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# Feds Plan Catastrophe Response Using Huge Kalaeloa Airport Hangar

By William Cole

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The state is leasing a 105,000-square-foot World War II hangar at Kalaeloa Airport to the federal government for emergency response to catastrophic natural or man-made disasters in the Pacific, with a focus on serving remote locations, including Hawaii and other U.S. interests in the region.

The agreed-upon lease, which has not yet officially commenced, is through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and its Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response and the National Institutes of Health, officials said.

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The frequency of hurricanes and even the 2018 eruption of Kilauea Volcano threaten medical infrastructure across the region, the federal government said.

Hawaii has a disaster medical assistance team for contingencies in the Pacific, and the Kalaeloa plan is seen as providing a forward-

staging area for medical equipment and a stop-off for disaster patients who might be treated in Hawaii or as they make their way to the mainland,

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according to a description of the effort.

Emergency supplies have been stockpiled in Hawaii and Guam for years. An official said the lease of the huge hangar is an extension of those already existing efforts.

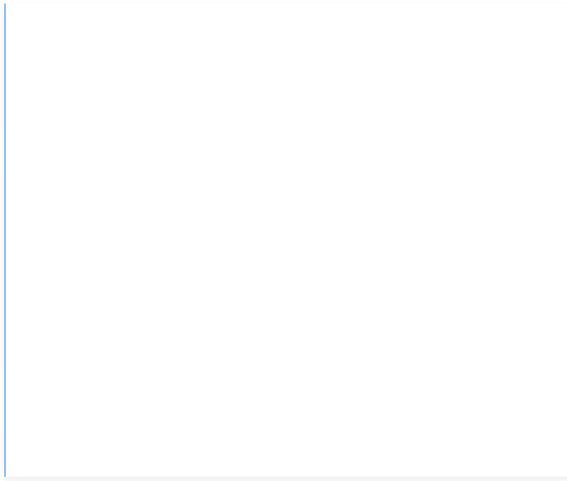
The federal government and state of Hawaii “collaborated and discussed capabilities required to respond to catastrophic natural or manmade disasters,” the state Department of Transportation said in a lease notice. “Key discussions (included) expanding Hawaii’s critical care bed capacity and ability to quickly execute aeromedical operations.”

Kalaeloa Airport and its infrastructure were “deemed a critical location to support public health and medical emergency operations due to its location, isolation, security and airfield capability,” the notice, signed by DOT Director Jade Butay, said.

The use of Hangar 110 “would provide direct access to general aviation operations to conduct federal public health and medical aeromedical operations,” according to the document. Kalaeloa Airport is capable of landing Air Force C-17 cargo planes and equivalent commercial aircraft.

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Treatment could occur on airport grounds. The hangar also would be used for training exercises to prepare for catastrophic emergency responses.

The state notice said the 20-year lease calls for annual rent of \$1.3 million with an initial term of five years and automatic renewal. An official said the facility could be used now in an emergency and is considered to already be at “initial operating capability.”

The big hangar is still undergoing repairs. Once done, the preparedness and response office will use it for training and temporary storage of critical medical equipment. A small cadre will be on-site full and part time to ensure resources moved there are ready for use.

Other staff will occupy the facility intermittently throughout the year for training events. Beds could be stored there, but the site is not considered a field hospital, the federal government said.

According to a Historic American Building Survey, Hangars 110 and 111 were completed in 1942 and are of a similar design.

“They were the first hangars built at the base,” the survey said. “Their size and function make them focal points of the base.”

Barbers Point Naval Air Station was shuttered in 1999. Kalaeloa Airport remains under the control of the state Airports Division. A 2010 DOT report said Hangar 110 is 105,284 square feet and Hangar 111 is 102,270 square feet.

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Some in the flying community are not happy that the state-owned Hangar 110 is being converted from general aviation to disaster preparedness use.

Rob Moore, a retired Air Force colonel who has a plane at Kalaeloa and is a past president of the General Aviation Counsel of Hawaii, said the Federal Aviation Administration provided more

than \$17 million in improvement funds since 2012 to renovate the big hangar.

General aviation, including aircraft storage and maintenance, utilized the hangar, “and they were forced out and at the beginning (the state) said, ‘Once we fix it back up, we’ll get you back in there,’” Moore said. That didn’t happen.

FAA “airport improvement program” funding comes from landing fees, gas taxes, passenger fees and other aviation sources, he said. “So it was aviation-generated money that is not going back to aviation,” Moore said.

Ian Gregor, spokesman for the FAA’s Pacific Division, said the Department of Health and Human Services’ use of Hangar 110 is “considered an allowable aeronautical use.”

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Moore counters that “it’s a tremendous waste” of a hangar at Kalaeloa. “There are other buildings that are empty in the Kalaeloa area” that could have been used near the airfield while maintaining the hangar for general aviation, he said.

“General aviation will not benefit from this at all,” Moore said. “And if they are thinking that C-17s (will be) flying in here carrying patients from Micronesia islands or wherever, that is not general aviation. That is military aviation.”

The adjacent Hangar 111 was leased by the U.S. Department of Education to the University of Hawaii for the sole purpose of having a pilot training center there, Moore said. The program was closed in 2015, and the hangar has sat vacant ever since, he said.

The General Aviation Council of Hawaii supported turning the hangar back to aviation uses, “but for five years they haven’t (decided) on anything,” Moore said.

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