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## Celebrating Month of the Military Child

**Why do we have to go?**

By Eliana Engeberg, 6th Grade,  
McCool Elementary Middle School

I was sitting on my front lawn admiring the beautiful maple trees that sat flowing in the light breeze. For some back story I was 10 years old, currently living in Virginia. My dad was in the Navy and we were 2 weeks before leaving our perfect home. I loved it there we

had everything: we had a zip line, a rope swing, and a never ending forest that led to our "secret base" all in our backyard! I didn't want to leave. But we had to, I was OK with moving a little far away, but what I didn't know was that later that night my parents were going to inform me we were moving to Guam.

SEE WHY ON PAGE 6




### I get to travel

Drawing and story by John W., 2nd Grade,  
McCool Elementary Middle School

Have you ever thought about being a military child? It has down sides and up sides. Let me tell you all about them. I will start with the up sides. A good thing about being a military child is you

get to meet new friends, live in a safe home, and in a safe community. I learn about new cultures. I get to travel and get to try new food and a lot more. That is all for the up sides, but all down sides are sad. For example, a family member has to go away, or you move and you miss your friends. But never be scared because no matter where you go, you will meet new friends. I hope you had a super good day learning with me today about being a military child.

**Read more military children stories on Pages 2 - 15**



**Annie**

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— Celebrating Month of the Military Child —

# McCool Elementary Middle School

2nd Grade / Mrs. Orozco



By Carley R.

I am a military child because my dad works in the Navy. I like being a military child because I go to different places. I was born in Florida, but now I live in Guam. Before I Guam, I live in Virginia. I go to McCool and I learn a lot of stuff. I also have many friends like Aaliyah, Mia, and Milton. All in all being a military child is fun.



By Rei C.

Being a military child is fun! Let me tell you why. First, I move to a lot of places like New York, Japan, and Guam. Second, I meet new friends and go to new schools. There are two sad parts of being a military child. First, is when I move to a different place, I miss my friends and teachers. I might even miss my house. The other sad part is when my dad goes on deployment. It's hard but that is part of being a military child.



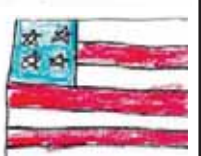
By Imani E.

Hi! My name is Imani. I am a military kid. Being a military kid has ups and downs. One down is your mom or dad has to go on deployment, which is when they are gone for a few months. Another down is you move away a lot. A few ups to being a military kid is you visit new places, try new foods, and celebrate different holidays! Another up is you get to meet lots of new people! Now you know why I like and don't like being a military kid. Would you like to be a military kid?



By Milton J.

Have you ever been a military child? Taking trips? WELL, I AM! But there are some ups and downs. First let me talk about the ups. One, I get to try new food. For example, I tried coconut milk and it's okay. Two, I learn new languages like Hafa Adai in Chamorro. Three, I get to explore new places like Guam and Rota. Now let me talk about the downs. One, it is hard to say goodbye to friends and family members. Well, now you know why being a military child is so amazing!



See more McCool stories on Page 4

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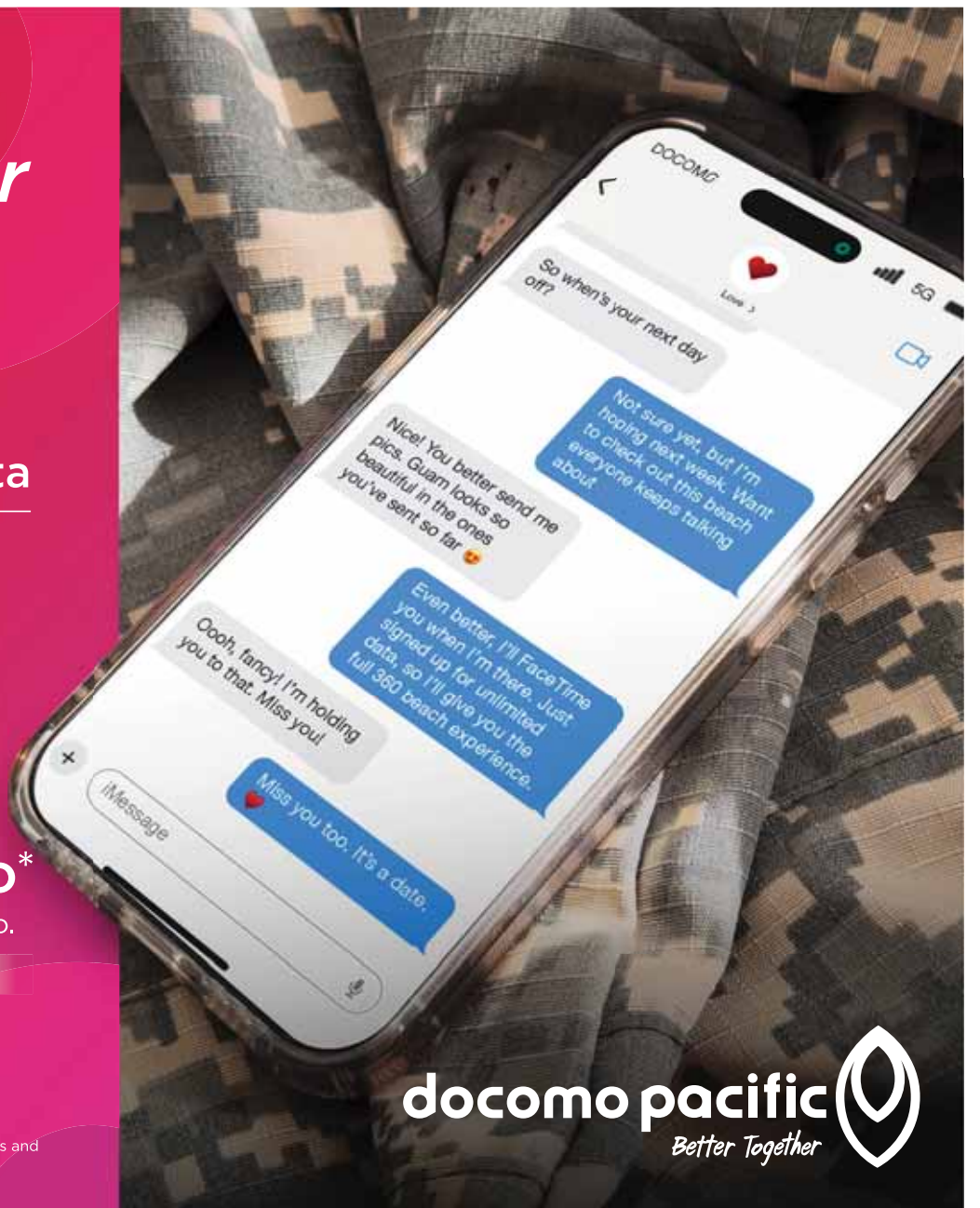
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— Celebrating Month of the Military Child —

# McCool Elementary Middle School

2nd Grade / Mrs. Orozco



By Gonzalo C.

I really love being a military child! I think it is the best in the world. Here are my reasons.

First, I love it because I want to be a sailor like my dad when I grow up. Next it is so much fun because I have more money. Also, I can go to different places like Guam and try new food. Last, I can go to a nice school like McCool and make my mom proud of me.

As you can see, I'm proud being a military child.



By Luna Q.

Do you like being a military child? I love being a military child! One good thing is I enjoy moving to different places and making new friends. I also love my teacher. Her name is Mrs. Orozco. One down side is I miss my dad when he goes on deployment. I am so sad. I also miss my friends in Key West. I hope you like being a military child because I do. Now you know why I love being a military child.



By Mia M.

Have you ever wondered what being a military child is like? If so, I can tell you all about it!

Being a military child is awesome because I get to travel to lots of places like Japan or Texas or even Guam! I like being a military child because I get to meet new friends, go to new schools, and meet even new teachers. The bad part, however, is when you have to say goodbye to your friends and family and to your pet fishes that you have known for three years.

Now you know what being a military child is like and why I think it is awesome! It's the best life ever!



By Marshall R.

There are some things I do not like and like about being a military child. I do not like being away from my other family members like my dad and my dogs. Another bad thing, my favorite foods are not here. For example, I miss eating Dunkin Donuts, but I can't find them here. There are two things I like about being a military child. I like that I have new friends like Henry, Axel, and Matthew. I also like the school and the teachers at McCool and the base houses are nice. Now you know how I feel about being a military child.



By Henry W.

I love being a military child! It feels good to be a military child because I feel safer on base than off base. I like being a military child because I have nicer friends and nicer school. I get to do fun activities at school. I also like going to different places like Texas, Korea, and Japan for vacation. Now you know why I love being a military child. It's a lot of fun!



By Aaliyah R.

There are some ups and downs being a military child. One good thing about being a military child is when my parents get paid, they buy me stuff I need. Another good thing is when my dad comes home from deployment! My dad works so hard to give me stuff. The hard part about being a military child is that when my dad leaves for deployment. I miss him soooo badly! You want more? Well, I do have another reason. I hate it when my dad goes on duty because he's gone more than usual. Now you know the bad and the good in the life of a military child.



By Laura

Are you a military child? Well, I am, and I love it! But there are some ups and downs. Here are some of the downs. I have to leave my friends behind when I move so I don't get to see them. My dad leaves almost every day and when he does, I don't get to see him. Now that I'm done with my downs I'll tell you the ups. One of the ups is that I get to meet new friends and call them, of course. I also get to go to fun schools and meet great teachers. And the best thing is that I get to live on base. As you can see, being a military child is a fantastic life!

## BUBBLE TEA MONTH

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By Chase H.

I love being a military child because it's such a good thing to be. I can live at new places like Guam and try new foods. I can also go to a new school like McCool and meet new friends. Because I love being a military child so much, I wish I can be one when I grow up. I love being a military child!



By Landon C.

I like being a military child because I like to go places. I've been to Arizona and Hawaii. I've lived in South Carolina and now in Guam. I also like to try new food like tacos and ice cream and meet new friends. All in all, being a military child is lots of fun, and it's awesome!

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By Finn N.

Do you like being a military child? I'm a military child, and I love it! You could ask me everything about being a military child. First, I'm a military child because my parents are in the military. It's their job. I get to go on travels. For example, I was born in Chicago, and now I live in Guam. I get to try new food like ramen and coconut candy. I know, stuff like that. If you don't like being a Military child, it makes your parents sad. Remember, the time is always right to do what is right. As you can see, being a military child is an amazing life!



By James D.

Being a military child is good, but there are some ups and downs. The upside is you get to go to more places. For example, I visited Japan, Korea, Saipan, Atlanta, and Guam. I also have lived in Florida, Arizona, and Guam. Another upside is I meet new friends and go to new schools.

On the down side, I have to PCS a lot, which means move to certain places. My dad goes on deployment, which makes me sad. But all in all, I love being a military child.



By Axel D.

Yes, I am a military child because my dad and my mom are in the United States Army. The Army is cool because they save people's lives. I like being a military child because I get to go to different states. I also go on base to shop at the NEX. I also go to school at McCool. I want to be in the military when I grow up. I want to be like my dad and my mom in the Army. As you can see, being a military child is lots of fun and amazing!



By Maddison

This is what it's like being a military child. The fun part sometimes you need to travel, but the sad part is you have to say goodbye to friends and teachers. But when you get to new place, you'll meet new friends and teachers, and that's what it's like being a military child.



By Eleven M.

I like being a military child because I like to see new friends. I also like trying new foods and living in the new houses when I move.

One thing I don't like about being a military child is that I can't see my old friends. And I miss the old houses and the foods that I like to eat.

All in all, I think being a military is a very good life.



By Beatrice A.

Do you like being a military child? I do! It's an amazing life.

First, I like being a military child because I get to travel to places like Japan and try some new food like sushi. Sushi is so delicious. I also love the view in Japan. Now I lived in Guam. Second, I like to make new friends. When I moved to Guam, Rei and Gonzalo became my best friends.

Now you know why being a military child is a wonderful life!



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— Celebrating Month of the Military Child —

# McCool Elementary Middle School

6th Grade

## WHY: Now happy in Guam

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

"Why are we moving, like A BILLION miles away!!!" I yelled. "Ya why are we leaving here!!!" my little sister added, she was only 7 or 8 at the time, so she didn't know why we were leaving. And this probably didn't make any sense for her. My older sister however stayed quiet. "OK, OK." My mom started to reassure us, "It is only 8,034 miles girls." My mom said calmly showing us here phone for proof. We all slumped upstairs to continue our packing, I could tell my mom was stressed about this and we didn't help.

By the time my dad had gotten home we all were back to our normal. Us three girls were outside soaking up all the fun we could, before we left. I went to bed that night thinking about what could happen. I woke up and the next week was much like the one before: playing outside, occasional fighting, and overall trying to soak up our home. The last day before we left our parents took us to a theme park, my mom had put our house on the market that day. Almost immediately we got a notification that someone was interested in buying. We set a date and enjoyed these last few hours.

When it was time to meet the man he ended up buying and got all of our stuff and hopped in a van (that process obviously took about 3 days), Once we got to the airport and started the process of boarding my little sister was right by my side and I did my best to answer all the questions she had. My older sister however was still silent, which I thought was odd. I studied her face, it looked slightly red and puffy. Almost like she was crying...

So we embarked on our journey running from one flight to the next. But after a 23 long hour flight we made it to our destination. It was hot and humid, I hated it already. We were forced to wait in small unit areas for the men to know my father was here. Once we finally got to leave we got in my dad's friend's van. He drove us to the commissary where I threw up, and my dad popped in to get some essentials.

We got to our temporary home and settled in. I had to share a room with my younger sister (which I was OK with), And my older sister called dibs on the couch. We all were jet lag from the plane so we pretty much just slept the rest of the day until we all got hungry and had dinner. The next week or so was pretty smooth, just finding out the neighborhood and making new friends.

My mom then took us school shopping and we had to go to school in 2 days. We started school that Wednesday, and I cried a lot. When I got home I started crying that I wanted to be home schooled, because "real school" was too stressful.

I got used to it though. The usual routine, and now I have been happy in Guam for almost 2 years and met some great people in my time.

- Eliana Engeberg



### Why do we have to wear purple for the month of the military child?

During the Month of the Military Child in April, people are encouraged to wear purple as a visible way to show support and thank military children for their strength and sacrifices, as purple symbolizes all branches of the military.

### What is the month of the military about?

"Month of the Military Child" to honor and recognize the unique sacrifices and resilience of military children, who face frequent moves, deployments, and other challenges due to their parents' service. May is National Military Appreciation Month, a time to honor and recognize the contributions and sacrifices of the men and women who have served in the U.S. Armed Forces, past and present. The month is a time to show appreciation for military service members, recognize their victories and sacrifices, and reflect on military families and individuals who serve the public in government.

### Why do military children and families have to move?

Military families move frequently (every 2-4 years) due to the nature of military service, which often requires service members to be reassigned to new duty stations, a process known as a Permanent Change.

