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Hawaii native cherishes life, heritage, Army

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Cilodong, West Java, Republic of Indonesia – A long way from his home on Oahu, a robust figure moves through a crowd of Soldiers and quickly establishes his presence with a trademark “bada-bing, bada-boom.”

Col. Jon Lee, commander, 4960th Multi-Forces Training Brigade, 9th Ready Reserve Command, Fort Shafter Flats, Hawaii has served in the Army for more than 17 years and served as the U.S. co-exercise director for exercise Garuda Shield 07 from April 16-27.

Born and raised in Wailuku, Maui, this Hawaii native, who speaks with a distinguishable New York accent, joined the Army 17 years ago as an infantry officer.

“I love the Army,” Lee said. “I love what it has done for me, and I love working with Soldiers.”

In his 17 years, Lee said he has seen the Army go through many changes, most he said were good, but some he does not agree with.

“It seems as if Soldiers today don’t get second chances. When something goes wrong, they are automatically considered bad Soldiers,” he said. “Sometimes they are really good Soldier who have just made bad decisions.”

Choosing not to dwell on the past, Lee said if that were the case when he was a young Soldier, he would not be where he is today.

“I made a lot of mistakes coming up in the Army. If tolerance was then what it is now, I would not still be in,” he said with a distinguishable booming laugh.

His love of Soldiers and mentorship started when he was still a Reserve Officer’s Training Corps student at the University of Santa Clara, Santa Clara, Calif., where he studied business management.

“ROTC was a great thing, but I decided then I didn’t want to be an officer, but I wanted to be a Non-Commissioned Officer.”

He made that decision because he wanted to be with Soldiers and train and mentor them. He said it took the advice of a “wise and respected” sergeant major to tell him the Army not only needed good NCOs but also good officers.

Since his commissioning as a lieutenant, Lee has traveled the world on various training and real-world missions. He has trained in Australia, Thailand, Republic of the Philippines, Malaysia and the Republic of Indonesia. Lee also served as the chief of operations for Combined Joint Task Force-7 in Iraq in 2003-2004.

“Learning about the different cultures of the world has helped me in life and has made me a better person,” Lee said.

Lee stays true to his Hawaiian heritage, but is quick to say that he is not Hawaiian-American, but American.

“I was taught at a young age to be open to new cultures and views,” he said. “I was also taught to be proud of whom I am and where I come from and the rich culture of the Hawaiian people.”

Those ideas and the sense of pride he is passing to his children. Lee and his wife are raising two boys and two girls.

“I want my children to be proud of who they are,” he said. “Family is the most important thing in the world to me.”

Lee said all of his spare time is dedicated to his family.

This dedicated family man and Soldier said he is always willing to listen and is always willing to give advice.

“Listening is the greatest way to learn,” he said. “I want to learn as much as I can during this life, and I hope I can always bring something to the table with my knowledge.”



Col. Jon Lee, commander, 4960th Multi-Forces Training Brigade, 9th Ready Reserve Command, Fort Shafter Flats, Hawaii briefs (from left to right) U.S. Army Maj. Gen Stephen Tom, deputy commanding general, U.S. Army, Pacific, U.S. Army Lt. Gen. John M. Brown III, USARPAC commanding general, Tentara Nasional Indonesia-Army Division Maj. Gen. M. Noer Muis, 1st Infantry Division, and Command Sgt. Major Joseph Zettelmoyer, USARPAC command sergeant major during exercise Garuda Shield 07, April 16-27, Cilodong, West Java, Republic of Indonesia. Lee is the U.S. co-exercise director. Lee is in Indonesia with U.S. Soldiers from Hawaii, Alaska and Japan. The goals of the Command Post Exercise are to improve capabilities in Peace Support Operations and Civil Military Operations.



Col. Jon Lee, commander, 4960th Multi-Forces Training Brigade, 9th Ready Reserve Command, Fort Shafter Flats, Hawaii, at the opening Ceremony for Exercise Garuda Shield 07 April 16-27, Cilodong, West Java, Republic of Indonesia. Lee is the U.S. co-exercise director. Lee is in Indonesia with U.S. Soldiers from Hawaii, Alaska and Japan. The goals of the Command Post Exercise are to improve capabilities in Peace Support Operations and Civil Military Operations.