

STATE OF HAWAII  
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

TESTIMONY ON HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 218 / HOUSE RESOLUTION 174  
URGING THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS TO AWARD THE CONGRESSIONAL  
MEDAL OF HONOR TO JOHN KUULEI KAUHAIHAO, OF HONAUNAU, HAWAII

PRESENTATION TO  
THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS, MILITARY,  
& INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS, & CULTURE AND THE ARTS

BY

MAJOR GENERAL DARRYLL D. M. WONG  
March 27, 2013

Chair Takai, Vice Chair Ito, and Members of the Veterans, Military, & International Affairs, & Culture and the Arts Committee:

I am Major General Darryll D. M. Wong. I am testifying in **SUPPORT** of House Concurrent Resolution 218 / House Resolution 174

John K. Kauhahao enlisted in the Hawaii Army National Guard in 1959 while still in high school. He served honorably and rose to the rank of sergeant. Senior officers in his command recognized his leadership and management skills and provided him an opportunity to attend Officer Candidate School. John Kauhahao earned his commission just before the mobilization of the 29<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade, Hawaii Army National Guard, in 1968.

In Vietnam, 1LT Kauhahao was a member of Company B, 2d Battalion, 8<sup>th</sup> Cavalry, 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division (Airborne). In September 1969, he was leading his platoon on a reconnaissance operation in Tay Ninh Province when they were ambushed by more than 500 North Vietnamese regulars in bunker fortifications.

The following narrative is taken from a Honolulu Star Bulletin article dated April 28, 2009 which covered 1LT Kauhahao's induction to the U.S. Army Museum's Gallery of Heroes at Fort DeRussy.

Kauhahao directed his men to cover behind several large, bamboo covered dirt mounds. As the rest of the company moved up, there were caught in a crossfire from flanking enemy bunkers. Seizing upon a momentary lull in the exchange of fire, Kauhahao hacked an opening through the bamboo grove. In the next fifteen minutes, Kauhahao hurled more than 30 hand grenades through this opening at the enemy bunkers. In so doing, Kauhahao drew enemy fire on himself again and again so that his men could sight enemy gunners and bring them under suppressive fire. Kauhahao directed the withdrawal of his battered point element. He dragged vital equipment to the rear and helped wounded soldiers to a position of safety. While rejoining his men to the company's main force, Kauhahao sighted an enemy squad moving up on his tattered platoon. As he advanced to engage the approaching enemy, Kauhahao was mortally wounded by enemy fire.

For his courageous actions that day, he was posthumously awarded the Distinguished Service Cross.

We believe his heroic actions clearly warrant an upgrade to the Medal of Honor. The Honorable John McHugh, Secretary of the Army, should direct a reexamination of the facts surrounding these acts of heroism by 1LT Kauhahao.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.

## vmitestimony

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**From:** Stephen Lum [starrynight52@hotmail.com]  
**Sent:** Monday, March 25, 2013 7:20 AM  
**To:** vmitestimony; JUDtestimony  
**Cc:** galen yoshimoto - scd; mark takai - leg; Lisa Vargas Omo  
**Subject:** HCR218/HR174 - 1LT K  
**Attachments:** 2009-0427&28HonAdv&HonSB 1LT K - Vietnam.doc; 1970 Winter Hawaii Guardsman - LT K.pdf; 1998 pupu33-1 1LT K p3.pdf; 1998 pupu33-2 68 Call-up ann p4.pdf

Attached are stories written in the Hawaii National Guard publications and local newspapers over the years noting 1LT John K. Kauhahao's humble beginnings in Capt. Cook, Kona, Hawaii to his honorable service to our country in Vietnam.

LT K joined the Hawaii Army National Guard while still in high school, in 1959. The sergeant earned his officer commission shortly before his unit, the 29th Infantry Brigade was mobilized during the Vietnam War, in 1968. Like all the recipients of the Medal of Honor he took on the enemy without regards to his own life, keeping enemy at bay while protecting his platoon.

The upgrade request is not without precedence, many the the Distinguished Service Cross recipients were deserving of the MoH, but their ethnicity prevented their presentation.

His wife, Shirley Ann P. Kauhahao (Ikeuchi), was left to raised their four children.