- Ava Clark

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— Celebrating Month of the Military Child —

McCool Elementary  
Middle School

6th Grade

The Important Job

Eula had a hard job. From the day she was born she was destined to help people. That was because she was a service dog.  
When Eula turned 7 years old (1 year old in human years. She thought so at least.), she began training. But she wasn't as great at it as the rest of her litter. She trained and trained. She trained, until the rest of her litter were ready to go on missions with the military. Whatever that meant.  
After Eula failed the test, the big human people thought that it may not be a good fit for her to be a military working dog. So instead of continuing her current training, she started to train to be a service dog. The big human people said that it would be good for her. She was curious and had the ambition to help people. She went through the test and....passed. Eula was overjoyed.  
Eula waited awhile, until finally she got assigned to be with an eight year old boy. This boy had many bad allergies. Eula wasn't sure what that meant, but her job was to sniff any food he wanted to eat. There were a few things she needed to sniff out. Dairy, cashews, blueberries, peanuts, peanut butter.... Wait. Just thinking about that made Eula hungry.  
However, that meant more training. Eula was really starting to hate that word. But after finally being finished ( And lots of peanut butter treats.) She was

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ready for her first real job.  
The job was great..for the first month. Well Eula wasn't totally sure but the boy didn't seem to like Eula much. He would say things like, " Back up, I don't want to play." Eula had been a bit....rough,but she just wanted to play. Nonetheless, she ended up going back to training. OK, yeah Eula hated that word now.  
Until she met them. Eula's next job was to work with a military veteran. Though Eula didn't know what the word,"veteran" meant, she did know that it meant that they had worked hard in their life. Kind of like Eula. The trainer had said,  
" Eula, this is a very important job. But I trust you."  
What was different about this time was Eula didn't have to train. She apparently already knew what to do. Eula simply had to make sure that she stayed by her owner's side. At least that was what Eula remembered.  
During this job there were good days. Her owner would play with her, and give her peanut butter treats. Sometimes saying,  
" Who's a good girl? Come here, you wanna treat?"  
But then there were bad days. Sometimes her owner would cry. Then all Eula could do was stand by her owner. Eula tried not to focus on that too much. Eula wasn't sure why she would cry. A lot of human things confused Eula though.  
Luckily there were mostly good days. For once Eula felt like she had finally done something. She wasn't sure what the rest of her litter might be doing right now. But Eula felt good that she had accomplished something.

- Masie Wisniewski

The PCS Adventue

One early morning around 3:00 am I hear mom walk into my room to wake me up to go to the airport.With me loving to sleep I did not want to wake up to leave. My mom yanked me out of bed and did the same to my brother. My little brother was already in the car sleeping soundly. My dad carried the luggage down the stairs with the sound of dropping something heavy on the carpet. As my family says our final goodbyes to our very close friends and family I start to get teary eyes as for the same for my older brother.  
Then going down the neighborhood where I had made so many memories with my family and friends gets me bawling my eyes out silently in the back seat of the car. As we dive more I see all the places I have been too and all memories rush into my brian thinking of everything I have done here. But I know that I would make many new friends in guam. As we are almost at the airport I did a lot of research on the island of guam.  
Then we had to get all of our stuff out of the car when we were dropped off at the airport to go to our new home.  
After we are out of security and walking to our gate, Me and my brother are half asleep. When we are at our gate and sit down I hear my mom talking to my dad about what we were going to eat. So I chimed it and said "I am hungry."  
" yes Emma I know" said my mom.  
I was hoping to get some pancakes to eat before the flight. As I boarded the plane I was focused on drawing and not paying attention to anything to get my mind off of the fact that we are leaving my favorite home that I have been too.  
I do not remember much of the plane but I know that I had woken up to some turbulence. It was a long flight but the last thing that I remember was that we got to Guam and we had to go through customs and then to our hotel for the next couple of days. That morning I stepped outside for the first time and I said " this place is hot" My dad just nodded his head up and down , as if saying yes it is. I just went back inside and went to eat some food because I was hungry.  
Overall this is the story of how I got to Guam and what I remember. So far I am still living on Guam and I am now a six grader writing about this for an assignment. I find this story to be one of my favorites that I have written this year. The Island of Guam is super beautiful and I have met my best friend for life here and I will treasure this island forever even when I move home back to the states. I have made so many memories here on Guam and I am still not done with making them.  
- Emma McGilton

Through My Eyes

I was brought on a boat with my partner and we both knew what we were getting ourselves into. We had trained for months for this and I was ready, my job was to find people that were injured on the battlefield, or to find explosives. After a grueling time stuck with other dogs we finally made it to shore, it was nice to be able to touch the ground again. The humans were setting up camp while us dogs were scouting the area with our partners. All was going well until I smelt an explosive, that was a bad sign. I had alerted my partener, as he alerated "Guys, we found one!".  
As people came to defuse the explosive we continued our way, it was boring most of the time searching the area. When we got back to the camp it was already night, since we hadn't eaten we got to eat while they made their beds that they were gonna be sleeping on. While that was happening us dogs had already finished eating and were just laying down trying to sleep. In total that day I found only two bombs out of the five that were found, that was an achievement to me or that is what I think. When we were trying to go to bed a new dog tried to take someone's sleeping spot and that started a fight.  
The rest of us just went back to bed when the young one straight up attacked an older one and it was not good. Since the older dog did have more experience it was able to take down the younger one. Though the younger one was bitten pretty bad though nothing serious that would cause him to get put down nor have to leave. When a handler came out, some dogs were fighting. He took the younger one to the medics since they could just banaged him up. Then we finally went to bed to start looking for traps or bombs.  
We went on a path that our handlers told us to go, it was muddy to say the least. When we came across a bomb we were to put a marker right next to it, that was what the sergeant told the handlers. We were with some Marines to make sure that in an ambush we would live, I was fine with that, "All dog handlers a Private has gone missing report back to camp." it was radioed through to everyone. Private James was a skinny boy that didn't really make it past the training though he did. Since I was a dog usually used for tracking or finding I was sent out with some other dogs and Privates. My partner Lieutenant Pike was familiar with what Private James looked like.  
After a while we had found him sleeping in the woods, and with all the people shouting his name he was still sleeping. Pike told me to bite him gently though strong enough that he would wake up. When Private James woke up he was in for a surprise since Pike had radioed where he was, which meant a sergeant was there. "Private Pike you can go now.", as we left the Private was given a task that I couldn't really hear them since we were far by then though the next day he was doing tasks.

- Natali Newman

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### A Day In The Life of a Rescue Dog: The Snow Day

The snow and ice whistles outside the window, supplying it with a superb frost. The fire glowed warmly, spreading a dim yet orange light around the cabin. My owner sat in a broad chair, far too big for myself. However, this home was perfect, no matter if some of it was quite big. I listened to the crackle of the fire, glad I do not have to face the cold temperatures, or my terrible rescue trainer. I was considering what I would do on the wonderful snow day, when my owner's weird antenna box started making sounds. I bark angrily. I did not like some of my owners' weird and crude devices, I did not understand the weird sounds they made.

My owner jumped out of his chair, and talked to the box. Something was wrong and I knew it this time. He grabbed my red backpack with a cross on it and strapped it to my back. I was confused about how to feel, to resent this waste of a lazy day or to be ready for a full blown adventure. My owner opened the door and a chill went down my spine, it was freezing outside, the wind howled at me. I was tempted to howl back, but my owner was still putting on my harness. After it was completed, my owner donned his jacket and stepped out the door with me. It was hard to smell over the soil, but I smelled cigars and a moldy coat. Suddenly, I knew my mission. I had to rescue my horrible trainer.

I've never liked my trainer. He smelled like smoke and spoke in a harsh tone, demanding attention and never letting slack. Some other dogs received praise and treats, but all I received was punishment, even when I did my best, so you would understand that I was not especially inclined to rescue him. I stood still until my owner's voice awoke my thoughts. His words, whatever they meant, sounded urgent so I continued following the smoky, moldy scent. However, my mind raced, filled with the thoughts of why, why am I doing this? My owner followed me intently, for I was leading him to my trainer.

I admit, I had my moments where I would stop and decide it wasn't worth going after my trainer, but my owner continued to urge haste, and would not let me stop. Suddenly, I realized that maybe my trainer would treat me differently if I rescued him! I tracked him with renewed vigor, only stopping to regain my bearing in the winter snow and trees that surrounded the area. At one point, I was worried that I had lost the scent to the wind, but I was able to recover; the smell of the smoke was getting stronger, and I concluded that my trainer was in the forest.

My ears shot up, I had heard the sound of teeth chattering in the snow. I saw my trainer, he was sheltered under a tree shivering with cold. My owner quickly called to him and he sat up straight. My owner helped him up and we made the trip back to the cabin with relative ease, for I would always remember the smell of my home. My owner sat my trainer into a chair near the fire, while I waited on the rug, warming myself. My trainer asked me to come to him. I obeyed, afraid of what might happen if I didn't. He took a few treats from his pocket and handed them to me. I gratefully ate them, for they were my first ones from him. From that moment on, me and my trainer became good friends, and I would always remember that snow day.

- Patrick Driscoll

### Documentary On The Murder of Danelle Marshall

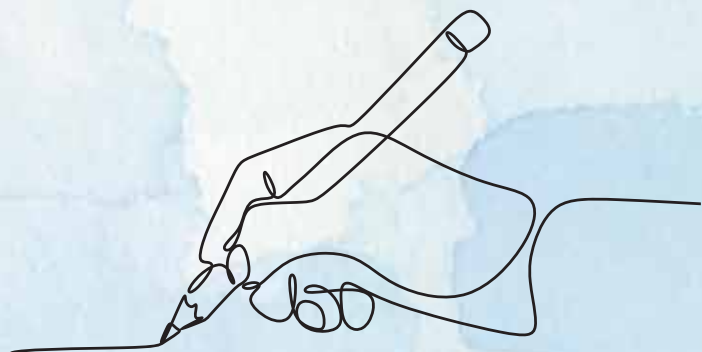
I'm in a house, one that is years old. The black mold grew on the wall, large and strong. Green splatters from the grass growing through the old house. The wood was soggy and flexible, disturbing when you touch it. In the corner was a chair, red and small. It was broken and covered in water from the leaking pipes above. Which was growing all sorts on it. The window was shattered and a spider web was latched all over. Making a frame of design. There was trash everywhere. Some old soda cans that lost their color, candy wrappers that have dirt and water in it. It was dark and cold, my flashlight was my only light available. I felt something watching me. Haunting me. It was clawing at each step.. Watching each movement.

My friend was beside me, exploring the house herself. The kitchen was worse. Moldy food that has been left there for years, which already leaked through the bowls and plates. It was disgusting. The rotten smell was trenching up the room, the dead bird was normal enough to lay on the floor in the children's bedroom. Its eyes peeled open from the ants taking its nutrients.

The children's room was happy. Full of small toys that light up at each step, or a teddy bear ripped in half. The bed was messy and unmade, which made an impact on how the room appeared. It was dreadful to be in such a room. The curtains on the ground, the bed flipped over, and the books on the desk scattered. Blood all throughout the room and hallway, leading down to the bathroom.

And such forth on the matter and small but important details taken on the matter. Taking locals' words is a strong thing to go off of. A large percentage of people in the local town were very hesitant to answer various questions. Often asking if they knew if Danelle was connected to any problems that may have upset anyone to make them do this, if they saw anything unusual.

- Aliana Newman



Check out more military children stories at:  
**[militarychild.stripes.com](http://militarychild.stripes.com)**

See more McCool stories on Page 12



### Traveling friendships

We finally arrived at the new base. Me and my family had been driving for two days on our move to Georgia from Maine. The base was nice, my school was very extravagant. Everyone was staring at me and our family, I could feel their eyes watching my every move. Everyone else already had a group of friends, and now it was my task to find one.

My very first class was fun, everyone was inviting. A girl with golden curls and gorgeous green eyes began to walk towards me. "Hey, I'm Lila! Are you new?" She asked as she sat next to me. "Hi, I'm Talia! Yes, I am new!" She agreed to show me around and help me figure out my classes. She stuck with me for the rest of the day, teaching me the way of the school. I had finally made my very first friend in this new amazing world.

At lunch she introduced me to her friends, Mayah, Zuri, and Kate. They taught me what I was supposed to do in the lunch line and let me sit with them. We talked about what it was like here and how each person acts. They showed me who and who not to talk to. I felt very welcomed in this small community of kind and caring people. Thankfully, I had at least one of my new friends in every class. They introduced me to more people and my social life expanded in amazing lengths.

After the first week I was invited to one of the girls' birthday parties. I was overjoyed that she saw me as such a good and close friend after only being here a week. When I got there we jumped on the first water slide we saw, as her party was at a water park. I felt the most included I had ever been since the move and it was all because of these girls that took me in and made sure I felt special. I will never forget my old friends, but these people will forever hold a special place in my heart.

- Ava Reilly

## — Celebrating Month McCool Elementa

7th C

### A letter to a farther form a son

Dear Dad,

I hope this letter finds you safe and well on the front lines. I can only imagine what you're going through, and I want you to know how proud I am of you. Your bravery and dedication inspire me every day.

Things back home are good. Mom is holding things together like she always does, and we've been keeping busy. I've taken up running again; it's a great way to clear my mind. I sometimes think about how you used to jog with me when I was younger, always encouraging me to push myself a little further. I'd love to have you back home to go for a run together again.

I often find myself thinking about all the stories you've shared with me about your experiences. They remind me of the strength that comes from resilience. I know these days can be tough, but I hope you're finding moments of peace in between the chaos. Remember to take care of yourself, no matter how busy things get.

It is chaotic at home, but it just doesn't feel the same when you're not here. I am still in martial arts and I love it. At school, it is fine because I have things to distract me from missing you but when I am not at school or doing something I sometimes have the feeling that you got hurt and that you may not come back, but I know that you would try everything in your power to come home to your family and I thank you for that. And yet I wonder how did you do it. How did you go this long without seeing your family? How was your deployment, what did you do most of the time you were deployed? I guess I just miss you and I wish I could see you.

Stay safe, Dad. I can't wait until you come home, and we can catch up on everything. Until then, know that I'm thinking of you every day.

With all my love,  
Adrian

- Adrian Visage



The Move

I try not to get attached because I know that I'm just going to have to say goodbye.

I know I will meet new people, but you know It's just goodbye over and over again.

Though I try not to get attached because I know i'm going to have to leave, most of the time I just find the people I click with and we are just friends.

Then I have to say bye to them and although my heart breaks I'm happy that they will find new friends and it will be okay.

It's time for me to leave goodbye I say, tears bled dry on my face.

Away I go off the ground and then all things look small like I can just grab them.

A new place not so familiar like I want to go back.

Here we go to a new school, new teachers, and new friends.

I feel like this time will be different here in Guam.

Beautiful weather.

I made a few friends at first trying new things like a play.

Then I move into my new house and meet new people.

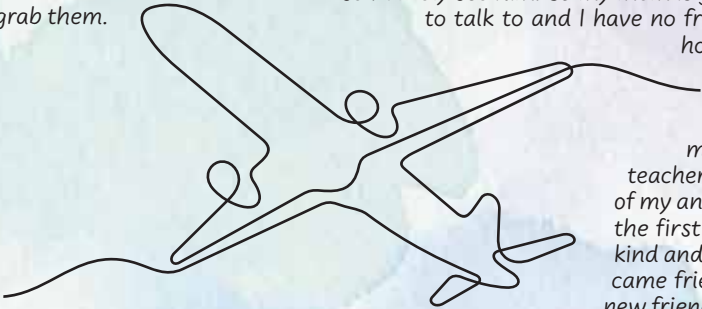
I think to myself do I want to say goodbye to them no but I play with them day after day and after a while I make a pretty good bond with them.

