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## Hawai'i's War Veterans and Battle Deaths

THE 1990 CENSUS reported that Hawai'i had 119,256 veterans in civilian life, including 87,301 with wartime service. This tally included 132 vets of World War I, 32,551 from World War II, 22,362 who had served in the Korean War, and 41,860 from the Vietnam Conflict. Out of the total, 4,876 had been in two wars and 2,364 in three.<sup>1</sup> (These figures, unlike those that follow, include veterans recruited elsewhere who moved to Hawai'i after their hitches in uniform ended.)

Veterans of interisland and local wars were common in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in Hawai'i, but veterans of U.S. conflicts remained rare until after annexation.<sup>2</sup>

### BEFORE 1900

The Revolutionary War ended only a few years after Captain Cook's voyage, and it is extremely unlikely that any native Hawaiians participated in it. A few early foreign residents conceivably could have been veterans of that war, however. One three-time Island visitor with a claim to such service was John Kendrick, a privateering captain in the Revolution, who accidentally was killed aboard his ship at Honolulu in 1794.<sup>3</sup>

The first Hawai'i-born veteran of a U.S. conflict may have been a son of John Young who apparently served with the U.S. Navy in either

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the War of 1812 or the Barbary Wars of 1815–1816. Charles H. Barnard, an Island visitor in January 1816, quoted the senior Young (a long-time advisor to Kamehameha I) as telling him, “I have a son, who has just returned from the United States, who is a good seaman, and has been on board an armed vessel, fighting for free trade and sailors’ rights.”<sup>4</sup>

Another Island native to serve in the U.S. Navy was George Prince Tamoree, the son of the last king of Kaua’i. Also known as Hume-hume and George Prince Kaumualii, George in October 1816 wrote to his father that he had enlisted at Boston and had been wounded (“in my right side with a boarding pike”) aboard the brig *Enterprise* in its 1813 fight with the *Boxer*. Later, George added, he had served aboard the *Guerrière* at Algiers and Tripoli.<sup>5</sup> According to U.S. Navy records, however, the young prince did not enlist until June 21, 1815, almost twenty-two months after the *Enterprise* captured the *Boxer* and six months after the war with Britain ended; he was discharged March 25, 1816.<sup>6</sup> Although George would thus have missed the War of 1812, his claim to service in the Barbary Wars (March 1815–December 1816) seems credible.<sup>7</sup>

Three native Hawaiians served aboard privateers during the War of 1812: Thomas Hopu, William Kanui, and a brother of the latter. All three left Hawai’i in 1809, and both Thomas and William returned in 1820.<sup>8</sup>

Hawaiian participation in later nineteenth-century U.S. conflicts was still quite limited. Nothing so far has come to light on Islanders serving in the Mexican War. About twenty-five Hawai’i residents (including at least two native Hawaiians) fought with the Union forces in the Civil War; three of them died in battle and one in a Southern prison camp. Although an offer to send Hawaiian volunteers to Cuba during the Spanish-American War was declined by the U.S. government, “several Island boys” were among the troops sent to the Philippines in that conflict.<sup>10</sup>

#### 1900–1949

Approximately 9,800 Hawai’i residents served in World War I, including almost 200 who joined the British armed forces, many prior to the U.S. entry into the war. Of the overall total, 102 died—14 over-

seas during the war, 61 in Hawai'i or North America or after the armistice, and 27 in unknown circumstances. Twenty-two of the 102 recorded deaths occurred among Island residents serving with the British. Actual battle deaths of persons in the U.S. armed forces whose preservice residence was Hawai'i numbered six; seven others were wounded.<sup>11</sup>

Persons from Hawai'i who either were drafted or otherwise enlisted during World War II numbered 36,777. Out of this group, there were 658 battle deaths and 138 nonbattle deaths during the war.<sup>12</sup> These figures exclude nonresident military losses and all civilian deaths suffered in the Pearl Harbor attack. In that action, 2,335 members of the American armed forces, almost all of whom came from other states, and 68 civilians died.

