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Halloween photo contest winners

We loved all of your spooky and fun costumes for this year's Halloween photo contest! Many Stripes readers sent their submissions. This year, Leslie Gills from Kadena AB won the \$40 prize for Best Costume; Ashley Craig from Misawa AB is taking home \$20 for the Best Pet Costume and Miko Santos from Yokota AB won the \$40 Special Prize. Check out their submissions as well as some other honorable mentions below. And, don't forget to follow us at Facebook.com/StripesPacific and instagram.com/starsandstripespacific for more great contests like this!



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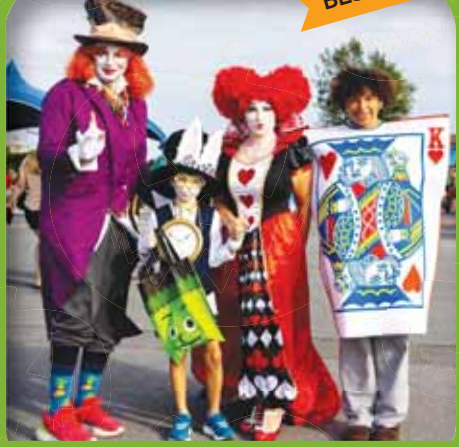
Winners

SPECIAL PRIZE



Miko Santos - Yokota

BEST COSTUME



Leslie Gills - Kadena

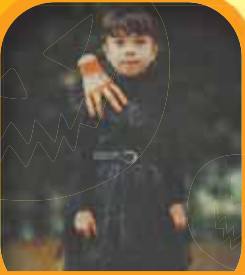
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U.S. Coast Guard formally establishes Base Guam

BY CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER SARA MUIR,
U.S. COAST GUARD FORCES MICRONESIA

SANTA RITA — The U.S. Coast Guard is proud to announce the establishment of U.S. Coast Guard Base Guam on Nov. 8, 2023, in a ceremony presided over by Rear Adm. Carola List, commander of Operational Logistics Command.

Led by Cmdr. Dana Hiatt, Base Guam, will be pivotal toward enhancing the U.S. Coast Guard’s mission support logistics in the region. This strategic move aligns with the Service’s commitment to increase mission support throughout Oceania. Given Guam’s vital importance to national security, this initiative takes center stage.

The establishment of Base Guam is part of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2023 and expands the U.S. Coast Guard’s mission support in the Indo-Pacific region. The establishment will shift current facilities engineering, naval engineering, comptroller and base operations, health, safety, and work life, personnel support, information technology, and procurement billets and responsibility from the existing U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia/Sector Guam to a new Base Guam command structure. The establishment of Base Guam will consist of 17 additional personnel billets and will rely on the realignment of existing elements to provide logistical efficiencies improving U.S. Coast Guard mission support on Guam.

U.S. Coast Guard Base Guam will operate under the direction of the Operational Logistics Command, responsible for mission support logistics across the entire U.S. Coast Guard enterprise while coexisting with U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia/Sector Guam. The base is taking on the role of the lead logistics and support command,



Cmdr. Dana Hiatt, commanding officer of U.S. Coast Guard Base Guam, Rear Adm. Carola List, commander of Operational Logistics Command, and Capt. Nick Simmons, commander of U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia Sector Guam are all smiles during the Nov. 8 ceremony.
Photos by David Lau, U.S. Coast Guard

a strategic decision aimed at better serving the needs of the operational community and partners. Forces Micronesia/Sector Guam retains the role of operational authority for U.S. Coast Guard activity in the Western Pacific.

The Base crew’s responsibilities encompass contingency logistics planning for joint operational plans, integration of logistics services, and support for tactical logistics needs for deployed operational assets. Additionally, the Headquarters enterprise through Operational Logistics Command

maintains a national-level logistics common operating picture and commands the Coast Guard’s 22 existing bases, ensuring the execution of assigned tasking through each of the U.S. Coast Guard’s logistics units and service centers.

The establishment of Base Guam marks a significant milestone in strengthening the U.S. Coast Guard’s presence and capabilities in the region. The unit is physically located on the existing U.S. Coast Guard footprint within U.S. Naval Base Guam.



Senior Chief Petty Officer Robert Davis assumes the watch during the ceremony.



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LINEBACKERS OF THE WEEK

Staff Sgt. Anthony Lorenz

‘You get to help families who are in need’



Staff Sgt. Anthony Lorenz receives the Linebacker of the Week Award from Brig. Gen. Thomas Palenske and Chief Master Sgt. Nicholas Taylor on Nov. 1.

STORY AND PHOTO BY STORY BY
SENIOR AIRMAN EMILY SAXTON, 36TH WING

Andersen Air Force Base – U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Anthony Lorenz, the unit deployment manager assigned to the 36th Force Support Squadron, was recognized as the 36th Wing’s Team Andersen Linebacker of the Week, at Andersen Air Force Base, Guam, Nov. 1, 2023.

The Team Andersen Linebacker of the Week recognizes outstanding enlisted, officer, civilian and total force personnel who have had an impact on achieving Team Andersen’s mission, vision and priorities.

As the unit deployment manager, Lorenz is a key member of a five- person readiness team that monitors, updates and briefs squadron leadership on the health and readiness of the unit. Additionally, he oversees six additional duties for the squadron including security manager, facility manager, antiterrorism monitor, emergency management representative, government purchase card holder and mortuary affairs technician. Lorenz also monitors and tracks readiness training and deployment

functions for 101 group and squadron personnel.

“I joined the military for a new beginning and new opportunities,” said Lorenz. “It’s been a lot of ups and downs but overall it’s been a positive experience and I’ve grown a lot.”

Being a mortuary affairs technician, Lorenz took charge of an infant mortuary case with minimal training and operational practices. He coordinated with the family, ensuring all members were cared for. He mentored others through his actions as to what a leader displays when difficult times hit. As the facility manager for the 36th Mission Support Group building, Lorenz ensures all work orders, details and clean-ups occur promptly. Furthermore, before Typhoon Mawar struck the island, Lorenz received the call to secure sandbags for the entire unit. Finally, Lorenz stood up the unit control center, leading to the FSS being able to regain normal operations after the storm.

“My favorite part of the job is mortuary affairs,” said Lorenz. “You get to help families who are in need and at the end of the day that’s the most important thing.”

Petty Officer 1st Class GavinChristian Pere

‘If I don’t do this right, then who will?’

STORY AND PHOTO BY
SENIOR AIRMAN AKEEM CAMPBELL, 36TH WING

Andersen Air Force Base – U.S. Navy Information Technician (IT) 1st Class GavinChristian Pere lead IT of C5I assigned to the Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron 25 (HSC-25) was recognized as the 36th Wing’s Team Andersen Linebacker of the Week, at Andersen Air Force Base, Guam, Oct. 25, 2023.

As the lead IT of C5I, Pere takes on several responsibilities such as: managing computer assets and ONE-Net accounts, releasing and disseminating naval messages, submitting trouble calls and conducting virtual teleconferences, trouble shooting and trouble call response for 350 Sailors.

“I’m one of two ITs in this command,” Pere said. “I pretty much manage anything security and IT related.”

Pere has procured \$22,000 worth of IT equipment, re-issued 195 restricted badges for flightline access, resolved seven Naval Information Warfare Center Pacific tickets, led the Calendar Year-22 Emergency Action Plan/ Emergency Destruction Plan Communication Security drill and managed 370 ISOPREP accounts for two detachments/foreign travelers, ensuring 100% mission readiness.

“One of my favorite things to do in this career is going

from shop to shop and helping people out,” Pere said. “Interacting with them, seeing how their day is, and just getting to know every single person on this command while also making sure that they are always mission ready and mission capable.”

Since the first day of arriving to HSC-25, Pere has displayed leadership. Following the destruction of Typhoon Mawar, the old hanger at which the squadron used to work in was destroyed. Pere spearheaded the complete move of all HCS-25 computer and communication assets from their old location to the new, with no lost days of connectivity. He was also instrumental with the hangar transfer by supporting the office with all requirements before the command official move date.

“There are a lot of people who would often do the bare minimum when it comes to doing their jobs,” Pere said. “For me, it’s like it like, if I don’t do this right, then who will? So if I set the standard now, my predecessors after me will continue a flow of excellence. That is what pushes me; to maintain excellence.”

Pere’s work ethic & unit involvement sets the tone for his peers and all Sailors to emulate. He consistently demonstrates hard work and dedication in every task assigned. His



IT1 GavinChristian Pere receives the Linebacker of the Week Award from Col. Larry Fenner and Chief Master Sgt. Merissa Schmidt on Oct. 25.

dedication to improving the command is unmatched and he goes beyond for each task.

Staff Sgt. Joseph Sutton

‘My favorite part of my job is the people I work with’



Staff Sgt. Joseph Sutton receives the Linebacker of the Week Award from Col. Larry Fenner and Chief Master Sgt. Nicholas Taylor on Oct. 17.

STORY AND PHOTO BY
AIRMAN 1ST CLASS EMILY SAXTON, 36TH WING

Andersen Air Force Base – U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Joseph Sutton, the supervisor of Silver Flag maintenance assigned to the 36th Logistics Readiness Squadron, was recognized as the 36th Wing’s Team Andersen Linebacker of the Week, at Andersen Air Force Base, Guam, Oct. 17, 2023.

As the supervisor of Silver Flag maintenance, Sutton trains and develops four vehicle management technicians and performs scheduled and unscheduled maintenance for three squadrons and 217 assets valued at \$38 million. He coordinates maintenance priorities with three vehicle control officials on rapid airfield damage repair, Machete Strike and partner nation exercises. Additionally, Sutton analyzes malfunctions through critical examination and the use of specific diagnostic equipment. Sutton has produced critical triage maintenance repairs with zero cost for 32 vehicles, averting the cancellation of five Silver Flag RADR courses, enabling 530 students to be trained.

