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Marine first Palauan to become Master Gunnery Sergeant



Master Gunnery Sgt. Milton Donatus

BY GUNNERY SGT. RUBIN TAN,
MARINE CORPS BASE CAMP BLAZ

In a historic moment for the Republic of Palau, one of its own has achieved the rank of Master Gunnery Sergeant (E-9) in the United States Marine Corps. This achievement marks the first time a Palauan has attained the highest enlisted rank in the Marine Corps. On May 12, 2023 Master Gunnery Sgt. Milton Donatus was frocked at Marine Corps Base (MCB) Camp Blaz, Guam in front of a formation of Marines, family, Marine veterans, and the Consul General of the Republic

of Palau on Guam.

Donatus, was born and raised in Ngkeklau in the state of Ngaraard.

“I remember growing up and before going to bed we would ask our grandmother to tell us stories about what it was like on the island during World War II. We didn’t have a TV back then,” said Donatus. “She would tell us stories about the Marines and how they saved groups of people who were going to be killed by the Imperial Japanese Forces. That’s when I knew, all I wanted was to be a Marine.”

At the age of 18, Donatus

traveled 805 miles from Palau to Guam in hopes of joining the Marine Corps. Unfortunately, he was a couple of years too early as the Guam Marine recruiting station was closed down. He lived with his aunt and uncle and worked various jobs around the island until the recruiting station opened. Finally, on April 28, 2000, the recruiting station reopened, and Donatus was the first and only young man to enlist during the reopening ceremony.

At MCB Camp Blaz Donatus

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Coast Guard cook channels Chamorro heritage to fuel crew

STORY AND PHOTOS BY CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER SARA MUIR,
U.S. COAST GUARD FORCES MICRONESIA / SECTOR GUAM

The crews of the Guam-based 154-foot Sentinel-class Fast Response Cutters made a name for themselves in 2022, with over 240 days away from homeport in service to Pacific partners and the Nation.

They are essential to executing the National Defense Strategy, White House Indo-Pacific strategy, implementing the Indo-Pacific combatant commander’s campaign plan, and the local commander’s strategic plan. These crews are trusted partners in the region and provide a persistent presence helping the U.S. compete below the level of armed conflict alongside our Allies, shaping the operational environment.

The support staff is one of the oft-overlooked enablers of this strategy aboard field assets. In the case of USCGC Oliver Henry (WPC 1140), one of these key personnel is Petty Officer 1st Class Joshua Anthony Dydasco Pablo, the lead culinary specialist. Originally from Mongmong, Guam, he’s been in the Service for five years and joined the Oliver Henry crew in the Spring of 2022, just before their first Oceania expeditionary patrol. He was recently named the runner-up in the 2022 Senior Culinary Specialist of the Year awards.

“I joined the Coast Guard to make a difference and try something different with my life,” said Pablo. “I worked at a few restaurants around Guam while paying for school and decided to go another route. Now I can use the Coast Guard to reach my professional and personal goals.”

As an unintentional independent duty culinary specialist at



SEE HERITAGE ON PAGE 4

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Cinto Peredo and family, center, celebrate his enlistment into the Guam National Guard at the Barrigada Readiness Complex on May 2 with Dr. Mary Okada, president of the Guam Community College, second from left, and Brig. Gen. Mike Cruz, adjutant general, right.

Guam Guard enlists first GED+ Program graduate

STORY AND PHOTOS BY MARK SCOTT,
 GUAM NATIONAL GUARD

BARRIGADA – Cinto Peredo of Dededo, Guam, enlisted into the Guam Army National Guard as the first candidate to complete the Graduate Equivalency Degree program at the Guam Community College.

The GED+ Program is a joint venture between the Guam Army National Guard and the Guam Community College that enables students to attain a GED, pass the military entrance exam, and enlist in the Guard.

Peredo, who is a father of three, currently works as a mechanic and tire technician. “I heard about the Guard and wanted to better my lifestyle and create more opportunities for my family,” said Peredo.

But without a GED, he was unable to enlist.

He signed up for the first 31-day GED+ Program in November 2022 and took courses in Math, Science, English and Social Studies. He received additional tutoring in math from Mr. David Conlu of the Guard’s Recruiting and Retention Battalion. With the additional support, Peredo passed his

GED+ exam in April 2023.

Brig Gen. Mike Cruz, adjutant general, gave remarks prior to enlisting Peredo. “When you said you’re trying to get better, Cinto, it’s important for two reasons. One, it’s the Army’s slogan to Be All You Can Be. Second, living here in the second island chain, you are becoming a defender of your homeland. I’d like to welcome you to the team, and I’m inspired by what you’ve overcome to be here. Thanks also to your family, because it takes your support for him to do what he did,” said Cruz.

Dr. Mary Okada, president and CEO of Guam Community College was also in attendance. “This program is a model of how we can come together to lift people up,” said Okada. “The GED+ program is such a significant milestone not only for your service, but as a way to encourage others and tell them if I can do this, you can do this. This is the first of more to come, and thank you to everyone involved from the GCC and the Guard in helping lift these individuals up.”

Peredo will become a 91B, Wheeled Vehicle Mechanic, in the Guam Army National Guard.

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HERITAGE: ‘Leaders don’t need to have a title’

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

the time, the expeditionary patrol presented a challenge. While billeted for more than one culinary specialist, many cutters are sailing short due to a limited number of rated personnel. His previous tour aboard the USCGC Maui (WPC 1304) in Bahrain conditioned him to extreme heat and high operational tempo.

Twenty-four crew times three meals a day, times 30 days means 2,160 meals each month. In port, they’ll do an “open galley,” providing a break and accounting for people eating off the ship. On the first expeditionary patrol, the crew also pitched in to help, but by the second, the newly minted SNCS Jeremiah Muniz arrived from “A” school. Pablo is mentoring him in shipboard life and galley best practices while strengthening his own skill set -- sights set on becoming a warrant officer or commissioned officer.

The U.S. Coast Guard is one of the smallest branches of the Armed Forces but is widely known for crews consistently going above and beyond their published capabilities. Pablo attributes this accomplishment to the crews’ proficiency on cutters and their shore support.

“Though all rates can be demanding due to the high operational tempo, knowing that everyone is in the same boat, pun intended, helps. At the end of the day, we all go home safely with the task accomplished. It requires us to be dedicated and hardworking and is not the right fit for everyone, but if you want to challenge yourself, you can achieve greatness beyond just your assigned position. The need for flexibility and adaptability is guaranteed to be a lesson learned at any unit,” said Pablo.

Being a CS on the Oliver Henry requires flexibility regarding sea state or the availability of ingredients in port. Pablo sets the meal



PO1 Joshua Anthony Dydasco Pablo conducts an emergency medical drill at sea in the Pacific Ocean on April 6.

plan weekly, but when the forecast calls for 6 to 8-foot seas, the menu may change for safety and to match the crew’s appetite. A lot of it comes down to operational planning and scheduling, from time management to shop for and load stores before getting underway to rotating stock and putting out meals.

Underway life has challenges, but if you’re willing to “roll with it,” there are many benefits. The crew conducted a fish call on the recent expeditionary patrol and hooked several good-sized Wahoo. One 30-pound fish was carefully filleted by fellow crewmember Petty Officer 1st Class Ikaika Ruiz, an electrician’s mate from Hawaii, producing several plates of sashimi and kelaguen prepared by the commanding officer, a Chamorro dish similar to ceviche using lemon and hot peppers rather than lime and cilantro.

“The camaraderie and memories made

with your shipmates underway and on port calls are something to look forward to always,” said Pablo.

Recent shopping in Palau for the last leg of the patrol required visiting several groceries, which came to around \$5,700. More than 1,200 pounds of food came aboard, ranging from essentials like meat and coffee to various snacks and water.

Ensuring daily meal services for 26 people for four to six weeks straight, in addition to collateral duties such as damage control, ship’s EMT, safety during special sea detail, and supporting the team when they conduct boardings and search and rescue, takes leadership and dedication. Each member must know their job and duties on such a small crew. Unsurprisingly, Pablo considers a leader to be someone who works with others and leads by example to find solutions, not excuses.

“Leaders don’t need to have a title. Regardless of rank, anyone on the boat can be a leader in any situation, such as damage control efforts, and shares or accepts others’ ideas on combatting the casualty,” said Pablo.

Like his other local colleagues, Pablo draws on the strength of being Chamorro. “Family comes first,” said Pablo. “Strangers are welcome as guests to any event to not feel left out, such as beach barbecues, as there is ample food and drinks along with stories to be shared and passed to one another. Whether on the island or overseas, Chamorro is being inclusive in spreading close bonds and connections to others from all walks of life.”

Being a CS means being proactive by nature, and the mission of feeding the crew is without an end state, constantly evolving but continually assessed. Similar to operational planning, they perform best when capitalizing on synchronized planning to forecast crew needs and anticipate demands. This way, CSs support campaign plans and ensure our forces are always ready to respond to mission requirements serving the nation and our partners.

Pablo spends time with the family outside of work, fishing, playing cards, or gathering around a board game. His attitude and pastimes tie to his favorite quote by Bob Marley, “Some people are so poor that all they have is money.”

“This is my favorite quote because it doesn’t matter what your job is, what you do in life, or how much money you make because you cannot take any of that with you when you die. Yes, money can buy limited happiness, but memories and experiences with cherished ones matter most when facing a life-flashing experience. That is what being Chamorro is all about,” said Pablo.



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'COME SAIL WITH US!'

Machinery technician from Guam drives cutter mission forward

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

The 154-foot Fast Response Cutters are the most advanced U.S. Coast Guard ships stationed in Guam to date. They boast a collection of upgraded electronics and use all the available space aboard. If it's mechanical or electrical, the Engineering Department is responsible for it.

Petty Officer 2nd Class Benjamin Laguana is a machinery technician assigned to USCGC Oliver Henry (WPC 1140). Originally from Yigo, Guam, Laguana has 16 years of service and has been aboard the Oliver Henry for less than a year.

The cutter had a 60 percent change out and received a new commanding officer in 2022 before a lengthy expeditionary patrol. Being so new among this crew, Laguana's expectations of the patrol centered on the crew coming together while representing the U.S. Coast Guard and the island of Guam. Trial under fire, given little time to gel as a team before setting off for 43 days. Part of his mantra is, "Sometimes you just have to send it."

