Hey, all you kids in the military community need to read this. Seriously! So, please put down your iPad, iPhone or other digital device for the next couple of minutes. You’ll survive, and I promise no one will take them. And, I also promise that this has nothing to do with more COVID-19 restrictions.

Now that I have your attention, I want to give you a little job. No, wait! Don’t stop reading! If you do a little bit of work, you’ll have the opportunity to be heard by tens of thousands of people. Seriously! You see, April is the Month of the Military Child, and for the 11th straight year, the Stars and Stripes community publications are dedicating it to you, the children of our men and women in uniform.

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

Military children tell us your story!

SEE MOMC ON PAGE 2

EXPLORING JAPANESE CULTURE

TV, online event to showcase ties between Guam & Japan

Pages 7-8
For those children who are part of the military community overseas but not technically a military child, we want to hear from you, too. You and your Department of Defense civilian parents are also a key part of the military community.

So, what’s life like as a military kid? Tell us. And after you share with us, your story, poem or drawing will be posted on our special Month of the Military website: Militarychild.Stripes.com and could appear in at least one weekly paper.

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

We get thousands of submissions a year, so for stories to run in the paper, they must be submitted by April 15. As we approach another April, our team is ready for the onslaught. In fact, we’re already receiving submissions.

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

Stars and Stripes is very proud to serve the military community, and it’s an honor to spotlight its resourceful group of children.

We can’t wait to hear from you!

Chris Carlson,
Publishing and Media Design Manager
Stars and Stripes

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1
Upgrade to Wireless Home Internet

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Airman 1st Class Bryan Rivera-Donalds

ANDERSEN AIR FORCE BASE – U.S. Air Force Airman 1st Class Bryyan Rivera-Donalds from the 644th Combat Communications Squadron was recognized as the 36th Wing’s Team Andersen Linebacker of the Week at Andersen Air Force Base, Guam, Jan. 26, 2022.

Rivera-Donalds participates in operations, maintenance, and training programs with satellite and ground-radio communications systems worth 21 million dollars. He participates in military operations supporting the Indo-Pacific region made up of 36 countries.

During the Contingency Response Group’s Wake Island field training exercise, Rivera-Donalds established a 1,500 mile command and control link, which is the data link between the remotely piloted aircraft and station, using a man-pack high frequency radio and improvised antenna. Exercise conditions simulated a contested communications environment in which Rivera-Donalds had an hour to establish his contingency high frequency connection. With intense preparation, creativity and good math, he provided communication with the hub, Andersen AFB, in only 16 minutes.

“A1C Rivera-Donalds’ drive and can-do attitude makes him stand out,” said U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Edward Blaize, radio frequency transmissions systems section chief with the 644 CBCS. “He strives for excellence whenever he’s faced with adversity.”

Since joining the team at Andersen AFB, Rivera-Donalds has impressed everyone with his determination and passion to become a subject matter expert in his career field.

“As junior enlisted you should strive to be a subject matter expert in your career and train those before and after you,” said Rivera-Donalds. “At the end of the day we are the main workforce during missions and the most knowledgeable technicians.”

Rivera-Donalds is currently leading efforts to develop a proof of concept about the way the 644 CBCS conducts agile combat employment.

“I’m excited for the future of the Air Force because of Airmen like Rivera,” said Blaize.

Staff Sgt. Justin Gentry

ANDERSEN AIR FORCE BASE, Andersen – U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Justin Gentry from the 554th Rapid Engineer Deployable Heavy Operational Repair Squadron, Engineer was recognized as the 36th Wing’s Team Andersen Linebacker of the Week at Andersen Air Force Base, Guam, Jan. 19, 2022.

Since his arrival to Andersen AFB, Gentry’s main responsibility has been a Mission Generation Vehicle Equipment Maintenance Journeyman.

“As part of the 554 RHS, my job is to ensure our member’s ability for world wide deployment within 72 hours for contingency and humanitarian mission,” said Gentry. “This is accomplished through maintaining 120 vehicles, while providing a high-level of vehicle maintenance and training for Andersen AFB.”

During his time at Andersen AFB, he has stepped up as a wing 2T3 (vehicle and vehicular equipment maintenance) subject matter expert, developing seven Airmen across three squadrons certifying them on over 290 core tasks.

“When SSgt Gentry arrived at our unit he brought 14 years of experience with him,” said U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Anthony Cathcart, the non-commissioned officer in charge of vehicle maintenance for 554 RHS. “This was his second tour with 554 RHS. During his first tour as a Senior Airman, he was mainly responsible for turning wrenches and maintaining a heavy construction fleet.”

His particular attention to detail and leadership has been displayed over the past year as he was placed as the shop floor supervisor where he guided 12 technicians, overseeing 768 maintenance actions on 120 vehicles.

“When he returned back to Guam in November 2020, our leadership team quickly recognized his potential to lead and develop his peers,” said Cathcart. “This time around, he is expected to not only turn wrenches and be a technical expert, sharing his knowledge with his peers, but also learn at the same time to manage people and resources.”

He also has displayed advanced technical expertise and knowledge of logistics readiness capabilities as he was hand-selected to fill a Master Sgt. advisory role within the 36th Contingency Response Squadron for an allied airspace visit.

“I am very grateful and honored to have been chosen to receive the Linebacker award,” said Gentry. “We are all tiny pieces of the puzzle and every piece is just as important as the next. Through hard work we can all succeed in our mission.”

The term Linebacker is rooted deep within Team Andersen’s history. Operation Linebacker II took place on Dec. 18, 1972, and was the largest number of heavy bomber strikes launched by the U.S. Air Force since the end of World War II. During the operation, B-52s from Andersen flew round-the-clock bombing missions over North Vietnam to destroy major targets in Hanoi and Haiphong in an effort to bring the Democratic Republic of Vietnam back to negotiations.
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I sometimes feel disconnect ed from military spouses, since my husband retired from the Navy five years ago. As a veteran spouse, I no longer endure PCS moves and deployments, which are cornerstones of active-duty life, affecting everything from children’s education to mental well-being, to finances and marriage. Now, when I write about these issues, I research what today’s active-duty spouses go through. However, there is one milspouse matter that affected me in such a profound way, my life has been forever changed — The military spouse unemployment problem.

Simply put, marrying a Navy man killed my career as an attorney. I tried to keep it alive for many years by getting two licenses, faithfully reading legal reviews, paying my student loans and bar dues and taking part-time research jobs. One thing we’ve figured out how to be enough to share our stories, until now. While interviewing Sue Hop-Hill to listen to spouses’ unemployment stories in recent years, she said they won’t act unless military spouses offer comprehensive solutions. "It’s our responsibility," Sue explained.

As such, the Paper lists clear recommendations for the DoD, including establishing data-based metrics measuring the bottom-line effectiveness of employment programs, creating milspouse employment "lifecycle maps" to identify problem phases and promoting awareness of existing employment programs. "NMSN started publishing White Papers [in 2019] to promote solutions, one of which has been signed into law. Together, we’ve figured out how to be more strategic about military spouse unemployment issues," Sue said.

