USO opens new center on Naval Base Guam

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Pages 7-11

Photos by Staff Sgt. Gabrielle Spalding, U.S. Air Force

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BY ED LEBITA,
USO NAVAL BASE GUAM

SANTA RITA – The USO announces its newest center—a state-of-the-art 6,000 square foot facility located at historic Camp Covington on Naval Base Guam. USO Naval Base Guam will serve Navy and Coast Guard personnel and families assigned to Naval Base Guam and visiting Pacific Fleet ships. The USO center is outfitted with the latest in technology including high-speed wireless internet, a sports lounge with big screen televisions, a gaming room with the latest equipment, and a reservable conference room for private meetings or gatherings. The center will be a place for relaxation with a café, reading areas, and full-body massage chairs. To learn more about the center and upcoming programs, visit www.facebook.com/usonbg.

“The United States military strategy identified the Indo-Pacific region as our nation’s priority theater,” stated C.K. Hyde, USO Pacific Regional Vice President (Brigadier General, USAF, Retired). “Guam is an increasingly important part of that strategy. USO Pacific is proud to stand with our forward deployed military forces and families. This center signifies our return to a location where the USO established one of its first centers in a Quonset hut on Naval Base Guam during World War II.”

Captain Jeffrey Grimes, Commander, NBC, emphasized the USO’s importance to service members and families, noting that the USO has made an outsized contribution to the maritime forces on Guam during 2020. “The USO’s support of the USS Theodore Roosevelt was unmatched, and their support for US ships and crews visiting the Safe Haven of Naval Base Guam during the pandademic has been a force multiplier. During this time, USO staff and volunteers demonstrated their passion and selfless support for our military community. This facility represents the USO’s long-term commitment to our forward deployed military forces.”

The support of donors and volunteers made the new center possible, said Leigh Leilani Graham, Area Director of USO Guam. “We thank our generous donors throughout the world and the local Guam community – in particular our Gold Sponsor GTA who donated all the high speed connectivity, cable and long distance for the center - who made this day possible,” said Graham. “We are extremely grateful for the National Football League’s incredible support over the years that has allowed the USO to expand our programs and services and further our mission. This special partnership with the NFL allows USO to bring football, holiday programming, and more to our Armed Forces serving and protecting us around the globe.”

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BARRIGADA – Sgt. 1st Class Brian Cruz, an instructor with the Guam National Guard’s 203rd Regional Training Institute, was awarded coins of excellence from Lt. Col Jumar Castro and Acting State Command Sgt. Maj. Celso Leonen on Nov. 24 in Barrigada, for piloting a new instructor training and recognition program.

The Army program, called the Faculty Development Recognition Program, was brought to Guam by Cruz after learning about it during his own instructor training.

“I ran into a couple instructors and just inquired,” said Cruz. “I said hey, how did you guys get those badges? They pointed me toward the regulations, and I just took it from there.”

After learning the program requirements, Cruz earned his first instructor badge, called the Basic Army Instructor Badge, while teaching National Guard units in Nevada. He then took his knowledge home to Guam and implemented the program.

Under the program, soldiers can sign up to learn the official Army teaching methods and curriculum required to become an instructor. Once certified, soldiers can then formally teach others, and are awarded successive badges. A Basic Army Instructor Badge requires 80 hours, a Senior Army Instructor Badge requires 270 hours, and so on.

“The intent is to spread the culture of mentorship and sharing of knowledge within our organization,” said Cruz. “We’re sending this invitation out to the leaders in all units, even part-time soldiers, to take all the experience you’ve learned over the years, and invest it into our future leaders.”

There are currently two Guam National Guard soldiers signed up for the Faculty Development Recognition Program.
Faces of the Deep

Petty Officer 1st Class Nicholas Miller
Machinist’s Mate (Nuclear)
USS Oklahoma City (SSN 723)
Hometown: Ontario, California

“I was going to get out of the Navy after my first tour, but I just kept on extending due to the opportunities it gave me and my family. Now, I am ready to hang up my uniform after 21 years of service.”

Petty Officer 2nd Class Brian Lemelle
Electronics Technician (Navigation)
USS Topeka (SSN 754)
Hometown: Bastrop, Texas

“There’s a lot of job satisfaction within the submarine force. When we come home from a deployment, we always know our work made a difference in the world. I’m proud to be in the sub force.”

Seaman Matthew Rubiogarcia
Information System Technician (Submarine)
USS Key West (SSN 722)
Hometown: Naples, Florida

“I haven’t been on the sub long, but everyone has treated me amazingly. They are just friendly all around and more than willing and helpful in my qualification process.”

Petty Officer 2nd Class Robert White
Electronics Technician (Navigation)
USS Key West (SSN 722)
Hometown: St. Petersburg, Florida

“I love the submarine force because of the people you get to meet. I’ve grown really close to many people I’ve met onboard. Eventually you learn who everyone is and you can relate very easily. A lot of people call the submarine force a family.”

Lt. Cmdr. Matthew Evans
Squadron Operations Officer
Commander, Submarine Squadron 15 Guam
Hometown: Yona, Guam

“My father served at CSS-16, from 2003 to 2006, when he was a Senior Chief Fire Controlman. I work with people that knew my dad back in the day. I’m really excited to work where my dad once did. It’s a proud moment for him as well. It’s truly a small world in the submarine force.”

Petty Officer 1st Class Michael Bartha
Machinists Mate (Nuclear)
Performance Monitoring Team
Hometown: Oconto Falls, Wisconsin

“I love that I’m able to travel the U.S. and have the ability to train in schools that I wouldn’t get to experience anywhere else. I’m now on a small island in the Pacific, which is 11,000 miles from my hometown. I look forward to more of the travel opportunities that the Navy has to offer.”
Christmas Drop delivers the goods

Teaming up to save lives

AGAT BAY — Sailors deployed with the maritime expeditionary security forces of Task Force 75 and Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron 25 prepare a simulated victim for transport during casualty evacuation training on a Mark VI patrol boat in Agat Bay, Guam. Maritime Expeditionary Security Squadron 2 can conduct combat operations to dominate the littorals and reinforce the blue water operations while also providing high value asset escorts, harbor area defense, embarked security teams, and visit, board, search and seizure (VBSS) overwatch.

Guam’s second fast response cutter arrives in Apra Harbor

SANTA RITA — The Coast Guard Cutter Oliver Henry (WPC 1140) arrived at its new homeport in Santa Rita, Guam on Monday, following a 10,620 nautical mile journey from Florida. During the voyage to its new homeport the crew of the Oliver Henry participated in drug interdiction operations in the Eastern Pacific while also assisting in a search for an overdue fishing vessel off Saipan.

“I am extremely proud of the crew, who did an exceptional job preparing and sailing the cutter nearly 11,000 nautical miles from Key West, Florida, to Santa Rita, Guam, during the global COVID-19 pandemic,” said Lt. John Hamel, the Oliver Henry’s Commanding Officer. “Not only did we deliver the highly capable Fast Response Cutter to our new operational area in the Western Pacific but we also conducted operations while transiting the Eastern Pacific, seizing a cocaine shipment worth $26.7M in support of the United States Southern Command’s Operation Martillo.”

