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Community Publication

GUAM

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APRIL 27 – MAY 10, 2026

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FREE

Annie
 Write a message to your graduate in this space. You can write up to a maximum of 20 words.
 _____ Sender's name

Congratulate a 2026 grad!

Our annual Grad Tab highlighting Pacific DODEA high schools and their graduating classes will appear in the May 25 edition of Stripes Guam.

For just \$25, customize your own message that will appear in this keepsake edition.

What you need:

- A photo of the graduate
- Graduate's first name
- Your name, as you want it to appear in print (e.g. "Suzy & Steve" or "Mom & Dad")
- A congratulatory message of no more than 20 words
- The graduate's high school

Send info by May 11, 5 p.m. to PacificGrad@stripes.com and a Stripes representative will follow-up with you right away.

GET TO KNOW GUAM

Hagåtña

PAGES 8-10

Plaza de España, Hagåtña. Photo courtesy of Guam Visitors Bureau

INSIDE INFO

FINDING A JOB ON GUAM
 PAGE 6

Where America's Diving Begins

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Easy ways to meal prep in Guam

PAGE 12

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Military-friendly colleges help tame beasts

This time of year, high school seniors open their mailboxes very carefully. Be it an email inbox or a curbside postbox, they cock their heads back as if protecting their faces from flying shrapnel. With one eye shut and trembling hands, they open new mail, fearing they'll be maimed.

What, pray tell, is this vicious beast from which seniors flinch? College decision letters, of course.

Even though college admissions teams try to hide messages among flowery phraseology (e.g., "Most Esteemed Applicant: After convening a council of considerable gravitas, we have completed our annual ritual of deliberation. Your application soared as a radiant comet across our universe. However, the constellations of capacity and circumstance have aligned in such a way that we are unable to extend to you a place within our academic dominion at this time."), college rejection letters puncture vital organs like shotgun blasts, leaving recipients mortally wounded.

On the other hand, college acceptance letters mimic instant shots of adrenaline, causing recipients to jump, dance, giggle, pant and faint with happiness before they've had a chance to notice the massive tuition bills.

All high school seniors applying to colleges are subject to these emotional extremes; however, for many military brats and their parents, there's an additional beast lurking beyond those college acceptances — finances.

Unless you've won the lottery, you're worried about paying for college. Additionally, you're concerned about military issues affecting your college finances such as proving residency, qualifying for discounts and aid and tapping into federal benefits.

To fund our three children at private colleges, one might think my husband and I worked night shifts at 7-Eleven and moved into a cardboard box under an overpass to get by. Not so. Instead, our family used a combination of my Navy husband's military-related benefits, school financial aid, scholarship grants, private loans and federal student loan funding. We applied for everything under the sun, including our base Spouses Club scholarships, Military Officers Association of America student loans and grants, DECA-Fisher House scholarships and local Rotary Club scholarships.

It's a lot for the typical busy military family to manage, but with patience, prompt filing, hard work and good record keeping, it's entirely

The Meat and Potatoes of Life

Lisa Smith Molinari

doable, especially if the colleges you are considering are supportive to military veterans and their dependents who wish to enroll.

These schools are referred to as being "veteran friendly" or "military friendly," but both terms refer to colleges and universities that put extra resources in place to help military veterans and other military-connected students. Our three children went to colleges

that were very military friendly, and we found this extremely helpful when seeking assistance with paying tuition bills using several sources of funding. Both schools had special military offices on campus, where staff were dedicated to handling GI Bill and Yellow Ribbon benefits as well as other aid, loans and scholarships for military-connected students.

MilitaryTimes.com publishes an annual "Best for Vets" list of colleges, using survey data analyzing military student success metrics, the range of military-specific resources, the level of financial assistance offered to military students, and other factors. The list contains 357 U.S. colleges, each with specific information about military programs, statistics and services.

MilitaryFriendly.com maintains an extensive list of post-secondary schools rated for military friendliness. Military students can search the list using criteria such as "G.I. Bill approved," "Yellow Ribbon Participant," "Campus Learning," "Online/Remote Learning," and military-friendly awards.

Even Ivy League schools have tried to become military friendly. For example, Brown University banished ROTC from its campus during Vietnam War protests, and didn't invite it back until 2016, establishing the "Office of Military Affiliated Students" and offering veteran scholarship funding.

However, the Ivies' efforts may have come too late. On February 27, War Secretary Pete Hegseth ordered a ban on Pentagon-funded military students from attending many top-ranked schools beginning 2026-2027, including Brown, Harvard, MIT, Princeton, Columbia, and Yale due to "anti-American resentment and military disdain."

This college decision season, you may approach your mailbox with caution, but as long as you focus on military-friendly colleges, you'll have reinforcements to slay the beast.

Read more of Lisa Smith Molinari's columns at: themeatandpotatoesoflife.com and in Lisa's book, *The Meat and Potatoes of Life: My True Lit Com*
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Celebrating Month of the Military Child

McCool Elementary Middle School

2nd Grade Mrs. Angoco



I Am A Military Child
By: Avacyn Saffell

My name is Ava
Intelligent
Loved
I'm a clown
Talked to mazing
Reader
Young

Cool
Humble
I'm an artist
Lively
Determined








I Am A Military Child
By: Elisabeth Walker

Marvelous
I Love my family
Love is so special.
I Love my dad.
Together as a family
A puppy is my favorite pet!
Ready for third grade.
Youthful

Cute
Helpful
Intelligent
Lively
Determined

I Am A Military Child
By: Jase Halmi

My name is Jase.
I love my family.
Lucky to be alive!
I love my dogs.
Trucks are cool
Awsome
Really good at soccer
Young

Caring
Happy
I love ice cream.
Loving
Dreamer








I Am A Military Child
By: River Torres

My name is River
I love my family
Loving
I love anime
Tech Savvy
Awsome
River is my nick name
Young

Cool
Happy
Intelligent
Lively
Determined

I Am A Military Child
By: Carter Simons

My name is Carter.
I am smart!
Loving.
I'm kind
Tater tot lover.
Artist
Ready
Youth

Calculator Master
Helpful
I'm AMAZING!
Lion lover
Dinosaur lover





I Am A Military Child
By: Gabby Zabala

My name is Gabby
I'm a hair waker
Loving
I'm very smart!
Tater tot lover!
A military girl
Rice lover
Young

Chill
Happy heart
I like my friend Jade!
Labubu lover
Dog lover






I Am A Military Child
By: Kairo Griffin

My name is Kairo.
I'm LOVING.
LEASER.
I LIKE ANIME!
THEE LOVER
AWAKTIDE
RAEE
YOUNG

CREATIVE
HELPFUL
IMPROVISAN
LOVED
DECORATE








I Am A Military Child
By: Troy Vineaki

My Dad's in the Navy.
I am helpful.
Loves to Beyblade
I am cool.
Troy
A Super Star
Royal
Young

Caring
Happy
I am kind.
Love Luigi
Dependable

I Am A Military Child
By: DeVel Wilson

My name is DeVel
I'm helpful
Loving
Intelligent
Tech Savvy
A nice boy
Racer
Young

Caring
Helpful
I'm fast.
Loved
Determined





I Am A Military Child
By: Jade Matei

My name is Jade.
I love my family
Lovely
I am an Artist!
Teacher
Active
Ready
Young

Cute
Helpful
I love my Teacher
Love myself
Dog lover





I Am A Military Child
By: Kaitie Hiet

My name is Kaitie.
I like Jade, as a friend.
Love my family
I like Mrs. Angoco
Teacher
Artist
Responsible
Writing
Caring
Helpful
I love my mom and dad.
Love dancing and singing
Diligent





I Am A Military Child
By: Jaden Ametepey

My name is Jaden.
I'm loving
Leader
Integrity
Teamwork
Always responsible
Ready
Young

Child
Helpful
I am fast!
Loving
Determined





I Am A Military Child
By: Milliana Bronner

My name is Milliana.
I am smart.
Loving
I love my family!
Technology Expert
Artist
Resilient
Young

Creative
Happy
I love basketball.
Lucky to have friends.
Determined





I Am A Military Child
By: Violet Clarke

My name is Violet.
I am smart
Loving
Intelligent
Taco lover
Active
Ready
Young

Caring
Helpful
Idea thinker
Learning lover
Dog lover





Check out more military children stories at guam.stripes.com





UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND GLOBAL CAMPUS in Asia



Congratulations Graduates! SATURDAY, MAY 9 TUMON BAY, GUAM

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Jerome Vincent Nicholas Oliva
Asuncion
Troy Batts-Reyes
Brandon Lee Baxter
Carlos Becker
Justin Billingsley
Scott Allen Birkley
Nathaniel Cantu Jr.
Brian Oliver Carter
Erik Armando Chairez
Chih-Hsin Chen
Joseph Andrew Bolano de La Cruz
Annaliza M. Delacruz
Walter Joseph Fahnestock Jr.
Jinsy Lirio Fassoth
Todd Michael Fedele II
Linda Gallucci
Danielle Legrand
Taeodong Ha
Alexander Hammett
Marc Eric Hernandez
Christina Hestermer
Grey Hodson
Shamar Lee Hope
Lawrence Charles Kamal Johnson
Steven Kay
Justin Lamar Kerns
Ki Hong Kim
Skye Lebreton
Nga Le
Chere Taynae Lee
Danielle Legrand
Jill Velasquez Limjoco
Jonathan Lindstrom
Dayla Moghimi Azari
Nathan B. Newberry
Rose Nerlie Oceant
Amber Ann Padilla
Sierra A. Parzyck
Benjamin Isaac Pittenger
Thomas Ray Regan
Karen Leon Santiago
Andrae Nathan Servida Sarao
Reden Bernard Sese
Jun Shimada
Tyler Christopher Stamples
Gian Carlo Sunga
Vincent Toth
Roy Daniel Vaneck
Taylor Watkins
Ashlie Westover
Tomika Giovanna White
Mark Christopher Witten
Bla Genuw Yang