"I would say we accomplished more than expected. My favorite moment would have to be the school visit in Papua New Guinea, where we had a full day of fun with the students," said Laguana. "We took pictures, had dance lessons, and bonded with our distant neighbors."

He's just completed his second expeditionary patrol in less than nine months. The cutter made port calls to the Republic of Palau and the Federated States of Micronesia. The crew participated in several named operations in support of the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency, Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission, U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, and U.S. Coast Guard strategies to counter illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing in the Pacific and build stronger ties with partners and allies in the region.



Petty Officer 2nd Class Ben Laguana takes a photo with students at HMPNGS Tarangau School in Manus, Papua New Guinea, Aug. 15, 2022. Photo courtesy of USCGC Oliver Henry, U.S. Coast Guard



Ben Laguana

As the crew departed Palau for the last time on this patrol, they did offshore maintenance. Every 250 hours, the engineers must change the oil on the generators, and it was time to replace the 8 gallons of oil in the No. 2 generator. As the cutter went dead in the water on calm seas, Laguana led his five-person team through the procedure. While it may be routine maintenance, the team still takes the time to define the environment, applying strategy and campaign design principles by thoroughly identifying the problem, the approach, and contingencies before beginning the action. Within 30 minutes, they'd replaced the oil, oil filter, and fuel filter without spilling a drop.

Laguana joined the Coast Guard to follow in his grandfather's footsteps, "I idolized him in every way possible. He served his country and represented his island to the best of his ability. Although he was limited to one job, he kept at it and made his mark. I wanted that and more. I knew I wanted to find a career that helped people and, at the same time, served. The Coast Guard perfectly fit that description, and I ran with it. Then the smallest branch of the military that few people knew about sold me from the beginning. I have dedicated my life to

this Service and wouldn't change a thing."

He advises anyone considering joining to expect the unexpected, "But if you're willing to step out of your comfort zone, train with the best, and join a small elite family of Coast Guard personnel, then come sail with us!"

When it comes to getting underway, Laguana advocates for it, "Without a doubt, do so. We are a sea-going service, and I believe an underway tour can help anyone understand the nature of our Service. An underway tour also allows you to visit places you'd never thought you'd see."

Traveling the islands means making connections. Laguana was previously stationed in Guam and served aboard Oliver Henry's predecessor USCGC Washington (WPC 1331) in 2015. In Yap, he met people while stationed in Washington; he went on to visit again aboard Oliver Henry and fish with them. In Palau, on this patrol, he spent time fishing, catching grouper and other fish. His passion for fishing comes from his upbringing and fishing with his father on weekends as a child, first with a cast net as the tide is out and then rod and reel once the tide is in. This passion is shared by many on the crew, and you'll find more than a few fish calls happening aboard Oliver Henry.

Laguana is known for his dedication and forthrightness aboard, which matches his leadership philosophy, "A good leader is someone who can see your full potential and more—who can push you to your limits knowing that you have more to offer. Being a good leader is not about being in charge, and being a good leader is about caring for those in your charge."

Leadership and caring for those in your charge are essential at home and outside work. He describes his wife and three children as "...my backbone and main support line."

March is Chamorro heritage month, and Laguana sums up what it means to him like this, "Being Chamoru, to me, means to be proud. Back in the day, my grandfather served in the U.S. Navy and could only be a cook because of his skin color and where he was from. But that never stopped him from rising and eventually retiring as a Chief Petty Officer. He was proud of his origins and always told me to do the same. I think about that conversation he and I had a lot, and it makes me proud to see how far the Chamoru people have come."



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LINEBACKERS OF THE WEEK

SrA Gabriella Balines

‘It’s important to lead by example’

BY AIRMAN 1ST CLASS EMILY SAXTON,
36TH WING

ANDERSEN AIR FORCE BASE – U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Gabriella Balines, a decentralized material support specialist assigned to the 4th Reconnaissance Squadron, was recognized as the 36th Wing’s Team Andersen Linebacker of the Week, at Andersen Air Force Base, Guam, May 3, 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 a DMS specialist, Balines oversees and tracks aircraft asset transactions through the Integrated Maintenance Data System and the Integrated Logistics Supply System. She also analyzes the due-in-from-maintenance listing through record audits to ensure the return of Air Force owned assets. Balines has proactively tracked 22 mission critical assets by coordinating with four logistic organizations across the Air Force. Her actions enabled the RQ-4 Global Hawk metrics

of 40 sorties and 662 flying hours.

“I like my job because it’s not repetitive work and it’s very tedious,” said Balines. “It keeps me busy all the time.”

Balines’ supply knowledge was vital in the training of five airmen from the 36th Logistics Readiness Squadron. She qualified them on 117 career field and education training plan tasks which supported the LRS military stand-up order.

Additionally, Balines is the section reparable and “awaiting maintenance” parts monitor for the 4 RS supply section. Her attention to detail and strict accountability led to six quality assurance passes and her being awarded the first quarter honor roll recipient of the section.

Balines maintained 100% accountability of 12 assets valued at \$4.3 million during offline procedures for the month of March and enabled the replenishment of the Mobility Readiness Spares Package within 72 hours. Furthermore, she assisted with the bench restock organization task where she validated 214 consumable line items for return to base supply. Moreover, Balines’ efforts aided in the tidiness of the storage bins which boosted maintenance parts requests



Senior Airman Gabriella Balines opens a package to inspect an aircraft part at Andersen Air Force Base. Photo by Senior Airman Jasmine Barnes, U.S. Air Force

by 50%.

“It’s important to lead by example to show others what to do and set an example for the Air Force,” said Balines.

Tech. Sgt. Tyler Ellman

‘It’s been fun because I like problem solving’

STORY AND PHOTO BY SENIOR AIRMAN JASMINE BARNES,
36TH WING

ANDERSEN AIR FORCE BASE – U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Tyler Ellman, a 36th Force Support Squadron noncommissioned officer in charge of readiness, was recognized as the 36th Wing’s Team Andersen Linebacker of the Week, at Andersen Air Force Base, Guam, April 26, 2023.

Since arriving at Andersen AFB in August 2022, Ellman was put in charge of readiness and he filled multiple roles. As the readiness NCOIC, he provides oversight for 32 programs. He was instrumental in immediately identifying and correcting 32 errors in the Defense Reporting System, realigning 11 unit type codes which led to the re-posturing of Air Expeditionary Force Indicators ultimately eliminating eight erroneous deployment taskings. Ellman and his team readied the unit by orchestrating seven cross organizational tactical combat casualty care classes in which 63 personnel were trained within 45 days. They secured 26 seats for chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear training and fueled medical readiness by 56%, magnifying overall basic



Tech. Sgt. Tyler Ellman answers the phone at Andersen Air Force Base.

deployment readiness by 90%. 36 FSS is now one of the leading units in Pacific Air Forces that has the most mission ready Airmen amongst other force support squadrons.

“It’s been fun because I like problem solving,” said

Ellman. “The tempo has been completely different coming from Alaska and it’s been challenging.”

Ellman is the lead mortuary technician. This duty is one of the toughest positions one will ever fulfill within the 36 FSS. In his short time here, he has overseen three mortuary cases. He and his team gracefully handled these cases and ensured the remains of the fallen were returned to their loved ones in a dignified and timely manner. The commander of the Utah Air National Guard coined Ellman and his team for their diligent efforts taking care of their member through a difficult case. His efforts got him the squadron Noncommissioned Officer of the Quarter award for the fourth quarter of 2022, and his team garnered squadron Team of the Quarter award for the fourth quarter of 2022.

“What I like best about my job is the mortuary aspect,” said Ellman. “The reason I like the mortuary aspect is because we get to hold standards to the family and we’re able to bring closure to those families. I know my work ethic and I pay super attention to detail so we can make sure that our members are able to receive the respect and dignity they deserve.”

Tech. Sgt. Robert Pepper

‘I try to thrive on being selfless’

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

ANDERSEN AIR FORCE BASE – U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Robert Pepper, the noncommissioned officer in charge 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, April 19, 2023.

As the NCOIC of Silver Flag maintenance, Pepper leads and develops five members, overseeing scheduled and unscheduled maintenance. Pepper innovates data management tools for expenditure tracking and the management of a \$1.5 million budget. Additionally, he controls and assigns maintenance repair actions for 1,500 vehicles in support of Pacific Air Forces’ rotational Tanker Task Force, Bomber Task Force, Dynamic Force Employment and multi-lateral exercises.

“I love taking something that is used and abused [vehicles] and bringing it back to health,” said Pepper.

During his time as NCOIC of Silver Flag maintenance, Pepper directed the relocation and repairs of 25 inoperable assets powering a \$40 million military construction airfield project, equipping Andersen AFB’s contingency dispersal plan with capabilities for two additional aircraft parking spaces. He also managed the repairs on 89 critical assets, driving interoperability training across 13 Air Force Specialty Codes and enabling 517 joint qualification certifications. Pepper also coordinated with a local U.S. Army fleet and procured 710 vehicle parts valued at \$210,000 enabling the team to expedite maintenance repairs and prevented Silver Flag’s training course cancellation.

Pepper’s focus on innovation drove him to develop metric trackers or the flight’s financial accountability and reporting of over \$1.5 million, impacting the operations and maintenance of Andersen AFB’s vehicle fleet. Pepper’s actions led to his selection as the NCOIC of night shift operations during Cope North 23. During that time, he led a four-member team responsible for the maintenance and repairs



Tech. Sgt. Robert Pepper tests a vehicle at Andersen Air Force Base.

of 325 vehicles. His team identified a critical safety limiting factor for the 36 WG’s vehicle shipment process and prevented two non-airworthy assets from deploying, mitigating the aircrafts exposure to hazardous material and protecting operators from catastrophic equipment failure.

“I try to thrive on being selfless,” said Pepper. “Putting the people beneath me before myself”

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Master Gunnery Sgt. Milton Donatus, his family and Palauan government officials are all smiles following his frocking ceremony at MCB Camp Blaz on May 12. Photo by Lance Cpl. Garrett Gillespie, U.S. Marine Corps

PALAUAN: ‘I strive to be like my mentors’

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

serves as the operations chief, and he is responsible for the establishment, management, and operation of the base’s current and future force laydown. He’s also the base’s Marine Corps Martial Arts Program instructor.

