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Each Stripes Okinawa, Stripes Japan, Stripes Korea and Stripes Guam issue in April will contain your stories, poems, drawings and photos about what life is like as a military child.

SEE MOMC ON PAGE 2

INSIDE INFO

**Special 4-page pullout inside!**

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# STARS AND STRIPES

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# MOMC: We're here for you!

**CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1**

For those children who are part of the military community overseas but not technically a military child, we want to hear from you, too. You and your Department of Defense civilian parents are also a key part of the military community.

So, what's life like as a military kid? Tell us. And after you share with us, your submission will be posted on our special Month of the Military website [Militarychild.Stripes.com](http://Militarychild.Stripes.com) and could appear in at least one weekly paper.

We are giving you a platform to say what you want. Of course, to have your say, you have to write, type or draw it. You can be funny or serious. You can write a paragraph or a longer story (250-word maximum, please). Whatever you do, be yourself. Stand up and be heard!

We get thousands of submissions a year, so for stories to run in the paper, they must be submitted by April 15. But no matter when they are submitted, they will be posted on the website. As we approach another April, our team is ready for the onslaught. In fact, we're already receiving submissions.

Like every year, we've been in touch with teachers across the Pacific who are using this as a class project, so be ready for that. For those of you who haven't participated in our annual salute, we hope to hear from you this year.

Stars and Stripes is very proud to serve the military community, and it's an honor to spotlight its resourceful group of children. We can't wait to hear from you!

*Chris Carlson,*  
Publishing and Media Design Manager  
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**Stories must be submitted by April 15 to appear in Stripes Guam!**

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# ISLAND VALUES, GLOBAL IMPACT

## Guam native makes mark in Air Force

STORY AND PHOTOS BY SENIOR AIRMAN LAUREN COBIN, U.S. AIR FORCE

When Staff Sgt. Alex Diego boards the KC-135 Stratotanker for another mission, he carries more than just the responsibility of an inflight refueler; he carries the values and spirit of his island home.

From the close-knit shores of Guam to the disciplined ranks of the U.S. Air Force, Diego's journey is a powerful story of cultural pride, personal growth and unwavering family support.

Since enlisting in December of 2015, Diego has worked as a crew chief on the C-17 Globemaster III and the E-3 Sentry before transitioning to his current role. Both positions equipped him with valuable skills and a deep understanding of Air Force operations that would shape him into the dedicated professional he is today.

Diego's roots are deeply tied to Guam, where he was born and raised with a heritage that is half Chamorro and half Filipino. Life on the island instilled in him a strong sense of community, respect and kindness.

"The island community is incredibly close-knit, where everyone knows each other and even

strangers treat you like family," said Diego. "This sense of unity and support was a cornerstone in my upbringing. The values of respect, kindness and community that I have learned growing up in Guam have stayed with me and continue to influence my career."

As he matured, Diego sought new challenges. Joining the military wasn't always part of his plan, but he recalls, "[it] seemed like the right step forward."

The Air Force offered him an opportunity to grow and develop. Though his family was initially saddened by his decision to leave Guam, they knew Diego would find success wherever life took him.

For Diego, his family's support was what made accomplishing his dreams to serve possible. He credits his Uncle Ed, Aunt Lani Mayo and his parents for teaching him resilience and kindness. Today, his wife, Roey-Rose, is his greatest inspiration.

"She balances her career as an ER Nurse at Tampa General Hospital and studying for her Master's degree in FNP (Family Nurse Practitioner) at Duke. Despite her demanding schedule, she always finds time to support me and be my best friend," Diego shares with pride. "Her dedication, strength, and unwavering encouragement inspire



Staff Sgt. Alex Diego, prepares the boom for aerial refueling over the southeastern United States on Sept. 13, 2024.

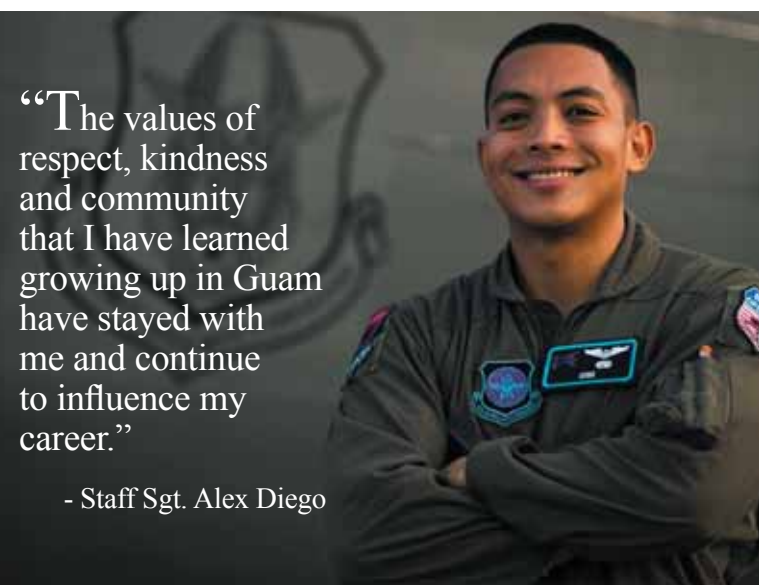
me daily to strive for excellence in everything I do."

The cultural values Diego grew up with—respect and treating others like family—align seamlessly with military life.

"Respect and treating everyone like family are fundamental aspects of my culture," he explains. "These values fit perfectly within the military."

Respecting your superiors, peers, and subordinates foster a strong sense of camaraderie and trust. Additionally, the island tradition of helping others, whether it's sharing food or lending a hand, that while seem small can potentially make a huge impact on someone's day.

Diego's commitment to these principles strengthens his relationships within his team and contributes to a positive work environment.



"The values of respect, kindness and community that I have learned growing up in Guam have stayed with me and continue to influence my career."

- Staff Sgt. Alex Diego

To the next generation, he offers valuable advice: "Don't compare yourself to anyone else because everyone's journey is unique. Trust in your own path and remember that everything happens for a reason, in its own time."

Staff Sgt. Alex Diego's story

highlights the importance of cultural pride, family support, and a commitment to growth. His journey demonstrates the powerful impact of integrating personal values into professional life, showcasing how service and community can thrive hand in hand.

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Two Lovers' Point (Puntan Dos Amantes) Photos courtesy of Guam Visitors Bureau



# Valentine vistas

BY TAKAHIRO TAKIGUCHI,  
STRIPES GUAM

“Romeo and Juliet” is not the only romantic saga ending in woe. Others in Japan and on Guam are inked so indelibly on public psyches as to inspire “lovers’ points” with sweeping vistas to evoke romance and luck in love. In fact, cities have even become bedfellows because of their respective tales of trysts and tragedies.

Guam’s Puntan Dos Amantes, or Two Lovers’ Point, overlooking picturesque Tumon Bay and the Philippine Sea, has two “sister capes” in the Land of the Rising Sun. There is Izu City’s Toi Koibito Misaki, or Lovers’

Point, with its panoramic vista of Mount Fuji and the Suruga Gulf in Shizuoka Prefecture, and Kashiwazaki City’s Lovers’ Point in Niigata Prefecture, offering scenic sunsets over the Sea of Japan against the backdrop of nearby Sado Island. The transpacific courting began more than two decades ago.

Present day Izu City has the longest running courtship with Guam. In 1989, then Guam Gov. Joseph Ada and the town mayor of Toi (now part of Izu City), Takashi Aoki, signed a “sister cape” deal during a ceremony on the island. In 2003, then Gov. Felix Camacho and Kashiwazaki Mayor Shingo Tsuchida followed suit.

“Since there is a lovers’ point in our town, I thought it would be nice to build a friendly relationship with Two Lovers’ Point on Guam to promote tourism,” said Kazuhiko Kagiya. The former Toi Tourist Association director spearheaded the 1989 project by reaching out to the Guam Visitors Bureau.

All three amorous attractions are wed to romantic sagas of yesteryear – two with tragic endings of Shakespearean proportions. Today, they are go-to destinations for a date day, if not to supercharge that special bond with a certain someone.

The saga behind Izu’s Lovers’ Point has the more upbeat ending: Prevented by circumstance from marrying, two youths express their love for one another over a great distance by ringing a bell miraculously given to each of them. In time, their famed plight prompts others to bring them together so they can wed. Today, pilgrims flock there to ring a gold bell in hopes of gaining love.