I got to school and they introduced me to their friends more and more.

I just forget, do I want to say goodbye no but already said hi so forever they live on. It feels like I've known them my whole life but just for that 1 year and maybe more.

I might not be me going away but maybe this time away they go to find something new for them.

- Ariana Ward



Long Lost Friends

Moving to a small town from a big city was hard. I moved to Guam, a little island. The move was not a fun Experience because I have two siblings. So the whole flight they were so annoying and I got barely any sleep. The flight to Guam was a 19 hour flight. So when I got off the plane I was happy to not sit on my but. Moving from a big city to a small town was hard because I was 12 and no one is my age because I'm home schooled and it is hard to make friends at my age. My mom says there's a lot of kids your age at middle school but the thing is I do not go to middle school. "You just have to go meet them." She said with a smile. " Yes I know but I'm shy," I said. " Oh you're not shy, you are just nervous to meet new people!" Said with confidence. It was a new week and my mom broke the news to me. She said I'm going to public school. I begged to stay and be home school but my mom said she has to go to work. To add My dad is in the military so I barely see him. So my mom is going to work all the time then I will have no one to talk to and I have no friends to talk to because all my friends are back home. My mom convinced me to go to public school because I need to have friends. Summer was over and it was my first day of public school. I was so nervous to go into those buildings, to make new friends, meet new people, and meet new teachers. Going into those doors is hard for me because of my anxiety and stress levels. But eventually I made it to the first period. I sat down with this girl and she was so kind and she had a goofy personality and we instantly became friends. I was actually surprised to actually make a new friend. The whole day I was with my new friend Emma. Eventually it was time to go home. I actually survived a day at Public School. When I went home I told my mom everything that happened! Emma showed me around the military base of Guam. A couple years have passed and now we are best friends for life. I have been best friends for 10 years now.

- Kaelyn Thresher

Medals that tell

What would you do if you found a WWII Medal in your attic? Well, I did, and I don't know why it's up there. This is the story about how I found my great-grandpa's medal in the attic. As I stood in my attic, surrounded by dusty boxes and forgotten memories, I stumbled upon an old, tarnished box that caught my eye. The wooden surface was scratched, and the brass latch was slightly rusted, but something about it drew me in. Gently lifting the lid, I was greeted by an array of objects, each with its own story, but one item stood out prominently: a WWII medal gleaming softly, as if it had been waiting for me to discover it.

What would prompt my great-grandfather to keep such a treasure hidden away for so long? I carefully lifted the medal out of the box, feeling its weight in my palm. It was a beautiful piece, intricately designed with an eagle and stars, its ribbon faded but still vibrant enough to hint at the honor it once represented. I could only imagine the stories woven into the fabric of this heirloom— courageous acts witnessed, comrades lost, and a life lived in the midst of turmoil and strife.

As I examined the medal further, I thought about the history it encapsulated. My great-grandfather had been a soldier in the Pacific theater, and the thought of him navigating those tumultuous waters made me feel a blend of pride and sadness. Our family had always shared snippets of his tales—how he fought bravely, the bonds he formed with his fellow soldiers, and the challenges they endured. Yet, beyond the stories, there was a deeper connection that I felt at that moment, a bridge to a past that seemed so distant yet remarkably close.

Determined to learn more, I began researching the significance of the medal. Each detail I uncovered painted a larger picture of what life must have been like for those who served during such a harrowing time. This journey into my family's history was not just about the medal; it was a chance to honor my great-grandfather's bravery and perseverance. I knew then that I had to share this discovery with my family—this piece of history was a reminder of the sacrifices made and the resilience shown, lessons that remain relevant today.

- Hunter Murphy

The PCS Adventure

Moving to Okinawa from Guam. Some facts about Okinawa is that there is a lot of culture. They are very respectful. Their cars are very small, because the roads are small. The weather is hot there. Some landmarks are Aka Bridge. Also the Ishigaki City Tokusan Hambai Center. In this family there are 4 people in this family, 5 if you count the cat. The moms name is Ruby. The dads name is James. The oldest is Ivy. Lastly, the younger sister is Mackenzie, she has schizophrenia. The cat's name is twilight. Ivy feels happy about going to Okinawa, and really wants to. Mackenzie feels sad and happy, because she wanted to go move somewhere else instead. But she is happy to see all the cool things i Okinawa. Ruby (the mom) feels good about moving there, but she wouldn't mind if we moved somewhere else. James (the dad), was sad because he did not want to move to another island he wanted to move back to the states. Everything was going smoothly, until they took off to leave Guam. Then Mackenzie forgot her medicine in her luggage. She didn't think much about it. Until she needed to take her medicine, she took down her carry on from overhead. She looked in her luggage for her medicine, where she thought she put it. She could not find it. She told her mom. Ruby asked her, "Did you put it in your carry-on or did you put it in your luggage?" Then Mackenzie remembered she put it in her luggage. She started panicking. Mackenzie started seeing things. Her and her mom went to the flight assistance, to see if they had medicine for schizophrenia. Mackenzie: " There is a person there. Mackenzie was seeing more things. Luckily they had some for her. We were so happy. Ruby was relieved that they had some. They went back to her seat and finished the flight to Okinawa. When they got off the plane, they decided to get dinner. It was night when they arrived. They went to a hotel. On the way there, Ivy and Mackenzie, fell asleep. The next week they looked around and started to get used to the places. Then they started to look for a house. They got a house on bases and they went to a Do-dea school. They found out that their home was a note that said: There is a secret door in the biggest room in the closet. That leads to a basement. P.S beware of what is in there.

- Zehira King

of the Military Child —

# ary Middle School

Grade



A day in my life

Being a military kid is really fun. My school asked me to write a story about being a military kid even though I go to an all military school. It sounded like a really fun writing piece so I guess I'll start. Hi my name is Emma Wyle and this is a day in my life. But first let me tell you about my family. My dad works on the submarine while my mom has a cookie business. My sister, Eli, is 2 so she goes to daycare and I go to Elementary school.

I wake at 7:00 am. My school doesn't even start until 9 but I like getting ready early. Then I get to watch TV for an hour. My dad heads off to work around 7:30 and then my mom gets my sister at 8:00. As my mom is getting Eli ready I pack our lunches and get in the car. Once we get to school my friend Lindsey is waiting for me. Me and Lindsey are best friends. I'm sad that she is PCS-ing soon. That means she is moving because her parents have orders to another place. We walk through the doors and go to Ms. Johnson's class for a while then it's lunch time. I packed mac and cheese for lunch today. It was delicious. Then we go back to class. Finally it's the end of the day and we go back to my house. My mom is with her business manager my auntie. I greet hello to them and hug my sister.

I went to my room and did my homework until dinner time. After dinner I get ready for bed and then the cycle starts again. Thank you for reading about a day in my life it was really fun and as you can see being a military kid isn't so bad after all. Love all you military families, from Emma Wyle

- Danika Ryan



— Celebrating Month of the Military Child —

# McCool Elementary Middle School

7th Grade

## Potass' Great Operation

Everyone has a dream, everyone wants to pursue their dream, but who actually does? Most of the time, people go and try to pursue their dreams but then find another dream to pursue. But I don't want that.

My name is Potass Everyyellow(I'm a banana in Banana Empire). I always wanted to be a soldier but I never had the experience of being one. I was 13 at the time when I was crazy about trying to become a soldier, I kept researching for the best ways to become one. But fast forwarding 10 yrs, Potass is now 23 and the most important knock on his door happened today.

"!KNOCK KNOCK! This is the J.B. VIII Department! Open the door NOW" One of the soldiers demanded.

I was the one that opened the door and as soon as I opened it, I was the happiest banana man on the entire island.

"Are you Potass?" They asked.

"Yes, I am? What brings you here?" I questioned.

"You have been one of many(12 soldiers) to be selected to be part of our top secret mission; OPERATION ROCK. In this mission, we will capture the orange landia's mascot, their pet rock. We are doing this to get revenge for the assassination of King Jim Bob the VIII." They announced.

"Sir yes sir." I saluted them as I said it. I was the happiest banana man in the Banana Empire.

The day the operation commenced, I was practically trained to be a mediocre soldier. Enough to qualify as a soldier, but I don't think that the attack leader agreed. Going into the future, there are now about 3 soldiers left due to all the traps and surprise attacks that have caused us to be low in men. But the attack leader has chosen ME as his new right hand man because his other one, Timmy, died due to a bullet to his chest. We got to where the rock was kept but we weren't ready for what was to come.

The rock was equipped with a peel staff to peel our skin off, we were terrified but we thought of getting our deceased peers as banana peels for the rock to fall, it worked and he dropped his staff as he fell down. We then burned the staff and captured the rock, we did it. I was then nominated as the attack leader's right hand man from now on.

- Ethan Carandang

## Operation rock

Long ago the banana empire was at peace but it all changed when the oranges killed king Jimbob VIII and started the 101 year that has yet to come to an end.

I was taken to the king's throne room that day. I was told I must recruit 12 banana soldiers to go on a top secret mission to kidnap the rock who was soon to be king and since I was the general timmy I would be commanding this mission.

I had chosen 11 of the 12 people required for this mission but I didn't know who the last person would be. My last option was a recruit named Potass everyyellow but he was very unexperienced so I was worried. Once I arrived at the recruits house and I could tell he was not going to survive the mission.

Today was the day for the operation. I collected my soldiers and we got on a secret stealth helicopter. It took 2 hours but we arrived at the empire's castle boundaries and we broke through a sewer pipe and we journeyed through but we had encountered 501 empire soldiers guarding the sewer connections so we had to sneak by. One of our soldiers slipped and broke his ankle so we had to leave him behind. We turned the corner and there was a trap that sliced another fellow banana soldier.

We had located the correct area so we broke through the pipes and there was two guards they were able to shoot two of my soldiers before we shot back. After the shots 5 guards came around the corner and there's a battle. I took out two but three were still there. My soldiers got the rest but sadly my right hand man timmy was shot along with 3 other soldiers. Then I had to replace him with Potass Everyyellow, he was surprisingly a good right hand man. We finally made it to the location where the pet rock was but he had a peel staff that could take us out in seconds. One of my soldiers slipped and fell from the hiding spot and the rock quickly obliterated my soldier so we throw bananas so he would slip and drop his staff. We put him in handcuffs and burned the peel staff. We escaped that day with our lives and after a few days of negotiation we had officially ended the 101 year war of Jimbob VIII.

- Alexander Beans

See more McCool stories on Page 14

## The absence of member

Cecelia Andrada; the only child, the daughter of Angela Andrada and Ricardo Andrada. Cecelia Andrada was born in Cebu, Philippines. When she was born, all her aunts, uncles, grandparents, parents, and even other people she barely knew circled close around her and expressed in such awhs. Phrases like, "Ay ang cute naman!" or "Kamusta baby Cecelia" repeated near her. She lived in a mansion with antique vases and paintings hanging on the wall. There were three floors to her house; the first floor for guests and other visitors, second floor for bedrooms, and the third floor for storage. Large stairs were made of marble with beautiful designs and patterns. Everything in her house consisted of many fine, rich materials like gold and diamond. The paintings were created by her mother, as she usually enters her art room on the first floor and paints whatever she can find inspiration from. Expensive bills were paid and they had less than 114,488 pesos left (\$2,000). By the time Cecelia turned 5, her father joined the navy as a source of income. They moved to Japan 3 weeks after and stayed at a Navy hotel on base for most of their time. Cecelia was only a baby and didn't mind her father staying in the office overnight sometimes, thinking he just went to the store or a friend's house. As time and time went by, she didn't mind her father's absence on the weekends.

One early morning it was December 2 and Cecelia jumped right out of bed. "Happy Birthday Cecelia! Me and Papa got you lots of gifts for your 9th birthday. Although, papa isn't here." Her mom exclaimed with a smile. "Oh did Dad go to the train station to buy me a gift?"

Cecelia replied. "Your papa will be going on the ship for a few months. He left last night while you were sleeping. We were going to wake you up so you could say goodbye, but Papa felt bad. He left you a card on the top of your drawer as a gift for your birthday." Mom walked out of the room to bake a cake and prepare the celebration. Cecelia closed the door and a few minutes later heard groups of guests entering her house. As she read the card silently in her room, tears began to fill her eyes. She knew she missed Papa and felt unsure. Her Papa was never absent on her birthday and she was not-in-the-mood the whole day, wearing fake smiles and taking pictures of just her and Mom. "This isn't even my birthday without the full family. I miss you Papa." She thought as she started cutting the cake.

The next day she went to school with a look, presenting in such sorrow and misery. "Are you okay Cecelia? It was just your birthday yesterday, what's wrong?" Her friend questioned in a concerned manner. "Oh. It's nothing! Don't worry, I'm fine. Just sleepy from the great party yesterday!" Cecelia lit with a bright smile, but she knew that really wasn't how she felt. Over time, she began to feel more discouraged. After school ended, she would always come home to hug her Papa and they would play at the playground in her free time, but she knew it all changed. Her Mom observed the sad or neutral expressions on Cecelia's face and came to the conclusion it was because of her Papa. "I know you feel sad and I do too, but just remember, he is coming soon okay? Besides, we can always chat or call him whenever we feel lonely. You can talk to me about it or write it in a diary to help you indicate your feelings. I'm here for you." 2 months have passed since her father's dismissal and eventually she learned to accept the truth. She

knew that this would happen often and she had to get over it. Mom always kept smiling at her and even baked leche flan often, one of Cecelia's favorite desserts, as a way to cheer her up.

A classmate of her's came to school with tears dripping on their red cheeks as they wiped their tears with their dark sleeves. "If you don't mind me asking, are you okay?" Cecelia said in a worry. "No.. My mom had to go underway for a couple of months and she was always my number one supporter. I have a math competition starting in a few weeks and can't bear the fact that she won't be here." Her classmate exclaimed, as their voice faded. Cecelia replied with a quote from her mother, "I know you feel sad, but just remember, she is coming soon okay? Besides, you can always chat or call her whenever you feel lonely. You can talk to me about it or write it in a diary to help you indicate your feelings. I'm here for you." The classmate wiped their last tear and gave a big hug to Cecelia, eventually making Cecelia realize what she did was right. After school that day, she walked home as she was eager to tell her Mom on how she helped her classmate. As she took her dangling keys out of her pocket and opened the door, there standing was her very own father. Her face lit in pure joy as she squealed in relief and happiness. This surprised shock made her own day and she realized how much she self-grew towards her feelings.

- Apple Kate Go

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— Celebrating Month of the Military Child —

# McCool Elementary Middle School

8th Grade

## Through My Eyes

As a military working dog It's exciting and full of essential tasks. I wake up every day, lying next to my handler, Sergeant Jake, who is already up and writing in his notebook. The smell of coffee fills the air. I stretch and let out a happy bark because I know today will be another mission.

"Hey, Max, ready to go?" Jake says with a smile, scratching behind my ears. I wag my tail in response. Days like this always fill me with energy and purpose.

After a quick breakfast, we travel to the motor pool where our armored vehicle waits. I hop into my harness, and Jake talks to the team, sharing important details for the mission. "Today, we'll be checking the village for any dangerous materials. Keep your eyes open," he instructs. I can feel the seriousness of the moment. I've trained hard for this, and I know my nose will help keep everyone safe.

Once we arrive at the village, I start sniffing the air. The sounds of people talking mix with the earthy smell of dust and flowers around me. "Are you ready to work, boy?" Jake asks. I bark again, eager to do my job.