While filling in as the noncommissioned officer in charge for three months, Sutton directed the transport of 53 assets to the Pacific Regional Training Center – Andersen to expedite maintenance repairs and relocated 27 stranded vehicles, including a derelict piece of equipment restricting the flight line taxi way.

“My favorite part of my job is the people I work with,” said Sutton.

His drive to assist others has led to the transportation and delivery of four missile defense containers, supporting the U.S. Army’s anti-missile transmission operation and providing base fortification. Furthermore, during Typhoon Mawar recovery, Sutton teamed up with the 554th Rapid Engineer Deployable Heavy Operational Repair Squadron Engineers to operate five material handling equipment loaders, clearing two miles of road creating access to PRTC-A and enabling the Federal Emergency Management Agency to deliver six generators for six villages across Guam.

“It’s a small career field, so no matter where you go you know someone,” said Sutton. “That makes it fun.”

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Oliver Henry returns from 28-day patrol

BY CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER SARA MUIR,
U.S. COAST GUARD FORCES MICRONESIA

SANTA RITA, Guam – The USCGC Oliver Henry (WPC 1140) crew returned to homeport on Oct. 15 after a 28-day patrol that reinforced the U.S. commitment to sovereignty and resource security in the Federated States of Micronesia Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and beyond.

The mission, which was part of Operation Rematau and the broader U.S. Coast Guard's Operation Blue Pacific, fortifies the U.S. reputation as a reliable, trusted partner in the region.

Sovereignty and resource security are fundamental components of national and regional stability. Access to vital goods, particularly in remote island nations, hinges on the maritime domains' secure and lawful use. During the patrol, the Oliver Henry crew dedicated 11 days in the FSM's EEZ and two days on the high seas, logging 422 total operational hours and sailing 4,986 nautical miles. The team's presence and surveillance capabilities bolstered maritime domain awareness and effectively upheld regional sovereignty.

"This mission represents another pivotal chapter in the ongoing success story of Operation Rematau and the U.S. Coast Guard's contribution to a free and open Blue Pacific. We continue to prove that our Service is not just a force for good but a dependable and committed partner in this strategic region's long-term security and prosperity," said Capt. Nick Simmons, commander of U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia/Sector Guam, reflecting on the broader objectives.

The crew conducted three observation reports on Chinese-Taipei, Korean, and Japanese-flagged fishing vessels within the FSM EEZ and on the high seas, thus contributing to regional stability and resource protection.

Additionally, the crew delivered new school supplies to communities on two FSM atolls and facilitated the return of the Nukuoro Elementary School principal. The mission ensured the delivery of over 6,000 pounds of supplies to Pohnpei, Chuuk and Yap. The supplies include goods from UNICEF like 39 Schools-in-a-Box, 31 Early Childhood Development, and two Recreation Kits so children can play and learn even during emergencies.

Further enhancing partnerships, the crew hosted the U.S. Ambassador to FSM, Jennifer Johnson and newly arrived Foreign Service Officer Amy Gradin in Pohnpei. They toured the ship and discussed the invaluable role the U.S. Coast Guard plays in search and rescue and deterrence of illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing in FSM territorial waters and in the region. The Oliver Henry crew also took embassy personnel underway for area familiarization and atoll surveys.

A unique part of these patrols is the human connection. Lt. Ray Cerrato, the commanding officer of Oliver Henry, emphasized this, stating, "The relationships we've built and the lives we've touched will last a lifetime. From delivering school supplies to sharing best practices with agency partners, these interactions go beyond mere duty; they embody the human spirit of cooperation and mutual respect."



The USCGC Oliver Henry crew take on UNICEF supplies for children in Pohnpei on Sept. 27. Photos courtesy by Robin Mae Magangat, U.S. Embassy Kolonia/UNICEF



The crew delivers supplies to Nukuoro, an atoll in the Federated States of Micronesia on Sept. 24.



The crew holds a cutterman ceremony for PO2 Class Max Bartlett while in the Philippine Sea on Oct. 9.

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Another day of leftovers becomes a tipping point

I never buy a Thanksgiving turkey that feeds my family. I buy one so big, it could feed the entire neighborhood. When a 10-pounder will do, I buy 20. When 20 pounds is enough for Thanksgiving dinner, sandwiches and a casserole or two, I select a gargantuan bird that barely fits in the oven.

My motivation is not gluttony, but rather, a need to be resourceful. As a military spouse, I've always enjoyed the challenge of making my family happy within our limited military budget. Other than one awful mud-splattered camping trip, a few bizarre pre-PCS meals, and the time my daughter broke her arm on a questionable playset I procured for free from our neighbors, my efforts to creatively satisfy my family inside the bounds of our modest resources have generally been a smashing success.

However, there was one Thanksgiving several years ago when leftover turkey became hazardous to my health.

It was Monday morning after Thanksgiving, and I'd just dropped my husband, Francis, at the airport for TDY to Bahrain. I wondered what to make the kids for dinner. In the four days since Thanksgiving, I'd already cooked leftover turkey tetrazzini, turkey pot pie and turkey enchiladas. They'd begun to complain, but I still had turkey bones and meat in our fridge.

Waste not, want not.

However, it was a busy Monday. I had to walk the dog, get a mammogram, swing by the commissary, do laundry, iron dress shirts, start my column, return emails, balance the checkbook, take a shower and try to look human — all before my 3 p.m. school pick-up. I decided I had less than five minutes to throw a pot of turkey soup together before heading out to my 9:30 a.m. mammogram appointment.

I chopped onions and carrots in flash, sautéing them in a pan alongside the pot of simmering turkey bones. Next, I plopped four celery ribs down and began slicing. I was coming to the end of the bunch when, shshshwing!

The very tip of my thumb lay neatly on the cutting board.

Slow-motion, controlled panic ensued. My uncut hand grabbed the severed cap of flesh and placed it back on the tip of my thumb, albeit crooked, and unraveled paper

The Meat and Potatoes of Life

Lisa Smith Molinari



towels to wrap my bleeding appendage. I flicked the stove off, grabbed my purse and jumped into my minivan, mumbling, "it's gonna be fine, it's gonna be fine, it's gonna be fine."

"Hi, I'm here for a mammogram [nervous laughter] ... you're never going to believe this [nervous laughter] ... I just cut the tip of my thumb clean off," I jabbered to the lady behind the clinic check-in desk. Despite her look of utter apathy, the woman said a doctor would check out my thumb after my mammogram.

As the adage goes, you learn something new every day. On this particular day, I learned that it's nearly impossible to unhook your own bra strap with one hand. Like an awkward boy on prom night, I managed the task just before the technician came in to squash my bits and pieces between two glass plates. After several painfully humiliating images were procured, I was free to dress and attend to my bleeding thumb.

With only one of the three hooks of my bra strap precariously fastened, I thanked the doctor for seeing me on the fly, then waited at immunizations for a tetanus shot. Four hours after entering the clinic doors, I left with an injection Band-Aid, wilted mammaries, a cartoonishly-bandaged thumb and a completely neglected to-do list.

Despite the chaos, I finished preparing the soup back at home, needing it more than ever. At dinnertime, I ladled the hot elixir into bowls, careful not to slosh broth onto my bandages, and placed them on our table with oyster crackers. The kids and I inhaled the salty steam in silence, blowing gently on spoonfuls.

"I can't believe you made soup from the rest of the turkey with all that craziness going on today, Mom," my compassionate child said with a slurp. "Mmmm," she murmured, "not bad, Mom."

In the grand scheme of things, she was right; it was not bad at all.

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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Baguio

Cooler city in Philippines

STORY AND PHOTOS BY
JEROME BAQUILAR

Baguio has a long history of being the coolest city in the Philippines, perhaps most famously having started back in the late 19th century when then-Governor of the Philippines, William Howard Taft (who would go on to become the 27th President of the United States of America), started the process that made Baguio the capital of the Philippines during the summer months. This was due to the pleasant, cooler weather compared to the rest of the country, thanks to its nearly mile-high elevation. But more on the “cool” stuff later.

American influences

As you can probably tell from the first paragraph, the city of Baguio has a lot of “Americana” in its history. The city’s urban design was created by American and world-famous architect Daniel Burnham, who also had the cities of Cleveland, San Francisco, as well as Manila, Philippines, on his urban planning resume. Burnham’s design of the city was centered on Burnham Park, one of the top attractions of the city and one of the few places in the Philippines where you can easily ride a rowboat, at Burnham Lake.

If you’re from Kansas or have been stationed there, it might warm your heart to travel on Leonard Wood Road, which connects the central city to some of the tourist

attractions on the east side. Camp John Hay, a former U.S. Air Force installation and originally a U.S. Army base, continues its legacy as a recreational area with many facilities and features dating back to its days as a military base. And with its abundance of trees, hilly landscape, and golf course, it may remind military members and veterans of places such as Tama Hills or even Camp Zama in Japan.

Top spots to see

Aside from being the most American city in the Philippines (or perhaps even all of Asia?), there are many other reasons for tourists both from abroad and other parts of the Philippines to visit Baguio.

Mines View Park might be the most scenic spot in the city, if not all of the Philippines, with a vantage point offering a view of the mining areas and mountain range to the east of the city.

Our Lady of Lourdes Grotto offers a similar experience, except with a view of part of the city and closeup views of the many trees and flowers at the site. You don’t have to be religious to come away worshipping the experience at

the Grotto, but might need to be at least somewhat fit to walk the 252 stair steps leading up to it! And the altitude makes it even more challenging!

If you’re short on time but love scenic spots, simply traveling to (or out of) Baguio from the “lowlands” on any of the main, winding mountainside roads leading to the city (Kennon Road, Marcos Highway, and Naguilian

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Road) gives city, and even occasional f combined w scene, it ma The Baguio cooler times it also frequ during the r

Interact

Once you city, there an and connect the Philippin developmen wooded area



Camp John Hay, where you'll find the American flag flying next to the Philippine flag.