Guam’s Two Lovers’ Point is said to be where a local Chamorro man and Spanish maiden leapt to their deaths in the 1500s to avoid capture and the girl’s forced betrothal to another, thereby preserving their love eternally.

Today, this scenic symbol of undying love is touted as the ideal place for weddings as well as views. There’s also a silver bell – a gift from its sister cape in Izu – said to bring luck in romance to those who ring it. Visitors can also buy heart-shaped locks and plaques to write down heartfelt wishes for romance and attach them to the Love Lock Wall to come true – a custom adopted from the cape’s Kashiwazaki sister.

In Kashiwazaki, Lovers’ Point is tied to the tale of a love-sick woman who drowned on one of her nightly perilous journeys from Sado Island to meet her lover in the city. He in turn took his own life. Now, those in search of

successful marriage make pilgrimages to enshrine their written wishes along the fence.

Tourism officials say the sister-capes have been a boon.

“Quite a few Japanese who visit Dos Amantes learned that it has a sister here in (Izu) then came to see our capes,” yama said. “I also hear a lot of love come here say they are planning to visit Two Lovers’ Point on Guam. ... This is a win situation.”

takiguchi.takahiro@stripes.com



Photo courtesy of Guam Visitors Bureau

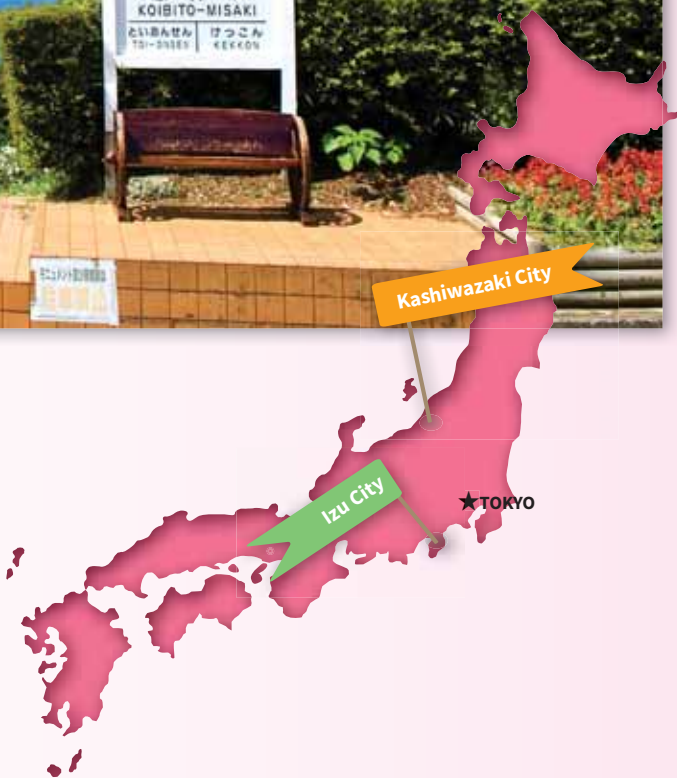
See the legends behind all three lovers' points. Page 8



Lovers' Point (Koibito Misaki), Kashiwazaki City. Photo courtesy of Kashiwazaki Tourism Association



Lovers' Point (Koibito Misaki), Izu City Photo courtesy of Toi Onsen Hotels Union



# Link 2 cultures

## Two Lovers' Point (Puntan Dos Amantes), Guam

Built upon a bittersweet tale of eternal love, Puntan Dos Amantes, or Two Lovers Point, is an icon of Guam attractions. Every year hundreds of thousands of visitors are drawn to the towering cliff that is the site of Guam's most well-known and romantic legends.

The Two Lovers Point park features lookout points that offer sweeping views of Tumon Bay, high above crashing ocean waves 122m (400ft) below. Couples can purchase a lovelock, attach it to the railing and toss the key into the ocean to symbolize their own eternal love. The centerpiece of the park is a magnificent brass statue of two lovers locked in an embrace that gleams in the sun and extends to the sky. The park also features a wedding chapel and terrace restaurant.

– Guam Visitors Bureau



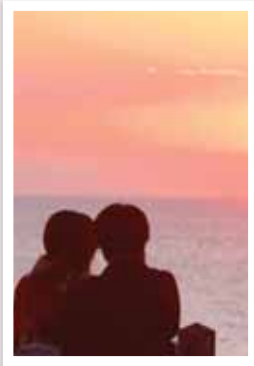
Photo courtesy of Guam Visitors Bureau



For more details, visit: <http://www.puntandosamantes.com/>

## Lovers' Point (Koibito Misaki), Kashiwazaki City, Japan

Named after a sad love story, or "sado jowa," this Lovers' Point is in Sado Yahiko Yoneyama National Park and is famed for being Niigata Prefecture's most popular spot for viewing beautiful sunsets. It overlooks the Sea of Japan, offering picturesque vistas of 3,255-foot-tall Mount Yoneyama, nearby Sado Island and the Fukuura Beach coastline. Lovers come here and purchase a chain, lock and heart-shaped plaque from the visitors' shop. After writing their romantic wishes on the plaque, they chain it to the fence surrounding the scenic cape, securing their love. It's said that doing so ensures successful marriage.



(\*Closed until Feb. 28 due to snow.)

For more details (in Japanese), call: 0257-24-2238 or visit: <https://www.nfcnet.co.jp/koibitoMisaki-niigata/>



## Lovers' Point (Koibito Misaki), Izu City, Japan

About 230,000 people, many in search of luck in love, visit this cape annually. An observation platform offers fantastic vistas of Mount Fuji over the Suruga Gulf. A golden bell is mounted there and it is said that whoever rings it three times their wish in matters of love will come true. The bell has a silver 'sister' on Guam's Two Lovers' Point. According to lore, whoever can ring both bells will be graced both happiness and prosperity. Lovers who ring the bell together can get a special certificate of declaring their amorous relationship at the visitor's office on site. When they marry later, a congratulatory message will be sent to the newlyweds.

The town of Toi, in the city of Izu, also boasts other attractions such as scenic Anrakuji Temple and the world's largest flower clock in Matsubara Park and the oldest hot spring in western Izu.

For more details (in Japanese), call: 0558-99-0270 or visit: [www.koibito.toi-onsen.com](http://www.koibito.toi-onsen.com)



# Matters of the heart mythology

Guam's legend may be compared to "Romeo and Juliet," while the lovers' points legends in Japan can be characterized as typical Japanese folk stories. Yet there is a poignant similarity at the heart of all three of these tales. Compare them yourself. You'll see just how beautiful – and cruel – love can be.

## The sad love story of Kashiwazaki

Oben, the daughter of shipping agent Ogi, Sado Island, met and fell in love with Tokichi, a boat carpenter who came from Kashiwazaki, a village on the shore of Niigata, about 35 miles away. They enjoyed romantic rendezvous while Tokichi worked on the island. On completing his work, however, Tokichi had to return to Kashiwazaki.

Oben could not forget her lover. One night, she missed him so much that she took a small round "taraibune" boat and sailed the sea late at night to Kashiwazaki guided by a light on the cape. When she reached Kashiwazaki she was reunited with Tokichi again. She began doing this every night.

Although Tokichi welcomed her at first, he was eventually put off by an attachment so strong that it made Oben sail 35 miles to Kashiwazaki every night. One night, he extinguished the light on Kashiwazaki's cape when Oben was at sea. She got lost and her boat eventually sank offshore. Seeing her body on Kashiwazaki's beach the following morning, Tokichi was filled with deep regret and despair over his actions. He took his own life by jumping off the cape into the sea.

– Kashiwazaki Tourist Association

## The legend of Two Lovers' Point

Once long ago, in the time when Spain ruled Guam, there was a proud family living in Hagatna, the capital city. The father was a wealthy Spanish aristocrat and the mother was the daughter of a great Chamorro chief. The family owned land and were highly esteemed by all, Chamorro and Spanish alike.

Their daughter was a beautiful girl, admired by all for her honesty, modesty, and perfectly natural charm. Her beauty bestowed the greatest pride and dignity unto her family.

One day, the girl's father arranged for her to take a powerful Spanish captain as her husband. When the girl discovered this, she was so distraught that she ran from Hagatna all the way to the north of Guam until she found a secluded and peaceful shore.

There, on the moonlit shore, she met and fell in love with a young warrior from a very modest Chamorro family. He was gentle, with a strong build, and had eyes that search for meaning in the stars.

When the girl's father learned of the two lovers, he grew angry and demanded that she marry the Spanish captain at once. That day at sundown, she stole away to the same high point along the shore, and once again met her Chamorro lover.

