sunny shores and warm hearts ever shining on all the corners of the world.

**The Neck Ribbon-** The neck drape is red and golden yellow in color. These colors symbolize the royal monarchy that once ruled these islands. The red represents courage and strength. The golden yellow depicts the honor that the recipients have brought to our islands.

**The Service Ribbon and Attachment-** The service ribbon represents distinguished service. Its colors are identical to the colors of the neck drape. The attachment device at the middle of the ribbon is an ancient flag or puela of Hawaiian Chiefs. In olden times, the puela was raised above the sail of the ancient Hawaiians' canoes while at sea. Our puela signifies that the person receiving this medal is of high rank or honor.

A rear inscription

The colors are: **Red** (Courage), **Gold** (Honor), and **Green** (Life)

- b. **LISTING OF HONOREES.** The list of service members for the program was compiled by Repr. Takai's office and submitted to General Lee (State DOD) on June 29, 2005 for verification. Eleanor D. Thommes, Office of Adjutant General forwarded the list to DOD staff members for verification. Copy of list was also forwarded to Dennis Fujii (PACOM) for review. On December 14, 2005, Dennis Fujii sent email to the military contacts from the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, Coast Guard, and Army Reserves for assistance. A deadline of January 06, 2006 was imposed to finalize the listing of the honorees. Subsequently, USARPAC on January 12, 2006 submitted a Medal of Honor list of the Army members. On February 09, 2006 an updated list was prepared and submitted to appropriate personnel for information. The Army advised of issues relating to Privacy Act on March 09, 2006.
  - c. **NEXT OF KIN.** Letter drafted on April 06, 2006 to each next of kin to confirm their attendance, logistics information, parking, attire, receptions, and point of contact. In addition, supplemental information, as appropriate was sent to each respondent to facilitate their stay on-island. A guest spread sheet was prepared by Representative Takai's office to record each family's responses on parking, accommodations, guest's names, and relationship to the honoree.
  - d. **SPECIAL GUESTS.** A list of special guests was prepared by Representative Takai's office and coordinated with the State DOD office. A draft letter of invitation was prepared on April 05, 2006 for each special guest to attend the ceremony and a private luncheon. Logistics information was also provided in the letter.
  - e. **HAWAII STATE LEGISLATURE CERTIFICATE.** A certificate from the State Legislature to each recipient was drafted and coordinated through Representative Takai's office. Each certificate extending the deep appreciation of the State Legislature and the people of Hawaii for his/her sacrifice in defense of our nation was signed by all the members of the Senate and the House of Representative.
2. **ETHICS COMMISSION:** On April 06, 2006, Mr. Daniel J. Mollway, EO and General Counsel advised that he sees "nothing inappropriate with respect to the State Ethics Code".
  3. **LEGISLATION:** House Bill 8, HD1 (2005), Act 21 authorized the Hawaii Medal of Honor. HCR NO. 329 resolved that the legislature assembled in Joint Session in the Chambers of the House of Representatives at 10:00 AM on Tuesday, April 18, 2006 for the purpose of presenting the Hawaii Medal of Honor to the family or representative of the recipients. Testimonies in support of these legislation were submitted by Major General Robert Lee (Stare Adjutant General), Edward Cruickshank (Office of Veterans Services), Kathryn Arizo (Hawaii National Guard Enlisted Assn.), Lt. Colonel Randall Tom (Hawaii National Guard Association), and Calvin T. Yonamine (HIANG).

**CURRENT STATUS:**

The Hawaii Medal of Honor authorized in Act 21 is living proof that the State Legislature has a model from which to demonstrate their appreciation to the members of the armed forces and their families for their sacrifices in defense of our nation should the occasion arises again.

The 2009 legislation in SCR 2, 2009 states that the two houses of the Legislature assemble in Joint Session in the Chambers of the Senate at 2:00 PM on Tuesday, March 31, 2009, to present the Hawaii Medal of Honor to the family or representative of each recipient. As of February 01, 2008 to January 15, 2009 there were twenty-three Medal of Honor recipients for 2009.

**REFERENCES:**

State Department of Defense

Maj. Gen. Robert G.F. Lee  
Brig. Gen. Gary M. Ishikawa  
Eleanor Thommes  
Aaron Pollick

Office of Veterans' Services

Edward R. Cruickshank

U.S. Pacific Command

Dennis Fujii

Office of Representative K. Mark Takai

Lisa Vargas

Bobby Chi, The Honolulu Mint

Henry Cordiano, The Honolulu Mint

Lisa Vargas, Office of Repr. K. Mark Takai

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