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'His memory still lives on'

Airmen, allies pay tribute with 'Jutba Drop' during OCD

BY MASTER SGT. NATHANIEL ALLEN,
 374TH AIRLIFT WING

In 2015, tragedy struck when Senior Airman Jeremy Jutba-Hake tragically passed away while supporting Operation Christmas Drop. In 2015, Jutba-Hake collapsed and died unexpectedly after a flight due to an undiagnosed heart condition.

Nearly a decade later on Dec. 12, Airmen, family members, and international partners gathered at Andersen Air Force Base, Guam, during OCD for a memorial service and, later, a flight, to honor the enduring legacy of a young man who died doing what he loved.

Eva Hake, the mother of Senior Airman Jeremy Jutba-Hake, signs a tribute bundle for her late son at Andersen Air Force Base on Dec. 12 during Operation Christmas Drop 2024.
 Photos by Senior Airman Natalie Doan, U.S. Air Force

A message from Eva and Jon Hake, the mother and father of Jutba-Hake, is written on a tribute bundle for their late son.

SEE TRIBUTE ON PAGE 4

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Sweet, salty mix of familial emotions

With my hair a rat's nest and still in my pajamas, I tapped on my daughter Anna's bedroom door. She was home for a whole week from New York City. My younger daughter, Lilly, a nursing student, had also just stopped by after her night shift at the hospital to see her big sister.

Slowly opening the door, I delighted at the scene that ranked in my top favorites as a mom: My daughters cozied up on one bed, chatting, gossiping and laughing. With an exaggerated tiptoeing movement that communicated, "Don't mind me!", I made my way to the other side of the already crowded bed and crawled in.

Anna and Lilly, 26 and 24 respectively, told stories of single young adulthood that were exciting, dramatic and hilarious. As a very tired 58-year-old mother, I relished the increasingly rare moments when both daughters were home and I could be a part of their lives. I sat back and took it all in.

For a moment, my attention was diverted, when our yellow Lab nibbled my sock.

"Ouch! Gilligan, stop!" Looking back toward Anna and Lilly, I noticed them whispering.

"What are you whispering about?" I whined in a juvenile tone. "Nothing," Lilly smirked at Anna.

"You guys, that's not fair. You say that you tell me everything, but you really don't," I pouted.

"We tell you too much, Mom," Lilly blurted. "It's not healthy!" "Anna," I pleaded a few minutes later, "Will you please come to Boot Camp with me today?" She agreed, and I was happy again.

That afternoon, I entered the kitchen where Anna sat working at the table and exclaimed, "Hey Anna, I have all the ingredients to make Chex Mix!"

Ever since Anna was in college, I'd been making batches of homemade Chex Mix for her to share with her roommates and friends. Her best friend's mom, a gorgeous bridal gown designer and talented baker, supplied their group of girls batches of her signature Reese's Cup cookies, and I contributed homemade Chex Mix. The girls had always seemed tickled pink to receive our respective sweet and salty offerings, and even though my pedestrian snack wasn't as decadent as the cookies,

The Meat and Potatoes of Life

Lisa Smith Molinari



I was proud of my contribution to the girls' fun nonetheless.

"I just need to get some pretzel sticks ... do you want me to get gluten free?" I asked Anna while I inspected the pantry.

"Mom —" Anna hesitated a moment then said, "— I'm not really that into the Chex Mix."

In an instant, scenes and thoughts flashed before my senses.

The batch of Chex Mix I burned on Anna's birthday. The other mom's pristine home, perfect smile and blonde hair. My paunch. Tumbleweeds of dog hair blowing across my hardwood floors. My cluttered house.

My admittedly weak self-esteem quickly conjured up a yearslong conspiracy: Anna and her friends had never liked my Chex Mix but were afraid to tell me. They had only pretended, to make me feel included.

However, almost as quickly, an alternative theory came to me. "Maybe Anna is just being passive-aggressive?" I thought, but didn't know why.

I hid away in another room, googling for answers, and found a Psychology Today article identifying seven roles mothers play in their daughters' lives that might explain relationship tension. Voraciously reading the list of seven roles, two descriptions jumped out at me. "The Girlfriend," the type of mom who wants to know everything and doesn't respect boundaries. Yep. Bingo. And "The Fixer," a well-meaning mom who wants to help too much, and can't accept that her daughter wants to control her own life. Uh-huh, guilty.

Regardless of whether Anna was being passive-aggressive to throw up boundaries, I was 50% of our mother-daughter relationship and needed to take 50% of the responsibility. I realized that, in my excitement to have my daughters home during the holidays, I planned and expected too much, leaving no room for them to be independent adult women.

Like Chex Mix and cookies, mother-daughter relationships are a complex mix of ingredients. As life stages change, sometimes roles must be carefully adjusted. A little more of this, a little less of that, to strike the right salty and sweet balance.

Read more of Lisa Smith Molinari's columns at: themeatandpotatoesoflife.com and in Lisa's book, *The Meat and Potatoes of Life: My True Lit Com*
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Left: Eva Hake prays at a ceremony for her late son at Andersen Air Force Base on Dec. 12 during Operation Christmas Drop 2024. Photo by Senior Airman Natalie Doan, U.S. Air Force Right: Airman 1st Class Anthony Gonzalez, left, and Tech. Sgt. Jordan Silversmith, check each other's equipment during a flight honoring Senior Airman Jeremy Jutba-Hake, who passed away during Operation Christmas Drop in 2015. Photo by Master Sgt. Nathan Allen, U.S. Air Force

TRIBUTE: Airman made his mark in Air Force

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Airman 1st Class Anthony Gonzalez, a loadmaster with the 36th Airlift Squadron at Yokota Air Base, Japan, opened the memorial with comments about Jutba-Hake's legacy.

"While many of us here did not have the privilege of knowing him personally, the stories shared about him speak volumes about the kind of person he was. On every account, he carried himself with kindness, humility, and the spirit of generosity," he said. "He was an exceptional loadmaster, a reliable friend, and a source of inspiration for those who were

fortunate enough to serve alongside him. And now, nine years later, his legacy lives on. For all Eagle Airlifters, SrA Jutba(-Hake) is a reminder of the type of Airman we should all strive to be."

Many current members of the 36th hugged Jutba-Hake's parents, Jon and Eva, throughout the ceremony, which took place behind a C-130J Super Hercules aircraft. During the ceremony's final act, they boarded the aircraft and signed a bundle designed by volunteers specifically for Jutba-Hake - a bundle that would later be delivered to Pacific islanders in remote parts of the Indo-Pacific region.



Eva said she knew from an earlier age that her son was destined to fly in large part due to Jon, who retired as the command chief of Air Force Materiel Command.

"He wanted to follow his dad's footsteps, but because of

"On every account, he carried himself with kindness, humility, and the spirit of generosity."

- Airman 1st Class Anthony Gonzalez

his vision, he couldn't be the pilot. So, he figured working behind would be great as a loadmaster," she said. "He wanted to fly so much that his friends said he'd wanted to come up to Yokota, get more flying hours, and travel the

world. He was having the best time of his life. He was born to be an aviator."

His mother said, when he was young, he'd wear aviator pajamas and sing songs about flying while jumping off the sofa. Now, 9 years after Jutba-Hake's death, she said she's thankful members of the 36th still take time to honor him every year.

"I am grateful. I'm just in awe, only because his memory still lives on," she said. "It's a struggle every day, but yet I put on a smile and I thank everyone that's still doing this, that they can give their time, and especially for always remembering."

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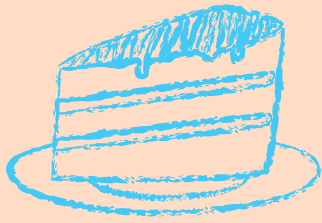
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Delightful Guam

STORY AND PHOTOS BY BBQ

How about some Fried Banana (Madoya)??