Her father, the captain, and all the Spanish soldiers pursued the lovers up to the high cliff above Tumon Bay. The lovers found themselves trapped between the edge of the cliff and the approaching soldiers.

All the young warrior could do was warn them to stay back, and the father ordered the soldiers to halt.

The lovers tied their long black hair into a single knot. And acting as if they were entirely alone, they looked deeply into each other's eyes and kissed for the final time. Then they leaped over the long, deep cliff into the roaring waters below.

Her father and all who remained rushed to the edge to stare in great anguish.

Since that day, Chamorros have looked to the jutting peak above Tumon Bay with reverence. The two lovers remain a symbol of true love – a love in which two souls are entwined forever in life and in death. Forever after, the high point on the cliff was known as Two Lovers Point.

– Two Lovers' Point Park

Oyone, thinking of Fukutaro, visited a shrine daily to pray they would be united. Even if there was a violent storm she always visited the shrine to pray. One day, while she was praying she heard a voice say, "Oyone, I'll give you two bells. Give one to Fukutaro and confirm his love with them." She looked down and there were two bells.

When she took the bells to Fukutaro, they both welcomed the miracle. He hung one bell on the bow of his fishing boat. Fukutaro always sailed passed Oyone's village on the way of his fishing grounds.

Every morning, Oyone climbed a cape rang her bell three times when Fukutaro's boat passed by. When Fukutaro heard the bell, he responded by ringing his bell on the boat. Although the lovers could not see each other, they confirmed their mutual love with the bells. Sometimes, Oyone's bell guided Fukutaro's boat home when he was lost in heavy fog or stormy weather.

The sound of the two lovers' bells gradually became renowned throughout Yonezaki village, and the villagers found a way for two to unite. They lived happily after.

– Izu City Tourist Association

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## The Love Call Bells

Once upon a time, a fisherman named Fukutaro from Toi met Oyone, a farming girl from Yonezaki at his village's morning market, and they fell in love. Although they wished to be together, the steep mountains between their villages, their poverty and need to care for their aging parents prevented them from seeing each other.



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# Boonie Stomps Guam

INFORMATION PROVIDED BY  
GUAM BOONIE STOMPERS



Ague Cove

**REMINDER! We no longer meet at Chamorro Village. We meet at the trailhead.**

Every Saturday, Guam Boonie Stompers offers public hikes to a variety of destinations such as beaches, snorkeling sites, waterfalls, mountains, caves, latte sites, and World War II sites. We meet at the trailhead on Saturdays at 9 AM. Directions to the trailhead will be posted on the Guam Boonie Stompers Inc Facebook page. The cost is \$5.00 for hikers over 17. Children must be accompanied by a responsible adult. Hikers should provide their own transportation. Guam's trails are not developed. Weather conditions can make the hikes more difficult than described. No reservations required.

**For more information:**  
[www.facebook.com/GuamBoonieStompers](http://www.facebook.com/GuamBoonieStompers)



Guam Boonie Stompers is a non-profit Guam corporation composed of volunteer leaders committed to leading hikes to and protecting the unique natural destinations on our island.

## SCHEDULE 2025

Feb. 8 (Sat.)	La Sa Fua River (Difficult)
Feb. 15 (Sat.)	Hila'an/Lost Pond/Shark's Hole (Medium)
Feb. 22 (Sat.)	Mt. Finacresta (Schroeder) (Difficult)
March 1 (Sat.)	Ague Cove (Medium)
March 8 (Sat.)	Pagat Cave to Coast (Difficult)
March 15 (Sat.)	Ija to Mt. Finacresta (Schroeder) (2x Difficult)
March 22 (Sat.)	Talofofo Caves (Medium)
March 29 (Sat.)	Manunu Valley to Fouha Point (Difficult)

NOTE: Schedule subject change, so please check Boonie Stomps Facebook in advance.

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### Crossword by Margie E. Burke

**ACROSS**

- 1 Karate move
- 5 Farm implement
- 9 Retro hairdo
- 13 Wrangler rivals
- 15 Jackie Chan's "Rush \_\_\_"
- 16 Within view
- 17 Construct
- 18 Leaving no will
- 20 Possible, as a plan
- 22 Audiophile's setup
- 23 Quiet
- 24 Rating unit
- 25 Fall guy
- 28 Honey bunch?
- 32 Suffers from
- 33 Outback dog
- 34 Quebec follower in the NATO alphabet
- 35 Creative pursuits
- 37 Image Awards org.
- 39 Loamy fertilizer
- 40 Hangs onto
- 42 Trail traveler
- 44 Bette Davis film, "The Great \_\_\_"
- 45 High nest (var.)
- 46 Without constraint
- 48 Word on a "Hello!" tag
- 50 Fastener for Rosie
- 51 1990s veep
- 54 Faux pas
- 57 Meaty tomato
- 59 Silklike fabric
- 60 Wreck site
- 61 Diarist Frank
- 62 Common sense?
- 63 Sets as a price
- 64 Wolfish look
- 65 Give a nudge to

**DOWN**

- 1 Sail's corner
- 2 Medal earner
- 3 Justice League enemy
- 4 Type of truck
- 5 Longtime TV host
- 6 Like Silver's rider
- 7 Ump's call
- 8 Take forcibly
- 9 Waiting place
- 10 1991 film, "Cape \_\_\_"
- 11 Part of A.P.R.
- 12 Cookie since 1912
- 14 Put into words
- 19 Beatles surname
- 21 Get cracking
- 24 Wall Street worker
- 25 Soda shop order
- 26 Barker's successor
- 27 Time's partner
- 29 Insignificant sort
- 30 Unearily
- 31 Did a cobbler's job

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
13				14				15			16	
17							18			19		
20				21			22					
		23					24					
25	26					27		28	29	30	31	
32				33				34				
35			36		37			38		39		
40				41				42		43	44	
45							46			47		
				48		49		50				
51	52	53					54				55	56
57							58			59		
60							61			62		
63							64				65	

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**Answers to Previous Crossword:**

B	A	R	E	A	T	L	A	S	S	L	A	M	
U	N	I	X	C	R	A	T	E	T	O	G	A	
R	E	S	P	I	R	A	T	O	R	I	C	O	N
T	W	E	E	D	G	E	N	E	A	L	O	G	Y
D	A	S	T	A	R	D	E	N	T	R	A	P	
E	L	M	S	O	I	L	S	E	T	U	D	E	
B	I	O	L	M	E	E	T	S	O	N	E	S	
R	A	C	E	S	S	T	I	E	S	O	P	T	
A	S	K	F	O	R	M	E	M	E	N	T	O	
C	A	T	H	E	D	R	A	L	L	I	S	T	S
O	S	H	A	C	O	B	A	L	T	B	L	U	E
T	H	E	N	A	M	E	N	D	L	E	N	A	R
E	Y	E	D	P	A	R	T	S	E	W	E	R	

## Exploring the Beauty of the Pacific

STARS AND STRIPES



Pick up the magazine or get it online

## Stripes Sports Trivia

March is the month of brackets, buzzer beaters and beers before noon on a Thursday - The month ... of madness. Everyone loves Cinderella, but midnight often comes early for the tourney's darlings. What school was the lowest seed to ever get a taste of the Sweet 16?

Answer
Florida Gulf Coast (2013)

### SUDOKU

Difficulty: Medium

Edited by Margie E. Burke

2								
	3			8		4	6	9
7			3	1		2		8
		8		2				
4	1					5	8	
					4		9	
9	2						7	
8				7			4	
		4		5	6			3

**HOW TO SOLVE:**

Each row must contain the numbers 1 to 9; each column must contain the numbers 1 to 9; and each set of 3 by 3 boxes must contain the numbers 1 to 9.

