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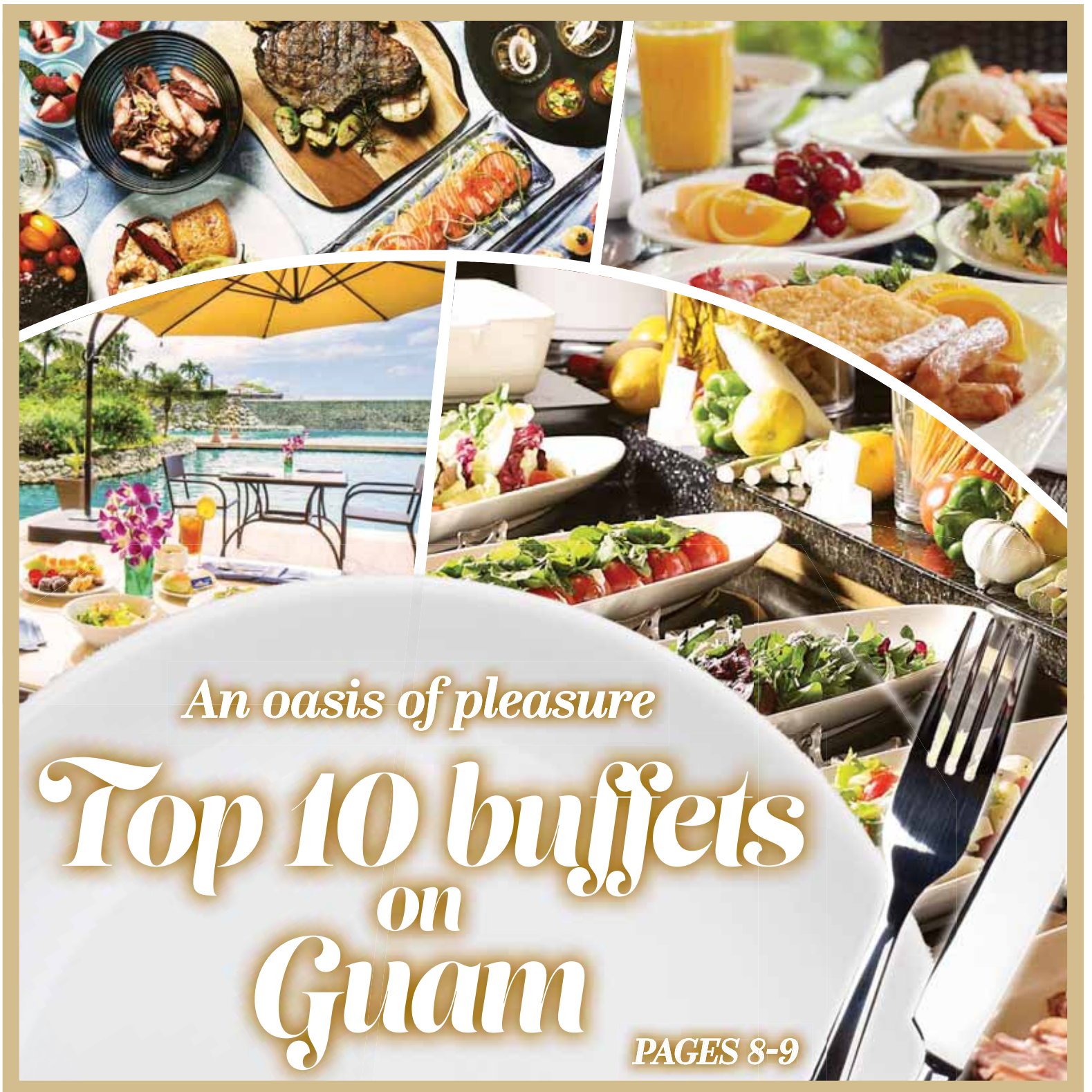
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# In praise of Guam's patron saint

*Editor's Note: Every year on Dec. 8 – an island-wide holiday – Catholics flock to the Dulce Nombre de Maria Cathedral-Basilica to honor Guam's patron saint. No source better chronicles the history and mystery behind this centuries-old phenomenon than Guampedia.*

BY LEO BABAUTA,  
GUAMPEDIA

**S**anta Marian Kamalen, also known as Our Lady of Camarin, is the patron saint of Guam. The 300-year-old Santa Marian Kamalen statue is a revered icon, and although its origins are unknown, they are explained through oral tradition. Every year on December 8, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception is celebrated, and Guam Catholics turn out by the thousands in Hagåtña to honor Santa Marian Kamalen in a procession around the island's capital.

The statue of Santa Marian Kamalen is 28 3/4 inches tall and weighs 48 1/2 pounds. It is made of wood, except for the ivory face and folded hands. She is painted with a regal pink and blue gown and sits high in the Dulce Nombre de Maria Cathedral-Basilica in Hagåtña in a niche in the sanctuary wall behind the altar.

Santa Marian Kamalen's origins are shrouded in legend and she was the subject of front-page headlines when she was stolen from her home in the cathedral on three separate occasions in the last few decades. She is one of the most important icons in Guam's history, religious or otherwise. A longtime effort to place a replica of the statue in the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington D.C. was realized in 2006.

## Legendary origins

The origin of the Santa Marian Kamalen statue has not been documented until recently, but by oral tradition multiple versions of a legend exists about her origin.

According to one version of the legend, a fisherman from Merizo went spear fishing in Babang Bay, between Merizo and Cocos Island, and with astonishment spotted a statue of the Virgin Mary on the ocean floor. He swam underwater to try to approach the statue, but to his surprise it retreated. No matter how hard he tried, he could not close the distance between the statue and himself.

Puzzled, he returned to shore and sought advice from the village priest. The priest told the scantily-clad fisherman to dress in his Sunday clothes and try again. He did so, and this time had no trouble in getting the statue.

Another version of the legend has it that the fisherman saw the statue floating in the water, escorted

by two gold-spotted crabs, each bearing a lighted candle between its claws. She thus also became known as the Lady of the Crabs.

When the fisherman, who was a member of the Dotacion, or native militia, returned to his required two months of active duty in Hagåtña, he took the statue to the Presidio, or main barracks which were still under construction. There the statue was relegated to a tool shed, in Spanish camarín and in Chamorro kamalen. Thus, she became known as Santa Maria del Camarin in Spanish or Santa Marian Kamalen in Chamorro. She was also known as the Lady of the Barracks.

She was then adopted as the Dotacion's patroness and when the Presidio was completed in 1736, placed in its chapel. The Dotacion celebrated the feast day of their patroness on December 8, and this continued until the Dotacion was disbanded in 1884 after several of its members were involved in assassinating the Spanish governor, Don Angel de Pazos Vela-Hidalgo. Santa Marian Kamalen was then placed in the church of Dulce Nombre de Maria, which later became the cathedral.

## Origin speculation

When Father Oscar L. Calvo brought the statue to Manila in 1948 to be refurbished, art connoisseur Maximo Vicente identified the statue's wood as molave, a hard wood native to the Philippines. Vicente determined the statue to be contemporary with the oldest images in the Philippines, such as the Nuestra Senora de Paz y Buen Viaje of Antipolo and Nuestra Senora de Guia in Ermita Church, Greater Manila.

Based on a rusted iron plate found on the bottom of the statue, Calvo speculated that the statue came from a Spanish galleon that sailed between Acapulco, the Philippines, and Guam. Galleon crews, according to custom, gathered before such a statue reciting the litany and singing the Salve Regina. The galleon Nuestra Senora del Pilar sank off the coast of Cocos Island in 1690, before the building of the Presidio.

The legend of the origin of the statue and its name is most commonly accepted by Guam residents. Historian Paul Carano speculated on other possible origins of the name, including one that centers around the statue's probable Philippine origin. He proposes the name could have been related in some way to the names of the provinces of Camarines Norte and Camarines Sur on the island of Luzon in the Philippines.

Carano also said the name might be related to the Spanish word camarín, which means a place behind an altar where images are dressed, and the ornaments destined for that purpose are kept.

## Other Santa Marian Kamalen legends

Numerous other legends exist around the patron saint. Legend has it that when the Spanish militia men were about to retire for the day, if they have indulged in more tuba (fermented coconut palm sap) and aguardiente (high-potency alcoholic beverage) than is prudent, they often fell asleep while saying their prayers or would act immodestly before the statue when drunk. The doors of the niche would slam shut violently, waking the sleepy soldiers so they could finish their prayers.

One of the more famous legends is that of a great earthquake in 1902, when the Dulce Nombre de Maria church was severely damaged. Many of the statues of the church were broken but not that of Our Lady of Camarin, which the pastor, Father José Palomo, found standing intact on the ground.

The statue also survived fire, when on December 8, 1945, it was rescued from a burning float by Jose D. Leon Guerrero.

Because the statue has suffered discolorations, nicks and other minor defects in the course of time, minor repairs have been made. According to one story, during one occasion when repairs were being made, the scraping of her face was too rough, and the face began to bleed.

Other miracles attributed to her include belief in her powers of intercession, cures of dreadful diseases, and safe removal from great danger. She has long been considered by many the protector of the island and its people.