Master of Science

- Kimberly Ackers
Artur Bernatowski
Karlann M. Briales
Christopher James Burns
Katherine Mary Campbell
Raymond Chavez
Man Wai Chu
Tisha Flores
Carlos Funezsanchez
Kara Garcia
Kyle Gill
Cordy F. Herring III
Diana Hinkle
Jennifer Hope
Joshua Mcloud
Shima Noga
Jay Perez
Michael Perez
Juan Ricardo Ramirez
Williams
Jeffrey Brian Robinson
Mary Alice Smoot
Karrisa Tealer
Kenneth M. Briones
Justin Brown
Jannice Carrasco
Ryan Thomas Carter
Abigail Collum
D'Andra Meshalia Credit
Anika Daughrin
Timothy Dischnard
Ryan Douglas Elkins
Alexander Dante Entzinger
Mario Fail
Haley Freeman
Shalacious Gamble
Steven V. Griffiths Jr.
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Kenisha Hunter
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Skylar Mya Kamenski
Amy Kathryn Karpan
Mallory Paige Kelley
Jiyon Kim
Kanon Kobayashi
Yolimar End Lara
Andre Jerome McClendon
Kaitlyn Mintz
Ian Morris
Brooklyn Murdaugh
Meredith Newton
Gregory Paik
Chase Wilnard Keonta Porter
Adrian Powell
Amir Randle
Salomon Rodriguez-Constanza
David Rothgery
Ayako Sakamoto
Devin Harold Saunders
Hana Sloss
Vichien Sorncan
Ronald Bernard Spencer
Taylon Shivon Stokes
Yukiko Takahashi
Yvonne Jacqueline Taylor
Harjot Kaur Torres
Justin Ezekiel Torrez
Aletheia Tsuchiya
Emma Clair Turner
Jason Williams
Sanae Yoshida

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Brandon Eugene Bledsoe
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Ryan Thomas Carter
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Bachelor of Science

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Joseph F. Aglubat
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Isama Amaya
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Minh An Tran
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- Olivier Valmond
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Gukbeom Kim
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Angela Faith King

File photo



Finding a job on Guam

STRIPES GUAM

So you've PCSed with your spouse to Guam. They have a job. You don't. There are jobs available on Guam, but you just need to know where to look. First of all, the Fleet & Family Support Center on Naval Base Guam and the Military & Family Support Center on Andersen Air Force Base offer classes to assist on finding employment, writing resumes, interviewing skills and techniques, starting your own business, applying for federal jobs and more. Here's some other helpful resources to get you started.

Guam Department of Labor's One-Stop Career Center

Great place to visit early on so your name can be placed on a list of jobseekers and your resume can be available to a potential employer match.

OFFICE LOCATION: 414 West Soledad Avenue
Suite 808 (8th Floor), GCIC Building
Hagatna, GU 96910
WEBSITE: <https://dol.guam.gov>



The PDN's online job finder service

guampdn.com/classifieds/job/ is a great resource.



Indeed.com

Indeed gives job seekers free access to search for jobs, post resumes and research companies.



Simplyhired

Simplyhired allows you to compare salaries, read reviews and apply directly.



Jooble

Jooble allows you to find full-time, temporary and part-time positions along with job alerts and company reviews.



www.usajobs.gov

Looking for a job with the U.S. government? Here's the site to check out.



On-base agencies

Joint Region Marianas

EMAIL: jrmj9nafhro@us.navy.mil



Regional NAF Human Resources Office

PHONE: (671) 349-1154/2154
2210/5154/3154
EMAIL: NAFjobs@fe.navy.mil

USAF 36 FSS Civilian Personnel Office

PHONE: (671) 366-3674/671-366-3677
EMAIL: andersenstaffing@us.af.mil

DON Human Resources Office

PHONE: (671) 333-4063/671-366-6817

Other job sites



guamjobsonline.com



aafes.com



deca.com



alutiiq.com

For more on jobs, go to guam.stripes.com

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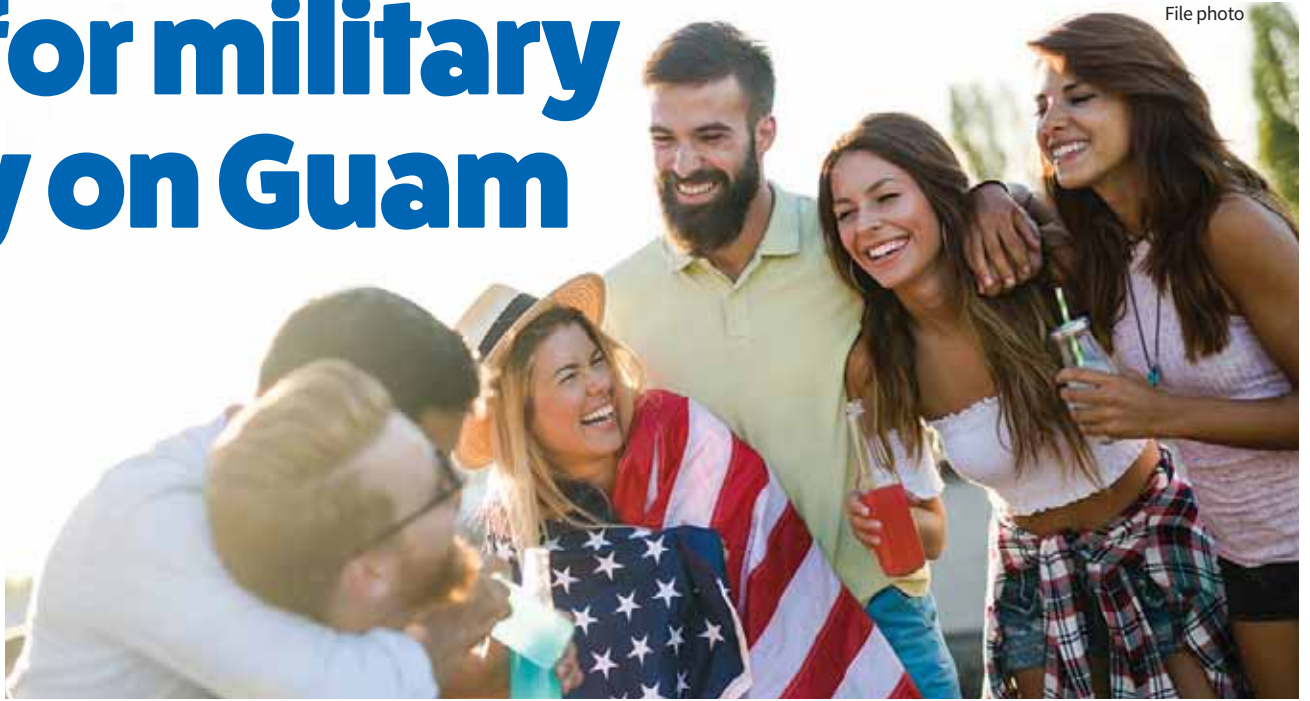
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Resources for military community on Guam

File photo



STRIPES GUAM

Guam boasts a vibrant local community that provides resources and support to active duty military and their families. Check out the following resources and get connected with your new community!

■ Armed Forces Committee

Within the Guam Chamber of Commerce is the Armed Forces Committee (AFC), which “Fosters mutual respect and a congenial working relationship between businesses and the military communities; promotes cooperation through the free flow of information; and ensures fair treatment for local business with the military.”



■ Navy League

The role of the Navy League in Guam is “Proudly providing support for men and women who serve in our country’s sea services; and the youth of Guam who participate in NLUS supported programs.”



■ American Red Cross

To access support from the American Red Cross 24/7:

Red Cross Hero Care Center: 1-877-272-7337

Andersen AFB: (671) 366-2574/688-0283

Guam Chapter (Main Office): (671) 472-6217/9



■ Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society

The mission of the Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society is to provide, in partnership with the Navy and Marine Corps, financial, educational and other need-based assistance to active-duty and retired sailors and Marines, their eligible family members, and survivors.

NMCRS Guam: 671-564-1885

Email: Guam@nmcrs.org

■ Air Force Aid Society

When unexpected financial emergencies arise, AFAS provides no-interest loans and grants to help Air Force families meet immediate needs and make a positive step towards a lasting financial solution.

Location: Airman & Family Readiness Center, Bldg. 22026, Andersen AFB

Phone: (671) 366-8136

Email: 36fss.fsh@us.af.mil

— SPOUSE PROGRAMS —

COMPASS is a spouse-to-spouse mentoring and orientation program that helps familiarize attendees to various aspects of the military lifestyle. Learn about your sailor’s command, opportunities for you and your family, network with other spouses and develop skills to handle the challenges of military life.



Heart Link

A fun, informative workshop geared for AF spouses married 5 or less years. Learn about local resources, military customs, traditions, and so much more! Games, prizes, giveaways and lots of fun! This is a great opportunity to network with fellow AF spouses during this interactive workshop.



