

Hawaiian Natives File UXO-Related Lawsuit Against Army

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Honolulu, Hawaii A lawsuit has been filed against the U.S. Army alleging violation of a 2001 court settlement. The settlement granted the native Hawaiian group Malama Makua limited access to sacred sites of Makua Valley, an area used for decades of military training.

Attorneys for the environmental law organization Earthjustice filed the lawsuit in federal court in Honolulu to protest a "blanket ban" in 2014 by the Army calling for a clearance from historic preservations to cut grass on trails leading to the cultural sites, an effort to insure any UXO in the area would be avoided. Then, in September 2015, the Army obtained a grass-cutting agreement but called for an investigation of an accident in which two contractors who were cutting grass for military training in April 2015 were injured by exploding UXO.

There was a partial lift of the ban in November 2015. At that time, the Army allowed access to a few locations, including a paved parking area, a pavilion and alters constructed to celebrate the Makahiki season. These areas, however, are not cultural sites, and the Army allegedly continues to block access to sacred sites including temples and shrines.