As we walk through the village, I suddenly pick up an unusual scent. I stop and focus. "What's wrong, Max?" Jake whispers. I crouch and keep my nose to the ground, alerting him to the danger. "Stay sharp, everyone!" he calls to the team, and they move into position.

A moment later, I found a Bomb! Jake crouches next to me, his eyes showing pride. "Good job, Max! You just helped save lives," he praises, patting me.

After the mission is over, I feel proud. I know I'm not just Jake's dog; I'm part of a team that helps protect people every single day.

- Brooks Carroll

## Average day as the military dog

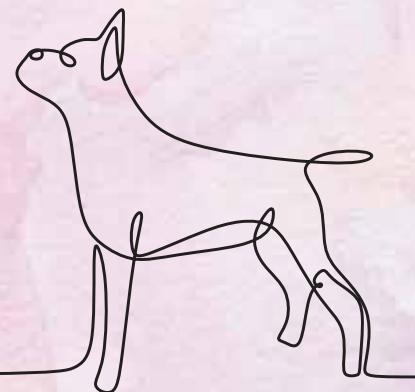
Everyday is confusing as always, yet fun as always not knowing where to go. Mysterious men in green uniforms and boots are always stomping around. While I'm here hearing random gibberish waiting to understand. All they hear is woof woof woof while they are looking at me like I'm crazy. Everyday is exciting though going on a new adventure. It's a hot sunny morning where the mysterious men in green call me up in a demanding yet calm voice "Gray get up" I hurry up as I wait for instructions. The morning sun is shining bright on me, feeling like the center of attention. I follow the man and wait for the adventure. I follow them to a humvee and go inside while 4 other men start talking. From their perspective I just looked like your average working animal sitting down. The smell of oil running through my nose, the air running thick. The radios are constantly talking with weird noises. I don't understand why glowing colors confuse me. Everything is just fading away as a sleep in the humvee. The men in green start waking me up as we reach our destination, I see I'm in an area for a checkpoint of some sort and I am trained to sniff out powders. I then wait as a car approaches. The men in green wait for the cars to go to them. I see the person in the car turn down his window and pull out a card of some sort. The green guy scans with a device and lets him go by opening the gate. The second car comes through and I smell some sort of substance. I start trying to communicate with the green guy and they look through the vehicle. He finds weird stuff in the trunk and the green guy takes him to jail. That is your average day as a military dog.

- Matthew Thompson

## The life of the working animal

Another day of work the smell of leather and steam in the Humvee we go down the road from the base. My companion is my best friend Dan who has trained me since I was a dog in the pound. We were on a mission and I was to sniff out where the package was. A nice simple job I have done tons of times shouldn't be difficult or so I thought. We get to the location and I start working then out of nowhere we start taking fire and I mean heavy fire. Dan radios back up on our location then I hear the hum of a uh-60 black-hawk. The spin of the Gatling gun went off for 10 seconds and then silence and then it left. And I had to get to work sniffing out any contraband 5 minutes ago and I heard rustling behind a bush. Then out of nowhere a grenade lands close to me and I take a somewhat blunt force and I am pushed into a wall Dan yells "Get Down" and starts shooting. Then my entire team starts shooting and then it is just a fire fight until it is over we then extract because I am injured.

- Julian Nelson



## The Letter of Pride and Love

Hey Mom, it's been about two weeks since I've seen you in person since you are now at school so I decided to write a letter to you.

For starters, at home it's been really peaceful and really nice as just yesterday we went to the ranch and it was really fun as we had to off-road to get there. As well, we also got some Canes not so long ago and it was really delicious as it fulfilled my craving for chicken tenders. Also, Dad made one of my favorite foods, fried salmon on Friday which was also of course super yummy as well. Continuing on, I've been doing really well in school just like I said since my grades are straight A's and I also recently just got a 90% on my Science test. But, even though me and my sister did miss a day in school because we missed the bus, I promise that we won't miss it again don't worry. By the way, soon I have a common paced assessment about argumentative writing and I am kind of nervous but not really as many people said it was easy so hopefully it is.

Now enough about home, how is Rhode island? I heard that Rhode Island is cold, is it really? Also, how has your school been going over there as well? By the way, I wondered what kind of food they have over there. I heard that many people love the food so I really wanna know if it is true. I am also wondering how big is Rhode Island? Is it a modern place?

Well Mom I really miss talking to you and everything that we do together so I'm really happy that you will be coming back home this weekend so do very well in school. Mom, I love you and see you soon!

- Daisy

## The Move

An island filled with diverse cultures with an amazing backstory, Guam. Guam is a U.S. territory in Micronesia in the western Pacific Ocean. It is known for its tropical beaches, Chamorro villages, and ancient latte stones. Landmarks based on ancient stories, Two Lovers Point, Fort of the Virgin Marry of Solitude, Asan Bay Observatory, and Fort Apugan. Two Lovers Point, one of the most viewed attractions for tourists has a legend about two lovers who jumped to their deaths and were forbidden to be together.

On the mainland, a family of me, Urijah, Mom, and Dad. Packing their things in the car and getting ready for a new home. The car filled with sadness heading to the airport but with a sense of exciting feelings. I was unfortunate to leave his friends of 5 years but is excited about making new friends and what discoveries he can make. While Urijah isn't taking it seriously, he is excited but is also sad about leaving his friends that he met online. While these situations were happening, Mom and Dad were fine and were excited to move to a new home. 20 hours later, Wheels touching the floor, the plane has landed.

Everybody was sitting and sleepy while the plane got to its right terminal. After 10 minutes of waiting, everybody rushed up from their seats and got their bags while the family sat and waited for the space to clear. Dad got up first and got the bags for me and my brother while my mom waited for a little bit more space to clear. We got off the plane and started to walk to the baggage carousel to pick up our luggage. Leaving the airport as soon as possible to lay on a bed and sleep.

- Mikhail Potante

## The Star-Spangled Man

Dear Dad,

It's been a while. Mom said you would be gone for a few months, but it's been a year. Do you know when you're coming back? If so, I have a lot to tell you. Everything has changed since you left. The tree in our backyard fell and collapsed onto our roof. Maybe Mom already told you, but I just wanted to be sure you knew. I overheard Mom saying that the cost of repairing our home might stop me from getting a Christmas gift. Please change her mind. Also, I know you got me a bunch of Lego sets on my birthday, but I think I've outgrown Lego. It just doesn't feel the same when I pick them up. Sure, I like building them, but that's about it. Instead of buying me Lego, can you please gift me an iPad next time? All of my classmates have one, or some other type of device, and I don't. That reminds me; do you get to go on your phone when you're out there deployed? Do you play any games with your friends? It must be fun being with the boys. I wish I could be there with you. I know that your ship is always moving and going places. What type of places have you been? Has it only been places in the U.S.? Considering that, you've probably gotten seasick a lot. Or maybe you've gotten used to it. If you're not used to it, I'd suggest drinking some water. Mom says that staying hydrated solves most of people's problems. How do you even properly get drinking water when you're out on the ship? Is it all stored somewhere? Make sure the supply doesn't run out. Speaking of water, how about food? Do you eat a lot of processed foods? It must suck. Stay safe Dad, and don't get seasick. Drink more water, please. Remember, you're my Star-Spangled Man.

- John Frye





### Hidden Friend

Some friendships are just... Different...

It is not a pretty place. Andrew thought as he looked out the window of his dad's car. It looked like a ghost town. All the houses looked vacant minus the occasional houses with dim yellow light barely illuminating their windows. He couldn't believe dad wanted to move here. He kept getting a creepy feeling that he was being watched. Every time he thought about it a shiver ran down my spine and his hair would stand on end. This base was so creepy.

The car pulled up onto the driveway. Andrew hopped out. Their house was so run down and old looking. Andrew went up the driveway and onto the front porch. He turned the door handle. Locked. Andrew bent down and looked under the doormat. He pulled out a key and inserted it into the lock. This time when he turned the doorknob it opened. The door let out a loud creaking sound, no not a creaking sound more of a shriek. Andrew was frightened by this thought and shut the door. He opened the door again, no sound at all. Andrew walked into the house. The door slammed loudly behind him, causing him to jump. He dropped his stuff next to an old beat up couch and headed toward the hallway where the bedrooms were located. It was a good thing he left his sneakers on. An old shattered picture frame was lying on the floor Andrew picked it up. He pulled out the picture inside. His dad opened the door causing that horrible shrieking. His dad seemed unphased by this horrible sound. Andrew decided it wasn't worth worrying about because maybe his dad had heard it and just didn't care. He was tired after that long plane trip to get here anyway. Andrew shoved the picture in his pocket and ran to get a broom.

Andrew bent down and swept up all the glass pieces. He walked over to the trash can next to the kitchen counter and dumped the glass pieces in there. He picked up his bag and walked into the hallway again. He passed his dad

who was lying on the couch with the tv turned on. Andrew walked into the first bedroom he saw and sat down on the bed. He pulled out his Gamerton and started to play Chaos 3.

The school here didn't look too bad. Andrew entered the building after waving goodbye to his dad. He needed to get his schedule and a computer. He went to the front office. Waiting for him was a computer and a schedule with his name on it. Who runs this place Andrew thought. Anyone could have stolen this computer. There was a sheet of paper asking for his signature. He took out a pen and signed an agreement that if he were to lose or damage the computer he was to pay for it.

Andrew looked at his schedule. His homeroom was room 13. The school was very small for a middle school. He quickly found his classroom. As soon as he opened the door everyone stared at him.

"Hi," Andrew said weakly. He walked to an empty seat near the back of the classroom.

He went from class to class. The teachers were not excited to have another student in their class. When it was time for lunch he went to his locker to retrieve his lunch box. The door of his locker fell off its hinge. Andrew looked around panicked. Would he be in trouble? He didn't even do anything! The science teacher just walked by like nothing happened. I guess this is the normal state of things around here Andrew thought. It seemed that wherever he tried to sit it was reserved for someone else's friend. Finally he found an empty table and quietly ate his lunch.

When he got home he went to his room to work on his homework. It was easy math. Andrew didn't think that the teachers were even trying to teach. They acted as if they were never going to be happy again. When his homework was done he went back to playing on his Gamerton.

Out of nowhere he starts to hear a strange sound coming from the vent. It sounded like wet slime moving in his vent. He looked up at the vent on his ceiling and almost screamed. A giant black piece of slime was oozing from the ceiling onto the floor. Andrew turned off his Gamerton

and watched in silent horror as the rest of the goop fell to the floor in a splat.

"Hi!" The little slime creature on the floor said to Andrew, waving a slimy arm that flings black droplets everywhere. It talks. Thinks Andrew in disbelief.

"Are you okay?" The little Slime creature says to him, "You look like you just saw a ghost!" he laughed.

"Wh-Who or what are you?" asked Andrew quietly.

The little slime creature looks down at himself, "I do not know what I am. But I do know that my name is Slip" he says cheerfully, holding out a slimy hand to me.

When Slip notices I do not want to shake his hand he puts it to his side. Slip looks around the room and sees the Gamerton.

"What's that!" Slip says pointing at the Gamerton on the bed.

"That's my Gamerton." Andrew tells Slip

"What does it do?" asks Slip.

"You play games on it." Answers Andrew, he's already starting to get used to Slip.

"Do you want to play on it with me?" Andrew asks Slip.

Andrew can see the excitement growing inside Slip. "YES!"

Slip and Andrew spend the afternoon playing on the Gamerton.

For dinner Andrew ate spaghetti and a muffin. He saved the muffin for Slip in case Slip wanted it.

When Andrew pulled out the blueberry muffin from under his jacket. Slip immediately came out from under Andrew's bed. Slip leaped off the floor and snatched up the blueberry muffin. Leaving black gooey drops on Andrew's palm. Andrew did not care though. He had a friend, and he was happy.

- Maxim

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**Meskla**



# JRM 2024 troops of year honored

STORY AND PHOTO BY  
PO1 SAMANTHA JETZER,  
JOINT REGION MARIANAS

**O**n March 26, Joint Region Marianas held an awards ceremony at United Services Organization Tumon Bay center to announce the region's junior and senior service members of the year.

Rear Adm. Brent DeVore, commander, JRM, congratulated all of the nominees and awarded Senior Service Member of the Year to Marine Corps Staff Sgt. Marcelous Dixon, assigned to Marine Corps Base Camp Blaz, and Junior Service Member of the Year to Navy Aviation Technician 3rd Class Dominick Donley, assigned to Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron 25, during the ceremony.

The other nominees for the junior category were; Marine Corps Cpl. Ryan Little, assigned to MCB Camp Blaz; Army Specialist Manuel Jesus Quenga, assigned to Guam National Guard supporting Task Force Talon; and Coast Guard Boatswain's Mate 3rd Class Erik Herman, assigned to U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia Sector Guam. The other nominees for the senior category were; Army Sgt. Michail Fitch, assigned to TFT; Coast Guard Information Systems Technician 2nd Class Shane Concepcion, assigned to USCGFM/Sector Guam; and Navy Aviation Structural Mechanic 1st Class Jordan McNeil, assigned to HSC-25.

"You all represent the top performers in your units," DeVore said during the ceremony. "I'm excited to recognize your elite performance and want to thank you for your contributions to the joint force. Unity is our strength and you all are dedicated to the mission in your fields and are executing it to the max."

While the two winners were off-island during the ceremony, the other six nominated service members from across Guam were joined by their leadership and families to be recognized for their conduct both on and off duty during 2024.

"Out here there's one island, one Guam, and we're all serving together increasing our joint warfighting advantage," said Command Master Chief William



1. Sgt. Maj. Daniel Soto, senior enlisted leader of Camp Blaz, accepts an award on behalf of Staff Sgt. Marcelous Dixon from Rear Adm. Brent DeVore, commander, Joint Region Marianas, and Command Master Chief William Webster, senior enlisted leader of JRM. 2. DeVore presents a flag letter of commendation PO3 Erik Herman. 3. DeVore presents a flag letter of commendation to PO3 Shane Concepcion. 4. PO1 Jordan McNeil. 5. Spc. Manuel Jesus Quenga. 6. Cpl. Ryan Little. 7. Sgt. Michail Fitch.

Webster, senior enlisted leader of JRM. "We're about as joint of an area as you can get. The service members being recognized today have shown great regard for how they conduct themselves from day to day, and they have demonstrated sustained excellence throughout the year."

U.S. Marine Corps Command Sgt. Maj. Daniel Soto, senior enlisted leader of MCB Camp Blaz, accepted the 2024 Senior Service Member of the Year award on behalf of Dixon who was in Washington D.C. to receive the Marine Corps Installations Command Marine of the Year award. Dixon operated above his pay grade as MCB Camp Blaz's legal chief. He was the Headquarters Company Gunnery Sergeant where he focussed on mentorship and training his junior Marines as well as service members from

other branches. Dixon also supported the local community by coordinating events like Toys for Tots, supply drives, beach cleanups, and mentorship with local high school students in the Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps program.

"Staff Sgt. Dixon is a phenomenal Marine, always good-spirited if you know him," Soto said. "He will always say 'yes' to everything that you need him to get done at a moment's notice no matter what and doesn't complain. This is just a testament of who he is and what he does for us at Camp Blaz and for the mission here on Guam."