"A sincere willingness on Capitol Hill to listen to spouses’ unemployment stories is critical," Sue explains. "But then, I met my Air Force husband," she said, soon finding herself a stay-at-home military mom on McConnell Air Force Base in Wichita, Kan. Volunteering offered Sue work with paid child care, but she struggled to find meaningful employment after each move. After attending graduate school, Sue thought her impressive education, volunteer experiences and fluency in several languages would finally land her a good job. "No one really cared," she said, telling the all-too-familiar tale of military spouse unemployment. Fortunately, Sue found her calling in 2010, when she founded NMSN.

Ever diplomatic, Sue concluded, "We can’t just share our problems; we have to offer our leaders opportunities to help us." Undiplomatically, I say, our leaders better take action, or they can take their lip service and kiss my milspouse bottom line.


Email: meatandpotatoesoflife@gmail.com
Before the COVID-19 pandemic, you may have noticed that many Japanese tourists would flock to popular Guam tourist spots like Two Lovers Point, Plaza de España and Chamorro Village. This is because the short three-hour flight from Tokyo to Guam makes the island an ideal and relatively inexpensive overseas getaway.

In any given year, nearly one million Japanese tourists made their way to this corner of paradise and there is even a significant community of over 3,000 Japanese people registered as residents of the island as of January 2021.

The geographical proximity to Guam and its popularity amongst Japanese nationals, has led to unique opportunities for cultural exchange. In particular, Japanese food is a very common and trendy cuisine to have on the island. Akimatsuri, a traditional Japanese autumn festival held in November, is also one of the largest celebrations on Guam with over 30,000 participants every year.

As in most other places, the COVID-19 pandemic has affected the tropical island and its vibrant tourism industry. For almost two years, Japanese cultural activities and events have been canceled or indefinitely postponed.

In an effort to revive and continue the tradition of Japanese heritage and cultural exchange, the Japan Club of Guam (JCG) and the Consulate-General of Japan in Agana are hosting the Japan Cultural Exploration in Guam 2022 (JCEG2022) which takes place from February 18 to March 3, 2022.

JCEG2022 aims to showcase ties between Guam and Japan through a variety of events and activities. The festival will feature Japanese food, music, dance, and other cultural performances.

In an effort to make the festival accessible to a wider audience, JCG and the Consulate-General of Japan in Agana have also organized a virtual event, "Exploring Japanese Culture: An Online Festival," which will allow people to participate from anywhere in the world.

BY TAKAHIRO TAKIGUCHI,
STRIPE GUAM
CULTURE: Tune in Feb.19-27

Guam 2022. The week-long television and online event coincides with the club’s 50-year anniversary.

From Feb. 19 through Feb. 27, viewers can tune into a 30-minute program airing on Fox Channel 6 and ABC Channel 7. The programs will feature interviews with Japanese-Guamanians (Chamorri), interesting stories of historical Japanese-Guamanians, online discussions by Guam students on the Japan Exchange and Teaching Program, an exciting opportunity for the cultural exploration internationally through the Japanese language, and virtual experiences including tours of Japan’s four seasons and an online Akimatsuri Festival.

Visit the official website of the event, JCEG2022.com, for all programs and online exclusives like videos of traditional rakugo (comic storytelling) and wadaiko drum performances. The event’s Instagram will also have live broadcasts throughout the cultural exploration event.

This event is an opportunity for Guam and Japan to strengthen their bond while supporting the Japanese School of Guam students in keeping up tradition, Yu-ichiro Hirano of Japan Club Guam explained. This has been a mission of the club since it was established in 1972. Don’t miss this great opportunity to explore Japanese culture in the safety of your home!

takiguchi.takahiro@stripes.com

———

Japanese School of Guam offers taste of Japanese education system

Founded in 1989, the Japanese School of Guam is centered around the same curriculum and textbooks used in Japan’s public schools. The school is accredited by both the governments of Japan and Guam and teaches kids about the Japanese language, culture and good manners.

On Guam, knowing Japanese is considered as a great asset in the island’s tourism industry, as more than 900,000 Japanese tourists visit every year - more than 70 percent of all the visitors of the island. So, good language skills gained at the school can translate into good job opportunities later in life.

“Japan School of Guam is only the place in the island to experience and learn authentic Japanese culture,” says Kotaro Kimura, a spokesman of JCG. “As some troops of U.S. Marine Corps in Okinawa are scheduling to relocate to Guam, I hope American military members will be aware of the value of the school and send their children to the school.”

The school’s supplementary program for students from preschool through ninth grade, offers a chance for local students to learn various Japanese subjects while they remain enrolled in their local Guam schools.

———

Celebrating the arrival of fall at Akimatsuri

Akimatsuri, a Japanese traditional festival to welcome the arrival of autumn. On the island, The Japan Club of Guam has hosted the celebration every year since 1970 at Ypao Beach Park on the third or fourth Saturday of November. The festivities were canceled in 2020 and 2021.

The festival offers a rare glimpse of Japanese culture by condensing a variety of seasonal activities such as bon odori dancing and mikoshi-carrying into a single event tailored to Guam. During the event, attendees can expect plenty of food and game booths, as well as a lot of entertainment on the main stage.

The event started when JCG wanted to create a place for their children to enjoy the activities and customs members enjoyed back home in Japan when they were children. Part of the proceeds go to Japanese School of Guam.

———

Japan Cultural Exploration in Guam 2022

PERIOD: Feb. 19 – 27
PORTAL SITE URL: JCEG2022.com
A 30-minute TV program
- Channel 6 FOX: Feb. 19, 8 a.m. and 10 p.m.; Feb. 20, 4:30 p.m.; Feb. 22, 10 p.m.; Feb. 23, 10 p.m.; Feb. 24, 10 p.m.; Feb. 26, 1 p.m.; Feb. 27, 4:30 p.m.
- Channel 7 ABC: Feb. 19, 2:30 p.m.; Feb. 21, 4 p.m.; Feb. 23, 4 p.m.; Feb. 25, 4 p.m.; Feb. 26, 4 and 10 p.m.; Feb. 27, 10 p.m.
(Note: The program will be reaired for Feb. 28 – Mar. 6 at midnight and 5 additional times. Check out the broadcasting schedule at the portal site: JCEG2022.com.)

Check out the broadcasting schedule at the portal site: JCEG2022.com.

Feb.19 Sat 8-8:30 22-22:30 14:30-15:30
Feb.20 Sun 16:30-17:00
Feb.21 Mon 16-16:30
Feb.22 Tue 22-22:30
Feb.23 Wed 22-22:30
Feb.24 Thu 22-22:30
Feb.25 Fri 16-16:30
Feb.26 Sat 13-13:30 16-16:30 22-22:30
Feb.27 Sun 16-16:30 22-22:30
Coexist with COVID-19

Japan Cultural Exploration in Guam 2022

Co-sponsored by the Consulate-General of Japan in Hagatna and the Japan Club of Guam

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Former JET (The Japan Exchange and Teaching Programme) representative with our local youth.

Ms. Jennifer McFerran, the JET graduate, shares her experiences with Ms. Miwa Gudmundsen (student host).

JAPANESE TRADITIONAL PERFORMING ARTS

Katsura Sunshine brings unique humor and laughter to Guam with Rakugo in English.