The Oliver Henry is the second of three scheduled Fast Response Cutters (FRC) to be stationed in Guam. The FRCs are replacing the 30-year old 110-foot Island Class Patrol Boats and are equipped with advanced command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance systems and boast greater range and endurance.

Like the Island Class Patrol Boats before them the FRC’s are designed as multi-mission platforms ranging from maritime law enforcement to search and rescue. The new cutters represent the Coast Guard’s commitment to modernizing service assets to address the increasingly complex global Maritime Transportation System.

“Oliver Henry will significantly increase the capabilities of the Coast Guard throughout the region,” said Capt. Christopher Chase, commander, Coast Guard Sector Guam. “I am excited to welcome the crew of the Oliver Henry home and look forward to them conducting operations with our partners in the near future.”

The cutter is named after Oliver T. Henry, Jr., an African American Coast Guardsman who enlisted in 1940 and was the first to break the color barrier of a then-segregated Service. During World War II, Henry served under Lt. Cmdr. Carlton Skinner who later became the first civilian Governor of Guam and played a critical role in developing the Organic Act in 1950. Henry blazed a trail for minorities in the US military as he climbed from enlisted ranks while serving on 10 different Coast Guard Cutters, finally retiring as a Chief Warrant Officer in 1966.

Each FRC has a standard 24-person crew. This will bring over 70 new Coast Guard members to Guam, along with a projected 100 family members. In addition to the crews of the three ships additional Coast Guard support members and their families will also be in Guam.

Photos courtesy of Petty Officer 3rd Class Katherine Hays
Christmas Drop delivers the goods

This year is a story of hope,” said Tech. Sgt. Lou Splichal, Operation Christmas Drop 2020 senior enlisted leader. “To come here and show that we can still do this mission, which we are accustomed to doing, but moreover, ensure that it takes care of people, is at the heart of it all.”

Andersen Air Force Base, Guam united with Yokota Air Base, Japan and the Japan Self-Defense Force for the 69th annual OCD, delivering love from above for the people of the Republic of Palau. C-130 aircrews airdropped 64 bundles, totaling 3,200 lbs of cargo to the people living on some of the most remote islands in the world, Dec. 6th to the 10th.

Due to challenges of COVID-19, this year was a little different than years past; however, a lot of hard work was done to ensure the success of OCD.

Prior to arriving to Guam, all Yokota personnel involved in the operation had to complete a 14-day restriction of movement at their place of residence and receive a negative COVID test. Before bundles were assembled, all donated items were held in a sanitized location for a minimum of 24 hours. During the bundle build, all participants were required to wear masks and gloves. Bundles were then disinfected and sat in a sanitary location for a minimum of 72 hours before being loaded onto a C-130 for delivery.

“There were a lot of measures we took to make sure that what we did was in line with the DOD and the [Centers of Disease Control] guidelines,” said Maj. Joseph Spitz, OCD mission commander.
“This allowed us to mitigate the risk of spread and transmission of COVID-19 to the islanders of Palau.”

Getting these critical supplies of food, medicine and other items necessary for survival to the people in the South-Eastern Pacific region has always been at the root of the OCD mission. This year, as a historic first, the islands of Koror and Peleliu were able to also receive bundles of aid.

“The islands farther out may not see aid for an entire year, and OCD is the only opportunity for them to get that life-sustaining aide, specifically with some of the challenges associated with a global pandemic,” said Spitz. “Not to say they’re not being taken care of, but there’s a unique advantage that OCD has using that space available tactical airlift to deliver humanitarian aid to these islands that really can’t be replicated.”

OCD continues a tradition of not only helping those in need but working with our partner nations to better meet the ever-evolving needs of the region, and for the past six years the JASDF has participated as a vital part of the mission. The aircrews were able to accomplish vital training on the techniques used and shared between the nations to better respond to natural disasters in the region.

“This operation is not a single squadron or unit exercise,” said Spitz. “I don’t know that we could accomplish this mission without the support of Anderson, Yokota or with the support of our JASDF partners, of whom we’ve come to rely on so heavily and our participation.”

Having the opportunity to work in a bilateral capacity with the JASDF during OCD, and in years past with the Royal Australian Air Force and Royal New Zealand Air Force, continues to strengthen our interoperability and response capabilities in deterring aggression, promoting humanitarian and disaster relief and maintaining an open and free Indo-Pacific.

“Getting the bundles dropped, experiences gained, relationships built and supplies delivered, it was the spirit of helping others that would prove to leave a lasting impression on all of the crews that took part.”

“The impact that this operation has on the islanders, not just in Micronesia and Palau, but the level of care and appreciation from the people of Guam is something you’re not going to see anywhere else,” said Spitz. “I don’t want to be in a world where Operation Christmas Drop doesn’t exist.”
Successful operation doesn’t exist.”

“I don’t see anywhere else,” said Spitz. “I don’t want to be in a world where Operation Christmas Drop wouldn’t prove to leave a lasting impression on all who had the chance to participate.”

“[This operation] is not a single person, but the level of care and appreciation from the islanders, not on just Micronesia and Palau, but the region looks different than in years past. This long-standing tradition of good will is a partnership between the 374th AW, Yokota Air Base, Japan; the 36th WG, Andersen AFB, Guam; the 734th Air Mobility Squadron, Andersen AFB of the JASDF during OCD, and in years past with the Royal Australian Air Force and Royal New Zealand Air Force, continues to be gathered in unique ways, then packed and ready to be delivered at a moment’s notice. The men and women of the crews that took part.


Right: Members of the 36th Wing base honor guard present the colors. Photos by Staff Sgt. Divine Cox, U.S. Air Force
ANDERSEN AIR FORCE BASE - The warehouse was full of the sound of holiday music, joy, laughter and ambition. Boxes filled with donated food, medical supplies and household goods lining the walls - Operation Christmas Drop 2020 bundle build accomplished what it set out to do for the last 69 years, preparing necessary goods to the families on the remote islands in the South-Eastern Pacific.

On Dec. 3rd and 5th, service members from the U.S. Air Force, Japan Air Self-Defense Force and volunteers from the local community gathered together for two days of bundle building at Andersen Air Force Base, Guam.

"To the people we are helping, this is their New Years, their Valentines, their Easter, their Thanksgiving," said Master Sgt. Anthony Biecheler, OCD president. "This is an all-in-one for them. It comes in the form of a C-130 flying overhead, with their engines roaring, dropping presents out of the back."

Previous years saw a packed room full of eager bundle builders, sharing bright smiles with fellow volunteers. This year, new measures had to be put into place to keep the bundles and the builders safe from the spread of COVID-19.

"Last year was a traditional year," said Biecheler. "We received donations through traditional fundraising efforts, like our golf tournaments and going out and speaking with island businesses. This year we knew we had to expand our digital footprint."

Because of this realignment of committee efforts, the golf tournament turned to e-sports as a way to garner support. "We had to reach out to the goodness of the global community," said Biecheler. "We hosted OCD Call of Duty tournaments. The second tournament had over one million viewers in a 24-hour period. It was awesome to see that type of visibility."