Like Dixon, Donley's impact extended beyond his primary duties. As an avionics shift supervisor, inspector and plane captain for his squadron, he led his team in conducting hundreds of

maintenance items and inspections necessary to maintain their MH-60S Seahawk helicopters, directly supporting 23 lifesaving search and rescue operations and medical evacuation missions on behalf of JRM. He was hand selected to deploy with forward-deployed amphibious assault ship USS America to support their Amphibious Integration Certification and Operation Iron Fist. He also helped his Sailors complete numerous qualifications, supported his command's physical fitness readiness as an assistant command fitness leader, and organized recreational events as president of HSC 25's Coalition of Sailors Against Destructive Decisions.

"AT3 Donely is one of my strongest Sailors who far exceeds the work," said Chief Aviation Electronics Technician Sergio

Barron with HSC-25. "I absolutely love being his chief."

The purpose of the JRM Service Member of the Year awards is to highlight the exceptional dedication of those serving in Guam's joint environment. Whether setting the standard of excellence in their fields, mentoring junior service members, or giving back to the local community, each service member recognized has contributed above and beyond the mission requirements.

"What you do matters," Webster said. "Folks are going to follow you. You are leaders, whether you're an E-1 or O-10 you're a leader. You are the image that others want to be so keep doing good things, keep doing the right thing, and get better every day. Let's continue to support all the services on Guam."

## Historian connects reservist to fallen family member

BY AMANDA DICK,  
445TH AIRLIFT WING,  
WRIGHT-PATTERSON AFB, OHIO

**F**or many with family who served in a previous war or conflict, they might never know what happened to their relatives. But sometimes, connection to those lost comes from unexpected places or people.

This was the case in December 2024 for Lt. Col. Jonathan Askins, 445th Airlift Wing chief of safety, when he had a conversation with the wing's new historian.

Askins' great uncle, James L. Roberts, was killed in the Pacific War somewhere in the Marianas Islands, and that was as much as he knew. Until he did genealogy research and found a couple of photos that indicated Roberts was a U.S. Marine. That led Askins to reach out to his father and aunts which led to Roberts' daughter and granddaughter in New Zealand.

Askins was talking about his great uncle one day with Tara Simpson, Ph.D., 445th AW historian, when she realized she might be able to add insight.

"I spent several years on Guam researching and writing about the island's rich military history," Simpson said. "I easily recognized the date his relative had fallen in battle and knew where it had occurred."

She was able to tell Askins what happened during Corporal Roberts' last days of service in the 2nd Battalion, 9th Marines, 3rd Division.

According to Simpson, Roberts' unit landed during the initial assault July 21, 1944, to help liberate the people and island of Guam.

It was the third assault of Operation Forager that was an Allied offensive to secure the Marianas Islands.

"The 3rd Marine Division was instrumental in spearheading the offensive push up the nearly impossible cliffs to secure the Fonte Plateau," Simpson explained. "They endured fierce resistance as the Imperial Japanese Army had occupied the U.S. territory since December 1941."

Unfortunately, the month-long



Lt. Col. Jonathan Askins

SEE HISTORIAN ON PAGE 18



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# HISTORIAN: 'It was very emotional'

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 16

campaign carried out by Allied ships and aircraft did not fully eliminate Japanese entrenchments and caves, and by July 29, 1944, when Roberts died, Allied forces were still embroiled in intense fighting.

On the personal side, Askins said Roberts enlisted at 22 and met someone in New Zealand then married her after one month together before he left for Guam which led to a daughter born days before his death.

Shortly after Askins' chat with Simpson, another opportunity presented itself that allowed him to connect even closer to his great uncle's last days, and it came in the form of a previously scheduled flying mission in the Pacific that included a stop in Guam.

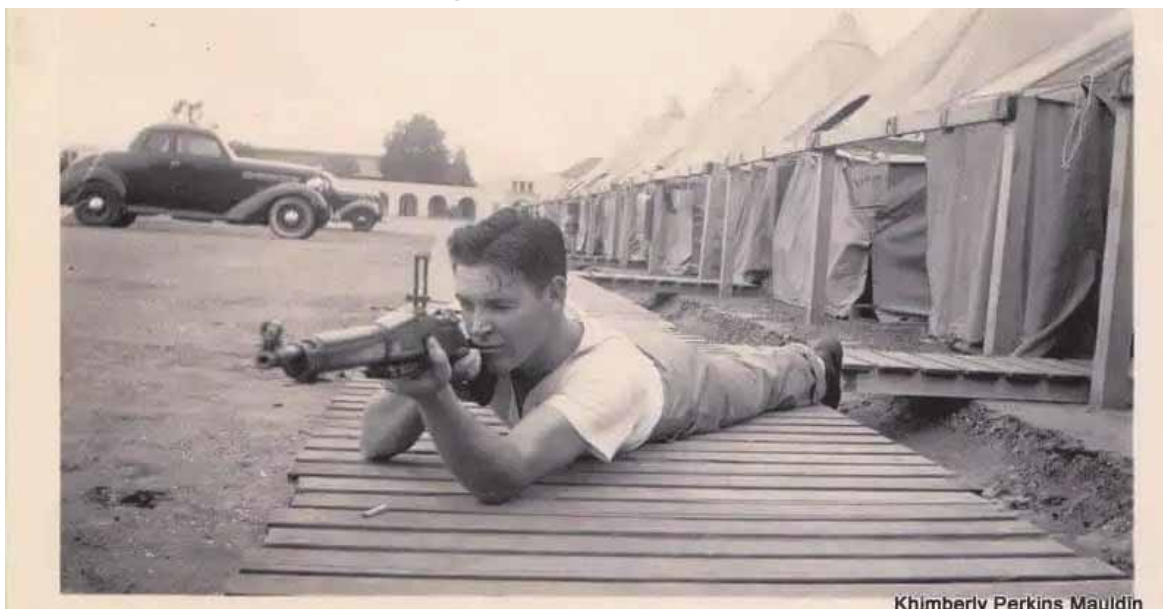
So, in mid-January during a

crew overnight on the island, Askins and two other crew members, Lt. Col. Chris Costly and Capt. Nicholas Armour, both 89th Airlift Squadron C-17 pilots, honored his great uncle where he fell in battle.

But it was not without its obstacles. Askins said he faced delays on the flightline and getting to lodging, then he had to figure out the transportation logistics to get around the island. However, he was able to reach Fonte Plateau before sunset.

Askins said he secured a local ride share driver who took him, Costly and Armour to the battle site, known today as Nimitz Hill.

"It was very emotional," Askins explained. "During the flight to Guam, I read an in-depth article Tara provided that detailed the beach landing and combat my



Kimberly Perkins Mauldin

Cpl. James L. Roberts, 2nd Battalion 9th Marines 3rd Division, pictured with his rifle. Courtesy photo

Great Uncle James saw in the days leading up to his death. Then to have finally reached the location where he lived his last moments was overwhelming.

"Having finally learned his full story and then visiting this location felt very personal," Askins continued. "So, I wrote him a letter, as a service member and a father, thanking him for his service to the nation and world – that his legacy remained through his family and ultimate sacrifice."

Askins said after the driver

heard his story, he took them to the Asan Bay Overlook, a location five minutes away with a panoramic view of the landing beaches. The overlook also included the War in the Pacific Park's Memorial Wall that honors both Guamanians who suffered during Imperial Japanese occupation and service-members who died in the Battle of Guam, including his great uncle whose name was etched into the wall.


"Seeing his name was the culmination and truly cemented that

the journey to learn his story and honor his memory was accomplished and correct," Askins stated. "It felt as though the whole experience was ordained or serendipitous."

After the trip, Askins said he contacted Roberts' daughter, now 82, and granddaughter to share the story and photos he took.

"They were grateful, and it was a very emotional experience for them as well – to know he was still honored and loved," Askins expressed.

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Call G.A.I.N. (Guam Animals In Need) Animal Shelter in Yigo at 653-4246 or visit <a href="http://www.guamanimals.org">www.guamanimals.org</a> 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




Nimitz Hill Caves

**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 8 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. 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](https://www.facebook.com/GuamBoonieStompers)

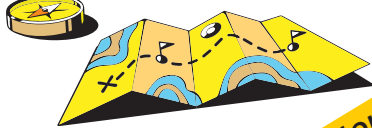


Guam Boonie Stompers is a non-profit Guam corporation composed of volunteer leaders committed to leading hikes to and protecting the unique natural destinations on our island.

## SCHEDULE 2025

April 19 (Sat.)	Umatac to Togu'an Bay / Earth Day Hike and Clean Up (Medium)
April 26 (Sat.)	Mt. LamLam North (Difficult)
May 3 (Sat.)	Nimitz Hill Caves (Medium)
May 10 (Sat.)	Togcha to Asanite Cove (Medium)
May 17 (Sat.)	Southern Mountain to Finacresta (2x Difficult)
May 24 (Sat.)	Ague Cove (Medium)

**FOR EVERYONE'S SAFETY:**  
No Pets Allowed  
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## Crossword

by Margie E. Burke

**ACROSS**

1 Flows back

5 Washington's portraitist

10 "Fernando" group

14 Romance novelist Roberts

15 Wall climbers

16 Golfer's need

17 \_\_\_-clad

18 Cartoonish portrait

20 Like some humor

22 Still in the outbox

23 Black tie is one

26 Coffeehouse packets

28 Forsaker of the faith

33 Mia in "Pulp Fiction"

34 Coconut meat

36 Mortise's mate

37 Treat poorly

39 Falcons, on scoreboards

40 Flip response?

41 Meat avoider

42 Trash

44 Singer Rawls

45 Constructing, as a building

47 Good-for-nothing

49 Adding to

51 Bassett of "Black Panther"

55 Art done with acid

58 Shade of red

61 Berry in smoothies

62 Indigo dye

63 Finger-pointer

64 "Nail" anagram

65 Runs into

66 Healing plants

67 First Lady of Song

**DOWN**

1 "National Velvet" author Bagnold

2 Snoozefest

3 Railroad track width

4 Justice O'Connor

5 "Guernica" painter

6 Captain America portrayer Chris

7 It can be fresh or hot

8 Waikiki welcome

9 Old Portuguese money

10 Plays a part

11 Down in the dumps

12 Get too much sun

13 Assist illegally

19 Numbing drug

21 Data ranking term

24 Hauling charge

25 Milky gems

26 Smooth-tongued

27 Brownish color

29 Three-way joint

30 Having similarity

31 Big fusses

32 Follow as a result

35 King protectors

38 Small pouch

43 Walks unsteadily

46 Sumerian goddess of love

48 Get some air

50 Rapp of "Mean Girls"

51 Miles off

52 Vessel of 1492

53 Dismal

54 Snaky swimmers

56 Polish place?

57 Actress Gershon

59 "For Me and My \_\_\_"

60 "If you ask me," in a text

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**Answers to Previous Crossword:**

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

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## Stripes Sports Trivia

Which of Michael Jordan's sidekicks hit a three-pointer in the final seconds of Game 6 to secure the 1993 title for the Bulls?

**Answer** John Paxson

## SUDOKU

Difficulty: Easy

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

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Edited by Margie E. Burke

**HOW TO SOLVE:**

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

Answer to Previous Sudoku:

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

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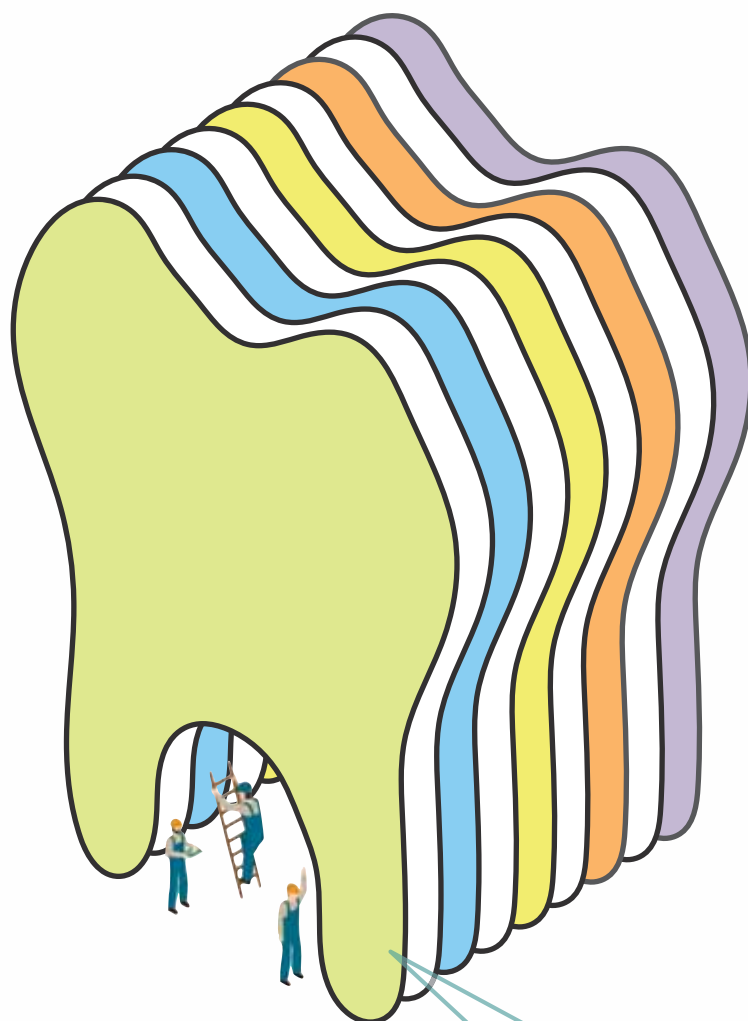
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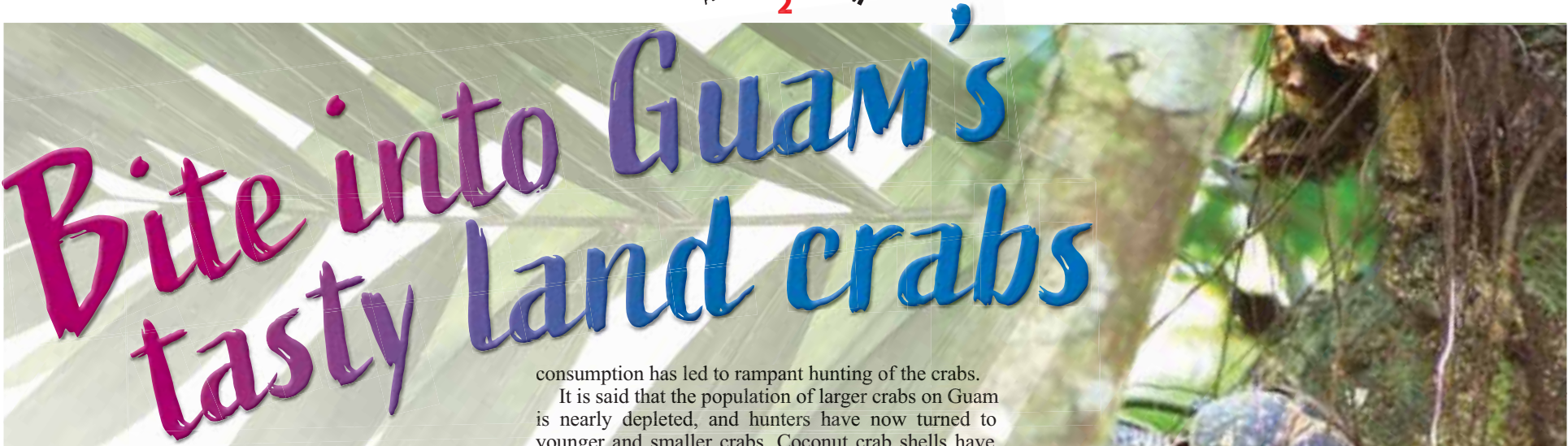
STARS  AND STRIPES®

# A Taste of Guam

The 3 'R's to good eating –  
Restaurants,  
Reviews & Recipes

**4-page pullout**





# Bite into Guam's tasty land crabs

STRIPES GUAM

What has six legs, gnarly claws, climbs trees and can grow to the size of a small dog? Oh! It's tasty, too. The answer is a coconut crab, or what the local Chamorros call "ayuyu." These giant crabs are on islands throughout the Western Pacific and East Indian oceans. But on Guam, they have had long history with locals and visitors alike – primarily, but not exclusively – as a delicacy. But now these giant island mascots are in danger.