Answer to Previous Sudoku:

4	9	5	2	1	3	6	8	7
1	8	7	9	6	4	3	5	2
2	6	3	8	5	7	1	9	4
6	7	4	5	3	9	2	1	8
9	5	8	6	2	1	4	7	3
3	2	1	7	4	8	9	6	5
5	3	2	1	7	6	8	4	9
8	4	6	3	9	5	7	2	1
7	1	9	4	8	2	5	3	6

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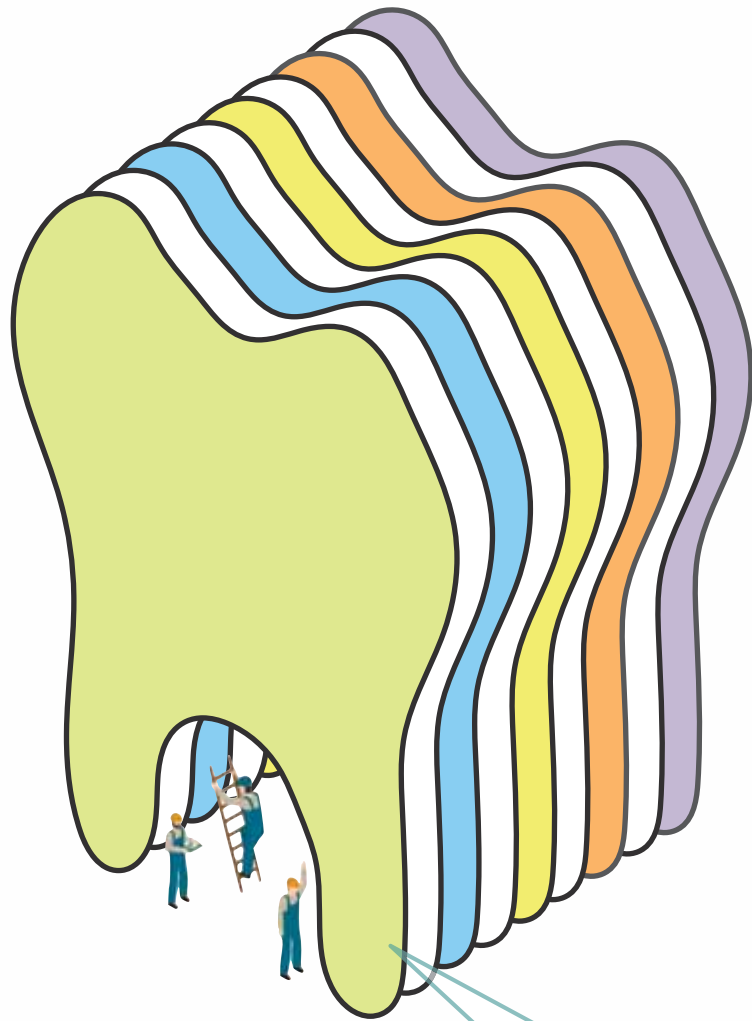
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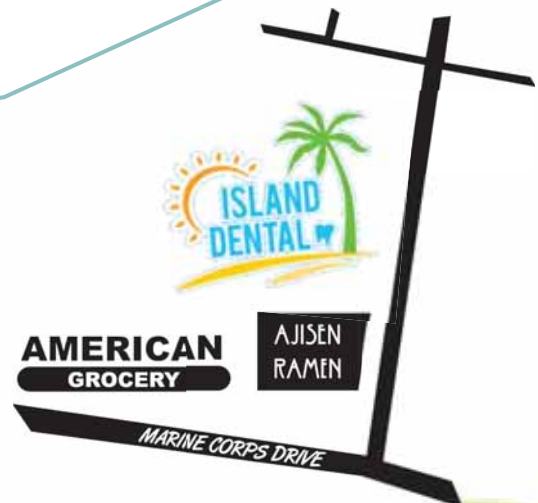


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# A Taste of Guam

The 3 'R's to good eating –  
Restaurants,  
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**4-page pullout**

# Valentine's Day delights

## Cassava cake

Cassava cake is traditionally made from grated cassava, coconut cream, sweet young coconut, eggs, sugar, butter and evaporated milk. These ingredients are mixed together to form a thick batter, baked until firm, then topped with a mixture of sweetened condensed milk and coconut cream then broiled until the topping is a rich, caramel color. It's quite decadent and oh-so-delicious.

My version is based on my sister's recipe, with a slight variation. While I love the traditional version, I like my cassava cake less sweet so I omit the sweetened condensed milk topping. I also like my version to be similar in consistency to Sweet Chamorro Tamales, so I add a bit more evaporated milk to my batter. To give my cake greater depth of flavor, I also add just a bit of vanilla extract.

Give it a try and let me know how you like it.

### Ingredients

#### Cassava Cake:

- 2 pounds grated cassava
- 1 can coconut cream or coconut milk
- 15 ounces evaporated milk (use just 12 ounces to make it less chewy like sweet tamales)
- 1 jar macupono, drained and chopped ■ 1 cup sugar
- 1/4 cup butter, melted
- 2 large eggs ■ 1 teaspoon vanilla extract (optional)

#### Topping (Optional):

- 3/4 cup sweetened condensed milk ■ 3/4 cup coconut milk
- 1 tablespoon sugar ■ 1 egg yolk

Here are the ingredients you'll need (the butter is not shown in the photo).



than a hobby for me - they're a passion. I come from the beautiful island of Guam, U.S.A. The recipes you'll find here are my creations, or those of my children, who are also budding foodies. I hope you like them. Drop me a comment or two to let me know how you like our island and other delicacies. Enjoy!"

- Army Lt. Col. (Ret.) Annette Merfalen



### Directions

#### Cassava Cake:

- 1 Preheat your oven to 375 degrees. Spray a 9x13 baking pan with butter cooking spray.
- 2 Mix the cake ingredients together in a large mixing bowl. Pour into the prepared baking pan.
- 3 Bake for 1 hour (see note); if the top is not a nice caramel color, bake for an additional 15 minutes or until nicely browned on top. Remove from the oven and cool completely before cutting.

**Note:** If adding the sweet topping, bake for 45 minutes; see instructions below for adding the topping.

#### Optional Topping:

- 1 Mix the topping ingredients together. Place in a small sauce pan; cook over medium heat, stirring constantly until slightly thickened.
- 2 After the cake has baked for 45 minutes, remove from the oven and carefully spread the topping over the top of the entire cake. Return the cake to the oven and cook for 15 more minutes.
- 3 Turn the oven to broil (make sure your baking pan is broiler-safe). Broil for 5 minutes to brown the topping.
- 4 Remove from the oven and let cool completely before cutting. Serve and enjoy!



## Chocolate Caramel Coconut Cake

Okay friends, if there was ever a recipe of mine you ought to try, this one is it! This is my homage to my favorite Girl Scout Cookies, the Caramel Delites or Samoas.

My version of this cake combines all the things I love about the classic cookie — sweet coconut, rich chocolate and luscious caramel.

The super moist and fudgy cake gets a generous topping of my caramel cream cheese frosting. Toasted sweet coconut gets pressed into the frosted cake, followed by drizzles of melted chocolate and MORE caramel!

Do I have you drooling yet and ready to bake this cake RIGHT THIS MINUTE???

My super easy recipe is made even more simple by using boxed cake mix. While you can certainly make a cake from scratch, there are several brands that bake up a very moist and delicious cake.

### Ingredients

#### Cake:

- 1 box Betty Crocker Chocolate Fudge cake mix
- 1 1/4 cups water
- 1/2 cup vegetable oil
- 3 large eggs
- 1 teaspoon coconut extract

#### Toasted Coconut:

- 2 cups (packed) sweetened coconut flakes

#### Frosting:

- 1 (8-oz) package cream cheese
- 1/2 cup caramel sauce
- 3 to 4 cups powdered sugar

#### Drizzled Sauces:

- 1 cup semisweet chocolate chips
- 4 tablespoons caramel sauce

#### Make the Frosting:

- 1 Beat the cream cheese and caramel sauce until creamy. Add the powdered sugar, one cup at a time, mixing until thick and creamy. Use all four cups of powdered sugar if you like your cakes frosted with a thick layer of frosting, otherwise, three cups of sugar will suffice.

- 2 Spread the frosting all over the cake, covering it entirely. Immediately sprinkle the coconut over the frosted cake. To add the coconut to the sides, grab a handful of coconut and press it into the sides of the cake. Shake off any excess coconut.

#### Drizzle on the Goodness:

- 1 Place the chocolate chips into a microwave-safe glass cup or bowl. Microwave for 30 seconds then stir. Microwave for 30 more seconds then stir again. Place the melted chocolate into a small sandwich bag. Snip a tiny piece off one corner of the bag. Squeeze the melted chocolate over the top of the cake.
- 2 Drizzle the caramel sauce over the top of the cake. SERVE AND ENJOY!

### Directions

#### Bake the cake:

- 1 Mix all of the ingredients for the cake together using a whisk. Mix just until combined and most of the lumps disappear. Do not over mix.
- 2 Pour the batter into a bundt pan sprayed with baking spray. Bake for 50-55 minutes at 350 degrees. Invert the cake onto a serving plate. Let it cool completely.

