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VOLUME 20 NO. 10

DECEMBER 8 – DECEMBER 21, 2025

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New restaurants, cafés on Guam to try

PAGE 6



Bakery



Matcha

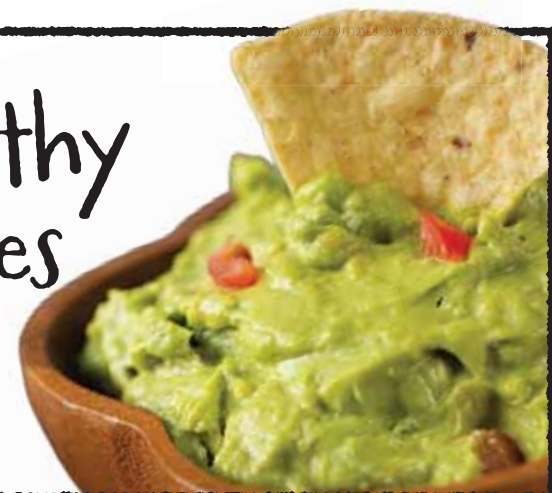


Chinese



Quick & healthy Guam recipes

PAGE 7



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Ask Uncle Ton'

Uncle Ton's been on Guam longer than your landlord's generator. He's seen it all, survived it all, and now he's here to answer all your questions about Guam and island life (sorta).



Submit Qs!


Sticky Situation

Dear Uncle Ton',

Why does it feel like my face is always wet and my toes are always sticky even when it's not rainy here?

- Jim

Dear Jim,

You new here or what? That's just Guam giving you a free facial every darn day. You better get used to feeling like a sticky rice ball by 8 a.m.. Go buy a \$5 fan from Honey House and stop complaining. Welcome to paradise, kid.

The Great Shoe Debate

Dear Uncle Ton',

Is it rude if I don't take my shoes off when entering someone's house?

- Matt

Dear Matt,

Unless you wanna get side-eyed by three aunts at once...TAKE. OFF. YOUR. SHOES. This is not up for debate. Auntie doesn't care if you have the cleanest Yeezys in the world. You're tracking dirt, taki, cockroach eggs and bad juju (bad vibes) into somebody's house. You think you're too good to see your own toes?

Nino Contract

Dear Uncle Ton',

Someone said I'm now their kid's "nino" and I just smiled and nodded...what did I agree to?

- Someone's Confused Nino


Dear Confused Nino,

Oy, you're in deep now, my friend. You just agreed to be the spiritual ride-or-die for life. Being a nino (or nina) on Guam is more hardcore than just eating cake at the first birthday party and showing up at their graduation 18 years later.

You are expected to:

1. Attend every milestone from baptism to graduation to the child's third cousin's rosary.
2. Give at least one solid gift a year (not something from your late week night run at Ross or Kmart, okay?)
3. Be ready to provide spiritual guidance, emotional support, AND emergency money if life hits the fan.

Also, you can't just "quit" being nino or nina because you're in it like the mafia, but with more fiesta plates. Congrats par!





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New restaurants, cafés on GUAM TO TRY

THE GUAM GUIDE

Guam’s food scene just keeps serving up surprises — from fine-dining Chinese cuisine to the island’s first-ever matcha café and even a community-driven coffee cart inspired by Filipino culture. Whether you’re after something elegant, on-the-go, or just downright comforting, this month’s lineup has something for every craving. Let’s dig in!



1. Majesty Chinese Restaurant

A new restaurant has arrived! Majesty Chinese Restaurant has officially opened inside the Royal Orchid Hotel, offering a refined take on classic Chinese cuisine. Expect beautifully plated dishes, rich flavors, and an upscale dining experience perfect for family dinners or special occasions. Private rooms are available, with a view (you can catch a glimpse of Two Lovers Point).



INSTAGRAM

LOCATION: 2F/Lobby of the Royal Orchid Hotel, Tumon
HOURS: Daily – 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. & 5 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.
INSTAGRAM: @majesty_guam



2. Sylvie Bear by ASAP

From the team behind ASAP Bakery comes Sylvie Bear — a new bake studio dedicated to artisanal breads, custom cakes, and handcrafted pastries. You can pre-order for pickup or delivery, but soon you’ll be able to walk in for their fresh bakes, frappes, and signature sweet treats. Wholesome, adorable, and 100% made with love.



INSTAGRAM

LOCATION: 689 Westpac Plaza, Tamuning
HOURS: Daily – 9 a.m. to 7 p.m.
INSTAGRAM: @sylviebear_by_asap



3. The Matcha Tokyo

The Matcha Tokyo has officially landed! This globally loved brand brings its premium organic matcha from Japan straight to the Micronesia Mall. With cafés in Tokyo, Bangkok, Dubai, and more, The Matcha Tokyo is now ready to win over Guam’s tea enthusiasts.



INSTAGRAM

LOCATION: Micronesia Mall
HOURS: Daily – 10 a.m. to 9 p.m.
INSTAGRAM: @thematchatokyo.guam



4. Matcha N Musubi

Guam’s matcha moment has arrived! Matcha N Musubi proudly claims the title of the island’s first matcha café, serving everything from vibrant green tea lattes to onigiri-style musubi and Australian-style coffee. It’s minimalist, modern, and a matcha lover’s dream come true.



INSTAGRAM

LOCATION: ITC Building, Tamuning
HOURS: Mon–Fri 7 a.m. – 4 p.m., Sat 8 a.m. – 1 p.m.
INSTAGRAM: @matchanmusubi



5. Jerry's Kitchen

Dim sum fans, rejoice! Jerry’s Kitchen is back, serving authentic Hong Kong-style dishes that have locals buzzing. From steamed dumplings to classic buns, every bite delivers traditional flavor and comfort. Whether it’s lunch with friends or a cozy dinner, Jerry Kitchen is dim sum heaven.



INSTAGRAM

LOCATION: 541S Marine Corps Dr, Bldg 102 & 103, Tamuning
HOURS: Lunch 10:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m., Dinner 5 p.m. – 9 p.m.
INSTAGRAM: @jerrys.kitchen

6. Skewer Delight

If you loved Skewer House in Tumon, you’re in for another treat! Skewer Delight brings the same flame-grilled goodness to the Micronesia Mall. Grab your favorite skewers — from savory meats to seasoned veggies — and enjoy an easy, delicious bite while you shop.



