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## **Royal Tongan Marines train at Schofield before deployment**

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SCHOFIELD BARRACKS, Hawaii -- A four-man team stacks shoulder to shoulder near a door. One man quickly checks for improvised explosive devices before throwing open the door. The team rushes in, dominating the room and eliminating threats with well-aimed fire.

"One clear," the team leader yells. The others immediately echo their status.

"All clear," the team leader says after all the reports are received. The team stacks again and readies to enter the next room.

This type of training occurs daily at the Shoot House on Schofield Barracks. Yet, today's training had a different twist, as 55 members of the Royal Tongan Marines trained under the tutelage of the U.S. Army, Pacific's 196<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade. The Marines will soon be deploying in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom

"The training we are receiving from the 196<sup>th</sup> Inf. Bde. is very important for our upcoming mission to Iraq," said Tongan Lt. Col. Kuli Fakalolo, commander of the Royal Tongan Marine contingent. "The trainers really did an outstanding job."

The live-fire exercise at the Shoot House was the culmination of more than two weeks of intense training for the Marines. The training started Jan. 14 with weapon familiarization on the M4 Carbine, M249 Squad Automatic Weapon and M203 Grenade Launcher, to name a few.

"I think a lot of the (Marines) enjoyed firing some of the weapons systems they hadn't fired before," said Cpt. Sean Donovan, senior field artillery advisor with 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 196<sup>th</sup> Inf. Bde. and officer in charge of the Royal Tongan Marine mobilization. "They definitely learned a lot from the 'shoot house' and overall, I think it's been an enjoyable experience for both my trainers as well as the Royal Tongan Marines."

"The Marines are really enjoying the training out here," said Tongan 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Siasoi Kiu Tu'ivailahi Kaho, Royal Tongan Marine platoon leader. "It adds on to the knowledge that they already have and makes it better."

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“The Royal Tongan Marines have come a long way as far as progression in their training,” Donovan added. “We’ve seen them in the crawl, walk and run stages, and the training in the Shoot House was excellent for everyone.”

According to Donovan, the 196<sup>th</sup> Inf. Bde. was tasked to provide the Royal Tongan Marines certain pre-deployment training specified by the U.S. State Department.

The trainers made the mission a success, said Donovan. “The trainers are tremendous,” said Donovan. “They are my subject matter experts for everything. They come from various different backgrounds-- infantry, field artillery... A lot of the guys have also deployed so they bring that experience to the table as well.”

The training in Hawaii was the first trip to the United States for many of the Marines. Though the training kept them very busy, they were able to spend some time on Sundays visiting two local churches.

The final step for the Marines was a deployment ceremony at Sills Field Feb. 1. Once in Iraq, the Marines will provide security to forces assigned to Camp Victory.

“I’d like to thank the 196<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade and their instructors for their very good training,” Fakalolo said. “We are going to use the training here to help us during our mission in Iraq.”

“We are going to do a great job over in Iraq,” added Tongan Chief Warrant Officer Samiuela Momo Lolomana’ia, platoon sergeant. “We’re looking forward to setting a new standard for our Marines.”

According to CIA World Fact Book, the Republic of Tonga is a third of the way between New Zealand and Hawaii. Tonga has a population of more than 100,000. Of the 171 Tongan islands, 47 are inhabited, with more than 60 percent in the capital of Tongatapu.

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Note: Low resolution photos with captions on next page are the same as the higher resolution JPG files with Photoshop-embedded captions attached to the email providing this news release.



Marines 11- Staff Sgt. Scott Casey, 196th Inf. Bde. trainer, conducts and after action review with Tongan Cpt. Siaso Lepa Kup Veikune during room-clearing training at Schofield Barracks Jan. 31



Marines 16- Members of the Royal Tongan Marines rush through a door at the "shoot house" during room-clearing training at Schofield Barracks Jan. 31.