Along with other exciting content for all interests

To access all content, please visit our YouTube menu through our portal site: JCEG2022.com
I love sashimi!
If you don’t care to eat raw fish, then I’m sorry, but this recipe is not for you. BUT, you can share it with someone who does!

In the words of my daughter, “I love, love, love this! It’s almost as good as your tuna poki!” That’s Radish, you ask? In sashimi? Don’t knock it ‘til you try it.

My inspiration is from this fantastic sushi restaurant in Vegas (sorry, folks, I can’t name the restaurant here), but if you’ve lived in Vegas before, you’ve probably been to or heard of this place — look at the photo below, recognize it yet? You try it.

In the words of my daughter, “I love, love, love this! YES! It’s almost as good as your tuna poki!” That’s my picky-eater daughter, mind you. She even eats this! It’s almost as good as your tuna poki!\

Serves: 1 serving

Recipe type: Seafood, Salad
Cuisine: Japanese

My name is Annie. Food and I get along so well! Cooking and baking are more than a hobby for me – they’re a passion. I come from the beautiful island of Guam, U.S.A. The recipes you’ll find here are my creations, or those of my children, who are also budding foodies. I hope you like them. Drop me a comment or two to let me know how you like our island and other delicacies. Enjoy!”

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

**The Best Sashimi Ever**

**Sashimi Sauce:**

- 1 cup soy sauce
- 1/4 cup rice vinegar
- 1/4 cup mirin
- 1-inch piece ginger, grated
- The juice of 3 lemons and 2 limes
- 2 packets dried bonito flakes (0.17 oz. per packet). The kind I buy comes in a package that contains 5 of these packets.

**Kewpie Mayonnaise**

- Kewpie mayonnaise. Don’t substitute with regular mayo. The main difference between Kewpie and regular mayo is that kewpie is made with the egg yolks only, whereas some regular mayos are made with either only egg whites or whole eggs. Kewpie is also creamier and just a tad bit sweeter that regular mayo. Anyhow…look for and use kewpie mayo for this dish (no subs).
- Cayenne pepper, about 1/4 teaspoon, more or less to taste. I like using Cayenne — it dissolves easily, and it’s not too spicy. Even my “little” one eats it. Well, she’s not so little anymore, but she’s sooooo picky!

**Instructions**

1. Rinse, peel, and grate the radish. I used a box grater, grating the radish on the side with the second smallest holes. Set aside.
2. Place the lemon and lime juices into a mixing bowl. I picked out the seeds before squeezing the juice out of them (I like leaving the pulp in the sauce). You can use one cup of juice. If you have smaller fruits and get less than a cup of juice, squeeze more juice out of either a lemon or lime (your preference) to get about a cup of juice.
3. Pour in the rice vinegar.
4. Add the soy sauce.
5. Add the mirin.
6. Add the dried kelp. Leave the pieces big — you’re going to remove this later.
7. Add the bonito flakes.
8. Add the grated ginger. Use fresh ginger — the powdered stuff just won’t taste the same.
9. Sprinkle in as much cayenne pepper as you like. You can also add in chopped hot chili peppers.
10. Mix to combine. Set the mixture aside. Let it sit for at least an hour to allow the flavors to meld. Use a fork to pick out the pieces of kelp; discard the kelp. If you want a smooth sauce, pour it into another bowl with a strainer over the top.
11. After an hour, place about 2 tablespoons of kewpie mayo into a shallow dish. Pour in 1 cup of the sauce mixture. Refrigerate any unused sauce.
12. Use a whisk or a fork to mix the kewpie mayo into the sauce mixture. I know, it doesn’t look very appetizing right now, but trust me…It’s delicious…so delicious you might just want to drink the sauce!
13. Place the shredded radish into the center of the dish.
14. Place thin slices of ahi tuna on top of the shredded radish.
15. Squeeze more kewpie mayo on top of the fish. Sprinkle sliced green onions on top. Drizzle more sauce over the fish. Optional: sprinkle smelt roe on top of it all.
16. Serve immediately (it’s delicious with steamed white rice) and ENJOY!

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 12**
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Japanese Vinaigrette

This is a quick and easy recipe. Throw all of the ingredients into a bowl, whisk, and serve.

This dressing is delicious with mixed salad greens, over cucumbers, or use it to make one of my many versions of Ahi Tuna Poki.

I give it a try. I think you’ll like it.

A tangy and slightly sweet dressing perfect for salads, seafood, or used as a marinade.

Recipe type: Sauces and Dressings
Cuisine: Japanese
Serves: 2.5 cups

Ingredients
- 1 cup rice vinegar
- ½ cup aji mirin sweet cooking rice seasoning
- ¼ cup white, granulated sugar
- ¼ cup sesame oil
- ¼ cup finely chopped onions
- ¼ cup soy sauce
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 tablespoon chopped garlic

Instructions
1. Place all ingredients into a small bowl. Whisk to combine.
2. Pour over salad greens, cucumbers, or use as a marinade. This is also a delicious dressing for my version of Ahi Tuna Poki.

Ahi Tuna Poki Salad

This is a new twist on Ahi Tuna Poki. Marinate good quality cubes of ahi tuna in my Japanese Vinaigrette dressing and serve with your favorite salad vegetables.

It’s oh-so-good, trust me.

Give it a try. I think you’ll like it.

A tangy and slightly sweet dressing perfect for salads, seafood, or used as a marinade.

Recipe type: Sauces and Dressings
Cuisine: Japanese
Serves: 2 cups

Ingredients
- ½ cup diced red onions
- ½ cup juliened carrots
- 1 cup diced ahi tuna
- ZăĐƵƉ:ĂƉĂŶĞƐĞsŝŶĂŝŐƌĞƩĞĐŝƉĞ
- ¼ cup Japanese Vinaigrette
Optional:
- Red pepper flakes

Instructions
1. Make my Japanese Vinaigrette as directed in my recipe (see above).
2. Marinate the ahi tuna in the vinaigrette for 10-15 minutes. Pour the tuna and dressing over the salad greens and other vegetables. Sprinkle red pepper flakes over the salad (optional). Serve and enjoy!

I love salads, but it’s all about the dressing for me. I’ve been experimenting with various salad dressings but I always seem to migrate toward vinegar and oil mixtures.

This is a new twist on Ahi Tuna Poki. Marinate good quality cubes of ahi tuna in my Japanese Vinaigrette dressing and serve with your favorite salad vegetables.

It’s oh-so-good, trust me.

Give it a try. I think you’ll like it.

A new take on Ahi Tuna Poki that’s served in my recipe (see above).

Step into Annie’s Chamorro Kitchen via Facebook.
Search for: “Annie’s Chamorro Kitchen”
Skydive Guam leaps back into business

One of Guam’s most popular optional tours returns with thrilling resident and military specials

The Skydive Guam team, with more than 60,000 combined dives and decades of aviation experience, announced it has reopened for business on February 5 and leaped into a 2022 promotional rate for Guam residents and military personnel. The ultimate 14,000-foot tandem skydive adventure, regularly priced at $349, will be available for a limited time for only $229 per person.

“Skydive Guam is reopening in 2022 with a renewed focus on providing unique and exciting adventures while adhering to the highest COVID-19 safety standards,” explains John Stewart, Skydive Guam President and Owner. “We are all about fun and adventure in the safest way possible, and we’re ready to welcome our guests back for the thrill of their lifetime.”