“Master Gunnery Sergeant Donatus is a Marine’s Marine, and there’s no other Marine I would want as my operations chief,” said Lt. Col. Colter Bahlau, MCB Camp Blaz operations officer. “He exudes the patriotism that is rich within the Republic of Palau, and he sets the finest example when it comes to work ethic, physical fitness, and leadership.”

This summer Donatus will move to Twentynine Palms, California to serve as the operations chief for 3rd Battalion, 7th Marines. Since joining more than 23 years ago, he’s served in various locations around the world. He deployed to Fallujah, Iraq with 3rd Battalion, 5th Marines, and he deployed twice to Afghanistan with 2nd Battalion, 5th Marines.

The calling to be a Marine is now entrenched in Donatus’ family. He is the oldest of four brothers who all joined Marine Corps, and one of those brothers is a staff sergeant who continues to serve as a bulk fuel specialist. Donatus’ son, following in his father’s footsteps, is also a mortarman and an active duty sergeant serving with 1st Battalion, 5th Marines. Donatus’

daughter plans on joining the Marine Corps when she turns 18.

“I strive to live my life in a manner that inspires others to challenge themselves and take actions to change their future. If I didn’t take action and listen to my grandmother, I wouldn’t be where I am today,” said Donatus. “Every day I strive to be like my mentors who inspired and continue to inspire me.”

Donatus recognizes that the rank he now wears is not a personal achievement but a reflection of his mentors and the community that raised him.

“There are only a handful of Palauans who have achieved the rank of E-8 in the Marine Corps,” said Donatus. “They paved the way for men like me, and when they return to the islands they carry the pride and leadership qualities ingrained in Marines.”

As Donatus continues his service in the Marine Corps, he hopes his accomplishments will inspire future generations of Palauans to pursue their dreams and make a positive impact in their communities and beyond.

“I plan on staying in the Marine Corps until they are ready for me to get out,” explained Donatus. “I came here to do 20 years and that flew by in a flash. I have seven more years that I can serve, and I’m intending to stay for the whole 30.”

Andersen AFB police officer receives Medal of Valor

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

ANDERSEN AIR FORCE BASE – Dwayne Pangelinan, 36th Security Forces Squadron supervisory police officer, received a Medal of Valor for his courageous actions during two separate incidents.

“I was just in the right place, at the right time,” said Pangelinan.

He described that some airmen undergo a lot of distress, especially being away from family. Pangelinan said that while some can withstand it, others turn to alternative methods of dealing with their problems. During one of the incidents, Pangelinan found an unresponsive airman and applied live-saving measures until first responders arrived on scene.

“I was lucky to be there in both instances and both airmen are alive and okay today,” said Pangelinan.

The Medal of Valor is awarded to officers displaying an act of extreme courage. This is not the first time Pangelinan has received this award. He has put himself in harm’s way to save others several times, and has received two other Medals of Valor during his time with the Guam Police Department.

“Helping people, that’s my favorite part of the job,” said Pangelinan.



Dwayne Pangelinan

Pangelinan says as a police officer he never knows what he will be facing or what the outcome will be. He goes on to explain that he goes into each situation he comes across with a clear and open mind, always anticipating a good outcome.

“I wasn’t expecting to receive an award,” said Pangelinan. “I was just doing my job.”

Pangelinan has worked at Andersen AFB for 15 years, while filling his current position for the last three. During his time here, Pangelinan has been through Airman Leadership School and a federal law enforcement academy.

“The training I’ve received from the 36 SFS not only made me physically and mentally tough, but gave me the ability to operate and handle high-stress situations,” said Pangelinan.

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GET TO KNOW GUAM

A VILLAGE PROFILE COURTESY OF GUAMPEDIA

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

Agat (Hågat)As the crow flies.....



Turtle Rock

BY LEO BABAUTA,
GUAMPEDIA

The village of Agat may have been named by the first clan who came to settle in the area from the northern part of Guam. It is also possible that the village name Hagat originally was derived from the word Aga, which is the Chamorro name of the Marianas crow which is a large black bird that makes the sound “aga” while flying low over the jungle. The village’s name, too, could be derived from the Chamorro word hāga, meaning blood.



Agat Beach Unit of the War in the Pacific National Historic Park.



..... Village history

It is believed that Chief Coroo headed the first clan of Agat. Beloved by his people, he was also the eldest in the clan. Chief Coroo divided the village into families,

each with its own surname. Many of these survive today but are referred to as Chamorro family names, such names as Koroo, Kamachili, De’chi, Dagu, Kusi, Min, Ato and Gotgo, to name a few.

Spanish Governor Don Jose Quiroga then designed Old Agat between 1680 and 1684 as a settlement for rebellious Islanders whose homes he had destroyed during the Chamorro rebellion. Many of its citizens were brought from the interior village of Fena. The first church in Agat was established in late 1680. In the early 1700s this church was one of only six parishes on Guam.

Pre-war Agat was a small village with coasts lined with coconut trees that produced copra (coconut meat). The village also supported farming, ranching, and fishing. Rice paddies existed on the coastal flats as well as the flat inland areas.

Throughout the years of Japanese occupation from 1941 to 1944, new rice paddies were developed in Agat to support the Japanese troops.

Local people were forced into labor with little or no subsistence rations. Thirty days before landing on Guam on June 11, 1944, American air forces bombed the beaches of Agat to clear Japanese positions. These bombings continued throughout June and July, destroying Japanese fortifications and virtually all of the structures of the village.

The beaches of Agat and Asan were selected by the U.S. forces for entry into the island, with two Marine Regimental Combat Teams and an Army Infantry Division landing at five points along the Agat coast. They faced a seventy-five-millimeter gun and a thirty-seven-millimeter gun mounted by the Japanese in a concrete blockhouse at Ga’an Point. In just the first day of the American invasion of Agat beach on July 21, 455 Marines were killed and 536 were wounded. By nightfall, the Americans secured the Agat beachhead, but were heavily assaulted by Japanese tanks that night. Heavy fighting ensued, and by the morning of July 22, the Americans had won the area and pressed onward toward Orote Point, eventually joining the forces that had landed in Asan.

After the Americans secured Agat beach, a refugee camp was established for Chamorros freed from Japanese-made camps. At its peak, 18,000 people were housed in the Agat camp. Following the return of American forces, residents of Agat lived in temporary houses before a new Agat village was established at a location farther south. Both the military government and Chamorros built homes at the new site.

In August 1978, the US National Park Service established the War in the Pacific National Historical Park on Guam, which included sites at the Agat invasion beaches. ↗



St. Andrew's by the Philippine Sea



Pre-war Mt. Carmel



Points of interest

↘ Institutions

Marcial A. Sablan Elementary School

One of the twenty-seven elementary schools within the Department of Education system (as of 2010). Sablan Elementary consists of Kindergarten through 5th-grades, and a Head Start program.

Oceanview Middle School

Oceanview is one of eight public middle schools of the Guam Department of Education (as of 2010). It was constructed in 1959 as Agat Junior High School. Later the school was modified into Oceanview High School but has since reverted to a middle school.



Mt. Camel Catholic Church

Our Lady of Mount Carmel Catholic Church

Mt. Carmel was first dedicated in 1937. It was rebuilt in its present location after World War II and is the center of village activities. A procession and village fiesta, or feast-day celebration, are held in July for the church's patron saint, along with a procession for Santa Ana, the patron saint of Christian mothers. The village also holds another procession in honor of Santa Rosa.

Our Lady of Mount Carmel School

This Catholic school, located in the heart of Agat, has pre-Kindergarten to 8th grade classes. In 2007 the threat of a closure loomed because of low enrollment rates, prompting the community and school alumni to rally in effort to keep the school open. Supporters coordinated events to raise funds and pushed for increased enrollment, which kept the school open.

St. Andrew's By the Philippine Sea

One of three Episcopal churches on Guam, St. Andrew's, was constructed in the 1960s initially serving as a day-care center, but eventually became a parish.

Santa Ana Chapel

The Santa Ana Chapel was built in the 1950s and dedicated in 1968. In 2008, the Chapel was rebuilt and is currently maintained by the Santa Ana Lancheros Association of Agat. Mass is held every first Saturday of the month at 7am and 4pm.

Southern Christian Academy

This Agat school is one of nearly a dozen non-Catholic private schools on Guam. The school offers courses from preschool to grade 12th.

Historical

Agat Beach Unit of the War in the Pacific National Historic Park

The Agat Beach Unit of the War in the Pacific National

This village at a glance

- **Population:** According to the US Census in 2010, the population of Agat was 4,917.
- **Village officials:** Kevin Susuico is the mayor of Agat.
- **Commissioners/Mayors:** Kevin Susuico, 2017-Present; Carol S. Tayama, Mayor, 2005-2016; Johnny M. Reyes, Mayor, 1997-2005; Joaquin G. Topasna, Mayor, 10/1/96-01/06/97; Antonio C. Babauta, Commissioner/Mayor, 1981-9/30/96; Antonio R. Terlaje, Commissioner, 1977-1981; Jose S. San Nicolas, Commissioner, 1973-1977; Thomas F.P. Muña, Commissioner, 1965-1969; Jose B. Guevara, Commissioner, 1963-1965; Juan L.G. Leon Guerrero, Commissioner, 1956-1963; Antonio P. Carbullido, Commissioner, 1945-1956; Francisco C. Sablan, Commissioner, 1941-1944; Francisco R. Chaco, Commissioner, 1937-1940; Tomas C. Charfauros, Commissioner, 1934-1937; Antonio P. Carbullido, Commissioner, 1930-1934; Christopher Fejeran, Vice Mayor, 2017-Present; Agustin G. Quintanilla, Vice Mayor, acting Dec. 2009. Officially elected into office November 2010; Jesus B. Chaco, Vice Mayor, 1997-2009; Jessie S. Pendon, Vice Mayor, 10/01/96-01/06/97; Joaquin G. Topasna, Vice Mayor, 1993-1996; John A. Quidachay, Assistant Commissioner/Vice Mayor, 1989-1993; Joseph R. Reyes, Assistant Commissioner, 1981-1988; Antonio C. Babauta, Assistant Commissioner, 1977-1981; Vicente Q. Guerrero, Assistant Commissioner, 1973-1977; Jose S. San Nicolas,

Assistant Commissioner, 1970-1973; Vicente M. Salas, Deputy Commissioner, 1934-1937; Pedro C. Charfauros, Deputy Commissioner, 1931-1933; Jesus Carbullido, Deputy Commissioner, 1903-1908; Jose Pereda, Deputy Commissioner, 1898-1903.

