



ISLAND MATTERS *Mufi Hannemann*

A Poipourri Of Current Island Topics

Missile Defense

In my last column, I recounted that Adm. Harry B. Harris Jr., commander of our Pacific military forces, had testified that Hawaii was unprotected from any potential missile attack by the belligerent North Koreans, or any other possible enemy, for that matter.

Riki Ellison, a former NFL football great and head of the Missile Defense Advocacy Alliance, took up his call for a stronger anti-missile defense. Ellison, to his credit, has been making the rounds locally meeting with government, tourism and community

leaders, especially on Kauai, to educate folks and share his concerns on the threats from North Korea.

And so it was good to hear that U.S. Sen. Brian Schatz has raised the banner, joining in a bipartisan effort with colleagues from Alaska, Texas, Michigan, Arkansas, West Virginia and Florida in introducing legislation called the Advancing America's Missile Defense Act of 2017.

According to Schatz, "This bill will help improve our ability to defend Hawaii, Alaska and the U.S. mainland against a North Korean ballistic missile threat. While we take this extra

step to strengthen our defense capacities, we must continue to explore every diplomatic avenue to hold North Korea to its international commitments and stop its unlawful pursuit of a nuclear-capable ballistic missile."

Among other things, the proposal pushes for an integrated missile defense system and would ramp up the development, testing and deployment of interceptor technologies.

While we continue our diplomatic efforts to restore calm to the Korean situation, it behooves us to prepare ourselves should they fail and tensions escalate.

More than ever, we need to be equipped, and it's better to be safe than sorry.

Hats off to Adm. Harris and Ellison for sounding the alarm loudly and consistently.

Honolulu Zoo

The only thing that's not confined at the Honolulu Zoo seems to be the bad news.

We just learned that the zoo just this month began the search for a new director, a full six months after the departure of yet another chief, the fifth in seven years. Last weekend, a chimpanzee escaped briefly from an exhibit that apparently is in need of repair or modifi-

cation. All that comes on the heels of a loss of accreditation by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums, a closed hippo exhibit, and a closed reptile and amphibian home.

If that weren't enough, during the period in question there have been five directors of Enterprise Services, the agency that oversees the zoo, and four executive directors of Honolulu Zoo Society, the zoo's nonprofit supporter.

Why Honolulu Zoo is not more of a priority of the city administration is incomprehensible. Despite the spate of problems at this venerable island institution, the zoo does

not seem to command the attention it deserves. The result is what we're seeing today.

Every mayor that I can remember when I first visited the zoo as a keiki paid attention to the zoo, and although things may not have been perfect, the situation never was this bad. During my term as mayor of Honolulu, we continued the public investments that had been made in prior years and introduced new ones, including the veterinary clinic, keiki zoo, orangutan exhibit, new entrance, elephant exhibit, and learning center. And the threat of a loss of accreditation never

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What A Zoo!

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loomed during this time.

Waikiki City Councilman Trevor Ozawa has been front-and-center on the matter, having organized a working group two years ago, when the zoo problems were going unresolved. A member of Honolulu Zoo Society and an annual pass member with his wife Nietzsche and 2-year-old daughter London, he backed a charter amendment that set aside 1 percent of real property taxes to the zoo, and he's continued to exercise legislative oversight on its operations. Despite this groundwork, he's correct in his assessment that the administration is demonstrating a "lack of urgency" when it comes to the operation of the zoo.

Honolulu Zoo is a beloved attraction for residents and visitors alike. It is a popular destination for tourists, school-children and so many others. It must be fixed, now. Among visitor industry stakeholders in Waikiki, it's not a place that is highly recommended anymore to anyone, be they locals or tourists, given the spate of negative reports and adverse publicity. The status quo is totally unacceptable and if the city administration is unable or unwilling to provide the leadership the zoo demands, then they need to make room for new solutions.

I believe it's time to seriously consider ushering in a public-private partnership that Ozawa strongly supports to run the operation. At the very least, it might infuse the city with the energy and ideas it sorely lacks in dealing with the many challenges of this cherished part of our history.

Team Aloha

There was another successful finish at the Adidas Gauntlet



The author poses with Team Aloha players and staff recently upon their return to Honolulu from a tourney in Phoenix

PHOTO FROM MUFI HANNEMANN

ladies hoops tournament held in Phoenix, Arizona, by the 11th edition of Team Aloha, comprised of 10 scholar-athletes from the ILH, BIIF and the OIA. They came so close to winning the title, falling by 2 points in a nail-biter in overtime to a talented team from Dallas, Texas, 42-40, in a contest that could have gone either way, if a couple of controversial officiating calls had gone their way.

On the way to the championship tilt, they disposed of teams from Southern California, Oregon, Texas and Arizona quite handily, and impressed spectators and college scouts with their cerebral approach to basketball, hustling style of play and sportsmanship.

Scouts were particularly impressed with 6-foot-2 post Bella Cravens of Maryknoll, and State Player of the Year from Division I state champion Konawaena, guard Cherylyn Molina. Also drawing rave reviews were Maryknoll's Kamalu Kamakawiwoole and Chayse Milne, Kamehameha Kapalama's Kalina Obrey and Konawaena's Mikayla Tablit and freshman Caiyle Kaupu. Other contributing members of the team included Gieani Balino of Campbell, Kodee Viena of Maryknoll, and Mid-Pacific

Institute's Brilie Kovaloff. The team was skippered this year by former UH Rainbow Wahine basketball coach and currently Kaiser High School vice principal Dana Takahara-Dias. Also on the staff was MPI head

coach Sherice Ajifu.

Kahele Point

I was over on the Big Island recently, and joined with government and community leaders to witness and participate

in the dedication ceremony of Kahele Point, named in memory of the beloved late state Sen. Gil Kahele, at the oceanfront dock of Grand Naniloa Hotel.

Ed Bushor, CEO of Tower Development, which redeveloped the Naniloa property (which was the subject of a previous Island Matters column), worked collaboratively with the Kahele family, in particular state Sen. Kai Kahele, who replaced his dad in office and is fast becoming a force in the Senate, and former Mayor Billy Kenoi, to bring this project to fruition.

The late Sen. Kahele was a highly respected, soft-spoken community servant through the years, who championed the redevelopment of Hilo's Banyan Drive.

Being the Yankees fan that I am, the first impression I had when I saw the narrative plaque of Kahele up close is that it resembled what I saw on television of the plaque to New York legend Derek Jeter ensconced in Monument Park in Yankee Stadium — a credit to Bushor, who meticulously researched the subject matter to ensure that this lasting tribute was of the highest quality. Besides the plaque, fishing stands and keiki fishing poles are part of the tribute to Kahele to underscore his affinity for the ocean.

Next time you are in Hilo, after popping in for a meal at Ken's House of Pancakes, go check it out ...

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