Skydive Guam’s Tandem Instructors are the best in the industry. Instructors are highly experienced and committed to ensuring that guests enjoy a safe and unforgettable experience. Skydive Guam is a certified Guam Safe and WTTC Safe Travel company, demonstrating the utmost care and pride in COVID safety and hygiene protocols.

Skydive Guam reopens with support from LEAP

Giving them an added boost, Skydive Guam has taken advantage of the Governor’s Local Employers’ Assistance Program (LEAP), which provides direct financial assistance to small businesses that have experienced a pandemic-related business interruption. The company closed its doors in March of 2020 as a result of the pandemic’s effect on global travel. “With the support of the LEAP grant, we are so happy to be back in business. We decided that now is the time to prepare for the return of our tourism economy. Skydive Guam is ready to welcome visitors back to Guam’s shores,” said Stewart. “Our team is thrilled to be back doing what we do best and to celebrate, we are honoring our residents and military personnel with an incredible special offer.”

Skydive Guam offers a unique skydiving experience for those who crave adventure, all while enjoying the beautiful scenery that Guam and Saipan have to offer. Skydive Guam’s expert instructors guide guests through the entire tandem skydive process, from the safety briefing and preparation on the ground to jumping out of the plane and gliding in their parachutes. Stewart noted, “We’ve received many calls asking when we will be offering our tandem skydiving again. Residents have been looking for adventurous ways to celebrate milestone birthdays and anniversaries or to cross skydiving off their bucket lists. We’re proud to be able to share moments like that with our guests and even more so to be opening our doors again.”

The reopening special is available through March 27, 2022. To learn more about Skydive Guam or to book your skydive adventure today, please call 671-475-5555.
Boonie Stomps Guam

FROM WAU L CAMPF I RE

No reservations required.

For more information: www.facebook.com/GuamBoonieStompersInc or call 787-4238.

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 9:00 AM in the Center Court of Chamorro Village in Hagatna. The cost is $5.00 for hikers over 17. Children must be accompanied by a responsible adult. Hikers should provide their own transportation. Guam’s trails are not developed. Weather conditions can make the hikes more difficult than described. No reservations required.

For more information: www.facebook.com/GuamBoonieStompersInc or call 787-4238.

Feb 19

Fadian Cove

We descend to this scenic and picturesque cove below Guam’s northeastern cliffs to swim and snorkel if the water is calm. If conditions are good we’ll also head north along the reef to the next cove.

Bringing: 2 quarts water, electrolytes, clothes/hiking shoes that can get wet, snorkel gear, gloves, insect repellent, sun screen, lunch, and camera

Special conditions: A steep hill to descend and climb, overgrown trail, and hiking over rough rocks

Feb 26

Southern Mts to Mt. Finacresta

We travel the open grassy ridges of the Southern Mountains, from Mt. J-M to Mt. Ilicho, with excellent views the whole way. We then drop steeply into the oven and traverse over to the long steep climb to Mt. Finacresta (aka Schroeder).

Bringing: 4 quarts water, electrolytes, hiking shoes, gloves, sunscreen, lunch and snacks, and camera

Special conditions: Lots of sword ferns, little shade, a lot of steep climbing, and a very long hike.

Stripes Sports Trivia

Less than three months after his father’s murder, Michael Jordan shocked the world and abruptly retired from the NBA in 1993. A few months later, “His Airness” signed a deal to take his talents to the baseball diamond. Which Double-A minor league affiliate of the White Sox did Jordan hit three home runs for?

Answer

SUDOKU

Edited by Margie E. Burke

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Sudoku Difficulty: Medium

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.

The answer to the previous puzzle:

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Keith Alaniz, right, a U.S. Army veteran and co-founder of Rumi Spice in Afghanistan, visits Badakhshan province in search of wild cumin. Veterans who founded businesses in Afghanistan have decisions to make after the Taliban returned to power.

Business as usual?

US veteran-run operations in Afghanistan face difficult decisions after Taliban’s ascent to power.
Marines activate first littoral anti-air battalion in Hawaii

BY WYATT OLSON • Stars and Stripes

FORT SHAPIRA, HAWAII — The Marine Corps activated its inaugural littoral anti-air battalion recently in Hawaii, the first such unit to be launched as the service continues to restructure and modernize its fighting force.

The 3rd Littoral Anti-Air Battalion was administratively activated during a small ceremony at Marine Corps Base Hawaii, the Marine Corps said in a news release. Its mission will include air defense, air surveillance and early warning, air control, and forward arming and refueling, the Marine Corps said.

The battalion is not expected to be fully operational for several years, but the formal activation installs its leadership and allows it to take over management of facilities and equipment that had been maintained by 2nd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, which was deactivated last month, the Marine Corps said.

The battalion will be a subordinate unit to the future 3rd Marine Littoral Regiment, the Marine Corps said.

A ceremony is slated for March 3 to redesignate 3rd Marine Regiment to 3rd Marine Littoral Regiment, the Marine Corps said.

"While the details of how the [littoral anti-air battalion] will operate are still in development, the Marine Corps envisions the [battalion] providing critical protection and support for small teams of [the regiment’s] Marines distributed across wide areas of the Pacific region," the Marine Corps said.

The initiation of the littoral anti-air battalion "marks one of the first steps in the Marine Corps' Force Design 2030 modernization effort," the Marine Corps said.

The new force design focuses on small maneuvering units instead of large assault forces, a change geared toward what U.S. officials term the "littoral fight," according to the release.

"Activation also facilitates wargaming requirements and employment concepts for the [battalion], providing critical support for maneuver units instead of large assault forces," the Marine Corps said.

Marine veteran John Gerlaugh spent the last decade convinced that Afghanistan could be transformed through commerce.

But Gerlaugh’s hopes for “economic diplomacy,” as he deemed it, have been extinguished.

Team Afghan Power, the nonprofit organization he and other veterans founded in 2015, closed Feb. 11. Gerlaugh, who served as director of counterterrorism policy at the Pentagon from 2004 to 2006, and his colleagues worked to bring renewable energy-powered grids to rural Afghan villages.

For U.S. veterans like Gerlaugh who founded businesses and nonprofits, the Taliban’s return to power proved to be a time of reckoning.

I realized that our investment in the country, the both the U.S. government’s investment of trillions of dollars and my personal investment, was a fool’s errand,” Gerlaugh said. “I was just thinking. It’s enough.”

Some other veterans who made similar commitments to Afghan development think they can still keep operations viable under Taliban rule, though they acknowledge economic and logistical challenges. Others question whether high standards of human rights can be maintained.

Matt Griffin, an Army Ranger veteran who co-founded Combat Flip Flops, said the financial crisis in Afghanistan has forced the company to shift its focus to humanitarian efforts.

In addition to its signature flip-flops bedecked with parts of bullet casings, the company was selling Afghan scarves, or shemaghs. Its goods were made in a factory in Kabul, and a portion of the profits helped Afghan girls go to school.

But production at the Kabul factory stopped after the Taliban took over, Griffin said. The Issaquah, Wash.-based company ran out of its stock of shemaghs in November.

