

Hawaii-Based 25th Infantry Division Welcomes New Commander

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The U.S. Army's 25th Infantry Division, headquartered at Schofield Barracks in Hawaii, has officially transitioned to new leadership. On Monday, Maj. Gen. Marcus Evans transferred command to Maj. Gen. James Bartholomees, during a rain-soaked ceremony on base, highlighted a new chapter for one of the Army's most strategically positioned units in the Indo-Pacific region.

Bartholomees returns to familiar ground. He previously served with the division as a battalion commander more than a decade ago, helping launch the Army's sole jungle warfare school in the U.S. program that remains active at Schofield Barracks and continues to train elite units for operations in tropical environments.

In his remarks, First Corps commander Lt. Gen. Matthew McFarlane commended Evans' leadership. "General Evans guided the 25th through major transformation efforts, ensuring the division remained ready while embracing innovation and modernisation," McFarlane said.

Under Evans, the 25th Infantry Division tested new equipment and operational concepts tailored for the Indo-Pacific theatre. This includes faster, more agile vehicles, enhanced drone systems, and advanced battlefield communications. These tools were recently put to the test in a joint training mission with Philippine forces, where U.S. soldiers operated in challenging terrain and weather conditions.

"The smaller and faster we are, the better we move and the harder we are to detect," Evans explained during his tenure. "Speed and concealment are our edge, especially in terrain like northern Luzon."

Bartholomees, in an interview with the *Honolulu Star-Advertiser*, praised the division's evolution and stressed the importance of continuing its mission in the Pacific. He is expected to attend a high-level Land Forces Command conference in the Philippines this week, aimed at strengthening military cooperation.

The 25th Infantry Division's growing regional presence includes regular deployments across Southeast Asia. Current training exercises in Malaysia under Operation Keris Strike 25 are further strengthening interoperability with regional partners such as Australia and Malaysia.

Despite ongoing debate in Washington over the Army's role in the Pacific—a region often dominated by naval and air strategy Army leaders are increasingly asserting the necessity of land forces. "Ultimately, every mission touches ground, whether resupplying ships, supporting aircraft, or launching assets into space," Evans noted.

The division's recent history includes deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan, particularly during the 2007 troop surge. Today, its focus is shifting toward preparing for large-scale,

high-intensity conflict with peer adversaries. That preparation, however, does not exclude the kind of instability still common in the region. From civil strife in Myanmar to cross-border violence in Cambodia and Thailand, regional flashpoints persist.

Bartholomees underscored that readiness for high-end combat remains key. “What we’ve learned is that training for major warfighting prepares soldiers best for any contingency, whether it’s peacekeeping, disaster response, or humanitarian aid,” he said.

That outlook is shaping how the division works with foreign governments and their armed forces. Gen. Romeo Brawner, head of the Philippine military and a graduate of Hawaii’s Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies, has requested U.S. assistance in improving disaster response capabilities. Brawner has long-standing ties with American military officials in Hawaii, reinforcing the division’s value as a bridge between allies.

Domestically, the 25th also faces scrutiny over its use of state-owned land in Hawaii. The Army is seeking to renew leases originally acquired in 1964, but its environmental impact assessments were recently rejected by the Hawaii Board of Land and Natural Resources. This has intensified calls for the military to demonstrate tangible benefits to the local community.

Bartholomees acknowledged this in his remarks, stating, “Our success relies just as much on our relationship with local communities as it does on what happens within our installations. It’s my duty as a senior commander to maintain that connection.”

As the U.S. defense strategy pivots toward the Pacific, the 25th Infantry Division remains central to projecting American land power in the region. With a new commander at the helm, the division continues to prepare for whatever challenges may arise, whether in times of war, peace, or humanitarian crisis.