Boating at Burnham Park.



O ines

Once a popular and easy getaway for U.S. service members stationed in the Philippines, and currently a very popular weekend and holiday spot for Filipinos, Baguio holds a place in my heart as a paradise. ”

You lots of great scenes of the mountains, even the ocean! One of the highlights is the fog that adds a unique accent to the scene; with the trees, mountains, and even the city makes the city look magical, mysterious even. Fog often makes its appearances in the middle of year, from November to February, but recently appears when it’s raining, especially rainy season from July to September.

Living with the city
Get enough of the views in and around the city, there are also more “interactive” ways to enjoy living with the city. Wright Park, named after the governor at the time who directed the development of the park by, yes, Daniel Burnham, is a most famous for horseback riding. The



Mines View Park.

the aforementioned Burnham Park has various activities available for visitors; aside from row boating, you can rent and ride bicycles of various types, roller skate at the rink, or simply walk around the park and take in the scenery and the many flowers at the park.

If you want to give zip lining or even paintball a try, Camp John Hay is your place for that. With the adrenaline rush from those activities, you’ll be in the vicinity of a variety of good food (and buffet-style dining) to feed that appetite, both at the camp and the adjacent Baguio Country Club.

Food scene

Speaking of food, the dining scene in Baguio is also unique. With so many different restaurants of various cuisines, from local Filipino dishes to international ones, all over the city, you can enjoy almost anything here. And the coffee culture is on par with the food scene here; with the cooler weather, it’s a natural fit, and the cafes are popular not just with Baguio citizens but perhaps even more so with visitors from the lowlands, finding a source of warmth in a climate significantly cooler than their hometown.

Sundays on Session Road

So, about the coolest part of Baguio, it can be described with one word, or one day: Sunday. That is when Session Road, the city’s main street, closes to vehicles and opens up to the artistic and fun types of the city (and beyond). Chalk artists create beautiful scenes right on the asphalt of the road, musicians perform on the street, various vendors sell their artistic creations, dancers perform for the curious crowds, and cosplayers get into character to pose for and with everyone who wants a photo (and taking those photos happens to be the creation of another work of art!).

Session Road is like the streets that close in Tokyo on Sundays such as at Akihabara and Shinjuku, but with a lot more action, organized attractions, and fun! The number of cosplayers on Sundays at Baguio far exceed what Harajuku used to have.

In a city so full of things to see and do, the scene at Session Road on Sundays is the best for me; you get to take in the vibe and personality of the city and its people.

Truly paradise!

Once a popular and easy getaway for US service members stationed in the Philippines, and currently a very popular weekend and holiday spot for Filipinos, Baguio holds a place in my heart as a paradise, as it will always be the coolest city in the Philippines (literally) and one of the coolest cities in Asia (figuratively).

Read more stories!



Chalk Art on Session Road.



Cosplayers at Session Road.

Speakin’ Tagalog

- Hello!: Kamusta
- How are you?: Kamusta ka?
- Excuse me.: Ipagpaumanhin nyo po.
- Goodbye.: Paalam, (Sa muling pagkikita.)
- What’s your name?: Ano ang pangalan mo?
- My name is...: Ang pangalan ko ay.

Girls' trip to Thailand

STORY AND PHOTOS BY
ROSIE ORTIZ-TORRES

If you're seeking an affordable and adventurous trip that won't break the bank, then Thailand is for you. Even better if you can pair with friends for added fun and further savings if you're on a budget.

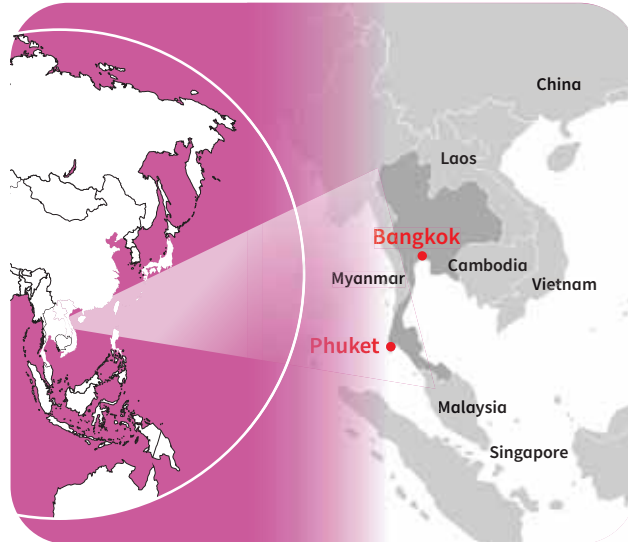
Many of the activities and tours we took were kid-friendly, so a family trip would also be just as great. If you book in advance, you can easily nab a roundtrip ticket from Japan for under \$500 per person.

For our trip, my friends and I split our time between Bangkok and Phuket for three days each. Our flight was direct to Bangkok, and booking an additional domestic roundtrip flight to Phuket was simple and under \$100.

A great tip is to book your driver in advance as this makes it convenient for airport pick-ups and drop-offs. The majority of drivers also have the best recommendations for local insights and tourism deals. More importantly, they do not make you feel obligated to go with their recommendations and accommodate your plans as much as possible. We went with recommendations from friends on Facebook and Instagram when choosing our drivers. It's easier to have one driver for your entire trip, but we had one in Bangkok and another in Phuket.

Quick trip to Phuket

Our trip to Phuket with, its lovely beaches and island



tours, was honestly more enjoyable than Bangkok. We loved our seven-bedroom villa with private pool, which was walking distance from the beach below. The beach had many activities, food and drinks to spend a day in the sun.

The three days in Phuket were packed with activities and we could've done more but we ran out of time. Here are the fun spots and activities in Phuket: Phi Phi Islands day tour, Patong Beach, Pullman Beach Resort, Three Monkey's Restaurant, and endless beach sunrise/sunset views.

Buzzing through Bangkok

In Bangkok, we spent time exploring Khao San Road, a backpacker district, and Wat Pho, a famous temple known for its reclining Buddha. We also took a tuk-tuk ride through the busy streets, shopped at MBK Mall, the floating markets and took in the views while enjoying some roof top dining. If you're looking for the nightlife, floating markets, temples, and exotic foods, then Bangkok is for you.



Wat Pho.

A memorable holiday

Overall, we were very satisfied with the trip at both locations and captured so many memorable photos. Thai culture is enticing, and the people were friendly. We filled our hearts and our bellies with so much pad Thai, mango sticky rice, and fresh coconut drinks.

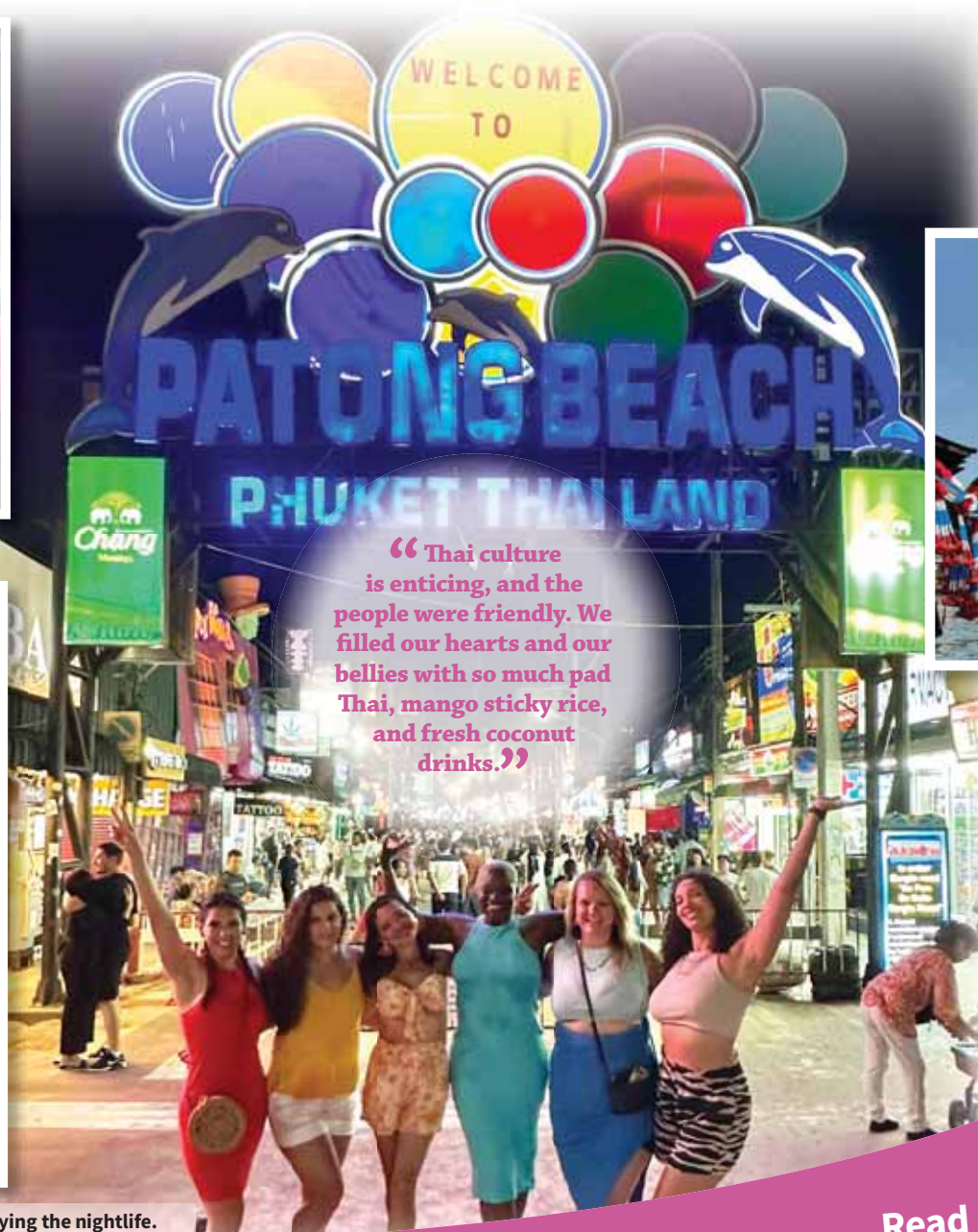
If Thailand has been on your list, definitely start planning as you will not be disappointed. Happy travels!