## World War II

One of the more well-known stories about the statue took place when Japan bombed Guam and Pearl Harbor, Hawaii as war broke out between America and Japan during World War II in 1941. Guam was bombed on December 8, the day of the Feast of the Immaculate Conception. Throughout the war, the statue was cared for by a teenager named Mariquita "Tita" Torres (who later became Mariquita Torres Souder), after Father Jesus Baza Duenas, who was beheaded by Japanese soldiers shortly before the U.S. recapture of Guam, took the cathedral's valuables to the Torres family home in Maite.

The Japanese ordered everything returned to the church and followed Duenas to the Torres residence. While there, a soldier asked for the statue standing in the family's living room, but Tita Torres claimed it belonged to the family, not to the church, and that it was only lent to the church on special occasions. Duenas vouched for this and told the officers that it

was not the church's property.

Torres carried the statue to the family ranch near Tiyan when the family was moved from their home. The family also moved the statue to bomb shelters during the numerous bombing raids to preserve her. When the Americans returned to Guam and bombed the capital and surrounding areas, the statue was miraculously saved from destruction.

## Infamous thefts

Santa Marian Kamalen made front page headlines in Guam newspapers when she was stolen in three separate cases. The first case occurred on May 19, 1968, when police conducted a desperate search and residents flocked to the cathedral to view the empty niche and pray for the statue's safe return. Police took fingerprints of the enclosure from which the statue was taken and sent them to Japan for identification along with records of local suspects. The statue was returned and the incident was closed. Bishop Apolinaris Baumgartner wouldn't disclose the details of who returned the statue as he had promised there would be no arrest and the return would be confidential.

Three years later, on May 3, 1971, the statue was stolen for the second time. Church officials asked for it to be returned and again promised that there would be no repercussions and no arrests would be made. After a long search, the statue was returned within two weeks.

On December 28, 1992, the statue was stolen for a third time. Once again, Archbishop Anthony Apuron promised that no criminal action would be taken against the responsible person or people if the statue was returned. The statue was found more than a month later, on Feb. 3, 1993, by a government worker who claimed the sacred statue waved to him. Parks and Recreation worker Juan C. Perez said he was cutting the bushes at about 9:45 a.m. that morning,

near the stone bridge in the Serena park in Hagåtña, when he noticed someone waving at him. It turned out to be Santa Marian Kamalen. It was in good shape but was missing its necklace and crown.

## Hagåtña procession

While processions are held every month to celebrate the patron saints of the various villages, the procession for Guam's patron saint celebrated on December 8 each year is by far the largest.

Beginning mid-afternoon on December 8, large numbers of parishioners from each village church begin to assemble outside the Cathedral-Basilica in Hagåtña. A rosary



Photos courtesy of Guampedia



www.guampedia.com



and novena are said, usually starting at 3:30 p.m., and as the thousands of people gathered cannot fit inside the large cathedral, it is held outside, on the lawn and the streets surrounding the cathedral.

Once the novena is over, the procession starts at 4 p.m., making a loop around Hagåtña along the connecting roads of Archbishop Flores St., West O'Brien Drive, and West Soledad Avenue.

December 8 is a government holiday on Guam.

## Gown and ornaments

The statue of Santa Marian Kamalen has real human hair and two crowns are used to dress the statue. One of the crowns is made from gold pieces given to the church by the late Ana Martinez Underwood, who donated the gold pieces (given to her by her husband as a wedding gift) in



Across the street from the kombento a small park with a marble statue of Santa Marian Kamalen. There is a plaque explaining that according to local legend, the site is where a fisherman from Malesso'/Merizo was fishing in the bay, between Malesso' and Cocos Island, when he spotted a statue of the Virgin Mary being carried by two golden crabs. Photo by George Miller

thanksgiving for the safe return of her husband from prison camp following World War II.

Preparing the statue for the Feast of the Immaculate Concep-

tion on December 8 is an honored job that was held by Mariquita "Tita" Torres Souder for many years after the war. She would comb the long black hair of the

statue, arrange her crown and jewelry and place roses on her carriage. In December 2003, that job was given to her daughter, Laura M. Torres Souder, after Mariquita Souder died in October 2003.

The real Santa Marian Kamalen is used only for the island-wide procession on December 8, and on other occasions a replica is substituted.

## National Shrine project

In 2004, former Senator Pilar Lujan, Guam Regent of the Catholic Daughters of America, working with Archbishop Apuron, began a petition for the inclusion of Santa Marian Kamalen into the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington D.C., which includes more than sixty chapels and oratories with various tributes to Mary from around the world.

In October 2004, Lujan made

a presentation to the Shrine Iconography and Plant and Facilities Committees. Guam was subsequently awarded a spot in the Shrine and was given one year to design, develop and construct a physical representation of Santa Marian Kamalen's story. A Guam-based committee was then formed to develop the project.

The committee raised \$75,000 for construction of the niche, and another \$20,000 for accessories, and Father James Benavente personally raised \$10,000 for the statue itself.

Construction was completed and the ceremony to enshrine a replica of Santa Marian Kamalen at the Basilica took place on September 17, 2006.

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




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Photos courtesy of  
Guam Visitors Bureau

# What to get your loved ones this tropical Christmas

GUAM VISITORS BUREAU

Christmas is on its way and the secret to a smooth holiday experience is to beat the lines and get a head start on your shopping. But then comes the dreaded question: What are good presents to gift our loved ones during one of the happiest times of the year?

Have no fear! One of the greatest things about living on Guam is that there is no shortage of gifts that are local, sustainable, and cost efficient and that will satisfy a wide range of tastes. Check out some of these ideas!

## Local and Sustainable Gifts

Guam’s natural beauty, swaying trees, crisp blue oceans, and verdant foliage have served as an inspiration for much of the sustainable goods produced on the island.

Gift your loved ones with recyclable and sustainable wallets fashioned out of banana paper, made from fiber leftover from a banana fruit harvest. Or if your loved one is a writer, find notebooks made from the same material at various gift shops around

the island and DIY a scrapbook of your favorite memories together.

You also can’t go wrong with gorgeous craft jewelry from Sirena Soul. Find necklaces made of spondylus and puka shells and earrings and bracelets that range from vibrant and electric reds, greens, and oranges to more subdued and elegant pearl whites and pale blues. Made and inspired by the natural

beauty surrounding us, these pieces of art are great for the jewelry lover in your life. Check out their IG page at @sirenasoulguam for more on their collection!

And everyone knows that one gift that you can never go wrong with is sweets! Spread the Hafa Adai spirit and treat your loved ones to the scrumptious and undeniable taste of gourmet coconut candy from The Coconut Tree Company made from fresh, local ingredients. Find them on IG at @thecoconuttreecompany for more information on their location and specials.

## Do-It-Yourself Projects

For those looking for more cost-efficient presents, there’s nothing quite as special as putting good ol’ time and effort into your

gift. Try out some of these DIY projects!

Make a cookbook of delicious CHamoru comfort foods for the chef in your life. Or create a spa kit out of the natural resources surrounding you that all hard working moms deserve! Grab some coconut oil, lye, olive oil, your favorite scents from natural ingredients such as coffee or lavender, and use materials around your house for a homemade soap. Pair it with some lotion and homemade candles for a simple yet heartfelt gift.

Weave a bag, basket, or fan made from pandanus or coconut leaves that reflect your love and Guam’s culture. If you’re not feeling too great about your weaving skills, stop by Chamorro Village on Wednesday nights and choose amongst an array of woven apparel from a variety of talented local vendors.

Don’t forget! Whatever you choose to do this Christmas season, you can never go wrong with quality time. Check out Guam Visitors Bureau’s Shop Guam app free on the app store for great deals and packages on family activities, restaurants, and more!



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An oasis of pleasure

Top 10 buffets on Guam

THE GUAM GUIDE

Guam is a melting point of cultures and a foodie’s paradise, and the food scene reflects that. From CHamoru to Chinese to Indian cuisine, Guam has something to offer for every person to indulge. One of the best ways to sample all that Guam has to offer is at a buffet. Guam’s buffet restaurants are known for their wide variety of international dishes, fresh ingredients, and beautiful dining scenery. You can also expect a truly luxurious dining experience since they are in hotels that will meet your expectations. Here is a list of the top 10 buffets on the island you should definitely check out!



1 | Aqua

International

Nothing is more gratifying than delectable food served with spectacular views of Tumon Bay and the service the Dusit Thani employees provide. At Aqua, unwind while enjoying fine dining and picturesque views of the ocean. For the ultimate indulgence, join them for dinner or Sunday brunch and savor a generous buffet and live culinary stations with free-flowing specials. Reserve a spot on your calendar today to dine at this luxurious restaurant and have a delicious meal with friends, family, or co-workers.

**LOCATION:** Dusit Thani Hotel - 1227 Pale San Vitores Rd, Tamuning  
**PHONE:** 671-648-8000



Photos courtesy of Dusit Thani Guam Resort



2 | Café Kitchen

International

Get ready to discover seasonal and regionally produced foods during Sunday brunch. Then, enjoy expertly crafted delicacies that are made to order. Finish off with a rotating variety of specialty desserts, including the crowd favorite — green tea tiramisu. Favorites from the Café Kitchen include entire fish, tomahawk, porchetta, and smoked certified angus beef.