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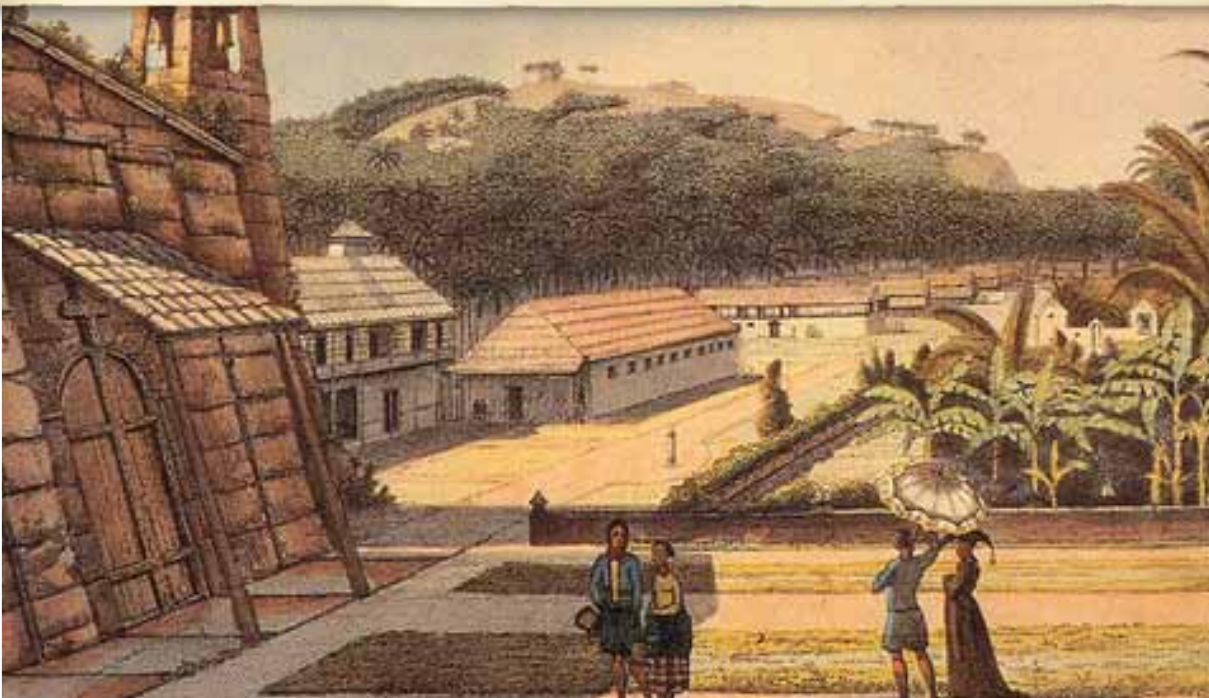


GUAM

A VILLAGE PROFILE COURTESY OF GUAMPEDIA

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

Hagåtña Timeless as blood itself



The earliest de silleria building in Guam was the 1709 Dulce Nombre de Maria Church in Hagåtña. Photo courtesy of Louis Choris/Lawrence J. Cunningham, Guampedia

BY JILLETTE LEON-GUERRERO,
GUAMPEDIA

Hagåtña is derived from the word *“haga”*, meaning blood. It is believed that this village came about due to the bloodlines of the families that established the village. Appearing as “Agadña” or “Agaña” in Spanish maps, and later, “Agana” in American maps, the Guam Legislature in 1998 changed the official spelling to “Hagåtña” to reflect the original CHamoru pronunciation of the village’s name.

Village history

Carbon dating indicates that the village was inhabited 2,630 years ago and possibly as long as 3,020 years ago. These dates indicate that Hagåtña was settled prior to the appearance of Latte, stone pillars and cup-shaped capstones, approximately 1,100 years ago. Little is

known about the village during this time.

Ferdinand Magellan made landfall on Guam 6 March 1521, but it was not until 1565 that Miguel Lopez de Legazpi claimed the Mariana Islands for Spain. The Galleon Trade between Acapulco and Manila was established shortly after Legazpi’s arrival in Manila and passed regularly through the “Ladrones Islands.” Between Magellan’s visit and 1602, approximately 74 ships with as many as 300 people aboard passed through the islands, usually between Guam and Rota. The islanders began to anticipate the arrival of the ships and set out in their swift canoes to trade water and produce for iron.

During this period it is known that outsiders lived among the CHamoru people for long periods of time although there is scant information about the village of Hagåtña.

Whalers, pirates and traders

Until 1815 Spanish Galleons plied the waters between Rota and Guam conducting trade between Manila and Acapulco. At least 33 other non-Spanish ships are documented to have had contact with the islands during

this same period. They were usually whalers, pirates preying on the Galleons, or traders.

Few detailed accounts of the village are known prior to the arrival of the Catholic mission headed by Father Diego Luis de San Vitores in 1668. San Vitores is credited with establishing the Catholic Church in the Mariana Islands. Shortly after arriving on the island of Guam, he renamed the village of Hagåtña, “San Ignacio de Agadña,” in honor of his holy father and patriarch.

At that time Hagåtña was reported to be the island’s principal village. It is estimated that 1,000 people lived in the village that reportedly had 203 dwellings: 53 upper-class homes and 150 other dwellings that belonged to lower caste residents “who had no part of the affairs of Agadña.”

San Vitores was initially welcomed by the island’s nobles, notably the principal Chief of Hagåtña, Chief Quipuha (Kepuha). In appreciation of his graciousness, Chief Quipuha was the first adult CHamoru to be baptized and was renamed Juan in honor of Saint John the Baptist, the patron saint of the island. Don Juan Quipuha as he was then called, is reported to have donated land in Hagåtña for the construction of the first Catholic Church and the house of the Society of Jesus. Upon his passing, he was buried beneath the altar of the Church. Some historians believe that the Dulce Nombre de Maria Cathedral Basilica was built on the site of this first Catholic Church.

Some have questioned the reason why the mission was established in Hagåtña. Father Francisco Garcia, who chronicled San Vitores’ life in 1683, states that Father San Vitores was called back to Hagåtña after visiting several villages on the island when the:

Nobles made it a point of honor that he live in their village. After all, the superior of all the ↗



Plaza de Espana. Exterior north side the arches of the Almacen and wall. Photo by Burt Sardoma Jr., Guampedia



Pre-War Hagåtña Photo by Guampedia



fathers should live in the principal village. According to Garcia, Father San Vitores was not happy with this situation but made the best of it saying, 'I am not a prisoner here without consolation, obeying the divine disposition of affairs as if it were the most glorious of missions.' Garcia said, 'But what the devil planned in order to block the spread of the Faith, the Lord used as a means to establish it more solidly. He [San Vitores] made Agaña the stronghold for Christianity in the islands, with a church and a house of the Society of Jesus.'

Violence erupted within a few months of the arrival of San Vitores, due to growing opposition to the missionaries' teachings — which clashed with the traditional practices of the Chamorus. Sporadic fighting on Guam continued for 16 years with a final major uprising in 1684 when the hostile Chamoru faction tried unsuccessfully to drive the Spanish out once and for all, though uprisings continued in the northern Marianas until 1695. Spanish troops aided by newly baptized Catholic Chamorus were finally able to subdue resistance to the establishment of Guam as a Spanish colony.

From Spanish hands to American

During this time, Hagåtña remained the principal village of the island and eventually became the seat of the Spanish government. In 1687 it was formally named as a city and began to take on the characteristics of a Spanish capital. Hagåtña remained the seat of the Spanish government in the Mariana Islands until June of 1898 when Governor Juan Marina, his Spanish officers and military personnel surrendered their arms to Captain Henry Glass of the USS Charleston and boarded the ship as prisoners of war. All Spanish flags on the island were confiscated and the Americans departed without leaving a single American soldier on the island.

A little over a year later, the first regularly appointed American military governor, Richard P. Leary, arrived on Guam. While Governor Leary lived on board the ship for three months while the governor's residence was being renovated, his aide William Safford took up residence in Hagåtña and in effect was the acting or Lieutenant Governor of Guam. Safford, a naturalist, kept a journal of his year-long residence on the island that provides detailed descriptions of the village of Hagåtña.

Arriving for the first time in the village of Hagåtña he observed:

Several streets diverging from the entrance to the town, more or less in the direction parallel to the beach and to the cliffs back of the town. Everything clean and tidy; best houses of masonry with tiled roofs, others of frame or bamboo thatched with coconut leaves or Nipa palm. All of them raised from the ground. Reached the Plaza de Magallanes, upon which face the Palace or Government House, and other public buildings including the Tribunal. Behind the Palace rises the steep escarpment of a plateau on the brink of which is an old fort and powder magazine now used as a signal station; on the west side of the plaza are the Public Treasury and the barracks of the native troops; on the east side the church, the palace and government store house are on the south side; and the tribunal and several private dwellings on the north side.

Between 1899 and 1941 Hagåtña became the seat of

the American naval government. During this time improvements were made to the village and a new hospital was built. Entertainment centered around the Plaza de España, the old Spanish seat of government in the center of the village. The population of the village steadily grew from 7,432 in 1920 to more than 10,000 in 1940.

Japanese takeover

On 8 December 1941 World War II came to Guam. By December 10th the island was officially claimed by Japan and Hagåtña was renamed Akashi-shi. Akashi-shi became the headquarters of the Japanese administration. The Japanese occupation lasted about two and a half years.

American bombardment to retake the island began on June 16 and lasted for three weeks. Systematic bombardment began on July 8th. Hagåtña sustained major damage during this time. More than 1,200 homes were destroyed in addition to many public and private buildings. Numerous structures of historical significance also sustained major damage or were destroyed.

Post-war rebuilding

Post war was a time of rebuilding. Hagåtña again became the capital city of the US Territory of Guam. The rubble from the war was bulldozed into the sea to form the Paseo de Susanna. The federal government, and later the government of Guam condemned large tracts of land and redrew property lots in the village essentially redistributing villages resources. In some cases this action left original landowners without any property in the village. The village population plummeted from 10,004 in 1940 to only 800 in 1950, a ninety-two percent decrease.

By 1960 the population had grown to 1,642. The village reported the second highest median family income on the island with the largest group of workers engaged in wholesale or retail trades, professional services or public administration.