There are more stored in Afghanistan, Griffin said, but the company can’t move them abroad.

“Until further notice, we cannot manufacture or export from Afghanistan” is what visitors to the Combat Flip Flops website see when they try to buy Afghan scarves, which are listed as sold out.

The United States froze nearly $9.5 billion in assets belonging to the Afghan central bank, so managers at the factory are forced to lay off workers and use small sums of money at a time to pay workers, he said.

“There’s no way to get money in, which means there’s no way to get product out,” Griffin said.

The company hopes to start manufacturing inseminated fleeces for Afghans braving the harsh winter within a month or so, Griffin said.

“I’m just there to do business,” he said. “I’m not trying to push an ideology on people. I don’t want to interfere with the government. I just want people to go to work.”

A third company, Rumi Spice, said they were able to grow over the last year, and that they plan to stay the course. It partners with farmers in western Afghanistan to export saffron, the world’s most valuable spice.

Genuine saffron costs up to $5,000 per pound because production requires intensive manual labor and cannot be automated. Rumi Spice employs hundreds of women who hand-pick crocus flowers and harvest the aromatic spice filaments.

Army veteran and company co-founder Keith Alaniz said the Taliban have not interfered with production so far, and their workers remain employed.

“The Taliban are hungry for that view of Afghanistan being a friendly place to do business,” Alaniz said.

The Chicago-based company, which has been backed by investors such as billionaire Mark Cuban, sells saffron, cumin and spice blends in U.S. stores such as Whole Foods.

In some ways, business is easier now, Alaniz said. The Taliban stopped their roadside attacks, which means more routes to transport goods.

He recognizes that the success of the company could be seen as a public relations win for the Taliban. But he said the benefit of helping individual Afghans is worth it.

“I don’t care who’s running the government,” Alaniz said. “As long as in the little world that I can affect through my activities there, those people are being treated right.”

All three ventures were founded on the belief that private enterprise could help fix a country the U.S. military and government couldn’t. Since regaining power, the Taliban have courted international investment, especially from China.

The group’s leadership would most likely welcome foreign businesses, even ones that are run by onetime foes, said Jamshid Mohammadi, a scholar with the Bard Globalization and International Affairs Program in New York.

But Westerners who wish to do business in Afghanistan should be aware of the risks, he said.

“Rank-and-file (Taliban), I witnessed myself post-collapse, are very allergic to anything provided by Americans, be it jobs or money,” Mohammadi said.

“But we can navigate through them and provide jobs.”

Sara Wahedi, an Afghan-Cana- dian tech entrepreneur, advised Western businesses to have a human rights policy to avoid complicity in potential Taliban abuses.

“Putting the stamp of capitalism on this isn’t going to sway the Taliban, who aren’t a unitary force,” Wahedi said. “A concern is that Afghan workers will receive the short end of the stick when it comes to foreign business testing out this new environment of a Taliban-governed Afghanistan.”

BY J.P. LAWRENCE • Stars and Stripes

Marine veteran John Gerlaugh

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In addition to its signature
Danish pop star Zindy Laursen finds Vietnam War vet father

BY MATTHEW M. BURKE
Stars and Stripes

Danish pop star Zindy Laursen’s new release, “The Two of Us,” coming this month, is the coda, she said, to a decade-long search for the father she never knew, an American veteran of the Vietnam War.

Laursen, 50, known simply as Zindy in Denmark, wrote the song for her father, Bill Johnson, 72, of Baker, La., after a DNA test in November revealed that the Army veteran was, in fact, her dad.

Johnson, a retired police captain, met Zindy’s mother, Vi-vian, on 10-day’s rest and recuperation in Sydney in October 1970. He served with the Army’s 282nd Assault Helicopter Company, based at Danang, Vietnam, he told Stars and Stripes by phone.

He headed back to the United States after his yearlong tour, never knowing he had fathered a daughter in Australia.

“It’s a story about never giving up and never giving up hope,” Zindy told Stars and Stripes by phone.

The pair met face to face in her large, extended family and showed similar personality traits.

“I said, ‘Oh my God, she is my daughter,’” Johnson said. “At first, I thought this was a scam,” Johnson said. But then he saw Zindy on a video call. The resemblance was uncanny. And the DNA test he submitted was a 99.9% match.

“I said, ‘Oh my God, she is my daughter?’” Johnson said.

Zindy was impressed to learn that Johnson, too, had risen from poverty to become the first Afri-can-American police officer in Zachary, La., a city of about 20,000 just outside Baton Rouge. He coached youth sports and led anti-drug programs.

The pair hit it off immediately, singing and laughing together. The two look alike, sound alike and show similar personality traits.

Johnson held a barbecue for Zindy’s visit in January. She met her large, extended family and brought Johnson to tears singing “Happy Birthday.” Now, they talk by phone nearly every day.

Johnson next plans to visit Zindy in Denmark to see where she grew up.

“It’s a miracle from God that Zindy came into my life and my family’s life,” Johnson said. “I plan to continue to share my love for the rest of my life for her.”

“I will always love my Dad, that’s for sure,” Zindy replied. “It was a dream come true.”

Army vet fights to have stepkids by his side for heart surgery

BY SETH ROBSON
Stars and Stripes

A disabled Army veteran, living in the Philippines but facing open-heart surgery in the United States, says he fears dying without his family at his side after the State Department twice refused emergen-cy visas for his three stepchildren.

Blocked arteries have meant several surgeries and stents inserted into Kevin Baltzley’s heart since he told Stars and Stripes by phone earlier this month.

Baltzley, 58, a former Army staff ser-gent and veteran of the Persian Gulf War, in 2014 moved to Pampanga province in the Philippines near Clark Air Base, for-merly America’s largest overseas military installation.

The retired teacher and foster parent was told in May 2020 he needed open-heart surgery but waiting on a COVID-19 vaccine delayed his return to the States, where the surgery may be performed at no charge by the Department of Veterans Affairs, he said.

“When August last year he has that pain almost daily,” his wife, Karen Baltzley, said in the same interview.

After receiving a first coronavirus vac-cine shot in July and the booster in De-

Army veteran Kevin Baltzley poses with family members, including his wife and stepchildren, in this undated photo taken in the Philippines.

However, his family’s request for emer-gency visas was refused by the U.S. Em-bassy in Manila, Baltzley said.

A second request garnered a visa for his wife but none for his three Filipino step-children, he said. Two sons from a previ-ous marriage live in Florida. His stepchildren — twin daughters and a son — are all fully vaccinated and attending local colleges, Baltzley said. They will have to wait in the Philippines while their parents head to Florida later this month.

The State Department doesn’t comment on individual cases due to privacy laws, a press officer at the U.S. Embassy in Manil-a, Heather Carlin Fabrihant, said in an email.

The former soldier said he chose Miami for the surgery because it’s free, he had stents put into his heart there and his con-dominium is nearby.

The pandemic meant he couldn’t travel to the U.S. after his father, a Navy veteran, died from cancer and his sister, who served in the Army, died of the coronavi-rus last year, Baltzley said.

“If I die, I would like my family with me, so I don’t have to leave this Earth alone,” he said. “I think I have earned that.”