Prior to Jun. 21, 2000 the Hawaii Army National Guard had no heroes that had received the Medal of Honor,\* but all that changed when 22 Asian American's Distinguished Service Cross medals (eight of though recipients were with the mobilized Hawaii National Guard, prior to the creation of the famed 100th Infantry Battalion) from World War II were upgraded 57 years later. The award was upgraded to the Medal of Honor after Congress directed the Secretary of the Army to review all awards of the DSC to Americans of Japanese and Pacific Islands descent to determine if racial bias had influenced the awards process.

Eight of the medal recipients have direct ties to the Hawaii Guard. Most were presented posthumously by then President William J. Clinton. A Distinguished Service Cross was also upgraded to Medal of Honor for a former HIARNG Soldier who served in the Korean War and was presented posthumously by President Barrack Obama on Oct. 28, 2009.

**\*Highest military honor awarded by Congress for risk of life in combat beyond the call of duty; the awardees are called recipients not winners; the official name is Medal of Honor not Congressional Medal of Honor**

thank you for your consideration

Stephen M. Lum  
MSG(R) Hawaii Army National Guard  
Bosnia and Afghanistan war veteran

## HAWAII HEROES

### Wartime deeds of heroism are brought to the forefront



**1st Lt. John  
Kauhahao**

POSTED: 01:30 a.m. HST, Apr 28, 2009

Seven Hawaii soldiers will be inducted into the U.S. Army Museum's Gallery of Heroes at Fort DeRussy on Thursday. All are recipients of the Distinguished Service Cross. These are their stories of heroism:

**1st Lt. John Kauhahao** Vietnam War, Company B, 2d Battalion, 8th Cavalry, 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) September 1969

Kauhahao was leading his platoon during a reconnaissance operation in Tay Ninh Province when they were attacked by North Vietnamese regulars occupying bunker fortifications. Kauhahao directed his men to cover behind several large, bamboo covered dirt mounds. As the rest of the company moved up, they were caught in a crossfire from flanking enemy bunkers.

Seizing upon a momentary lull in the exchange of fire, Kauhahao hacked an opening through the bamboo grove. In the next 15 minutes, Kauhahao hurled more than 30 hand grenades through this opening at the enemy bunkers. In so doing, Kauhahao drew enemy fire on himself again and again so that his men could sight enemy gunners and bring them under suppressive fire.

Kauhahao directed the withdrawal of his battered point element. He dragged vital equipment to the rear and helped wounded soldiers to a position of safety. While rejoining his men to the company's main force, Kauhahao sighted an enemy squad moving up on his tattered platoon. As he advanced to engage the approaching enemy, Kauhahao was mortally wounded by enemy fire.

Source: U.S. Army Museum

# A SPECIAL SORT OF MAN

Lieutenant John K. Kauhahao was a special sort of man. He spent most of his life on the Kona Coast of Hawaii, going to school, making a living, raising a family, and fishing when he wanted to relax and think. John died in Vietnam last year in a final effort that won him the Distinguished Service Cross, the nation's second highest combat award.

His handwritten autobiography in the OCS files sketches a man of quiet strength and determination, who was devoted to his wife and four children. There are other letters in the file with the autobiography—letters of recommendation from his clergyman, a family friend, and one from his company commander in Kona. Descriptive phrases recur in the letters, "learns quickly," "well coordinated," "has a great deal of strength and stamina." A sheaf of colored forms adds more to the picture of John's character. His OCS classmates thought of him as fair, enthusiastic, cooperative, and a man who was always ready to help someone else. The staff at OCS concurred, and John Kauhahao was selected to receive both the Hawaii National Guard Association and the Association of the United States Army awards for leadership.

The awards were presented on Friday, May 10, 1968. A short while later, his unit was activated. John was eventually reassigned to an infantry company of the First Cavalry Division.

On Friday, September 5, 1969, he was briefed by his OCS classmate, Lieutenant Zenon Wong, prior to a reconnaissance patrol near Tay Ninh. Later, during that mission, in the dense jungle, the patrol was fired upon by a battalion-size force of North Vietnamese regulars occupying bunker fortifications.

After John had directed his men to cover behind large bamboo-covered dirt mounds, the rest of the company moved up to lend support fire to the pinned down element,



John Kauhahao, Jr. receives the DSC from MG Sternberg as Mrs. Kauhahao, MG Webster and BG Schaefer look on.

only to be caught in a crossfire from flanking enemy bunkers. Seizing upon a momentary lull in the exchange of fire, Lieutenant Kauhahao hacked an opening through the bamboo growing over the dirt mound behind which he had taken cover. During the next 15 minutes, he hurled more than 30 hand grenades at the enemy bunkers, drawing enemy fire on himself again and again so that his men could sight the enemy gunners and bring them under suppressive fire.