Birgus latro, commonly known as the coconut crab, is the largest terrestrial arthropod in the world. It is a type of hermit crab that can grow to a leg span of more than three feet, weighing over nine pounds. However, they are more outgoing than their hermit counterparts.

While most hermit crabs spend their entire lives inside their shells to protect their soft bodies from predators, coconut crabs rely on those shells only when they are young and small. When they grow older, they abandon them and develop hard exoskeletons that continue to grow with the rest of their bodies.

These crabs have also been nicknamed "robber crabs" on Guam. Rumor has it that they earned that reputation by stealing items from U.S. Marines in the trenches during World War II. They're known to wander into unlocked houses and steal knives, forks and even shoes. So, if you are missing some household items, look around for one of these big guys conspicuously crawling nearby.

Anyone who has seen a coconut crab knows they also have huge claws. These claws are powerful enough to tear through the tough shell of a coconut to get at the sweet coconut meat. They can climb up to 20 feet high just to reach growing coconuts. Though not a major part of their diet, perhaps this taste for coconuts is what makes them so tasty.

On Guam, Chamorro have eaten coconut crabs for centuries as part of their cultural tradition. The meat has been traditionally served at various ceremonies and events such as weddings. It is so tender that it is often compared to lobster. But the high demand for both home and high-end restaurant

consumption has led to rampant hunting of the crabs.

It is said that the population of larger crabs on Guam is nearly depleted, and hunters have now turned to younger and smaller crabs. Coconut crab shells have also become popular souvenirs for tourist, prompting even more hunting. As a result of these demands, the coconut crab population has been declining rapidly.

In 1981, the coconut crab was listed as a "vulnerable species" on the International Union for Conservation of Nature Red List. However, a lack of accurate information caused the crab to be classified as "data deficient" in 1996.

Today, according to the Guam Department of Agriculture, coconut crabs must be at least four inches long to be sold commercially and at least three inches long for personal consumption. It also is illegal to collect coconut crabs with eggs. Selling undersized coconut crabs is an offense punishable by arrest and fine.

According to one study, the coconut crab is also threatened by the development of Guam's coastal zone. Emily Lu writes in the Scientific American that recent heavy development is continually reducing the crab's preferred habitat on Guam. Typically, female coconut crabs release their eggs within a few miles of the ocean because they hatch only upon contact with saltwater.

Today, the highest crab densities on Guam can be found on military installations, where limited civilian access makes it difficult to hunt crabs, according to Lu.

In fact, all coconut crabs can find sanctuary on both Naval Base Guam and Andersen Air Force Base. Hunting them, regardless of their size, is banned on both bases, according to Leanne Obra, 36th Civil Engineering Environmental Flight natural resources specialist at Andersen.

"The coconut crab is a unique and fascinating component of the biota of Guam, the Marinas, and Federated States of Micronesia," said Obra. "The Andersen Air Force Base environmental office is available at any time to answer questions about protection of the coconut crab to help preserve the species for the meaningful role they play in the Chamorro culture and its popularity as a tourist attraction."

Obra advises that if people see the crabs on base, they should leave them alone. Illegal collection of crabs on

military installations should be reported immediately to Andersen's Natural Resources Conservation Program at 366-5078/1849.

## Pet a coconut crab at Chamorro Village

You may be hesitant to pet the largest land-living arthropod in the world, but go ahead, the coconut crab doesn't bite. Coconut crabs can weigh up to nine pounds with a leg span of more than 3 feet. Locals are adept at handling the crabs and sometimes keep them as pets. Stop by the Chamorro Village Night Market on Wednesday and Friday for a photo op of you or someone brave petting a giant crab.

■ ADDRESS: Paseo Loop, off Marine Corps Drive, Hagåtña  
■ TEL: (671)475-0375

# Pång'lao: Stuffed land crab



Photo by Victor Consaga, Guampedia

## Preparation

Crab hunting is a family affair with men, women and children taking part in the hunt.

After they are caught, crabs are kept for a few days to purge their system of toxins and to fatten them up. They are usually fed a diet of grated coconut.

There are regional difference in how the stuffing for the grab is prepared. In northern and central Guam, the stuffing is called "pengot." In southern Guam, it is referred to as "ka'it."

## Placement on table

Stuffed crab is placed alongside the fish on the fiesta table. The fish section is the third section coming after the starch section (ãggon) and the meat section (totche). The vegetables and salad section follows the fish section. The kelaguen, fina' denne' and kadu (soup) section is at the end of the table. The desserts are usually located on a separate table.

## Recipe

- Crabs
  - Onion, chopped
  - Pepper leaves, chopped
  - Pumpkin Tips, chopped
  - Red Pepper, chopped
  - Coconut, grated
  - Coconut milk (for every 1 cup of coconut milk add ½ cup of water)
1. Remove shell from body of crab. Set aside. Remove bitter part (bile) then scrap out meat. Mix finely chopped onion, pepper leaf, pumpkin tips, and donne (hot red chile peppers) and grated coconut. Stuff mixture in shell and tie it securely with coconut leaf or string.
  2. Mix coconut milk and water and place in large stock pot. Submerge stuffed crab in pot. Vegetables can be added to the top of crab if desired. Cover and let boil until crab turns red.

– Recipe provided by Sen. Pilar Lujan





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RESTAURANT INFO



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**GUAM EDITION**

APRIL 14, 2025

## Maritime security

Coast Guard on Guam  
shifting emphasis  
Page 2

Members of the Coast Guard and Drug Enforcement Administration board a China-flagged oil tanker off Guam last month.

TRENTON JONES/U.S. Coast Guard





## COVER STORY

# Coast Guard shifts focus to border security

Guam expecting at least two new cutters next year

By ALEX WILSON  
*Stars and Stripes*

The U.S. Coast Guard on Guam is expecting at least two new cutters next year, an addition that would expand its operations as the service reprioritizes border security.

The fast response cutters USCGC Vincent Danz and USCGC Jeffrey Palazzo should join U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia/Sector Guam's three existing cutters by the end of 2026, according to sector spokeswoman Chief Warrant Officer 2 Sara Muir.

The Coast Guard projects a sixth cutter at Guam, but Congress has yet to allocate funds for it, Muir said by email. Congress funded the Vincent Danz and Jeffrey Palazzo in fiscal year 2024.

Ahead of the two cutters' arrival, Sector Guam is readjusting its priorities to focus more on U.S. domestic security and maritime borders, said Muir and Cmdr. Ryan Crose, sector deputy commander.

"Our mission sets have remained the same, but given our limited resources out here in Guam, we can't always focus on all the missions all the time," Crose said.

"So, we have sort of focused — or transitioned our focus — to border security and the integrity of our territories," he said.

Senior Coast Guard leadership in Washington D.C., ordered the shift, Muir added.

The Coast Guard is part of the Department of Homeland Security, now under Secretary Kristi Noem.

To achieve that goal, Sector



TRENTON JONES/U.S. Coast Guard

**Coast Guard and Drug Enforcement Administration teams arrive by small boat to board the China-flagged oil tanker Chang Hang Xi Wang off Guam on March 23.**



JACKSON COLLINS/U.S. Coast Guard

**The USCGC Myrtle Hazard sails between Guam and the Northern Marianas Islands in March.**

Guam is deploying its cutters closer to islands like Guam and Saipan, rather than farther out to

sea, Crose said.

However, new cutters would allow more flexibility on deploy-

ments.

"Obviously, with more resources, we'll be able to continue to focus on a larger set of our missions, as opposed to sort of having to pick and choose with the limited number of resources we currently have," he said.

The pivot won't affect the Coast Guard's commitment to building strong relationships with regional neighbors, which remains a "cornerstone" for the service, Muir said.

Coast Guard Forces Micronesia is responsible for 1.9 million square miles — about 60% of the size of the contiguous U.S. — with its major focus on Guam, Saipan and the Northern Marianas Islands.

Port security, unsafe ocean

crossings, illegal immigration and other illicit maritime activity remain among the Coast Guard's top concerns.

Over the past several years, Saipan has become a pathway for Chinese citizens to illegally enter Guam, enabled in part by a no-visa program that allows them to stay up to two weeks.

Coast Guard efforts to close that pathway appear to be paying off, Muir said.

"Authorities note deterrence is working; we've seen a decrease in these crossings lately, which shows our presence and teamwork are hitting the mark," she wrote.

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@AlexMNWilson

## Smuggler sentenced for attempt to bring migrants to Guam

By ALEX WILSON  
*Stars and Stripes*

A Chinese man was sentenced to a short federal prison term for attempting to smuggle 12 Chinese migrants from the Northern Marianas Islands to Guam last year, the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Guam announced.

The Northern Marianas Islands District Court sentenced Zhongli Pang, 36, to three months in prison, with credit for time served; one year of supervised release; 50 hours of community service; and a \$200 fine, according to a news release from the U.S. Attorney's Office.

Chief Judge Ramona Manglona sentenced Pang on March 28, according to court records. Pang pleaded guilty Feb. 25 to conspiracy and aiding and abetting transportation of illegal aliens and conspiracy to defraud the United States.

He will serve approximately one month in prison after credit with two months in jail prior to sentencing, U.S. Attorney's Office spokeswoman Carmela Rapadas said by email.

Pang will likely be monitored after his release from prison until he either returns to China or is formally deported from Saipan.

"We will continue to target

illegal aliens unlawfully traveling between the [Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands] and Guam," U.S. Attorney Shawn Anderson said in the news release. "The risk to personal safety is substantial."

The route from Saipan — the Northern Marianas Islands' capital — to Guam over the past several years has been regularly used as a pathway for illegal immigration, according to U.S. authorities.

Both are U.S. territories, but Saipan allows Chinese citizens to stay without a visa for up to two weeks.

Those who attempt to enter

Guam typically do so in search of better pay or economic opportunities.

Pang on June 23 attempted to transport the 12 immigrants via a small vessel, the Helen, but the trip went awry when the boat ran out of fuel. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia/Sector Guam ultimately had to rescue the 13 boaters.

One passenger told investigators she had paid \$3,500 to "Captain Pang" for the trip, according to court records.

Chinese immigrants typically pay between \$3,000 and \$5,000 to be smuggled from Saipan to Guam, Ha Noul Lee, a special

agent with Homeland Security Investigations, said in the criminal complaint against Pang.

A separate, unrelated case involving nine Chinese citizens and two Northern Marianas citizens was also recently concluded, according to a March 17 news release from the U.S. Attorney's Office.

The case bore many similarities, including an overloaded boat that ran out of gas.

All 11 were found guilty, with sentences ranging from one year probation to 15 months in federal prison, as well as supervised release, community service and fines.



## PACIFIC

# New facility to boost Navy power resilience

Guam project part of Department of Defense initiative to improve energy efficiency, reliability

By ALEX WILSON  
*Stars and Stripes*

A joint venture between a U.S. and Japanese construction company has secured a \$97 million Defense Department contract to build energy storage facilities aimed at shielding the U.S. Navy on Guam from power outages.

Granite Construction Inc., of Watsonville, Calif., and Obayashi Corp., of Tokyo, will build a 17,000-square-foot facility to house a battery storage

system at Naval Base Guam's Polaris Point, home to five nuclear-powered fast-attack submarines with Submarine Squadron 15.

The project will also include a microgrid controller, with completion expected in June 2028, according to a March 10 news release from Granite.

"Granite remains committed to advancing solutions that support the Navy's mission and contribute to a more sustainable

and reliable energy infrastructure," the company said in its news release.

With this project, the joint venture has secured more than \$500 million in DOD contracts on Guam, including more than \$404 million at Marine Corps Base Camp Blaz, since 2017.

The battery energy storage system, or BESS, will provide "power resilience" in the event of any power outage and is the first microgrid project to in-

corporate such a system, according to experts at Naval Facilities Engineering Systems Command Marianas.

"The project's microgrid controller will be integrated with the BESS, with capability to connect to other Navy distributed energy resources," NAVFAC Marianas said in an email from spokesman Corwin Colbert.

It will also be interconnected with the existing power grid,

allowing it "to provide clean power to the future Naval facilities," according to Granite's news release.

The project is part of a broader DOD effort to improve "energy efficiency, resiliency and reliability" through microgrids, new technology and renewable energy initiatives, according to the command.

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## Marines to deploy ship-killer missile

By SETH ROBSON  
*Stars and Stripes*

The U.S. Marine Corps plans to deploy its new Navy-Marine Expeditionary Ship Interdiction System to the Philippines for the first time during this month's Balikatan exercise, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth said on his recent stop in Manila.

Hegseth, who toured Indo-Pacific tour of Guam, Japan and the Philippines recently, announced the NMESIS deployment at a press conference with Philippine Secretary of National Defense Gilberto Teodoro.

"We agreed that the United States will deploy additional advanced capabilities to the Philippines," Hegseth said, according to a transcript on the Department of Defense website.

"This includes using the NMESIS anti-ship missile system and highly capable unmanned surface vehicles in exercise Balikatan," he said.

The annual exercise — Balikatan is Tagalog for "shoulder to shoulder" — is scheduled to run from April 21 to May 9. The U.S. is sending 10,000 U.S. troops to participate alongside 6,000 service members from the Philippines, Australia and Japan.

The deployment of NMESIS and unmanned surface vehicles will "hasten the introduction of the technologies" to the Philippine military, Teodoro said in the DOD transcript.

A Marine Corps video released in February shows the 3rd Marine Littoral Regiment at Marine Corps Base Hawaii training with NMESIS ahead of



JACQUELINE PARSONS/U.S. Marine Corps

**The 3rd Marine Littoral Regiment with the Navy-Marine Expeditionary Ship Interdiction System at Marine Corps Base Hawaii in November.**

Balikatan. The system arrived at the base in November, according to a news release by the regiment.

The system allows the unit to "make greater contributions to a naval campaign," 3rd Littoral Combat Team commander Lt. Col. Timothy Love said in the Nov. 26 release. "In addition to rifle companies capable of seizing and defending key maritime terrain, 3d LCT's missile battery is now armed with mobile precision fires systems to support sea denial operations."

NMESIS is a key piece of hardware for littoral regiments, formed as part of the Marines' Force Design plan to deploy small units onto the Pacific's first island chain to take shots at Chinese warships in a conflict.

The NMESIS system consists of antiship Naval Strike Missiles

mounted on Joint Light Tactical Vehicles. The missile alone costs \$2.194 million, according to a Naval News report in November 2022.