Author and friends enjoying Thailand.



Phi Phi Islands.



“Thai culture is enticing, and the people were friendly. We filled our hearts and our bellies with so much pad Thai, mango sticky rice, and fresh coconut drinks.”

Enjoying the nightlife.

Speakin' Thai

Hello: Sawadee

Yes: Chai

No: Mai

Thank you: khop khun



Read more stories!



Let's Take a Virtual Vacation Singapore



Perhaps after watching the Hollywood movie “Crazy Rich Asians,” Singapore has been on your mind as a great place to vacation. This small island country is where old-meets-new and where influences of European, Chinese, Malayan, and other cultures collide. This virtual vacation will take you to the Raffles Landing Site for some Instagram-worthy pics, to the equally-photogenic Marina Area for a glimpse at a future-oriented cityscape. If you’re hungry you’ll want to try the Hainanese chicken rice, a well-seasoned steamed and chopped chicken on rice that is also steamed in chicken soup, topped with ginger and chili sauce.

– Takahiro Takiguchi, Stripes Guam



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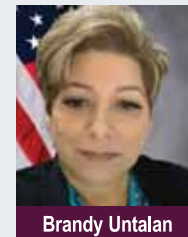
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In praise of Guam's patron saint

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

BY LEO BABAUTA,
GUAMPEDIA

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

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

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

Legendary origins

The origin of the Santa Marian Kamalen statue has not been documented until recently,

but by oral tradition multiple versions of a legend exists about her origin.

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

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

Another version of the legend has it that the fisherman saw the statue floating in the water, escorted by two gold-spotted crabs, each bearing a lighted candle between its claws. She thus also became known

as the Lady of the Crabs.

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

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

Origin speculation

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

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

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

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

Other Santa Marian Kamalen legends

Numerous other legends exist around the patron saint. Legend has it that when the Spanish militia men

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

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

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

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

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

World War II

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

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

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

Infamous thefts

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

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

On December 28, 1992, the statue was stolen for a third time. Once again, Archbishop Anthony Apuron promised that no criminal action would be taken against the responsible person or people if the statue was returned. The statue was found more than a month later, on Feb. 3, 1993, by a government worker who claimed the sacred statue waved to him. Parks and Recreation worker Juan C. Perez said he was cutting the bushes at about 9:45 a.m. that morning, near the stone bridge in the Serena park in Hagåtña, when he noticed someone waving at him. It turned out to be Santa Marian Kamalen. It was in good shape but was missing its necklace and crown.

Hagåtña procession

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

Beginning mid-afternoon on December 8, large numbers of parishioners from each village church begin to assemble outside the Cathedral-Basilica in Hagåtña. A rosary and novena are said, usually starting at 3:30 p.m., and as the thousands of people gathered cannot fit inside the large cathedral, it is held outside, on the lawn and the streets surrounding the cathedral.

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

December 8 is a government holiday on Guam.

Gown and ornaments

The statue of Santa Marian Kamalen has real human



Photos courtesy of Guampedia



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www.guampedia.com



hair and two crowns are used to dress the statue. One of the crowns is made from gold pieces given to the church by the late Ana Martinez Underwood, who donated the gold pieces (given to her by her husband as a wedding gift) in thanksgiving for the safe return of her husband from prison camp following World War II.

Preparing the statue for the Feast of the Immaculate Conception on December 8 is an honored job that was held by Mariquita “Tita” Torres Souder for many years after the war. She would comb the long black hair of the statue, arrange her crown and jewelry and place roses on her carriage. In December 2003, that job was given to her daughter, Laura M. Torres Souder, after Mariquita Souder died in October 2003.

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

National Shrine project

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

In October 2004, Lujan made a presentation to the Shrine Iconography and Plant and Facilities Committees. Guam was subsequently awarded a spot in the Shrine and was given one year to design, develop and construct a physical representation of Santa Marian Kamalen’s story. A Guam-based committee was then formed to develop the project.

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

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

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What to get your loved ones this tropical Christmas

GUAM VISITORS BUREAU

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

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

Local and Sustainable Gifts

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

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

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

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

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

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

Do-It-Yourself Projects

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

gift. Try out some of these DIY projects!

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

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

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



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- **Certified** – Provides evidence of mailing as well as the date and time of delivery or attempted delivery. Requires the recipient to sign upon delivery.
- **Delivery confirmation** – Shows when an item was delivered or when delivery was

To ensure delivery of holiday gifts by Dec. 25, the Postal Service recommends that cards and packages be sent to military APO/FPO/DPO addresses overseas no later than the mailing dates listed below.

Military Mail Addressed To and From	Priority Mail Express Military® Service (PMEMS) -1	First-Class Mail® Service	Priority Mail® Service	USPS Ground Advantage™ Service
APO/FPO/DPO AE ZIPs™ 090-092	Dec. 15	Dec. 9	Dec. 9	Nov. 6
APO/FPO/DPO AE ZIPs 093	N/A	Dec. 9	Dec. 9	Nov. 6
APO/FPO/DPO AE ZIPs 094-099	Dec. 15	Dec. 9	Dec. 9	Nov. 6
APO/FPO/DPO AE ZIPs 340	Dec. 15	Dec. 9	Dec. 9	Nov. 6
APO/FPO/DPO AE ZIPs 962-966	Dec. 15	Dec. 9	Dec. 9	Nov. 6

<https://about.usps.com/holidaynews/mail-by-dates/#tables>

Holiday mailing deadlines between the Pacific and CONUS



1 - PMEMS is available to selected military/diplomatic Post Offices™. Check with your local Post Office to determine if this service is available to an APO/FPO/DPO address.

attempted using a Track and Confirm tool you can use on your computer.

- **Certificate of mailing** – Offers evidence of the date your mail was accepted by the post office.
- **Return receipt** – Provides proof that an item was

delivered, through a postcard or email showing the signature of the recipient.

- **Restricted delivery** – Specifies who can sign for and receive your mail
- **Special handling** – Offers preferential handling if you're

sending something that needs extra care.

Mailing tips

Print names and addresses of both shipper and recipient clearly on packages with a pen or permanent marker.



Put an extra label with the addresses inside the package in case the original one is defaced. Also include an itemized list of contents.

- Select a box strong enough to protect the contents and appropriate for the amount and size of items inside.
- Leave space for cushioning inside the carton, using bubble wrap, Styrofoam peanuts, or newspaper to protect the contents.
- Use tape designed for shipping, using enough to secure the opening and seams of the box.
- Put newspaper or packing material in hollow items to avoid damage during transport.
- Write "fragile" or "perishable" on packages when shipping such items.
- Use boxes, envelopes and tubes the post office provides for Express Mail and Priority Mail.

– Military Postal Service Agency

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

SCHEDULE 2023	
Dates/Times	Locations
Dec. 2 (Sat) 9 a.m.	Sinesa/Lower Sigua Loop (4 Waterfalls) (Double difficult)
Dec. 9 (Sat) 9 a.m.	Tak'hilo Falls (Guams tallest waterfall) (Double difficult)
Dec. 16 (Sat) 9 a.m.	Cetti 7 Falls (Very difficult) (Must be confident climbing ropes)
Dec. 23 (Sat) 9 a.m.	Sella Bay (CHRISTMAS FAMILY HIKE) (Medium)
Dec. 30 (Sat) 9 a.m.	Maguagua/Upper Sigua (Medium/Difficult)

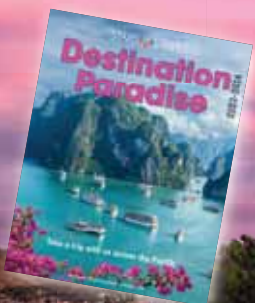
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STARS AND STRIPES



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Stripes Sports Trivia

Japan has produced some very good players in MLB, including a future Hall of Famer in Ichiro and a World Series MVP in Hideki Matsui. Shohei Otani moved to the MLB in 2018. Who was the first player to make the move from Japan to the MLB. Hint: He was a pitcher, but probably not the one you're thinking of.