**LOCATION:** Hyatt Hotel - 1155 Pale San Vitores Rd, Tamuning  
**PHONE:** 671-647-1234



Photos courtesy of Hyatt Corporation



3 | La Seine

International

The Lotte Hotel Guam’s lobby level is where you’ll find this elegant and lavish hotel buffet restaurant, which is aptly named after a well-known river in France. A unique aspect of the restaurant is its open kitchen stations, which will produce delectable meals for everyone. There are countless delicious options available every day. Because of the breathtaking view of Tumon Bay Beach, every eating experience will be different.

\*Contact the restaurant; subject to 10% service charge.

**LOCATION:** Lotte Hotel Guam, 445 Governor Carlos G. Camacho Rd., Tamuning  
**PHONE:** 671-646-6811



Photos courtesy of LOTTE HOTELS & RESORTS

4 | Islander Terrace

International

The Islander Terrace has one of the best buffets on the island. Whether you go there for breakfast, lunch, or dinner, you can choose from a large variety of hot meals, appetizers, bread, soup, salad, and desserts. Additionally, there are also live cooking stations there, which draw a lot of attention from guests. Come and check out the newest “Korean” buffet which treats your taste buds to an unforgettable culinary journey filled with the finest Korean dishes.

**LOCATION:** Hilton Guam Resort, 202 Hilton Road Tumon Bay, Tamuning  
**PHONE:** 671-646-3463



Photos courtesy of Hilton Guam Resort & Spa



5 | Casa Oceano

International

Casa Oceano, which translates to “The Ocean’s house” in Spanish, offers a fun environment for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Prepare to savor a variety of dishes and flavors that are native to Guam as well as international cuisine. The Casa Oceano is a submerged journey into a mysterious underwater environment that was intended to be a “diving experience under the ocean.” The Spanish culture, which influenced Guam’s cuisine, is reflected in patterns and aesthetic elements.

**LOCATION:** The Tsubaki Tower - 241 Gun Beach Rd, Tumon  
**PHONE:** 671-969-5200

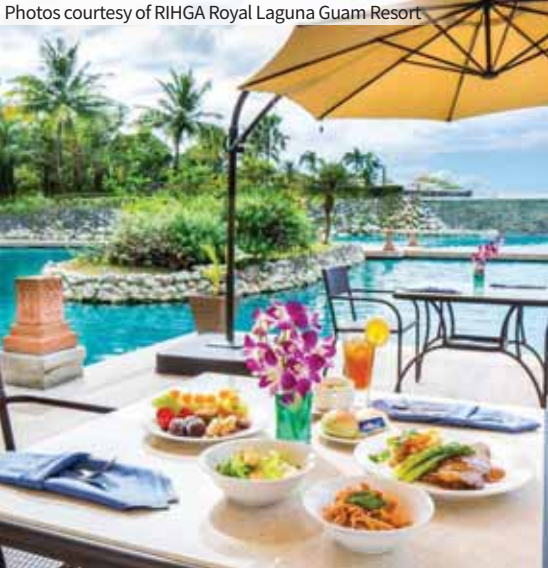


Photos courtesy of The Tsubaki Tower





Photos courtesy of RIHGA Royal Laguna Guam Resort



6| La Cascata

International

Want to spice up your lunch hour with a flavorful Indian buffet experience? How about traditional Filipino food that makes you miss home? You’re at the right spot, then! Greetings from La Cascata! A tropical atmosphere is provided for customers who want to take advantage of the nice weather in Guam at this international eating establishment, which offers a variety of buffets and à la carte menu items. Visit today to enjoy a feast unlike any other.

**LOCATION:** RIHGA Royal Laguna Resort - 470 Fahrenholt Avenue, Tamuning  
**PHONE:** 671-646-2222



Photos courtesy of Guam Plaza Resort

8| Rootz Hill’s Grillhouse

Located in the heart of Tumon, Rootz Hill’s Grillhouse is an open-kitchen concept restaurant where you can watch chefs prepare delectable steaks on a three-tiered robata grill or observe the moving flames as pizza bakes in a copper-tiled pizza oven. Dark walnut furniture is used in the dining room to create a warm, inviting atmosphere that will make you feel cozy. Rootz Hill’s Grillhouse is committed to making your dining experience a pleasure.

**LOCATION:** Guam Plaza Resort, 1328 Pale San Vitores Rd, Tamuning  
**PHONE:** 671-646-7803



10| The Terrace

International

Only the views of the turquoise ocean and tropical gardens are comparable to the cuisine at The Terrace. A tropical breakfast is the best way to start your day on Guam. This breakfast buffet is also among the best on the island and offers a choice of regional and international breakfast delicacies. During lunch and dinner, dive into the Mediterranean-inspired buffet which also features a delicious roast carving station. Particularly when it becomes a restaurant for lunch and supper, this restaurant’s interior décor is trendy. You’ll enjoy The Terrace’s close proximity to the beach, vistas of palm trees, lovely planted gardens, infinity pool, and breathtaking nightly sunsets.

**LOCATION:** Crowne Plaza Resort - 801 Pale San Vitores Rd, Tamuning  
**PHONE:** 671-646-5881



Photos courtesy of Crowne Plaza® Resort Guam

7| Niji

Japanese

Come in and enjoy a variety of your favorite Japanese dishes at the Niji Japanese restaurant, including shabu-shabu, sushi, sashimi, tempura, certified Angus Beef on the teppanyaki grill, and more! You don’t want to miss their mouthwatering dessert menu, which includes their well-known green tea tiramisu.

**LOCATION:** Hyatt Regency Hotel - 1275 Pale San Vitores Rd, Tamuning  
**PHONE:** 671-647-1234



Photos courtesy of Hyatt Corporation



9| Taste

International

TASTE, Guam’s award-winning restaurant, has been rated #1 for Sunday Brunch and #1 for Buffet three years in a row. This well-known eatery offers an all-inclusive international buffet with themed lunch and dinner options that include a fresh garden salad bar along with cold salads and appetizers, a sushi station, desired seafood on ice, hot entrees, and an opulent dessert station. On Mondays, start your week by trying popular Japanese, Korean, and Filipino dishes during lunch. If you’re feeling the “Surf and Turf” vibe, then come check out their delicious steak and lobster options featuring a Louisiana seafood boil on Tuesdays. On Fridays, begin your weekend by indulging in Asian foods from the East and West. End your weekend on a Sunday night with a whole roast pig, some sparkling wine on the side, and live entertainment playing while you enjoy your meal. Let the tantalizing aroma from the live cooking stations and Taste’s welcoming atmosphere transform your meal into an engaging dining experience.

**LOCATION:** The Westin Resort, 105 Gun Beach Road, Tamuning  
**PHONE:** 671-647-0911



Photos courtesy of Marriott International, Inc.





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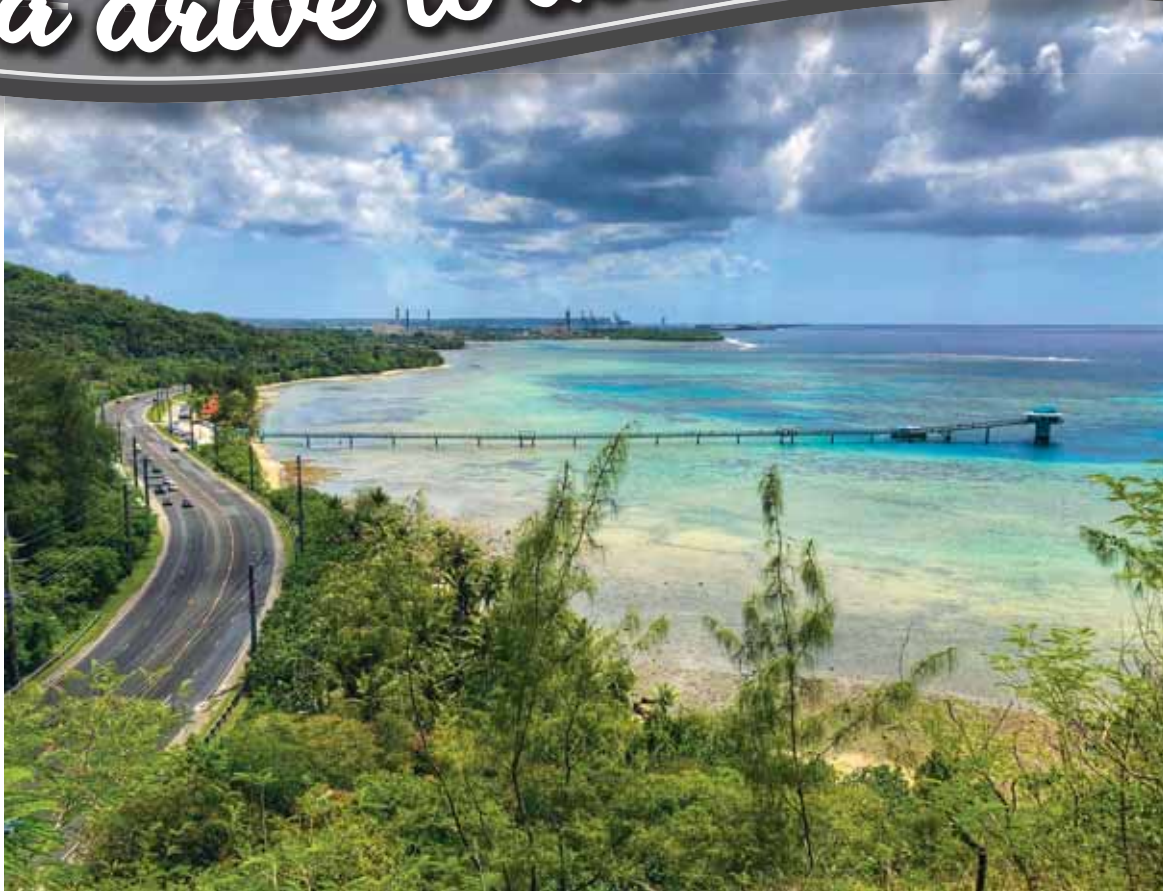
# Take a drive to these destinations

GUAM VISITORS BUREAU

**W**hen it comes to travel, if you feel that the journey is just as important as the destination, then Guam is the perfect destination for you. Named “Best Overseas Self-Driving Tour Destination” by Ctrip, China’s leading online travel agency, Guam was selected for its stunning coastal routes and serene driving experience.