INSTAGRAM

LOCATION: 2F Food Court, Micronesia Mall
HOURS: Daily – 10 a.m. to 9 p.m.
INSTAGRAM: @skewerdelightguam

7. Kapwa Kopi

Kapwa Kopi is more than just caffeine — it’s connection. This community-driven mobile coffee cart takes inspiration from the Filipino spirit of kapwa, meaning shared humanity. You’ll find their pop-up cart serving thoughtful brews and good vibes around the island, creating moments of warmth (and great coffee) wherever they roll up.



INSTAGRAM

LOCATION: Pop-Up Stand
HOURS: Follow Instagram for updates
INSTAGRAM: @kapwakopi

Quick & healthy Guam recipes

THE GUAM GUIDE

On Guam, we love to eat — and as proud as we are of our barbecue and as much as we love to both laugh at and laud the myriad expressions of our Spam addiction, the resulting dietary habits combined with a variety of other factors have caused lifestyle issues such

as diabetes and heart disease to increase. But eating healthy can be expensive! To cut the cost, try sticking to local eats. We have five healthy recipes you can make with local produce. We're not saying to throw away your barbecue grill. But try mixing things up every once in a while by trying out the recipes below. You might find them delicious enough to forget they're healthy.



Dragon fruit mango popsicle

- 1 can coconut milk (or from local coconut)
- 1 local mango, peeled and chopped
- 1 local dragon fruit
- Juice from 4 local calamansi or 1 local lemon
- 1-2 tbs local honey (optional)

Blend, put in popsicle mold and freeze.



Guacamole

- 3 lbs local avocado
- 1 cup local tomatoes, diced
- Juice from 5 local calamansi or 1 local lemon (or more/less depending on your preference)
- 1 handful local cilantro, chopped
- 1-2 stalks local green onion, chopped
- 1/2 tsp salt

Mash avocado, then add remaining ingredients and mix.

Cucumber bites

- 1 local cucumber, sliced
- 2 local green onion stalks, chopped
- 1/2 cup local tomatoes, sliced
- Sprinkle of paprika
- Your favorite tuna salad mix (we used tuna plus veganaise, mustard, salt and pepper)

Lay cucumber slices down and top with tomatoes and tuna salad. Sprinkle with paprika and green onion.



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Upcoming Events

GUAM VISITORS BUREAU

Tumon Night Market

DATES: Every Sunday until Dec. 21
LOCATION: Pleasure Island
TIME: 5-9 p.m.

The Tumon Night Market is officially back, lighting up Pleasure Island every single Sunday until Dec. 21. That's food, music, culture, and community right in the heart of Tumon!

Every Sunday, the strip between SandCastle and the Dusit Beach Resort is transforming into Guam's hottest block party, bringing together locals and visitors for the ultimate island experience.

What you'll find every week

- **A WORLD OF FLAVOR:** Indulge your cravings with an incredible selection of local & international food vendors and food trucks serving up everything from savory street eats to sweet island delights.
- **THE BEST OF GUAM:** Browse unique, handcrafted goods, apparel, and souvenirs from dozens of Local Businesses and Pop-Up Shops.
- **LIVE ISLAND ENERGY:** Enjoy traditional cultural performances, contemporary bands and dynamic street acts.



Run With Friends

RECURRENCE: Every 1st and 3rd Wednesdays of the month
TIME: 6 p.m.
PRICE: Free

- Run or walk for 30 minutes
- No pressure, No racing
- All levels welcome
- Free refreshments and raffles

Start and finish at PIC (Pacific Islands Club)
Parking is available at PIC for convenience



REGISTER FOR FREE ONLINE

Gridiron 7v7 Battle: Football Action at LeoPalace

DATES: Dec. 12-13
LOCATION: LeoPalace Track & Field, Yona, Guam 96915
TIME: 10 a.m. - 6 p.m.

Get ready for an action-packed weekend of speed, skill, and pure football intensity at the Gridiron 7v7 Battle! This Clutch Guam Signature Event brings together Guam's fiercest athletes to go head-to-head for bragging rights, pride, and the ultimate gridiron glory. This fast-paced showcase is built for big plays, quick drives, and highlight-reel moments!



WALK FOR WATER

DATES: Dec. 13
LOCATION: Litekyan
TIME: 8 a.m. - noon
ADMISSION: FREE, all ages welcome

Join the community for the 2nd Celebration at Litekyan for Water Justice & Native Land Stewardship! The Walk for Water returns to unify the island in protecting the human right to clean drinking water and advocating for the protection of Guam's lands and waters. This gathering highlights the threats to our water—including PFAS, dieldrin, Agent Orange, and contamination from military live fire training and bombing—and calls for the protection of our island's sole aquifer.




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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

Jingle Bell 2K/5K Run

Join LeoPalace Resort and the Guam Running Club (GRC) for their inaugural Jingle Bell Run! This festive 5K and 2K run is for a great cause, with all proceeds supporting Guam Cancer Care.

DATES: Dec. 14
LOCATION: LeoPalace Resort Guam
SHOWTIME: 5 a.m.
RACE START: 6 a.m.
COST: Early Bird - Till Dec.13 is \$15.00. Race Day - Dec.14 \$20.00



REGISTRATION

The Fresku Music Festival

DATES: Jan. 24, 2026
LOCATION: Ypao Beach Park

The festival is an opportunity to give back to the community and celebrate together. Everyone is invited to bring their families and join the fun!


CHECK OUT

WHAT IS HAPPENING ON
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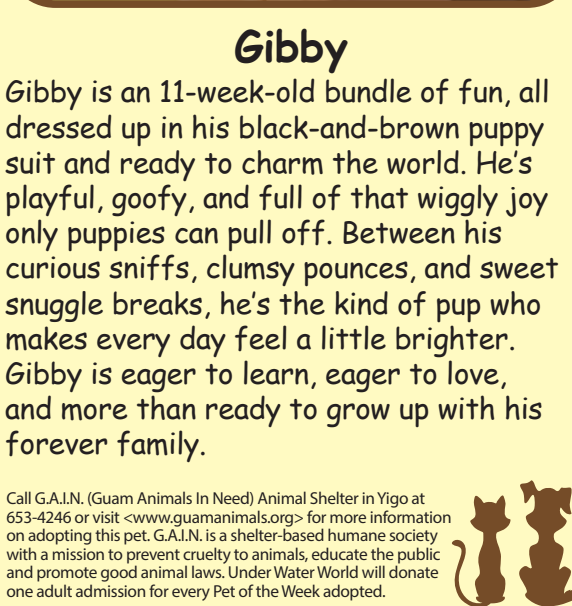
G.A.I.N. Pet of the Week



Gibby

Gibby is an 11-week-old bundle of fun, all dressed up in his black-and-brown puppy suit and ready to charm the world. He's playful, goofy, and full of that wiggly joy only puppies can pull off. Between his curious sniffs, clumsy pounces, and sweet snuggle breaks, he's the kind of pup who makes every day feel a little brighter. Gibby is eager to learn, eager to love, and more than ready to grow up with his forever family.

