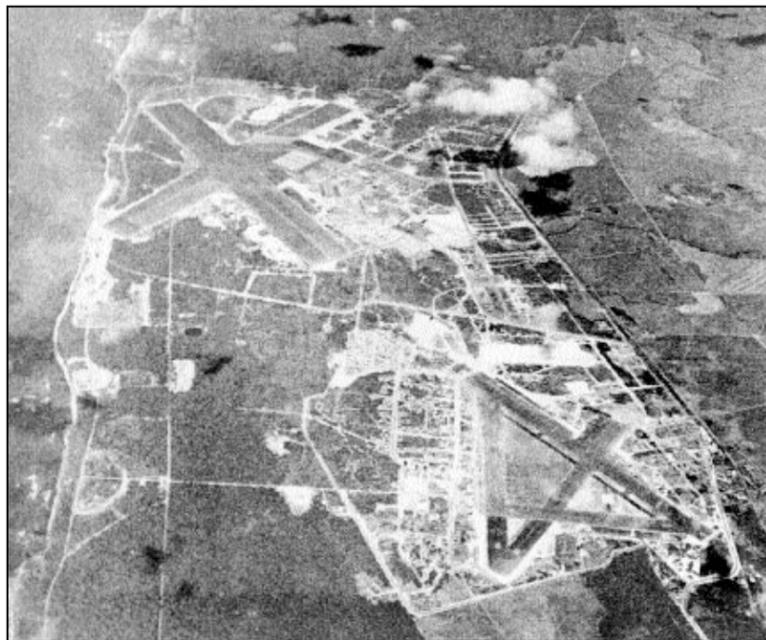




A rich history ...



NAS Barbers Point historical photo



NAS Barbers Point historical photo

An aerial view (left) of Naval Air Station Barbers Point (bottom right of photo) and the air strip from the old Ewa Marine Corps Air Station, as they appeared in 1953. A ground crewman waves off a plane (above) during a touch and go exercise in May 1945.

Compiled by NAS Barbers Point Public Affairs

With more than 3,800 acres and up to 6,500 military, family members and civilian employees, Naval Air Station (NAS) Barbers Point served as the largest naval air station in the Pacific theater.

Barbers Point provided homeport services for numerous naval and defense organizations, including maritime surveillance and anti-submarine warfare aircraft squadrons, a U.S. Coast Guard Air Station, Defense Investigative Service, Defense Reutilization and Marketing Office (DRMO), a Hawaii Air National Guard (297th Air Traffic Control Squadron) air traffic control facility, Fleet Imaging Facility and Commander, Patrol Wings, U.S. Pacific Fleet.

The Tale of Captain Barber

The Barbers Point tale first emerged from vintage Pacific lore, when a vicious tropical depression battered the southwest coastline of Oahu. Captain Henry Barber, determined to get underway despite the storm, hoisted anchor on his 100-foot brig Arthur on October 31, 1796. All other captains held their ships in port while Arthur was deluged by wind, rain and pounding surf.

The ship went down taking with it all but six crewmembers and its captain. The seven survivors struggled ashore near a tract of land referred to by native Hawaiians as "Kalaeloa" (long cape or headland), a legendary birthplace of Hawaiian Kings. Kalaeloa later became known as Barbers Point.

Beginnings and Development

In the early 1930's, the Navy leased a 3,000 square foot piece of land from the estate of James Campbell. This tract was to be used as a mooring location for the dirigible, Akron. Once the original lease expired in 1940, the Navy purchased more than 3,500 acres from Campbell Estate. This purchase laid the groundwork for the Ewa Marine Corps Air Station, which later became Naval Air Station, Barbers Point. The site,

chosen for its ideal peacetime air training atmosphere, was completed in early 1941. Concurrently with the groundbreaking, plans were already being developed for an expansion of naval aviation facilities at Barbers Point.

Base construction was well underway by Dec. 7, 1941, when the Japanese attacked U.S. forces in Hawaii, marking the United States' entrance into World War II. Although much of the attack was concentrated at Pearl Harbor, Wheeler Air Force Base and Hickam Field, the Ewa Marine Corps Air Station (and its supporting equipment) sustained a great deal of damage. Nine of 11 total Wildcats, 19 of 32 scout bombers and all six utility aircraft were rendered inoperable.