Fried bananas, or as they are called on Guam, Madoya (the “y” is pronounced like a “j”), are one of the delicacies of Guam. It is a battered half slice of banana fried to perfection and typically served with butter. But you can sprinkle a little brown sugar with cinnamon if you like to add a little more sweetness. However, most Guam households just use plain butter, just like one would with toast.

Ingredients

Batter mix for madoya:

- 1/2 cup all purpose flour
- 3/4 cup water
- 1/4-1/3 cup sugar
- Mix ingredients together until creamy similar to pancake batter.

Directions

- Banana must be firm (when skin is just turning from green to yellow). And you should use the cooking bananas, like plantains. If you do not have these types of bananas at your local grocer, then you can use the sweet ones like “Chiquita” but make sure they are not ripe.
- Peel the banana.
- Slice the banana in half.
- Dip in batter and let the batter drip for a few seconds.
- Fry in oil at about 375° until golden brown.
- Lift banana out of oil and let it drip for a few seconds.
- Place in colander upright and allow to drain.
- Serve hot with butter.

Let me warn you, once you start spreading that butter on these nice and hot, freshly fried banana slices, its hard to stop eating them. You will find that they go down like potato chips. You actually have to force yourself to stop.

I hope you enjoy this little spice of life from Guam. And I would be remiss if I did not thank my lovely wife, Lupe, for sharing this recipe with you all. So Thank You my dear.



1 Slice the banana in half..very carefully!!!



4 Fry them until they are golden brown.



2 Coat well with your batter mix.



5 Here you have the finished product. But before you start eating them, pat them dry with a paper towel.



3 Place the battered banana slices one at a time in the hot oil. Oil should be about 375 degrees F.



6 spread your butter and start in.

Pecan Tassies (Tarts)...the perfect snack



Ingredients

Recipe version by Lupe (Dydasco) Olivas

- For the dough:**
- 1/2 cup butter
 - 1 3-oz. pkg cream cheese
 - 1 cup all-purpose flour

- For the pecan filling:**
- 1 egg
 - 3/4 cup brown sugar
 - 1 tsp vanilla
 - Dash of salt
 - 1 tbs butter
 - 1/2 cup coarsely chopped pecans

Directions

- For pastry, in mixer bowl, mix together the 1/2 cup butter and the cream cheese.
- Add flour and mix well. Set aside.
- Mix into bowl the egg, brown sugar, the 1 tablespoon butter, the vanilla and salt, until smooth and set aside.
- Roll pastry dough into 1 inch round balls and place into an ungreased mini-muffin tray.
- Shape dough in each muffin cup to cover the bottom and sides.
- Spoon about 1 tsp of chopped pecans into each muffin cup.
- Fill each cup up with the egg/brown sugar mixture that you previously set aside.
- Pre-heat the oven to 325 F, and then bake for about 25 minutes or until filling has set somewhat firm. Individual ovens vary with their own specific temp and timing. You know how that goes.
- Remove and allow to cool.
- This should make about 24 tarts.
- You can adjust this recipe to your individual taste.

Sometimes your sweet tooth kicks in and sometimes you just got to have some type of pasty. Well, I have the perfect solution for both. Pecan Tassies as they are known on Guam. Also known as Pecan Tarts.

These little jems have that fabulous pecan, butter, vanilla, and brown sugar filling in a fantastic, flaky pastry cup. Talk about tasty and the worst thing is that they are bite sized. A dozen is just not enough.....believe me!!

This was all that was left of 4 dozen. You know I had to flex my quality control wings... Do yourself a favor and try these out. And don't forget that ice cold glass of milk.

Desserts

n-style desserts



BY RUEBEN OLIVAS,
GUAM

Red Velvet Cookie Sandwiches w/ cream cheese filling



bqguam.blogspot.com

Hey, with all the cooking and grilling that we do, a meal wouldn't be complete without a good dessert. My wife, Lupe, got this recipe for Red Velvet Cookie Sandwiches, while watching TV.

Recipe by Chefs Peter Duenas and Lorena Manibusan, Meskla Restaurant, Guam

Cookie batter:

- 1/2 cup softened butter
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 2 eggs
- 1 cup flour
- 1 tsp baking soda
- 1 tsp baking powder
- 1 tbsp cocoa powder
- 1 tsp salt
- 1&1/2 tsp red food coloring
- 1 tbsp milk

Cream cheese filling:

- 1/4 cup softened butter
- 8 oz. softened cream cheese
- 1/2 cup powdered sugar

Sometimes We Just Have to Have Dessert!!!!

Directions

- Pre-heat oven to 375 F.
- Mix ingredients in the following order.
- Fold the butter with granulated sugar.
- Add in the vanilla.
- Add in the eggs.
- Fold in the flour, baking powder, and baking soda.
- Next fold in the powdered cocoa and 1 tsp salt.
- Now add the red food coloring and milk and mix everything together until you have a smooth batter.
- Next use a small ice cream scoop for portion control and drop the batter on a cookie sheet about 3 inches apart.
- Bake at 375 F for about 10 minutes.
- Take out of the oven and allow to cool for 15-20 minutes.

Directions for cream cheese filling:

- To make the cream cheese filling, take the softened butter and whip it until it is creamy in texture.
- Fold in the cream cheese and add the powdered sugar slowly until you have a creamy filling.

Putting it all together:

- Take one cookie and add filling, thickness depends on your personal taste. Cover with another cookie to create the sandwich.

You have got to try this. Super delicious. For all you macho men out there, you can substitute the glass of milk for a pint of ice cold beer!!!!

Pineapple Cream Pie



Well since we have been posting desserts, let me post one of my all time favorites.... my mother's Pineapple Cream Pie.

Pineapple Cream Pie... Mom's Recipe!!

Ingredients

- 1 Pkg 9-inch Baked Pie Crust (Pillsbury Frozen Pie Crust or Betty Crocker) or make your own.
- 2 Cans 20oz. Crushed Pineapple w/heavy syrup, drained
- 2 Egg yolks
- 2 Cups milk
- 3/4 cup sugar
- 1 Tsp. salt
- 5 Tbsp corn starch
- 2 Tbsp butter
- 1 Tsp. vanilla

Directions

- Prepare pie crust according to directions & set aside, allow to cool.
- Over medium heat combine the 2 egg yolks, milk, sugar, salt, and cornstarch. Stir constantly and bring to boil. Mixture will thicken rapidly. When thickened, remove from heat.
- Stir in butter, drained crushed pineapple and vanilla.
- Pour into cooled pie crust and let pie cool.
- Refrigerate until firm.

Pistachio Cake

Everyone loves dessert. A Guam island favorite is Pistachio cake. Here is a great tasting recipe from one of our friends. And it is so easy to make. Even I can make this...



Pistachio Cake... Island Favorite!!

Cake

Recipe supplied by Arlene

- 1 Box of Betty Crocker Super Moist Yellow Cake Mix
- For the water portion of the instructions, make it 1/2 water and 1/2 Rum.
- Add 1 box of Jello Pistachio pudding into the batter.
- Add green food coloring until it is the color that you like.
- Those are the only deviations from the instructions on the box.

Glaze

Recipe supplied by Lani

- 1 cup confectioner's sugar
- 3 tsp milk
- 1 tsp vanilla
- butter for flavoring

That's all there is to it. Simple...right?



Land snails of the Mariana Islands

BY ALEXANDER M. KERR,
GUAMPEDIA

Pacific Islands, including the Mariana Islands, often have many small native snails. Many of the species in the Marianas are unique to the archipelago, or even to only one of the islands. Some of these snails live in trees in the moist and shaded forests, while others live in the moss and leaf litter of the forest floor. Guam has about 100 species of land snails, although about twenty of these have probably been introduced.



