Mayor Kawakami thanks Hawai’i National Guard members for keeping Kaua’i safe throughout the pandemic

LĪHUʻE - The Hawai’i National Guard is scaling down COVID-19 response operations on Kaua’i now that the interisland quarantine has ended.

More than 100 guard members have been activated on Kaua’i since the pandemic began in March 2020. A majority of them came from other islands, leaving their friends and families behind for months-long deployments.

Mayor Kawakami and senior county officials attended their send-off Thursday from Port Allen Airport to thank the guard members.

“Kaua’i maintained one of the lowest rates of COVID-19 in the United States thanks in large part to the dedicated work and sacrifices of our Hawai’i National Guard troops,” said Mayor Derek Kawakami. “We couldn’t have done it without their countless hours of support. To all of our Guard members from Kaua’i and those who left their home islands to be here, mahalo nui loa for stepping up to protect our community when we needed you.”

Hawai’i National Guard members staffed the Līhuʻe airport, conducting temperature checks and verifying passengers’ Safe Travels documentation or mandatory quarantine accommodations. They worked with the Kaua’i Police Department to ensure quarantine compliance by making unannounced checks at locations around the island. They helped the Kaua’i Emergency Management Agency answer
hundreds of phone calls every week from residents and visitors needing assistance with COVID-19 emergency rules. They assisted the county with mass testing efforts, and helped to distribute food to families in need. National Guard medics stepped up to administer vaccine doses to Kauaʻi residents.

“As the last commander of Task Force Kaua‘i, it was my pleasure to lead and be amazed at the partnership between members of Task Force Kaua‘i and the Kaua‘i County emergency management team,” said Major Francis D. K. Lessett. “This pandemic has changed us all. Many hands made light work of past stressful times and it taught us that together Guard, County, and our community could prevail to see our island home restored. We take with us the memories of our mission and know the Garden Isle is in good hands!”

Since the start of the pandemic, Hawaiʻi National Guard members gave a total of 4,417 vaccine doses to civilian Kauaʻi residents, conducted 92,324 traveler quarantine compliance checks, screened 203,798 passengers at the airport, and received and processed 12,837 phone calls at the county Emergency Operations Center.

“As we start to reduce National Guard Operations based on the Kaua‘i County's success in mitigating COVID-19, I want to thank Mayor Kawakami, his staff, and the people of Kauaʻi for their hospitality and kindness in supporting our Guardsmen in their efforts to help Kaua‘i get back to a new normal,” said Brig. Gen. Moses Kaoiwi, Jr., Joint Task Force Commander, Hawaii National Guard Joint Task Force. “Our mission to protect our communities is the reason many of us joined and remain in the Hawaiʻi National Guard. Your hospitality and support for the Hawaii National Guard is critical in maintaining a force that is able respond to threats against our communities at a moment’s notice. Your support means a lot to us and is what keeps us strong.”

Most guard members from Oʻahu, Maui County, or Hawaiʻi Island departed Kauaʻi on Thursday, June 17. For photos and video of their departure ceremony, click here:  
https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1LDojWpusbDEMAO6wgds9PsfPboFJu8m9?usp=sharing.
Hawai‘i National Guard members also assisted with food distribution events on Kaua‘i:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1gDiC-Nb-DkoASn8rMBvXaPGQBMa1HmKf/view?usp=sharing.

About 20 guard members who are Kauai residents will remain activated assisting at the airport with temperature screening through Sept. 30, 2021.

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