In 1962, a mandatory security clearance required of visitors to the island was lifted. The security clearance had been in place for 21 years and restricted entry to many including US citizens. The lifting of this security requirement brought about significant change to the island and the village of Hagåtña.

While Hagåtña had always been the center of government and commerce on the island, the new tourism industry shifted the focus from Hagåtña to Tumon. The island experienced a building boom as well as an increased presence of military personnel due to America's entry into the Vietnam War. The population of Hagåtña grew to 2,119 by 1970 with the largest group of workers engaged as craftsmen and carpenters while the wholesale and retail trades reported 175 less workers than in 1960.

By 1980, the village population had shrunk to 896, climbing back to 1,100 by the year 2000.

A cultural revival in the 1990s spurred the renaming of the village to its traditional name, Hagåtña. Today, the village remains the seat of the island's government as well as a center of commerce and trade. The village's residential population is only a shadow of its former self. This fact combined with its significant historical and cultural heritage have fueled a movement to revitalize the island's capital city. A master plan has been developed by the Hagåtña Restoration and Redevelopment Authority to revitalize, preserve and protect the heritage and economic vitality of Guam's capital city.

This village at a glance

- Population: As of the 2010 US Census, the village population was 1,051.
Village officials: Michael Thomas Cruz Gumataotao, Mayor, 2025-Present; John A. Cruz, Mayor, 2005-2024; Felix F. Ungacta, Commissioner/Mayor, 1981-2005; Thomas F. Mendiola, Commissioner, 1973-1981; Lucas L. San Nicolas, Commissioner, 1962-1973; Juan D. Perez, Commissioner, 1952-1962; Antonio Suarez, Commissioner, 1918-1930; Joaquin Cruz Perez, Commissioner, 1894-1899
Vicente dela Cruz, Deputy Commissioner, (no date provided); Lorenzo Franquez, Deputy Commissioner, 1930; Lucas de Castro, Deputy Commissioner, (no date provided); Jesus de Rivera, Deputy Commissioner, (no date provided); Antonio Guerrero, Deputy Commissioner, 1832-1834
- Konsehelon Mahot Guåhan, the Mayor's Council of Guam
Village description: Hagåtña, located in central Guam, is nestled between Agana Bay and the cliffs of Agana Heights. It is considered the first European city in the Pacific because of the early colonization of the Marianas, as compared to the rest of the Pacific. It was declared a city by a Spanish royal decree 40 March 1686 as the capital of the Marianas, the residence of the Spanish governor and the site of the garrison.
Guam's main roadway, Marine Corps Drive, runs through the village from east to west. Another major artery, Route 4, dissects the village from the shoreline to the central part of the island, running east. Hagåtña borders the village of Tamuning in the east and Asan to the west.
The capital of Guam, Hagåtña is the seat of the island's three branches of government: Judicial, Legislative, and Executive as well as the religious center for the Catholic Church. It is also home to numerous commercial activities including legal offices, banks, department/variety stores, insurance, technical and professional services and restaurants.
The cultural resources of the village are significant being home to a large number of Guam's historical sites. The Guam Museum, Hagåtña boat basin (formally known as the Gregorio D. Perez Marina), the Guam Public Library (formally the Nieves M. Flores Memorial Library) and numerous public facilities are also located within the village.
As opposed to the island's historical past, Hagåtña is currently one of the least populated villages on the island. Residential homes primarily are located below the cliff at the western portion of the village.



Chamorro children smile despite standing in debris and rummage of Hagåtña in this photo taken at the close of WWII. Photo courtesy of Dave Morris, Guampedia

SEE GUAM ON PAGE 10



Latte Stone Park Photo by Guampedia



The San Antonio Bridge Photo courtesy of Lawrence J. Cunningham, Guampedia

GUAM: The Guam Museum a highlight

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

Points of interest

Historical

Senator Angel Leon Guerrero Santos Memorial Park/Latte Stone Park



Senator Angel Leon Guerrero Santos Memorial Park
Photo by Nathalie Pereda, Guampedia

This park was originally established during the administration of US appointed Governor Ford Quint Elvidge (1953 to 1956). The park was renamed the Senator Angel Leon Guerrero Santos Latte Memorial Park in 2005 in honor of the Guam Legislature senator's efforts on behalf of the CHamoru people. Santos was a CHamoru rights activist and founding member of Nasion Chamoru, an indigenous activist group.

The park contains eight latte (stone pillars with capstones) transferred by the military from their original locations in the Me'pu and Fena regions in the southern interior of Guam as new military bases were being built in these locations.

Japanese World War II Caves

These caves, located at the base of the cliff line, were man-made with forced labor during the Japanese occupation during World War II. They were used for storage of supplies and shelter. One cave entrance is located directly behind the Latte Stone site at the Senator Angel Leon Guerrero Santos Latte Memorial Park.

Lujan House



Lujan House Photo by Guampedia

Also known as the Guam Institute, the Lujan House is one of the few remaining pre-World War II houses in Hagåtña. The house was built in 1911 by Jose Pangelinan Lujan and was first used as a residence. In 1928 the Guam Institute, founded by Nieves M. Flores in 1922, moved to the Lujan House. Students paid a monthly fee of \$1.00 in order to attend this private school. Among the many notable leaders that graduated from this school were Governor Ricardo J. Bordallo, Bishop Felixberto C. Flores and Judge Cristobal Duenas. The school was forced to close when the Japanese invaded the island in December 1941. The Guam Institute was listed on the

National Register of Historic Places on 6 October 1977.

Plaza de España

The Plaza de España was the location of the Governor's Palace during the Spanish occupation. Academics speculate that the plaza was established at its current location after a typhoon in 1693 destroyed Fort Santa María de Guadalupe, where the governor's residence had been located since 1683. The Governor's Palace served as the seat of government for both the Spanish and the first U.S. Naval Government. Most of the palace was destroyed by the shelling of Hagåtña during the re-taking of Guam in World War II.

The historical structures of the Plaza de España that have survived until the 21st century include:

- The Garden House, which was built around 1736. Prior to World War II, it was used as storage shed to house garden tools for the Plaza de España. In 1954, the Guam Women's Club, at the request of Governor Elvidge, re-established and staffed the Guam Museum within the Garden House, though it has since closed. The original Museum had been bombed during World War II.
- The Azotea and inner court are the only visible structure left of the Spanish palace. In 1933, the U.S. Naval Government built a tiered tin roof over the Azotea, which was originally an open terrace.
- The Chocolate House functioned as a merienda place, where the Spanish and American administrators of Guam and their families entertained, serving morning and afternoon beverages and pastries. The Chocolate House contains two of the oldest Spanish coat of arms on Guam. One is made from soft greenstone dated 1879; the other made of marble is dated 1895.
- The Almacen (Warehouse) Arches and Almacen flagstone floors — The remains of the former entrance to the palace warehouse, which later became an arsenal, and segments of the original floors are still present.
- The ruins of the walls built during Governor Muro's administration, including the more than nine-foot walls behind the Azotea and the low walls behind the Plaza de España ruins, also remain standing. The Plaza was listed on the National Register of Historic Places on 1 May 1974.

Dulce Nombre de Maria Cathedral-Basilica



Dulce Nombre de Maria Cathedral-Basilica Photo by Guampedia

The Cathedral-Basilica rests on the site of the first Roman Catholic mission in the Mariana Islands. CHamorus constructed the original wooden thatched chapel from 1669 to 1670 under the direction of Padre Diego Luís de San Vitores on lands granted by Chief Quipuha of Hagåtña. The CHamoru nobility initially welcomed San Vitores and his fellow priests. The chief of one of the mountain villages complained about letting strangers live in their land, but upon learning that the men were padres, he invited them to his village. Chief Quipuha was the first adult to be baptized, followed by all of the nobles of Hagåtña. Don Juan Quiphua, as he was called after he became a Christian, was the first to be buried beneath the church.

Significant dates/events in the history of the building of the Cathedral-Basilica are:

- In 1705 through 1709, Governor Manuel Argüelles y Valdéz built a church of three naves in Hagåtña using blocks of coral from the sea.
- In 1862, Father Aniceto Ibanez constructed a beautiful

chapel to the side of the existing church.

- In 1772, French Commander Crozet described the church as a "beautiful church of red brick and tile."
- In 1912, the Iglesia de Dulce Nombre de Maria was designated a Cathedral. This structure survived until World War II when it was destroyed during the shelling of Hagåtña in preparation for the American invasion.
- In 1958, the present building was completed.
- In 1981, Pope John Paul II elevated the Cathedral to a minor Basilica.
- In 1998, the church underwent major renovations to include a museum gallery featuring exhibits of Guam history and culture and a gift shop.

One of the principal features of the Cathedral-Basilica is the statue of Santa Marian Kamalen. According to oral tradition, a fisherman off Cocos Island, Malesso discovered the statue, during the late 17th century. It is believed that the statue, the patron saint of the Mariana Islands, washed up on the shores of Malesso (Merizo) in spite of its great weight.

By the mid 1800s, it was transferred and permanently housed at the Iglesia de Dulce Nombre de Maria.

Santo Papa as Juan Pablo Dos Monument

This bronze statue commemorates the 1981 visit by Pope John Paul II to Guam. This was the first papal visit to the island. The statue stands on a median on Chalan Santo Papa Juan Pablo Dos Street, named in his honor. It is the location where he held an outdoor Mass in February 1981. The bronze statue originally rotated one full turn every 12 hours; the motor no longer works.

Spanish Bridge

This stone bridge, also known as Tollai Acho (stone bridge in CHamoru), was built around 1800 during the Spanish administration of Governor Manuel Muro, and named after San Antonio de Padua. The bridge spanned the Hagåtña River, where it flowed before its course was greatly changed after the village was rebuilt, after World War II. On the south side of the bridge sits a bronze statue of La Sirena, Guam's legendary mermaid.