Giant African Snail



Rice tree Snail on Guam



Akaleha' bracelet

a couple of dozen of these still require formal scientific names and descriptions. Many of the Mariana Island species have only been collected from the southern islands of Saipan, Tinian, Rota and Guam. The fauna of the northern islands remains the least known.

The best-known snails in the Mariana Islands are the tree snails in the family Partulidae from the genera Partula and Samoana. The first Partula described from the Mariana Islands, Partula gibba, is the most widely distributed in the archipelago. Another species, Partula radiolata, is endemic to, and still widely distributed within, the largest and southernmost island of Guam. Another species, Partula salifana was discovered in the forests surrounding the summit of Mt. Alifan of Guam. The fourth species, P. langfordi is restricted to the tiny island of Aguiguan. The fifth Marianas partulid, Samoana fragilis, is known from northern Guam and Rota.

Cultural history

In the Chamorro language, land snails in general are called akaleha'. Land snails appear not to have been used as food or used in material culture, given their absence from the archeological record and oral culture. Intriguingly, some snails spread through the Pacific by hitching a ride on ancient canoes and cargo. Archeological research indicates that several widely distributed snails repeatedly show up on islands at about the same time as did the earliest human inhabitants. The same pattern

appears to hold true for the Mariana Islands.

The first Europeans to collect the land snails of the Mariana Islands were Jean-René Constant Quoy and Joseph Paul Gaimard, the scientists aboard the French naval vessel Uranie, Captain Louis Claude de Freycinet commanding, which



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stopped on Guam in April of 1819 during its circumnavigation of the world during the years 1817 to 1820. The only recorded use for land snails was an apparently relatively recent practice—to bead the

large and colorful Partula snails into purses for export and sale to tourists. This practice is of uncertain origin, but one that apparently ceased after World War II and as Partula became rarer on the heavily populated larger islands after the mid-20th century.

Diversity and systematics

Land snails belong to two main evolutionary or taxonomic groups, the informal group Pulmonata (formerly a taxonomic order), that is, the lung-bearing snails, and the clade Caenogastropoda (formerly a taxonomic superorder), a large

group of primarily marine snails that all retain the ancestral gills of their marine gastropod or snail cousins.

The shell-less slugs are all members of the air-breathing pulmonate family, but several slug groups have independently evolved through the partial or complete loss of their shell. The land snails of the Indo-west Pacific are not at all well documented. In the Mariana Islands, there are about 110 known distinct species, and even

SEE SNAILS ON PAGE 10

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SNAILS: Predatory worm eating them up

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

Current decline

Across the Pacific, there is an ongoing and unprecedented rate of extinctions documented for native snail species. Sadly, the same holds true for the snail fauna of the Mariana Islands, where the numbers of nearly all species

have declined precipitously during the latter half of the 20th century. Many species have not been seen alive in half a century, some, in fact, not since the publication of their original descriptions.

The cause of the declines in the Marianas are primarily due to habitat destruction and the imprudent introductions of generalist predators such as the gastropods snails

– *Gonaxis* species and *Euglandina rosea* to control yet another invasive gastropod, the agricultural pest *Achatina fulica*, the giant African land snail. In unparalleled biological irony, these predators, as well as their endemic prey, have now fallen prey to the introduction of the generalist predatory flat-worm *Platydemas manokwari*. The worm appears to have also essentially eliminated the introduced snail predators, but still decimates native species.

The upshot is that the forests of the southern Marianas are now nearly devoid of native snail species, including on most islands the iconic and once prolific *Partula*. Declines of partulids have been of the order that the two Marianas *Partula* having the most restricted distributions—*Partula salifana* and



Partula langfordi, are now undoubtedly extinct, and *Partula radiolata* is probably reduced on Guam to a few thousand animals. Even *Partula gibba* no longer occurs in vast areas of its formerly broad range; on Guam, it probably exists as a few hundred animals.

As a result of the carnage wrought by the foolish introduction

of the predatory worm, the faded, pocked and empty shells of *Partula* and other snails now litter Guam's forests. They will soon erode and fragment, such that most evidence of their existence will be gone forever in another decade or so.

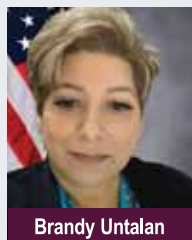
This is a reprint from Guampedia.com, an online resource about Guam history and the Chamoru people, used here with permission.

GSA in Guam

GSA Global Supply® has partnered with M80 Systems, a local small business, to serve civilian and military customers in Guam. M80 is now storing and delivering approximately 350 high-demand National Stock Number (NSN) items formerly stored in and shipped from the continental United States. The change reduces delivery time to a few days from weeks or months.



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Brandy Untalan

The program does not replace existing retail stores managed by GSA at Andersen AFB and Naval Base Guam. Instead, the stores and new outlets are complementary. For more information, please contact your local GSA Customer Service Director, Brandy Untalan, at 671-333-4721 or brandy.untalan@gsa.gov.

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Boonie Stomps Guam

INFORMATION PROVIDED BY
GUAM BOONIE STOMPERS



SCHEDULE 2025

Jan. 11(Sat.)	Tenjo to Tarzan Falls Trailhead (Double Difficult)
Jan. 18(Sat.)	Inarajan Falls (Difficult)
Jan. 25 (Sat.)	Tarzan Falls (Medium)
Feb. 1(Sat.)	Agfayan River and Falls (Medium)
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)



Mt. Tenjo to Tarzan

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



FOR EVERYONES SAFETY:
No Pets Allowed
No Drones Allowed

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

Complete 10 Boonie Stomp hikes to earn a free Boonie Stomp T-Shirt.

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.

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Crossword by Margie E. Burke

ACROSS

1 ___ Romeo

5 It's sold in bars

9 Canned meat since 1937

13 Pale anagram

14 More than suggest

15 Madcap comedy

16 Fluid rock

17 Like the fabled piper

18 Motionless

19 Be in charge of

21 Summer quencher

23 "Hondo", for one

24 Prickly shrub

25 Very skillful

27 Hoops grp.

30 Maintain

33 Sign before Virgo

34 Think tank nugget

35 Krasinski of Hollywood

36 Work shirker

38 In the vicinity

39 Quite often

40 Piece of pipe

41 Parody

43 Detail on some tickets

44 Acme

46 Medium's deck

48 Classic Dodge

52 Bond's drink

54 Franc division

55 Words to live by

56 Flower part

58 Iris's place

59 "Cheers" role

60 Coloring

61 Road turn

62 Vogue rival

63 Adjusts, as a clock

64 Means justifiers, at times

DOWN

1 Give the OK

2 Way off base?

3 Top picks, informally

4 Common rental

5 Lucky horse-shoe, e.g.

6 Get one's bearings

7 Go gray

8 AKC concern

9 Smooths, as wood

10 Made believe

11 Part of a plot

12 Prefix with physics or data

15 Like some speeches

20 Char, as a steak

22 Decorator's concerns

26 Pompeo of "Grey's Anatomy"

28 Bridges of Hollywood

29 Org. for seniors

30 Cracked

31 Without help

32 Rigged court proceeding

34 River float, at times

37 ADA members

42 Zip

44 Kind of number

45 Actor's study, perhaps

47 Make amends

49 1999 film, "Any ___ Sunday"

50 Revise

51 Digests digests

52 Like some beds

53 Leaf-stem angle

57 Corn site

Answers to Previous Crossword:

W	I	T	C	H		C	A	S	T		S	I	L	L
I	D	A	H	O		A	L	T	O		O	L	I	O
M	O	R	A	T	O	R	I	U	M		P	L	O	W
P	L	O	P		T	E	E	N		B	R	I	N	E
					L	A	T	E	N	T	H	E	A	T
M	A	D	I	S	O	N		M	A	N	N	E	R	S
A	G	E	N	T			M	A	R	J	O	R	A	M
K	I	T		A	T	L	A	N	T	A		A	V	A
E	L	E	C	T	I	O	N		M	I	T	E	R	
S	E	R	R	I	E	D		E	M	I	N	E	N	T
					M	A	N	S	E	R	V	A	N	T
S	P	I	C	E		S	E	E	S		E	L	S	A
C	O	N	K		S	T	E	N	T	O	R	I	A	N
A	L	E	E		E	A	S	T		V	I	S	I	T
T	O	D	D		T	R	E	S		A	M	P	L	E

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Stripes Sports Trivia

Who was the first player, after a record-breaking season in which he led his team to an NBA-record 73 wins and set an individual record of 402 three-pointers (smashing his own previous league record of 286 set the year before), in NBA history to be elected league MVP by a unanimous vote?