There were many different ways the community came together to ensure these goods were able to get carefully delivered to the families that needed them. The bundle build itself had only a limited amount of people inside the warehouse during specific times. Bundles were spread out six feet apart. Groups of only five people were allowed at each station, and every volunteer had to wear masks and gloves and get their temperature checked upon entering the area.

"We worked closely with the 36th Wing Public Health and guidance from the Center of Disease Control to make sure we were operating in a COVID safe manner," Biecheler said.

In order to maintain these important mitigations, bundles went through a series of rest, storage and sanitation periods, said Staff Sgt. Alex Vigil, 374th Logistics and Readiness Squadron combat mobility flight supervisor.

"Our biggest challenge this year was COVID-19 and making sure our crew was safe during our 14-day restriction of movement," said Vigil. "Most importantly, those on the receiving end of these bundles are going to be safe when getting these critical supplies."

The airmen with the 374th CMF spent countless hours ensuring the supplies will be ready for final delivery. All donated items were held in a sanitized location for seven to 10 days before being handled. Bundles built on the first day will have been stored for the required minimum of 72 hours before being loaded onto USAF and JASDF C-130 aircraft for delivery on Dec. 6 and 7. All bundles put together on the fifth, will be ready for delivery on Dec. 9 and 10.

Although this year was a little different than years past, mitigation measures were applied across all fronts of this year’s OCD.

With great care and attention, all of the much-needed supplies were packed and set aside, awaiting their big delivery to families living on the remote islands in the region.

"I love OCD," said Vigil. "Seeing how much goes into making this happen, how much joy it brings to those giving and receiving these donations, and the positive influence our military and our bilateral partners have, leaves me with a good feeling at the end of each day."
“Gone but not forgotten”

‘Gone but not forgotten’

STORY AND PHOTOS BY
STAFF SGT. GABRIELLE SPALDING,
374TH AIRLIFT WING

“T his is for you, Jut-
ba.” “Gone but not
forgotten.” “Here’s
to you.”

Written messages like these and pictures of the late Senior Airman Jeremy Jutba-Hake, 36th Airlift Squadron, Yokota Air Base, Japan, instructor loadmaster, adorned bundles which were airdropped onto the remote island of Koror, Republic of Palau, during the last day of Operation Christmas Drop 2020, Dec. 10.

As the world’s longest running humanitarian airdrop mission operating for the last 69 years, OCD has continued its efforts of providing critical items to the people who live on the islands throughout the South-Eastern Pacific region; a mission that has remained a positive aspect for the families on those islands.

For Tech. Sgt. Lou Splichal, OCD 2020 senior enlisted leader, the foundation of OCD and who Jutba was as a person, the two have become synonymous.

“Jutba was a consummate gentleman of the Pacific,” said Splichal. “He would literally give you the shirt off his back; constantly thinking about the group as whole, and not just about himself. He was the embodiment of the Aloha spirit.”

Jutba unexpectedly passed away due to an unknown heart condition during OCD 2015. The following year, the 36th AS began this tradition of commemorating his legacy by holding a ceremony on a C-130 before air-dropping bundles in his name, which continues to this day.

“It’s important that we keep honoring him in this way, so that he is not forgotten,” said Splichal. “From day one he was a valuable member of the C-130 family. He worked so hard to get those wings and lost them doing something that we all love.”

Splichal, who began his career as a loadmaster with Jutba, reminisced about his devotion to helping others. It was at the core of who he was as a person.

“Him and I were together at Little Rock [Air Force Base, Arkansas],” recollected Splichal. “When I first arrived there, Jutba, for no other reason than because he was a good guy, came up to me and introduced himself to me, because he understood what it was to be the new guy.”

While a part of the mobility section at Little Rock, Jutba made a name for himself as someone who could be relied on for more than just what was expected of him.

“He was the go-to guy,” said Splichal. “People just knew he was the one who had the answers. And not because he was weaponizing his knowledge, he genuinely cared. People who care just for the sake of caring, they’re going to stand out, and he did.”

Taking care of his peers and being an essential part of the community was just who Jutba was as a person, said Splichal. His legacy, as not only an integral part of the Air Force, but also his positive and compassionate personality is why this important tradition remains a significant part of the OCD mission.

Honoring him in this way, Jutba’s spirit remains alive in the hearts and minds of those throughout the Air Force community who knew him and for those who will know him through stories and ceremonies held for him during Christmas Drops for years to come.

Editor’s Note: The U.S. territory of Guam is comprised of 19 villages, many with their own distinct character, history and points of interest. Stripes Guam and Guampedia have joined forces to present this weekly feature on each of them in the hopes that it will help our readers get out – and get to know – our gracious hosts. To learn more about Guam’s people, history, culture and places, visit: guampedia.com

The village name is probably derived from the CHamoru word puti, which means to hurt or ache.

Village history

Piti started out as a small pre-Spanish settlement, with plentiful fishing for the ancient CHamorus. Even after the arrival of the Spanish, Piti remained a small village until the Port of San Luis of Apra (Apra Harbor) near Piti became the chief harbor of the Spanish government.

With the increased presence of other European powers in the Pacific in the early 1700s, Spain ordered the improvement of Guam’s defenses. Between 1720 and 1730, Fort Santiago, a small emplacement with cannons, was erected on Orote Peninsula overlooking Apra Harbor. In 1734, the Spanish opened a new anchorage for ships in Apra Harbor, offering better protection from storms and a higher level of defense than fortifications in the village of Umatac. In 1737, Fort San Luis, with six cannons, was completed on Orote (near what is now Gab Gab Beach) to defend the anchorage. The area near Gab Gab Beach was a part of Sumay village, which is now US Naval Base Guam.

After 1740, most ships began to anchor in Apra Harbor when the wind was favorable, with cargo transferred via small boats to a pier near the village of Piti. From the village, the goods were transported by two-wheeled carts pulled by steer or oxen to the government store in Hagatna. For many years, the road connecting the pier at Piti to Hagatna, made of crushed limestone, was the only real road on Guam.

In the 1830s, the Spanish helped plant the first rice paddies in Piti, which continued until after the World War II. Rice crops were grown in ancient times as well though not in rice paddies but rather in natural swamps with the use of a kind of wooden digging stick or hoe known as a tatum.

Piti and Apra Harbor played an important role at critical points in Guam’s history. The surrender of the Spanish government and military on Guam to US Navy Captain Henry Glass, for example, took place at Piti on 21 to 22 June 1898 during the Spanish-American War, with the cruiser USS Charleston and a contingent of US Marines anchored in Apra Harbor.

Apra Harbor became the port for US naval vessels under the new American government, and in 1899 a navy yard was created on the former Spanish crown property at Piti.

In 1909, the American government established the Experimental Agricultural Station in Piti, along the main road to Hagatna, funded by the US Department of Agriculture.

On 8 December 1941, the Piti navy yard was one of the first targets of Japanese bombing at the start of World War II. Residents of Piti fled the village toward Hagatna, jamming the main road along with residents of Sumay.