Call G.A.I.N. (Guam Animals In Need) Animal Shelter in Yigo at 653-4246 or visit <www.guamanimals.org> for more information on adopting this pet. G.A.I.N. is a shelter-based humane society with a mission to prevent cruelty to animals, educate the public and promote good animal laws. Under Water World will donate one adult admission for every Pet of the Week adopted.



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Boonie Stomps Guam

INFORMATION PROVIDED BY
GUAM BOONIE STOMPERS



Sinisa Falls

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 13. Children must be accompanied by a responsible adult. Hike fees for active military and veterans are covered by Adaptive Adventures. 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



SCHEDULE 2025	
Dec. 13 (Sat.)	Sinisa Falls and Lower Sigua (Very Difficult)
Dec. 20 (Sat.)	Sella Bay- Annual Christmas Hike (Medium)
Dec. 27 (Sat.)	Priest Pools (Easy) with option to Finacresta (Mt. Schroeder) (Difficult)



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

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Crossword

by Margie E. Burke

ACROSS

1 Rumble, as hair

5 ___ del Sol

10 Orch. section

14 "___ Dinka Doo"

15 Bread spreads

16 Opera feature

17 Working hard

18 Saving gas, say

20 Shortcut

22 Bobby of tennis fame

23 "The Zoo Story" playwright

24 Took to jail

26 Like draft beer

29 Renders invalid

33 Taunts on the field

36 Meetup, slangily

37 Sculler's need

38 Gibraltar and Magellan

40 Nonpro sports gp.

41 It ebbs and flows

43 Denier's words

45 Trap

47 "Peer Gynt" composer

48 Street reps

50 Indian flatbreads

53 Social no-no

56 "Calvin and Hobbes" cartoonist

59 "It's news to me"

61 Bones, in anatomy

62 Golfer's cry

63 Water and elec.

64 Fortune teller

65 Heads-up abbrs.

66 "One of ___ days...."

67 Latin "to be"

5 Cola starter

6 One of five Norwegian kings

7 More parched

8 Highest rated

9 Japanese volcano

10 Steinbeck's birthplace

11 H.S. math

12 Smoke or napkin follower

13 Yields to gravity

19 Copier insert: Abbr.

21 Rogen and others

25 Trojan War figure

27 Clothing

28 Gave up, reluctantly

30 Quells, as rioters

31 Son of Isaac

32 "On the Verge" actress Elisabeth

33 Shopper's bag

34 Parade spoiler

35 ___ Cruces, N.M.

39 "Goosebumps" writer

42 Makes a cryptogram

44 Fragrant bloomer

46 Elvis' middle name, originally

49 Sink of "Stranger Things"

51 Plastic surgery targets

52 Catch

53 Minor quarrel

54 Call to a mate

55 Italian seaport

57 Business card nos.

58 Shock, in a way

60 Ump's call

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Answers to Previous Crossword:

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

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Stripes Sports Trivia

Don't let the nickname confuse you, "Charlie Hustle" was no Charlie or Charles. Who was the player known for his relentless hustle?

Answer

Pete Rose

SUDOKU

Difficulty: Easy

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

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:

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

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The background of the entire page is a detailed collage of various food items arranged on a rustic, dark-stained wooden surface. In the top left, there is a small wooden bowl filled with green and black olives. Below it, a pile of uncooked fusilli and farfalle pasta is visible. To the right, a halved avocado with a large pit sits next to a whole purple onion, a yellow cherry tomato, and a green chili pepper. Further down on the right, a red bell pepper and another yellow tomato are partially visible. In the bottom left corner, there is a large, golden-brown baked item, possibly a flatbread or pizza, and a variety of fresh seafood including a whole fish, a scallop, and a crab. The text is overlaid on this collage.

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4-page pullout



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RESTAURANT INFO



THE GUAM GUIDE

Traditional foods on Guam every traveler must try

Guam is undeniably one of the most beautiful and culturally rich destinations in the Pacific. Located at the heart of Micronesia's islands, it is known for being the heart of Chamorro culture and food.

The island is also a top destination for experienced travelers, who appreciate not only an opportunity to relax and enjoy peaceful rest but also a chance to immerse themselves into a completely different culture with its unique traditions, authentic cultures, and unusual cuisines.

No matter if you prefer calm vacations or active days off in Guam, you are likely to relish its eye-catching landscapes, magnificent views, and picturesque places. However, what you will love even more is delicious and cuisine. Check out some of the most popular dishes you should definitely taste in Guam.



LUMPIA

Is there anything more delicious than Lumpia? Well, it depends on your preferences, but a considerable number of tourists specify it as the best food they tasted in Guam. Spring roll is the exact dish you will find at every fiesta table in this area.



LATIYA

Travelers, who enjoy sweets and desserts more than first dishes, will surely appreciate and an unforgettable taste of the vanilla custard cake. It is the traditional delight that is served at any celebration.



TITIYAS

This tasty dish can be made with flour and corn. If you have ever tried tortilla, you will find it similar. At the same time, you will also notice a crucial difference. The authentic Titiyas can be taken as a separate dish or as a chip for scooping kelaguen.



RED RICE

If you enjoy traveling, you should know that each destination has a specific product popular all over the place. In Guam, red rice is the most popular dish. It resembles a Mexican dish because of its strong aroma and spicy taste. However, the unique color and unusual flavor add to its appreciation. In fact, you will not find a tourist who has been to Guam and didn't taste Red Rice. It is the dish served in every single restaurant, café, and home.