Answer

Golden State Warriors guard Stephen Curry

SUDOKU

Difficulty: Easy

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

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:


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


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Raw honey – The Miracle nectar

STORY AND PHOTO BY ARMY LT. COL. (RET.) ANNETTE MERFALEN, WWW.ANNIESCHAMORROKITCHEN.COM

I've read many different articles about the health benefits of honey over white, granulated sugar. Honey is high in calories, as is sugar (a teaspoon of honey contains 22 calories; there are 16 calories in a teaspoon of sugar).

So, the question is, IS honey better for you than sugar?

In reading up on the differences between honey and sugar, I learned that both contain fructose and glucose. The difference is that the fructose and glucose in sugar are "hooked" together, whereas the fructose and glucose in honey are "unhooked" or independent units. Why is that important, you ask? Well, I found through my readings is that this is important if you have digestion issues. During digestion, the "unhooked" independent fructose and glucose units in honey get absorbed in our intestinal tracts, while the "hooked" fructose-glucose units in sugar have to first be broken down (into separate units like in honey) before it gets absorbed. The enzymes in our bodies do a good job of breaking down sugar (sucrose) molecules, but not all of them are absorbed. This is where it could cause an issue for some people. (If you have a sensitive stomach, stop reading. I'm going to talk about bacteria in our intestines now.) The sugar molecules that don't get digested or absorbed in our intestinal tracts feeds the bad bacteria in our intestines. Where this is not so good is when there is an over-population of bad bacteria that feeds off the undigested sugar, which in turn causes some by-products, one of which is the production

of different gasses, methane gas among them. Again, putting it simply, you end up farting a lot.

It stands to reason that if you substitute honey for sugar in most of your foods, you will be less gassy (your significant other will thank you for this).

Another interesting bit of information I found through my readings is fructose is sweeter than glucose, which is one of the reasons fructose is used in so many food products today. However, fructose does not convert to energy as efficiently as glucose. As a result, processed foods containing granulated sugar high in fructose convert to fat more easily than honey. Hmm...less fat production by using honey in foods? I'm sold!

Actually, I like using honey because it is plain and simply DELICIOUS. Not to mention that I buy my honey from local Colorado bee farmers, and anything I can do to help our local economy, I'm all over it.

Oh, as an added bonus, honey doesn't spoil! I don't worry about honey going to waste in my house...we use it up pretty quickly. Luckily for us the Busy Bee Farm in Larkspur, CO is not too far from where we live that we can get a resupply when we need it.

So, whether you add honey to your diet instead of sugar for it's pure deliciousness or supposed health benefits is up to you. I recommend buying raw honey (honey that is unheated, unpasteurized and unprocessed) if you can find it.



A Taste of Guam

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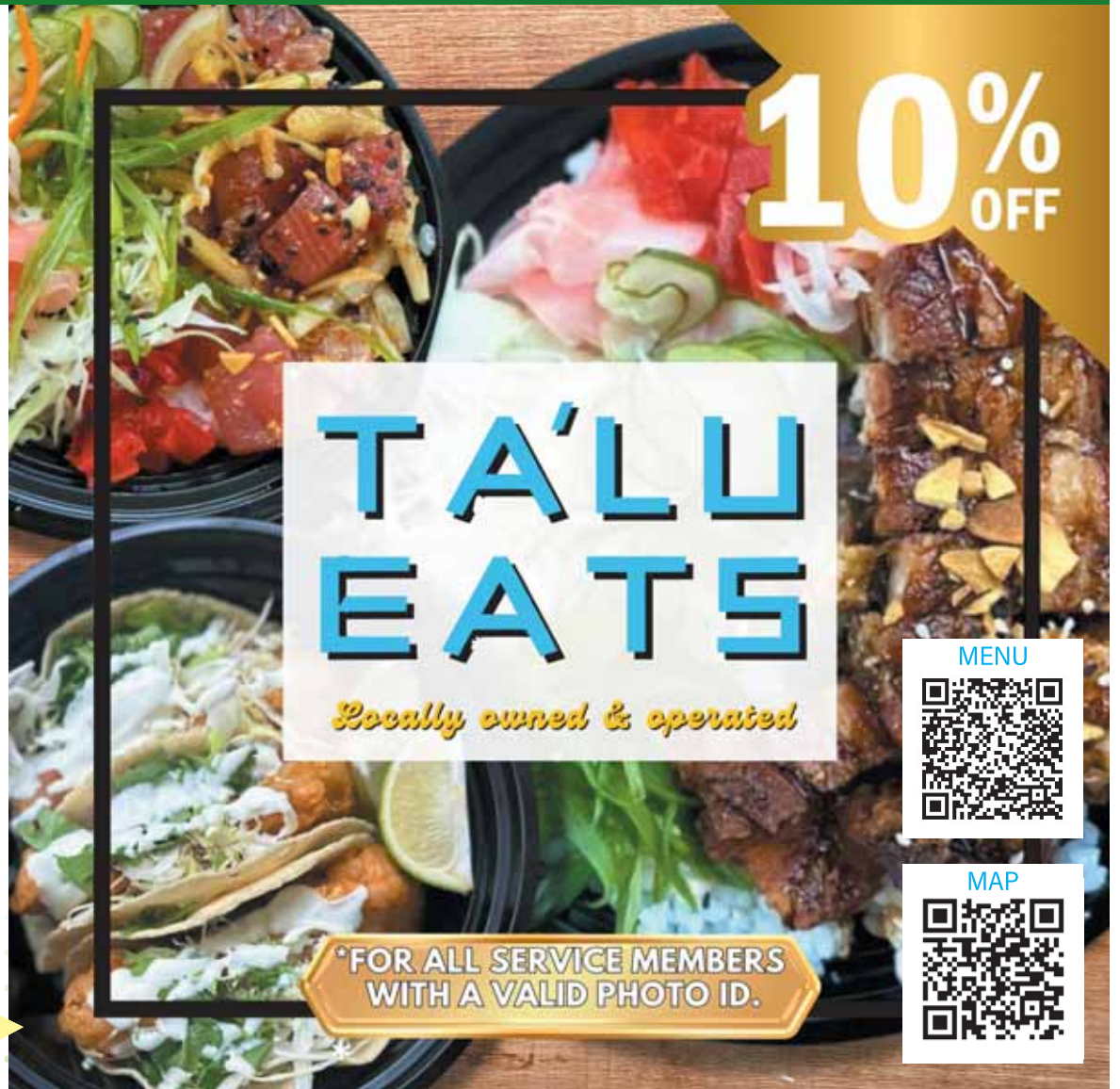
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RESTAURANT INFO