During the occupation, the Japanese forced the CHamorus to turn Piti into a large area of rice paddies to help feed the Japanese troops. The Japanese also forced the CHamorus to help build defenses, including three coastal defense guns set into the hillside of Piti. The CHamorus had to carry thousands of pounds of steel up the steep terrain and through dense vegetation. The guns were to have a firing range of almost ten miles and were intended for uses against ships and landing craft. But when the US forces came to retake the island on 21 July 1944, the guns were not fully operational, and were therefore never fired. They remain a site for visitors as part of the War in the Pacific National Historical Park.
Institutions

Guam Veterans Cemetery
This cemetery, located directly across the street from Jose L.G. Rios Middle School covers about 18 acres of land and is the resting place for U.S. military veterans and their families.

Our Lady of Assumption Catholic Church
Our Lady of Assumption Church, the Catholic church of Piti, was established in 1913. It is the southernmost Catholic Church in Guam. In 2013, it was declared a National Historic Landmark.

Jose L.G. Rios Middle School
Jose L.G. Rios Middle School, part of the Guam Public School System, is located at the edge of the main village and along the road going up the Piti side of Nimitz Hill, across from the Guam Veterans Cemetery. The middle school was formerly known as Piti Middle School and was previously an elementary school.

Historical

Piti Guns
Piti Guns historic remains is one of seven units of War in the Pacific National Monument. They are located in the heart of the village after ascending a quarter-mile steep incline. The three guns are Japanese coastal defense guns that had a range of nearly 10 miles to defend against U.S. naval ships and landing craft, but were never used during World War II.

Santa Cruz Shrine / Atanano
A small shrine with a cross is located near the southern boundary of the municipality of Piti. On a narrow road in the jungle off Marine Corps Drive, near Sunay Grill, the shrine today has a small shelter for those in the village who make the annual trek to honor the cross. After the Piti-Agap road was rebuilt by the US Navy in 1908-09, the shrine was constructed to bless the road, and the swamp around it is known as “the Swamp of the Immaculate Virgin.”

Recreational

Atlantic Guam
Just south of Cabras Island off a small peninsula in Apra Harbor is Atlantic Guam, home to the Marianas Yacht Club and Port Authority Beach. Visitors can see the reef and tropical fish up close without getting wet with a 45-minute trip below Guam’s waters on Atlantis Adventures’ 65-foot submarine. Close by is the United Seaman’s Club, an old restaurant and recreation area that was formerly the USG.

Fish Eye Marine Park
Sitting on the shore of the Piti Bay is an Underwater Observatory and Fish Eye Visitor Center. Micronesia’s first and only underwater observatory, constructed to show visitors the island’s beautiful underwater wonders. More than 200,000 people visit Underwater Observatory annually.

Mahogany Forest
Located near the Piti Guns is a mahogany forest. The trees were planted around 1929 as part of the Guam Agricultural Experiment Station established from 1909 to 1932, and agricultural school from 1932 to 1940. The trees are the broad-leaved mahogany, Swietenia macrophylla, which is native to Central and South America.

Piti Bomb Holes Preserves
This area is part of Piti Bay and is designated as a marine preserve. The Piti Bomb Holes attracts a large amount of fish and other marine life, along with many snorkelers, swimmers and divers. The area is so named because it looks as if craters have been created by bombs, although they are natural coral formations.

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While the Chamorros maintained ranches away from the main village, they often worked for the Navy Department instead of farms as a main occupation. The government set up the agricultural station to encourage farming in an attempt to improve the economy.

The station distributed seeds and plants, and set up school gardens and boys’ and girls’ clubs to teach the Chamorros about effective methods of farming. The plants distributed included hibiscus, which now grows wild in the area. Mahogany and teak were also introduced to supplement native hardwoods, and a mahogany grove still stands in the area.

On April 7, 1917, when Guam received a coded cable message that President Woodrow Wilson declared war on Germany (thus beginning World War I for the U.S.), Piti and Apra Harbor were the site of a confrontation between the U.S. naval officers and the captain and crew of the German ship Cormoran. After agreeing to surrender his men, the Cormoran’s captain blew up his ship, which sank to the bottom of the harbor. The Germans were taken as prisoners of war.

The Guam Agricultural Experiment Station was closed June 30, 1932 and was transferred to the island government, to be used as an agricultural school. The school was open until 1940.

Points of interest

This village at a glance

• Population: As of the 2010 US Census, the population was 1,454.
• Village description: Most Guam residents know the village of Piti from what they see along Marine Corps Drive, Guam’s main thoroughfare. The first noticeable landmark in the village along Marine Corps Drive when heading southbound is the Piti Underwater Observatory. The observatory juts out from the coastline into the ocean.
• The coastline in Piti is lined by two beach parks: Tepongan Beach Park, with newer pavilions, and the Pedro Pitan Beach Park. This area of the coast, known as the Piti Bomb Holes, is a marine preserve, where fishing is now prohibited. This prohibition has resulted in an increase in marine life, such as a large amount of fish and other marine life, along with many snorkelers, swimmers and divers. The area is so named because it looks as if craters have been created by bombs, although they are natural coral formations.
• Slightly further south across the road to the ocean, is the New Market grocery store and a gas station, just before the Piti Power Plant at the junction of Marine Corps Drive and Route 11, which leads out into Cabras Island. Cabras Island extends into the ocean to form part of Apra Harbor and is further extended by the Glass Breakwater, named after US Navy Captain Henry Glass.

Guam’s experimental agricultural station

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

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**Boonie Stomps Guam**

**INFORMATION PROVIDED BY GUAM BOONIE STOMPERS**

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.

**Dec. 26**

**Priest’s Pools**

Medium

3 hours for 1 mile

**With Little Kid Option**

Easy

2 hours for 0.25 mile

We journey to a beautifully secluded waterfall in central Guam for swimming and pictures, then hike along a pristine jungle river to enjoy a second waterfall with jumping and swimming.

**Bring:** 2 quarts water, hiking shoes that can get wet, swimsuit, gloves, sun screen, insect repellent, lunch, and camera.

**Special conditions:** Steep slopes, walking in water, mud, rocky slippery river bottom, and climbing up and assisted by a rope.

**Stomp Tips:**

1. Alcohol and hiking do not mix.
2. Do not bring beverages with caffeine on hikes.
3. Bring plenty of water with you on hikes.
4. Do not bring beverages with caffeine on hikes.
5. Always bring a small flashlight in case you get lost, or delayed. They have many uses.
6. When hiking, lots of little snacks are better than one big meal.
7. Always bring a small flashlight in case you get lost, or delayed.
8. Do not hike alone and let someone know where you are going and your return time.
9. **Complete 10** Boonie Stomp to earn a Boonie Stomp T-Shirt!

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**Crossword**

Edited by Margie E. Burke

**ACROSS**

1. Walking stick
2. “Holy cow!”
3. Help out
4. Worse than bad
5. Canyon call
6. Had no doubt
7. Blue-eyed feline
8. Not being used
9. Fishing spot
10. City dweller
11. Rooming house guest
12. Narrow opening
13. Hostess product
14. Gaming cubes
15. Talk about.
16. NFL team
18. Pipe puffer
20. Fishing spot
21. Blue-eyed feline
23. Boat name
25. Rooming house
26. Burglar alarm
27. Eat before leaving home
28. Joint
29. Meal
30. Hostess product
31. Broad opening
32. Narrow opening
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100. Narrow opening

**DOWN**

1. Impudent talk
2. Blockhead
3. From a distance
4. Got really upset
5. Steaky housey
6. Ten C-notes
7. Come to mind

---

**Memories with Stars and Stripes, Pacific**

Share your Memories with Stars and Stripes Pacific!