Stars and Stripes
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Twitter: @MatthewMBurke

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Army touts new climate strategy’s wide benefits

By Corey Dickstein
Stars and Stripes

Top Army leaders argued that steps they plan to take to address Earth’s changing climate will not only reduce the greenhouse gas output by the service but will also make American soldiers more effective on the battlefield, according to a new strategy.

The Army will spend the coming years investing in renewable energy sources, upgrading its massive vehicle fleet, strengthening power grids at its installations, and preparing soldiers to live and fight in increasingly harsher weather conditions, according to the 20-page Army Climate Strategy published Feb. 8. The steps are designed to lower the Army’s own impact on the climate crisis while also ensuring U.S. soldiers can “fight and win the nation’s wars” even in the most extreme conditions, said Paul Farnan, the assistant Army secretary for installations, energy and environment.

“I want to emphasize that nothing in this strategy will detract from or impede us from accomplishing that mission,” he told reporters. “In fact, it’s the opposite. We actually believe that this strategy will enhance our ability to accomplish that mission.”

Farnan pointed to some examples. Electric or hybrid vehicles, he said, can idle silently thus providing the power needed to run critical communications and other systems silently and with a much-reduced heat signature. This could make soldiers harder to find for enemy forces, Farnan said. Solar fields built by local utility companies on dozens of Army installations, he added, can be used to power critical base infrastructure if the power grid goes down.

The new Army plan comes some four months after the Pentagon rolled out its new climate-focused strategy in October, which labeled the issue as an “existential threat” to U.S. national security and pledged to curb the Defense Department’s large contribution to greenhouse gas emissions. The Defense Department is the single largest institutional consumer of fossil fuels in the world and emits more greenhouse gas than two-thirds of all the nations on Earth, according to the Pentagon.

Last year, President Joe Biden committed the federal government to producing net-zero emissions by 2050 and reducing emissions by the federal force by 65% by 2027. Army Secretary Christine Wormuth said the new strategy represented a “great blueprint” to describe the service’s contribution to lessening the federal government’s impact on climate.

“The Army, frankly, has been in the lead on this for some time — even if perhaps it’s gone through periods of being less vocal in advertising what it’s doing,” she said hours after the strategy’s release.

The Army intends to reduce its own greenhouse gas emissions 50% by 2030 compared to 2005 levels and achieve net-zero emission by 2050, according to the strategy. It will rely on the move toward electrifying most of the vehicles in its inventory during the coming years, starting with its non-tactical vehicles — such as cars, trucks, vans and buses — and its light tactical vehicles such as the replacement for Humvees — Joint Light Tactical Vehicles.

The service has already taken steps to reduce its reliance on fossil fuels in its non-tactical vehicle fleet. Since the end of 2020, the Army has removed 18,000 gas-powered, non-tactical vehicles from its fleet, and it increased its inventory of hybrid vehicles by some 3,000 during the last three years, according to the strategy. Those changes have slashed Army fuel consumption by some 13 million gallons per year and reduced its greenhouse gas emissions per mile driven by more than 12%, the documents state.

The Army also plans for its fleet of light-duty, non-military vehicles to be fully electric by 2027 and all its non-tactical vehicles by 2035. Starting this year, the Army will begin expanding its charging infrastructure on its about 130 installations, planning to add some 470 chargers in 2022, the strategy said.

Farnan said the Army would work together with manufacturers to bolster electric vehicle research for the service. Battery-powered vehicles are still in their infancy and acceptance by the American public has been slow due to several factors including supply issues and anxiety about their driving range, officials said.

That, in part, is why the Army has a slower timeline to adapt its fighting vehicles to all-electric, Farnan said. The strategy calls for the Army to field purpose-built, hybrid-drive tactical vehicles by 2035 and move to all-electric tactical vehicles by 2050.

He said the Army is already looking at ways to electrify its most powerful vehicles such as tanks and self-propelled artillery, but it will be years before technology advances to fully power them.

“We are going to push hard to get there, but we’re going to be methodical and deliberate as we do to make sure that as we implement these changes, rather than impeding the mission effectiveness of these systems, we’re actually enhancing it,” Farnan said. “The technology development and maturation of this technology is still happening. If we look back 10 years ago, and where EVs were and where we are today, I don’t think anyone sitting in 2010 would have imagined where we’re going with EVs today.”

The strategy also calls for the Army to further bolster its installations against extreme weather by building energy efficient buildings, investing in pollution-free power generation, and building microgrids on every Army post by 2035.

“The Army has already taken steps toward many of those goals, Farnan said, calling the strategy a “significant step forward” more than a “drastic change” for the service. Already the Army has leased thousands of acres to local power utilities for solar farms, and it has long built energy efficient buildings. Building microgrids, he said, could prove challenging at certain locations, but it’s necessary for the Army to ensure its most important systems can run outside of the national grid.

Meanwhile, he said, the Army in 2024 will begin publishing “climate change lessons and best practices” every other year to ensure its soldiers are prepared for whatever environment in which they are asked to train or fight. The strategy calls for soldiers to consider climate change-related risks and threats in all Army “operational and strategic exercises and simulations … by 2028.”

“Everything in this strategy is going to enable our [climate-related] priorities and mission, increase our capabilities for the fighting force and increase the resiliency and protection of our installations,” Farnan said. “It’s going to address the very real threat that is climate change … because in addition to defending our nation on the battlefield, we also need to be good stewards of our environment and our resources here at home.”

Paul Farnan
assistant Army secretary for installations, energy and environment
Girl Scouts see swift cookie sales at Yokota

BY KELLY AGEK
Stars and Stripes
YOKOTA AIR BASE, Japan — The Girl Scouts at this airlift hub in western Tokyo bet that Girl Scout cookies would be in big demand this year, bigger even than last year when they sold out.

But predicting demand during the pandemic has been a dizzying carnival ride. Would COVID-19 restrictions squash sales again this year like they did in 2020? Or would pandemic fatigue again fuel the public’s appetite for something sweet?

As it turns out, 2022 is a bull market for the iconic treats. Earlier this month, on the first weekend the cookies were available, the Yokota Girl Scouts Community sold 1,900 boxes of Tagalongs, Thin Mints, Samoas and four other varieties.

That’s almost halfway to this year’s goal of 3,900 boxes, Tommi Mendoza, an Air Force spouse, scout co-leader and cookie manager said Monday at the Yokota Community Center.

The Yokota community has troops for every grade level, kindergarten through 12th, and consists of 59 girls.

“Last year we did really well with selling out of all our cookies before cookie season was over,” said Mendoza, 30, a native of Santa Paula, Calif. “We decided that adding 10% more to our inventory can help make our supporters happy. We felt comfortable with the decision because we have an awesome supporting community here at Yokota Air Force Base.”

Troop leaders ordered enough to carry them to March, but if the sales pace keeps up, the cookies may be gone in another weekend.

The Girl Scouts will sell cookies inside the community center, just outside the base commissary, until the supply runs out. They go for $5 a box, except S’mores, which cost $6 a box.

But one variety consumers will not find are Adventurefuls, a new cookie so popular that it sold out. It has a brownie base topped with caramel flavored crème and a hint of sea salt.

