

Hawaii Reporter

Freedom to Report Real News

Report From Jakarta: 'This Mission is About Saving Lives'

By Michele Van Hessen, 6/19/2007 10:11:55 PM



Hawaii Rep. Gene Ward (R-Hawaii Kai), who is traveling in Jakarta with Gov. Linda Lingle and her delegation, says Hawaii will greatly benefit from the personal and institutional relationships bring established by the governor's mission to Indonesia.

In addition, he says the mission, which addresses strengthening emergency preparedness partnerships, for such events as a future outbreak of an Avian influenza (Bird Flu) virus, or a devastating tsunami, will help to save lives.

Rep. Barbara Marumoto (R-Kahala), who also is on the mission, says the main focus of the Governor's Security and Trade mission to Indonesia "is about saving lives."

They cite the delegation's briefings, which outlined future joint exercises to avert an outbreak of the Avian influenza. Also, there were discussions for a multinational response to catastrophe.

Indonesia is one of four likely Asian countries that include China, Thailand and Vietnam where a pandemic could begin. In recent history, Indonesia has had the most documented number of Avian influenza cases.

"Due to the personal and institutional relationships that this mission has established and is building, if an Avian influenza pandemic did break out, an early alert system and the collaboration with our friends in Indonesia could save lives in Hawaii," Ward said.

"If the virus begins to spread from humans to humans, it is estimated that it can spread around the world in four and half months. On any given day in Hawaii, we have people from all over the world walking our beaches and sleeping in our hotels, and we need to be prepared and ahead of any Avian influenza curve, if we're to keep our tourism industry in tact and the lives of local people insulated from this global killer," Ward added.

Marumoto says at the same time, Indonesia is greatly benefiting from the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center being located in Hawaii. "Currently, the center is in the process of training and replicating its efforts for protecting the people of Indonesia as well as other areas of the Pacific community," said Marumoto.

"Our mission to Indonesia is about how many lives these collaborative efforts will save in the future," said Ward.

Earthquakes, tsunamis or the Avian influenza could ravage the Pacific and our Hawaiian Islands, and the Governor's mission reflects her awareness to strengthen emergency preparedness for such events.

Ward was appointed to the delegation because of his language and expertise in the region. He speaks fluent Bahasa Indonesia and was an USAID advisor to Indonesia during the Aceh earthquake/tsunami crisis. Ward also was a United Nations advisor for small business development, and most recently served as the Peace Corps Country Director in East Timor.

Michele Van Hessen writes for a variety of local magazines and works for the minority party in the Hawaii State House of Representatives.

HawaiiReporter.com reports the real news, and prints all editorials submitted, even if they do not represent the viewpoint of the editors, as long as they are written clearly. Send editorials to <mailto:Malia@HawaiiReporter.com>

[Guest Commentary...](#)

© 2010 Hawaii Reporter, Inc.