Your photos/stories will appear on the Stars and Stripes Pacific 75th Anniversary Website, 75.stripes.com.

**Stripes Sports Trivia**

**OPTION PLAY:** Back in the day, Tiger Woods was as good as it got. His domination was unrivaled by just about any athlete. And, in 2000, Tiger let out one of his biggest roars with a huge win at The U.S. Open. How many strokes did Tiger beat his next closest competitor by? **A. 8 B. 15 C. 10 D. 12**

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**SUDOKU**

Edited by Margie E. Burke

**Difficulty: Easy**

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**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.

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Space Force plans to nearly triple in size, could accept Army, Navy transfers in second year


SARAYUTH PINTHONG/U.S. Air Force
Space Force plans to triple in size next year

By Corey Dickstein
Stars and Stripes
WASHINGTON — The U.S. Space Force plans to almost triple in size and add a Reserve element in 2021, the service’s top general said as the newest military branch neared its first birthday.

Gen. Jay Raymond, the chief of Space Operations, officially became a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on Dec. 20 when the Space Force marked its one year anniversary. The space chief told reporters that he was optimistic about his plans to grow the force from about 2,400 active-duty troops to about 6,400 by the end of 2021.

“We were up and running on day one, and we have not let our foot off the accelerator ever since,” Raymond said in a telephone news briefing. “The progress we have made far surpasses anything that I would have would have expected.”

To date, the Space Force is built almost entirely of former Air Force space-focused troops who applied and were selected to transfer into the first new military branch created since the Air Force was split from the Army in 1947. The Space Force did commission 86 Air Force Academy cadets directly into the new service, and it is interviewing candidates to select 98 cadets to commission in the spring, Raymond said.

But 2021 could be the year some space-focused troops serving in the Army and the Navy transfer into the Space Force, Raymond said. The service recently completed a Defense Department-required study on how to best incorporate service members outside the Air Force into the Space Force. Raymond said a few hurdles still exist, but he expected the processes to allow non-Air Force transfers to be in place in 2021.

“You can’t break the Army or you can’t break the Navy while setting up the Space Force so we’ll do this in a way that consolidates those capabilities where needed and strengthens the joint war-fighting readiness on both the Space Force side and on the other services,” Raymond said.

Raymond said the service also expects to unveil its plans for a Space Force Reserve component early in 2021. National Guard leaders have lobbied for the last year to build a Space Force National Guard element, but Raymond and other leaders have declined to provide their specific plans while they worked with Congress to study the issue.

On Dec. 15, the general again declined to describe how a Space Force Reserve element would be constructed. The National Guard already employs some 1,100 space-focused troops in at least nine states, officials have said. Raymond said his service relies “very heavily” on those forces and Reserve troops to complete its missions, which include operating space-based sensors and protecting American space-based assets.

Without providing any specific details, Raymond hinted his service would soon build an innovative Reserve component not modeled after the Army or Air National Guard or the Reserve components of the other services.

“We’re going to continue to rely on those [Guard and Reserve] assets into the future,” Raymond said. “We think we’ve come up with a really innovative approach. … I have told the team, we have an opportunity to be very bold — not just wedded to how we’ve done business in the past, and we think we’ve got a way ahead [for a Reserve component] that’s going to be very, very valuable to us.”

The service enters its second year just before a presidential transition. While President Donald Trump was among the most vocal champions for the building of the new service, President-elect Joe Biden has not revealed any plans for the new force.

Raymond said he met with members of Biden’s transition team at the Pentagon and had “a very good conversation.” But the space chief declined to provide any details or comment on the change in White House leadership.

He said his service is moving forward and there was no indication it could be scrapped under a new administration.

“What I will tell you is what isn’t going to change is my focus, and the focus of our team, and that’s on building a service that delivers a national advantage” in space, Raymond said.

“What we’re going to do is keep focused on building that service [and] building partnerships [in the government] to be able to do that and do that well and provide our nation with the vital national interest that is space.”

Space Force troops now called guardians

By Steve Beynon
Stars and Stripes
WASHINGTON — Troops serving in Space Force are now referred to as guardians, Vice President Mike Pence announced.

“It is my honor on behalf of the president to announce henceforth the men and women of the United States Space Force will be known as guardians,” Pence said during a ceremony to celebrate Space Force’s first birthday, which was Dec. 20. “Soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines and guardians will be defending our nation for generations to come.”

The announcement comes after months of troops in the military’s newest branch being referred to as “space professionals,” as a placeholder title.

“Where the opportunity to name a force is a momentous responsibility. Guardians is a name with a long history in space operations, tracing back to the original command motto of Air Force Space Command in 1983, Guardians of the High Frontier,” a tweet from the Space Force’s account read following the announcement.

Space Force has roughly 2,000 personnel, most of whom are transfers from the Air Force, though the service has recently started enlisting new recruits. Space Force hopes to recruit 300 enlisted service members in 2021 and reach 6,500 members overall in a year. Most of them will come from Air Force transfers.

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MILITARY

Army roasted for ‘expedited’ camo mask rollout

By Chad Garland
Stars and Stripes

If it had taken the Army the typical 18 months to two years to roll out its official face mask, it would have been roasted on social media. It got roasted anyway after announcing it would be delivered in about half that time.

The Army touted its efforts to speed the acquisition process, going “from inception to issuance” of the mask in less than a year, in a statement.

The Defense Logistics Agency is expected to begin issuing two Combat Cloth Face Coverings, or CCFCs, to recruits early next year.

“The Army is issuing its own official cloth face mask (complete with acronym) and bragging that it only took slightly less than a year to do,” wrote @elethalityjane, a Twitter account run by a soldier, in a tweet shared nearly 400 times.

The account, followed by more than 24,000 people, noted that unofficial alternatives have been available for months, often just off base.

But some veterans said that the process operated as it should have, with the Army providing disposable or reusable masks, allowing them to use neck gaiters, bandanas and scarves, while working to field an official mask.

“Before we freak out and call this an acquisitions failure, remember that the immediate need was met with contracting at lower levels,” wrote Aaron Levin, a former Marine. “This is the bigger, sustained, lower priority … effort for a long term change to the uniform. The system worked as designed.”

The Army and DLA have committed to contracts totaling more than $43.5 million for disposable and other cloth face masks since January, according to a Stars and Stripes analysis of contracting data.

The rollout of the CCFC doesn’t change existing guidance on the use of other face coverings, the Army statement said.

The new two-ply mask made of cotton and nylon is expected to be available for purchase at exchange stores later next year.

The Army’s Combat Cloth Face Covering will be a two-ply cloth covering made of 57% cotton and 43% nylon. It will have a pliable nose bridge and drawstring with a barrel lock.