Being on your own gives you the freedom to explore the island at your own pace, the flexibility to visit the areas and sites that interest you, and a drive that takes you away from busy urban villages to wide coastal lanes that cut through shifting, breezy landscapes.

Ready to hit the open road? It’s hard to choose a favorite but here are some sites around the island that you shouldn’t miss.



 **Like the landscapes, renting a car in Guam is a breeze**

Requirements may vary between car rental companies but basic requirements include a driver’s license in the visitor’s home country and a passport. An international driving permit is not required. Some car rental companies have a minimum age to rent a car such as 21 years or older, and might also require a deposit and credit card.

 **Slow down and go with the flow**

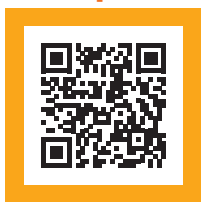
We want you to have an unforgettable – and safe – holiday in Guam. To get the most out of your around-the-island road trip, plan your route ahead of time and remember that driving is on the right-hand side of the road. Seat belts are required by law and it is against the law in Guam to talk or text on a mobile phone while driving without a hands-free device.

It is also important to mind traffic signs and signals. According to Richard Kuntz from Blake’s Car Rental Guam, one of the most common mistakes is obeying the traffic lines and signs. “Be careful and please obey the traffic laws. Enjoy your time on Guam and get lost in the beauty and splendor of Guam. I have seen too many times a family will come to Guam, stay four days and not even go around the island one time. It’s so sad,” said Kuntz.

 **Plaza de España**

Plaza de España served as the center of cultural, religious, and government activities for centuries.

In the 1660s, the Spanish colonial government chose this site as the Plaza Principal. Historic sites here include the Azotea, the last remaining structural element of the Governor’s Palace; the Almacén Arches, Guam’s signature triple arches that were once the entrance of the royal warehouse built in 1736; and the Chocolate House, the small round building that was used by both the Spanish and American administrations to host meriendas where beverages and pastries were served. While you’re in Hagåtña, take some time to explore the Heritage Walking Trail that connects 17 historical sites and brings to life the resilient and fascinating history of the Chamorro people.



 **Cetti Bay Overlook and Fort Nuestra Señora de la Soledad**

The village of Umatac is located on the southwestern coast of the island and is home to some of Guam’s most visited scenic and historical sites including the Cetti Bay overlook and Fort Nuestra Señora de la Soledad, or Fort Soledad. “Umatac” is derived from the Chamorro word “uma,” which means to carry something on the back or a heavy load on the shoulders. Umatac is the smallest and the second oldest Guam village, and Umatac Bay is believed to be the site where explorer Ferdinand Magellan made first contact with Guam on March 6, 1521. There are a number of historical sites to see in Umatac and many of them can be explored by walking along the quiet streets of the village.



 **Historic Inarajan**

Considered Guam’s oldest and best-preserved village from the Spanish era. Inarajan’s history predates the island’s discovery by Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan in 1521, and has been listed on the National Register of Historic Places since 1977. There are 17 National Register of Historic sites in Inarajan, and many can be explored on foot. As you further along the coast, look out for the “Bear Rock” sitting on the edge of Agfayan Bay and stop to take a dip in Salagula Pool, a set of natural seawater pools that is a popular spot for swimming and relaxing.



doubt one of Guam’s most iconic sites. Every year, hundreds of thousands of visitors are drawn to the towering cliff that is the site of one of Guam’s most renowned and romantic legends. The site features tiered lookout points that offer a dramatic view of the Philippine Sea and breathtaking Tumon Bay. From the top, it is a 400-foot drop to the crashing waves below. Visitors can walk the plunging face of the cliff on walkways that hug and hang over the jagged rock. There are also telescopes for long range views of the ocean and Guam’s western coastline.



 **Two Lovers Point**

Two Lovers Point, or Puntan Dos Amantes, is without a






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GUAM VISITORS BUREAU

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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13

Guam International Dance Festival

**DATES:** Dec. 6-7  
**LOCATION:** Pleasure Island, Tumon  
The Guam International Dance Festival is a showcase and competition that brings together dancers around the world to celebrate cultural heritage, creative expression, and artistic excellence.



**THE FESTIVAL FEATURES TWO PRIMARY DIVISIONS:**  
- Cultural Dance  
- Contemporary Dance

Jingle Bell 2K/5K Run

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

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



REGISTRATION

The Fresku Music Festival

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

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

G.A.I.N. Pet of the Week



Nerissa

Meet Nerissa, a 9-week-old torbie beauty with just the right mix of sass and sweetness. She's full of kitten confidence, always the first to investigate a new toy or climb to the highest perch. Between playtime adventures, Nerissa melts into your arms with her soft purr and gentle eyes. She's the perfect blend of bold and loving—ready to fill your home with energy, cuddles, and a little bit of mischief.

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



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Pirates of the Pacific

**RECURRENCE:** Weekly (Closed Wednesdays)  
**LOCATION:** Pacific Island Club Guam  
**TIME:** 6 p.m.  
**PIC IN-HOUSE GUESTS:** Visit the Guest Services Counter.  
**GENERAL ADMISSION:** Call 1-671-646-9171 to reserve your tickets.  
**DRESS CODE:** Resort Casual—comfortable and island-appropriate. No swimwear or bare feet.



This isn't your typical island show. It's a brand-new, live-action dinner spectacle that blends a pirate vs. treasure ship narrative with an authentic island twist. The fates of islanders, sailors, and unruly pirates intertwine in a high-energy spectacle of daring stunts, cultural charm, and humor. Get ready for a one-of-a-kind, action-packed adventure the whole family will love!

Your ticket includes a delicious dining experience! Dinner is served buffet-style featuring Island Cuisine, appetizers, salad, and dessert, plus a plated entrée. With group seating available and a capacity of 400 guests, bring the whole crew!

Wednesday Night Market

**RECURRENCE:** Recurring weekly on Wednesday  
**LOCATION:** Chamorro Village  
**TIME:** 5:30 - 9:30 p.m.



The Chamorro Village is open every day of the week but is best known for its Wednesday Night Market. It is not uncommon to notice the smell of barbecue as you walk through Spanish influenced buildings that lead you to a center court where people of all ages dance the night away. You can also find farmers displaying local produce grown under their care and local dance groups entertaining the crowd. Fresh fruit juices are usually available to quench your thirst after a long, hot day. In addition, carabao rides and other cultural activities are simply a few steps away. The Chamorro Village is also ideally located near the Hagatna Marina, Paseo de Susanna and across the street from Skinner Plaza and the Guam Museum.

With a mission to maintain a place that encourages and promotes made on Guam products and small businesses, the Chamorro Village is the perfect place for visitors to experience being part of the island's extended family. It is also a hub for the local community that perpetuates Guam's culture and traditions.

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# Boonie Stomps Guam

INFORMATION PROVIDED BY  
GUAM BOONIE STOMPERS



Sinisa Falls

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

Every Saturday, Guam Boonie Stompers offers public hikes to a variety of destinations such as beaches, snorkeling sites, waterfalls, mountains, caves, latte sites, and World War II sites. We meet at the trailhead on Saturdays at 9 AM. Directions to the trailhead will be posted on the Guam Boonie Stompers Inc Facebook page. The cost is \$5.00 for hikers over 13. Children must be accompanied by a responsible adult. Hike fees for active military and veterans are covered by Adaptive Adventures. Hikers should provide their own transportation. Guam's trails are not developed. Weather conditions can make the hikes more difficult than described. No reservations required.