The single span, arched bridge with stone abutments is located at Aspinall Street and Route 1. The bridge originally connected the districts of San Ignacio and Bilibic. The bridge was damaged during World War II and finally restored in 1966 with concrete. The bridge was listed on the National Register of Historic Sites on 6 September 1974.

Guam Museum

The Guam Museum, located at Skinner Plaza in the heart of Hagåtña, Guam, is a government of Guam owned museum focused on the history of Guam. Its official name is Senator Antonio M. Palomo Guam Museum and Educational Facility.

The Guam Museum, opened in 2016, reflects the diversity, creativity, and resilience of Guam and the Mariana Islands. It is hoped to encourage people to engage in dialogue, to share multiple perspectives and experiences, and debate issues that concern us all today. and experiences, and debate issues that concern us all today.

Guam Congress Building

The newly-restored Guam Congress Building holds the legislative session hall, hearing rooms, and offices of the island's senators. The Guam Legislature returned to the building, after more than 25 years of absence, in January 2017, after reconstruction finished in December 2016.

The building is the site of the historic Guam Congress walk-out, which led to the passage of the Organic Act of Guam in 1950.

See more of what Guam has to offer at
GUAM.STRIPES.COM

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Easy ways to meal prep in Guam

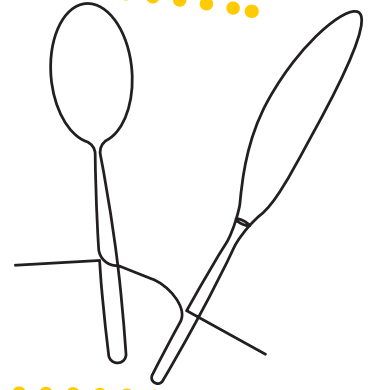
THE GUAM GUIDE

If you're like most of us, you've probably set some big health and fitness goals at one time or another. But let's be honest—sticking to them is often easier said than done, and healthy eating gets pushed to the back burner. Don't stress—we've got your back! One of the best ways to stay on track is through meal prepping. It's a game-changer that saves time, keeps your portions in



check, and ensures you're eating nutritious meals even on your busiest days.

Lucky for us, Guam has several fantastic meal prep businesses ready to help you crush your goals. But before we dive into those, let's talk about how you can master meal prepping at home. It's easier than you think, budget-friendly, and incredibly rewarding. If convenience is what you need, we'll also highlight local businesses that can take the load off your shoulders.



Meal prepping on a budget

Think meal prepping is too complicated or time-consuming? Think again! Prepping meals at home can be simple, affordable, and even fun.

Here are some easy tips to get you started:

- **Plan your menu:** Keep it simple! Pick a few recipes that share similar ingredients, like chicken adobo and chicken stir-fry, to save money and make shopping easier. We have some Guam-Style healthy recipes to include in your plans.
- **Buy in bulk:** Stock up on staples like rice, beans,



and frozen vegetables. Check out local grocery stores that offer bulk purchase options like Cost-U-Less or Don Don Donki.

- **Invest in reusable containers:** You don't need fancy ones! A sturdy stack from Healthy City or Kmart will do the trick. You can also order in bulk online, like these reusable containers. Bonus points if you can keep them from mysteriously disappearing like socks in the laundry!
- **Prep in batches:** Cook large portions and freeze meals for future use. Craving more local flavors? Throw these 16 mouth-watering Chamorro food recipes into the mix as well!



• **Shop local:** Visit Guam's farmer's markets for fresh, affordable produce.

• **Leverage fiesta leftovers:** Post-fiesta balutan can be a lifesaver! Your fridge might already be stocked with lechon, pancit, and dessert after the holiday season—perfect for portioning into ready-to-go meals. Who needs meal prep when Auntie Mary's cooking has you covered? Three-day-old chicken estufao is basically a love language BUT don't forget, NO PRE-BALUTANING at the party please!



Meal prepping at home isn't just cost-effective; it's also a great way to customize your meals to suit your dietary preferences and health goals.

Local meal prep services

If cooking isn't your thing or you're short on time, these Guam-based meal prep services offer convenient and delicious options:



1 Fit for You Guam

Fit for You Guam is a lifesaver if you want healthy meals without the hassle. They've got you covered whether you're aiming for weight loss, bulking up, or just trying to eat better.

Highlights:

- Customizable meal plans.
- Options for keto, low-carb, and high-protein diets.
- Convenient delivery service.

Contact Info:

WEBSITE: www.fitforyouguam.com
INSTAGRAM: @fitforyouguam
EMAIL: info@fitforyouguam.com



WEBSITE

INSTAGRAM

2 The Boka Box

The Boka Box brings a gourmet touch to meal prepping. With creative recipes and premium ingredients, this service is perfect for foodies who want to eat healthy without sacrificing flavor.

Highlights:

- Chef-curated meals.
- Specialty items like smoothies and snacks.
- Great for adventurous eaters.
- A variety of diet plans, including paleo, keto, wholesome, low calorie, Mediterranean, carnivore, and athlete-focused options.
- Monthly health programs designed to help people eat healthier and lose weight.

Contact Info:

FACEBOOK: <https://www.facebook.com/thebokabox/>
INSTAGRAM: @thebokabox
CONTACT: +1 671-922-2652



FACEBOOK

INSTAGRAM

3 The Health Bistro

The Health Bistro combines convenience with nutrition, offering meals that cater to a variety of dietary preferences, including gluten-free and diabetic-friendly options.

Highlights:

- Focus on clean eating.
- Grab-and-go meals available in-store. (depending on availability, CALL FIRST)
- Affordable pricing.

Contact Info:

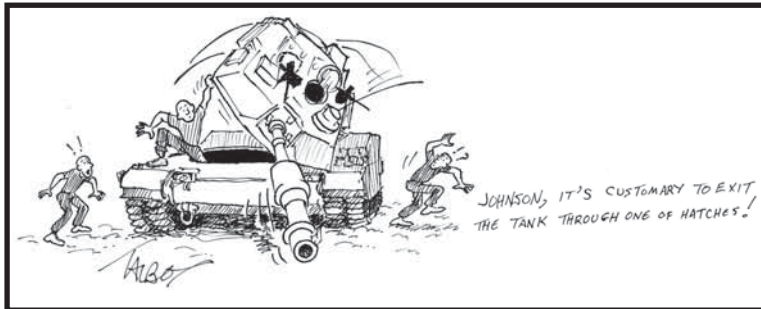
INSTAGRAM: @healthbistroguam
CONTACT: +1 671-649-4871



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By following these tips or partnering with one of Guam's excellent meal prep businesses, you'll be well on your way to achieving your health goals.

COMICS CORNER



- Daryl Talbot

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Boonie Stomps Guam

INFORMATION PROVIDED BY
GUAM BOONIE STOMPERS




SCHEDULE 2026

May 2 (Sat.)	Ague Cove (Medium)
May 9 (Sat.)	Mepo Cave & Latte (Difficult)
May 16 (Sat.)	HIKE CLEAN-UP /To'guan Bay to Humatak Bay (Easy)
May 23 (Sat.)	Nimitz Hills Caves (Medium)
May 30 (Sat.)	Ati'long Acho to Sella Bay (Difficult)
June 6 (Sat.)	Faha and Priest Pools (Easy/Medium)
June 13 (Sat.)	Togcha Cemetery to Asanite Cove (Medium)

Ati'long Acho

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 a.m. unless otherwise indicated. 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 EVERYONE'S SAFETY:
No Pets Allowed
No Drones Allowed

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

For more information:
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.

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Crossword

by Margie E. Burke

ACROSS

- 1 Turning point?
- 5 Unruly crowds
- 9 ___ in the right direction: 2 wds.
- 14 Part of the Corn Belt
- 15 On ___ (without a contract)
- 16 Mecca native
- 17 Burt of 1960's "Elmer Gantry"
- 19 Clean completely
- 20 Items on to-do lists
- 21 Seismic source
- 23 Caviar fish
- 25 Outspoken
- 26 Lucky charm
- 29 Out of shape?
- 30 Where Switz. is
- 33 Penalty
- 35 Beheaded Boleyn
- 36 Begged
- 37 Peter, pumpkin-wise
- 38 Portion out
- 39 Cleanse
- 40 Etcher's fluid
- 42 OH to MA direction
- 43 Kind of curve
- 44 Thanksgiving fare
- 45 Regarding birth
- 47 Depend (on)
- 48 Sponsorship
- 51 Works, as a field
- 55 Buyer's proposal
- 56 Wistful for the past
- 58 Smelled awful
- 59 Icicle former
- 60 Hogwarts librarian Pince
- 61 Puts a stop to
- 62 Fax button
- 63 Equinox mo.

DOWN

- 1 Scottish garb
- 2 Weather tracking org.
- 3 Admits, with "up"
- 4 Fall off the wagon, perhaps
- 5 Publisher's pile: Abbr.
- 6 Chose
- 7 Microwave sound
- 8 Copyist of old
- 9 ___ ratio (TV spec)
- 10 Spa feature
- 11 High-collar top
- 12 Result of honing
- 13 Fishing spot
- 18 Contents of some urns
- 22 Penitent
- 24 Plato was one
- 26 Eden fruit
- 27 Disney's Chinese warrior
- 28 Humdrum
- 29 Midler of music
- 31 Loosen a knot
- 32 Oboe-sounding
- 34 Views from isles, often
- 35 Lilylike flower
- 41 Mea ___
- 43 Baby birds?
- 46 "___ we all?"
- 47 Varnish ingredient
- 48 Luxurious
- 49 Shaving lotion brand
- 50 1990s VP
- 52 Grimm villain
- 53 Spineless sort
- 54 "Beat it!"
- 57 Covered in Cottonelle, say

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	
14				15				16					
17				18				19					
20				21				22					
23				24				25					
26	27	28					29			30	31	32	
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48	49						50			51	52	53	54
55							56			57			
58							59			60			
61							62			63			

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Stripes Sports Trivia

Which former New York Knicks guard was also an award-winning quarterback at Florida State?