#### Toast the coconut:

- 1 Spread the coconut onto a large baking pan. Bake at 350 degrees for 8-10 minutes, stirring every 3 minutes to ensure even browning. Bake until golden brown.
- 2 Remove the toasted coconut from the hot pan; allow to cool completely.





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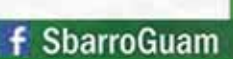
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**MAP**



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**RESTAURANT INFO**

# STARS AND STRIPES®

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GUAM EDITION

FEBRUARY 3, 2025



## ‘Going the wrong way’

Marine Corps commandant says Guam too far away to deter Chinese aggression Page 2

Marines and sailors with Marine Corps Base Camp Blaz, Guam, participate in a 249-mile run as a part of a celebration of the Marine Corps Birthday in November.

BRAYDEN DANIEL/U.S. Marine Corps

## COVER STORY

# Commandant questions move to Guam

## Marine Corps commandant says island too far away to deter Chinese

BY BRIAN MCELHINEY  
*Stars and Stripes*

The commandant of the Marine Corps warned this week that a plan to move thousands of troops from Okinawa to Guam would position forces too far away to deter Chinese aggression in the Indo-Pacific, according to media reports.

Gen. Eric Smith, at a Defense Writers Group meeting in Washington, D.C., said the plan “puts us going the wrong way,” according to reports from news websites [military.com](http://military.com) and Task & Purpose.

“Guam puts us on the other side of the International Date Line, but it puts us a long way from the crisis theater, from the priority theater,” Smith said, according to the reports.

“Every time you give China a foot, they take a mile. They only understand one thing, which is a credible deterrent force. And that credible deterrent force has to be present to win, which — to me — means being [in] the first island chain,” he said, according to [military.com](http://military.com).

The chain includes the Kuril Islands north of Hokkaido; Japan itself; the Ryukyu Islands,

which include Okinawa; Taiwan; and the Philippines.

U.S. Marine Corps Headquarters spokeswoman Capt. Brenda McCarthy confirmed the accuracy of Smith’s comments.

More than 4,000 Marines are expected to move from Okinawa under the Defense Policy Review Initiative, a 2012 agreement between the U.S. and Japan to reduce the military presence on Okinawa, which hosts nearly 30,000 of the 55,000 U.S. troops stationed in Japan.

About 100 logistics support troops from III Marine Expeditionary Force began moving from Okinawa to Guam last year, according to a Dec. 14 joint statement by the Marine Corps and Japan’s Ministry of Defense.

Camp Blaz on Guam is expected to house 1,300 members of III MEF and another 3,700 Marines as a rotational force. The base is still under construction.

Smith told reporters Wednesday that he is not sure the plan “is in the best strategic interest of America.”

“We’re committed to coming down to about 10,000 on Okinawa and getting ourselves to



KELSEY DORNFIELD/U.S. Marine Corps

**Marine Corps Commandant Gen. Eric M. Smith speaks with Defense Writers Group journalists at the Fairmount Washington Hotel in Washington, D.C., last year.**

Guam,” he said, according to [military.com](http://military.com). “But Guam is a challenge. I mean, Apra Harbor [at Naval Base Guam] still has to be refurbished; [it] has to be redone to allow for big decks to get in there.”

The service “supports the tenets outlined in the DPRI agreement and the plan for the

movement of units from Japan to Guam or Hawaii starting in 2024,” McCarthy wrote in a separate email Wednesday. “The Marine Corps will continue to explore options for the best location for the future force in the region.”

The Pentagon identified China as an aggressive presence in the

East and South China seas and a global “pacing challenge” in its 2022 National Defense Strategy.

The Marines’ Force Design plan calls for the service to better defend the small islands east of Taiwan and to counter China.

[mcelhiney.brian@stripes.com](mailto:mcelhiney.brian@stripes.com)  
@BrianMcElhiney

## Decision on beards: ‘We’re Marines, and we’re different’

BY MATTHEW ADAMS  
*Stars and Stripes*

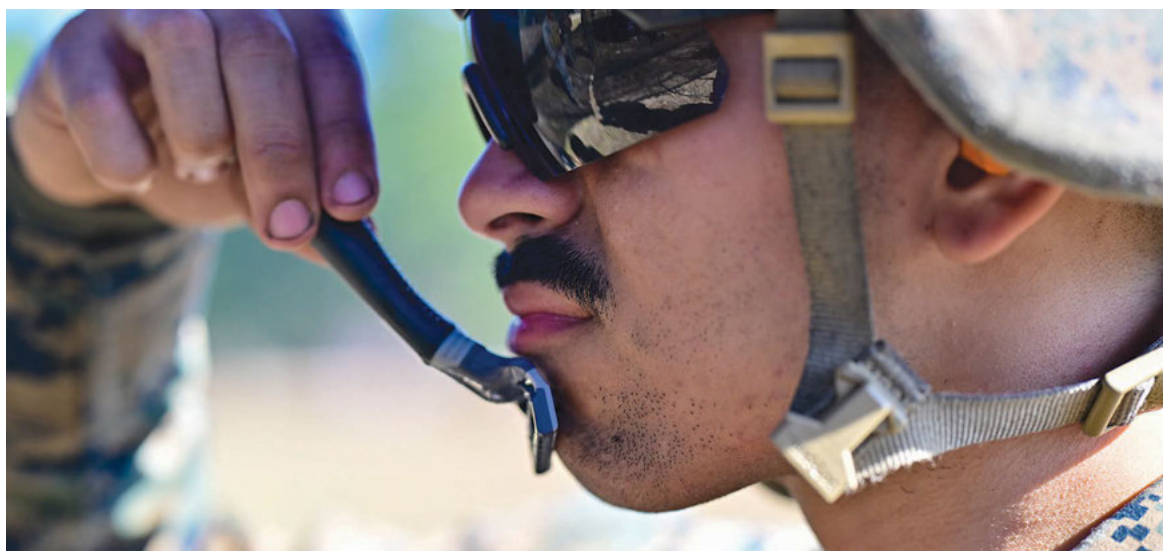
WASHINGTON — Gen. Eric Smith, the Marine Corps commandant, said Marines are different, even when it comes to beards.

Smith told reporters that the service would not make any changes to its regulations that would allow Marines to grow beards.

“We’re Marines, and we’re different. We don’t have beards,” he said during a Defense Writers Group discussion. “The Marine Corps has a brand, and we’re making our recruiting mission. We’ve always made our recruiting mission, and what we don’t want to do is tinker with the ethos of the Marine Corps — you joined us, we didn’t join you. You knew that coming in. You signed up. We don’t have beards, and you knew that coming in.”

Some Marines can grow a beard through a waiver process for pseudofolliculitis barbae, which causes painful razor bumps and disproportionately affects Black men.

“That’s a medical waiver, not a fashion waiver,” Smith said. “It’s



NICHOLAS PILCH/Defense Logistics Agency

**Marine Corps Cpl. Jeremy Rojas shaves at Fort Barfoot, Va.**

not a ‘Well, I decided I wanted to.’”

All military services have faced growing legal and internal pressure to relax grooming standards as debates on social media and in various other forums highlight the struggle to balance tradition and uniformity with individual rights.

Military officials have argued facial hair could prevent a per-

fect seal of a gas mask.

“When I retire, I’m going to grow one,” Smith added. “I won’t have to deal with a ... mask.”

In December 2022, a federal appeals court ruled three Sikh men should be allowed to go through Marine Corps recruit training with their turbans and beards intact. The panel ruled the Marine Corps had not proved that allowing the recruits to keep

their beards and turbans for religious reasons would threaten cohesion and uniformity.

Currently, airmen are not required to shave only if they have a religious exemption or a medical waiver for conditions such as pseudofolliculitis barbae.

In the latest National Defense Authorization Act, the annual must-pass bill that sets policy and spending priorities for the

Pentagon, Congress wants the Air Force to examine the pros and cons of allowing airmen to grow beards, with a prospective April 1 deadline for service leaders to deliver findings to lawmakers.

The House Armed Services Committee in May approved an amendment requiring the Navy to brief committee members on a 2023 study by the Naval Health Research Center on the effect of beards on gas mask seals, with the briefing due by March 1.

For years, military branches have carried out various studies on the beard issue to determine whether regulations could be loosened for the rank and file. So far, no branch has taken the step beyond special exceptions.

In the case of the Army, soldiers being clean shaven became a requirement just before World War I when chemical weapons were deemed a serious threat.

The Navy and the Coast Guard were the last branches to ban beards, doing so in 1985 and 1986, respectively.