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



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

## SCHEDULE 2025

Nov. 29 (Sat.)	Tarzan Swim Hole (Medium)
Dec. 6 (Sat.)	Maguagua Falls (Medium)
Dec. 13 (Sat.)	Sinisa Falls and Lower Sigua (Very Difficult)
Dec. 20 (Sat.)	Sella Bay- Annual Christmas Hike (Medium)
Dec. 27 (Sat.)	Priest Pools (Easy) with option to Finacresta (Mt. Schroeder) (Difficult)



**FOR EVERYONE'S SAFETY:**  
No Pets Allowed  
No Drones Allowed

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

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## Crossword

by Margie E. Burke

### ACROSS

1 "Bohemian Rhapsody" addressee

5 Brusque

9 \_\_\_ in a blue moon

13 Desktop symbols

15 Come from \_\_\_

16 Actress Miles

17 "Tootsie" Oscar winner

18 Scented splash

20 Compared

22 Cheer up

23 Mystery writer \_\_\_ Jackson Braun

25 Jockey's wear

26 Unerasable, as ink

29 "Happy Gilmore" prop

30 Sets free

31 Places a value on

35 Barrister's field

36 "Steppenwolf" writer Hermann

38 Fertility clinic supply

39 Boating hazard

42 Main ideas

45 \_\_\_ Paulo, Brazil

46 Clips and clasps

48 Out of bed

50 Keys in, as data

51 Sara Gilbert role

53 Marked down

57 Needless

59 Whittle away

60 Finger jab

61 Delight

62 Avoid cancellation

63 Ocho minus cinco

64 Escape slowly

65 Disavow

### DOWN

1 Grain grinder

2 Exotic berry

3 Jazz great

4 Part of U.C.L.A.

5 "Bodak Yellow" rapper

6 Roswell craft

7 Undue haste

8 Grove growth

9 Egg-making organs

10 Annoying

11 Battle \_\_\_, Michigan

12 Brings in

14 Declining, in a way

19 Fritter away

21 Actress Cuthbert of "The Ranch"

24 Nome native

26 Woes

27 U.S. weather agcy.

28 Piston movement

32 Sofa's cousin

33 Who follower

### Answers to Previous Crossword:

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

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## Stripes Sports Trivia

This amazing Pittsburgh Penguins great was appropriately nicknamed after a famous video game character.

**Answer** Mario Lemieux

## SUDOKU

Difficulty: Easy

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

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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:

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

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# STARS AND STRIPES®

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**GUAM EDITION**

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NOVEMBER 24, 2025

## Black Hawk drone

Soldier flies drone  
Black Hawk from  
tablet for first  
time **Page 2**

National Guard soldiers secure an external load beneath the Sikorsky OPV Black Hawk as it maintains a steady autonomous hover during Northern Strike in Michigan.

Sikorsky



## COVER STORY

# Black Hawk flies as drone in first test

By COREY DICKSTEIN  
*Stars and Stripes*

It took less than an hour for an enlisted Army National Guard soldier with no past aviation experience to train to fly a Black Hawk helicopter during a training exercise this summer, according to utility chopper's manufacturer.

But the sergeant first class was not in the cockpit. Instead, he flew the aircraft remotely using a tablet in the U.S. Army and Black Hawk-maker Sikorsky's first real-world, soldier-run test of its optionally piloted Black Hawk helicopter, the company announced in a news release this month.

The training occurred in August as part of the National Guard's Northern Strike exercise in Michigan, during which some 7,500 Guard forces from 36 states trained for two weeks with the latest military tech including drones and electronic warfare capabilities, according to the National Guard.

During that exercise, the non-commissioned officer — who was not named publicly — flew the optionally manned Black Hawk, or OPV Black Hawk, from the deck of a Coast Guard vessel on Lake Huron, according to Sikorsky.

Using the tablet, the soldier instructed the helicopter to perform "racetrack patterns" over the lake while soldiers inside the OPV Black Hawk performed resupply parachute drops some 70 miles away.

It marked the first time Sikorsky's OPV Black Hawk conducted a mission entirely planned and controlled by soldiers.

Sikorsky — which is owned by weapons giant Lockheed Martin — has spent most of the past decade developing the optionally piloted Black Hawk program with the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, or DARPA.



Sikorsky

**A National Guard soldier uses a tablet to command the Sikorsky OPV Black Hawk to autonomously transport a 2,900-pound water buffalo sling load for the first time during the Northern Strike exercise in Michigan in August.**

The advanced, semi-autonomous helicopter is meant to give the Army options to fly it with an in-cockpit pilot when the mission calls for it or to fly it remotely in situations that could prove especially dangerous — like when enemy contact is likely, officials have said.

"An optionally piloted Black Hawk aircraft can reduce pilot workload in a challenging environment or complete a resupply mission without humans on board," Rich Benton, Sikorsky's vice president and general manager, said in a statement. "In contested logistics situations, a Black Hawk operating as a large drone offers commanders greater resilience and flexibility to get

resources to the point of need."

Sikorsky's UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters have been an Army staple since the 1970s.

The helicopters shuttle troops and supplies around battlefields and military posts across the globe and conduct the Army's air medevac mission. The service expects Black Hawks to fly into the 2070s.

But as the Army faces potential conflict with a near-peer power like China or Russia, service leaders want to be able to conduct operations with as few American forces on the front lines as possible.

Sikorsky — like other big and small defense manufacturers — has spent recent years focused on

building unmanned systems loaded with autonomous and artificial intelligence capabilities, like its MATRIX autonomy system on the unpiloted Black Hawk.

Sikorsky first flew the OPV Black Hawk in 2022. The company is also working on a fully unmanned version of the Black Hawk, which it has nicknamed the U-Hawk, according to the company.

During Northern Strike, the optionally manned Black Hawk hit a series of additional firsts after the parachute drop planned by soldiers on the Coast Guard boat.

On another mission, the OPV Black Hawk completed its "first

ever autonomous hookup of an external load while airborne," according to Sikorsky. The helicopter hovered over a group of soldiers who attached a 2,900-pound water buffalo tank to be sling loaded elsewhere.

In a third exercise at Northern Strike, the optionally manned Black Hawk completed six autonomous hovering hookups to transport High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems, or HIMARS, to other locations during the training, according to Sikorsky.

A soldier then operated the helicopter remotely to conduct a simulated medevac mission, another first, the company said.

dickstein.corey@stripes.com

## Army wants faster drone production, anti-drone lasers

By GARY WARNER  
*Stars and Stripes*

The U.S. Army wants to speed up drone procurement while also developing laser weapons to shoot down enemy unmanned vehicles.

A "Request for Information" from the Army seeks ideas for using High-Energy Laser (HEL) weapons to bring down swarms of drones that could be used on future battlefields.

The request, the first step in gauging developer interest in developing the technologies, came as Defense Secretary Pete

Hegseth and Army Secretary Dan Driscoll urged a new acquisition system to speed weapons to soldiers.

Hegseth on Nov. 7 told an audience of senior executives from large defense industry and technology companies at National War College at Fort McNair in Washington, D.C., that they needed to focus on "speed and volume" or they "will fade away."

The Army plans to buy at least a million drones in the next two or three years, with millions more purchased each year in the near future, Driscoll told Reuters

in an interview from the Joint Center of Excellence for Guns and Ammunition at Picatinny Arsenal in New Jersey.

"It is a big lift. But it is a lift we're very capable of doing," Driscoll said.

The Army is looking to accelerate its anti-drone abilities by calling on industry to submit concepts for high-energy laser weapons to shoot down enemy reconnaissance and attack drones on the battlefield.

Among the requirements are that the systems be transportable by C-17 Globemaster III cargo

aircraft operated by the U.S. Air Force, be mountable on Joint Light Tactical Vehicles and be used to protect "semi-fixed" and maneuvering forces.

A formal "Request for Information" has been issued on the government's procurement website. Responses were due by Nov. 21, with possible product testing during two sessions at Dugway Proving Ground in Utah in December and January.

The Army's Rapid Capabilities and Critical Technologies Office said it is seeking up to 20 systems using enduring high-energy

lasers that could be adapted for a modular launcher defending American ground forces.

If the Army finds sufficient industry interest, it plans to award contracts as early as the end of 2026.

Though the request for information does not guarantee that the Army will move forward with projects, it underscores the service's sense of urgency regarding anti-drone equipment and tactics outlined in September by Driscoll.

warnar.gary@stripes.com



## MILITARY



Photos by Amblin Entertainment

The series “Marines,” which takes a behind-the-scenes look at the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit, premiered on Netflix on Nov. 10.