COCONUT CANDY

This is the best delight for those who love coconut. Combining sugar with grated coconut, locals get an excellent dessert worth trying. It may be served in different forms, but the taste will remain the same. It is also important to note that people in Guam care not only about the flavor of their dishes but also the way they look.



HOTNON BABUI

Hotnon Babui is the exact thing you need to taste if you relish pork. Tender and moist meat will not leave you indifferent. The unique flavor and unforgettable aftertaste make the dish special. Thus, it is reserved for special celebrations and important occasions that take place in Guam.



FINA'DENNE'

Although you will not taste it as a separate dish, it remains one of the most appreciated and widely-used all-purpose sauces that can be added to a whole array of local dishes. No matter if you cook red rice or barbecue, the salty-spicy-sour Fina'denne' will contribute to the final taste of the dish.



KADON PIKA

A taste of an exceptionally spicy stew made of chicken marinated in vinegar, pepper, soya sauce, garlic, and onion will stay in your memory for many years. The dish is frequently cooked with coconut milk that also adds to its flavor.



HAGUN SUNI

The beloved vegetable dish is made with spinach cooked in coconut milk is a staple at the table. It's a popular dish served with meats and fish and has a mild and creamy flavor.



SHRIMP PATTIES

Do you love seafood? Shrimp mixed with vegetables and covered in the soft dough may become your favorite dish in Guam. The vast majority of locals take it daily, as it is not only tasty but also easy to cook.



CUCUMBER SALAD

Although it may sound simple and trivial, in fact, it is a delicious dish when cucumbers are pickles with a mix of vinegar, soy sauce, and hot pepper. Extraordinary cucumber salad is perfect with rice and ribs.





Annie's Chamorro Kitchen

www.annieschamorrokitchen.com

“My name is Annie. Food and I get along so well! Cooking and baking are more 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



Cheeseburger Biscuits

Cheese...seasoned ground beef...bacon...all baked in a fluffy biscuit (did I mention there was BACON?).

These little pillows of delight are delicious as a snack, appetizer, or served with your favorite soup or meal.

Give my recipe a try. I think you'll like it.

- **PREP TIME:** 15 mins
- **COOK TIME:** 10 mins
- **TOTAL TIME:** 25 mins



DIRECTIONS

- 1 Brown the ground beef with the Dashida seasoning; set aside to cool.
 - 2 Cook the bacon until crisp. Crumble the bacon into small bits; set aside. Reserve about 2 tablespoons of bacon fat.
 - 3 In a large mixing bowl, mix together the cooked ground beef, bacon bits, Bisquick mix, baking powder, and cheese.
 - 4 Fold in the reserved bacon fat, mayo, and sprite. Mix GENTLY, just until all ingredients are incorporated (do not overwork the dough).
 - 5 Using a large ice cream scoop (I used one that holds ¼ cup), scoop out balls of dough, placing them on a baking sheet 1 inch apart.
 - 6 Bake at 450 degrees for 10 minutes. Note: The cooked biscuit will feel slightly soft when the baking time is finished; do not be tempted to cook them longer, however. You are most likely feeling how soft the biscuits are because of the melted cheese.
 - 7 Immediately remove the biscuits to a wire cooling rack.
 - 8 Serve warm.
- Enjoy as a snack or with your favorite soup or meal.

Step into
Annie's Chamorro Kitchen via
Facebook. Search for:
"Annie's Chamorro Kitchen"

INGREDIENTS

- 1 pound ground beef
- 2 tablespoons beef flavored Dashida
- 10 slices bacon
- 4 cups Bisquick mix
- 1 tablespoon baking powder
- 4 cups shredded cheddar cheese
- 1 cup mayonnaise (YES, mayo)
- 1 cup Sprite (YES, sprite)

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GUAM EDITION

DECEMBER 8, 2025

Shahed smasher

NATO training on counter-drone system tested in battle **Page 2**

A U.S. soldier preps the Merops counter-drone system for testing at a Polish military training area in Nowa Deba on Nov. 18.

PHILLIP WALTER WELLMAN/Stars and Stripes



COVER STORY

NATO allies getting ready to down drones

After breaches, alliance turns to Merops system for eastern flank

BY PHILLIP WALTER
WELLMAN
Stars and Stripes

NOWA DEBA, Poland — U.S. soldiers are training alongside Polish and Romanian forces on a counter-drone system rushed to NATO's eastern flank after a recent spate of unmanned aerial incursions across Europe.

U.S. and NATO officials, drawing lessons from the war in Ukraine, have long argued that the alliance needs cheaper ways to counter drones, since firing traditional air-defense systems at them is too expensive and often impractical. That urgency grew after about 20 unmanned aircraft crossed into Polish airspace in September, followed days later by an incursion into Romania.

NATO blamed Russia for those violations, which proved to be the final push for Poland and Romania to purchase the U.S.-made Merops counter-drone system.

The system has been battle-tested in Ukraine, where local forces have used it to shoot down Russian-made Shahed drones and other incoming threats, according to U.S. military officials.

Poland and Romania received their first Merops systems in November, and training alongside U.S. soldiers began here at one of Poland's largest military training areas soon afterward.

"It's very lethal, very effective, but the key piece here is that it's cost effective," said Brig. Gen. Curtis King, head of the 10th Army Air and Missile Defense Command.

During a demonstration on Nov. 18, the Merops system sat in the back of a midsize pickup truck. Once launched, its interceptor shot through the air at speeds officials said exceeded 150 mph, identifying drones and passing within feet of them in flight.

Officials said that in a real-life scenario, the interceptor would carry explosives and detonate to destroy its target. Each interceptor costs about \$15,000, and the system overall is roughly one-tenth the price of the Shahed drones Moscow builds and employs, they said.

That matters because, until now, responding to incursions often meant scrambling NATO fighter jets, which cost tens of thousands of dollars per flight. And in a conflict like the one



PHOTOS BY PHILLIP WALTER WELLMAN/Stars and Stripes

A soldier launches the Merops counter-drone system from the bed of a truck during testing and training on Nov. 18 at a Polish military training area in Nowa Deba.



A Merops interceptor before a demonstration of the system's capabilities.

playing out in Ukraine, large numbers of interceptors would be needed to counter repeated drone swarms.

Another advantage of Merops, made by the company Project Eagle, is its ability to use artificial intelligence to navigate even when satellite and electronic communications are jammed, according to the company.