The Pearl Harbor attack, along with the increasing need for additional facilities to train pilots, led to an extensive construction project. As World War II raged in the Pacific theater, the troop and equipment capacity of the yet unfinished base more than doubled.

NAS Barbers Point, only partially completed, was commissioned on April 15, 1942. Cmdr. H.F. MacComsey assumed command with a staff of 14 officers and 242 enlisted men.

As World War II neared an end, the station grew to more than 4,000 personnel, and after Armistice in 1945, NAS Barbers Point became a rapid demobilization center. More than 6,000 personnel transitioned through NAS Barbers Point en route to leaving the military.

By the end of 1947, the future of the station was uncertain in the face of post-war budget constraints. However, the role of NAS Barbers Point was solidified in 1949 when it began supporting all aviation operations on leeward Oahu. In addition, the Ewa Marine Corps Air Station was incorporated into the NAS boundaries.

When the war in Korea began in 1951, NAS Barbers Point again became a critical staging area for supplies, equipment and forward deploying squadrons. Eight hundred additional Sailors were assigned to the station. New construction included weapons and jet engine test sites, a survival equipment shop and more than 1,000 housing units. With state of the art equipment and facilities, NAS Barbers Point was one of the most modern VP homeports in the world. By the end of the Korean War, NAS had made a name for itself by fully meeting the support challenges it faced.

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Home of the "Rainbow Fleet"

Patrol Squadron Six (VP-6) transferred to NAS Barbers Point from NAS Whidbey Island, Wash. in 1950, bringing the first Neptune Aircraft to the islands. Operational tempo increased with VP-6's arrival, and other maritime patrol squadrons lined up to move to NAS Barbers Point, including VP-1, VP-9, VP-17, VP-22 and VP-47.

In 1956, Airborne Early Warning Squadron Two transferred to the station to extend the continental air defense DEW (distant early warning) line across the Pacific Ocean. Other early tenant commands included

Airborne Early Warning Wing Pacific, Commander, Barrier Force Pacific, Commander, Fleet Air Hawaii, and Fleet Wing Two.

Fleet Wing Two, redesignated as Commander, Patrol Wing Two, assumed operational control of the Barbers Point-based patrol squadrons when Fleet Air Hawaii decommissioned in 1973. Today,

Commander Patrol and Reconnaissance Forces, U.S. Pacific Fleet (formerly Commander, Patrol Wings, Pacific) provides operational development and maintenance of patrol squadron combat readiness.

While NAS Barbers Point was primarily a patrol squadron support community, it also hosted an ever-changing mix of squadrons and activities. Helicopter Antisubmarine Squadron (Light) 37 (HSL-37), the Navy's only helicopter squadron in Hawaii, reinforces the antisubmarine and anti-ship missile defense of the naval surface forces. The squadron's SH-60B Seahawks also provide vertical replenishment, medical evacuation and personnel transfer to ships throughout the Pacific. Detachments from the squadron are regularly assigned to destroyers deploying throughout the Pacific theater.

Other tenant squadrons included Fleet Tactical Support Squadron One (later redesignated Fleet Composite Squadron One), Fleet Air Reconnaissance Squadron Three, and Patrol Squadron Special Projects Unit Two (VPU-2).

In addition to Naval aviation

squadrons, NAS Barbers Point hosts the Coast Guard, which has been part of the station as a Coast Guard Air Facility since 1949. The facility was designated Coast Guard Air Station Barbers Point in 1965 and is the only Coast Guard aviation unit located in the 14th Coast Guard District. Their C-130 Hercules aircraft and H-65 Dolphin helicopters perform search and rescue missions within the central Pacific maritime region. Aircraft also conduct water pollution patrols in the Hawaiian Islands.

Transient aircraft from all branches of the Armed Forces flew to NAS Barbers Point for military exercises, including Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC), a biennial multi-nation combined arms exercise. Aircraft also used the station as a refueling stop en route to Pacific and Indian Oceans.

For more than half a century, NAS Barbers Point has been the pride of the Pacific, and home of the "Rainbow Fleet." The closure of NAS Barbers Point writes the final chapter in a distinguished history, and closes the book on the finest air station in the western hemisphere.



NAS Barbers Point historical photos

During its 57 year history, Naval Air Station Barbers Point provided support to countless naval aviation squadrons.

The Barbers Point Commissary (left) had its beginnings in a quonset hut in the 1940's.