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RESTAURANT INFO

A Taste of Guam



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RESTAURANT INFO

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GUAM EDITION

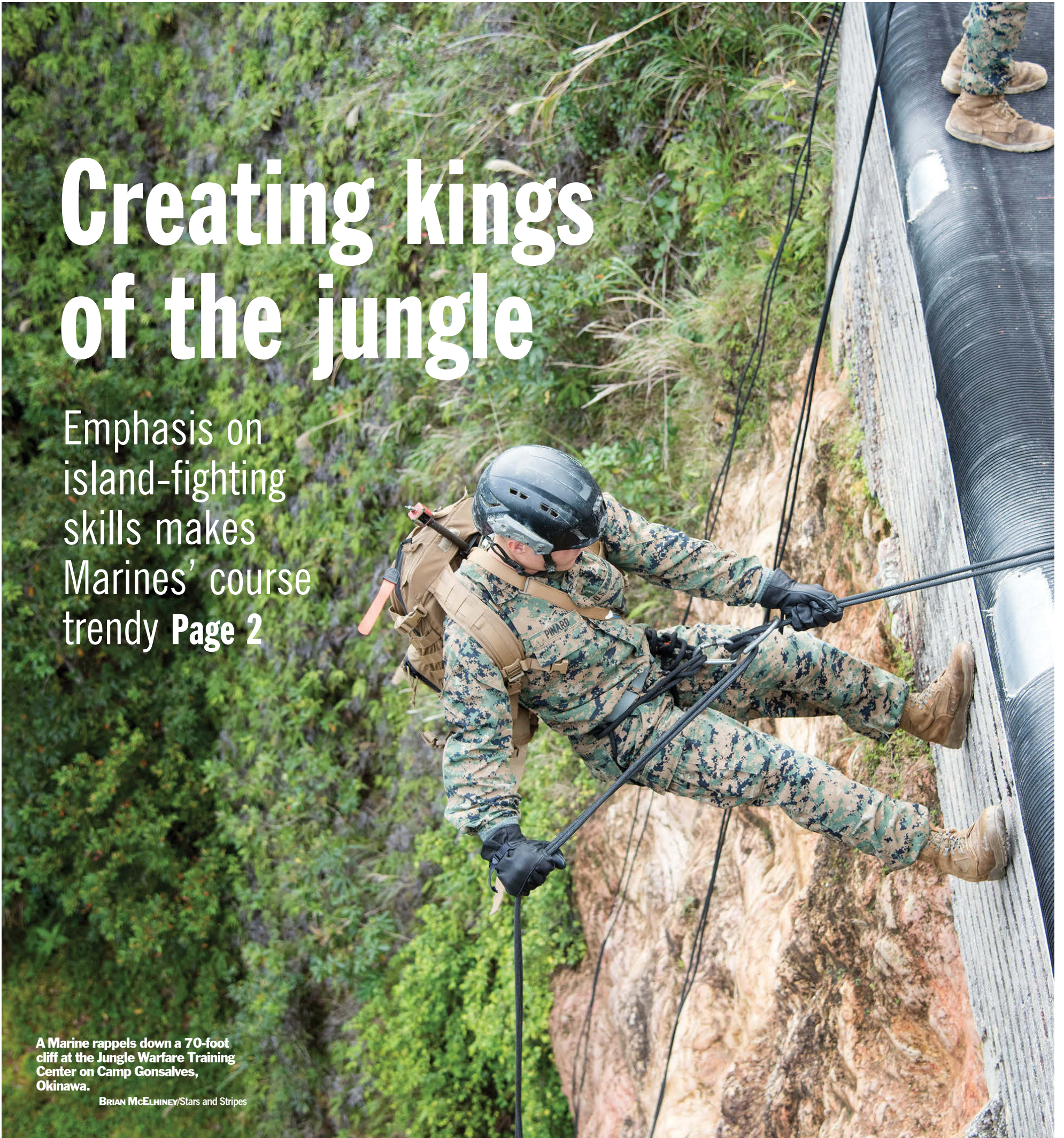
JANUARY 6, 2025

Creating kings of the jungle

Emphasis on
island-fighting
skills makes
Marines' course
trendy **Page 2**

A Marine rappels down a 70-foot cliff at the Jungle Warfare Training Center on Camp Gonsalves, Okinawa.

BRIAN McELHINEY/Stars and Stripes



COVER STORY

Course hones skills in jungle warfare

Okinawa Marines preparing for possibility of island conflict

By **BRIAN McELHINEY**
Stars and Stripes

CAMP GONSALVES, Okinawa — About 40 Marines took turns descending a 45-foot cliff — a hasty rappelling obstacle — part of a weeklong course designed to teach them and other service members how to fight and survive in a jungle environment.

Instructors at the cliff bottom — “jungle leaders” — called out encouragement, shouting out when to crawl, walk and run.

“Right now, because it’s the beginning of the day, they’re just going through without any equipment on,” Gunnery Sgt. Caleb Holsinger, the basic jungle skills course chief, said during a media tour of the center. “But later on in the day you’ll see rifles and packs and stuff like that going down both of these.”

The potential for conflict in the Indo-Pacific has heightened the importance of jungle warfare training in recent years, according to Lt. Col. Kelly Candies, director of the Jungle Warfare Training Center.

For example, while no Marine is required to take jungle warfare training, the recently created 12th Marine Littoral Regiment based at Camp Hansen is considering the course.

Littoral regiments are designed as smaller, mobile units inserted within enemy missile range to seize and hold key Pacific islands and deny enemy vessels access to surrounding areas, a key tenet of the Marine Corps’ island-fighting doctrine in its Force Design plan.

At the rappelling site, the 45-degree hasty rappel seemed a bit less daunting than the nearly vertical, 70-foot-high main rappelling cliff.

The hardest part for Marines rappelling from the 70-foot cliff is just “getting off that platform,” said Cpl. Irving Gomez, a jungle leader.

“We do brief them on, when they first originally get here, how tall the cliff is just to get them mentally prepared,” he said, looking down from the cliff top. “But we don’t have a smaller one. They see a good and bad demo, and that would be their view of seeing and getting confident and ready for the rappel.”

The Jungle Warfare Training Center — the only one of its kind in the Department of Defense —



PHOTOS BY BRIAN McELHINEY/Stars and Stripes

Marines make a camp fire at the Jungle Warfare Training Center on Camp Gonsalves, Okinawa, on Dec. 11.

“The importance is that we are prepared to do our job in any environment.”

Lt. Col. Kelly Candies
Jungle Warfare Training Center

was established in 1958 across 17,000 acres of mountains and jungle in the north of Okinawa. It’s open to Marines, sailors, soldiers and airmen, as well as other NATO forces and Japanese troops, Holsinger said.

The center offers four courses: basic jungle skills; a five-week jungle leaders’ course that qualifies service members to lead other troops through jungle terrain; a jungle medicine course; and a jungle communications course. Units can also use the center to do their own training, Holsinger said.

About 7,000 to 10,000 troops come through the center each



Marines load a 225-pound dummy onto a stretcher, or sked, as others stand watch at the training center.

year, he said.

About 160 Marines from several units signed up for the basic jungle skills course.

They practiced at several stations: cliff rappelling; survival skills such as fire-making, finding water and building shelters;

patrolling; and combat casualty care. They were scheduled to be tested the next day for their certifications, Holsinger said.

The course concluded with a nearly four-mile, 18-obstacle jungle course.

“The importance is that we are



Marines practice hasty rappelling down a 45-foot cliffside at the training center.

prepared to do our job in any environment,” Candies said. “Being here helps build confidence with our allies and partners.”

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@BrianMcElhiney

MILITARY

GAO: Navy wasted \$1.84B on cruiser rehab

7 cruisers were modernized, but only 3 returned to the fleet

By CAITLYN BURCHETT
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Navy wasted nearly \$2 billion rehabilitating four aging cruisers that were ultimately decommissioned, according to a scathing report by a federal watchdog.