"This is one of many capabilities that NATO nations are going to have to look to employ to defeat the drones," King said, adding that the war in Ukraine shows how quickly modern warfare evolves and how weapons development must keep pace.

U.S. Army Europe and Africa says Merops is the first system fielded since the announcement of the Eastern Flank Deterrence Line, a concept unveiled earlier this year by commander Gen.

Christopher Donahue. The plan envisions a mix of manned and robotic forces linked by a shared data network to repel any attack on NATO territory.

Under the concept, low-cost, easily replaceable hardware and software feed live targeting data to front-line robotic platforms, which can strike enemy drones and ground forces while absorbing the first wave of an assault. The goal is to deter an attack or blunt one long enough for NATO's manned units to regain the initiative and launch a counteroffensive.

Army officials say the approach is meant to be scalable and repeatable across the eastern flank, using rapidly deployable technologies that can overwhelm an adversary and deny key terrain.

It's one of several efforts being



Brig. Gen. Curtis King, head of the 10th Army Air and Missile Defense Command and Brig. Chris Gent, deputy chief of staff of Transformation and Integration at NATO LANDCOM, speak in Nowa Deba.

pushed in Europe to counter future drone attacks, as the U.S. and its allies scramble to find effective, affordable solutions.

Speaking on the sidelines of the training, Lt. Gen. Stanislaw Czosnek, deputy chief of the general staff of the Polish armed forces, said Poland plans eventually to field its own domestically built counter-drone systems but needed a quick solution to fill an immediate capability gap.

"The airspace violation we witnessed recently forced us to accelerate," Czosnek said. "We want to be safer than we are now. This is a gap filler."

Merops' success on the battlefield in Ukraine was a major reason why Poland selected the platform, Czosnek said.

According to King, Merops has been responsible for up to 40% of the Shahed drones shot down by Ukrainian forces. He added that other counter-drone systems are being developed across the alliance that rely on similar radar,

with the goal of allowing partners to operate different systems interchangeably.

Sgt. 1st Class Corey Myers, a platoon sergeant with Germany-based 1st Battalion, 57th Air Defense Artillery Regiment, said he and his soldiers found the system intuitive.

"It's a simple system to understand," Myers said. "If you're good with an Xbox controller, you're good."

The U.S. military does not currently field Merops, but U.S. Army Europe and Africa sent troops to the roughly two-week training event in Poland so they can help train partner forces who adopt it in the future.

"It feels extremely important being here," said Sgt. Riley Hiner, another member of 1-57. "With all the Shaheds Russia is flying, I think this is the way forward."

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PACIFIC

General: 'East up' highlights advantages

USFK commander urges adjusting view of Pacific region on maps

BY SETH ROBSON
Stars and Stripes

The commander of U.S. Forces Korea is urging military planners to rethink how they view East Asia — literally — by rotating the map.

Army Gen. Xavier Brunson argues that turning a regional map 90 degrees to place east at the top reveals overlooked strategic advantages for the United States and its allies.

He outlined the idea in an opinion piece posted Nov. 16 on USFK's website.

"The most profound strategic insights sometimes emerge from the simplest shifts in perspective," he wrote. "In the Indo-Pacific theater, where geographic relationships determine operational possibilities and alliance effectiveness, military planners may be overlooking critical advantages simply because of how they view their maps."

An "east-up" map, Brunson wrote, highlights how South Korea, Japan and the Philippines — all U.S. treaty allies — gain strategic depth through cooperation at a time when Washington has encouraged closer coordination in the face of challenges from China, North Korea and Russia.

Historical grievances and territorial disputes have often slowed such efforts.

In the column, titled "The East-Up Map: Revealing Hidden Strategic Advantages in the Indo-

Pacific," Brunson wrote that the traditional U.S. view emphasizes the Indo-Pacific's vast distances and downplays the benefits of deployed forces.

The east-oriented perspective, he said, shows that troops on the Korean Peninsula are not "distant assets requiring reinforcement," but instead are already situated inside the "bubble perimeter" the U.S. would need to penetrate during a crisis.

USFK's headquarters at Camp Humphreys lies just 158 miles from Pyongyang, North Korea, 612 miles from Beijing and 500 miles from Vladivostok, Russia.

"Korea is positioned to address northern threats from Russia while simultaneously providing western reach against Chinese activities in the waters between Korea and China," Brunson wrote.

From Beijing's vantage point, Brunson added, U.S. installations such as Osan Air Base south of Seoul do not appear remote but instead offer "resources positioned to achieve effects in or around China."

"Perhaps the most significant insight from east-up mapping is the emergence of a strategic triangle connecting Korea, Japan and the Philippines," he wrote. "When these three mutual defense treaty partners are viewed as vertices of a triangle rather than isolated bilateral relationships, their collective potential becomes clear."



SARAH WILLIAMS/U.S. Air Force

Army Gen. Xavier Brunson, commander of U.S. Forces Korea, greets Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth at Osan Air Base, South Korea, on Nov. 4.

In written responses to South Korean media, Brunson expanded on that concept: "Each partner brings a distinct capability: Korea's central depth, Japan's technological advantage and maritime reach, and the Philippines' access to key southern sea lanes."

Brunson argues that U.S. forces already in the region can impose costs on adversaries while

retaining defensive advantages and that current force posture, particularly in South Korea, may provide greater strategic value than widely recognized.

The east-up approach mirrors long-standing Australian strategic thinking and aligns with India's "Look East" perspective, said Paul Buchanan, an American security analyst based in New Zealand.

U.S. commanders, he said by email, should study regional geopolitics in countries such as Thailand, Japan, South Korea, Indonesia and Australia "to get more well-rounded East-Up perspective rather than something more narrowly construed by U.S. interests alone."

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Guam's 3D-printing hub aims to cut months off repair times

BY ALEX WILSON
Stars and Stripes

A Navy-backed 3D-printing lab under construction on Guam aims to slash the monthlong wait for ship and infrastructure parts on the island by producing them locally.

The Guam Additive Manufacturing and Materials Accelerator, or GAMMA, held a ceremonial groundbreaking on Nov. 7 for its 8,000-square-foot site in Dededo's Pacific Industrial Park. The \$40 million project is led by the Applied Science & Technology Research Organization of America.

Once complete, the facility will house equipment for measuring, testing and designing metal and plastic industrial components.

