



Centennial of the Hawaii Naval Militia

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Hawaii World War One Centennial Task Force

As the United States prepares to commemorate the Centennial of World War One, we look back a century ago to a moment in history when America was a declared neutral as war waged in the European and Pacific Theaters. Although neutral, the United States prudently improved its defense capabilities. The Territory of Hawaii, along with the rest of the nation, took steps to ensure preparedness for war, if it came. During this time, Hawaii stood up its own Naval force, the Hawaii Naval Militia, under the Command of the Territorial Adjutant General as a Territorial military force alongside the National Guard of Hawaii.

The Act to provide a Naval Militia for the Territory of Hawaii was approved by the Governor on April 23, 1915, and recruiting commenced in November of the same year. The Hawaii Naval Militia made its first public appearance on Memorial Day, May 30, 1916. At that time, the Hawaii Naval Militia numbered 100 enlisted and eight officers and had its initial headquarters in the Queen's Bungalow on the Palace grounds, with hopes for moving the Hawaii Naval Militia to Naval Station at Pearl Harbor, a move which Rear Admiral Clifford J. Boush, Commander of the Pacific Fleet, had expressed his support. In September 1916 Hawaii's Naval Militia, was preparing for its first practice cruise aboard the Navy's first class cruiser, USS Saint Louis (C-20).

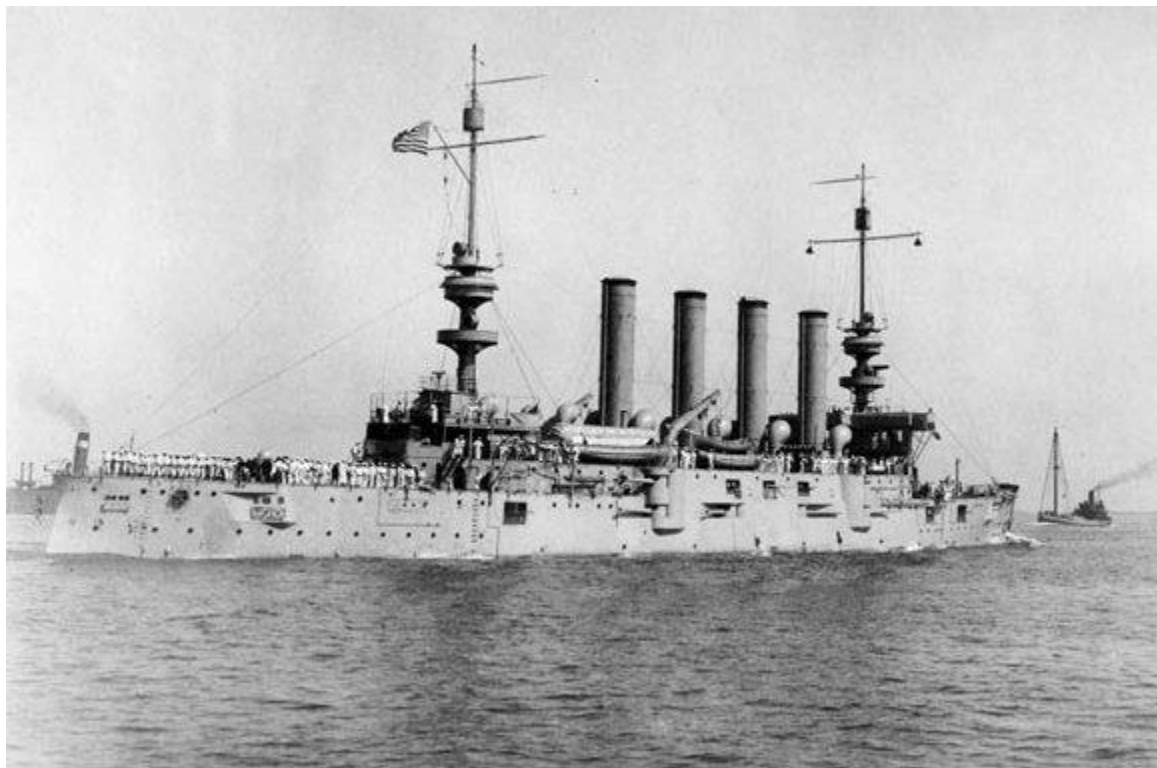
The U.S. Navy provided assistance in training the Naval Militia to achieve proficiency to serve as a reserve for the Navy in time of need. The U.S. Navy appointed Lieutenant Commander Victor S. Houston, a line officer and one of Hawaii's Annapolis graduates, to serve as Inspector-Instructor of the Hawaii Naval Militia. LCDR Houston, who in later years would be Hawaii's delegate to the U.S. Congress, was then the Commanding Officer of the USS St. Louis. LCDR Houston was seconded by the Navy to the Militia, and in this capacity, LCDR Houston was authorized to detail officers already under his command on the USS St. Louis to assist him in this task.