Lieutenant Kauhahao then directed the withdrawal of his battered point element, crawling over a hundred meters of fire-swept terrain to drag vital equipment to the rear and helping wounded soldiers to positions of safety.

Later, as he and his men moved to rejoin the company's main force, John sighted an enemy squad mov-

ing up on them. He engaged the approaching enemy and was mortally wounded by their fire.

For his extraordinary heroism, which cost him his life, Lieutenant Kauhahao was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross.

Shirley Ann Kauhahao, John's wife, and John Jr, one of the four children, recently received the award from Major General Ben Sternberg, Commanding General of USARHAW.

John Kauhahao lived for 27 years. His life was shaped by his personal choices. He chose to join the National Guard. He chose to become an officer, and he chose to perform some difficult tasks as a leader. John was one of those special men whose service in uniform make the wearing of that uniform a very special privilege for the rest of us.

# Former TAG buried with full military honors

By Deborah M. S. Murray

The State of Hawaii Department of defense said farewell to one of its own in a military funeral service, Jan. 5, at Hawaii State Veterans Cemetery, Kaneohe.

Retired Maj. Gen. Valentine A. Siefermann died Dec. 30, 1997. He was buried with full military honors including a 13-gun volley, performed by the U.S. Army's Bravo Battery, 3rd Battalion, 7th Field Artillery; 21-Gun Salute by the U.S. Air Force's 15th Air Base Wing Honor Guard, and an F-16 flyover by the Hawaii Air National Guard.

pallbearers for the ceremony were soldiers and airmen of the Hawaii National Guard.

A prayer was given by Ron Faux, pastor of Kailua United Methodist Church.

"Today, we honor and bid farewell to Maj. Gen. Valentine A. Siefermann a visionary leader, a pioneer, and a citizen-soldier who lives on in his many accomplishments and contributions to the State of Hawaii, Department of Defense," said Maj. Gen. Edward V. Richardson, the adjutant general.

Siefermann was the state adjutant general and director of State Civil Defense from 1973 to 1981. He served as the commander of the Hawaii Air National Guard from 1953 to 1973, before he was selected adjutant general.

His accomplishments include working closely with the U.S. Air Force to allow the Hawaii Air Guard to assume the air defense alert mission of the Hawaiian



Apr. 1st Class Stephen H. Lee

Islands in 1956; establishing a mobile communications squadron, which today is the 201st Combat Communications Group; helping to modernize the Post-Vietnam Hawaii Army National Guard aviation program; and under his direction, Hawaii became the first state to get involved in marijuana eradication efforts in the 1970s.

"Much of what we ... are today can be traced to the hard work and vision of General Siefermann," said Richardson. "He guided our growth, secured the funding to build a number of outstanding facilities, and forged our role in national defense, as well as an in-

creased role in the safety and well-being of our state and communities."

"Forty-two years after his vision became a reality, those of us who worked with him know that without his vision... without his guidance in building facilities... without his direction and unrelenting quest for excellence, this achievement would not have been possible."

His wife, the former Pauline F. Capanus of Kahuku, sons Franklin and Dickerson Smith, James, Robert, and John; daughters, Valarie Way and Gail Lawrence; 16 grand children and 11 great-grand children survive him.

## 30th anniversary of '68 activation remembered

# Lieutenant K's Vietnam heroics recalled

By Sgt. 1st Class Aaron R. Pollick  
Historical Section

Lieutenant K. That's what his men called him in Vietnam. They couldn't pronounce his name so they nicknamed him "Lieutenant K."

First Lt. John Kulei Kauhahao, born and raised on the Kona coast of the Big Island, did what most local boys would do, went to school, made a living, raised a family and like most loved to fish. A devoted husband and father of four, John was a person who learned quickly, was athletic and had a great deal of strength and stamina and his family friends.

Hawaii Army National Guard Officer Candidate School, Class 06-68 classmates thought of him as fair, enthusiastic and cooperative. He was a man who was always willing to help someone else. Kauhahao, a member of the Hawaii Guard's Company C, 2nd Battalion, 296th Infantry out of Honolulu, was commissioned just two months after the call-up on May 13, 1968. Just a little over a year later, John was reassigned with Company B, 2nd Battalion, 8th Cavalry, of the 1st Cavalry Division.

### "The Mission"

Lieutenant K's story of heroism began Sept. 5, 1969. Kauhahao was briefed by his OCS classmate 2nd Lt.