• **Village description:** While many regard Agat as the western gateway to the south, it is also the commercial center of the south. Numerous businesses - from merchants and restaurants to the seventy-room Inn on the Bay - have sprung up in the once-quiet seaside village in the last twenty-five years. Despite Agat's thriving business center, the old heart of the village that includes Our Lady of Mount Carmel Catholic Church, Convent and School, still exists.

The seaside village of Agat lies just south of Naval Base Guam. The village's main road, Route 2, meanders through several commercial and residential areas. The road also leads to a group of public buildings, such as the Agat Community Center and mayor's office and a community library and police station. Farther south, Route 2 runs along the coast of some of the finest beaches on Guam including Nimitz Beach. Nearby is the popular Agat Marina.

The village of Agat is also home to several parks dedicated to the events of World War II. These parks are part of the National Park Service's War in the Pacific National Historical Park.

- By Konsehelon Mahot Guãhan/ the Mayor's Council of Guam



Taleyfac Spanish Bridge

contain many artifacts from the battle, including shell and bomb fragments and bullets.

Taleyfac and Taelayag Spanish bridges

These two stone bridges are reminders of Guam's Spanish-colonial era. They are a couple of the few remaining bridges built using Spanish stone and mortar construction, and are listed on the Guam and National Registers of Historic Sites.

The Taleyfac bridge, the more commonly known of the two, can still be seen just off the main road south of the main village, and was constructed by Governor Alexandro Parreño in 1785 over Talifac Creek (then called Muja Creek).

Recreational

Agat Commercial Point Center

Located at the entrance of the village across Inn on the Bay, the Agat Commercial Point Center houses restaurants and businesses.

Agat Sagan Bisita

The Agat Sagan Bisita, next to the Mayor's Office, is a series of pavilions lined around a courtyard with a large stage. This facility hosts the Tuesday Night Market from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m., the Annual Agat Mango Festival and is available for reservations.

Agat Small Boat Marina

The marina is a modern facility for docking small boats. The facility includes a sea rescue operation, restaurant and icehouse. The marina is a popular location

SEE GUAM ON PAGE 12

Historic Park is one contiguous unit with four segments managed by the National Park Service. Two of these segments, Apaca and Ga'an Point, have visitor facilities including interpretive displays, picnic pavilions, barbecue grills, restrooms, and parking areas. Memorials and monuments have been added throughout the park.

Mount Alifan

This mountain rises 871 feet above the Agat's beaches and contains remains of the fighting between US and Japan's armed forces at the end of WWII during the recapture of Guam. For the most part, the remains are craters, foxholes, emplacements, caves, and rifle-pits. Only two small features are constructed of concrete. Following capture of the mountain, American demolition teams sealed many caves on the forward slopes. The slopes



Agat Marina



Agat village

VILLAGE: So much history to see

Points of interest

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

for annual fishing derbies and daily charter fishing trips for local residents and tourists.

Agat Senior Citizens Center

The Agat Senior Citizen Center is located on Calle Delos Marteres Road and is a place where the man'amko in the village can go to to relax, play bingo, cards or mahjong.

Hap's Reef

Located just off Agat Bay, Hap's Reef is a popular site for divers and snorkelers to enjoy different marine life. Pilot whales can also be spotted from this location.

Haya Youth Center

Haya is located between the Agat Gymnasium and Agat Senior Citizens Center. It holds various after school programs. In addition, Haya Youth Center hosts the Agat Community Youth Summer Camp.

Inn on the Bay

A seventy-room hotel completed in 1989, Inn on the Bay offers an array of amenities and guest services.

Mango Festival

The village of Agat held the first annual Agat Mango Festival in May 2007 at Nimitz Beach. The event includes a canoe paddling race, displays, vendors booths, and a mango culinary competition. It is hosted by the



Agat Mango Festival

Agat Municipal Planning Council and the Guam Visitors Bureau.

Nimitz Beach

Located at the south edge of Agat, Nimitz Beach is a popular public beach and recreational area with pavilions.

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

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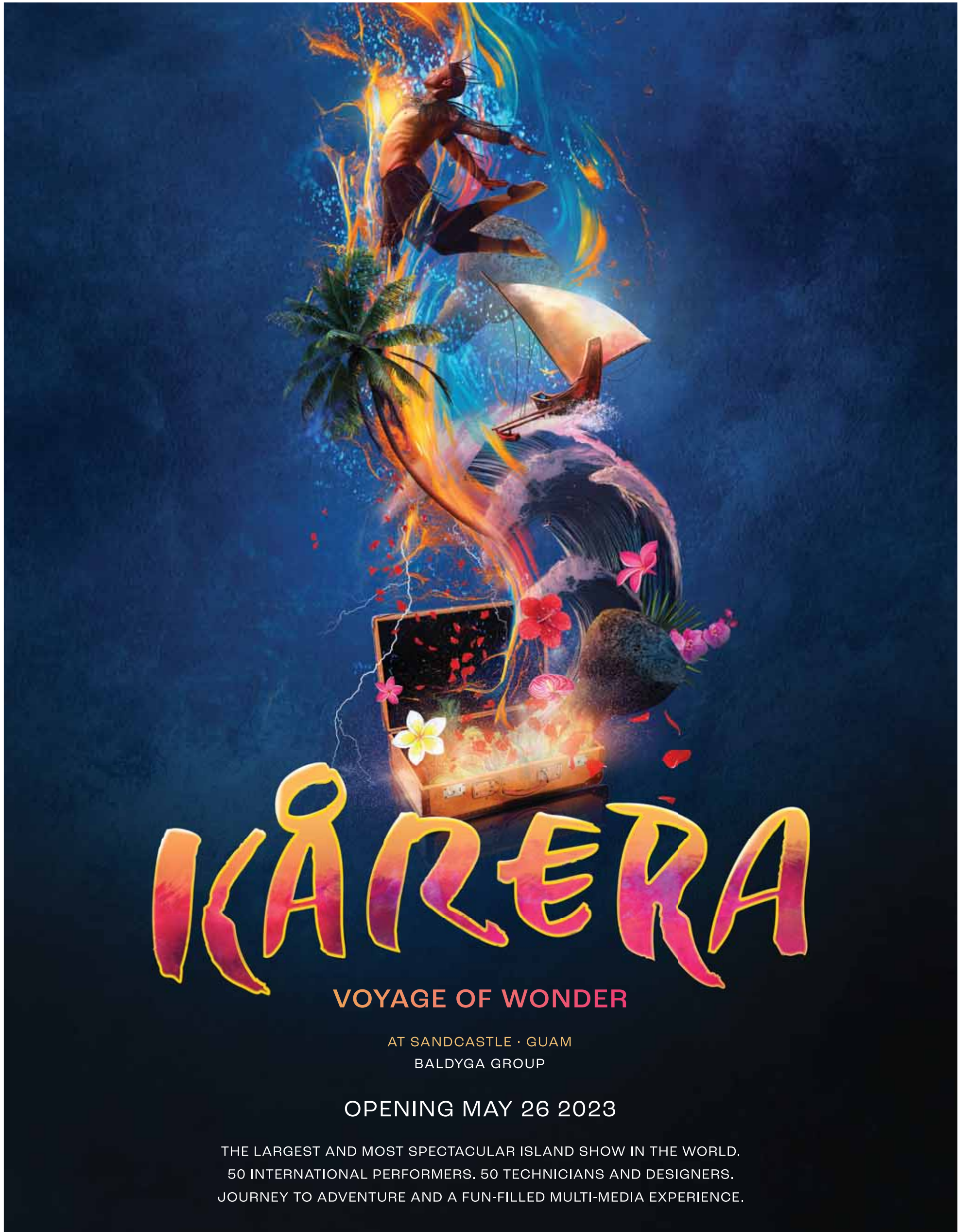
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Scenic Cetti Falls

Umatac's 7 wondrous waterfalls



This difficult hike rewards the hiker with pools of freshwater full of fish that will swim all around you and beautiful waterfalls that cascade for 500 feet. There is also an optional river walk to Cetti Bay, which is totally uninhabited except for some makeshift shelters in a boonie dog camp. You can even make a loop to see the latte stones and Spanish bridge & oven in Sella Bay and have much easier, although longer, path back up to the highway.

Quick Stats

Location: Umatac

Region: Southwest

Difficulty: Difficult [Medium when using the Sella Bay trail (SBT)]

Time: Allow 3 – 4 hours [5 – 6 hours via SBT]

Length: 1.2 miles [4.5 miles via SBT]

Elevation Gain: 500 feet up & down [440 feet via SBT]

Sight: Waterfalls, Freshwater, Beaches + 1hr (optional)

Cool Stuff: Rock climbing (rope climbing), natural pools, uninhabited beach

Overview

This trail is difficult. Read the trail guide carefully before you go to make sure that you can handle the angle of descent and ascent, slippery surfaces, and fitness that this hike requires.

What To Bring: Shoes with good traction for hiking, gloves (the sword grass is serious business on this one), long pants and long sleeve shirt option (to avoid mosquito bites and sword grass cuts), insect repellent, head lamps (in case it falls dark or weather conditions force you to use the Sella Bay trail route), map for emergencies, food & water.

Tips: Try to avoid being caught down here during a rainstorm if you plan to use the rope climb or retrace your steps to leave. This is a difficult hike even without rain and adding rain makes it extremely difficult. If it rains we suggest you leave via the Sella Bay route.

We will explain how to leave that way here, but for more information look at our Sella Bay page. Full instructions on how to get to the falls and leave via the Sella Bay route can be found here.

Directions + Trail Map

FROM THE NORTH: Drive south on Marine Corps Drive until you hit the light at the main Navy base in Santa Rita.