#### 1950 TO THE PRESENT

Personnel with a preservice residence in Hawai'i who served in the Korean conflict were estimated at 25,000.<sup>14</sup> Those killed in battle during that war numbered 403; those with nonmortal wounds, 923. Data for nonbattle deaths by states are unavailable.<sup>15</sup>

There were an estimated 12,970 Islanders who served in the Vietnam Conflict. Among these, deaths from hostile action amounted to 221; all other deaths, to 51.<sup>16</sup>

Through July 31, 1991, a total of 2,839 military personnel whose home state of record was Hawai'i had participated in Persian Gulf War operations. There was one death due to hostile action.<sup>17</sup>

Major American conflicts of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have thus cost the lives of about 1,600 military personnel from Hawai'i. Adding the nonresident and civilian casualties from the Pearl Harbor attack would bring the cumulative total to 4,000 or so. Either way, the number is sizable.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Hawaii State Department of Business, Economic Development & Tourism, *The State of Hawaii Data Book 1992: A Statistical Abstract* (March 1993) 291; Hawaii State Data Center, special tabulation of 1990 census tapes.

<sup>2</sup> Kenneth P. Emory, "Warfare," in E. S. Craighill Handy et al., *Ancient Hawaiian Civilization*, revised ed. (Rutland, Vt.: Charles E. Tuttle Co., 1965) 233.

- <sup>3</sup> A. Grove Day, *History Makers of Hawaii* (Honolulu: Mutual Publishing of Honolulu, 1984) 76.
- <sup>4</sup> *A Narrative of the Sufferings and Adventures of Capt. Charles H. Barnard in a Voyage Round the World during the Years 1812, 1813, 1814, 1815 & 1816 . . .* (New York: J. Lindon for the author, 1829) 233; Robert C. Schmitt and Ronn Ronck, *Firsts and Almost Firsts in Hawai'i* (Honolulu: U of Hawai'i P, 1995) 152–53.
- <sup>5</sup> Ethel M. Damon, ed., "George Prince Kaumualii," *55th Annual Report, HHS, 1946*: 7–12.
- <sup>6</sup> Pai Palapala, "Naval Service of George P. Kaumualii," *PP* June 1940: 16.
- <sup>7</sup> Jack Sweetman, *American Naval History*, 2nd ed. (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1991) 32, 38, 39.
- <sup>8</sup> Day, *History Makers* 53.
- <sup>9</sup> *F* April 1865: 30; *13th Annual Report, HMCS, June 17, 1865*: 11–12; "Hawaii's Contribution to the War for the Union," *Hawaiian Monthly* Jan. 1884: 2–4; Ethel M. Damon, "Punahou Volunteers of 1863," *F* April 1941: 67; Susan N. Bell, *Unforgettable True Stories of the Kingdom of Hawaii* (Pearl City: Press Pacifica, 1986) 95–97; Bob Dye, "'We are all Unionists out here,'" *HA* July 3, 1994: B1.
- <sup>10</sup> *46th Annual Report, HMCS, July 2, 1898*: 20; *47th Annual Report, June 3, 1899*: 16; Thomas A. Bailey, "The United States and Hawaii During the Spanish-American War," *American Historical Review* 36 (April 1931): 556.
- <sup>11</sup> Ralph S. Kuykendall, *Hawaii in the World War* (Honolulu: Historical Commission of the Territory of Hawaii, 1928) xvii–xix, 90; Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense, Comptroller (Systems Policy & Information), letter to Schmitt dated Nov. 2, 1973.
- <sup>12</sup> *Hawaii-Alaska Statehood. Hearings Before the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, House of Representatives . . . 1955* 298–99; Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense, Comptroller (Systems Policy & Information), letter to Schmitt.
- <sup>13</sup> Robert C. Schmitt, "Catastrophic Mortality in Hawai'i," *HJH* 3 (1969): 79.
- <sup>14</sup> Report dated April 20, 1955, cited in U.S. Department of Defense, Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, letter to Glenn K. Ifuku, June 18, 1996.
- <sup>15</sup> Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense, Comptroller (Systems Policy & Information), letter to Schmitt.
- <sup>16</sup> Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense, Comptroller (Systems Policy & Information), letter to Schmitt; Hawaii State Department of Planning and Economic Development, *Military Personnel and Dependents in Hawaii, July 1977* (Statistical Report 120, Sept. 9, 1977), table 6. Note the change in terminology at this time, from "battle deaths" to "hostile deaths"; this change reflects modifications in the treatment of certain war death categories for more recent conflicts.
- <sup>17</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, Washington Headquarters Services, letter to Ifuku; *HA* Feb. 19, 1991: A3.