Since 2015, the Navy has spent about \$3.7 billion modernizing seven Ticonderoga class guided-missile cruisers. But only three will be delivered back to fleet, and none will gain five service life years, as intended, the Government Accountability Office said in a recent report.

“The Navy did not effectively plan the cruiser effort. This led to a high volume of unplanned work — 9,000 contract changes — resulting in cost growth and schedule delays. The Navy has yet to identify the root causes of unplanned work or develop and codify root cause mitigation strategies to prevent poor planning from similarly affecting future surface ship modernization efforts,” the report read.

The modernization plan dates back to 2012, when the Navy proposed retiring several cruisers due to budget constraints. Congress rejected the Navy’s proposal and provided funding to modernize the ships.

In response in 2015, the Navy planned to use a phased approach to modernization that would refit 11 cruisers across a 10-year timeframe in an effort to keep them in the fleet into the 2030s.

In 2017, the plan cut four ships, reducing the modernization effort from 11 ships down to seven.

Four of those seven ships — USS Hue City, USS Anzio, USS Vicksburg and USS Cowpens — ate up \$1.84 billion being repaired and modernized, only to never deploy again.

The Navy decommissioned the Hue City and the Anzio in 2022 after spending \$161.2 million and \$250.54 million, respectively.

The Vicksburg was decommissioned in June after the Navy spent \$678.56 million on it, followed by the Cowpens in August, which had \$754.1 million in repairs done.

After touring five cruisers and interviewing more than 100 Navy officials, the GAO found that weak oversight, lack of planning and poor-quality work drove the failure of the cruiser moderniza-



SCOTT PITTMAN/U.S. Navy

The guided-missile cruiser USS Vicksburg is one of four cruisers whose combined repair bills totaled \$1.84 billion.

“The Navy did not effectively plan the cruiser effort.”

Government Accountability Office

tion program.

“Even though the Navy used more than \$2 billion of procurement funding for cruiser modernization, it did not implement planning and oversight tools typical of high dollar major defense acquisition programs following the major capability acquisition pathways because it is not an acquisition program,” the report read.

The Navy’s cruiser modification plan will upgrade three ships — the USS Gettysburg, USS Chosin and USS Cape St. George for the price of \$1.9 billion. Originally, all 11 cruisers were meant to complete modernization by 2026.

To date, nearly \$599.4 million



CHARLES BLAINE/U.S. Navy

Sailors man the rails during the decommissioning ceremony of the USS Vicksburg in Norfolk, Va., in June.

was spent on the Gettysburg, \$695.72 on the Chosin and \$601.39 on the Cape St. George. The Chosin and the Gettysburg have successfully completed modernization, with the Gettysburg deploying.

The point of the modernization was to extend cruiser service lives by five years each in an effort to keep more ships in the fleet. While the ships are not

currently planned to see 40 years of service life, the sea service will get an extra three years from the ships.

In November the Navy announced in plans to extend service lives of the Gettysburg, Chosin and Cape St. George to 2029, with plans to decommission them in 2030.

The Gettysburg, Chosin and Cape St. George, which were

commissioned in 1991, will now see 38 years of service before retirement.

Ultimately, the Navy saw approximately 36% cost growth on the cruisers it attempted to modernize and cumulatively experienced over 15 years of schedule delays.

The GAO recommended the Navy assess root causes of unplanned work by developing mitigation strategies and codifying the strategies in policy and reassessing its overall approach to quality assurance to prevent similar issues in future surface ship modernization efforts.

“The Navy has other upcoming significant surface ship modernization efforts, such as for 23 destroyers. The success of these efforts is critical to the Navy having a combat-ready fleet,” the report read.

The Navy agreed with the GAO’s recommendations, the report read.

MILITARY

DODEA opens new annex on Naval Base Guam

Middle school facility to accommodate island's growing student population

By JONATHAN SNYDER
Stars and Stripes

Department of Defense Education Activity has opened an annex to its middle school at Naval Base Guam to accommodate the growing student population.

The annex at William C. McCool Elementary Middle School debuted with a formal ceremony, according to a base Facebook post.

Seventh- and eighth-grade classrooms will move to the annex during the summer break in time for the 2025-26 school year, the post said.

"We are thrilled to open this space for our upper middle school students at McCool," Lois Rapp, DODEA Pacific director for student excellence, said in a DODEA news release Dec. 3.

The annex was previously a dental facility. With the ren-

ovations it has additional classrooms, a science lab area and flexible learning spaces, according to the release.

Neither the Navy's post nor DODEA's release listed a cost for the renovation.

On Aug. 29, 2003, the school was renamed for Navy Cmdr. William Cameron "Willie" McCool, a NASA astronaut and pilot aboard the space shuttle Columbia whose crew was killed when it disintegrated during re-entry into the Earth's atmosphere.

The school has more than 800 students ranging from pre-kindergarten to eighth grade.

"This project has been a true partnership, with full support from military leaders," Rapp said in the release.

nyder.jonathan@stripes.com
@Jon_E_Snyder



U.S. Navy

The commander of Naval Base Guam, Capt. John Fry, left, and other officials tour a new annex for William C. McCool Elementary Middle School.

Master sergeant wins \$250K on mountain-climbing show

By JEREMY STILLWAGNER
Stars and Stripes

YOKOTA AIR BASE, Japan — Ladeania Jackson, an Air National Guard master sergeant, and three others who completed a 14-day challenge in the Southern Alps of New Zealand shared a \$1 million prize on the reality TV show "The Summit."

The 16 contestants who started the show carried a share of the prize money in their backpacks but, as they dropped out, surrendered it to those who carried on.

Jackson — known as "Punkin Jackson" on the show — said she has been an avid reality TV fan since childhood. When she found out about auditions for "The Summit" through an Instagram post, she seized the opportunity.

"We had no idea what exactly we were signing up for," she told Stars and Stripes in an interview recently at Yokota, an airlift hub in western Tokyo. "I just thought it would be a great experience and a great opportunity."

A native of Columbus, Miss., Jackson serves with the 194th Air Support Operations Group at Camp Murray, Wash. But her home is at Yokota with her spouse, Senior Master Sgt. Tamika Boler of the 374th Logistics Readiness Squadron.

Jackson went home with \$250,000 and plans to use the money to expand her family. It will cover some of the cost of in vitro fertilization, she said in a Facebook message.

Jackson said the competitors



Air National Guard Master Sgt. Ladeania Jackson competes on the reality TV show "The Summit."

weren't told what they had signed up for until the first day of filming.

They were given 14 days to scale a mountain while carrying an equal share of a \$1 million prize in addition to all their gear. Anyone who made it to the top would win a share of the prize money, but if no one completed the journey, all the money would be lost.

"Hearing those words was a shock, to say the least," Jackson said. "None of us had any kind of hiking experience or mountain climbing experience, so it was

going to be challenging for sure. I was getting what I signed up for, a challenge."

As their trek wore on, contestants were eliminated through votes and challenges until the final three reached the summit of Mount Head.

"We all had a goal to make it to the top, and to be one of the three that made it, win the game and accomplish that goal, was an amazing feeling that is truly hard to describe," Jackson said.

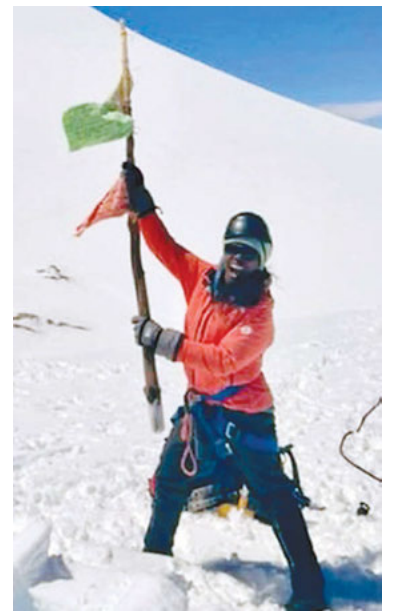
The show averaged 2.1 million viewers per episode, according to TV tracker tvseriesfinale.com,

but earned mixed reviews.