[adams.matthew@stripes.com](mailto:adams.matthew@stripes.com)  
@MatthewAdams60

## MILITARY

# Trump defense advisers focus on China

## Aides urge cuts to Army, EUCOM to prepare military to face China

By JOHN VANDIVER  
*Stars and Stripes*

President Donald Trump's team of defense advisers is taking shape, this week adding two high-level officials who have called for slashing the American armed presence in Europe and broadly restructuring the military to deal with China.

Austin Dahmer and Alexander Velez-Green, known for their hawkish views on China, will serve in senior posts focused on developing military strategy, the Defense Department said.

Both have close ties to Elbridge Colby, the nominee for undersecretary of defense for policy.

If he's confirmed, Colby and company will be the Pentagon's primary strategists with a big say on how U.S. troops are deployed around the world.

And a 2023 research report by Dahmer for the Marathon Initiative, a Washington think tank co-founded by Colby, gives granular insight into what is dubbed a "strategy of denial" in the Pacific, after the title of a 2021 book by Colby.

The approach aims to deter adversaries from acting aggressively by convincing them "that they would fail to realize their objectives if they attempted such behavior," according to the report.

Meeting such requirements in the Pacific entails accepting more risks in other regions in lieu of major defense spending increases, wrote Dahmer, now the Pentagon's deputy assistant secretary of defense for strategy.

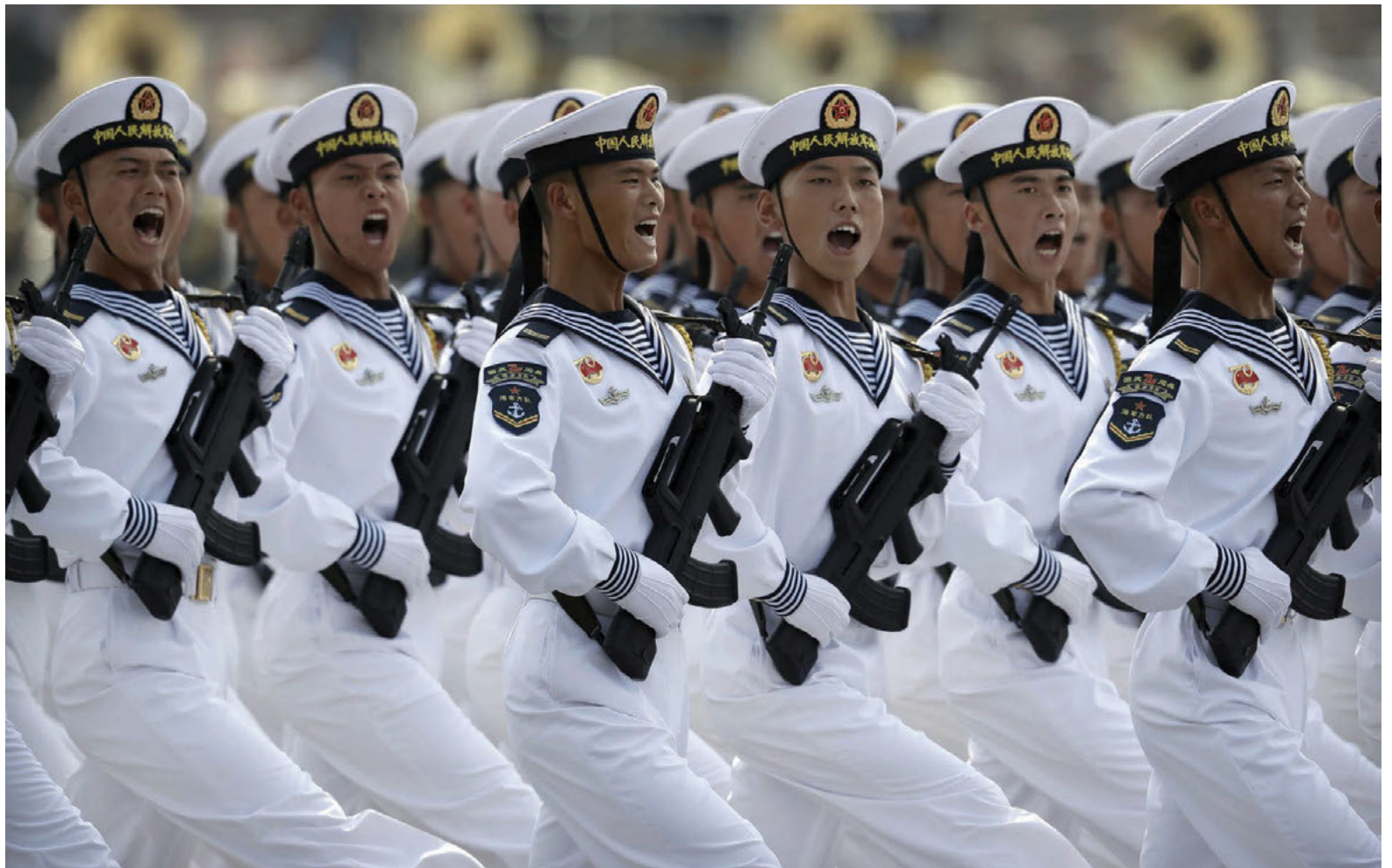
In the report, Dahmer does not take a position on how big the DOD budget should be. But without a big boost in expenditures, he wrote, the Pentagon would need to search for savings or "bill payers" to surge capabilities required to deter potential Chinese aggression against Taiwan, Okinawa or the Philippines.

"One of the largest bill payers in resourcing the strategy of denial should be the Army," the report said.

The strategy targets both the Army's active-duty cohort and the National Guard and calls for



Colby



MARK SCHIEFELBEIN/AP

**Chinese sailors march in formation during a parade. In a 2023 report, a newly installed top Defense Department official called for a major realignment of Army personnel to help stave off China and a cut of \$70 billion from the service's budget.**



TREVOR WILSON/U.S. Army

**A U.S. Army M1A2 Abrams tank simulates firing at Bemowo Piskie Training Area, Poland, on Nov. 13.**

deactivation of four Stryker brigades, six infantry brigades and two aviation brigades.

Also headed to the chopping block would be a number of Army ground vehicle and aviation modernization and procurement programs, and all the Air Force's A-10C aircraft would be retired, according to the report's recommendations.

Drastic reductions would also be made in the DOD civilian workforce under Dahmer's prescriptions.

For the Army to avoid big cuts

while still meeting Pentagon objectives in the Pacific, DOD would need a roughly 10% annual budget increase, the report said.

Overall, Dahmer's report recommends about \$70 billion less annually for the Army, which along with other cuts would give about \$40 billion more apiece to the Navy and Air Force.

The realignment he calls for in the report would also exact a heavy toll on the security structures that Europe has been relying on for over a decade. For one thing, the U.S. European Com-

mand mission would be slashed.

The European Deterrence Initiative, a multibillion-dollar annual effort aimed at deterring Russian aggression, would be dramatically scaled back if not eliminated outright, according to the report.

That would mean the end of Army tank brigade rotations to Europe that have been a staple of the EUCOM mission since Russia's initial invasion of Ukraine in 2014 and that have grown since Moscow's full-scale invasion in 2022.

Dahmer's report says savings from cuts to the Army, EUCOM mission and DOD civilian workforce would enable a faster build-up of production on a wide range of munitions needed in East Asia.

In-demand assets in the Pacific will involve most of the military's major systems, ranging from the Army artillery units and Patriot batteries to Navy warships, submarines and long-range Air Force bombers, the report said.

Velez-Green, who now serves as the senior adviser to the undersecretary of defense for policy, told Stars and Stripes last year that requirements in the Pacific mean European allies will need to shoulder a much larger share of the security burden on the Continent.

"These (EUCOM troops) are the forces that cannot be in two places at once. They'll have to be backfilled by our NATO allies," Velez-Green said in May.

He and Colby argued that the Pentagon has stretched itself too thin and that stakes in the Pacific are too high to overinvest elsewhere.

Velez-Green formerly worked as a senior policy adviser at the Heritage Foundation, the conservative think tank behind the controversial Project 2025 set of initiatives.

## MILITARY

# Overhaul of military moves draws skepticism

System of shipping household goods meeting resistance from moving firms

BY WYATT OLSON  
*Stars and Stripes*

The Defense Department's effort to streamline its global system of shipping service members' household goods is meeting resistance from the moving industry and a federal lawsuit challenging the bidding process for a multibillion-dollar contract.