“They are pretty good,” Mendoza said. “They have a brownie taste, and they are not too chocolatey. But they are so popular that currently the bakers are even out of the cookies and are backlogged with requests for them.”

The sale of Girl Scout cookies, the one fundraiser the organization undertakes each year, powers the local troop. The money provides supplies and equipment to carry them to March, but if the sales pace keeps up, the cookies may be gone in another weekend.

Mendoza said they are so popular, the troop orders four times what they currently have on hand. “Last year we did really well with selling out of all our cookies before cookie season was over,” she said. “It may be gone in another weekend.”

But the Girl Scouts at this airlift hub in western Tokyo bet that Girl Scout cookies would be in big demand this year, bigger even than last year when they sold out.

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Guam USO center reopens in new space at Tumon Bay resort

BY JUAN KING
Stars and Stripes
A line of about 100 people waited for the doors to open at a revamped and relocated USO on Guam, the director of USO operations on the U.S. territory told Stars and Stripes.

The new USO Tumon Bay — one of three USO centers on the island — opened Feb. 5 at Dusit Hotels-Plaza Shopping Center, operations director Leigh Graham wrote in an email.

“We were thrilled that on the first day of opening the new center, there was already a line of service members awaiting the opening of the doors the first morning,” she wrote.

The new, 4,000-square-foot facility includes an internet cafe upgraded with high-speed fiber internet and coffee and snacks supported by In-fusion Coffee & Tea.

For the sports enthusiasts, an added lounge and nearby gaming room feature several big-screen televisions.

Reading areas and stress relieving massage chairs add to a relaxed setting, and a conference room is set aside for private meetings.

USO Tumon Bay, situated for 16 years in the Royal Orchid Hotel, closed Aug. 19 while the center moved to its new location, Graham said.

She declined to say what the relocation cost, but the USO spent more than $60.3 million operating its centers worldwide in 2020, according to its IRS filing for the year.

The USO chose the new location partly because 2,000 service members stay at the Dusit hotel each year, Scott Maskery, USO Pacific regional vice president, said in an October news release announcing the move.

Dusit International is a resort hotel company based in Thailand, according to its website.

The Tumon Bay location is the only off-installation USO on the island. The others are at Naval Base Guam and Andersen Air Force Base.

“It’s a new day at USO Tumon Bay and we are very excited about the new hospitality experience for service members and families,” Graham said.
US, Japan take part in Noble Fusion drill

BY MATTHEW M. BURKE
Stars and Stripes

ABOARD THE USS MIGUEL KEITH, East China Sea — Two Navy MH-60S Seahawks buzzed this expeditionary mobile base as it steamed alongside the USS Green Bay and USS Ashland off Okinawa’s coast.

One of the helicopters paused over the Miguel Keith’s flight deck as a dozen members of the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit fast-roped down. Within several minutes they had scaled and entered the ship’s towering pilothouse, guns pointed at crewmembers in red vests and Russian-style fur hats.

“Show me your hands,” a Marine shouted at the mock enemy.

The raiding party of Marines and Navy SEALs were among the 15,000 U.S. sailors and Marines and another 1,000 members of the Japan Self-Defense Forces who took part in Noble Fusion 2022 earlier this month.

The wide-ranging exercise combined concepts reminiscent of the Marines’ Pacific island-hopping campaigns of World War II, with a 21st century warfighting doctrine that prioritizes fast-moving forces and scattered island bases.

It was the largest exercise of its kind since two amphibious ready groups and two Marine expeditionary units combined in the Indo-Pacific region in 2018, Navy Lt. Cmdr. Sherrie Flippin, a spokeswoman for Task Force 76, told Stars and Stripes.

Noble Fusion included a wide array of maritime strength: the aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln and Carrier Strike Group 7, the 31st and 11th Marine Expeditionary Units, and Expeditionary Strike Group 7 and Amphibious Squadron 1, which joined Abraham Lincoln and Carrier Strike Group 1945, on Okinawa. The ceremony, which was attended by hundreds of Okinawans, took place at the Gokoku Shrine in Oita.

The exercise wasn’t aimed at any particular potential adversary, like China, Expeditionary Strike Group 7 commander Rear Adm. Chris Engdahl said from the Miguel Keith during a break in the action.

Instead, Noble Fusion was meant to demonstrate the ability to mass forces and move quickly as well as strengthen partnerships, he said.

“It’s a message to our allies; it’s a message to the other nations that are in the Indo-Pacific,” Engdahl said. “This is a force that can support you and maintain a free and open Indo-Pacific.”

China may view such a large-scale exercise as provocation but is not likely to retaliate while the Winter Olympics are underway through Feb. 20, Masayuki Tadokoro, a professor of international relations at Keio University, told Stars and Stripes by phone.

The Biden administration has been pressuring China, he said. “If such a large-scale training took place in Okinawa, China would likely think the training is a preparation for Taiwan contingency.”

China would likely think the training is a preparation for Taiwan contingency. The signature-covered flag, brought home from the war by James Ellis Mercer, was returned by his daughter Linda Hahn, 72, of Concord, Calif.

Many Japanese soldiers carried the red and white flags inscribed with names and messages from family and friends for good luck.

The flag was accepted by Yoshinori Goto, 45, of Oita city, the grandson of Keiji Goto, a Japanese Imperial Army soldier who carried the flag and died July 1, 1945, on Okinawa. The ceremony, which Hahn didn’t attend, took place Jan. 16 at the Gokoku Shrine in Oita.

Mercer, a machinist’s mate from Goodland, Kan., served aboard the seaplane tender USS Bering Strait. The warship supported aircraft that rescued dozens of downed airmen and sailors from stricken vessels during the Battle of Okinawa from April to June 1945.

The flag was folded inside an album of war photographs left by Mercer, who died in 2003 at age 83, Hahn said in a telephone interview.

The family knew he served on Okinawa but not many details of his wartime experience.

“He never talked about it,” Hahn said. “I don’t think it was a real happy time for him.”

After the war, Mercer set up a machine shop and worked on heavy vehicles such as forklifts and trucks, she said.

A retired bank employee and mother of six, Hahn said he didn’t talk about it a lot. It was a surprise when the War-Bereaved Families Association contacted them about the flag, she said.

Some Japanese relatives of war dead, citing little or no connection with the original owners, decline to receive returned flags, but Goto had no hesitation accepting it, he said.

The news was “a bolt out of the blue,” he said. “I definitely wanted to receive it.”

The flag includes his father’s name, Shoji Goto, between his grandparents’ names.

“This shows that my father was either born or at least his name was picked when my grandfather went to war,” he said.

The flag’s return gave him a chance to talk about his grandfather with his children.

“I hope people will take an opportunity to think about peace,” Yoshinori Goto said.

Although he had seen a photograph of the flag before receiving it, it felt different touching it, he said. “It tells a story,” he said. “I felt the soul of my grandfather.”

Yoshinori Goto and his wife, Mihoko, accept the flag of his grandfather, Japanese Imperial Army soldier Kesaji Goto, at Gokoku Shrine in Oita prefecture, Japan, on Jan. 16.
MILITARY

‘Space it up’

Space Force to modify USAF blues while waiting for final dress uniform rollout

BY CHAD GARLAND
Stars and Stripes

The Space Force is going for “quick win” with plans to tweak the Air Force blues uniform before eventually rolling out its own service dress outfit, its top enlisted leader said.