Answer

Charlie Ward

SUDOKU

Difficulty: Easy

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

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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.

Answer to Previous Sudoku:

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

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GUAM EDITION

APRIL 27, 2026



Canine comrade

Military working dogs, handlers establish strong bonds to accomplish mission **Page 2**

Army Spc. Logan Knight, a dog handler with the 131st Military Working Dog Detachment, conducts bite training with Edzsi.

LYDIA GORDON/Stars and Stripes

COVER STORY



PHOTOS BY LYDIA GORDON/Stars and Stripes

Military working dog Lucky — part of the 131st Military Working Dog Detachment — searches military vehicles for contraband during training in Grafenwoehr, Germany.

Building bonds to accomplish the mission

Handlers, military working dogs must learn to ‘flow together’

BY LYDIA GORDON
Stars and Stripes

GRAFENWOEHR, Germany — Some partnerships are built over time, others through shared service. But for a military working dog and its handler, the bond is both.

Sgt. Brianna Plush and her canine companion MWD Edszi initially struggled to build a rapport when they were paired with each other more than four years ago at Fort Polk, La.

“She was a spitfire,” Plush said of her Belgian Malinois. “I would say last year was really when we started to click together.”

During routine training on April 16, the pair, assigned to the 131st Military Working Dog Detachment in Grafenwoehr, surveyed a motor pool with practiced ease, searching for staged contraband among the vehicles.

Working off-leash, Edszi deftly moved through the inspection, shifting between focused precision and brief moments of playful energy as Plush guided her.

“Being a dog handler is like dancing,” Plush said, adding that she and Edszi would sometimes “step on each other’s toes and butt heads.”

“Now, we actually have a flow together,” she said. “So that was really hard but so worth the process.”

Military working dogs at Grafenwoehr are housed in a new facility on the outskirts of the installation’s main post. There, the small detachment of soldiers and canines train daily to help safeguard the base in Bavaria.

The unit’s dogs are a mix of German shepherds, Belgian

Malinois or mixtures of the two. They receive around-the-clock care year round and are trained to detect explosives, narcotics and other illegal contraband.

Spc. Logan Knight said the unit’s current focus is primarily law enforcement, but also maintaining the ability to deploy and operate in a combat capacity.

“It’s really amazing how much of a psychological deterrent they are,” Knight said.

He has been training with his dog, MWD Mario, for only a few months. His previous partner is heading into retirement.

On average, military working dogs typically serve until they’re about 8 to 10 years old, depending on their health, according to the nonprofit Mission K9 Rescue.

A typical day for military police and their canine partners at Grafenwoehr includes patrolling the installation, inspecting the gate area and sweeping facilities.

While handlers often develop strong bonds with their four-legged companions, Plush said the job is not “playing with puppies all day.”

Every day is different, and she enjoys the lack of repetition that comes with being a dog handler.

Handlers have the option to adopt their dogs after retirement. Edszi is about two or three years away from that point, but she has already decided to maintain the relationship beyond her dog’s service life.

She said she’ll begin the adoption process once Edszi retires.



Army Sgt. Brianna Plush, a dog handler, and military working dog Edszi prepare to demonstrate how military dogs take down an aggressive assailant.



Army Pfc. Zane Busic of the 131st Military Working Dog Detachment rewards Lucky for identifying contraband during training.

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MILITARY

2 Marines secure rare win in Army sniper competition

BY LYDIA GORDON
Stars and Stripes

A pair of Marines captured a rare victory at the Army-run International Sniper Competition, securing the service's first win in nearly 17 years and only the second in the event's history.

Staff Sgt. Tyler Johnson and Sgt. Spencer Harrell, representing the Marine Corps Shooting Team, outperformed a field of U.S. and NATO sniper teams during the five-day event, which concluded April 10.

This year marked the competition's 25th anniversary. The Marine Corps last won in 2009, according to the service.

Johnson and Harrell are not officially designated snipers in the Marine Corps personnel system. The former is a rifleman, while the latter is an anti-tank missile gunner. Both serve as instructors

with the Weapons Training Battalion in Quantico, Va.

The Marine Corps began restructuring its scout sniper platoons in 2020, phasing out the specialty in infantry battalions and shifting it under reconnaissance battalions in 2023.

Hosted annually at Fort Benning, Ga., the competition tests elite shooters through grueling challenges, including long-range marksmanship, reconnaissance, stealth and concealment, according to the Army's website.

Johnson's facial hair helped make the duo a favorite among commenters on the Army Maneuver Center of Excellence's Facebook page. The mustache he sports "could bend physics," one of the comments stated.

The Marine Corps Shooting Team later took to Facebook to congratulate the pair on their win,



U.S. Army

Staff Sgt. Tyler Johnson and Sgt. Spencer Harrell won first place at the annual International Sniper competition, held at Fort Benning, Ga., this month, making them only the second Marine Corps team to achieve this victory and the first since 2009.

though some commenters expressed disappointment that Johnson had since shaved the mustache.

Johnson and Harrell were one of the only duos in an online photo gallery of entrants. Most teams

consisted of three members: a shooter, a spotter and a coach.

The international competition was held alongside the Best Jumpmaster and Best Mortar contests, as well as the Lacerda Cup — a multi-event infantry

competition testing endurance, marksmanship and tactical skills — as part of the Army's Infantry Week.

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Single Marine dad inspires counselor's book for kids

BY JANQUA ROBINSON
Stars and Stripes

A mental health counselor for military families was so inspired by a single Marine's love and care for his three children that she wrote a book about it.

"My Dad Is a Marine: Home Is Where My Hero Lives," self-published by author Sacra Magdalia Durandisse in December, is based on the real-life experiences of Chief Warrant Officer 4 Juan Arce and his daughters Soledad, Camila and Alyssa.

"It's not the first time that you hear about a single parent, but his situation to me was a bit unique," Durandisse said. "They get to see the Marine, but they don't get to see the sensitive side in how he loves his children, his daughters, and that resonated with me."

The book is written for ages 3 to 11 and depicts everyday moments, such as school drop-offs and family trips, while also addressing the emotional strain deployments can place on children.

"I'm proud of really what the book is about, what it stands for," said Durandisse, who plans to use proceeds from the first 50,000 copies to create a scholarship fund for single-parent military families.

Arce, a quality assurance officer with Marine Aviation Logis-

"When he talks about the girls, the pride in that is like that's his biggest accomplishment."

Sacra Magdalia Durandisse
author

tics Squadron 14 at Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point in North Carolina, is scheduled to retire next year.

"I'm grateful for the recognition, but this isn't just my story," he said this month. "It represents the experience of single parents in uniform who are raising their children while serving. If it resonates with even one person navigating that path, then it's worth it."

Arce said he enlisted in the Marine Corps in 2003 as an airframe mechanic. He got married in 2005 and divorced in 2013 after returning from a deployment.

"I maintained 50% custody," he said. "When I ended up going to Japan, I asked if I could get the kids for a year for the experience."

Arce later won primary custody of his two oldest daughters and said he wanted them to experience living overseas.

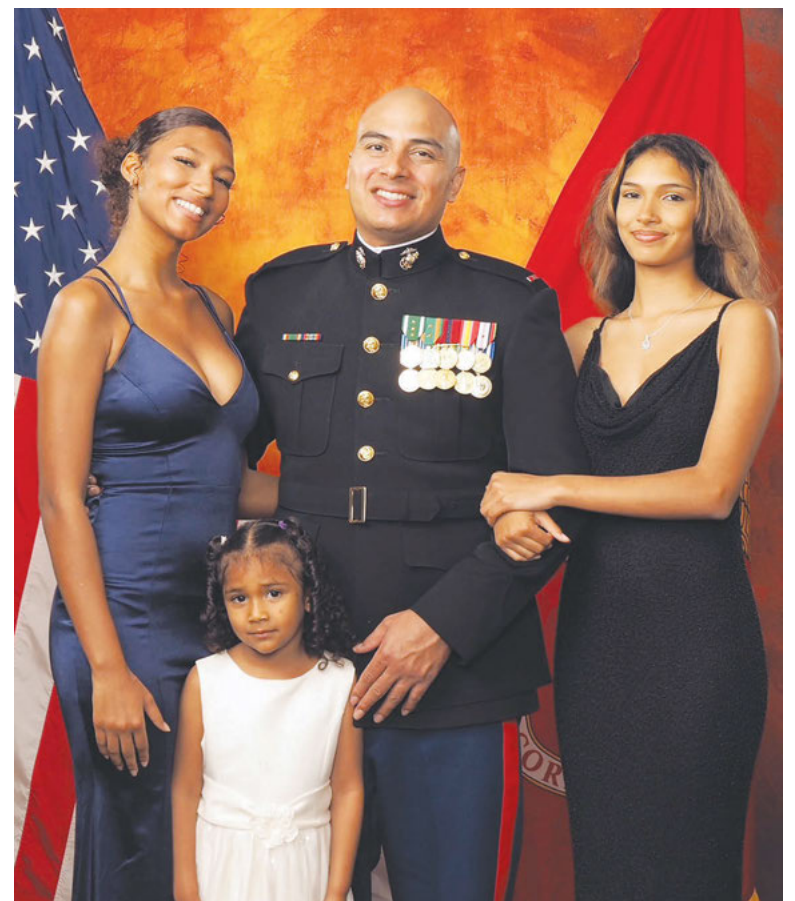


SACRA MAGDALIA DURANDISSE

"My Dad Is a Marine: Home Is Where My Hero Lives" is based on the real-life experiences of Arce and his daughters.