"The Summit" ends up a cheap knockoff of the CBS network's defining reality show, "Survivor," said Kelly Lawler, TV critic for USA Today.

The show is "too physically difficult for most of its contestants and full of nonsensical twists and rules that make it hard to understand, let alone get sucked into," she wrote in September. "There's very little suspense to a show where it seems clear the biggest guy is probably going to be the winner."

Joel Keller of the Decider



Ladeania Jackson

Jackson shared a \$1 million prize on "The Summit."

CBS

website was kinder. "The vistas in that part of the world are spectacular," he wrote Sept. 29. "The show is worth watching just to show this group going from the lush greenery at the base of the mountain to the Arctic conditions near the top."

Jackson hopes to compete on more reality TV shows and is eager for the next challenge.

"Your mind is your biggest obstacle," she said. "If you can get over that, you can accomplish any dream or goal you set out to accomplish."

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MILITARY

Guam base remains a work in progress

By ALEX WILSON
Stars and Stripes

The first contingent of Marines moving from Okinawa to Guam will bunk at Andersen Air Force Base, Naval Base Guam or off-base, not the Corps' Camp Blaz, a 4,000-acre, multibillion construction project still in the works.

About 100 logistics support troops from III Marine Expeditionary Force have begun moving from the III Marine Expeditionary Force on Okinawa to Guam, according to a recent joint statement by the Marine Corps and Japan's Ministry of Defense.

Their transfer has been underway for several months, Marine Corps Headquarters spokeswoman Capt. Brenda McCarthy said by email.

The first 100 Marines should be in place by 2025, according to a report by Kyodo News that cited the Defense Ministry.

They are the first of more than 4,000 Marines expected to move from Okinawa under the Defense Policy Review Initiative, a 2012 agreement between the two allies to reduce the military presence on Okinawa, where nearly 30,000 of the 55,000 U.S. service members in Japan are stationed.

Blaz — the first new Marine Corps installation in 72 years — is still largely under construction. It's expected to eventually house rotational units that are moving from Okinawa.

About 1,300 Marines from III MEF may be permanently stationed on Guam, while another 3,700 Marines may be on the island as a rotational force.



ALEX WILSON/Stars and Stripes

Contractors work on bachelor enlisted quarters at Marine Corps Base Camp Blaz, Guam, last month.

The recently arrived logistics Marines are considered permanently stationed on Guam, Blaz spokeswoman Maj. Diann Rosenfeld said by email. She said staff sergeants and above who are permanently stationed on Guam will live on the Air Force and Navy bases or in the local community.

The rotational force will be quartered at Camp Blaz regardless of rank, Rosenfeld said.

Marines, sailors and civilians

included in the relocation, regardless of their place of residence, may work at spots around the island, including Blaz, Andersen or the naval base, Rosenfeld said.

Blaz was officially activated in 2020 and has remained under construction since.

At least 22 projects have been completed across the island, mostly at other installations. Another 32 are expected to be completed in fiscal year 2025,

Rachel Landers, a spokeswoman for the Office in Charge of Construction Marine Corps Marianas, told Stars and Stripes at Blaz earlier this month.

The Defense Policy Review Initiative relocates some Marine assets from Okinawa to Guam, and elsewhere, including Hawaii. Japan is providing approximately \$3 billion of the estimated \$8.6 billion to build Blaz and its surrounding infrastructure.

McCarthy did not elaborate on

a timeline for coming troop arrivals on Guam.

"The Marine Corps continues to explore options for future force posture in the Indo-Pacific region that is geographically distributed, operationally resilient, politically sustainable, and remains capable of supporting our Allies, partners, and the Joint Force," she said.

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Active-duty troops eligible for flex spending

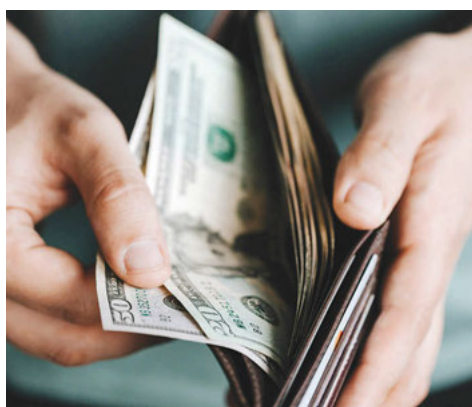
By JONATHAN SNYDER
Stars and Stripes

Many service members may enroll in a tax-advantaged flexible spending account starting next year to help pay medical expenses not covered by Tricare, a Department of Defense spokesman told Stars and Stripes.

"A Health Care Flexible Spending Account is an optional benefit that enables service members to set aside up to \$3,300 in pre-tax earnings to pay for health expenses such as co-pays and cost shares, vision, dental, and drug store items," Joshua Wick wrote in a recent email.

Only active-component service members and Guard and Reserve members on Title 10 orders are eligible to participate in the Health Care Flexible Spending Account and Dependent Care Flexible Spending Account programs, according to fsafeds.gov website.

Reserve members not on Title 10 orders and U.S. Coast Guardsmen are not



Pixabay

A Health Care Flexible Spending Account is an optional benefit that enables service members to set aside up to \$3,300 in pre-tax earnings to pay for health expenses such as co-pays and cost shares, vision, dental, and drug store items.

eligible for either program.

Uniformed service members may en-

roll during a special period March 3-31.

Afterward, first-year service members may enroll during normal Federal Benefits Open Season that occurs mid-November to mid-December, Wick said.

One advocacy group is pleased that the department has extended flexible spending accounts to service members, but it has reservations.

For example, the accounts might justify increases to Tricare premiums, Karen Ruedisueli, health affairs director for the Military Officers Association of America, said by phone.

"Sometimes in the civilian sector the pre-tax savings that are realized through flexible spending accounts are used to justify health plan cost increases, and we would be adamantly opposed to that," she said.

Wick recommends eligible service members calculate how much they spend on out-of-pocket health care such as co-payments, vision or dental care for themselves and family over the course of a

year.

"Service members who use an HCFSAs can save on taxes while paying for these costs since using an HCFSAs can lower their tax liability, or how much of their total earnings is subject to taxation," he said.

If their calculations are off, service members may carry over up to \$660 of unused funds in their flexible savings accounts into the next year if they re-enroll during open season, he said.

"Service members can monitor the balance of their account and status of claims any time through the year using the FSASFEDS website or mobile app," he said.

Don't put more money in your flexible spending account than you think you'll spend within a year, or risk losing anything above the carry over amount, according to healthcare.gov.

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MILITARY

Army facing balancing act in fitness test

Report: Army can raise the bar for some jobs, but it must establish clear consequences for falling short

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

The Army can raise the bar on minimum fitness standards for close-combat jobs and also must establish clear consequences for soldiers who fall short, according to the recommendations from a new study on the implications of demanding more from front-line troops.

The Rand Corp. study found that higher standards for select military specialties, such as infantry and combat engineers, can be implemented as a means to ensure better fitness for those in more physically demanding positions.

But the Army's ability to achieve desired fitness test pass rates for those jobs hinges on how high it sets a new minimum standard, the service-commissioned report said.

Between May and August, the Army tested higher potential standards among a sample of more than 44,000 soldiers in close-combat jobs. Rand's analysis of the results showcased potential trade-offs associated with alternative approaches.

For example, raising the overall Army Combat Fitness Test

minimum from its current 360-point total up to 450 points and a minimum deadlift requirement of 150 pounds — levels the Army wanted for the trial — may be too high if the aim is to achieve a 95% overall pass rate and a 90% pass rate for select subgroups, Rand said.