Answer

Masanori Murakami

SUDOKU

Difficulty: Easy

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

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Edited by Margie E. Burke

HOW TO SOLVE:

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

Answer to Previous Sudoku:

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

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Crossword

by Margie E. Burke

ACROSS

- 1 Bomb, as a mid-term
- 5 Lengthy narrative
- 9 Rustling sound
- 14 Latvian capital
- 15 Babe with a bat
- 16 "Deed I Do" singer Lena
- 17 Haughtiness
- 19 Love, in Lyon
- 20 Indian condiment
- 21 "Survivor" event
- 23 Entice
- 25 Trash bag closers
- 26 What bell-bottoms do
- 29 Camera stand
- 33 Abbr. in some military titles
- 34 Fast too long
- 36 Potted "pet"
- 37 Elevator pioneer
- 39 Cowpoke's charge
- 40 Potter's oven
- 41 Basketball defense
- 42 Donkey sound
- 44 Grant permission
- 45 Mesh, as gears
- 47 Save for later
- 49 Growing business?
- 51 Gets soupy, as ice cream
- 52 Yellow-flowered plant
- 56 Classical language
- 59 Watchful
- 60 Huge victory
- 62 Late newsmen Morley
- 63 Parasitic insects
- 64 Had the answer
- 65 Contest submission
- 66 Multitude
- 67 Adriatic and Aegean

DOWN

- 1 Peck film, "Cape"
- 2 Surrounding glow
- 3 Irksome
- 4 Riot opportunist
- 5 Memorable time
- 6 Use a comma
- 7 Monroe's "The Seven Year"
- 8 Swindle
- 9 Ship like Ahab's
- 10 Pining while away
- 11 Pressing need?
- 12 Tight
- 13 Roll-call response
- 18 Midway attractions
- 22 Able to read and write
- 24 Earthenware fragment
- 26 Stopped in one's tracks
- 27 Acknowledge

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
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- 28 Arborist's concern

30 Goliath, e.g.

31 Drunk as a skunk

32 "Divine Comedy" author

35 Intensity

38 Ocean voyager

43 Room dividers

46 Sinclair Lewis' Elmer

48 Celery servings

50 "Pollyanna" actress Hayley

52 Bulk buy

53 Verve

54 Word before field or wing

55 Finger part

57 Brainchild

58 It's breaking, at times

61 Morning drops

Answers to Previous Crossword:

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

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GUAM EDITION

NOVEMBER 27, 2023

New wings for new pilots

T-7A Red Hawk prepares to
take on role as new Air Force
training jet **Page 2**



KATHY DURAN/U.S. Air Force

A T-7A Red Hawk, assigned to the 416th Flight Test Squadron, lands at Vance Air Force Base, Okla.

COVER STORY



GIANCARLO CASEM/U.S. Air Force

The first T-7A Red Hawk taxis at Edwards Air Force Base, Calif. The aircraft's test campaign is being executed by the T-7A Integrated Test Force, part of the Airpower Foundations Combined Test Force in association with the 416th Flight Test Squadron.

Air Force's 1st T-7A arrives for testing

The Red Hawk, an advanced training jet, will replace older planes in Calif.

By DOUG G. WARE
Stars and Stripes

Edwards Air Force Base in California has received its first T-7A Red Hawk, an advanced training jet that will begin final testing and eventually replace the older planes that have helped mold American pilots for more than 60 years, the service said.

The first Red Hawk arrived at the base, located about 60 miles north of Los Angeles, after a 1,400-mile, cross-country flight that included stops in Oklahoma, New Mexico and Arizona.

In development since at least 2016, the T-7A is a collaboration by Boeing and Saab that has built-in flexibility to evolve in the future as technologies, missions and training needs change. The plane will eventually replace the T-38 Talon, a training aircraft with 1950s technology that's been training American pilots since 1961.

"This arrival marks an exciting transition into the next phase of developmental flight," said Air Force Maj. Jonathan Aronoff, a test pilot. "The T-7A gives immense capability updates that will allow the Air Force to train

"The T-7A gives immense capability updates that will allow the Air Force to train the next generation of combat aviators."

Air Force Maj. Jonathan Aronoff
test pilot

the next generation of combat aviators. Success of first delivery is truly a testament to the joint USAF-industry team we have in place."

The Air Force has been plagued by several T-38 crashes in recent years. A year ago, an in-flight emergency forced one pilot to eject from a T-38 over Columbus Air Force Base, Miss., and two aviators were killed in 2019 — an instructor and a student — when their aircraft crashed on landing at an Oklaho-



BRYCE BENNETT/U.S. Air Force

The Red Hawk soars over Edwards Air Force Base.

ma base. There were also several T-38 crashes in 2017 and 2018, including one that killed a pilot at Laughlin Air Force Base in Texas.

"The T-7A is a brand-new, state-of-the-art pilot training system created specifically for the Air Force, with the purpose of training future fighter and bomber pilots," the Air Force said. "The aircraft is the first digitally designed tactical aircraft, finessed using model-based systems engineering and 3D design tools."

Boeing calls the T-7A Red Hawk a "low-risk, leading-edge, live, virtual and constructive fifth-generation aircrew training system that delivers a multi-generational leap in capability to revolutionize and reinvigorate fighter pilot training." The jet

can carry two pilots and is powered by a single General Electric F404 turbofan afterburning engine.

Officials said the milestone at Edwards AFB marked the beginning of the jet's developmental flight test period, which will involve teams from the Air Force and Boeing working together to certify the aircraft.

"Test pilots have been busy rehearsing missions in the simulator and will quickly begin to fly up to three times daily," the service said. "The [testing teams] will utilize a mix of both Air Force and contractor-owned aircraft to swiftly bring cutting edge capability to train the next generation of warfighters."

The origins of the T-7A Red Hawk go back about 20 years when the Air Force's Air Educa-

tion and Training Command began looking for a successor for the T-38.

The service considered proposals from several aerospace companies — including Lockheed Martin and Northrop Grumman — but ultimately chose the single-engine, twin-tail aircraft initially known as the "T-X." At first, the Air Force hoped to put the T-7A Red Hawk into service in about 2020, but the timing was pushed back by various delays and budget issues. An Air Force pilot flew the plane for the first time at a Boeing facility in St. Louis in June.

"To the next generation of aviators, I can safely say I am jealous," Maj. Bryce Turner, another test pilot, said. "This aircraft's performance, commitment to pilot safety and ground-based training system is something I could only dream of during my time in flight training."

The name "Red Hawk" is a tribute to the Tuskegee Airmen, the historic group of pilots who during World War II became the first Black American military aviators. They were also known as the "Red Tails," due to the color of the tail sections on their planes. The tails on the T-7A Red Hawk are also red.

ware.doug@stripes.com

PACIFIC

Navy to take over closure of Red Hill facility

BY WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

FORT SHAFTER, Hawaii — The Pentagon announced recently that a newly created task force will take the lead this spring in closing the defunct underground fuel storage facility in Hawaii responsible for widespread water contamination two years ago.

Rear Adm. Stephen Barnett, commander of Navy Region Hawaii, will head Navy Closure Task Force-Red Hill while continuing in his current position.

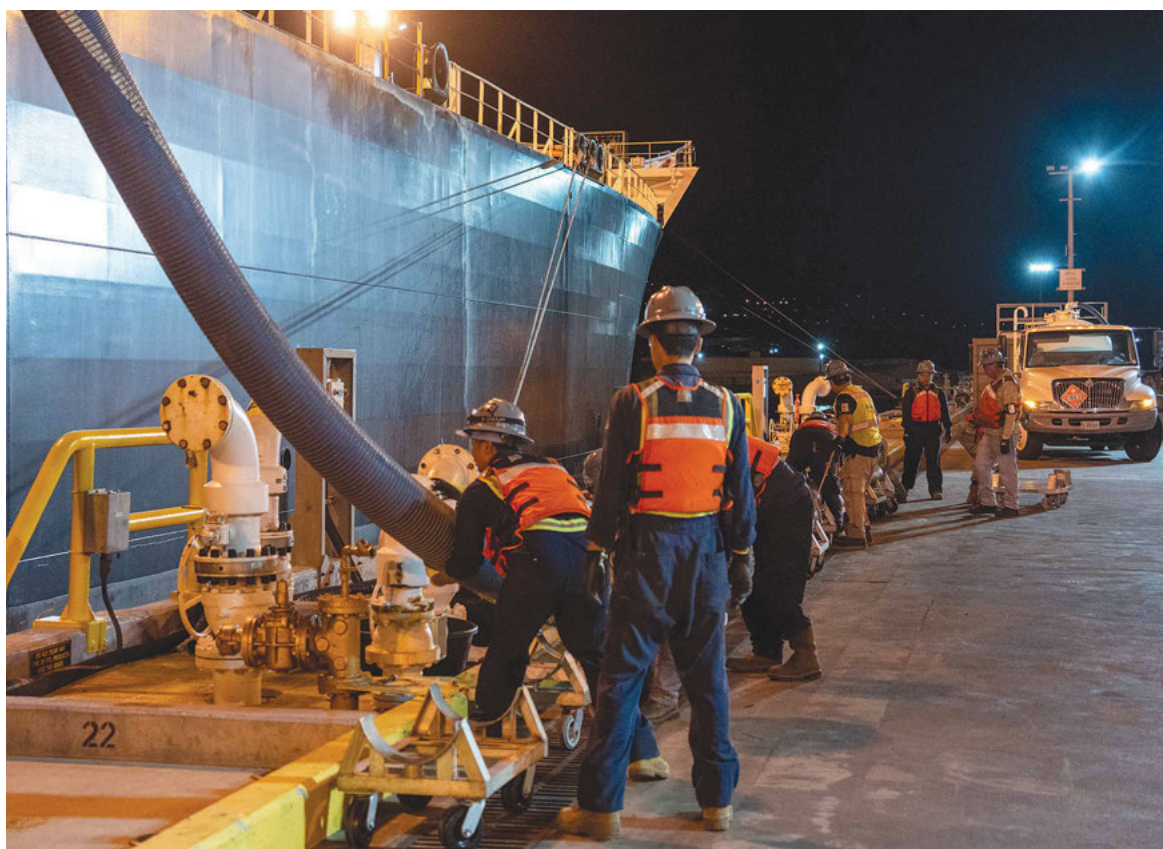
“Dual hatting the Commander enables operational and reputational synergy for the execution of closure and remediation actions, while also leveraging the Commander’s position in the community to continue rebuilding trust with the State of Hawaii and the local community of Oahu,” Brig. Gen. Pat Ryder, the Pentagon press secretary, said in a statement.

Joint Task Force-Red Hill, the Department of Defense entity overseeing the emptying of 104 million gallons of fuel from the World War II-era Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility, is expected to complete its work in the first few months of 2024.

The Navy task force is slated to take charge of the closure operations on April 1, according to a supplemental defueling plan issued recently by the DOD.