Marines put small command concept to work during Japan air-assault exercise

By Seth Robson
Stars and Stripes

CAMP SOUMAGAHARA, Japan — The Marine Corps is downsizing its command-and-control sites in the field to something light, mobile and suitable for work within range of an adversary’s firepower.

Marines of 3rd Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment, out of Camp Lejeune, N.C., working in a forest clearing from three Humvee-sized vehicles demonstrated the concept during Exercise Forest Light in Gunma prefecture. With a few maps and radios, a dozen Marines coordinated a simulated air assault involving 1,000 Marines and troops of the Japanese Ground Self-Defense Force’s 30th Infantry Regiment.

A small, mobile combat operations center can be moved quickly and often, said Lt. Col. Neil Berry during the operation earlier this month at Soumagahara Training Area, northwest of Tokyo.

“We can have it set up in a matter of minutes,” he said.

The Marines and JGSDF are practicing assaults on “key maritime terrain” during Forest Light, the type of operations the Pentagon foresees in a potential conflict with China. The exercise concluded Dec. 17.

Marines taking part in Exercise Forest Light work from a mobile combat operations center at Soumagahara Training Area in Gunma prefecture, Japan, on Dec. 15.

But some veterans said that the process operated as it should have, with the Army providing disposable or reusable masks, allowing them to use neck gaiters, bandanas and scarves, while working to field an official mask.

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Marines’ ideas aim to improve daily Corps life

By Matthew M. Burke
Stars and Stripes

CAMP COURTNEY, Okinawa — Marines have built a reputation on brute force, but they’re also earning commendations by using brain power and technology to solve everyday problems.

On Okinawa, Sgts. Jesse Robertson, of the 12th Marine Regiment, and Adrian Willis, of the 7th Communication Battalion, earned a Navy/Marine Corps Achievement Medal for their entry in the first Big Ideas Challenge.

Theirs was one of five winning entries in the summer event sponsored by III Marine Expeditionary Force.

The competition was open to anyone affiliated with the U.S. military in Japan, including Marines, sailors, civilian employees and family members.

“We’re trying to tackle some of our most daunting tasks within the MEF and also in the Marine Corps,” Lt. Gen. Stacy Clardy, commander of III MEF, said at the Camp Courtney medal ceremony Dec. 8. “The idea behind it is that we will promote imaginative, disruptive ideas; we’ll unleash some creativity and ingenuity within the MEF.”

The challenge was so successful, Clardy said, that he plans a second one in the spring.

Robertson, a maintenance chief, said his project was born of necessity. He saw that the Marines’ new, long-awaited Joint Light Tactical Vehicles lacked enough space for satellite communications equipment.

The new vehicles were not designed with the satellite systems in mind, Robertson told Stars and Stripes during an interview earlier this month.

He and Willis, a 3D printing liaison, teamed up over the summer to design a way to install the Lockheed Martin Mobile User Objective System, a secure ultra-high frequency satellite communications system issued in 2019, so it fit compatibly with the legacy multiband radio set.

The new satellite system took up several inches of space in the new vehicles meant for the radios. Willis and Robertson designed a bracket prototype that Willis produced on a Creality Ender 3 Pro 3D printer. The bracket holds the satellite system puzzle-like above the radio.

When III MEF announced the Big Ideas Challenge on Aug. 20, Robertson and Willis submitted their bracket prototype. Theirs was one of 72 submissions, including one from a Navy spouse, that III MEF received by the deadline a month later, Clardy said.

The ideas addressed a range of issues from barracks life to pay to torpedoes and robots.

Eleven ideas are on their way to Marine Corps headquarters in Washington for possible application across the Corps. Another 24 are being further evaluated on Okinawa.

Challenge organizer Maj. Stephen Kent said the crop of ideas has absolutely made the Marines and III MEF better.

Another idea getting attention, from the mind of Chief Warrant Officer 3 Todd Coyle, would marry two lightweight water purification systems into one with a higher, faster production capability rather than spend money on an entirely new system.

“The great thing about this, cost-saving wise, is we already have the system,” Coyle said.

“We just got to find a way to connect it all and make it work.”
**MILITARY**

**USS Topeka arrives at new Hawaii homeport**

**BY WYATT OLSON**
Stars and Stripes

FORT SHAFTER, Hawaii — Pearl Harbor became home to another fast-attack submarine as the USS Topeka changed its homeport to Hawaii on Dec. 15.

The vessel, formerly homeported in Guam since 2015, became the 10th Los Angeles-class submarine to be stationed at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, the Navy said in a news release. It is assigned to Submarine Squadron 7.

The sub is slated to soon join into Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard for regularly scheduled major maintenance for upgrades and repairs, the Navy said.

“The crew and their families did a fantastic job of getting things ready in a timely manner and transitioning to a new place,” Cmdr. Richard Salazar, Topeka’s commanding officer, said in the news release.

“Tens of thousands of nautical miles in support of national and Pacific Fleet objectives and participated in numerous national and international exercises,” he said.

Since 2015, the submarine has deployed four times, participated in 14 exercises and earned the service’s Engineering Efficiency Award each year, the Navy said in the release.

The Topeka became the fourth Los Angeles-class submarine to be homeported in Guam in 2015 as part of the Obama administration’s Pacific rebalance intended to enhance the Navy’s forward presence in the region.

The sub can support a variety of missions, including anti-submarine warfare; anti-surface ship warfare; surveillance and reconnaissance; and strike warfare, the Navy said.

**Rand report highlights potential for Japan’s assistance**

**BY CAITLIN DOORNSOS**
Stars and Stripes

A new Rand Corp. report released Dec. 17 found that the Japan Self-Defense Forces could offer “effective and capable” assistance to the United States in the East China Sea.

Japan’s Constitution restricts its military operations to defensive initiatives only, and its laws may hinder its efforts, according to the report. Still, Japan’s strengths position it “to make things very difficult for China to prevail quickly in conflict,” according to the think tank report.

“Much relies on Japan’s political decisionmakers, who, in a time of a crisis, will be challenged to understand that their decision-making timelines are fully in sync with U.S. operational needs,” the report said.

Japanese strengths include advanced weaponry, a greater presence in the Ryukyu Islands southwest of the main island of Japan, and capabilities in mine-sweeping and anti-submarine warfare.

The report, “Japan’s Potential Contributions in an East China Sea Contingency,” called the U.S. alliance with Japan “arguably its most important in pursuit of objectives” outlined in the National Defense Strategy.

That strategy, written in 2018 by then-Defense Secretary Jim Mattis, formally shifted U.S. defense priorities to the Indo-Pacific region and strategic competition with China. Since then, the military has boosted its presence in the South and East China seas, which Beijing views as its territory. The U.S. considers those regions to be international waters, and the Navy and Air Force frequently carry out freedom-of-navigation operations there, sailing through and flying over waters that China claims as its own.

In the East China Sea, China and Taiwan dispute sovereignty of the Japanese-controlled Senkaku Islands northeast of Taiwan. The Trump and Obama administrations have said an attack on the Senkakus would involve the U.S.-Japan Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security, meaning the U.S. military would be obligated to respond.