September 14, 2016 is the Centennial anniversary of the first cruise of the Hawaii Territorial Naval Militia. Seven Officers and seventy-six Sailors of the Naval Militia, under the Command of Ensign W. H. Stroud Hawaii Naval Militia, embarked on the USS St. Louis on September 14, 1916, and trained under the instruction of its Captain, LCDR Houston. The concept for the cruise was to consider the Naval Militiamen as an addition to the ship's complement, and to train them in emergency and battle drills. In fact, the Hawaii Naval Militiamen's training included Fire Drills; Battery Drills, Infantry Drills, Collision Drill, Abandon Ship Drills, General Quarters, Fire and Rescue Parties, Man Overboard, and inspection. The cruise included port calls at Waimea Kauai, Lahaina Maui, Kealahou Bay Hawaii, Hilo Hawaii, and returning to Honolulu on 26 September 1916, after sailing 886 nautical miles.

Brigadier General Samuel I. Johnson, Commanding General of the 1st Hawaiian Brigade, and simultaneously the Hawaii Adjutant General, accompanied the “citizen sailors” on the cruise and wrote of their performance:

“The men did their work with a will and showed great adaptability under conditions that were totally new to them. The officers and petty officer took hold splendidly, and in a remarkably short time, the Naval Militiamen had fitted into their allotted places...I see a great future in store for the Naval Militia of Hawaii.”

In his official report to the Department of the Navy on the performance of the Hawaii Naval Militia, USS St. Louis’ Executive Officer, Lieut. R. L. Stover, commended the detachment for their progress in training and recommended twelve Naval Militiamen for promotion.



*Photo 1: USS St. Louis, First Class Cruiser No. 20, assigned as tender to Third Submarine Division, Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor.
Photo source: www.navysource.org*

When the United States declared war on the Central Powers, the Hawaii Naval Militia was almost immediately called into service, and nearly half (7 officers and 43 enlisted) were brought into the Navy on active duty. These men were assigned to serve aboard the USS St. Louis, which departed Honolulu just 72 hours after the Congressional Declaration of War. The Hawaii Naval Militia Officers and Sailors served on the St. Louis for the duration of the War, except for LCDR S. W. Tay, who was given command of his own ship in the Mediterranean during the War.



Photo 2: Members of the Hawaii Naval Militia at an Atlantic Port. Photo Source, Honolulu Star Bulletin, September 15, 1917, p. 6.

The story of the Hawaii Naval Militia is exemplary of the lost military history of Hawaii during the Great War. Governor Ige has stood up the Hawaii World War One Centennial Task Force (HI WWI CTF) to plan the commemoration of Hawaii's experiences in the Great War. The mission of the HI WWI CTF is to "Honor and remember Hawaii's military veterans who served during the Great War, to educate Hawaii on our local contributions to the War effort, and to help facilitate grass-roots Centennial commemorations."

There are many intriguing stories of service, sacrifice, patriotism and duty that must be uncovered and preserved for future generations. Uncovering and sharing these stories is an activity we can all support.

For more information on Hawaii's World War One Centennial Commemoration, and how you can participate, go to <http://worldwar1centennial.org/HI>