A former Marine general has reservations about the missiles' limited reach.

Its 115-mile range is inferior to the other services' anti-ship missiles, retired Marine Brig. Gen. Jerry McAbee, a former artillery officer, said by email Monday to Stars and Stripes.

"It will contribute little to nothing if the Chinese invade Taiwan or anywhere else in the Indo-Pacific," he said.

The Army's Typhon missile system, positioned in the Philippines since spring 2024, has a range of more than 1,000 miles, said retired Marine Col. Grant Newsham, a senior researcher with the Japan Forum for Stra-

tegic Studies.

"The Chinese are very unhappy with the Typhon," he said in an email Monday. He questioned why the Marines have not acquired the Army's system.

Despite its relatively short range, NMESIS could cause a lot of trouble for an enemy force in the Western Pacific, Newsham said.

The missiles could be effective in the Strait of Malacca, between Indonesia and Malaysia, or the Bashi Channel, which separates the Philippines from Taiwan.

"The Philippine geography also has a lot of tight maritime terrain, so there's plenty of places to deploy these missiles usefully — and provide coverage," he said.

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@SethRobson1

## US gives Qatar OK for MQ-9B purchase

By LARA KORTE  
*Stars and Stripes*

The State Department has approved the potential sale of MQ-9B drones to Qatar, advancing a deal with a key Middle East ally amid ongoing fighting between U.S. forces and Houthi militants in the region.

Qatar, home to the largest U.S. military installation in the Middle East, has requested to buy eight unmanned aircraft in addition to hundreds of bombs, missiles and related equipment for a total of \$1.96 billion, the department said in a statement.

The contractors are General Atomics Aeronautical, Lockheed Martin, RTX and Boeing.

Qatari officials made the request to purchase the drones back in 2020 but have faced delays despite providing support for the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan and serving as a conduit for talks with Iran and Hamas.

The U.S. had been wary of upsetting the balance of power in the region. Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, both of which are U.S. military partners, have had a contentious relationship with Qatar.

The MQ-9B, known as the SkyGuardian, is a long-range surveillance drone that can stay in the air for more than 40 hours, according to General Atomics Aeronautical.

The approval of the arms sale by the administration of President Donald Trump comes as U.S. forces continue their operation against the Houthis.

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@lara\_korte



## MILITARY



MAXWELL ORLOSKY/U.S. Navy

The Arleigh Burke-class, guided-missile destroyers USS Winston S. Churchill, front, and USS Bainbridge, back, escort the USS Gerald R. Ford during a recent training event.

# New anti-drone weapons protecting ships

## Ford carrier group prepares for possible deployment to Mideast

BY CAITLYN BURCHETT  
*Stars and Stripes*

ABOARD THE USS GERALD R. FORD — Two F-18 fighter jets roared above the USS Gerald R. Ford, flying past the aircraft carrier in the direction of a destroyer sitting on the horizon.

Four other destroyers were also spread across the ocean as the strike group conducted its final training exercise recently in the Atlantic, preparing for a summer deployment that could take the warships to the Middle East, where Iran-backed Houthi militants have been attacking merchant vessels regularly. If sent to the region, the strike group will put newly adapted counter-drone weapons to the test as the Navy explores alternatives to shooting down cheap Houthi drones with multimillion-dollar munitions.

The strike group's Arleigh Burke-class, guided-missile destroyers will deploy with the Coyote and Roadrunner systems, two interceptor-style drone systems that the Navy has spent the past year developing for ship-based launches, two service officials said. The Coyote and Roadrunner systems, which were modified from existing land-based technologies, are specialized drones designed to stop other drones before they reach their intended targets. The new weapons are intended to counter Houthi drones for a fraction of

the price of a standard missile typically used by the Navy.

"Those two systems are part of that attempt to get after the cost curve, give our commanding officers more options to engage the threat and ultimately be more effective in defending a high-value unit," Capt. Mark Lawrence, commander of Destroyer Squadron 2, said aboard the Ford as the aircraft carrier trained some 100 miles off the East Coast.

Six destroyers will support the Ford during its deployment, strike group leaders said. It is unclear how many of the destroyers will be Coyote and Roadrunner capable.

The Ford was the first aircraft carrier sent to the Middle East in late 2023 to help deter the Israel-Hamas war from growing into a regional conflict. The carrier, homeported at Naval Station Norfolk, Va., spent about two months off the coast of Israel before it returned to the United States in January 2024.

The Ford and its strike group are now preparing to pick up where they left off — training for a deployment that could task the ships and the air wing with defending merchant vessels from Houthi drone attacks.

The rumble of fighter jets was constant as F-18s honed landing on and taking off from the Ford as the carrier cruised the ocean. The sway of the ship from the



CAITLYN BURCHETT/Stars and Stripes

An F/A-18 fighter jet prepares to launch off the USS Gerald R. Ford as other jets maneuver the flight deck while the aircraft carrier's strike group conducts training.

waves appeared to have little impact on pilots successfully tail-hooking their aircraft on the wires stretched across the flight deck.

The strike group brought aboard the nine-squadron air wing and took to the sea with its five U.S.-based destroyers for the strike group's Composite Training Unit Exercise, the final training event that tests their ability to operate as a cohesive fighting force. When the group completes the training, which typically takes three weeks, it will be certified to deploy.

Scrimping on expensive munitions — without sacrificing the effectiveness of the mission — was highlighted during the Ford strike group's training.

"We are looking at ways that we can be more effective against the threats that are presented — unmanned, specifically in this case — and we are trying to find ways to make sure that we are

going to have the deep missile inventories we might need for other contingencies," Lawrence said.

### High-end threats

One-way attack drones are one of the main weapons the Houthis use to attack military and merchant ships, according to U.S. officials.

Since November 2023, the Navy has defended against nearly 400 attacks using drones and missiles in the waters of the Red Sea, a pace that has seen U.S. ships firing back at levels comparable to World War II battles.

Navy forces have fired more than 200 missiles and upward of 150 artillery rounds — missile expenditures that have cost the sea service hundreds of millions of dollars, according to Missile Defense Advocacy Alliance data.

As of January 2025, the Navy had fired 120 SM-2 missiles, priced at about \$2.1 million

apiece. In addition, 80 SM-6 missiles were expended, costing \$3.9 million each. Twenty Evolved Sea Sparrow and SM-3 missiles were also fired, which range in price from \$9.6 million to \$27.9 million.

Missile expenditures are likely higher because the U.S. on March 15 began striking Houthi facilities in Yemen on an ongoing basis. The strikes will continue, the Pentagon has said, until the Iran-backed rebels pledge to halt attacks on ships transiting the Red Sea.

Navy leaders have acknowledged the expense during the past year, saying the service was working to address the modest threats with lower-cost alternatives such as 5-inch guns, while expediting the development and delivery of new, cheaper technology.

The Coyote and Roadrunner counter-drone systems are among those new technologies.

"Both are specifically designed to go after [drones] so we don't have to shoot the big standard missile at them. From inception to fielding and testing — all have been done in the last year. That's a pretty quick turn for the Navy," said Adm. Daryl Caudle of U.S. Fleet Forces, the command that oversees the training and equipment of East Coast-based naval forces.

The Coyote is a small, expendable, tube-launched drone that can be deployed from the ground, air and ships. Defense technology company Northrop Grumman, a Coyote developer, describes the drone as agile, with

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## MILITARY

### FROM PAGE 4

the ability to perform high-speed maneuvers and climb to altitudes above 50,000 feet before “pouncing” on its target at supersonic Mach 3.5 speeds.

The system has been developed for 25 years, but the variation that will be used by destroyers supporting the Ford’s 2025 deployment was recently adapted and tested at sea in August. Neither the company nor the Navy has said how much the Coyote costs per unit, but a similar model developed by Raytheon for the Army costs about \$125,000 per unit.

The Roadrunner, dubbed a “drone hunter,” is a twin jet-powered autonomous air vehicle that was unveiled in late 2023 by tech company Anduril. The Roadrunner can detect, track and engage targets at significant distances, according to the company. The system can be operated manually or autonomously.

When the system was announced, Anduril declined to identify its customer, but the Defense Department has awarded the company contracts to develop drones for the Navy since at least June 2024. Company executives have said the cost of the system was in the low hundreds of thousands of dollars, but the price tag was expected to decrease when mass production began.

It took the Navy only seven months — from January to August 2024 — to develop the original land-based concepts of both systems for ship-based use and begin at-sea testing, said a Navy official who spoke on the condition of anonymity. The at-sea testing of the systems was supported by \$88 million in congressional supplemental funding.

The official said the sea service, as well as other services, “pursued a plan” to test and field the systems rapidly in response to the Houthi attacks on military and merchant vessels in the Red Sea. U.S. drone pursuits in the past year have coincided with defense officials raising the alarm on the Navy’s increasing missile expenditure, which they say is eating up U.S. inventory that would be needed in a potential conflict with an adversary such as China.

Former national security adviser Jake Sullivan said in December that there was a need to stockpile munitions and invest more in low-cost weapons such as drones after sending billions of dollars in aid to Ukraine and the Red Sea threat collectively depleting U.S. shelves.

Less than a month earlier, Adm. Samuel Paparo, the commander of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, said he was dissatisfied with U.S. munitions stockpiles at a time when China is conducting a historic amount of large military exercises.

“The ultimate goal for devel-



BRIANNA BARNETT/U.S. Navy

**The USS Winston S. Churchill, front, and USS Mitscher transit the Atlantic Ocean with the aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford on March 20.**

opment of these systems is to counter threats posed by drones more efficiently, which will preserve high-end weapons for high-end threats,” the Navy official said.

### ‘Systems with promise’

While the military services have been working in earnest to develop drones for more than 10 years, the deployment of the Coyote and Roadrunner systems indicates a push to get the technology in the hands of troops, according to one defense analyst.

“Most counter-drone systems, including the Coyote and the Roadrunner systems, have not become programs of record for the Defense Department or the services,” said Mark Cancian with the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a Washington think tank. A program of record is one that has been formally funded by the government for mass production after extensive development and testing,

often a process that takes years.

But pushing these systems to the fleet now, Cancian said, is a “very sensible thing” for the Navy to do.

“It is a great way to test the system before mass production. And given the immediacy of the threat in the Red Sea, it could be a risk the Navy has decided is worth taking,” he said.

It was recommended by the Defense Innovation Board in January that the Pentagon “act with the urgency that the changes in warfare and chaotic world security environment demand” to develop and field drone technology.

“We cannot afford the time to find perfect answers for each question,” the board said. “We must get unmanned systems in the hands of the warfighters in sufficient quantities to matter now.”

Cancian said the Navy is likely leaning on lessons learned from Ukraine’s use of drones in its war

with Russia. The U.S. sent drones in the developmental stage to Ukraine to help beat back Russia’s invasion.

“We used Ukraine as an operational test,” he said.

But there is not much available to the public on what the U.S. learned about what works and what doesn’t. Standard missiles, Cancian said, should still be relied on for faster, more sophisticated weapons. At least until the testing is completed.

“These are systems with promise, but they have limited target capabilities. They are good against slow, low-flying targets but not much else,” Cancian said.

### ‘Tried-and-true’ weapons

While the Ford strike group learns the new counter-drone systems, they will lean on conventional weapons, such as the standard missiles and 5-inch guns, strike group leaders said.

“In the meantime, we are also making sure our ships and our

crews have confidence in the tried-and-true SM-2 capability, because that’s a no-fail mission. So, while we work on fleet initiatives to really get more efficient, I’d say we remain laser focused on staying effective,” Lawrence said.

However, he declined to comment on the integration of the technologies across the strike group, stating he would “leave the specifics aside.”

Rear Adm. Paul Lanzilotta, commander of the Ford strike group, echoed Lawrence’s confidence in the weapons that have been a mainstay of the Navy’s deterrence efforts for decades.

“When you see a guided-missile destroyer on the high seas and her 5-inch gun points, God forbid, in your direction, you ought to be thinking twice about what’s coming next because it’s a very effective weapon,” he said.

The Ford is scheduled to deploy in the summer to the 6th Fleet area of operations, which includes waters surrounding Europe and Africa. The strike group will consist of the Ford carrier and six destroyers — five based in the U.S. and one based out of Rota, Spain. Aboard the ships will be an air wing made up of nine aviation squadrons, including four F-18 fighter jet squadrons and one electronic attack Growler squadron.

The U.S.-based destroyers are the USS Winston Churchill from Naval Station Mayport, Fla., and the USS Mitscher, USS Mahan, USS Bainbridge and USS Forrest Sherman, all from Naval Station Norfolk, Va. An unidentified destroyer out of Spain will support the strike group as needed.

The strike group, Lanzilotta said, could be asked to deploy sooner. And it could be directed instead to sail to the Middle East in the 5th Fleet area of operations.

The aircraft carrier USS Harry S. Truman has been conducting operations in the Red Sea against the Houthis. The Truman was due to transit home to Norfolk at the end of March, but its deployment was extended by at least one month.

The aircraft carrier USS Carl Vinson, which has been operating in the Pacific, was ordered to steam toward the Middle East. The Vinson, which was slated to transit home to San Diego in mid-April, will extend its deployment by three months. The aircraft carrier USS Nimitz was deployed recently for likely the final time to the Pacific.

“With the rest of the things going on in the world, we bring the secretary of defense and the president of the United States options for potentially going sooner. And our sailors have that mindset every single day,” Lanzilotta said.



## MILITARY

# Hegseth orders review of fitness standards

Pentagon told to weigh policies for 'sex-neutral' rules, combat-arms jobs

By MATTHEW ADAMS

*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth has ordered the secretaries of the military services to come up with a plan that distinguishes between combat-arms jobs and noncombat-arms jobs and develops physical standards that are “sex-neutral.”

“For far too long, we allowed standards to slip and different standards for men and women in combat arms [military occupational specialties],” Hegseth said in a video posted on X. “That’s not acceptable. We need to have the same standard, male or female, in our combat roles.”

Hegseth, an Army National Guard veteran, came under fire before becoming defense secretary for saying women have a place in the military but not in ground-based combat jobs in special operations, artillery, infantry and armor units.

“I’m straight up just saying we should not have women in combat roles,” he argued on a podcast in November. “It hasn’t made us more effective, hasn’t made us more lethal, has made fighting more complicated.”

Questions were raised by senators during his hearing in January. Hegseth denied he ever disparaged women and said his concern was with what he believes are slipping standards and gender quotas. He said he would conduct a review of the requirements for combat positions if he became defense secretary.

“In ways direct and indirect, overt and subtle, standards have been changed inside infantry training units, [Army] Ranger school, infantry battalions to ensure that commanders meet



ANGELA WILCOX/U.S. Marine Corps

**Marine Corps Sgt. Angela Scolari, front, a combat marksmanship coach, fires a rifle during an all-female marksmanship subject matter expert exchange between U.S. Marines and Jordanian soldiers in Al-Quwayrah, Jordan, in October.**

quotas to have a certain number of female officers or female enlisted,” he said at the time.

For certain combat roles, Hegseth wrote in the memo that it is “essential to identify” positions that require heightened entry-level and sustained physical fitness standards. Plans must address ground combat jobs, special operations forces and specialized occupations.

Hegseth marked the document with an asterisk and included a handwritten note that “no existing standard will be lowered in the process.”