The system overhaul would consolidate oversight and management to a single contractor that oversees and manages all domestic and international relocations for the military, Coast Guard and federal employees.

Single oversight is intended to increase customer satisfaction and tamp down costs, but many in the moving industry have balked. They compare the contract terms unfavorably to the current system.

In November 2021, U.S. Transportation Command awarded a \$20 billion contract to Houston-based HomeSafe Alliance LLC to handle the work being done by more than 900 commercial entities for roughly 300,000 moves a year.

More than three years later, the rollout of the so-called Global Household Goods Contract has made little headway, with growing resistance by much of the industry.

As of Jan. 13, HomeSafe had completed a meager 607 household goods deliveries, according to an email from the U.S. Transportation Command in response to a written query.

"Initially, I think industry was kind of split on whether GHC was going to be a good thing or a bad thing," Katie McMichael, executive director of Movers for America, a coalition pushing back on GHC's implementation, said in a phone interview Jan. 8.

"But I think what we've seen with the rollout of GHC is there have been a lot of areas that really were not well thought out," she said.

## 'Damaged goods'

The effort to streamline moves was sparked by a spate of complaints in 2018 by service members over late arrival of shipments, damaged goods and a lack of clarity on whom to blame for the failures.

Problems arising under the GHC model would rest on the shoulders of the sole entity overseeing relocations: HomeSafe Alliance.



DANIEL MAYBERRY/U.S. Navy

Household goods inspector Faata Leafa watches a mover with Aloha International pack up a home in Honolulu in 2020.

**"I think what we've seen with the rollout of GHC is there have been a lot of areas that really were not well thought out."**

Katie McMichael  
Movers for America

Under GHC, HomeSafe, a joint venture between Tier One Relocation and KBR, will eventually replace the roughly 900 forwarding agents who have until now handled military moves.

Forwarding agents — sometimes called transportation service providers — orchestrate domestic and international moves by hiring movers, truckers, ocean shippers and warehousing. In some cases, forwarding agents own subsidiaries to do that work.

"They're creating something that's never existed," said Anthony Shipp, president and CEO of Hawaii-based M. Dyer Global, which is among those 900 forwarding companies.

If such an all-encompassing agent could have made a go of it, "it would already exist," Shipp, who opposes GHC, said during a Jan. 7 phone interview.

"To this day, there's no player in the market that would do something like that," he said.

GHC will put his company's forwarding operations, which account for about 25% of its revenue, "completely out of business," Shipp said.

"So that's one reason why we're opposed," he said.

The GHC contract for the use of his company's trucks and warehouse space comes with fixed rates "not favorable to us" and "an enormous amount of liability that doesn't exist in the current program," Shipp said.

"So, when you kind of put all that together, it just doesn't make business sense for us to do it," he said. "No mover really wants to sign up for that."

## 'Proprietary' rate info

The Movers for America alliance primarily objects to the payment rates offered under the GHC contract and to complications arising from the federal Service Contract Act that could force moving companies to treat independent truckers as employees.

U.S. Transportation Command is leaving the issue of compensation to HomeSafe.

"Regarding rates, as the prime contractor for GHC, HomeSafe is responsible for building a sub-contractor network to fulfill contract terms to include sub-contractor compensation," the

command wrote in its email.

"It is important to note, specific information on rates is contract proprietary between HomeSafe and the providers in their network," the email states.

As to the issue of independent contractors and truckers, little wiggle room exists because GHC is a Federal Acquisition Regulation-based contract, according to the command's email.

To comply with that regulation, HomeSafe and its sub-contractors must pay at least minimum wage and furnish fringe benefits to workers, the email said.

McMichael said the industry has received "no guidance" from the Transportation Command, the Department of Labor or HomeSafe on how this impacts workers.

The bottom line for the alliance is that the entire GHC overhaul is ultimately unnecessary because the current system is working smoothly.

"The current program is seeing record high satisfaction rates," she said. "So, at this point, we really don't support GHC moving forward because it's over budget and behind in the timeline. It seems like a massive waste of taxpayers' money."

## Target missed

In a November 2022 news release, the Transportation Com-

mand had projected that by the peak 2024 moving season "all domestic and international household goods and unaccompanied baggage shipments" would move under GHC.

After almost entirely missing that target, the command's current projections are modest and "subject to change."

"The DOD is planning to activate all installations in the continental U.S. by spring 2025," the command wrote in its email. "International shipments under GHC are expected to begin no earlier than September 2025."

A federal lawsuit filed by several moving companies late last year could further slow or even derail GHC.

The Suddath Cos., a major player in military relocations based in Jacksonville, Fla., filed suit Nov. 22 in the U.S. Court of Federal Claims alleging that Transportation Command violated the bidding process for GHC by changing terms after it was awarded.

Two additional companies joined the suit.

The lawsuit alleges that HomeSafe has been given almost four times as long to implement the program as was set out in the bid solicitation and provided an additional \$60 million to fund implementation.

## MILITARY

# Del Toro names 19 future Navy ships

New carriers to be named after Bill Clinton and George W. Bush

By CAITLYN BURCHETT  
*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — Outgoing Navy Secretary Carlos Del Toro in his final days in his position named more than a dozen future ships, including aircraft carriers and submarines, to culminate his time leading the sea service.

A total of 19 Navy ships have been named by Del Toro in his last two weeks in office. The ships span two aircraft carriers, four submarines, five destroyers, two fleet replenishment oilers, a frigate, an amphibious ship, an expeditionary medical ship, two ocean surveillance ships and a first-in-class amphibious ship.

The Navy's next two Gerald R. Ford-class aircraft carriers will honor former presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush. The future USS William J. Clinton honors the 42nd president who served two terms from 1993 to 2001. The future USS George W. Bush honors the 43rd president who also served two terms, from 2001 to 2009. The names follow the Navy tradition of naming aircraft carriers after U.S. presidents.

Then-President Joe Biden announced the naming of the ships Jan. 13.

The latest slew of ships to be named included the future USS McClung, the first ship in the new McClung-class of medium landing ships. The Navy's Medium Landing Ship program, previously called the Light Amphibious Warship program, seeks to purchase and build 18 to 35 new amphibious ships to support Marine Corps operations. The ships are meant to transport troops and equipment from ship to shore. The first-in-class ship honors Maj. Megan McClung, a Marine Corps public affairs officer who was killed in action while serving in Iraq. This will be the first Navy vessel to bear her name.

"[The ship] will be an asset to the Marine Corps' amphibious capabilities, designed to greatly enhance operational flexibility and combat readiness," Del Toro said.

Also announced Jan. 16 were the future USNS Joshua L. Goldberg and USNS Thomas D. Parham Jr. — two future John Lewis-class fleet replenishment oilers. The oilers will supply fuel



EJ HERSOM/Defense.gov

Sailors practice a commissioning ceremony for the Arleigh Burke-class Flight III guided-missile destroyer USS Jack H. Lucas in Tampa, Fla.

and dry cargo to deployed warships while at sea.

The day before Del Toro announced the names of three Flight III Arleigh Burke-class, guided-missile destroyers and one Constellation-class, guided-missile frigate. Those warships are future destroyers USS Ray Mabus, USS Kyle Carpenter and USS Robert R. Ingram and future frigate USS Everett Alvarez Jr.

The three destroyers honor former Navy Secretary Ray Mabus and Medal of Honor recipients Lance Cpl. Kyle Carpenter and Navy Corpsman Robert Ingram.

The destroyers join two others named earlier in the month — the future USS Robert Kerrey and USS Intrepid. Arleigh Burke-class destroyers incorporate stealth techniques, allowing these ships to conduct a variety of operations with a wide range of air, surface and underwater warfighting abilities.

Future frigate USS Everett Alvarez Jr. pays tribute to the first American aviator shot down over Vietnam and the longest-held prisoner of war in North Vietnam, according to the Navy History and Heritage Command. The constellation-class, guided-missile frigate represents the Navy's next-generation small surface combat vessel. This ship class is designed to be a multi-



STACY GODFREY/United States Naval Academy

**Outgoing Navy Secretary Carlos Del Toro speaks to the U.S. Naval Academy Brigade in Annapolis, Md.**

mission warship capable of operations in deep water or near shore.

"Everywhere that these ships sail it will represent the legacies of these four leaders and heroes who placed country over self and service above all else," Del Toro said Jan. 15 at the Naval Surface Force National Symposium in Arlington, Va.

Also on Jan. 13, the names of four future submarines were announced in a video message to the Navy's submarine community.