The Maryland-based research institute hopes to have it operating as early as spring, said GAMMA general manager Alex Benham.

"It might not be full-scale manufacturing, but we can produce parts" by March or April, he said.

Despite its cost and planned capabilities — including a \$5 million investment with another \$12 million expected — the lab is not intended to design new components.

"They just want to be able to get parts now. They don't need to be better than the past ones — they just need to be as good," Benham said. "The problems we're solving with additive [manufacturing] is entirely a logistical

problem."

Benham said GAMMA's primary customer will be the Navy, particularly the five nuclear-powered fast-attack vessels in Submarine Squadron 15 at Naval Base Guam. Among the most in-demand items are pump impellers — fan-like parts that move fluid through pumps.

"It's a common part that is classically hard to design and hard to manufacture, but [additive manufacturing] comes in and kind of solves all that," he said.

The Air Force and Marine Corps are also evaluating the lab's potential, especially for producing ground-vehicle components that corrode quickly in Guam's climate, Benham said.



ASTRO America

ASTRO America CEO Neal Orringer speaks at the groundbreaking ceremony for the Guam Additive Manufacturing and Materials Accelerator, or GAMMA, facility in Dededo, Guam, on Nov. 6.

Civilian infrastructure operators, including power, water and emergency services, may also benefit from the ability to reverse-engineer and reproduce

parts in weeks rather than months.

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MILITARY

Survey finds mold, air quality problems

Many significant or dangerous issues cited in military housing

By WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

A survey last month of service members living in military housing drew nearly 3,400 respondents who cited at least one significant or dangerous issue in their homes.

The online survey by the non-profit Change the Air Foundation attracted respondents from all four military branches and the Coast Guard from 57 installations across 30 states and the District of Columbia. It sought answers to an online questionnaire rather than through random sampling.

About three-quarters of respondents said the health of family members had been negatively affected by housing issues.

Change the Air Foundation advocates for improved indoor air quality.

The findings echo the conclusions of federal watchdogs in recent reports.

In a 2023 report, the Government Accountability Office detailed squalid living conditions in military housing, such as overflowing raw sewage, mold and rodent infestation.

An audit earlier this year by the Defense Department Office of Inspector General that looked at seven installations managed by a private entity found that lax inspection protocols led to families moving into homes that had unresolved health and safety hazards.

The new survey report con-

tains several dozen excerpts of comments made by respondents concerning their experiences.

An active-duty service member in Texas, not identified by name, said his family's housing experience "financially leveled us."

"We left military housing after over a year of being displaced, having been placed in three homes that contained toxigenic molds, and walked into a rental off post with nothing but a week's worth of clothing," the service member said.

"We ended up having to sell our home in our home state to pay for basic furniture and begin treatments. We have never recovered."

Two-thirds of respondents said they had mold problems in their homes and that they felt "stuck without further options," according to the survey report.

Almost half the respondents reported that housing-related issues had affected their "ability to perform duties and maintain mission readiness," according to the survey report.

Parents answering the survey indicated that housing problems had led to changes of mood or anxiety in their children, specifying respiratory, skin and sinus problems as being most common.

An active-duty service member in Texas said that while living in military housing "my kids were regulars" at the local urgent care with breathing prob-



ALEXANDER GAGO/U.S. Army

Jamie Lisane, a housing manager with the Directorate of Public Works at Fort Benning, Ga., inspects a residential ventilation system in April 2023.

lems and chronic congestion.

"Once we moved everything cleared up," she said. "They haven't had any issues since we left that house."

The findings illustrate a housing system that is failing those it is intended to support, according to the survey's executive summary.

"The widespread prevalence of hazardous conditions — paired with unresolved maintenance requests, declining physical and mental and cognitive health, and

the heavy burden placed on families — shows the current model is neither sustainable nor acceptable," the summary states.

The foundation contends that a major step in improving military housing would be to provide service members with reliable housing condition records.

"For years, military families have lived in homes with no clear history of past repairs, unresolved issues, or environmental risks," the survey report states. "Without a transparent, ver-

ifiable trail of repairs, families are forced to navigate problems blindly, often discovering hidden hazards only after their health or belongings have already been profoundly affected.

"This absence of documentation also prevents commanders and housing officials from identifying patterns, holding providers accountable, or intervening early when serious issues emerge."

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Last-of-its-kind Independence-class LCS commissioned

Stars and Stripes

The newest ship in the Navy, the USS Pierre, was commissioned Saturday in Panama City, Fla.: "Welcome to the fleet," said Navy Secretary John Phelan, who gave the keynote address.

Pierre is the 19th and final Independence-variant littoral combat ship. The ship bears the name of the capital city of South Dakota.

The commissioning of the Pierre marks the end of an era.

Littoral combat ships were designed to be fast, nimble vessels prized for their abilities in coastal areas and the open ocean.

In the early 2000s, shipbuilders developed two variants, Independence and Freedom, each capable of surface warfare and mine hunting. The ships have different hulls and are designed and built by separate shipbuild-

ers.

At one point, the Navy planned to have the ships make up about one-sixth of the service's ocean-going fleet.

But the Independence variant suffered costly setbacks and delays, including cracked hulls and propulsion issues.

About 17 Independence-class vessels are active.

The Freedom variant also was plagued by propulsion problems and other costly issues.

As a result, the Navy in 2022 proposed mothballing nine Freedom-class ships well ahead of their end-of-service dates. Ultimately, five of the ships were saved.

About 10 Freedom-class ships remain in service, according to the Navy's website. The variant's final vessel, USS Cleveland, is planned to be commissioned this



KASSANDRA ALANIS/U.S. Navy

The crew aboard the Independence-variant littoral combat ship USS Pierre brings the ship to life during the commissioning ceremony on Saturday in Panama City, Fla.

fall, according to usscleveland.org.

The service now is prioritizing production of the Constellation-

class frigate, which it says delivers a more powerful punch.

But with the aging Avenger-class minesweepers nearing retirement, the Navy recently designated at least three Independence-class ships — USS Canberra, USS Tulsa and USS Santa Barbara — to be homeported in Bahrain.

The USS Pierre — led by Cmdr. Justin Guernsey — will have a crew of 112 and depart Panama City next week, making several stops before arriving at its homeport of San Diego in December.

