



PREPARING TO SOAR

Vintage warbirds move to Wheeler Army Airfield for the 75th end-of-WWII aerial parades

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Some of the airpower stars of World War II landed at Wheeler Army Airfield on Thursday, coming in from the Waianae Range side to touch down at the historic airport in preparation for three aerial parades in honor of the 75th anniversary of the end of World War II.

A Grumman FM2 Wildcat — a type of carrier and land-based fighter flown by the U.S. Navy and Marines in battles such as Guadalcanal, the Coral Sea, Midway and the Solomons — was the first to arrive just before 10 a.m.

After that came a P-51 Mustang, famous as a long-range, high-altitude bomber escort, followed by more than a dozen others.

Three “Legacy of Peace” aerial parades to celebrate the service and honor the sacrifice of WWII veterans will be visible to residents around Oahu on Saturday, Sunday and Wednesday. The warbirds are being staged out of Wheeler.

The flights will feature 17 vintage aircraft — 14 that were carried on the Navy amphibious assault ship USS Essex and three that are in Hawaii, the 75th World War II Commemoration Committee in Hawaii said.

The times of the weekend flyovers was moved up to 10 to 11 a.m.

The first batch on Saturday will fly from Wheeler over Waipahu, the Pearl Harbor/Aiea area, then will follow a path toward the south shore. Heading north from there, the warbirds will fly along the windward side, around the north shore and by old Haleiwa Airfield.

The second aerial parade on Sunday will head from Wheeler to Haleiwa Airfield and Kaena Point, then along the west side of Oahu, returning above Pearl Harbor and Ford Island.

Aircraft route maps with projected times are available at 75thwwiicommemoration.org.

It could take as many as 40 minutes for the last



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Warbirds commemorating the 75th anniversary of the end of World War II converged Thursday on Wheeler Army Airfield. At left, Capt. Dan Hill in front of his T-28 Trojan aircraft. Above, Lady Alice, a P-51 Mustang flown by Kendall Wagner, sits with other fighting aircraft. At top, a B-25 Mitchell owned by David Prescott flew past the Amelia Earhart Hangar at the airfield.

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aircraft, two Stearman bi-planes, to pass by, officials said.

The list includes a B-25 bomber, two PBY Catalina flying boats, an SNJ/AT-6 Texan, four AT-6 Texans, an FM2 Wildcat, a F8F Bearcat, two Stearman biplanes, a TBM Avenger, two P-51 Mustangs, a T-28 Trojan and a Globe Swift.

Wheeler, now a helicopter base and the staging area for the flyovers, has its own important history: On Dec. 7, 1941, more than 35 men were killed there by attacking Japanese planes. An open house for the public to see the warbirds was canceled due to the coronavirus.

Wednesday's anniversary of Japan's formal surrender on the battleship Missouri on Sept. 2, 1945, is the main event, starting just after 8 a.m., with attendance on the fantail expected by 15 or more World War II veterans who live in Hawaii; Defense Secretary Mark Esper; Adm. Phil Davidson, head of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command; and Gov. David Ige.

The final flyover that day will begin at Wheeler just after 7 a.m. on a path toward Haleiwa Airfield, then along the west coast of Oahu. Turning inland, the Warbirds will fly over the Battleship Missouri Memorial starting at 8:10 a.m.

A "missing man" formation of F-22 Raptors is expected at the conclusion



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David Prescott, middle, owner and pilot of the B-25 Mitchell, was flanked by Lt. Col. Adam Hallmark and son Gavin Prescott on Thursday at Wheeler Army Airfield. Hallmark's relative, 1st Lt. Dean Hallmark, was a pilot who lost his life during the Doolittle Raid in 1942. At left, Lady Alice, a P-51 Mustang piloted by Kendall Wagner, lands at the airfield.

of the event.

Esper spoke at the Daniel K. Inouye Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies on Wednesday in Honolulu, contrasting America's victory in the Pacific in World War II with an erosion of the ideals established by America since then.

"When we reflect on the sacrifices of the greatest generation, we are reminded that together, America and its allies delivered victory for freedom and built an international order that has

brought prosperity and security to the globe for more than seven decades," Esper said.

He added that, "Today, regrettably, that free and open system is under duress," in a reference to China's advances.

Esper said America's robust network of allies and partners "remains the enduring asymmetric advantage we have over near-peer rivals, namely China."

All of the 75th events were

canceled due to the coronavirus except the aerial parades, Wednesday ceremony and luncheon on the Missouri with the local wartime veterans and Esper, officials said.

On Wednesday, beginning at 8:10 a.m., a live stream of the 75th commemoration ceremony will be provided by satellite feed to stations around the globe. The ceremony also can be viewed at 75thwwiicommemoration.org or by joining Facebook Live at #75thWWII.