

Inouye comes through

Ed. Hon. S-B 9/1/93

THE Pacific Missile Range Facility on Kauai has found a powerful friend. The facility could be endangered in the next round of military base closings. The Military Affairs Council of the Chamber of Commerce of Hawaii has expressed concern that the facility might be closed and its functions taken over by a facility at Point Mugu, Calif.

But Sen. Daniel Inouye has come to the base's defense. Inouye has written to Navy Secretary John Dalton citing the value of the facility and urging the Navy to expand operations there. He asked that the Navy terminate a study into the possibility of closing the base by 1995.

In his letter, Inouye said services provided by the base and its "superior record as a training, research, development, test and evaluation range clearly support the expansion of its workload and responsibility." The senator has also suggested moving Coast Guard operations from Barbers Point Naval Air Station, which will be closed, to the Kauai base as a way to diversify operations there.

When it comes to such issues, Inouye is a valuable person to have on your side. One of the most respected members of the Senate, especially on military matters, he is chairman of the Defense Subcommittee of the Senate Appropriations Committee. That gives him a very large say on which military projects receive funding. The secretary of the Navy is likely to read a letter from the senator very carefully.

As the Chamber of Commerce points out, the fate of much of the military establishment in Hawaii could be tied to the Pacific Missile Range Facility. It is used primarily by submarines and surface ships. If the range was closed, these vessels might be transferred from Pearl Harbor to West Coast ports closer to training facilities. This in turn would affect the Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard, one of Hawaii's largest employers.

Keeping the Kauai range facility open should be a high priority for Hawaii's congressional delegation, but only Inouye has taken notice of the threat. Rep. Neil Abercrombie wants to take over Bellows Air Force Station. Sen. Daniel Akaka and Rep. Patsy Mink seem to have other interests. But with tourism in a slump and sugar declining, Hawaii can ill afford to lose