In the week leading up to the commissioning ceremony, the Pierre crew spent time around Panama City, hosted tours on-board for local organizations and built ties with the city hosting their ship's commissioning ceremony.

MILITARY

Rise in military aviation accidents seen

Serious mishaps rose significantly from 2020 to 2024, killing 90

By SVETLANA SHKOLNIKOVA
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Serious U.S. military aviation mishaps rose significantly between 2020 and 2024, killing 90 people and costing billions in damage, according to new Pentagon data provided to Democratic senator Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts.

There were a total of 4,820 mishaps from October 2019 to July 2024, including 222 of the most severe “Class A” incidents, which result in damage of at least \$2.5 million, destroy aircraft, or lead to fatalities or permanent full disability.

The rate of such accidents rose from 1.30 mishaps per 100,000 flight hours in 2020 to 2.02 mishaps per 100,000 flight hours in 2024 — an increase of 55%, according to Warren.

Those mishaps killed 90 service members and Defense Department civilian employees, destroyed 89 aircraft and cost the military \$9.4 billion. There were



Navy sailors conduct a crash and salvage training exercise on the flight deck of the aircraft carrier USS Theodore Roosevelt in September.

TYLER HARSTAD/U.S. Navy

25 fatalities, 14 destroyed aircraft and costs of \$1.7 billion in the first half of the 2024 budget year alone, according to the data.

“These data reveal that [the Defense Department] must make additional efforts to improve aviation safety, and that Congress must act,” said Warren in a letter sent to Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth.

The senator has partnered with Sen. Dan Sullivan, R-Alaska, both members of the Senate Armed Services Committee, on an amendment included in the Senate’s annual defense policy bill that would require more transparency from the military’s safety investigation boards.

The boards identify root factors and safety issues that con-

tribute to aviation accidents, but their reports are not made public or provided to lawmakers.

If adopted by the House and Senate as part of the 2026 National Defense Authorization Act, the measure would give lawmakers access to summaries of investigations over the past three years and help Congress in its oversight role of preventing acci-

dents, Warren said. The data provided by the Pentagon shows the Marine Corps had the highest average rates of Class A mishaps out of all the military branches, with a 194% increase from 2020 to 2024. In 2023, the service’s commandant ordered all Marine units to review their approach to safety after two aircraft crashes within days of each other killed four Marines.

Aviation mishaps continued across all the services this year.

In January, an Army helicopter collided with a commercial passenger plane over Washington, D.C., killing 67 people. The Navy has lost several F/A-18 Super Hornet fighter jets to mishaps, including incidents this spring where two jets fell off the deck of the USS Harry S. Truman aircraft carrier.

Most recently in October, a Super Hornet jet and a helicopter assigned to the aircraft carrier USS Nimitz crashed into the South China Sea within 30 minutes of each other.

Warren said she is seeking more recent crash data from the Pentagon as well as information on how the military is addressing the rising rate of accidents.

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GAO: DOD vulnerable due to info available to public

By WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

The Pentagon’s missions and personnel are increasingly vulnerable to “malicious actors” who can disrupt operations by aggregating digital information from data brokers, websites and other sources, a government watchdog concluded in a report issued Monday.

An 18-month audit by the Government Accountability Office of 10 Defense Department components — all five military services, U.S. Cyber Command, U.S. Special Operations Command, National Security Agency, Defense Counterintelligence and Security Agency and Defense Intelligence Agency — found that all but one “did not consistently train personnel on risks of digital information in the public across all relevant security areas,” the report states.

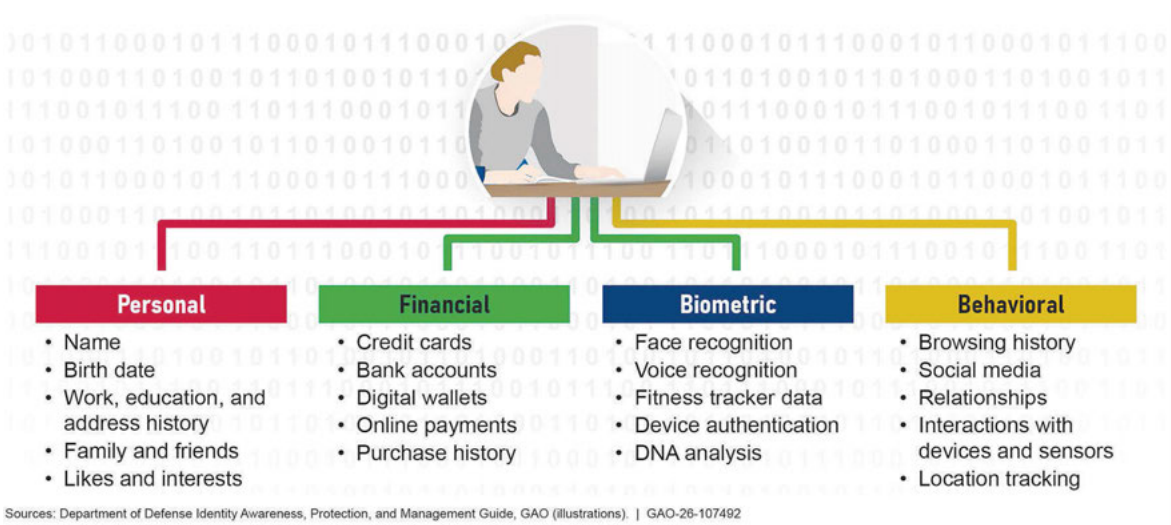
U.S. Special Operations Command provided a digital force protection training course aimed at helping personnel manage their online identities, among other things, the GAO found.

“Eight of ten components did

not conduct assessments of threats across the required security areas of force protection, insider threat, mission assurance, and operations security,” the report states. “While the department has taken actions related to a wide field of traditional security areas, its actions to reduce safety, security, privacy, and operational risks posed by the digital profile are limited.”

The security risks posed by malicious actors — criminals, terrorists and adversarial nations — have increased with the proliferation of ubiquitous digital devices, social media and “big data” that can now be combed using artificial intelligence.

“The digital activity of DOD’s service members, contractors, and family members — from websites visited to emails sent to photos posted on social media — can generate volumes of traceable data that can threaten their privacy and safety, and ultimately our national security,” the GAO report states. “These digital footprints represent a piece of a larger puzzle that, when tied to



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Defense Department service members, civilian employees, contractors and family members knowingly or unknowingly leave behind sensitive information via digital activity.

other sources, can create a digital profile and adversely affect military functions and missions.”