# Netflix puts focus on Okinawa Marines

## Rapid-response task force shown in 4-part series

By BRIAN MCELHINEY  
*Stars and Stripes*

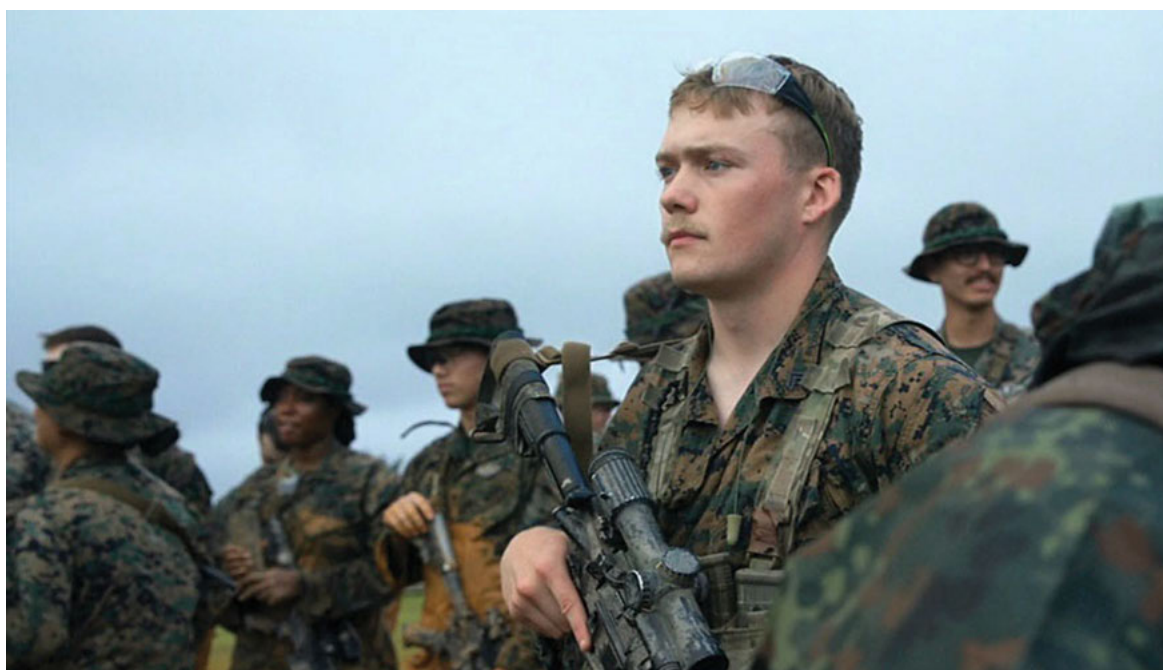
Netflix has unveiled another series about the Marine Corps, this time a four-part documentary about a rapid-response task force on Okinawa.

“Marines” premiered Nov. 10 — the service’s 250th birthday — on the streaming service in the United States. Its story focuses on the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit based at Camp Hansen.

A film crew embedded with the unit for three months in summer 2024 during its pre-deployment certification exercise and patrol, Marine entertainment and media liaison Maj. Hector Alejandro said by email.

Filming locations included Okinawa, the South China Sea, and aboard the amphibious assault ship USS America and amphibious transport dock USS Green Bay.

“This was a great opportunity to show America what our Marines do every day,” 31st MEU commander Col. Chris Niedziocha said in a quote relayed by Alejandro. “The film crews had access to anything they



“Marines” was filmed on Okinawa, in the South China Sea, and aboard the amphibious assault ship USS America and amphibious transport dock USS Green Bay.

wanted and saw just about everything we do during a patrol. I think it’s obvious from the series the incredible level of commitment our Marines have and just how ready to fight we are and the vital role we play ensuring stability in the Indo-Pacific region.”

Netflix describes “Marines” as a “coming-of-age docuseries.” Nine Marines and one U.S. Navy sailor, ranging from junior enlisted to senior leaders, are featured in the documentary,

Alejandro said. They include machine gunners, scout snipers, F-35B Lightning II pilots and UH-1Y Venom helicopter pilots.

“This series is a chance for families, friends, and the American public to gain a much deeper understanding of the service and sacrifice involved in being part of America’s forward-deployed crisis response force,” he said.

“Marines” will be the second series aired this fall by Netflix about the sea service. The com-

edy-drama “Boots,” about a gay recruit, debuted Oct. 9. It’s based on Marine veteran Greg Cope White’s memoir, “The Pink Marine.”

“Marines” director Chelsea Yarnell has worked on Netflix documentaries “Cheer” and “America’s Sweethearts: Dallas Cowboys Cheerleaders.”

Production company Amblin Entertainment, led by director Steven Spielberg, also produced the World War II-set series “Masters of the Air” and “Band

“The film crews had access to anything they wanted and saw just about everything we do during a patrol.”

Col. Chris Niedziocha  
31st MEU commander

of Brothers.”

Journalist and documentarian Sebastian Junger, known for codirecting the 2010 Afghanistan War documentary “Restrepo,” serves as an executive producer on “Marines.”

The 31st is one of seven Marine Expeditionary Units, each consisting of about 2,200 Marines and sailors embarked aboard amphibious warships, according to its website.

It features a combination of air, ground and support elements, and is designed to quickly respond in combat and non-combat crisis situations including humanitarian assistance and evacuation operations.

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## MILITARY

# Maintaining memories of the fallen

Pair part of effort to repair tributes to WWI soldiers

By PHILLIP WALTER  
WELLMAN

*Stars and Stripes*

CHAUMONT-DEVANT-DAM-VILLERS, France — From a hilltop overlooking miles of farmland, American retiree Eric Mueller stood beside a stone monument and pointed to a spot in the valley below where the last U.S. soldier killed in World War I is thought to have fallen.

A former Michigan Air National Guard lieutenant, Mueller has traveled to northeastern France twice a year for nearly a decade, logging the GPS coordinates of trench lines, bunkers and other wartime sites for a digital mapping project.

But while scouring old battlefields, he became troubled by something he never set out to find: monuments to American military units and soldiers weathered by age and suffering from neglect.

At the hilltop monument in the Meuse region, an inscription about the Army's 79th Infantry Division and Sgt. Henry Gunther, the aforementioned soldier, was barely legible and cracks ran through a panel embedded in the stone.

"It bothers me that their sacrifices were recognized by these monuments and then forgotten," Mueller said. "These guys deserve better."

So in 2019, he teamed up with Dutch historian and author Maarten Otte, whose research focuses on U.S. involvement in World War I. Since then, the two have taken it upon themselves to care for some of the more than 140 American memorials Otte says are scattered across the area north of Verdun, where the U.S.-led Meuse-Argonne Offensive occurred in late 1918.

Throughout western Europe, thousands of small, privately funded memorials stand at sites where Americans fought and died during the world wars. As the 107th anniversary of World War I's end was marked Nov. 11, maintaining many of them has never been more difficult.

One of the primary challenges is the disappearance or death of the organizations or people originally responsible for the monuments. In such cases, towns and various associations sometimes step in to help with maintenance.

But in sparsely populated areas of northeastern France — where American memorials stand among numerous French



PHOTOS BY PHILLIP WALTER WELLMAN/Stars and Stripes

**Eric Mueller, left, and Maarten Otte hoist an American flag back onto the Henry Gunther memorial in Chaumont-Devant-Damvillers, France, after repairing the flagpole, on Nov. 6.**



**Mueller, left, and Otte repair a flagpole at the monument to Gunther, believed to be the last American killed during World War I, on Nov. 6.**

and other Allied monuments from both world wars, as well as older ones from the Franco-Prussian War — resources are limited.

Otte, who lives in the region, routinely checks on the condition of the monuments. When Mueller returns for his visits, the pair tend to those that need attention.

They replace worn-out American flags with ones Mueller brings from the U.S. and do light cleaning and restoration work. Occasionally, they hire professionals to remove heavy moss and lichen buildup.

"We always do this before

November 11, when more Americans visit the area," Otte said, referring to what is observed as Armistice Day in Europe and Veterans Day in the United States.

## Locations with less allure

While the Meuse-Argonne region welcomes a steady stream of visitors each year, it's hardly a tourist hot spot.

In Normandy, by contrast, World War II tourism helps sustain the regional economy, so officials make sure monuments and cemeteries are kept in pristine condition.

urged the creation of a national body to oversee America's overseas commemorations.

Congress responded in 1923 by creating the American Battle Monuments Commission, appointing Pershing as its first chairman. But the agency's responsibility does not extend to most privately funded monuments.

Only about three dozen have been accepted into the commission's Private Memorials Program, through which the agency is paid to ensure that contractors maintain sites on behalf of the groups that own them.

## Stirring hearts and minds

For Americans and Europeans today who have never experienced the realities of war firsthand, smaller monuments can be especially effective because they often convey more personal details, said Ann Rigney, a former professor of comparative literature at Utrecht University in the Netherlands.

She specializes in cultural memory and the ways societies commemorate the past.

"Sometimes you need these very shocking small little details to bring home in a new way the awfulness of war ... rather than being something you ritualistically yawn at when November 11 comes around," Rigney said.

Another American who understands the impact of such monuments and shares the sense of urgency to preserve them is Lilian Pfluke, a retired U.S. Army major who formerly ran the Private Memorials Program.

During her decadelong tenure beginning in the 1990s, Pfluke often heard from people concerned about neglected American war monuments that fell outside the agency's authority.

The steady stream of complaints inspired her to establish the nonprofit American War Memorials Overseas in 2008.

The organization documents, promotes and helps preserve smaller, privately built military memorials honoring Americans around the world, often encouraging local groups to act and assist with fundraising. Its database now includes more than 4,600 sites.

"We don't have troops in France anymore," said Pfluke, who lives in Avignon. "Our monuments and cemeteries are our strategic presence here. They show what America has done, reflect our alliance with France and preserve the legacy of our cooperation during the world wars."

## "These guys deserve better."

Eric Mueller

Ex-Michigan Air National Guard

The Normandy American Cemetery alone welcomes more than a million visitors each year. The Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery, which holds the graves of more than 14,200 Americans and is the largest cemetery of its kind in Europe, receives only about 15,000 annual visitors, staffers said.