Putting the Navy in charge of closure brings the service full circle in the Red Hill saga.

For decades, the Navy operated the Red Hill facility, which lies only a few miles outside Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, maintaining all the while that the massive underground tanks were



KYLER CHATMAN/U.S. Army

Workers supporting Joint Task Force-Red Hill transfer fuel to a merchant tanker at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii, last month.

crucial to national security and posed no risk to the environment.

The tanks and piping, however, sprung numerous leaks throughout those years, and jet fuel from a leak in November 2021 made its way into one of three wells used by the Navy for a water distribution system that served thousands of people living in military communities on and near the joint base.

A Navy investigation into the spill released in July 2022 described a litany of Navy shortcomings that led to the disaster.

Among them was a culture of ignoring proper procedures, poor training and supervision, ineffective command and control and a lack of timely, accurate reporting of problems and defects.

Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin in March 2022 ordered the facility permanently closed.

“Joint Task Force-Red Hill and Navy Closure Task Force-Red Hill will conduct a tightly-coordinated transition of command-and-control responsibilities to ensure seamless continuity of all

health, safety, and environmental protection operations at the Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility as facility closure begins,” Brendan Owens, assistant secretary of defense for energy installations and environment, said in a news release by Joint Task Force-Red Hill.

The task force has emptied almost 90 million gallons of fuel from the facility via gravity into tanker ships moored at the joint base. The fuel is being sent to San Diego, Subic Bay in the Philippines, the Port of Singapore

and a pair of depots in Hawaii.

About 99.9% of the fuel will be drained that way; roughly 60,000 gallons must be drained by other means.

Joint Task Force-Red Hill expects it will complete that work by March, the news release said.

The Navy task force will have to drain the last bit of fuel, approximately 4,000 gallons, by destroying and disassembling piping, according to the release.

The task force “will also remove the pipelines and the sludge in the bottoms of the tanks (approximately 28,000 gallons) and will remove any unknown quantities of residual fuel or related products in the facility until the [facility] is permanently closed,” the release said.

Navy Region Hawaii is “prepared for a seamless transition,” Barnett said in the release.

“Navy has served proudly as part of the JTF, and we will build upon its good work and bring with us the knowledge and processes developed, to ensure the same discipline and transparency as we do the work of closing Red Hill,” he said.

Once the facility is fully closed, the Navy task force will “continue long-term environmental remediation and aquifer restoration efforts in coordination with state and federal stakeholders in order to protect public health and the environment, while continuing to rebuild trust with the State of Hawaii and the local community of Oahu,” the supplemental plan states.

olson.wyatt@stripes.com
@WyattWolson

Tokyo residents seeking testing for PFAS contamination

BY SETH ROBSON
AND HANA KUSUMOTO
Stars and Stripes

YOKOTA AIR BASE, Japan — A group of western Tokyo residents are urging the Japanese government to test water at the home of U.S. Forces Japan amid concerns about the past use of toxic firefighting foam.

The 45-strong residents’ group, whose name roughly translates to “a group that reveals PFAS contamination in the Tama area,” laid out its concerns in a letter sent earlier this month to Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida. The letter, signed by the group’s 12 co-leaders, was also addressed to ministers responsible for health, the environment, defense and foreign affairs and the Tokyo Metropolitan Government.

Tests of people living downstream of Yokota, carried out at the behest of the residents’

group between November 2020 and June, found that more than half of those tested had high levels of PFAS in their blood, according to the residents’ group.

The group now wants the Japanese government to conduct an on-base survey to check for PFAS contamination at Yokota since the fire-extinguishing foam was used there in the past and there were PFAS spills between 2010 and 2012.

“A request should be made to the U.S. Forces to enter Yokota Air Base and check for PFAS contamination,” the letter states.

In 2012, nearly 800 gallons of concentrated firefighting foam seeped into the ground from a storage tank at Yokota, according to an Air Force spill report cited in the Asia-Pacific Journal on Aug. 15, 2020.

PFAS, short for poly and perfluoroalkyl substances, is a class

of chemicals linked to an increased risk of certain tumors of the liver, testicles, breasts and pancreas, according to the American Cancer Society. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency updated its health advisories last year to say no level of PFAS chemicals, which include PFOS and PFOA, is safe in drinking water.

The synthetic compounds accumulate in the body over time, according to the agency.

The fire-suppression systems at Yokota that held PFAS are no longer in service as part of a wider effort to replace those systems with materials other than PFAS at bases across Japan.

“All our PFAS systems have already been locked out so they can’t be used,” Col. Andrew Roddan, commander of the base and its 374th Airlift Wing, told reporters on June 26.

Yokota’s 374th Airlift Wing is committed to protecting the health of personnel, their families and surrounding communities, wing spokesman 1st Lt. Danny Rangel said in a text message.

“We will continue to adhere to all relevant agreements, obligations and procedures as good stewards of our installations and environment,” he wrote.

The residents, in their letter, also asked for nationwide blood testing for PFAS.

“The number of blood tests conducted by the group of 791 people was extremely small compared to the Tama area’s population of about 4.3 million people, and many residents have expressed their desire to have blood tested,” the letter states.

The Tama area encompasses Yokota and numerous communities in western Tokyo.

Japan’s Environment Ministry

told the group when they met recently that the health impacts of PFAS in people’s blood are unclear, according to a document provided by the group.

Japan’s Defense Ministry in July detailed the foam spill on Yokota to local governments.

“We will take appropriate measures by consulting with related local governments in regards to entering the base and conducting a survey,” the ministry stated, according to the document provided by the residents.

The residents’ group also asked the Japanese government to examine the impact of PFAS on children, set new water quality guidelines, conduct a nationwide water survey, and ask companies and public facilities whether they have used PFAS.

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VETERANS

‘Can’t walk past a mirror without looking’

Army veteran recovering after eye and partial face transplant

By MATTHEW ADAMS
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Aaron James and doctors at NYU Langone Health recently showed off the results of his eye and partial face transplant.

On June 10, 2021, James was working in Hot Springs, Ark., as a high voltage lineman when he suffered an electrical accident and withstood 7,200 volts of electric shock when his face touched live wiring.

James had a range of injuries including the loss of his left eye, his dominant left arm below the elbow, his entire nose and lips, front teeth, left cheek area and chin down to the bone.

“Most individuals that I’ve experienced in medicine that sustain that type of injury rarely ever survive,” said Dr. Eduardo Rodriguez, the lead surgeon on James’ case at the hospital. “Aaron is not a guy you’re going to keep down. He is a fighter.”

James said he joined the Army National Guard in Arkansas at 18. During his 10 years of service, he was deployed to Kuwait in 1999, Egypt in 2002 and Iraq in 2004.

After his accident, James said he initially received care at the burn center at Hillcrest Medical Center in Tulsa, Okla., where he was in a coma for four weeks. He was then transferred to Parkland Memorial Hospital in Dallas.

Doctors at NYU were introduced to James’ case two months after the injury, providing guidance and communicating with specialists at Parkland.

About a year after his accident, James had his first clinical appointment at NYU for an initial evaluation for the transplant. He cleared all approvals and was officially listed as a potential recipient in February 2023 with the United Network for Organ Sharing, or UNOS, the private, nonprofit organization that manages the nation’s organ transplant system.

The effort to find a donor for James was led by LiveOnNY, the organ procurement organization for the greater New York metropolitan area. Three months later, coordinators with LiveOnNY found a match at another hospital in New York City.

The surgery was performed on May 27 and lasted approximately 21 hours. More than 140 surgeons, nurses and health care



JOSEPH B. FREDERICK/AP

Dr. Eduardo Rodriguez examines Aaron James in New York on Oct. 23. In May 2023, surgeons performed the world’s first transplant of an entire human eye, an extraordinary addition to a face transplant.

“Aaron is not a guy you’re going to keep down. He is a fighter.”

Dr. Eduardo Rodriguez
NYU Langone Health

professionals were involved.

But James said he felt very little pain, if any, following the operation. He admitted that before the transplant, his confidence was a “little low.”

“Since the transplant, I tell people I can’t walk past a mirror without looking at it,” James said. “It’s made me stand up taller. It’s great now.”

James spent 17 days in the intensive care unit at NYU Langone and was discharged to a nearby apartment on July 6 where he continued outpatient rehabilitation including physical, occupational and speech therapy.

He returned to Hot Springs on Sept. 14 with his wife and daughter. James returns to New York City for monthly visits.

Dr. Vaidehi Dedania, a retinal ophthalmology specialist at the hospital, conducted tests on the donor eye to determine it was healthy, and continues to observe James during the recovery process.



NYU LANGONE HEALTH/AP

James accompanies his daughter Allie in September 2022.

ess. She said the eye looks healthy and based on various tests that they have done it is receiving good blood supply. Early on, they were making certain to keep the eye lubricated, though his body has responded well.

“This is all remarkable and something we haven’t seen before,” Dedania said. “In regards to vision, we’re taking that a day at a time. But we have a lot of hope here.”

Rodriguez said James still

can’t raise his eyelid at this time but is beginning to squint and tighten up his muscles. But he said James has made great strides in his recovery.

James said he is not thinking too far into the future during the recovery process. He is just going forward, one day at a time. He was not hesitant to try the transplant.

“You got to start somewhere. Hopefully, this will kick off something that we can improve on for the next person,” he said.



PROVIDED BY THE JAMES FAMILY

Undated photo of James when he was in the Army National Guard.

“Whether I can see or not, so be it. It is what it is. But hopefully this will help with future cases.”

He said June 10, 2021, is a day he doesn’t remember but a day he will never forget. Since that day, it has been nothing but a test every step of the way. With strength, family and friends by his side, James feels good.

“I think we beat it,” he said.