He is ordering the military secretaries to submit their proposals to the undersecretary of defense for personnel and readiness within 60 days of the memo. The secretaries of the services

will provide an interim update on the development of their plans to the undersecretary within 30 days.

Full implementation of plans must occur within six months of submission, Hegseth wrote.

“This initiative aligns with my broader directive to maintain uncompromising and clear standards that ensure the continued dominance of our military,” the secretary added.

Hegseth issued another memo dated March 12 that stated the undersecretary for personnel must gather information on military standards “pertaining to physical fitness, body composition and grooming, which includes but is not limited to beards.”

Hegseth’s memo called for a

review of how standards have changed and the impact of those shifts since Jan. 1, 2015. That year, then-Defense Secretary Ash Carter announced beginning in January 2016 all combat roles would be open to women.

The 2015 decision, resisted most by the Marine Corps, opened about 230,000 combat positions that were previously off limits for women.

Today, thousands of women are serving in Army infantry, armor and artillery jobs, hundreds are in combat roles in the Marines and dozens are in special operations positions across the military.

The military has long had what is largely a two-part system for physical fitness standards — routine annual fitness based on

gender and age or more grueling standards for specific combat, special operations, infantry, armor, pararescue jumpers and other jobs. For some combat roles, the standards are the same for various occupations regardless of age or gender.

Hegseth wrote in his memo that the focus for occupations such as Navy divers and explosive ordnance disposal technicians should be proficiency in tasks such as water rescue, repair and demolition. This is already a requirement, according to a Navy spokesperson.

The 2024 National Defense Authorization Act, an annual law that sets expenditures and policies for the Defense Department, directed the Army to implement “higher minimum standards” for some combat troops in its Army Combat Fitness Test, or ACFT, within 18 months of the bill’s enactment.

As major combat operations were ongoing in Iraq and Afghanistan in about 2010, top Army leaders began planning for a more rigorous fitness evaluation. They believed the decades-old Army Physical Fitness Test, or APFT, placed too much emphasis on a soldier’s running ability and did not adequately gauge a service member’s ability to perform critical functions in combat, such as heaving heavy equipment or dragging a wounded trooper to safety.

The law brings the Army back in part to its original intent when it rolled out the ACFT in 2018. It was to be a gender- and age-neutral fitness assessment with scoring tiers based on the physical demands of an individual’s job.

The Army eventually developed different standards for men and women, facing pressure from Congress after studies showed fewer than half of female soldiers were passing early versions of the test.

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## USAF returns to old flight limitations on pregnant aircrew

By ZADE VADNAIS

*Stars and Stripes*

The Air Force is reinstating flight restrictions for airmen in the early stage of pregnancy and elevating waiver decisions for expectant aircrew members from flight surgeons to higher command, according to the service.

The changes apply to all pregnant airmen with in-flight duties and are based on recommendations from medical professionals across the service, a statement

from the Air Force surgeon general’s office said.

Under the new guidance, aircrew members may no longer fly during the first 12 weeks of pregnancy due to increased risk of miscarriage. A waiver is not available during the first trimester, Air Force officials said.

The change reverts to the Air Force’s 2019 policy and brings the branch in line with broader Defense Department standards.

The previous policy aimed to remove barriers suggesting to

women that parenthood and an aviation career were incompatible, Air Force director of staff Lt. Gen. Jacqueline Van Ovost said at the time. The policy didn’t force pregnant women to work as aircrew, the service said in 2019.

Meanwhile, the authorized flying window following the first trimester has been extended under the new policy. Aircrew members may now be reinstated to fly from week 12 through week 32 of pregnancy with an approved waiver, four weeks longer

than the previous policy allowed.

The Air Force cited medical research indicating no significant increase in risk between weeks 28 and 32.

Aircrew members who are expecting also are prohibited from flying in high-performance aircraft or planes with ejection seats at any point during pregnancy. The service said that there is insufficient medical data on the effects of g-forces on pregnancy and that the restriction is a precaution.

The change requiring waiver requests for second and third trimester flight to be reviewed at the major command level gives senior medical personnel a broader view of cases and trends, the Air Force statement said.

Aircrew members who are temporarily grounded due to pregnancy may still use flight simulators, take courses and fulfill other duties.

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## MILITARY

# GAO: Shipbuilding strategy needs upgrade

Navy must throw out playbook if it wants to expand fleet, agency says

BY ALISON BATH  
*Stars and Stripes*

The Navy must throw out its worn shipbuilding playbook if it wants to grow its fleet enough to meet critical national security needs, a congressional watchdog agency said.

The service's deficient planning approach to designing, building and delivering ships has led to huge cost increases, delays in putting vessels into service and missed performance goals, the Government Accountability Office said in a recent report.

The GAO noted that poor buying decisions are made worse by a budgeting process that requires the Navy to secure long-term funding before the full scope of a project is understood.

The Navy has about 296 numbered battle force ships, including aircraft carriers, destroyers, submarines and combat logistics vessels. But the service wants to see the fleet grow to 381 battle force ships over the next 30 years.

The report casts doubt on the Navy's ability to achieve that goal unless its acquisition approach better aligns "with innovative practices that promote timely, predictable development and delivery of new, fully capable ships."

To improve performance, the Navy should use proven ship design and product development practices rooted in the approaches of industry-leading companies, according to the report.

"Leading practices offer the Navy a near-term path toward restoring credibility with the operational fleet, Congress, and the taxpayers," the report stated.

The GAO added that since 2015, the agency has made 90 recommendations identifying design practices used by commercial ship buyers and builders that the Navy can use.

Though the service has agreed to many of the recommendations, it has only fully or partially implemented about 30 of them, the GAO said.

Among the recommendations are using commercial shipping practices that ensure schedule, cost and requirements expectations are better informed.

The Navy currently sets those expectations when a ship's design is unstable, or in progress, which results in insufficient



U.S. Navy

A graphic rendering shows the future USS Lafayette, which will be the fourth of the new Constellation-class frigates, scheduled to commission in 2029. The Constellation building program has fallen years behind.

**"Leading practices offer the Navy a near-term path toward restoring credibility with the operational fleet, Congress, and the taxpayers."**

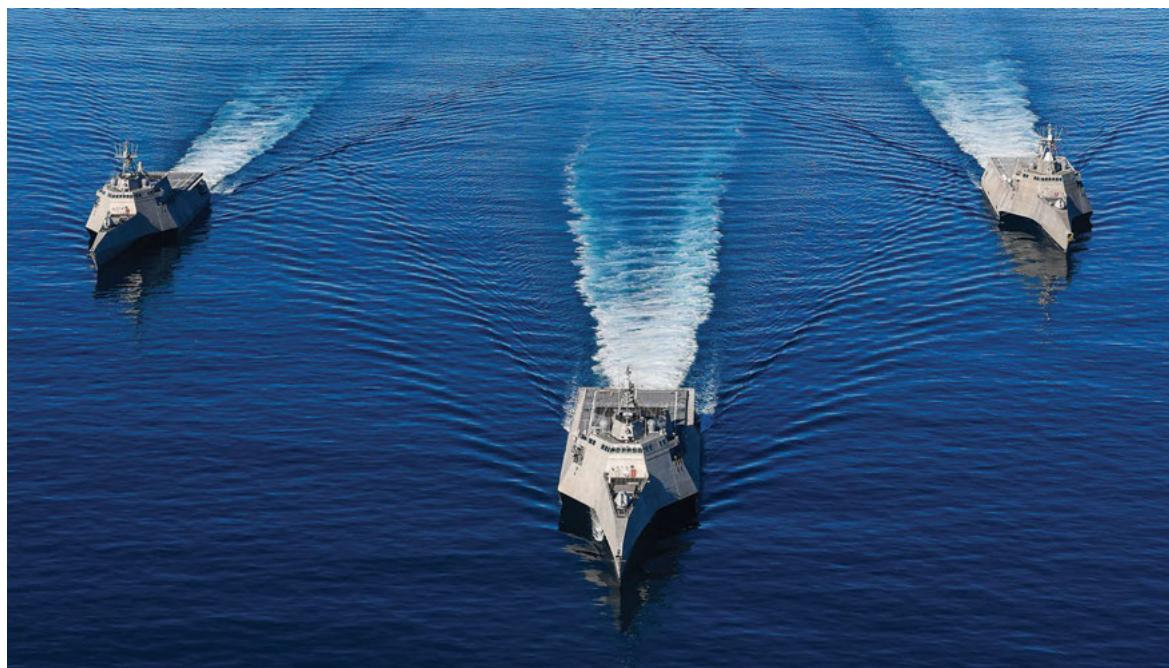
Government Accountability Office

information for decision-making. That raises the risk of higher costs and delays, the report stated.

Using the industry model would help the Navy avoid problems such as those that led to tens of billions of dollars in cost overruns to build the littoral combat ships and Zumwalt-class destroyers.

Beyond the added spending, the ambitious plan to add developmental technologies to the destroyers resulted in years of delays.

Ultimately, the Navy was forced to reduce the number of Zumwalt-class destroyers from 32 to just three, at a cost of \$10.6 billion each, more than seven



SHANNON RENFROE/U.S. Navy

Littoral combat ships sail in the eastern Pacific Ocean in 2019.

times the original estimate, the GAO said.

Meanwhile, the Navy determined that upgraded Arleigh Burke-class destroyers more effectively met changing mission needs, according to the report.

While the Navy has taken some actions toward improving shipbuilding outcomes, it isn't apparent that the service has fully understood or applied lessons from previous mistakes, the GAO said.

Two newer programs — the Constellation-class frigate and the medium landing ship, or LSM

— are experiencing similar problems, according to the agency.

The Navy began work on the first Constellation frigate in 2022 with a then-estimated price tag of \$1.3 billion. But estimates have since ballooned by more than \$200 million, and delivery of the ship has been delayed by three years to 2029, according to the report.

Using faulty metrics, the Navy determined that the design of the ship was nearly 88% complete as it awarded construction contracts. A later evaluation by the service showed that design pro-

gress was just 70% complete.

As a result, construction has stalled while the Navy and the shipbuilder negotiate important technical requirements, the GAO said.

Unrealistic design plans also have contributed to delays and likely higher costs for LSMs, which transport Marines and their supplies, the agency said.

The program is in the process of revising its cost estimates and timelines, the GAO said.

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MILITARY

# Academies cancel classes after DEI purge

West Point,  
Annapolis each  
end 2 courses; 3  
eyed by Air Force

BY SVETLANA SHKOLNIKOVA  
*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — Only a handful of courses at the military's service academies have been eliminated to comply with President Donald Trump's directive to scrub diversity programming from their campuses, the academies' superintendents told Congress.

Two classes were cut at the Military Academy, two classes were canceled at the Naval Academy and the Air Force Academy has marked three courses for potential suspension under guidelines issued by the Trump administration to end diversity, equity and inclusion content.

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, acting on Trump's orders, in January mandated the prohibition of all instruction on DEI, gender ideology and critical race theory, an academic framework that teaches racism is systemic.

The two courses eliminated at the Military Academy at West Point, N.Y., were a history course called Race, Ethnicity and Nation and an English course titled Power and Difference, Lt. Gen. Steven Gilland, the superintendent, told a subpanel of the Senate Armed Services Committee last month.

A review of the academy's



JUSTIN PACHECO/U.S. Air Force

**Basic cadets arrive for in-processing at the U.S. Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colo., in June.**

curriculum is still ongoing, he said, but only two classes in a review of more than 600 courses were deemed out of compliance.

They were electives with fairly small enrollment, with 25 cadets enrolled in the history class and a dozen cadets enrolled in the English course, Gilland said.

At the Naval Academy in Annapolis, Md., two courses related to gender were eliminated. One was a Gender Matters leadership course and the other was an English course, Gender Sexuality

Studies, said Vice Adm. Yvette Davids, the superintendent.

The academy also found 18 other classes that will need to be slightly modified to comply with executive orders, she said. A total of 870 courses were reviewed.

Lt. Gen. Tony Bauernfeind, superintendent of the Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Co., said an initial review of 735 courses has identified 55 courses for further analysis. He estimates 40% of them will require

no change, 53% will require minor changes and three could be suspended.

"I have not made that decision yet," he said.

Bauernfeind said the Air Force Academy no longer teaches critical race theory, in accordance with a defense policy bill passed in December that banned such instruction at the military academies.

"We're delving in hard on teaching our future leaders how to think and not what to think,"

he said.

Hegseth's order to purge DEI from curriculums also requires the service academies to teach that "America and its founding documents remain the most powerful force for good in human history."

His directive also bars the use of sex-based, race-based or ethnicity-based goals for academic admissions. The Supreme Court in 2023 ended race-conscious college admissions but exempted military academies from the decision.

The academies became a frequent target of criticism by conservatives during President Joe Biden's administration, with critics arguing the academies were becoming overly consumed with pushing a "woke" agenda focused on liberal ideology.

Trump has moved quickly to implement his vision for the academies.

Last month, he fired members of boards that provide oversight at the Military Academy, Naval Academy, Air Force Academy and Coast Guard Academy, saying, "Our Service Academies have been infiltrated by Woke Leftist Ideologies over the last four years."

Trump's offensive against DEI programs in the government also led West Point last month to shut down cadet clubs primarily centered on ethnic and gender affiliation, including the National Society of Black Engineers Club and Society of Women Engineers Club.

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## Navy, Air Force caution troops about social media posts

BY SETH ROBSON  
*Stars and Stripes*

U.S. service members can discuss politics online but must make clear they are speaking in a personal capacity and avoid implying military endorsement, the Navy and Air Force reminded troops.

The acting secretaries of both services issued guidance warning airmen, sailors and Marines to be mindful of how they express their opinions, especially

on social media.

"Service members are permitted to use personal social media accounts to forward, like, or link to official information, provided it is done in a manner that does not express or imply [Department of the Navy] or [Department of Defense] sanction or endorsement of any personal content," states a memo issued by Acting Navy Secretary Terrence Emmert.

Troops should also avoid dis-

closing non-public information, including unclassified details that, when combined, could reveal classified material, according to the document.

Acting Air Force Secretary Gary Ashworth issued similar guidance in a March 17 memo.

"The First Amendment protects freedom of speech and permits the expression of ideas for all Americans," he wrote.

"Service members, owing to their critical role in our national secur-

ity and the duties and obligations of service, have accepted limits on their freedom of expression."

Both officials cautioned troops against engaging in political discourse that could be perceived as an official stance.

"Service members may not engage in partisan political activity while on duty and should avoid inferences that their personal political activities imply, or appear to imply, official sponsorship, approval, or endorsement," the Navy's order states.

Troops may maintain personal social media accounts but must ensure they are clearly identified as non-official. While using military titles or appearing in uniform is allowed, personal accounts must not use official insignia, symbols or uniforms in a way that suggests government approval.

In cases where confusion is possible, service members should include a disclaimer

stating that their posts reflect personal views and do not represent those of the government.

Certain provisions of the Uniform Code of Military Justice also limit troops' expression, including prohibitions against contemptuous remarks about officials, failure to obey orders, conduct unbecoming an officer and actions that bring discredit upon the armed forces.

The military has previously reminded service members about appropriate social media use. In March 2017, the Air Force issued a "Public Web and Social Communication" regulation barring personnel from posting "any defamatory, libelous, vulgar, obscene, abusive, profane, threatening, hateful, racially, ethnically or otherwise offensive or illegal information or material."

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