Turn left at the light and continue south passing downtown Agat, the Agat boat harbor, and Agat neighborhoods of houses along the road. Soon the drive will start going uphill, the houses will go away, and the road will begin twisting and turning.

After about 10 minutes you will pass a shady round-a-bout park (Sella Bay Trail) then find a long red wall to the right 2 minutes later, with a small area along the wall to park your car – Cetti Bay Overlook.

Parking

Park here diagonally, pointing slightly left of, but towards, the wall, the back of your car pointing down the hill where you came, as seen in the picture.



Trailhead

To the right of the wall of Cetti Bay Overlook there is an opening in the brush directly behind a telephone poll. The opening between the brush to the bare line of a dirt trail is obvious enough, however, the steepness of the hill looks too steep (about a 25 degree angle) to be the trail. This is the way to Cetti Falls.

Trail Guide

The beginning of this trail is at about a 25 degree angle for about 40 feet. Carefully make your way down this extremely steep, lose dirt trail, using trees for footing and handholds wherever possible. You make try hunkering down to slide a bit. Do not hold onto the grass if you do not have gloves on! It is swordgrass and will slice you up!

At the bottom of the 40-foot drop of dirt trail you will find more slippery, hard to traverse incline. It will take you straight down and eventually to the left. At each new

section of hiking, look around for the easiest traverse possible. You should never be rock climbing down cliffs, only traversing steep rock-hills. Find the smooth, flowing rock formations or riverbeds to walk down. Stay together with your hiking partner(s) in case someone needs help. During this section there are some beautiful views of the falls to your left. You may catch some people climbing up the fells with the rope if you're lucky, so definitely stop and enjoy.

After this section, you will find a rope assist. Use this as you hike down steep inclines and finally through a sword grass forest. Once again DO NOT hold onto this grass without gloves.

At the base of the two ropes is the river. To the left are Cetti Falls. To the right are Cetti Bay, Sella Bay, the Spanish Bridge & Oven, and the Sella Bay Trail.

To Cetti Falls: Turn to your left and start hiking up the river. When the river is too deep, carefully use the surrounding rocks to traverse (if you have gear that shouldn't get wet). Be careful as the rocks baby waterfalls are extremely slippery, decomposing brush will not hold your weight, and some pockets of riverbed are mushy, slippery silt. After about 15 minutes you will find the bottom section of Cetti Falls. You may take time out here to swim, take pictures, and eat your lunch.

TO HIKE OUT: There are three ways to leave the bottom section of Cetti Falls.

The Most Difficult Route + More Falls: The hardest route, and the way to see the upper two tiers of Cetti Falls, is to start your climb to the right of the waterfall where the rope is. Take care to keep hold of the rope to avoid any fatal accidents. This is a difficult route for even well-experienced hikers, so please take care in your decision-making. From this route you will pass six upstream waterfalls and have a wonderful view of the valley below. Once you reach the road at the top, turn left and walk a short distance to your car. This part should take about 30 – 40 minutes.

The Difficult Route: The second hardest exit route is to go back the way you came. Walk back downstream to the place where the rope/hill climb begins to your right. You may decide to keep going past the rope climb to see Cetti Bay before you leave. This is about a 35-minute walk from the rope to the bay. (See "To Cetti Bay" below) Climb up using the rope as an aide. Hike up the smooth rock, riverbeds, and steep dirt path, using tree roots as footholds and tree trunks as handholds wherever possible. Arrive at your car.

Notice: If weather conditions (like heavy rainfall) make this route too dangerous or if you are not in the condition to climb up the steep falls, we suggest you take the easier Cetti Bay to Sella Bay Trail exit route.

To Cetti Bay: You can either follow the river (skipping across a few times where the river makes a curve so that it's parallel with



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FALLS: Different routes for different hikers



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 14

itself) or find the trail markers and take the trail. The trail is easier and faster than the river walk. It takes about 35 to 40 minutes to reach the bay from the rope climb area. Cetti Bay (at the time this was written) is completely vacant and untouched except for the small, abandoned area of makeshift tents with a common area created by Cetti Bay Tours. It is now a village for bonnie dogs who, although bark a lot, are not aggressive and mostly stay by their shelters. A nice pup might decide she wants to hang out with you for the rest of your journey. The bay has great views of large powerful waves, with beaches switching from rock and shell to sandy. To take the difficult yet shorter exit route, return back the way you came and follow the trail markers

or river back to the rope/hill climb. (See “The Difficult Route” in the previous page). For the easier route, keep going onward to Sella Bay.

Alternate Route Out: Sella Bay Trail



The Medium Route + Sella Bay & Spanish Bridge: From Cetti Bay (looking out into the ocean) turn right and walk to the end of the Bay. Keep walking, passing a few interesting stretches of beach. You will traverse tree roots with trees stretching into the ocean, pebble beaches, large rock beaches, sandy beaches, and stretches of coral, dirt grass, and trees.

Finally, after passing a large rock formation jutting out of the shallow ocean, you will reach the last large bay. You will see that cliffs permit you from passing beyond this bay, looking across the water to the far right. Walk along the beach of Sella Bay until you spot the two-arched Spanish Bridge.

After you have taken some pictures and taken in the beauty of the ruins, start your hike out behind and to the left of the bridge. You should find a trail marker to know you are going the right way (the spaces between the trees in the forest can be a little confusing and look like a trail at first). The trail should become very clear fairly soon. It’s nice and wide and meanders up the hills at a mild incline. You will leave the palm forest and walk up to smooth dirt and rock trails through hilly meadows, offering beautiful views of this valley and the surrounding green hills. You will descend the hills and cross the river a couple times, and get to ascend the hill all over again.

After about 30 minutes of hiking, you will begin the slightly more grueling last leg of the hike. The incline becomes more of a workout through a forest of woodland trees. At this point you are extremely close to your finish point (about 10 minutes) and you may begin to hear cars drive by. You will reach the summit at the parking roundabout, shaded by trees. You may want to take a water break here.

From the Sella Bay Trail park (if you have parked at the Cetti Bay Overlook), you will walk 1 mile South (to your right) back to your car. This section of the road has 4 – 5 twists and turns and has a medium incline. The highway walk should take about 25-30 minutes.

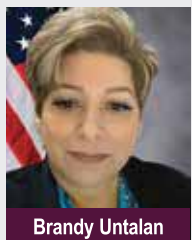


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PHOTO SPOTLIGHT



Service members attend the U.S. Army Materiel Support Command Masquerade Ball in Daegu, S. Korea on 2/10/23

Pictured Left to Right: 2LT Megan Revor, CPT David Calvo, 1SG Brandon White, LTC Sun Ryu, SSG Michelle Peterson, SFC Cesar Sumauang, and SFC Eligio Aguilar

Photo Courtesy of Crystal Nelson

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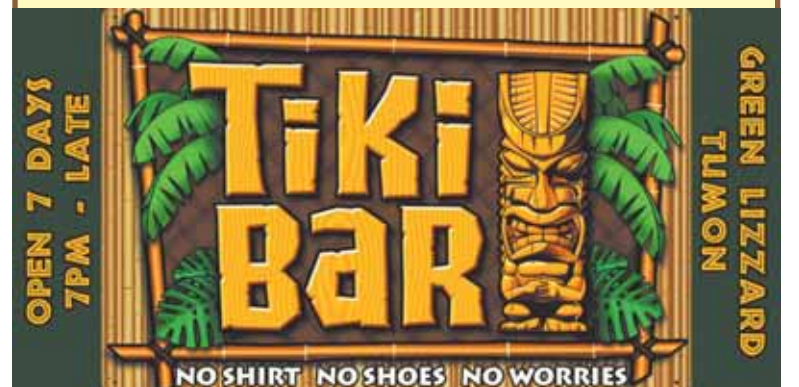


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INFORMATION PROVIDED BY
GUAM BOONIE STOMPERS




Talofofo Caves

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

Every Saturday, Guam Boonie Stompers offers public hikes to a variety of destinations such as beaches, snorkeling sites, waterfalls, mountains, caves, latte sites, and World War II sites. We meet at the trailhead on Saturdays at 9 AM. Directions to the trailhead will be posted on the Guam Boonie Stompers Inc Facebook page. The cost is \$5.00 for hikers over 17. Children must be accompanied by a responsible adult. Hikers should provide their own transportation. Guam's trails are not developed. Weather conditions can make the hikes more difficult than described. No reservations required.

For more information:
www.facebook.com/GuamBoonieStompersInc



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.

One of the most adventurous and memorable outdoor activities you can experience on Guam is "boonie stomping," which is what locals call hiking through the jungle. Guam's landscape is dotted with stunning off-the-beaten-path sites including secluded rivers and coastlines, cascading waterfalls, majestic mountain peaks, natural caves, remnants of ancient Chamorro civilization and historical World War II battlegrounds.

Boonie stomping trails range from easy walks across beaches to very difficult treks over rough rocky terrain. Many trails are unmarked and conditions can widely vary depending on weather, so it is recommended to go boonie stomping with an experienced guide or with a group such as the Guam Boonie Stompers.

Founded in 1970, Guam Boonie Stompers is a non-profit organization committed to helping island residents and visitors explore and preserve the natural beauty of Guam. Every Saturday, Guam Boonie Stompers leads groups to remote beaches, snorkeling sites, waterfalls, mountains, caves and cultural and historical sites.

To participate, the group meets at 9 a.m. at the center court of Chamorro Village in Hagåtña. After a short briefing, participants take their own transportation and meet at the trailhead. Children under the age of 12 must be accompanied by a parent or guardian. There is a nominal \$5 fee and no reservations are required.

Guam's tropical climate can sometimes mean intense rain and sweltering heat, so it is best to be very prepared when going on a boonie stomp. Bring plenty of water, wear appropriate clothing and shoes, and always inform someone of where you're going and when you expect to return.

Guam's beautiful landscape and fresh air offers many opportunities to enjoy the outdoors. When it comes to unique activities on Guam, add an element of adventure to your trip with an on-Guam boonie stomping experience.

Complete 10 Boonie Stomp hikes to earn a free Boonie Stomp T-Shirt.