Tokyo has accused Beijing of using coercive means to negate Japan’s control of the islands. On Nov. 3, China broke a record for the number of days per year that its vessels are spotted near the disputed islands. Its ships spent 284 days there this year, two more than the record 282 set in 2019, according to the Japan coast guard.

The Rand report comes after the defense ministers of Japan and China in a video call earlier this month reaffirmed their countries’ opposing claims to the islands, which the Chinese call Diaoyu Dau.

Tensions over the Senkakus have inspired the Japan Self-Defense Forces to alter their training and resources to better prepare for a potential conflict in the region, according to the report.

“Over the past decade, as provocations by China in the East China Sea have increased, the [Japan Ground Self-Defense Force] has reoriented itself to be more mobile and realigned its capabilities to respond to events in Japan’s southwest,” the report said. “This has meant taking on anti-air and anti-ship functions and developing amphibious capabilities.”

These capabilities alone, according to the report, may not be enough to stave off an attack by the Chinese but could offer substantial assistance to the U.S. to defend Japan against China in a conflict.

The capabilities “increasingly keep Chinese forces at length with a growing suite of (anti-access/area denial) capabilities thereby heightening the risk to China in any East China Sea contingency and allowing Japan to remain in the fight in support of the United States,” according to the report.

For this reason, the U.S. military can expect to continue receiving Tokyo’s support, according to the report.

“While Japanese laws set limits for all of these, the United States can expect Japanese domestic laws and interpretations to support U.S. operations,” the report said.
Forensic sleuth frustrated by DPAA

By Wyatt Olson
Stars and Stripes

When Beverly Dillon’s home phone rang on a late summer evening in 2019, she ignored it. She didn’t recognize the number and assumed it was a pesky marketing call to her home in a small Montana town near Glacier National Park.

But when the caller began leaving a message on her old-fashioned answering machine — mentioning the surnames Vincent and McAllister — Dillon raced to pick up the phone.

“Yes! I was a Vincent before I was Dillon, and my grand-mother’s maiden name was McAllister,” the self-described “genealogy nut” recalled saying. “I nearly jumped out of my skin I was so excited.”

On the other end of the line was Jay Silverstein, a forensic anthropologist who said he believed he had identified the remains of Pvt. Charles McAllister, her great uncle who died in battle during World War I.

Silverstein had just retired from the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency in Hawaii, the U.S. government’s official agency tasked with bringing home the remains of the nation’s missing men and women; some 4,300 Americans died in battle during World War I.

Silverstein had submitted DNA samples to Registry in August 2019, for the last contact she had from the lab a few weeks later. It was considered DPAA’s foot-dragging.

On the other hand, Dillon had been frustrated with what he referred to as DPAA’s “dilighted and honor due their families”

McAllister’s remains had been stored at the agency’s Hawaii lab for 15 years.

Dillon, now 80, and her son, Sean, submitted DNA samples to the Department of Defense DNA Registry in August 2019, for which she received a letter of receipt a few weeks later. It was the last contact she had from the government concerning the samples, she said. More than a year later, the case has gone nowhere.

Silverstein, who now teaches forensic anthropology in Russia, is frustrated with what he regards as DPAA’s “foot-dragging” and “slow response” to the lawmakers’ query about the agency’s accounting effort.

Silverstein’s criticism of how the Defense Department operates its accounting effort is nothing new.

He had been among the internal whistleblowers who complained of failings of the agency’s predecessor, the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command, sending a memo, for example, to the agency’s commander in 2012 describing shortcomings in efforts to recover World War II remains on Tarawa.

His complaints were among those that led the Defense Department to reorganize the effort to account for the nation’s missing war dead by creating the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency, or DPAA, in 2015.

In a civil lawsuit he filed that same year in U.S. District Court in Hawaii, Silverstein alleged that certain agency personnel had retaliated against him over his complaints and other matters, a case he lost by jury trial in 2017.

Nevertheless, when Silverstein was leaving the agency last year, he was presented the Meritorious Civilian Service Award by Rear Adm. Jon Kreutz, then deputy director of DPAA.

DPAA Director Kelly McKeague outlined the agency’s position on the World War I case in a Nov. 23 letter to U.S. Sen. Maria Cantwell, D-Wash., in response to the lawmaker’s query.

The agency, McKeague wrote, is not authorized by statute to account for remains in conflicts before World War II.

“At the same time, acknowledging Dr. Silverstein’s efforts, DPAA is coordinating with the [Defense Department] components to hopefully facilitate an identification,” he wrote.

More DNA samples are required from “other known family members,” but the U.S. Army Casualty and Mortuary Affairs Operation Command had not yet located them, he wrote.

Silverstein contends that DPAA has an overwhelming amount of physical, circumstantial and historical evidence indicating the remains are those of Charles McAllister.

He also argues that the agency has an obligation to account for pre-World War II remains that come into its possession — as has been done in past cases.

“Once these remains are accessioned into the laboratory, in my opinion, the agency has accepted responsibility to treat them with the dignity, respect, diligence and honor due their sacrifice for our nation,” Silverstein said in a Dec. 5 email to Stars and Stripes in response to the McKeague letter.

“I am frankly befuddled by the dancing around of scientific and bureaucratic excuses for years, rather than vigorously seeking a way to do what is a moral imperative and what should be an honorable tribute to someone lost as missing in action” while fighting for our nation.”

McAllister’s remains have been stored in a box in DPAA’s Hawaii laboratory since 2004 after being exhumed, along with a second set of remains, from a construction site by archaeologists in Hawaii the year before.

In 2005, Silverstein successfully identified that second set of remains as being those of Pvt. Francis Lupo, a case resolved in part because a wallet embossed with Lupo’s name had been found among the artifacts.

The first set of remains defied quick identification. Silverstein completed his analysis and passed the case to a historian at the lab, which at that time was part of the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command, or JPAC.

“”I said it was unsolvable,” Silverstein said during an interview via Skype this fall.

In response to a query about the case from Stars and Stripes, DPAA spokeswoman Maj. Leah Ganoni said in an emailed statement that Silverstein’s recollection was accurate.

Silverstein’s attention over the following years turned to recovery efforts in North Korea, Vietnam and Taiwan, but as America approached the 100th anniversary of its entry into World War I in April 2017, he pulled an un-solved case for another look.

“The case always bothered me because I felt there was enough information there to follow up on,” he said.

He scoured the available clues, including uniform insignia that indicated the remains could be those of a member of the Washington National Guard. He retrieved and reviewed a history of that Guard unit.

He used geographic information system mapping to reconstruct the Second Battle of the Marne, which coincided with the event that Silverstein’s recollection of these events is accurate.

“The height and build between the remains and records also matched perfectly,” he said.

But McKeague said in his letter that “there are a number of individuals who could be associated with the remains.” That necessitates the use of nuclear DNA testing, as opposed to the mitochondrial DNA testing used on samples submitted by Dillon and her son, he said.

The genetic code in mitochondrial DNA is passed from mothers to children in almost unaltered form through generations. But nuclear DNA possesses roughly 3.3 billion more base pairs than mitochondrial DNA, making it a vastly more unique identifier.