A malicious actor can create a digital footprint for an individual by purchasing personal information from a data broker for just pennies and combining it with online posts and location “pings” from cellular towers from devices such as fitness trackers, the report states.

The report illustrates a hypothetical scenario in which the operations of an aircraft carrier could be disrupted or sabotaged

by a malicious actor using Pentagon news releases, media reports, online activity, social media posts and ship coordinates routinely posted by maritime aficionados.

The DOD concurred with 11 of 12 recommendations from GAO and partially concurred with one.

Among the recommendations were that:

■ The secretaries of the Air Force and Army and the Defense Counterintelligence and Security Agency conduct required assess-

ments in the security areas of force protection, insider threats and mission assurance

■ U.S. Cyber Command, Defense Intelligence Agency and National Security Agency conduct required assessments in the security areas of force protection, insider threats, operational security and mission assurance

■ The Navy secretary ensure that the service is conducting required assessments in the security areas of force protection, insider threats, operational security and mission assurance

MILITARY

North Korea labels military drills 'gravely threatening'

Commentary knocks US, South Korean exercises, buildup on Guam, Japan

By YOONJIN LEE
AND JOSEPH DITZLER
Stars and Stripes

CAMP HUMPHREYS, South Korea — North Korea's government media has denounced the year's U.S. military activity in the region as "gravely threatening" to "strategic stability" on the Korean Peninsula.

A series of exercises on and off the peninsula encroaches upon North Korea's "sphere of security," according to an unsigned commentary published on the Korean Central News Agency website.

"We have already made it clear that all threats encroaching upon our sphere of security will become direct targets of the [Democratic People's Republic of Korea] and be managed in a necessary way," the KCNA commentary states, referring to the country by its formal name.

U.S. Forces Korea responded that military exercises by the U.S. and South Korea "ensure the readiness necessary to meet the expectations of those we lead and those we are sworn to protect," according to a Nov. 28 email from USFK spokesman David Kim.

"Our training events are transparent and focused on deterrence, defense, and the maintenance of peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula and across the region," Kim said. "We maintain a strictly defensive posture, and our exercises are designed to prevent conflict, not provoke it."

KCNA lists a series of "reckless military moves" this year, most recently an anti-submarine and counter special operations drill with South Korea.

The four-day Maritime Counter Special Operations Forces Exercise involved the guided missile destroyer USS Dewey, an



OSCAR DIAZ/U.S. Navy

U.S. and South Korean navy sailors discuss maneuvers aboard the USS Dewey during the Maritime Counter Special Operations Exercise in South Korea on Nov. 18.

MH-60R Seahawk helicopter, two U.S. AH-60E Apache helicopters and one U.S. P-8A Poseidon surveillance aircraft, according to a U.S. Navy news release Nov. 21. The exercise took place Nov. 17 to 21 in Pyeongtaek and offshore, according to the Navy.

"Our routine and long-planned defensive training exercises are essential to ensure we meet our mission: to defend the homelands and uphold our ironclad commitment to [South Korea]," Kim said.

The South Korea Joint Chiefs of Staff said the nation's military "conducted an annual defensive exercise for the stability on the Korean Peninsula and the region, and we will continue this effort."

KCNA also referenced a U.S. Air Force consolidation this year of F-16 Fighting Falcons from Misawa Air Base, Japan, and Kunsan Air Base, South Korea, into two "super squadrons" at Osan Air Base, 48 miles south of the border between North and South.

The super squadron initiative is a yearlong "force-optimization

test designed to see if a larger, consolidated squadron can generate more combat power and operate more efficiently," according to an Air Force news release in August.

KCNA said the Air Force "is running amuck" by creating "two 'super-powerful wings'" at Osan.

"It is an irrefutable fact that it is aimed at deterring the DPRK and regional countries by force and securing air superiority in contingency," the commentary states.

The commentary also criticized the U.S. for military exercises and arms buildups in Japan and Guam "targeting independent sovereign states in the region."

South Korea for the first time sent its own domestically designed and built submarine and other assets to Guam for a biennial Silent Shark exercise starting Nov. 18, according to the Korea JoongAng Daily on Nov. 17.

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WYATT OLSON/Stars and Stripes

Soldiers with the 4th Quartermaster Theater Aerial Delivery Company oversee the loading of a Humvee onto a pallet at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii, on Nov. 6.

Airdrop drills prep for speedy deliveries

By WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

JOINT BASE PEARL HARBOR-HICKAM, Hawaii — In just four days, an Army aerial delivery unit from Alaska packed more than 160 tons of gear onto parachute-rigged pallets to be dropped over Hawaii's Big Island — a logistical surge at the heart of one of the service's largest Pacific combat exercises.

The 4th Quartermaster Theater Aerial Delivery Company, based at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, underpins airdrop operations for U.S. forces across the Indo-Pacific, especially in remote spots where parachuting supplies is the only lifeline.

"The uniqueness of the Pacific area is that it's vast," Capt. Cody Poos, the company's commander, said Nov. 6 as about 60 soldiers prepared pallets inside a joint base hangar.

During the 15-day Joint Pacific Multinational Readiness Center exercise, which ended Nov. 17, the company loaded everything from Humvees to barrels of water onto specialized 8-, 12- and 16-foot steel pallets.

Each pallet was rigged with an elaborate system of parachutes, the first of which pulls the load out the back of an Air Force C-17 Globemaster III followed by additional chutes that carry it safely to the ground.

The pallets were dropped from about 1,000 feet onto the



SAMARION HICKS/U.S. Army

A cargo pallet is parachuted from a C-17 Globemaster III over Pohakuloa Training Area, Hawaii, on Nov. 8, as part of Joint Pacific Multinational Readiness Center combat training.

Pohakuloa Training Area, a sprawling expanse on Hawaii Island used heavily by the 25th Infantry Division during the drills. The unit later recovered the pallets for reuse.

"So if you need something quick, yes, barges can move, and boats can move, but it's not going to be quick," Poos said. "Yes, they can go to seaports, but there's many islands, many locations, that just don't have a deep enough draft or deep enough port. So aerial delivery gives that option. You can reach farther, you can reach faster, you can reach more precisely."

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