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Crossword

by Margie E. Burke

ACROSS

1 800, in old Rome

5 Got some shuteye

10 Butter bits

14 Malta money

15 Sparkly headpiece

16 Newspaper bio

17 Former StubHub owner

18 Blend in

20 In dire straits

22 Specialty

23 Affectionate greeting

24 Walloped

26 Misbehave, with "up"

28 Emerald, for one

32 It comes with kings and queens

34 Con artist's art

38 Nautical pole

39 Now and again?

41 Cathedral recess

42 Salad follower

44 They may be flared

46 High school grade

48 Swedish airline

49 Franc fraction

52 ___ de Triomphe

54 Flinch, say

55 Answers to problems

61 Musical ensembles

63 Jane's dog

64 Filly's father

65 Enraged

66 Soldier's stance, with "at"

67 Meets, as a bet

68 10th U.S. President

69 Whole bunch

3 Trial with a dummy

4 River rat

5 Hollywood sighting

6 Mona ___

7 Right on the map

8 White-collar worker?

9 Scot's cap

10 Patrol vehicle

11 Taken ___

12 Churchgoer's offering

13 Trusty horse

19 Laughable

21 Breakfast staple

25 Unassuming

26 Very top

27 Detective Charlie

29 Look up to

30 Kitten sound

31 "Goosebumps" writer

33 Prepares to work out

35 Kind of church

36 Madonna's "La ___ Bonita"

37 "___ of the D'Urbervilles"

40 Debate side

43 Privileged group

45 "___ does it!"

47 Room for church garments

49 Alex of James Patterson novels

50 Otherworldly

51 Mother-of-pearl

53 Reacts to yeast

56 Spoken aloud

57 Recently deceased

58 Computer operator

59 Cyrano's famous feature

60 Dinner in a pot

62 Take a load off


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Answers to Previous Crossword:

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


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Stripes Sports Trivia

SAY MY NAME! Given the name Panayotis when I was born, I am known by most as a shorter version of my middle name. I spent time as a defender in MLS, but many remember me (and my hair) from my days with the 1994 U.S. Men's National Team. Who am I?

Answer

Alexi Lalas

SUDOKU

Difficulty: Medium

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

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:

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

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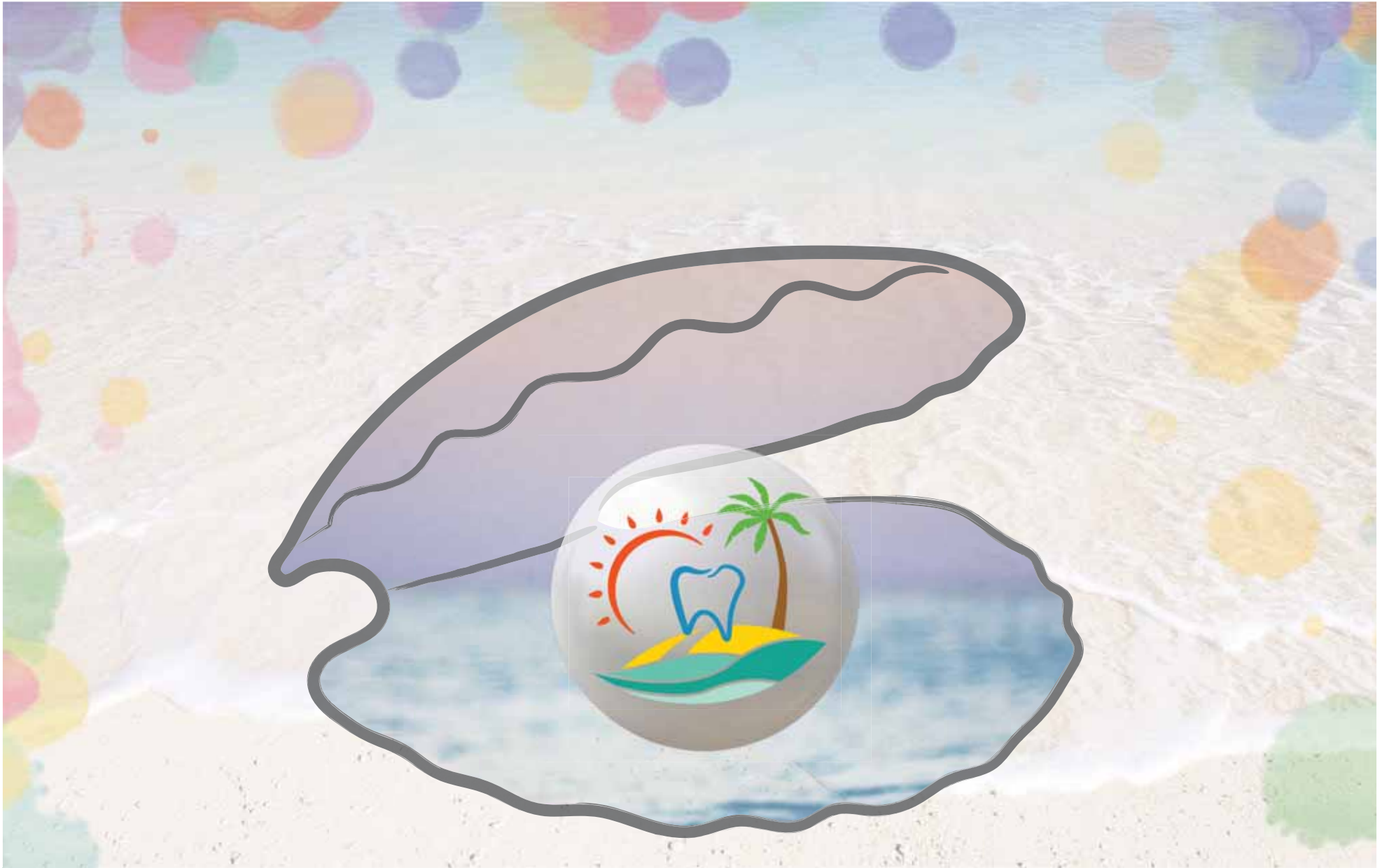
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- The Guam High School Class of 2023

Grad Tab

CLASS OF 2023



Guam High School



Guam High School

Acevedo Cruz, Diego
 Alcantara, Jada Joy
 Ampunin, Eisha Francine
 Asprer, JiaLee
 Asuncion, Evan
 Baird, Keilani
 Baker, Tyler
 Bawar, Adrian
 Benjamin, Aiden
 Blas, Jayvier
 Blocker, Ashley
 Bordelon, Tatum
 Cabrera, Dustin
 Camacho, Elena Rae
 Camacho, Troy John
 Collins, Bree Alyssa
 Conner, Sierra
 Cook, Alayna
 Crandell, Trayton
 Crisostomo, Leafloa

Dahilig, Giselle Paige
 Delia, Joseph Dominic
 DeVera, Derex
 Diaz, Clara Grace
 Duenas, Elijah
 Durbala, Braxtin
 Eddy, Jalen
 Edquid, Margaux Denise
 Escobar, Journie
 Etherton, Cooper
 Ferrell-Ayers, Elijah
 Finona, Magahet
 Flores, Elizabeth Joy
 Franchino, Megan
 Guerrero, Kailee
 Hearn, Lemmy
 Hitz, Taylor
 Holguin, Jacob
 Kennedy, Kaila
 Kosko, Enzo

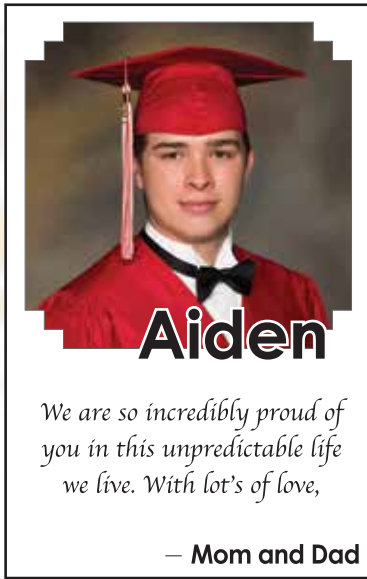
Krieg, Alexis
 Lang, Molly
 Lange, Ethan
 Larson, Isaac
 LeFever, Randell
 Lujan, Rachel
 Maratita, Elisabeth Rylie
 Martin, Brayden
 McClure, Bethany
 McNair, Benjamin
 Moore, Kayla
 Mosher, Makua
 Muller, Sean Gabriel
 Murciano, Kyan Michael
 Nato, Raven
 Padayhag, Kyle
 Paz, Keira Crystal
 Piehl, Morgen
 Potter, Nixon
 Ramotar, Isha

Rivera, Brian
 Roach, Leonard
 Ronquillo, Vinzmher Jiemar
 Rosario, Terrell David
 Santiago, Michael
 Santos, Devin
 Santos, Keithin
 Sowell, Scout
 Stringham, Rebekah
 Suva, Justine Miguel
 Ter Beek, Hayley
 Terrill, Zoie
 Thaw, Damien
 Tominez, Riana
 Urso, Kyra
 Wasson, Xander
 Wharton, Cameron
 Wilson, Collin
 Wright, Victoria (Mid-year Grad)
 Yuza, Paris Phoebe





Proud senior Panthers.



Aiden
We are so incredibly proud of you in this unpredictable life we live. With lot's of love,

— Mom and Dad



Senior cheerleaders are all smiles.

Thank you for preparing and guiding us

After four years, the time has come where we prepare to walk across the stage, turn over our tassels, and close this chapter of our lives. All the years of learning and preparing will now allow us to create a new page in our story. This June, the Senior Class of 2023 will be able to face our dreams and ambitions head on with the abundance of guidance and support we have received from our loved ones, teachers, and staff throughout our lives. All of those experiences have shaped us into the young adults we are today.

To our family, friends, and loved ones who have stuck by our side through thick and thin, your abundant support has kept us going strong every day. All the sacrifices and obstacles that you have had to endure graced us with knowledge, wisdom, and skill that will now be of use for the rest of our lives. Family is what makes us discover who we are as people. You have helped guide our courageous hearts and brilliant minds all our lives and for that, we cannot express enough gratitude. To the teachers and mentors we have encountered around the world, thank you for seeing us as our true individual selves. Whether we have been with you for 6 months or the past four years, you have never doubted our strengths and have guided us to overcome our weaknesses. The constant will to always keep us driven has now manifested into place as we graduate and enter our future. Because of you all, we are prepared to pursue our dreams, passions, and a life filled with change in both our generation and future generations to come. We, the Guam High School Class of 2023, would like to acknowledge you and thank you for sharing your wisdom and expertise that will now help us walk into this new chapter of our lives confidently and courageously.