Kauhahao

Zenon K. Wong prior to his reconnaissance patrol near Tay Ninh, South Vietnam.

He was advised that there were unknown numbers of enemy bunkers hidden in his sector of patrol. His mission: to seek and destroy the bunkers. He was willing and ready. Kauhahao preferred hand grenades to rifle fighting and favored fragmentation grenades. At least 30 were fixed on and over his gear and clothing, so many that it looked like armor.

Lieutenant K's search for the enemy bunkers was relatively short. He and 25 men from his platoon found a strand of blue communication wire in the scrub brush. They carefully traced the wire to its source. Then the battle began.

Fire erupted savagely from a bunker complex on the platoon's flank. It was instantly clear that the GI's were

out numbered and they could only drop for cover. Kauhahao's cover was a mound of dirt. He knew his platoon was caught in a crossfire put down by a large North Vietnam force in thick jungle terrain. Recognizing his unit's precarious position, he hacked an opening through the bamboo growing over the dirt mound and began a one-man war. In the next 15 minutes he threw 30 hand grenades. When his own supply dwindled, his men tossed theirs up to him. The lieutenant kept grabbing and tossing. Minute after minute until the battleground was littered with enemy dead, he drew fire upon himself again and again so that his men could sight the enemy gunners and bring them under suppressive fire. Kauhahao then directed the withdrawal of his men and crawled more than 100 meters over

fire-swept terrain to drag vital equipment to the rear and help wounded soldiers to a position of safety.

Later, as he and his men moved to rejoin the company's main force, Kauhahao sighted an enemy squad moving toward his platoon. He advanced toward them, opened fire, and was mortally wounded by their fire. It was said that after the battle a newspaperman heard of John K. Kauhahao and wanted to do a story on him. The man eyed the newsman curiously. "Oh, you mean Lieutenant K. Listen man, you know, he saved our lives out there. Just say he was the greatest; that's all, the greatest."

### Recognition

For his extraordinary heroism, Kauhahao was posthumously awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, the highest award for valor to be given to anyone called up with the 29th Infantry Brigade.

Mrs. Shirley Kauhahao and her four children also received a Bronze Star medal with one Oak Leaf Cluster for heroism, earned by her husband in an earlier engagement, as well as the Air Medal, Purple Heart and seven other awards.

*Editor's note: Story based on materials gathered from the Honolulu Star-Bulletin, Hawaii Army National Guard records and the Hawaii Guardian (Guard's historical publication from 1950 to 1972, prior to the pupukahi).*

**"Build me a son, O Lord, who will be strong enough to know when he is weak, and brave enough to face himself when he is afraid, one who will be proud and unbending in honest defeat, and humble and gentle in victory."**

— General Douglas MacArthur

## In memory of Sgt. Maj. Harry T. Nishida

Sgt. Maj. Harry T. Nishida, 44, a full-time intelligence sergeant and security specialist with the Hawaii Army National Guard's plans, operations and military support section, passed away, March 22. Services, with full military honors, were held at Milliani Memorial Cemetery Chapel, March 30.

Nishida, graduated from Waipahu High School in 1971 and joined the Hawaii Guard's 487th Field Artillery in 1972. His mili-

tary career included tours with the Hawaii Military Academy and the Hawaii Army Guard aviation units. His full-time Guard career began as a supply sergeant for Troop E, 19th Cavalry and later as chief intelligence sergeant with the 1st Battalion, 189th Aviation (Attack Helicopter). He joined the Army Guard headquarters in 1990.

Harry lived by two primary noncommissioned officer rules:

- 1- Lead by example
  - 2- Never forget rule number one.
- Nishida's leadership, enthusiasm, and hard work contributed significantly to the protection of our equipment, our readiness and our ability to provide emergency support to the state during disasters.

Ever the professional, Harry often quoted the NCO guide, noting "The good officer knows that a good NCO can get the job done. The good NCO knows that the good officer will let him do it."

"Harry was a good NCO," said

Col. Vern T. Miyagi, his friend and co-worker.

His military awards include the Legion of Merit (posthumously awarded), Meritorious Service Medal, Army Commendation Medal, and Army Achievement Medal (3rd Oak Leaf Cluster).

The Hawaii National Guard family is deeply saddened by Sgt. Maj. Nishida's passing and our sympathy goes out to his parents Harry N. and Ella, brother Sheldon, sisters Wanda and Robin, and niece Ashley-Ann.