"Today's submarine force is the most capable force in the world and in the history of U.S. Navy," Del Toro said. "It is my honor and privilege to announce the names of the future sub-

marines which will protect us from deep below the ocean's waves."

The next Columbia-class submarine will be the USS Groton, named for the Connecticut town considered to be the submarine capital of the world because it is where Navy submarines are built. The Columbia-class submarine is a new class of nuclear subs designed to replace the Navy's Ohio-class submarines. They serve as a launch platform for ballistic missiles. The Groton will be the third Columbia submarine.

Additionally, three Virginia-class submarines were named the future USS Potomac, USS Norfolk and USS Brooklyn. Virginia-class submarines are attack warships designed to seek and destroy enemy submarines and surface ships, conduct intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance and engage in mine warfare. The ships are armed with Tomahawk cruise missiles and carry special operation forces that can deploy from the submarine.

Also this month, Del Toro named a future San Antonio-class amphibious transport dock USS Travis Manion, along with two T-AGOS — the first two ships in the newly named Explorer class of ocean surveillance ships — the future USNS Don Walsh and the future USNS Vic-

tor Vescovo. Operated by the Military Sea Lift Command, the Explorer-class ships are designed to play a role in the Navy's anti-submarine warfare operations.

The amphibious ship, which embarks Marines and their equipment, honors a Marine who was ambushed while searching a suspected insurgent house in Iraq's Anbar province. As he led a counterattack, Manion was fatally wounded by a sniper while aiding his fellow Marines. He deliberately exposed himself to heavy enemy fire to draw fire away from other wounded Marines. For his actions, he received the Silver Star and the Bronze Star with valor.

Del Toro also named a future Bethesda-class expeditionary medical ship USNS Portsmouth during a ship naming ceremony at the Naval Medical Center in Portsmouth, Va. Bethesda-class expeditionary medical ships are designed to optimize hospital-level medical care in support of maritime operations.

Del Toro was sworn in as the Navy's top civilian leader in 2021 under Biden's administration.

President Donald Trump has tapped businessman and mega donor John Phelan as his pick for the next Navy secretary.

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## MILITARY

# Navy to tailor posts for special-needs families

BY JONATHAN SNYDER  
*Stars and Stripes*

The Navy has changed its Exceptional Family Member Program to tailor sailors' duty assignments to the services available to their special-needs family members.

Case managers will coordinate those assignments, rather than sending sailors to duty stations according to blanket categories that appeared to fit their families' special needs, said a spokesperson for Navy Personnel Command.

The Navy announced the changes last month and plans to implement them gradually, in line with other service branches, by October, the start of fiscal 2026, according to a Navy news release Dec. 9.

The service amended its EFMP program to comply with the policy required by the Department of Defense, personnel command spokesman Lt. Cmdr. Stuart Phillips said.

"This change results in a tailored assignment process that addresses the specific needs of the service member and their exceptional family member in-



JASON BORTZ/U.S. Navy

**The Exceptional Family Member Program provides programs for military dependents with special needs and helps them find services and information both online and at their duty station.**

stead of relying on blanket categories to drive the assignment process," Phillips said.

The mandatory program assists sailors by ensuring they are assigned to areas where they can find medical, dental and mental health care; developmental or educational assistance; and adap-

tive equipment, services and technology for family members with special needs, according to the Navy website.

The category system lumped sailors with similar needs into groups. The new process employs a "direct concierge approach" between a sailor and a

case manager that lifts limitations and opens assignments that may have been previously denied, Phillips said.

The case managers are working for a central command, he wrote.

"Consolidating these functions under the same roof enables a

better identification and enrollment process, provides individualized assignment case management, and ensures the healthcare and educational services for our Navy EFMP families are considered before they [permanently change their stations]," Phillips said.

An advocate with the National Military Family Association believes the change is a better option for sailors and their families than the previous tier system.

"I think that any time that you're dealing with a family or a family member as an individual, rather than as part of a tier, I think that's preferable," said Eileen Huck, the association's government relations director.

The new process will allow more transparency to enlisted sailors and remove perceived barriers by allowing them to view available billets and apply for orders through MyNavy Assignment based on their career needs and EFMP considerations, Phillips said.

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# Navy needs billions more to reach warship building goal

BY ALISON BATH  
*Stars and Stripes*

NAPLES, Italy — The Navy will need a budget boost of at least \$85 billion annually to realize an ambitious goal to grow its fleet by nearly 100 ships over the next three decades, according to a recent Congressional Budget Office analysis.

The service would need an annual budget of \$340 billion to operate, purchase and maintain a fleet of 381 battle force ships as outlined in its most current shipbuilding proposal, the CBO said in a report released Jan. 6.

That's roughly one-third more under current valuations than the Navy's \$255 billion budget in 2024, said the CBO, which ana-

lyzed the service's 30-year shipbuilding plan submitted to Congress in March.

That plan would grow the fleet to a level not seen since 2001, according to the report. The service now has about 296 numbered battle force ships, including aircraft carriers, destroyers, submarines and combat logistics vessels, among others.

"Over the past decade, funding for ship construction reached its highest level since the Reagan Administration's defense buildup in the 1980s," the CBO said. "Since 2015, lawmakers have appropriated an average of \$2.5 billion more per year for shipbuilding than the President

has requested, partly because of concerns that the fleet is too small to perform all of its missions."

The Navy needs a larger, more flexible fleet to address growing threats in the Indo-Pacific, Europe and the Middle East, officials and naval analysts have argued.

An inadequately sized force is one reason why there are fewer Navy ships currently on patrol in the eastern Mediterranean Sea than in recent years, analysts recently said.

Presence in the Mediterranean is "partly threat-driven and situation-driven, and it's all conditioned by (the fact that) there aren't enough ships in the Na-



BRANDEN BOURQUE/U.S. Navy

**The attack submarine USS Texas departs Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in Maine on Dec. 6 for sea trials.**

vy," said Bradley Martin, a retired Navy surface warfare officer and director of the Rand Corp. National Security Supply Chain Institute.

Under the Navy's 2025 shipbuilding plan, the service would buy fewer next-generation attack submarines and large surface ships, favoring proven current-generation submarines, destroyers and other vessels, according to the CBO report.

For example, in its 2024 plan the Navy envisioned purchasing as many as 35 next-generation attack submarines. Its 2025 proposal includes buying just 14 of them.

Instead, the service is opting to buy 36 Virginia-class fast-attack submarines in the coming decades.

Over the next 30 years, the Navy would buy 364 ships, or an average of about 12 annually, for an estimated \$903 billion.

That cost likely is higher — \$1.075 trillion in current-year dollars — when all expenses, such as outfitting new ships or purchasing oceanographic survey, sealift and other vessels not considered part of the battle force are included, the CBO said.

The report cast doubt on the Navy's ability to achieve its acquisition goals, which also include more missiles and unmanned systems on ships to make it more difficult for an opponent to destroy the fleet's offensive capability.

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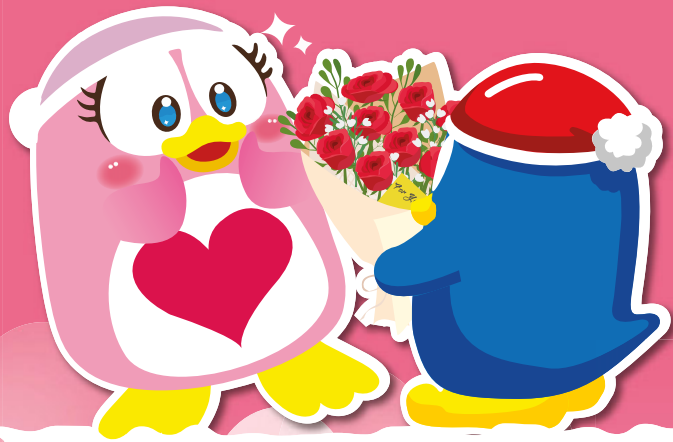
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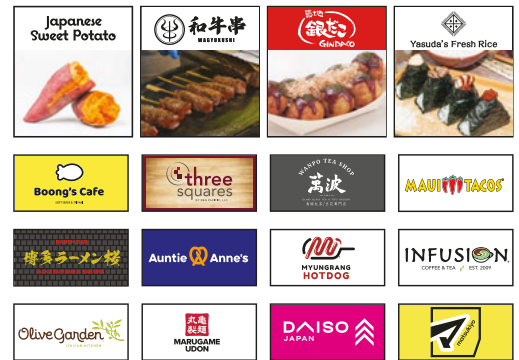
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