Entering our freshman year, we would have never expected our high school experience to take a turn the way it did. We dealt with our biggest challenge yet, the pandemic. Despite the change we had to endure, we were able to not let that affect us and still go forth to pursue our dreams and ambitions. Our ability to adapt allowed us to flourish in all aspects like our education, leadership roles, extracurriculars, and types of community service. Though the pandemic is something we wished we could have avoided in our high school experience, it brightly shows our perseverance and that makes the class of 2023 very unique. The class of 2023, your future leaders, can proudly say that despite hardship, we are able to recognize all that we have learned and keep pushing forth to continuously impact change in both our island community and all over the world.

Now comes the bittersweet moment where we say our final goodbyes as we cross the stage. To the people who have guided us all throughout our lives, every step we take will be because of you all and your constant support. Thank you for preparing and guiding us to the best of your ability as we enter this new journey of our life, one that we can happily call ours. We are ready to see the world and what it has in store for us and our future. Thank you!community and all over the world.

Now comes the bittersweet moment where we say our final goodbyes as we cross the stage. To the people who have guided us all throughout our lives, every step we take will be because of you all and your constant support. Thank you for preparing and guiding us to the best of your ability as we enter this new journey of our life, one that we can happily call ours. We are ready to see the world and what it has in store for us and our future. Thank you!

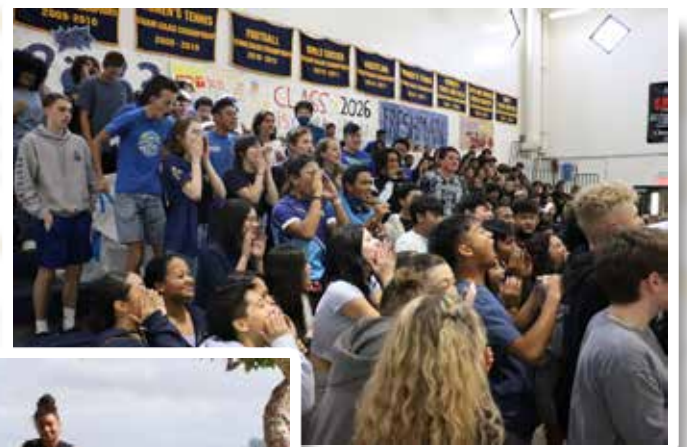
— Love,
The Guam High School Class of 2023



Class of 2023 showcases its school spirit at pep rally.



Bonding over food.



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Seniors clean up Ypao beach during the Guam High Gives Back event Feb. 7, 2023.



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the class of 2023!**



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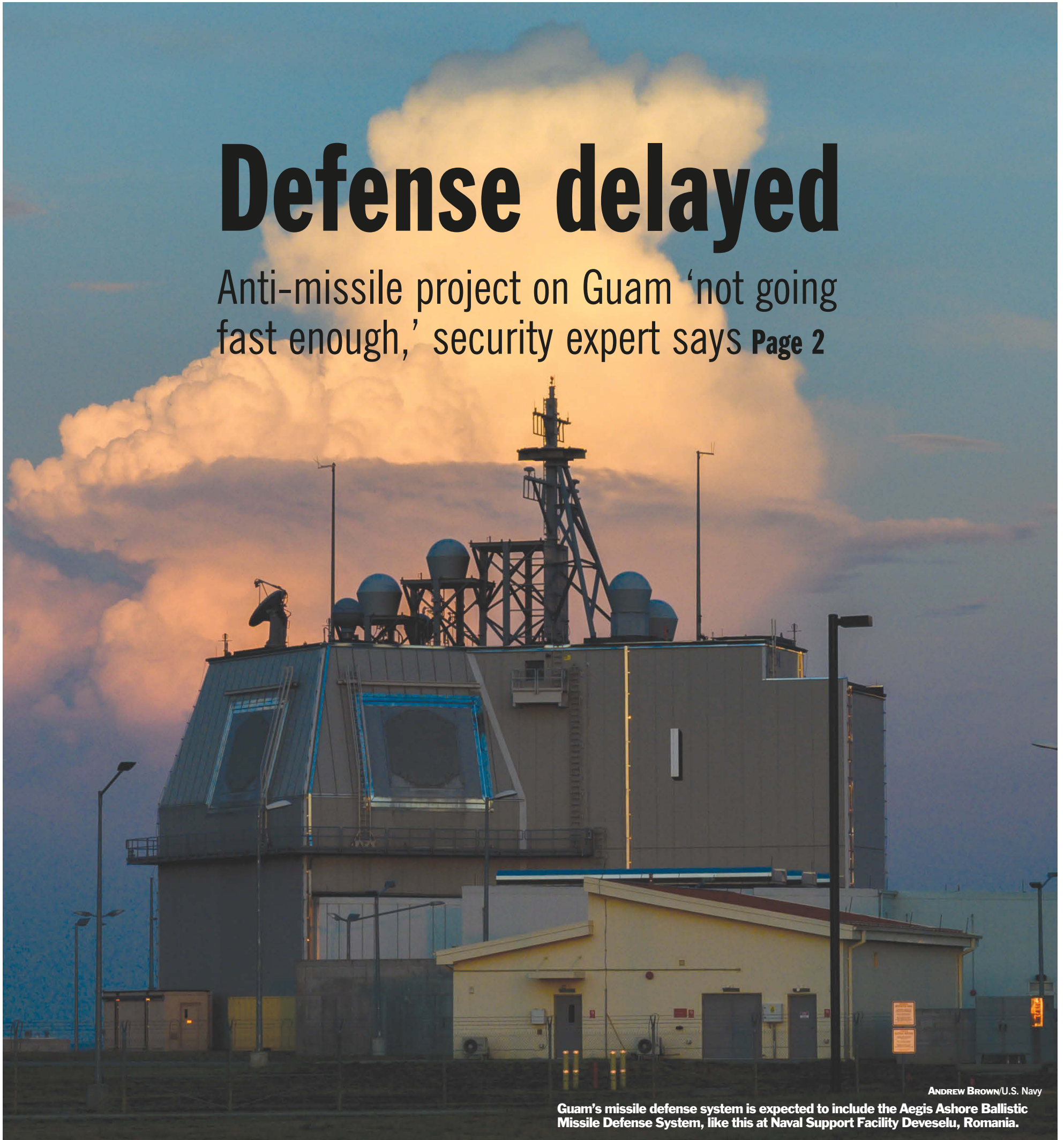
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GUAM EDITION

MAY 29, 2023

Defense delayed

Anti-missile project on Guam 'not going fast enough,' security expert says **Page 2**



ANDREW BROWN/U.S. Navy

Guam's missile defense system is expected to include the Aegis Ashore Ballistic Missile Defense System, like this at Naval Support Facility Deveselu, Romania.

COVER STORY

'We're not going fast enough'

Security experts: Missile-defense system for Guam already overdue

BY ALEX WILSON
Stars and Stripes

A proposed missile-defense system for Guam may provide the island with absolute protection from missile threats, including hypersonic missiles, but the project is already overdue, according to missile defense experts.

Guam's Enhanced Integrated Air and Missile Defense System is expected to deploy in long stages starting in 2027, according to the Missile Defense Agency. But with looming threats from potential adversaries like China and North Korea, that timeline may not suffice, according to Riki Ellison, founder of the Missile Defense Advocacy Alliance.

"We're not going fast enough," he told Stars and Stripes recently by phone.

The project, a joint effort between several Defense Department agencies, is described as a "comprehensive, persistent, 360-degree" defense of the U.S. island territory against ballistic, cruise and hypersonic missiles.

Exact figures for the project's cost haven't been disclosed, but the Pentagon is requesting \$1.5 billion for the "defense of Guam against the missile threat from China" in fiscal year 2024, according to a March 13 DOD news release. The program is expected to incorporate the Army's Integrated Air and Missile Defense Battle Command System and the Navy's Aegis Combat System found on Arleigh-Burke class guided-missile destroyers.

Aegis is already capable of intercepting some hypersonic missiles — weapons that travel at Mach 5, or around 1 mile per second — but they can only do so within a relatively small window during a missile's final phase of flight.

The Defense Department is developing a new system — a "glide phase interceptor" — to intercept hypersonic missiles during the longest portion of their flight, a much larger window, but that technology likely won't be available until the early 2030s, MDA director Vice Adm. Jon Hill said at a March 14 news conference.

This poses a problem, because the United States needs that technology "this decade," according to Tom Karako, a missile



AMY FORSYTHE/U.S. Navy

Guam's missile defense system is expected to include the Aegis Ashore Ballistic Missile Defense System, seen in the background at Naval Support Facility Deveselu, Romania. During a maintenance period, the U.S. fulfilled its commitment to NATO's Ballistic Missile Defense by the temporary deployment of a Terminal High Altitude Area Defense system, at left, which also is likely to be included in the Guam project.



ALEX WILSON/Stars and Stripes

Guam is home to major U.S. military installations, including Naval Base Guam, Andersen Air Force Base and Marine Corps Base Camp Blaz.

defense analyst at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

"We don't get to choose which missiles China uses to hold Guam at risk," he told Stars and Stripes by phone.

Hypersonic missiles can have predictable or maneuverable flight paths, which along with high speed and low altitude trajectories, make them "extremely difficult to detect and counter,"

Air Force Gen. Glen VanHerck, head of U.S. Northern Command, told the Senate Armed Forces Subcommittee on Strategic Forces earlier this month.

Without a glide phase interceptor, Guam's defense is limited to "what works today," Ellison said. Aegis systems, for example, may be deployed on Guam in the near future.

However, Ellison advised against waiting for newer tech-

nology rather than investing in proven technology right now.

"It's really back down to when you think that threat is coming," he said. "When do you think that China will make moves on Taiwan?"

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

"It's really back down to when you think that threat is coming. When do you think that China will make moves on Taiwan?"