The Meuse-Argonne Offensive, a 47-day campaign that helped bring World War I to an end, remains the largest and deadliest battle in U.S. military history.

When fighting finished, American units, veterans groups and families independently built hundreds of memorials on European soil to honor fallen soldiers and commemorate military milestones.

But as Gen. John J. Pershing, commander of the American Expeditionary Forces, toured the Continent in the early 1920s, he noticed that many of these tributes lacked coordination and upkeep. Concerned that they might deteriorate and reflect poorly on the United States, he

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## MILITARY

# 80 years ago, US planned invasion of Japan

## Operation Downfall was set to launch in November 1945

By GARY WARNER  
*Stars and Stripes*

There are no rows of white crosses along the Satsuma Peninsula or victory memorials dotting Kagoshima Bay. No markers at beaches on Kyushu bearing names of American car brands — Buick, Cadillac, Stutz, Zephyr. And no aging veterans gather with military and political leaders to recall the grinding battle that would have brought 100,000 troops ashore.

More than 14 U.S. Army and Marine divisions never landed on X-Day of Operation Downfall, the planned invasion of Japan to end World War II.

None of it happened because of two shattering flashes of light and heat: the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945. More than 150,000 Japanese citizens died from the blast and radiation; some estimates say the toll is nearly twice that.

Japan announced its surrender on Aug. 15, 1945, and it was made official on Sept. 2, 1945, aboard the battleship USS Missouri in Tokyo Bay.

The invasion scheduled for November 1945 — 80 years ago this month — became just old maps and battle plans to file away, relics of an extended war that never was.

How much longer and more deadly is still debated. The invasion would have meant millions more Americans serving in the war, marching afterward on Veterans Day. Thousands more would be mourned on Memorial Day.

“I think an invasion would have been incredibly bloody and awful,” said historian Jonathan Parshall during a webinar in September hosted by the National World War II Museum in New Orleans. “American casualties would be horrific. Millions of Japanese civilians would have died. It would have been an absolute bloodbath.”

Guadalcanal, North Africa, Italy, Tarawa, Saipan, D-Day, Battle of the Bulge, Iwo Jima and Okinawa were all preludes to final victory. Italy and Germany were defeated. But Japan still held a massive swath of Asia and the Pacific.

Until mid-1945, U.S. planners expected the war to continue well into 1946.

The Pentagon estimated it needed 900,000 replacement troops — 600,000 for the Army and Army Air Forces, 300,000 for



U.S. Navy

**President Franklin D. Roosevelt, Adm. William D. Leahy and Adm. Chester W. Nimitz, standing, discuss strategy against Japan during a July 1944 meeting in Honolulu.**

the Navy and Marines.

Norman Polmar, co-author of “Code-Name Downfall,” about the plans for the invasion, said American military leaders had to deal with an enemy that increasingly used suicide as a strategy.

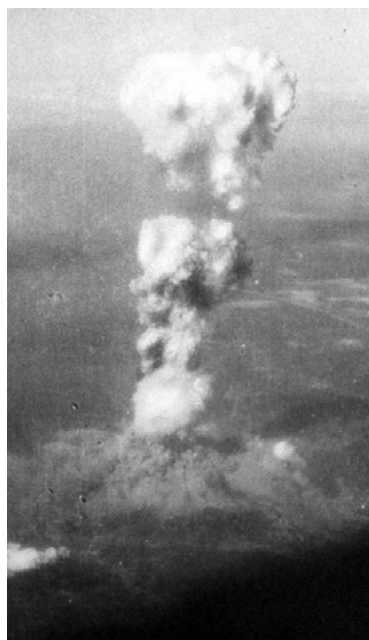
“Beginning with the American invasion to take back the Philippines in 1944, the Japanese employed a large number of kamikaze aircraft to sink ships and kill large numbers of Americans. The threat was unexpected and difficult to counter,” he said.

As the invasion’s time frame approached, American planners were factoring in higher casualty numbers.

“Kamikaze planes, kamikaze small craft, kamikaze submarines, even kamikaze civilians with explosives or just spears,” Polmar said. “Kill as many Americans as possible, no matter the cost to them.”

Downfall had two phases. Operation Olympic would launch from Okinawa to invade Kyushu in November 1945. Operation Coronet in March 1946 would invade the central island of Honshu and push across the Kanto Plain to capture Tokyo.

In the initial phase, 250,000 American troops supported by land and carrier-based aircraft would face 700,000 Japanese defenders on Kyushu. The U.S. Army’s 25th and 33rd Divisions would land at Miyasaki; the 1st Cavalry and 43rd Divisions at Ariake Bay. The 2nd, 3rd and 5th



Library of Congress Archives

**This photograph discovered by Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum officials at the Library of Congress in 2016 is believed to have been taken from the B-29 bomber Enola Gay after it dropped the world’s first atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Japan, on Aug. 6, 1945.**

Marine Divisions would target Kagoshima. The 18 landing beaches all were to be named after American car brands.

By Thanksgiving, 816,000 Americans would be on Kyushu.

Occupying the southern portion of the island would allow Americans to use captured airfields and build new ones. Round-the-clock bombing raids

“crouching dragon” — divers trained to swim at landing craft with contact mines.

Civilians were urged to become “100 million shields of the Emperor.” Official propaganda urged the Japanese that death was preferable to defeat and capture.

The second phase of the invasion, Operation Coronet, would be launched on Y-Day in March. Eight Army divisions, including two armored, would land at Sagami Bay near Kamakura and push past Yokohama. Three Army and three Marine divisions — including the 1st, 4th and 6th — would land at the Boso Peninsula and move east toward Tokyo.

Planners expected to have 1.17 million American and allied troops on Honshu within 60 days. For the first time in the Pacific, the flat expanse of the Kanto Plain leading to Tokyo would allow for the use of armored divisions for the final drive on the imperial capital.

Even when told of the atomic bomb that had been detonated in July at Alamogordo, N.M., many American planners did not expect the nuclear bomb would push Japan into surrender.

“In my opinion, there should not be the slightest thought of changing the Olympic Operation,” Gen. Douglas MacArthur said.

After the bombs devastated Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the invasion plans became moot. Emperor Hirohito spoke on the radio — his voice heard by citizens for the first time — to announce surrender.

Estimates of the cost in lives of invading Japan remain controversial. MacArthur thought American casualties would be about 23,000.

Maj. Gen. Charles Willoughby projected 200,000 casualties on Kyushu, and 510,000 more to capture the rest of Japan — 400,000 for Honshu alone.

Former President Herbert Hoover, asked by President Harry Truman to draft post-war plans, estimated up to 1 million Americans dead and wounded.

“Half a million American casualties is realistic,” Polmar said. “Millions of Japanese, military and civilian, would die.”

One grim calculation: The U.S. had built up a stockpile of nearly 500,000 Purple Hearts, the medal given to those wounded and the families of those killed. The post-World War II surplus meant there were enough in warehouses run by the Defense Supply Center to last through Korea, Vietnam, the Cold War, Grenada, Panama, the Gulf War and more minor conflicts. New medals weren’t pressed until 1999, during U.S. operations in Kosovo.



U.S. Marine Corps

**A U.S. Marine rifleman advances during the battle for Okinawa, in April 1945.**

would use both heavy bombers against cities and factories, and tactical aircraft would harass rail lines, command posts and communications centers.

Japan was preparing desperate defenses under Operation Ketsugo, or “Final Battle.” Troops would face fanatical resistance.

Japan planned to replicate Okinawa’s “Operation Ten-Go” — Ten-Go meaning “heaven.” The tactics called for suicide attacks. Japan’s army and navy had as many as 10,000 aircraft ready by July 1945, most of which were used for one-way trips.

Suicide attacks would come by sea, too: Shinyo motorboats; Kaiten crewed torpedoes and 400 midget submarines; more than 1,000 Fukuryu — meaning



## MILITARY

# Submarine vets push for more health coverage

## Group urges that findings on toxins in sealed environment be released

BY LINDA F. HERSEY  
*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — A coalition of Navy veterans is seeking an expansion of health care and disability benefits for toxic exposures from gases, chemicals and biological contaminants aboard submarines.

The nonprofit Submariners' Advocacy Group is also pushing for the Navy to release findings from extensive atmospheric studies on submarines' sealed environments conducted more than 20 years ago that remain classified today.

David Bozarth, president of the Submariners' Advocacy Group, said his organization documented more than 150 toxins that sailors may come in contact with on submarines. Bozarth served aboard submarines as a ballistic missile fire control technician from 1978 to 1984.

The coalition published its findings in a 60-page report released recently to the U.S. Submarine Veterans Inc., which represents active, retired and veteran personnel. The report was also posted on the group's website.

The report, "The Unseen Burden: Toxic Exposures and Health Impacts on U.S. Submariners," points to long-term consequences of exposure to chemicals, gases and ionizing radiation that are "unique to submarine service."

"In a sealed environment with continual exposure to multiple chemicals the human body is subjected to a complex interplay of stressors," according to the advocacy group's report.

The Submariners' Advocacy Group formed in April 2024 in response to studies and findings by the National Research Council (NRC) Committee on Toxicity and the Naval Submarine Medical Research Laboratory. Those findings and others are included in the advocacy group's report.