VETERANS

Poll: Forgo thanks to younger veterans

Survey: Phrase makes some troops and vets feel awkward

By J.P. LAWRENCE
Stars and Stripes

Younger American veterans and military personnel who receive a spoken thanks for their service are more apt to think “thanks but no thanks,” according to a new poll.

The finding came from a survey of 1,639 veterans and service members released by financial services company USAA as part of a Veterans Day initiative.

About two-thirds of a mix of mostly veterans and some currently serving troops between the ages of 18 and 44 said the phrase “thank you for your service” makes them feel uncomfortable or awkward.

The survey found a generational divide on the phrase, which gained prominence after the start of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan more than 20 years ago.

Most veterans over 45 said the phrase does not bother them. And 76% of veterans over 65 said the phrase does not make them feel awkward, with most responding that thanking them for their service is the most appropriate way to honor them.

In contrast, 69% of veterans and currently serving troops ages 18-29 said the phrase makes them uncomfortable, and 66% of respondents ages 30-44 agreed.



KIRSTIN SPANU/U.S. Marine Corps

A girl holds a sign welcoming veterans of World War II and the Vietnam and Korean wars outside the National Museum of the Marine Corps in Triangle, Va.

The divide on “thank you for your service” comes from the difference in how various generations were viewed on returning

home from war, said Kayla Williams, a former Army linguist who deployed to Iraq during the 2003 invasion and now works at

the Rand Corp. think tank as a researcher.

In her conversations with Vietnam War veterans, Williams

often hears of a lack of public appreciation at the time, which is why they welcome hearing the phrase now.

But the launch of an all-volunteer military force means that younger veterans view their service differently than those who were drafted, she said.

“All of us chose to join the military,” Williams said. “Many chose to do so in a post-9/11 environment where we knew we were going to deploy, so it’s awkward being thanked for doing the job you signed up to do.”

Veterans of the wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and Syria often have complicated feelings about their service that can’t be distilled into a short response when someone thanks them out of nowhere at the grocery store or on the bus, said Malia Du Mont, who served in Afghanistan and now is an officer in the Army Reserve.

These veterans deployed during wars that affected them deeply but that the American public largely ignored, Du Mont said.

“‘Thank you for your service,’ for a lot of people feels like an empty phrase,” she said. “For younger veterans, I think, there’s an unspoken disappointment that when people say ‘Thank you for your service,’ there’s that lack of understanding.”

USAA also surveyed more than 800 civilians and found that slightly more than half said they’d be surprised to learn that “thank you for your service” could make some veterans and service members uncomfortable.

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Senator touts cap on attorney fees in Lejeune toxin case

By COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

Former troops and their family members who became sick from exposure to toxic water decades ago at Camp Lejeune, N.C., cannot be charged by their attorneys more than 25% of the money paid to them as compensation by the government, federal officials have ruled.

The Justice Department made the decision official in an Oct. 27 court filing, adopting a request from Sen. Dan Sullivan, R-Alaska, who said he had worked for more than a year with the American Legion to cap attorney fees in these cases involving the Marine Corps base. Sullivan, who spoke on Capitol Hill, accused some attorneys involved in these cases of signing their clients to contracts that would award the lawyers more than 65% of the money that victims eventually

receive.

“We do not want sick Marines and their families to be scammed,” said Sullivan, who is an attorney, a colonel in the Marine Corps Reserve and a member of the American Legion in Alaska.

The Justice Department decision, shared by Sullivan’s office, caps attorney fees at 20% for administrative claims and at 25% for suits filed in federal court. Sullivan said that Attorney General Merrick Garland had assured him that the federal government would levy criminal or civil penalties under the Federal Tort Claims Act on lawyers who charge their clients fees beyond those caps.

The American Legion has lobbied lawmakers to cap law firm fees since the Camp Lejeune Justice Act was passed in 2022, which allowed for those

sickened by toxic water at the Marine base between 1953 and 1987 to sue for damages. American Legion National Commander Daniel Seehafer, who spoke alongside Sullivan, said he was angered by wall-to-wall radio and television advertisements from law firms seeking Camp Lejeune clients.

Seehafer said law firms have “spent billions [of dollars] ... on predatory marketing campaigns targeting sick Marines and their families.” He called on Congress to encode those fee caps in law, which Sullivan and other Republicans have unsuccessfully attempted previously.

Over 100,000 Marine veterans and their family members who served at Camp Lejeune between the 1950s and 1980s have filed claims, Navy officials said. So far, no one has been paid a settlement nor gone to trial in the case.

Victims have until Aug. 10, 2024, to submit a claim.

Navy officials said the processes to vet claims have been slow moving, but they have promised staffing has been increased and they are making progress on the backlog.

In September, the Navy and Justice Department announced the government would offer some victims a preset settlement option, which would pay between \$100,000 to \$550,000 to those who have developed certain diseases and spent at least 30 days at Camp Lejeune between Aug. 1, 1953, and Dec. 21, 1987.

Known as the elective option, those settlements are meant to provide some claimants a “quick and early resolution” to their cases, the Justice Department said in September.

Government officials said they had not estimated how many

victims would take the elective option. They also said they expect thousands of additional individuals to file claims.

It remains unclear how much money the federal government will pay out to victims of toxic water at Camp Lejeune. The government has projected such payouts could exceed \$21 billion, Bloomberg reported.

Up to 1 million service members and civilians were likely exposed to toxic water at the base, Navy officials have said. Contaminants in the drinking water — primarily dry-cleaning chemicals that leaked into wells from an off-post business — have been linked to neurological disorders, including Parkinson’s, cancers, reproductive issues and other health defects.

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PACIFIC

Historical salvage platform collapsing

Structure used to save USS Arizona in WWII fell into Pearl Harbor

By WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

FORT SHAFTER, Hawaii — It took Japanese torpedo bombers less than an hour to sink the battleship USS Arizona during the Dec. 7, 1941, surprise attack on Pearl Harbor.

Salvaging the unrepairable hulk that rested half submerged on the harbor floor took almost two years. A pair of platforms were welded to the sides of the Arizona to which ferries, barges and ships tethered as workers stripped parts critical to the war effort.

Now, after eight decades of exposure to salt water and ever-pressing tides, one of those submerged platforms has collapsed after breaking loose from the ship, which is now part of the USS Arizona Memorial.

On Oct. 27, staff with the Pearl Harbor National Memorial discovered the smaller of the two platforms had shifted, with its concrete surface now inclined diagonally in the water.

A preliminary assessment found that the platform appeared to be stable, but a much more in-depth evaluation will be needed to determine what can or should be done to preserve it, David Kilton, a spokesman for the Pearl Harbor National Memorial, told Stars and Stripes by phone.

Preserving both platforms is essential to historical preservation, he said.

“Our mission at the National Park Service is not just Dec. 7, 1941,” he said. “It’s the lead up to the attacks, the actual attack and the aftermath, continuing all the way to peace and reconciliation — a story still playing out today.”

“Those platforms tell the part of the story of the salvage,” he said.

The top of the now-listing platform is a roughly 2-by-6-foot concrete slab, about a foot thick, Kilton said. It is lined with bollards that had been used to secure vessels.

The slab is attached to a submerged steel frame that had been welded to the ship.

The Arizona was one of only three ships so badly damaged in the attack that they were unrepairable, Kilton said.

The wreck of the USS Utah remains in the harbor, and a memorial was erected near the



PHOTOS BY NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

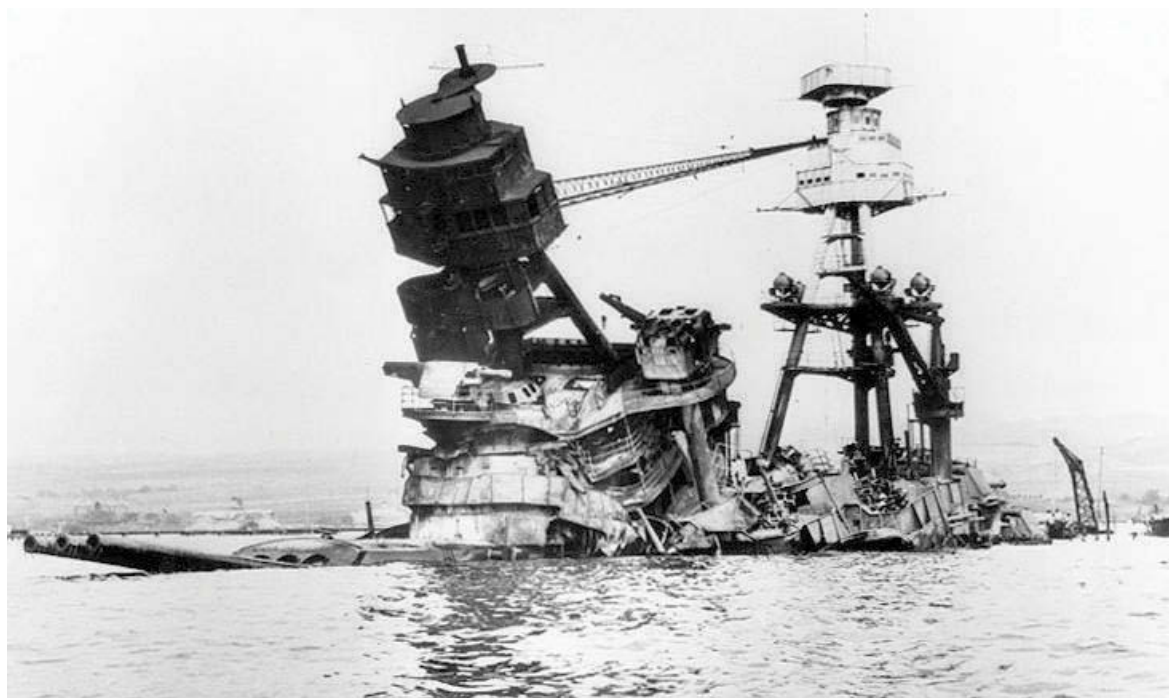
Staff with the Pearl Harbor National Memorial discovered in late October that the concrete-steel platform, left, used for salvaging the USS Arizona had partially collapsed.