Durandisse said she met Arce in 2022 while he was assigned to Marine Aerial Refueler Transport Squadron 152 at Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, Japan. She was working as a military and family life counselor.

"Officer Arce has all these things on his uniform. I don't know what they mean, but when he's talking about it, he goes on and on and on," Durandisse said. "But here's the thing. When he talks about the girls, the pride in that is



JUAN ARCE

Chief Warrant Officer 4 Juan Arce and his daughters, from left, Soledad, Camila and Alyssa, pose at the 2023 Marine Corps Ball in Wilmington, N.C.

like that's his biggest accomplishment."

Military life is often depicted in movies and television, but few children's books focus on the subject.

"I read it with my youngest and she loved it," Arce said. "We could see the stories, and I was very ex-

cited that she was excited."

His favorite part about being a father, he said, is passing on things he wished he knew when he was young.

"Teaching them lessons, from driving to cooking, to just being able to teach them early on to be self-sufficient," he said.

MILITARY



KAYLYN BARNHART BATISTA/Stars and Stripes

Chief Petty Officer Courtney Dion talks to media in front of the USS Harvey C. Barnum Jr. at Naval Station Norfolk, Va. Barnum, a Medal of Honor recipient and retired Marine Corps colonel, is Dion's uncle.

Sailor carries uncle's legacy aboard ship named for him

By KAYLYN BARNHART
BATISTA

Stars and Stripes

NORFOLK, Va. — Before leaving for boot camp 16 years ago, Chief Petty Officer Courtney Dion asked Medal of Honor recipient and retired Marine Corps Col. Harvey C. Barnum Jr. — known to her simply as “Uncle Barney” — for advice.

“Just keep your head down and don't make a fuss out of anything,” he told her, and she moved through boot camp just like any other recruit, with no one knowing her family ties to a war hero.

Now, Dion proudly serves aboard the ship that bears her uncle's name, carrying forward her family's legacy through her service.

“To be able to contribute to the mission and the readiness is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, and to be a representative of his legacy is one of the best things,” said Dion, a hospital corpsman.

The USS Harvey C. Barnum Jr. was commissioned at its homeport in Naval Station Norfolk on April 11 joining the fleet as one of the service's latest Arleigh Burke-class guided missile destroyers. The ship's sponsor, Martha Hill, is Barnum's wife and Dion's aunt.

Barnum was at the ceremony — a momentous occasion rarely experienced by a namesake.



Barnum



JACKSON ROTT/U.S. Navy

The Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Harvey C. Barnum Jr. arrives at Naval Station Norfolk, on March 20.

“All the hard work, the hours and hours of training, and the separation from your families was not for nothing,” Barnum told the crew. “You have prepared this warship, the newest warship in the fleet. Mission accomplished, bravo zulu, charge on.”

Having a living namesake “with us throughout this entire process, from new construction to joining the fleet, it's just been a great, great exceptional opportunity. That's a once-in-a-lifetime event,” said Cmdr. Ben Cantu, the ship's commanding officer.

Barnum received the Medal of Honor for his actions during the Vietnam War.

On Dec. 18, 1965, he moved through enemy fire to lead attacks against entrenched fighters and, after securing the area, coordinated the landing of transport helicopters to evacuate casu-

alties.

“When the ship got named after him, he was speechless,” Dion said. “I think, every day, he lives in awe knowing that this is something that he's done, because to him, he's just doing the right thing, at the right time, for the right reasons.”

Dion serves as the senior medical department representative aboard the ship and is responsible for the health and well-being of the crew. In 2024, she was selected as the U.S. Fleet Forces Command Sailor of the Year, which recognizes sailors who exemplify excellence and leadership.

“His (Barnum's) devotion to duty, what he has done in his life, what he's been able to achieve, the experiences that he's been able to have, has definitely been an influence for me to join the military,” Dion said.

Navy taps robotics, AI firm for \$71M in ship maintenance

By ALEX WILSON
Stars and Stripes

A U.S. company has secured a contract worth up to \$71 million to use robotics and artificial intelligence to support Navy ship maintenance, as the service continues to invest in advanced technologies.

The Navy and the General Services Administration awarded the contract to Pittsburgh-based Gecko Robotics, which will use wall-climbing robots, drones and sensors to scan and monitor warships for structural issues, the company said in a news release.

The contract calls for work over five years on 18 vessels in the U.S. Pacific Fleet, including guided-missile destroyers and littoral combat ships.

Gecko said its technology uses AI to create detailed digital models and identify structural issues, including those not visible to the naked eye.

“The previous way of doing this is putting a ship into dry dock, building scaffolding all around the ships and then gathering information, you know, point by point; gathering very little information,” company cofounder Jake Loosarian told CNBC. “We gather millions more information and data sets, and we do so in about three to four months, faster than has ever

been done before.”

The company did not respond to a Stars and Stripes request for additional comment.

The contract reflects the service's broader push to incorporate a variety of robotics and AI into shipbuilding and maintenance operations.

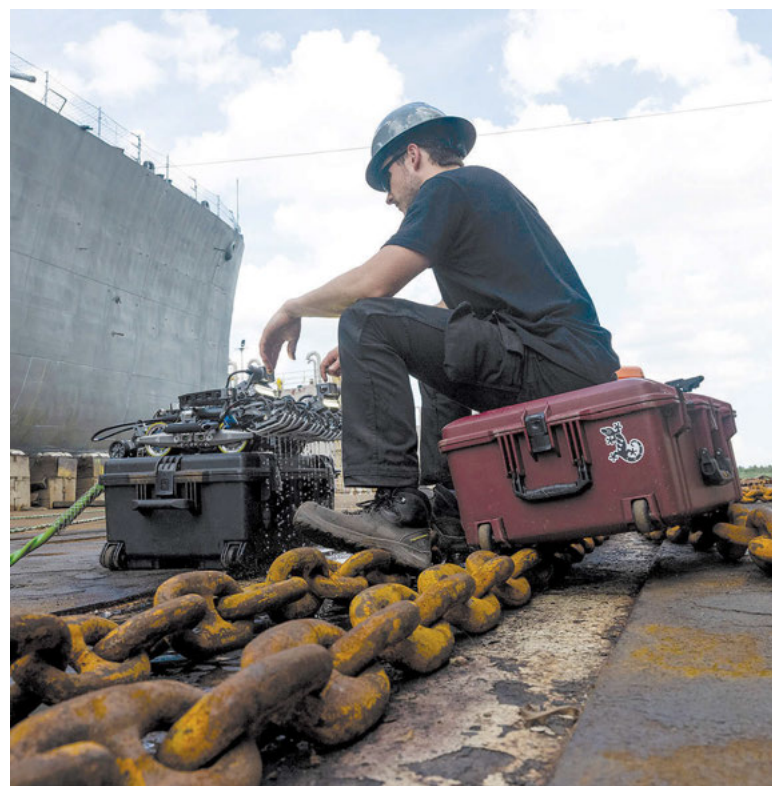
In December, Navy Secretary John Phelan announced a \$448 million investment in the Shipbuilding Operations System, an initiative that uses AI to aggregate data, streamline engineering and identify delays early in the construction process.

Initial tests showed that planning submarine construction schedules was reduced from 160 hours of manual work to less than 10 minutes, the Navy said in a Dec. 9 news release.

Other countries are investing heavily in similar technologies.

In South Korea, companies including Samsung Heavy Industries, Hanwha Ocean and HD Hyundai are expanding the use of robotics and AI in shipbuilding. HD Hyundai plans to deploy about 200 robots in its shipyards, according to a January report by The Chosun Daily.

Japan is also expected to announce a \$100 million investment in AI technology, some of which could support U.S. shipbuilding efforts, Maritime Executive reported.



Gecko Robotics

Pittsburgh-based Gecko Robotics will use artificial intelligence to create detailed digital models and identify structural issues, including those not visible to the naked eye, in Navy warships.

MILITARY

CNO: SOUTHCOM doesn't need carrier

Admiral seeks to reserve flattops for other regions

By GARY WARNER
Stars and Stripes

The chief of naval operations wants to come up with an “enduring naval package” capable of responding in the U.S. Southern Command area without an aircraft carrier.

“I want to reserve the carrier ... for power projection and deterrence in the theaters that really need that kind of capability,” Adm. Daryl Caudle said March 31 at the Maritime Security Dialogue in Washington, D.C. The event was co-hosted by the Center for Strategic and International Studies and the U.S. Naval Institute.

Since President Donald Trump took office in January 2025, the Navy has at times strained under a shift in strategic priorities and military activity around the world.

Caudle said commanders in all theaters want carriers as the paramount response to outside threats. But with China and Russia operating in the Indo-Pacific, the war in Ukraine, and the Middle East conflict that stretches from the Arabian Sea north to the Mediterranean Sea, the demand for carriers outstrips the supply when maintenance periods are factored into plans.

Congress requires that the Navy maintain a minimum of 11 aircraft carriers, but at any given time about a third are in maintenance ranging from months to years. Others are training for a deployment or have just returned from months at sea.

Southern Command — which includes the Atlantic and Pacific on either side of Central and South America, along with the Caribbean — is a possible place to look at a different kind of response, Caudle said.

The key to the Southern Command region is “maritime domain awareness,” Caudle said, essentially knowing what is going on at sea in the region in real time. Southern Command’s “main problem set” is drug interdiction, traditionally handled by the U.S. Coast Guard, Caudle said.