Under that standard, active-duty soldiers in the regular Army scored a 91.4% pass rate, while several subgroups had rates below 90%.

Pass rates for soldiers in the National Guard and reserves were "significantly lower" under this standard, coming in at under 75%, Rand said.

The study was prompted by a bill Congress passed in 2023 requiring the Army to elevate fitness standards for infantry, combat engineering, armor and cavalry, artillery forward observers, engineer and artillery officers and all Special Forces soldiers.

The congressional mandate was aimed at addressing concerns related to the fitness test's shift from being age- and gender-neutral, as it was originally proposed several years ago, to one that now has tailored standards.

higher costs of non-housing goods and services for troops living in the most expensive areas of the U.S.

Impacted areas include counties in states such as New York and California.

This year, 10 military housing areas will begin receiving a cost-of-living allowance, and another six military housing areas will receive an increase in rates.

Military housing areas are the groups of ZIP codes surrounding military installations for which the Defense Department sets a basic housing allowance rate.

In non-military housing areas, troops in 25 select counties will gain a cost-of-living allowance. Non-military housing areas are



YESENIA CADAVID/U.S. Army

Soldiers do deadlifts during an Army Combat Fitness Test at Sembach, Germany. The Army can safely raise minimum fitness standards for close combat jobs, but setting the bar too high would test the service's acceptance of lower pass rates, according to a new study.

To address those concerns, Congress called for higher minimum fitness standards for soldiers in front-line jobs. However, the legislation didn't specify how far beyond the current minimum test score of 360 points the new standard should go.

Rand noted that younger, female soldiers had lower pass rates when the test's deadlift standard was increased from a minimum of 120 pounds to 150 pounds.

The Army Combat Fitness Test is made up of six events:

deadlift, standing power throw, hand release pushup, sprint-drag-carry, planks and the 2-mile run.

An overall minimum standard of 420 points would be enough to ensure the general fitness of soldiers for combat jobs, while setting the level at 450 points would require enhanced fitness, the report said.

As the Army sorts out how to implement higher standards for combat jobs and how high it should go, it should set up "glide paths" that allow soldiers suffi-

cient time to train and improve, Rand said.

It also must make sure that sufficient training resources are delivered down to lower unit levels, such as squads and companies.

Meanwhile, the Army will need to establish "a clear and consistent message" that "includes transparent policies for failure to meet close combat ACFT standards," Rand said.

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Troops in some US urban areas will lose cost-of-living allowance

By CAITLYN BURCHETT
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Service members assigned to about three dozen urban areas of the U.S. will see a bump in cost-of-living allowance rates at the start of 2025, while more than 50 other locations will lose the extra money, the Pentagon said recently.

For troops living in more expensive duty locations, cost-of-living allowance rates will range from \$35 to \$60 per month for service members with dependents, and from \$27 to \$46 per month for those without dependents.

The cost-of-living allowance is a taxable supplemental allowance designed to help offset the

locations where housing options are not provided by the military.

The military housing area of Humboldt County, Calif., will see the largest increase — going from no cost-of-living allowance to a 5% cost-of-living rate. The exact amount each member receives will vary by pay grade and family size.

There will be three military housing areas that see a decrease in cost-of-living rates, and another four that will lose the rates all together. In non-military housing areas, there are 51 counties that will have cost-of-living allowances halted entirely. One county will see a decrease.

The military housing area that will see the largest decrease is

New York City, going from a 13% rate to 8%.

To establish the cost-of-living allowance, a contractor provides the Defense Department with cost data from each military housing area and non-MHA for the following categories: transportation, goods and services, federal income taxes, sales taxes and miscellaneous expenses. The data is adjusted to account for basic allowance for subsistence. This information is compared to the average cost data for the continental U.S., which serves as a benchmark.

By law, a cost-of-living allowance rate for the continental U.S. is only prescribed when the index meets a certain threshold

above the U.S. average. For 2025, the costs for non-housing types of goods and services in a particular location must be at least 7% more expensive than average U.S. costs to qualify for a cost-of-living payment.

Military housing areas with the highest cost-of-living rates include New York City at 8%, Humboldt County at 5% and San Francisco at 5%.

Service members can calculate their CONUS COLA rate at www.travel.dod.mil/Allowances/CONUS-Cost-of-Living-Allowance/CONUS-COLA-Rate-Lookup/.

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PACIFIC

Officer's creativity making mark on Japan

Navy commander exercising artistic talents at Atsugi

By JUAN KING
Stars and Stripes

NAVAL AIR FACILITY AT-SUGI, Japan — An officer on this installation southwest of Tokyo is exercising his artistic side with contributions to the Navy and local Japanese communities.

Cmdr. Daniel Ropp, assigned to Fleet Readiness Center Western Pacific, has been creating art throughout his 20-year military career, finding joy in the impact his work has on others.

"When I make art or any creative process, it is genuinely rewarding," said the native of York, Pa.

Ropp said he has never really settled on a particular subject, though he experiments with portraiture, reflective items and aviation-related art.

Now in his third tour at NAF Atsugi, Ropp was recognized on Dec. 3 by Ayase Mayor Yoshihiko Katsukawa for a painting he submitted for the Ayase Base-Side Festival.

That Halloween painting depicts two Japanese American children dressed in traditional American scary costumes with a glowing jack-o'-lantern under a full moon. It is scheduled to be on display at Ayase City Hall for the remainder of 2024.

Although naturally talented, Ropp said he never attended art school but honed his skills in sketching and painting over the years. Throughout his Navy career, he has designed unit shirts and morale patches but has expanded his focus in recent years.

"I genuinely enjoy experimenting with all mediums and have experimented with drawing, acrylic and oil painting, large-scale spray paint murals, sculpture, and carving," he said.

Using spray paint, he has performed live speed painting at NAF Atsugi open-base events, supporting the Morale, Welfare and Recreation department.

Ropp said he is scheduled to



JEREMY STILLWAGNER/Stars and Stripes

Navy Cmdr. Daniel Ropp, of Fleet Readiness Center Western Pacific, poses in front of a mural he painted for the library at Naval Air Facility Atsugi, Japan.

complete a large mural early next year in nearby Yamato and has a goal of getting more public art into the community.

He said his artistic objectives are twofold.

"Sometimes I want to create something from my imagination that plays with different elements, and on some other pieces I genuinely want to create a piece to help build community and tell a story of that organization or group," he said.

After becoming more comfortable with public art exhibitions in 2021, Ropp said he pushed his works out to social media. About three years ago, he established a dedicated Instagram page, @flysurrealart, and a webpage, www.flysurreal.com, to show off his creations.

Each piece requires significant

"When I make art or any creative process, it is genuinely rewarding."

Navy Cmdr. Daniel Ropp time and effort, Ropp explained. Paintings like the one displayed at Ayase City Hall vary in complexity, depending on materials, size and detail.

"For some complex oil paintings, it can take months because of the curing required," he wrote. "For some acrylic paintings, it can take about 12 to 24 work hours, and for live paintings, I strive to complete them

between 4 to 7 hours so they can



This painting by Ropp will be on display at Ayase City Hall through the end of the year.

be completed in a single sitting."

A large-scale mural, like one he created for NAF Atsugi's library, could take months. It shows a compilation of children's story book characters, such as from the 1982 book, "The Big Friendly Giant," by Roald Dahl. Ropp used his personal leave time to complete that project.

"I wanted to put as many different elements and Easter eggs throughout the mural so that when people view it, they are

always looking and discovering new parts of it," he said.

Ropp was deeply moved by the recognition he recently received from Ayase city.

"I was completely surprised, humbled and grateful," he said. "I am glad that something like art can be used to connect communities and find common ground in our humanity."

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