Ganoni, the DPAA spokeswoman, told Stars and Stripes that the mitochondrial sequence found in the samples from Dillon and her son are “fairly common and can’t be used as an individual identification.”

Silverstein said a process of elimination has winnowed the list down to only McAllister, making further DNA testing unnecessary.

SEE PAGE 7
USMC to let armor Marines out early

BY CHAD GARLAND
Stars and Stripes

Marines in tank-related fields could qualify to leave the service up to one year early under a “surgical reduction in personnel” as the Corps sheds its heavy armor in favor of a lighter, more agile force.

Eligible enlisted armor Marines, senior armor staff non-commissioned officers, tank officers and main battle tank repairer/technicians may be approved to separate up to 365 days before the end of their expiration of active service, the Marine Corps announced earlier this month.

The programs are part of the Corps’ efforts to pare down its armor job fields, which began this spring after Marine Commandant Gen. David Berger announced plans to divest the service of its M1A1 Abrams main battle tanks and M1150 Assault Breacher Vehicles.

Early this year, Berger announced plans to shutter the service’s tank battalions as part of a 10-year redesign.

“As we implement Force Design to modernize the force for naval expeditionary warfare … we will begin a surgical reduction in personnel and realignment of specific capabilities and units,” said Col. Christopher Escamilla, branch head for Marine Corps Plans, Programs and Budget, in a statement last week.

Plans call for eliminating law enforcement units and slashing the number of cannon artillery battalions, reducing and restructuring infantry battalions and disbanding aircraft squadrons as the service aims to trim 2,000 troops from its ranks by 2030.

Some of the cuts are meant to free up resources for modernization without asking Congress for more money.

“These redesign efforts will enable the Marine Corps to reinvest time, money and resources into higher priority areas, which includes emerging technologies and significant changes in force structure,” Escamilla said in the statement.

Tank battalions began casing their colors this summer, as have combat logistics, engineer support and wing support units.

The 2nd Law Enforcement Battalion of the North Carolina-based II Marine Expeditionary Force was expected to deactivate Dec. 17.

Earlier this year, the service began allowing service members in the four tank-related specialties to change jobs, change services or, for those with 15 years of service, retire early.

“Certainly, the cumulative evidence in this case is consistent with the highest level of legal and forensic precedent for accepting the identification of an MIA.”

The case took on greater meaning to Silverstein after his initial hourlong conversation with Dillon last year.

On Dillon’s family room wall hangs a framed letter that her great uncle sent to his sister Effie — Dillon’s grandmother — on Dec. 3, 1917, from New York before shipping out for France. She read it to Silverstein during that first call.

“I’ll do everything I can for my country,” wrote McAllister, who enlisted at 23 while living in the Seattle area.

He concluded, “From boy gone away to war, remember me in the sweet by and bye and I’ll come home when the war is over.”

“Poor Jay was almost in tears by the time I finished reading the letter,” Dillon said. “It was just such an innocent letter.”

As of early December, Dillon had not been contacted by anyone from the Defense Department seeking leads on family members or additional DNA samples, she said.

Silverstein said in his Dec. 5 email that if DPAA has determined it is unable to “fulfill the responsibility our nation owes to Pfc McAllister, it is incumbent upon them to transfer the remains to another military mortuary authority as expeditiously, transparently and respectfully as possible.”

“I don’t think the family is concerned about what government authority oversees the identification of Charles McAllister,” Silverstein said. “They do, however, think that his remains sitting in a cardboard box for 16 years in Hawaii is simply unacceptable.”

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Retiring sergeant major reflects on 30 years in the Marines

BY JAMES BOLINGER

By 1990s. We were the last of the Vietnam-era kids, the youngest of the cold-war era kids, the first of the Gulf War kids, and we were just starting to see a bachelor’s in something. It was a huge step in the right direction. It’s just who we are as Marines, it’s in our DNA,” he told Stars and Stripes.

The military culture helped keep infection rates statistically lower than those in the civilian world, Gregory said.

“One, we are young and healthy,” he said, “and two, when someone tells us to wear a mask, we wear a mask.”

Son of Colorado

Gregory was a 20-year-old grocery store clerk in Colorado Springs, Colo., whose horizon stopped at the Rocky Mountains. Then he joined the Marines.

“Boot camp was a life-changer for me,” he said. “The first day on the parade deck and hearing the national anthem playing, that was awesome. My parents did a fine job raising me, but the Marine Corps fine-tuned me.”

He spent the next seven years as a mechanic on CH-53E Sea Stallion heavy-lift helicopters. He deployed once to Afghanistan and three times to Iraq, including the 2003 drive to Baghdad.

His next stop was Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego and the life of a drill instructor.

The day he earned the distinctive Smokey Bear campaign hat that sets drill instructors apart is his most memorable day in the Corps.

“Walking across that stage, putting on the cover with my mom and dad in the audience, that was probably the best moment,” he said.

Yelling at recruits is fun, Gregory said, but that’s not really the job. That’s turning a young man or woman into a Marine.

“These kids come from all walks of life, and you don’t know their stories,” he said. “But on graduation day their mom or dad walks up and tells you all the nice things that kid has written about you after you did your best to wear him out every day for 12 weeks. You find out maybe he didn’t have a dad in the family and wrote to his mom that you were the most positive male influence in his life. That is when it definitely hit home for me.”

The Corps has come a long way since recruit Gregory rolled into boot camp. Young Marines have access to things now that weren’t even imagined in the 1990s.

Privates no longer wait in line at the barracks pay phone for a chance to call home. Mobile phones make that a quaint memory. Today’s Marines live in dormitories with their own kitchens and high-speed internet.

“Yes, you will still have Marines who are upset about the barracks, and there are some things that we could probably do better,” he said, “but I walk into some of the facilities here, and I’m amazed at what they have.”

Educate, educate, educate

Gregory tells younger Marines to take advantage of the Corps’ tuition assistance program and further their educations. He starts his next chapter in life without a degree and that makes a difference.

“As I’m trying to put in resumes, I’m seeing that it’s a struggle,” he said, “Everyone wants education. They want to see a bachelor’s in something. It doesn’t really even matter what it is.”

Gregory plans to split his time between Colorado and San Diego before settling with his family somewhere in between. But first, he’s just going to take a break.

“I don’t know what I’m going to do yet, and I’ve got some time to figure it out,” he said. “I just want to make the right decision for my family.”

He and Debbie, his wife of 18 years, have three children: Timothy, 14, Madeline, 10, and Tucker, 6.

Gregory’s replacement, Sgt. Maj. Adam Ghariati, took up his post at MCAS Iwakuni earlier Dec. 8.

Lewis, Gregory’s former boss, emailed Stars and Stripes to say he’ll miss the man.

“I’m going to miss his sense of humor and our talks,” Lewis wrote. “I’m going to miss his advice. The most powerful thing he brought to the MCAS Iwakuni family was his passion for taking care of people.”

One thing missing from Gregory’s sea bag when he turns to ward home: any thought that a grocery clerk from Colorado Springs made the wrong move 30 years ago.

“This is a pretty good life,” he said, “and a pretty rewarding career I’ve had.”