The 2026 National Defense Strategy promises to “provide President Trump with credible military options to use against narco-terrorists wherever they



SEAMAN ABIGAIL REYES/U.S. Navy

The aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford prepares to pull out of Saint Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands, in the Caribbean Sea, on Jan. 26.



ALEXANDER MERCHAK/U.S. Army

U.S. soldiers prepare to transfer UH-60L Black Hawks at Soto Cano Air Base, Honduras, on March 20. The Navy's top admiral wants a U.S. Southern Command response plan that doesn't require an aircraft carrier.

may be.”

So last summer and fall, the Pentagon surged naval assets to the western Atlantic, Caribbean and eastern Pacific, major hubs for drug trafficking.

The aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford and its strike group were part of the buildup. It linked up with the USS Iowa Jima Amphibious Ready Group, carrying up to 2,500 Marines as the U.S. ramped up assets for a possible invasion of Venezuela.

Instead of an invasion, U.S. Special Forces captured Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro, who was flown to the United States to face indictment on drug and other charges.

“With Venezuela, as you know, the war was over in about 45 minutes,” Trump said during a news recent conference.

During the overall campaign against traffickers, warships —

consecutive days deployed record held by the USS Abraham Lincoln, which spent 281 days deployed in 2022.

“For those that are not in the Navy, that’s an extraordinary thing to even think about something of that kind of deployment length,” Caudle said. “So my hat’s off to the Ford.”

Caudle said he was seeking ways to triage the military response in the Southern Command region so that aircraft carriers aren’t automatically dispatched again.

U.S. Army Gen. Francis L. Donovan, the SOUTHCOM commander, needs ships, aircraft and other resources to match the demands that arise in the region.

“What does Gen. Donovan need an ‘enduring package’ to look like?” Caudle said.

Options mentioned include a forward staging base. Southern Command currently operates from its headquarters in Doral, Fla.

Unlike Europe and Asia, where the U.S. has large military installations, the American presence in Central and South America is relatively small.

The U.S. operates a large base in Comayagua, in Honduras, Soto Cano Air Base. And the U.S. has retained Naval Base Guantánamo Bay, in Cuba, but it is primarily used for logistics and detention of prisoners.

Caudle said it could mean assigning a littoral combat ship — designed for coastal operations — or an amphibious transport dock that could carry a ready-response Marine unit.

“Can I put together a thing that

solves his problem?” Caudle said.

Cancian said the U.S. could redevelop and expand facilities at Roosevelt Roads Naval Station in Puerto Rico.

Or it could work with an allied country to build a joint base, and the U.S. could pay for airport runway improvements, for instance.

The crux of the issue in the region is that operations have largely been the job of the Coast Guard.

“I would imagine there is a lot of intense conversation going on right now between the Navy and the Coast Guard, with the Navy saying these roles are for the Coast Guard and the Coast Guard saying we don’t have the personnel or equipment for the job,” Cancian said. “There’s a lot of money in the pipeline for the Coast Guard, but it will take years for major changes.”

Having aircraft carriers off Venezuela when the U.S. was threatening a major bombing campaign or full-scale invasion might have made sense, Cancian said. And, Trump may harbor a desire to topple the communist government in Cuba.

But overall, Cancian said, there aren’t the kind of threats in the region that Trump has designated as America’s top priority that require a major military response.

“Whatever the ‘enduring naval package’ that Adm. Caudle puts together, it will have to be stitched together over time if we’re seeking a long-term presence,” he said.

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MILITARY

Pentagon seeks to boost spouse employment

Leaders urged to be more flexible in their hiring practices

BY CHAD GARLAND
Stars and Stripes

The Pentagon wants leaders in the armed services to do more to combat persistently high military spouse unemployment, which sits at 20% — five times the national average.

To address the disparity, the armed forces are directing senior leaders to maximize the use of hiring flexibilities for military spouses, Anthony Tata, defense undersecretary for personnel and readiness, said in a statement April 8 on X.

That includes waiving rules that may create challenges for those seeking work overseas.

“Hiring military spouses is smart business and the right thing to do for our warriors & their families,” Tata said. “This immediate change will make it easier for talented military spouses to secure opportunities in the Department.”

Among the obstacles, he said, was that the Department of Defense Education Activity could not extend job offers to military spouses with teaching licenses until 30 days before their permanent change of station move.



JAMES MITCHELL/U.S. Navy

Staff members of the Commander, Fleet Activities Yokosuka Child and Youth Program host a job fair for dependents in Japan last May.

That creates “economic insecurity for our military families and unnecessary vacancies in our schools,” Tata said.

Under changes introduced recently, military spouses now can apply and be hired upon receiving official change of station orders, he said.

In a memorandum accompanying the social media post, Tata said DOD must eliminate unnecessary barriers to military spouses joining the civilian workforce.

A yearlong Stars and Stripes investigation published in 2023 found that an overseas assign-

ment meant living on the edge of poverty for thousands of U.S. military families.

The reason for that hardship after being sent to Europe was rooted in a loss of income resulting from U.S. and NATO country prohibitions that keep military spouses from working overseas.

Since then, the U.S. has reached agreements with some European countries, such as Italy, to allow military spouses to work remotely for their American employers.

Still, obstacles remain for many overseas spouses.

Tata’s post urged the use of alternative work sites for spouses accompanying military members on orders outside a job’s primary duty location.

In addition, he called on DOD hiring managers to consider military spouses before all other candidates who are ineligible for hiring preferences.

Tata also directed agencies to develop lists of qualified military spouses, including by using continuous job announcements not tied to particular vacancies so that human resources teams can fill résumé banks of military

spouses they can quickly hire when vacancies open.

The moves come after aggressive attempts by President Donald Trump’s administration to shrink the federal workforce by implementing hiring freezes and offering incentives for resignations and early retirement.

Just over a year ago, after instituting a hiring freeze, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth announced plans to reduce and restructure the department’s civilian labor force to make it “lean, mean and prepared to win.”

As a result, the DOD saw an exodus of about 10% of its civilian employees last year, shedding about 81,000 of them, the Daily Wire reported in February, citing Pentagon data.

But the restructuring and unfilled vacancies were causing low morale and lost capability, while overseas civilians trying to rotate back stateside faced the prospect of demotions and pay cuts, DefenseOne reported.

A recent search of the government hiring website USA Jobs turned up over 2,300 postings for which military spouses were eligible, with a total of just over 8,000 open to the public.

The unemployment rate in March was at 4.3%, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported April 3, with the jobless rate for women at 4%, compared with 3.8% for men.

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Air Force reduces training days for SkillBridge program

BY JENNIFER H. SVAN
Stars and Stripes

The Air Force is reducing the number of days that airmen and guardians are given to sharpen their job skills in the private sector as they prepare to leave the military.

Changes to the popular SkillBridge program affect all ranks, but the highest grades will now have the fewest days allowed for career training during their last six months of service, according to the new policy.

Airmen and guardians previously were given up to 180 days to intern full time with an approved commercial partner while still receiving their military pay and benefits.

The new limitations balance the need for units to maintain readiness while also ensuring personnel “can access opportunities aimed to support their transition to the civilian workforce,” the Air Force said in a recent statement.

Around 200,000 service mem-

bers transition from military service to civilian life each year, according to a 2024 Government Accountability Office report.

In 2022, SkillBridge said that over 22,500 service members had either enrolled in or completed a training program, according to the GAO. As of June 2024, the program offered 7,959 opportunities through 4,867 industry partners, the report said.

Air Force noncommissioned officers at the E-8 and E-9 pay grades, along with senior war-

rant officers and lieutenant colonels in the service are now limited to 60 days of career training under the new guidance. It took effect March 31.

Mid-grade ranks get 90 days now, while lower-level enlisted personnel and officers can take up to 120 days. Air Force colonels, meanwhile, require “special exception to policy approval” to participate in SkillBridge training, according to the announcement.

For Space Force personnel, those at the pay grade of E-9 or O-6 and above are limited to 90 days, while all lower-ranking guardians have a maximum of 120 days in the program.

The new guidelines also raised the approval authority to squadron commanders and above. Previously, first-line supervisors such as section leaders could authorize participation, Air and Space Forces Magazine reported this month.

Some current and former airmen expressed disappointment

with the change and told of the benefits they had gained from the transition program.

“Skillbridge was huge for me, not just the internship but the time necessary to interview and relocate,” a poster in the Air Force’s Reddit community said this month.

The message also said the writer would not have found their current job without the program.

Another commenter wrote that the longer a person’s military service, the harder the transition can be.

“I feel this is an overall detriment for those using the program,” the commenter said.

The changes align the Air Force with the other services. The Army, Navy and Marine Corps in recent years have implemented a rank-based tiered system that is more favorable to junior enlisted personnel.

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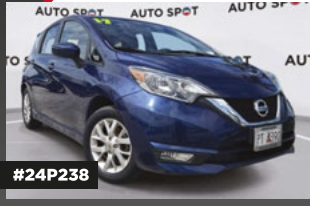
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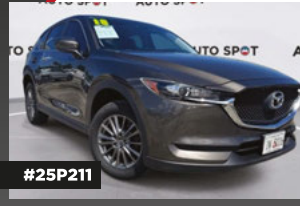
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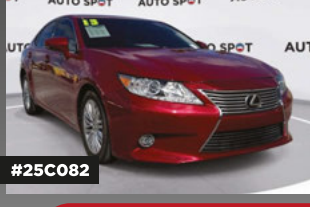
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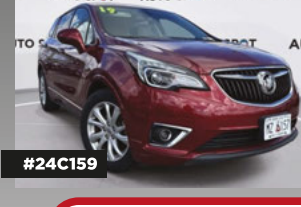
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