Submariners are exposed to a "toxic cocktail" of chemicals with a combined effect that may be more potent than a single exposure, according to the NRC.

Some of the hazardous exposures may include benzene, ozone and asbestos for sailors

who served on submarines before the 1970s.

Many spaces for non-nuclear personnel are close to radiation sources. Certain compartments with high concentrations of hazardous chemicals pose greater risks, including the engine room, auxiliary machinery spaces and missile compartments.

Carbon dioxide levels are higher in a submarine environment. Elevated levels may amplify the toxic effects of contaminants in the air, according to the NRC.

The oxygen content on board submarines is lower than in the natural environment, Bozarth said. "We have less oxygen available to us on submarines," he said.

A chemical byproduct of lubricating oil for submarine machinery, for example, has been found in the air and in common areas of submarines, on eating utensils and even on the skin of sailors, according to the advocacy group's report.

"The byproduct produces a yellow discoloration that shows up on walls, floors, cooking utensils, everything," Bozarth said.

There are an estimated 300,000 veterans living today who served since 1947 in the Navy's submarine force, also known as the "silent service," according to the veterans group.

The Department of Veterans Affairs denies veterans claims for service-connected ailments acquired from serving on submarines at a higher rate than other veterans claims, Bozarth said. But diseases — including cancers, blood disorders and central nervous system conditions — may be diagnosed decades after hazardous exposures on board submarines, he said.

Bozarth, 66, said he knows several shipmates who died from serious and rare diseases in the last two decades, including from amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, or Lou Gehrig's disease, early-onset Parkinson's disease and uncommon forms of cancer.

"I have been helping many submarine veterans with their VA disability claims by providing information and assistance to



JOSHUA KARSTEN/U.S. Navy

**Chief Petty Officer Shane Stevenson inspects the torpedo room while pierside at Naval Submarine Base Groton, Conn., last year. A group of Navy veterans are calling for an expansion to health care coverage for toxic exposure on submarines.**



ALEX R. FORSTER/U.S. Navy

**The Navy's 10th Virginia-class submarine is shown being delivered to the Navy in 2013 in Norfolk, Va. A new report by the Submariners' Advocacy Group, a coalition of former sailors, documents chemicals and other hazards found aboard submarines.**

their veterans service organizations," Bozarth said.

The submarine force makes up roughly 7% of the Navy, but it is responsible for operating nearly a quarter of its combatant ships.

"Their small numbers and inherent secrecy surrounding their duties" have resulted in under-representation in VA benefits, including disability compensation, according to the report.

Nuclear submarines are powered by onboard nuclear reactors, and every crew member is issued personal radiation monitors that are regularly checked, according to the Navy. Also,

policies limit the time personnel are in radiation-prone areas, and physical barriers prevent accidental entry into the reactor compartment.

Service members "stationed on nuclear-powered submarines are occupationally exposed to external ionizing radiation at very low levels, and radiation dose for each individual is closely monitored. Little is known about ionizing radiation risks of cancer mortality for populations with levels of cumulative ionizing radiation exposure this low," according to a 2022 report in the National Library of Medicine.

The Navy has established

exposure guidance levels for many contaminants. The Navy also works with the NRC to review, adjust and develop exposure guidance levels for specific contaminants as necessary.

But Bozarth said he believes there has been inconsistent follow-up by the Navy in addressing toxins in the submarine environment.

The Submariners' Advocacy Group is asking for greater coverage under the PACT Act for diseases and other medical ailments sailors may have experienced from exposures aboard submarines.

The PACT Act, signed into law in 2022, recognized medical conditions connected to toxic exposures including from burn pits, radiation, solvents and other hazards.

Nuclear workers aboard submarines may qualify for presumptive disability benefits if they have certain conditions linked to radiation exposure during service.

The veterans group is pushing for the military and VA to further study the effects of toxic chemicals and biological contaminants aboard submarines.

"As submarine veterans, we are fighting to make sure other submarine veterans are protected and get the health care and treatment they need," Bozarth said.



MILITARY

# Army prepares for missile defense upgrades

## Prototype gear already moved to Guam, S. Korea

By SETH ROBSON  
*Stars and Stripes*

The Pentagon has already moved prototype gear to Guam ahead of the development of an updated missile defense system there, an Army official said.

The unspecified equipment was delivered last fiscal year to the U.S. island territory, Jeannie Sommer, a program director with the Army's Program Executive Office Missiles and Space, said Nov. 10 during a Guam defense online forum run by the Missile Defense Advocacy Alliance.

Similar equipment was also shipped to South Korea, she said.

U.S. officials see Guam's defense as critical to deterring a Chinese attempt to invade Taiwan, which Chinese President Xi Jinping has vowed to reunify by force if necessary.

Construction of the \$8 billion Enhanced Integrated Air and Missile Defense System is expected to begin on Guam next year. The project's environmental impact statement is available for public comment until Jan. 8.

The system is expected to incorporate the Army's Integrated Air and Missile Defense Battle Command System and the Navy's Aegis Combat System



SETH ROBSON/Stars and Stripes

**A Terminal High Altitude Area Defense, or THAAD, launcher is displayed on Guam in 2023. Guam has received prototype equipment for an updated missile defense system.**

found on Arleigh-Burke-class guided-missile destroyers.

The system will include radars, sensors, launchers, interceptors and support facilities at numerous sites on the island to provide continuous 360-degree protection against cruise, ballistic and hypersonic missile attacks.

Guam is home to major military installations, including Naval Base Guam, Andersen Air Force Base and the new Marine Corps Base Camp Blaz. The island has long been called the

U.S. military's "tip of the spear" in the Indo-Pacific, owing to its proximity to the South China Sea, North Korea and China.

Sommer didn't identify the prototypes delivered to Guam but said capability expected on the island would include the Integrated Battle Command System, the Indirect Fire Protection Capability launcher, the Sentinel A4 and Lower Tier Air and Missile Defense Sensor radars and M903 launchers.

Soldiers have been rotating to the island and training with pro-

totypes, Sommer said.

"These prototypes really under traditional acquisition would be sitting at White Sands Missile Range undergoing continuous testing there, but we're getting them into the hands of soldiers early," she said.

Feedback from the soldiers is being incorporated into the design process, which results in faster delivery, Sommer said.

"Learning in an operationally relevant environment versus a controlled test environment is paying enormous dividends al-

ready, even though the capability's only been there a few months," she said.

The project, Sommer said, aligns with a Nov. 7 message by Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, who said the Pentagon is re-vamping how the military buys weapons.

Hegseth, speaking to military leaders and defense contractors in Washington, said the "objective is simple: transform the entire acquisition system to operate on a wartime footing, to rapidly accelerate the fielding of capabilities and focus on results."

The first capabilities of the missile defense system will be delivered in fiscal 2027, Sommer said.

"What we will do is deliver the initial capabilities and we will incrementally improve over time to realize the full operational capability just a few years later," she said.

Guam already has some defenses, including the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense system, but those capabilities are often supplemented by guided-missile destroyers.

Completion of the missile defense project will alleviate the need for those destroyers to protect Guam, Riki Ellison, founder of the Missile Defense Advocacy Alliance, said during the online forum.

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# US sub arrives for maintenance at Australian base

By SETH ROBSON  
*Stars and Stripes*

A U.S. Navy fast-attack submarine is undergoing maintenance at an Australian base where a multinational force of nuclear-powered boats may be in position in just over a year, according to the Australian Defense Department.

The Virginia-class USS Vermont docked Oct. 29 at HMAS Stirling, Western Australia, marking a significant advance toward the country's goal of

operating and maintaining nuclear-powered submarines, according to a department news release.

Australia is responsible for significant maintenance on the Vermont, according to the Defense Department.

The work required on the Vermont will be more complex than what Stirling provided the USS Hawaii last year and reflects the type of work needed to support the submarine rotational force, the release states.

The Pearl Harbor Naval Ship-

yard in Hawaii is collaborating on a maintenance period in Australia for the first time, according to the release.

The work will provide valuable training and test infrastructure and systems at Stirling, Vice Adm. Jonathan Mead, director general of the Australian Submarine Agency, said in the release.

Australia is developing the capability to service the boats under the AUKUS defense pact, a defense partnership between

Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States.

The Pentagon is reviewing the 2021 agreement, which aims to establish Submarine Rotational Force-West at Stirling, with one British and four U.S. submarines stationed there on a temporary basis from as early as 2027.

The review is underway amid concerns about whether U.S. industry can supply Australia with submarines beginning in the early 2030s while meeting Navy needs.

Nevertheless, the primary upgrades at HMAS Stirling, valued at \$5.2 billion, began in August with reports that 3,000 to 9,000 Americans could arrive with the submarines.

Ahead of the international force's deployment the U.S. has been sending Virginia-class boats to Stirling and training Australian technicians to maintain them.

In August 2024, the fast-attack submarine USS Hawaii and submarine tender USS Emory S. Land spent several weeks at the



x Australia Defense Department

**The fast-attack submarine USS Vermont arrives for scheduled maintenance at HMAS Stirling in Western Australia, on Oct. 29.**

base, where U.S. and Australian crew members aboard the tender performed maintenance on the submarine.

In February another Virginia-class vessel, the Guam-based USS Minnesota, also called at Stirling.

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