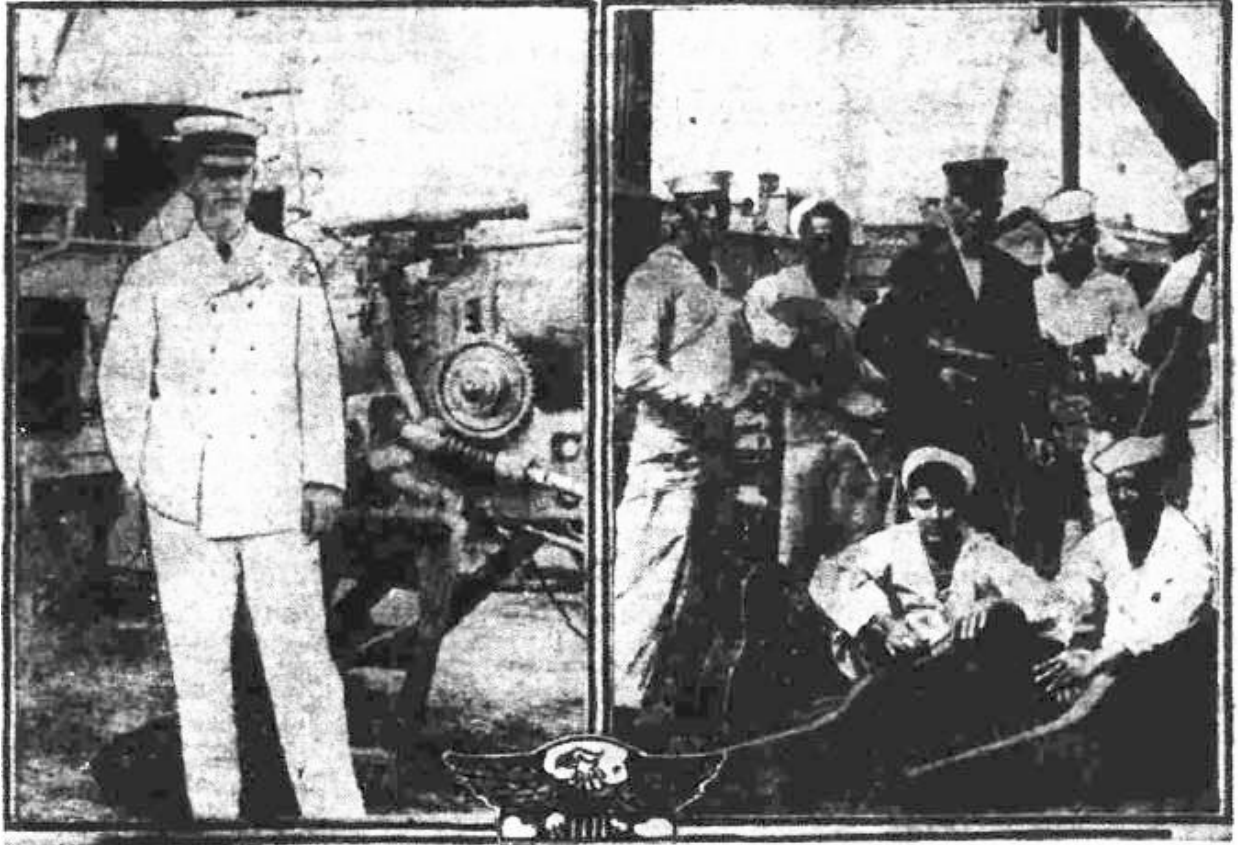
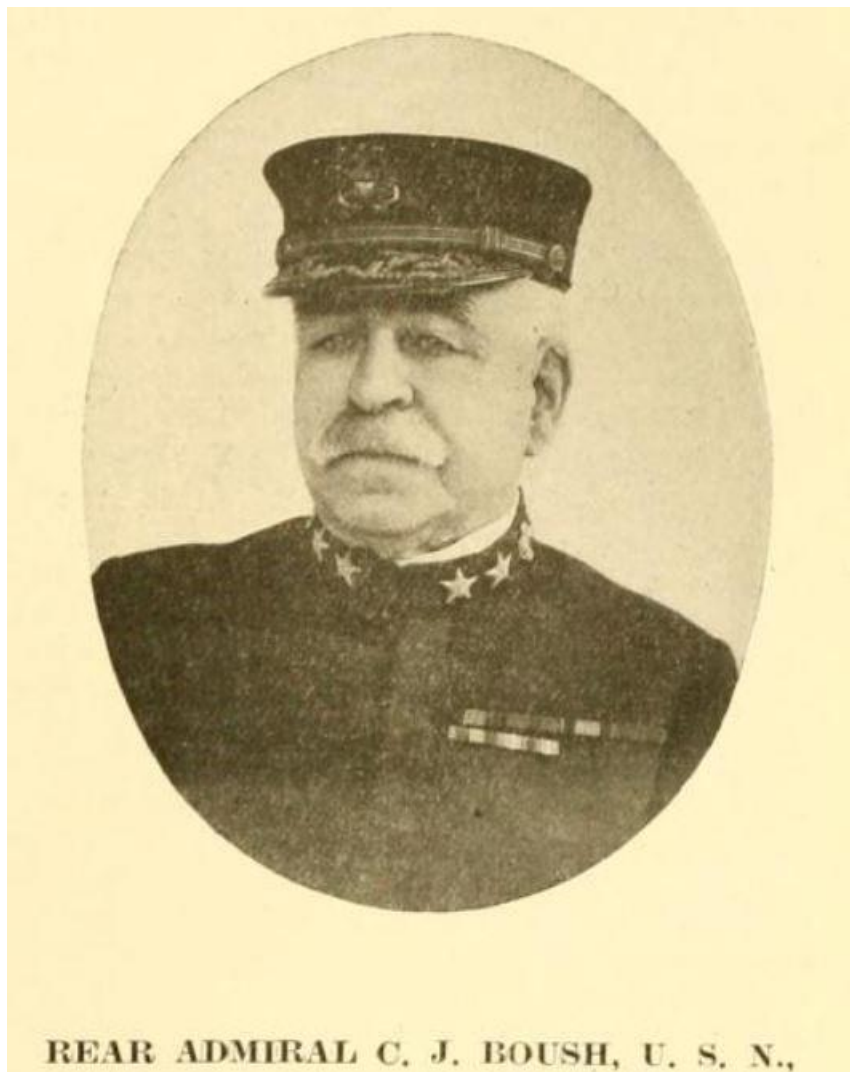


Photo 3: Hawaii Naval Militia Officers and men aboard the USS St. Louis during a follow-on cruise Dec 1916. Photo Source Honolulu Star-Bulletin, December 21, 1917



REAR ADMIRAL C. J. BOUSH, U. S. N.,

Photo 4: RADM C. J. Boush, Commander U.S. Pacific Fleet. Photo Source: New Hampshire History Blog, <http://www.cowhampshireblog.com>