# Brigade commemorates '68 call-up

*Sgt. 1st Class Wayne T. Iha*

**Finally . . . Recognition**  
Gov. Benjamin J. Cayetano ties a mobilization streamer on the 29th Separate Infantry Brigade colors, during the 30th commemoration of the brigade's activation during the Vietnam war.

By 2nd Lt. Jonathan M. Shiroma

Thirty years may have gone by, but the memories of May 13, 1968 are still very clear for the soldiers of the Hawaii Army National Guard's 29th Separate Infantry Brigade.

On that date, more than 4,000 Hawaii Army Guard soldiers were activated into federal duty and thrown into one of the most controversial wars the United States has ever been involved with . . . Vietnam.

More than 1,100 would eventually deploy to Southeast Asia and 29 soldiers would lose their lives while serving their country.

"We must never forget those who fought so bravely and ultimately gave their lives for their country," said Gov. Benjamin J. Cayetano, commander in chief of the Hawaii National Guard, during the 30th commemoration of the activation ceremony held at the brigade's headquarters. The governor thanked all those who had come to honor the Guard's fallen heroes, especially the families of soldiers like 1st Lt. John K. Kauhahiao, who died saving his platoon and Spc. 6 Thomas T. Horio, who was a prisoner of war.

The governor also tied on a mobilization streamer to the 29th Brigade's colors, in recognition of the '68 call-up.

In his welcoming remarks, Maj. Gen. Edward V. Richardson, the adjutant general and Vietnam veteran, reflected on the mood

and events of the days leading up to the activation. "We are here to give a real welcome home to you, the soldiers, who served gallantly and brought distinction to their units, community and family," said Richardson.

The Hawaii Guard soldiers received the first notified of their activation by local morning radio show personality Hal 'J. Akuahead Pupule Lewis, said Richardson, an F-102 Delta Dagger pilot who flew escort missions for bombers in Vietnam. "The day after Christmas 1968, I took a flight for Vietnam . . . along with six brigade soldiers . . . also on to assignments in Southeast Asia. They were part of the silent majority — those who answered the call when their country needed them."

Twenty-nine M-16 rifles, planted in the ground with battle helmets fixed on top, lined the sidewalk leading up to the headquarters, a symbol of the soldiers who died during the Vietnam activation.

"It still hurts, to remember my friends who died in those killing fields," said one Vietnam vet who did not want to be identified. "I lost two of my very best friends because of the war, yet, I'm proud to say they gave their all despite how unpopular the war was back home."

"It really woke me up," said Chief Warrant Officer Paul N. Kahunahana about the activation. "There was so much opposition, but we were called to do our job and that's what we did. It made us realize that we had



*Sgt. 1st Class Wayne T. Iha*

**FAREWELL ONCE MORE** — Retired Brig. Gen. Frederick A. Schaefer III and his wife, Evelyn, salute the 29 fallen heroes of the 29th Separate Infantry Brigade who died during the unit's activation.

to depend on each other to make it through," he said. Kahunahana works full-time with the Hawaii Army Guard's vehicle and equipment maintenance shop.

"I remember that day so well," said retired Brig. Gen. Frederick A. Schaefer III, who served as the commander of the brigade during the activation. "We were all at Fort DeRussy's Kuroda Field . . . there was a whole lot of leis, loved ones . . . a lot of Aloha."

But Schaefer pointed out, the grim reality was some of the soldiers would be off to war, in the midst of public protests

and demonstrations.

"There was a lot of tension in the air," said Schaefer, "but through it all, I believe our Hawaii soldiers, for the most part, served their country well and gave their all for the cause."

Now, in 1998, Schaefer says, the Hawaii Guard's Vietnam activation should serve as a reminder to the next generation of soldiers.

"Being ready is the key to all the training you receive during drill status because you never know when a potential hot spot will erupt and an activation ordered," said Schaefer.



*Sgt. Lance M. Kamisugi*

**WITH A SONG IN HIS HEART** — Arthur DeFries bursts out in song in tribute to his brother Spc. 4 Gaylord K. Defries. Gaylord, a 299th Infantry soldier activated with the 29th Separate Infantry Brigade, died in service to his country.



*Sgt. 1st Class Wayne T. Iha*

**THANKS FOR HIS SERVICE** — Gov. Benjamin J. Cayetano shares a moment with Mrs. Shirley Ikeuchi, the widow of 1st Lt. John K. Kauhahiao, while Mrs. Vicky Cayetano and others also walk along the roll of honor.