Chief Master Sgt. of the Space Force Roger A. Towberman said changes to buttons, name tags and insignia would distinguish members of the newest service, known as Guardians, from those of the Air Force. Both branches fall under the Department of the Air Force.

The goal is to “space it up a little bit,” he said in a video message released internally earlier this month, explaining that officials were ditching plans to introduce a completely new service dress uniform all at once.

For now, “the chassis remains the same,” he said.

The changes will transfer to the Space Force’s final uniform as it works to create its own identity, two years after the service formed to operate and protect the military’s satellite fleet.

Officials previewed a dress uniform prototype at a September conference, which some observers found reminiscent of costumes from science fiction television shows such as “Star Trek.”

The uniform was being redesigned based on feedback from the force and has garnered positive feedback from wear-testers, Towberman said. But he cautioned that a textile shortage could affect when it will be available for purchase.

A fabric shortage led the Air Force and Space Force late in the year to reduce the number of some service uniform items issued to recruits.

Towberman showed off a version of the service’s rank insignia patch to be worn on the camouflage uniform. The patch was expected to go into production soon, with availability possible around May, he said.

While global supply chain issues may be hindering efforts to give the service a distinctive look, some members of the fledgling force have struggled to convince the public the new branch even exists.

One service member’s decision to speak to a reporter anonymously for fear of reprisal prompted a conversation among senior leaders, Towberman said. He reminded them that the service’s ideals include courage.

“We all have to embrace this concept of candor and honesty, and the courage it takes to have real conversations and build on our teams, and built the psychological safety to make that happen,” he said.

The video message was released on internal Space Force web forums, which require a military ID card and passcode for access.

— Chad Garland
Twitter: @chadgarland
chad.garland@stripes.com

Chief Master Sgt. of the Space Force Roger A. Towberman shows off a prototype rank insignia patch to be worn on the Space Force camouflage uniform in a video posted on an Air Force network.

“Space it up”

Navy senior enlisted leader shows off flame-resistant khakis

BY CHAD GARLAND
Stars and Stripes

The Navy’s top enlisted member has been sporting a new khaki working uniform that has spurred a mix of confusion, excitement and apprehension among sailors on social media.

Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy Russell Smith was seen wearing the outfit in photos that were shared on his official Instagram and Facebook accounts.

“What uniform is MCPON wearing?” Instagram user @o.livxxr asked in response to a post, a question echoed in web forums, which require a stipend or paychecks, she said.

It’s meant to be worn on ship and at operational commands ashore in place of flame-resistant coveralls or flight deck pants, she said.

It was patterned after the green camouflage Type III working uniform that became official in late 2019, when the Navy retired the blue camouflage Type I uniform. Dérivé as “blueberries,” that uniform had been banned from wear as a working uniform at sea because they were highly flammable.

The two-piece variant was inspired by sailor feedback after the 2017 release of the improved flame-resistant variant coverall, or IFRV, Hansen said.

The new organizational clothing combines the flame-resistance of the Navy’s coveralls with the “travel flexibility” of the Type III uniform, Smith said in a statement.

The new organizational clothing is expected to go into production late this year, meaning it will be available for purchase.

Hansen said officials were ditching plans for a full transition to the organizational working uniform all at once.

The Space Force story.

“I ask every one of you to get out of your echo chambers and do what you can to share what we’re doing,” he said. “What you do matters to the world, to the nation.”

The video message was released on internal Space Force web forums, which require a military ID card and passcode for access.

— Chad Garland
Twitter: @chadgarland
chad.garland@stripes.com

Chief Master Sgt. of the Space Force Roger A. Towberman wears a new flame-resistant khaki working uniform while visiting a Navy Exchange earlier this month.

Navy senior enlisted leader shows off flame-resistant khakis

BY CHAD GARLAND
Stars and Stripes

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Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy Russell Smith was seen wearing the outfit in photos that were shared on his official Instagram and Facebook accounts.

The Navy chose 40 “ambassadors” at East Coast units to begin wearing it in October to “showcase the new garment and answer sailors’ questions” about it, Hansen said in an email to Stars and Stripes.

Several social media users were asking whether this was yet another uniform sailors would be required to buy. But Hansen said the two-piece set, popularly known as 2POC, is an optional uniform that will be provided at no cost.

“2POC is not an addition or a requirement for sailors’ sea bags, meaning it will not come out of their annual uniform stipend or paychecks,” she said.

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MILITARY

Study: Troops balk at some duty posts over racism fears

BY J.P. LAWRENCE
Stars and Stripes

Military personnel who are minorities or have family members of color can face an agonizing decision when they receive assignments to places where they think they will face racial discrimination, a study commissioned by a military family advocacy group found.

And numerous respondents said that turning down a duty assignment over concerns of how they would be treated had harmed their military careers.

The results of the survey, which polled 2,731 respondents who identified as nonwhite, were published earlier this month. It was designed by Blue Star Families and Syracuse University’s Institute for Veterans and Military Families.

The sample included 303 active-duty troops as well as veterans and military family members who identified as Black, Asian, Latino or Hispanic.

Some 42% of active-duty troops of color said concerns about racism at certain bases and surrounding communities led them to reject assignments there, the report said.

“We have had good people across all branches leave because of negative experiences with either being sent somewhere where they were not safe or did not feel safe, or where they were harassed,” Tonya Murphy, a fellow with Blue Star Families who participated in the study, told Stars and Stripes on Tuesday.

Murphy, who is Black, said she and her Navy submariner husband Scotty, who is white, balked at assignments to bases in southeast Georgia and southwest Tennessee out of fear of racial discrimination being directed at their three sons.

“Are we all in this together, or are we not?” said Steven Price, a Panamanian American who said he faced racism and hate crimes while in the Army in the 1980s, fears that extremism is on the rise.

Tonya Murphy, a fellow with Blue Star Families, said she and her husband balked at assignments to bases in southeast Georgia and southwest Tennessee out of fear of racial discrimination being directed at their three sons.

“You would think because we are members of the military community, and 79% said the military positively influenced their professional growth. But 41% also said they had experienced racial or ethnic discrimination or harassment by their peers at some point in their career.

“What are mining efforts have drawn criticism from U.S. Sen. Tom Cotton, a former Army officer who said diversity campaigns are creating mistrust and not “something that our military needs to constantly obsess about.”

But not talking about the experiences of troops of color and their families won’t make the issues affecting them go away, Murphy said.

“We have to take the conversations from being whispered about in small circles and quiet talks, and they need to be had out loud,” Murphy said. “How are we a more ready force if our service members are worrying about the safety of their families at home?”

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Max D. Lederer Jr., Publisher
Terry Leonard, Editor
Robert H. Reid, Senior Managing Editor
Doreen Wright, Guam Edition Editor
Scott Foley, Revenue Director

CONTACT US

633 3rd Street NW, Suite 500, Washington, D.C. 20001
Editorial: (202) 886-0005
Advertising: (202) 886-0014
Additional information: nripes.com

Twitter: @jplawrence3
lawrence.jp@stripes.com

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