A preliminary assessment found that the platform appeared to be stable, but a much more in-depth evaluation will be needed to determine what can or should be done to preserve it.

site in 1972. At the time it was sunk, the Utah was no longer an active battleship and was used primarily for anti-aircraft training.

The battleship USS Oklahoma underwent salvage work until 1946, when a private company purchased the Oklahoma’s hull and attempted to pull it by tug to California. The battleship sank about 500 miles east of Hawaii.



U.S. NAVY

The USS Arizona rests submerged in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, shortly after the Japanese surprise attack on Dec. 7, 1941.

The sunken wreck of the Arizona is the centerpiece of the Pearl Harbor National Memorial. Roughly 1.7 million visitors each year take the short ferry trip to the memorial’s viewing platform that was erected above the sunk-

en hull. The area includes a shrine room listing the names of the 1,177 crew members who died because of the attack.

The memorial’s dive team is working with the Navy and a dive resource team from the National

Park Service’s Denver Service Center to conduct a more thorough assessment of the platform’s condition, Kilton said.

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PACIFIC

Pilot program

High school senior at Camp Foster on Okinawa has earned his wings through a Navy flight academy

BY MATTHEW M. BURKE
Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — A high school senior at this Marine Corps base on Okinawa has earned his wings through a Navy flight program for exceptional students.

Jackson Coberley graduated in August from the eight-week Naval Air Forces Flight Academy, a scholarship program for high-performing 11th- and 12th-graders. He aims one day to fly for the Air Force.

The program allows students from the Navy and Marine Corps Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps to pursue their private pilot's license while receiving college credit, the Navy said in a June 7 news release.

Coberley was one of three students from the Indo-Pacific region chosen for this year's program.

"It was a lot of fun," he recently told Stars and Stripes. "It's not difficult if you're willing to put in the work."

The program, which takes place at three locations in North Carolina and Delaware, was launched in 2021 to expose a diverse group of students to naval aviation and inspire them to join the Navy. It features classroom instruction, more than 40 hours in single-engine training aircraft and 17 hours of solo flights.

This year, 28 students were chosen to participate but only 21 graduated with a pilot's license, Coberley said.

Program costs of \$26,000 per student are paid by the Naval Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics Coordination Office under a new STEM initiative.

The U.S. military has been hampered by a "significant" pilot shortage in recent years, the Defense Department reported to Congress in July 2019.

As of August, the Air Force had a backlog of around 900 prospective pilots awaiting training, mostly due to a lack of civilian simulator instructors, unscheduled inspections and issues with training aircraft, Air Force spokeswoman Rose Riley wrote in an emailed statement earlier this month.

The Navy has dealt with similar issues with training aircraft and instructor manning, spokeswoman Lt. Alyson Hands recently told Stars and Stripes. Over the summer, the service had 617 prospective pilots awaiting training.

Coberley, the son of Air Force avionics technician Senior Master Sgt. Darren Coberley, grew up around planes. He arrived on Okinawa eight years ago after stints in South Dakota and En-



Amy Coberley

Jackson Coberley graduated in August from the eight-week Naval Air Forces Flight Academy, a scholarship program for high-performing 11th- and 12th-graders. He aims to one day fly for the Air Force.



U.S. Navy

Jackson Coberley, left, and Jake Tirado take notes on aircraft systems during the ground school portion of the program. Coberley said he passed his final exam with only three days to spare.

gland.

Jackson Coberley said he decided to fly after taking five free discovery flights through the Civil Air Patrol in the U.S. in the summer of 2022. He applied for the Navy program later that year.

"It's so pretty up there," he said. "You see the world from a whole different view."

At the academy, students alternate between classroom instruction, studying for their Federal Aviation Administration written exam and time in the air, Coberley said.

He flew in a Piper Warrior out of Delaware Airpark in Dover, Del. By his 10th flight, he was alone in the cockpit, relying pri-

marily on steam gauges and his eyes to pilot the aircraft, without certain modern avionics like GPS or a ground-based navigation system.

"At that point, you know what to do," Coberley said. "It's just if you can get over your nerves and say, 'Yeah, I'm going to solo this airplane.' Then it just kind of comes

naturally at that point."

Coberley said he passed his final exam with only three days to spare. Some of the other students weren't so lucky.

Back on Okinawa, he is flying with the Aero Club at Kadena Air Base. He hopes to attend the Air Force Academy to study computer science next year.

In addition to flying, he is taking six Advanced Placement classes and is student council executive president, vice president of the National Honor Society and an officer with the JROTC and Civil Air Patrol.

"I hold Jackson in the highest regard, and I don't know of any other staff member or fellow student that doesn't feel the same about him," Kubasaki High School principal James Strait wrote in an emailed statement Oct. 26.

Kenneth Gipson, the senior Marine JROTC instructor at Kubasaki, agreed.

"Jackson is one heck of an individual," Gipson said at the school in September. "He is academically sound, respectful. He's not perfect, but he's pretty dog-gone close to it."

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MILITARY

US bomber back in S. Korean airspace

B-52H is part of show of airpower

By DAVID CHOI
Stars and Stripes

CAMP HUMPHREYS, South Korea — An Air Force bomber returned to South Korean airspace with U.S. and South Korean fighter jets in tow recently, nearly a month after one landed in the country for the first time in at least 30 years.

The B-52H Stratofortress bomber was escorted from Seoul to the Yellow Sea by an unspecified number of American F-35B Lightning IIs and F-16 Fighting Falcons, as well as South Korean F-35As and F-15K Slam Eagles, the Ministry of National Defense said in a news release.

Reached by phone, the ministry and the 7th Air Force declined to elaborate on the exercise.

The recent drill is the 12th appearance by a U.S. bomber over South Korea so far this year. The latest exercise was an example of the increased frequency of U.S. military assets in South Korea, the release said.

President Joe Biden and South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol agreed to deploy strategic military assets “in a timely and coordinated manner” following a summit in May, according to a joint statement at the time.

A nuclear-capable B-52H landed in South Korea on Oct. 18 and performed flyovers during Seoul’s Aerospace and Defense Exhibition, a biennial military convention hosted by the National



SOUTH KOREAN AIR FORCE/8th Fighter Wing Public Affairs

A U.S. Air Force B-52H Stratofortress flies south of the Korean Peninsula alongside U.S., South Korean and Japanese fighter jets, on Oct. 22. The bomber returned recently to South Korean airspace with U.S. and South Korean fighter jets in tow.

Defense Ministry.

Five days later, that B-52H out of Barksdale Air Force Base, La., flew with U.S., South Korean and Japanese fighter jets over the air-defense zones south of the Korean Peninsula, marking the first-ever air drill between the three countries.

In addition to the latest aerial demonstration, warships from the United States and South Korea conducted a naval drill in the East

Sea, or the Sea of Japan, to hone their anti-submarine and maritime blocking capabilities.

The guided-missile destroyer USS Rafael Peralta joined 10 South Korean warships, including the ROKS Seoae Ryu Sungryong, a destroyer equipped with the Aegis missile-defense system, for a four-day exercise, according to a Ministry of National Defense news release.

The drills came soon after

Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and South Korean Defense Minister Shin Won-sik met in Seoul for an annual conference between senior U.S. and South Korean defense officials.

Following the meeting, Austin told reporters that Seoul and Washington’s alliance had never been better and that South Korea’s defense included “the full range of our nuclear, conventional and missile defense capabil-

ities.”

North Korea’s state-run Korean Central News Agency recently reported that the regime successfully tested two solid-fuel engines for an intermediate-range ballistic missile.

Pyongyang has fired 21 ballistic missiles in 14 days of testing so far this year.

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Sailors on ships in dry dock gain rights on punishment

By ALISON BATH
Stars and Stripes

Sailors and Marines assigned to vessels undergoing maintenance or upgrades now can refuse nonjudicial punishments meted out by their commanders, just as they can when serving ashore.

Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro ordered the change to service policy recently regarding

the “vessel exception” rule, a controversial, decades-old clause in a section of the Uniform Code of Military Justice covering non-judicial punishment of service members.

Under military law, service members have the option to reject nonjudicial punishment and face charges for UCMJ violations during a court-martial or other proceeding.

But service members either aboard or assigned to ships, submarines and other vessels are stripped of that right.

A court-martial typically has a higher burden of proof.

Del Toro’s directive clarifies that a vessel must be operational for a commanding officer to apply the exception. The order, issued earlier this month, also specifies the conditions under

which a vessel is considered inoperative.

Commanders also must fully inform service members of their rights prior to a nonjudicial proceeding, or captain’s mast, whether at sea or ashore and allow them access to a lawyer when feasible, according to the memorandum.

Service members have long challenged nonjudicial punishments given under the exception, arguing that they’re unfair when a vessel is in dry dock or otherwise not at sea, or when they were no longer assigned to a vessel.

The exception is part of Article 15 of the UCMJ, enacted in 1950, according to a February 1997 opinion by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Armed Forces.

In 1962, Congress overhauled Article 15 to include the right of service members to demand trial by court-martial, “except in the case of a member attached to or

embarked on a vessel.”

The justices also wrote in the 1997 opinion that it was clear that Congress intended the exception to apply only to vessels at sea.

In U.S. v. Glen P. Edwards, the appeals court ruled that a lower court erred in saying that the operational status of a ship was not relevant for the purpose of considering nonjudicial punishment as evidence in a separate court-martial.

In his order, Del Toro said nonjudicial punishment remained an important tool to ensure commanders could swiftly address minor misconduct, regardless of where a unit operates.

But he also acknowledged that maintaining unit discipline came with the responsibility of “safeguarding the rights” of sailors and Marines.

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