



**(U) Paradise Found**

FROM: [REDACTED]  
Chief J304, Analysis & Reporting Staff, Kunia RSOC  
Run Date: 01/28/2005

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*Wintertime on Oahu, home to the Kunia Regional Security Operations Center... (U)*

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(U) Brrrrr. It was a cold, winter day in the islands. I had to put the heat on in the car -- the temperature was only 68! I was a little late getting out this morning. The neighborhood peacocks were standing at the edge of my driveway and did not want to move. Must be mating season since the male was proudly displaying his feathers. Since I was running late anyway, I decided to take the long way in. There's a swell on the North Shore and the waves were cresting at 20-30 ft. It's quite a sight. I sipped my Kona blend coffee as I meandered on the winding, seaside road, taking in the great white splashes as the waves hit the beach...

(U) Though most KRSOCers live near the facility, I live on the windward side of the island. It's a long drive by Hawaii standards (about 30 miles), but everyday when I come home I get a spectacular view of the crystal blue water when I cross the Koolau Mountains. Our house sits at the base of the mountains and when it rains, there are about 16 waterfalls we can view out our back window. If I want to see a waterfall when it's not raining, I just go down a few streets and hike back a short path, which leads me to an always-running waterfall.

(U) I know what you're thinking. It sounds too good to be true. There's got to be a catch. Well, yes. When it gets down to 70, I have to wear pants because its too cold for shorts. Sure, I'm far away from my family, but you would be amazed at how many relatives come out of the woodwork when they find out you live in Hawaii. I think I've seen more of them living here than when I lived back east! You've probably heard that housing prices are high. From what I've seen back at the Fort, they're just as high back there if not higher. And out here, I'm living on a 25% COLA, plus I'm on the Pacific pay scale, which has a 13% higher base than the regular GS pay scale. Hawaii has all the big discount places -- WalMart, Costco, Sam's Club -- and the local supermarkets are always running sales.

(U) Is there such a thing as island fever? I don't think so. While I may be sitting out in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, Hawaii is made up of several islands and each one is different. Did you know you can ski in Hawaii? The Big Island's two peaks, Mauna Kea and Mauna Loa, see snow every winter and many people hop over to the island for a quick ski trip. Don't ski? Well, landlubbers can find a golf course within probably a 5- or 10-minute drive no matter where they live. And for those lazy weekend days, just pack up the grill and make a day of it on the beach. The state's beach parks all have restrooms and showers, ample parking, and lifeguards to keep everyone safe. Oh, and NSAers have the annual Thanksgiving on the Beach. Where else in the world can you do that?

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(U) Well, I hope I've provided you with a little piece of my paradise found. I think I'll go wander down to Waikiki, have a mai tai on the beach, and wait for the green flash when the sun sets over the water. I may just catch a glimpse of the whales breaching since its whale season right now. Aloha!



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DERIVED FROM: NSA/CSSM 1-52, DATED 08 JAN 2007 DECLASSIFY ON: 20320108