Riki Ellison

Missile Defense Advocacy Alliance

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

Blaz already has some defenses, such as the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense, or THAAD, system, but those capabilities are often supplemented by guided-missile destroyers, Ellison said. Completion of the project may alleviate the need for those destroyers to protect Guam.

"That's probably the No. 1 driving point of this thing, is to get that done," Ellison said. "So those ships can do other missions and do what they're supposed to do."

wilson.alex@stripes.com
Twitter: @AlexMNWilson

MILITARY

All paws on deck

A furry friend helps give sailors a boost aboard Navy carrier at sea

By ALISON BATH
Stars and Stripes

With the help of a yellow Labrador retriever, the Navy's newest aircraft carrier is testing a pilot program to improve quality of life for sailors at sea.

USS Gerald R. Ford is the first Navy ship to host an operational stress military working dog, said Cmdr. Genevieve Clark, a chaplain aboard the carrier.

Three-year old Sage from the Virginia Beach, Va.-based non-profit Mutts With A Mission was aboard when the carrier left Naval Station Norfolk on earlier this month for a global deployment.

With a wag of her tail, love for attention and friendly demeanor, Sage offers sailors a way to get the stress-reducing benefits that animals can bring, Navy officials said.

"In a lot of ways, Sage normalizes life," said Clark, who completed 120 hours of training before deployment in becoming the canine's primary handler. "Because just like people have pets at home, that's a normal part of life that we can offer now at sea."

The Navy is working to address quality of life issues and pushing to expand services amid concerns about mental health and suicide.

In 2022, 70 active-duty sailors died by suicide. There were 59 and 65 suicide deaths of active-duty sailors in 2021 and 2020, respectively, according to the Navy's website.

Recent Navy efforts include installing waterfront resiliency centers at some bases, such as Naval Station Rota in Spain, where sailors can seek counseling or other mental health services just steps from four homeported destroyer berths.

The Navy also plans to place chaplains on all its destroyers by 2025 to help fill a critical need for counseling, Stars and Stripes reported Feb. 27.

And officials at Naval Support Activity Bahrain last month held a mental health stand down designed to raise awareness of expanded services available there.

Sage offers sailors aboard Ford more than a chance to say "hello" or cuddle for a few minutes, officials say.

A casual encounter can offer an opportunity for Clark or one of three other trained handlers to talk with sailors who may be feeling homesick, anxious or have personal or work-related problems, she said.

"It's an entry point to further conversation where we can either help directly or connect them with the people (needed)," Clark said.



PHOTOS BY JACKSON ADKINS/U.S. Navy

Sage is a 3-year-old yellow Labrador retriever deployed to the aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford as a military facility working dog. She is part of an effort to improve quality of life for sailors deployed at sea.



Sage is the first military facility working dog deployed on a U.S. Navy ship in modern times, says Cmdr. Genevieve Clark, a chaplain and Sage's primary handler. Clark completed 120 hours of training as a handler before the aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford's deployment.

Sage is trained to assist sailors in distress with a technique to help them regulate their breathing. She also intuitively seeks out service members who need attention, Clark said.

For the past year, Mutts With A Mission has sent dogs for visits

to Navy ashore facilities and ships, Brooke Corson, the group's director, said in an email. Facility dogs also have worked at police departments, where they help to reduce the stigma associated with mental health, she said.

"They give the individual an 'excuse' to go seek help under the guise of visiting the dog," Corson said. "Sometimes the dogs enable the individual to open up where they might not have otherwise been comfortable doing so."

Sage has taken part in thousands of hours of training, exposure and socialization since she was 8 weeks old. She's even received training on how to use ship ladders, Corson said.

The hope is to expand the program to more ships and potentially other military services.

For example, the group is working to place a military facility working dog aboard the amphibious assault ship USS Wasp for an upcoming deployment, Corson said.

In just a few weeks, Sage has proven popular with Ford sailors, who often question her absence if Clark is alone. Sage routinely tours nearly all areas of the ship and attends staff and other meetings, Clark said.

Clark believes the program's value will become more apparent as Ford's mission continues.

"Sage is going to be even more important to being present with individuals or even small groups as they process the stressors that come with a deployment at sea," she said.

bath.alison@stripes.com
Twitter: @alisonbath_

MILITARY

Efforts to clean out toxins at bases criticized

By COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

The Pentagon's efforts to clean up contamination of toxic PFAS — so-called forever chemicals — at hundreds of military bases nationwide is moving too slowly and could linger for 50 years without an influx of funds, environmental advocates said recently.

The Defense Department has failed to keep pace with the rising costs of PFAS cleanup at its current and former bases, where chemicals — mostly from foam used for decades to fight fires — have leached into groundwater, the Environmental Working Group said in a new report.

The estimated cost to mitigate PFAS contamination across the Defense Department has grown by billions of dollars in recent years, but the department's annual budget requests to address contamination have not kept pace, the group said.

"We're calling the escalating backlog a ticking time bomb because based on current trajectories, DOD's cleanup challenge will become increasingly difficult, if not impossible, to overcome without substantial increases in funding," said Jared Hayes, a senior policy analyst at EWG, a nonprofit group based in Washington that specializes in research and advocacy in agricultural subsidies, toxic chemicals, drinking water pollutants and corporate accountability. "Current cleanup funding cannot possibly

"Current cleanup funding cannot possibly catch up to rising cleanup obligations."

Jared Hayes

EWG, a group that researches pollutants, corporate accountability catch up to rising cleanup obligations."

Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, or PFAS, are known as forever chemicals because they build up in human bodies and never break down in the environment. The national Centers for Disease Control and Prevention states human health effects are uncertain, but some research has linked the chemicals to increased risks for cancer, reproductive and immune system harm, among other diseases.

The Pentagon in March requested about \$1.5 billion in funding for contamination cleanup at its current and former bases, some \$700 million less for those efforts than Congress provided the Defense Department for fiscal 2023. The EWG on Monday recommended lawmakers give the Pentagon \$2.75 billion for contamination cleanup in fiscal 2024, which starts Oct. 1.

John Reeder, the EWG's vice president for federal affairs,



CHRISTIAN AYERS/U.S. Marine Corps

Navy contractors use a sonic drill to install a monitoring well to gather soil and water samples to be tested for per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances on Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, N.C., in August 2020.

blasted the budget request, saying the problem will continue to get worse without immediate intervention. He said even as the Pentagon sought fewer funds for clean up next year, its own estimates for long term cleanup costs grew by billions of dollars in recent years.

"The costs are going up because DOD waited too long to look into the PFAS contamination, which they knew was there decades ago," Reeder recently told reporters. "As that contamination is confirmed, and they start to engineer solutions, the costs are going to escalate extraordinarily quickly in the next few years.

"This crisis is getting bigger. It's not getting better."

Pentagon officials did not immediately respond to questions about EWG's report.

The Pentagon has said it will cost at least \$31 billion to address PFAS at known contamination sites. Officials have confirmed PFAS contamination at 397 current or former DOD locations, including at least one in all 50 states. More than 300 additional locations are suspected of PFAS contamination, according to EWG.

The longer it takes to address the contamination, the more costly clean up fees will be, Reeder said.

"Not only do [people face] prolonged potential exposure if these cleanups are delayed, but PFAS spreads, and so you have a larger area that might become contaminated," he said. "Then you might have additional systems that are impacted, water supplies are impacted. So time is definitely not

on our side. It needs to be dealt with urgently."

Reeder said the EWG hears almost constantly from military and veteran families concerned about PFAS exposures and who question how seriously the military is working to address the issue.

"We've heard over and over that, you know, 'We are military families. We've always seen that military installation is the lifeblood of our community, and this issue has turned us into adversaries' [of the military]," he said. "They don't want to be adversaries. So that issue of trusting the military, I think, is a serious issue, and we urge DOD to consider that."

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More than 250K vets' claims for PACT Act benefits completed

By MATTHEW ADAMS
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — More than 250,000 claims from veterans for PACT Act benefits have been processed by the Department of Veterans Affairs since the law was enacted, agency officials told House lawmakers recently.

"At this time across the agency, it has truly been an all-hands-on-deck effort to prepare for and execute on the delivery of the PACT Act," the VA's Undersecretary for Benefits Joshua Jacobs told members of a House Committee on Veterans' Affairs subpanel.

The law, signed by President Joe Biden on Aug. 10, 2022, is called the Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Honoring Our Promise to Address Comprehen-

sive Toxics Act of 2022, or PACT Act.

The law seeks to provide an easy path to health care and benefits for veterans who served near open-air burn pits, which were used throughout the 1990s and the post-9/11 wars to dispose of garbage, jet fuel and other materials. Veterans diagnosed with cancer, respiratory issues and lung disease at young ages have blamed exposure to the toxic fumes from these pits, but the VA contended for years that there wasn't sufficient evidence to support their claims.

Since the law went into effect in August, Jacobs said the department has received nearly 575,000 claims and with about 280,000 claims completed. According to

the department's PACT Act performance dashboard, 251,584 claims had been processed with an 80% approval rating as of May 12.

The law also improves the VA's workforce and claims processing to speed up efforts to meet the needs of veterans and establish 31 new VA health care facilities in 19 states. Additionally, it expands health care eligibility to post-9/11 combat veterans and adds 23 conditions related to burn pits and other toxic exposures to the VA's list of service presumptions.

However, some lawmakers had concerns about VA employee training, the department's community outreach and how claims move through the system.

Rep. Morgan Luttrell, R-Texas, a former Navy SEAL and chair-

man of the House VA Committee's Subpanel on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs, Oversight, said he is concerned about employees not learning from their mistakes made if the claim "moves up the chain of command" but never comes back to the original person who started the processing.

"That seems like we can tweak that a bit and make it more advantageous," he said.

Jacobs said he has asked for "wholesale review" with the goal to have an answer to Luttrell's by the end of the year.

"I can appreciate the challenge of trying to get something done in a short window, but I hate to think that if we wait until the end of the calendar year, how many claims

will have issues," Luttrell responded. "I would ask the department to move on this hurriedly. I just want to make sure we up here and the department are doing what they need to be doing in order to prevent this."

The VA has been encouraging all veterans and survivors of toxic exposure to file a claim for PACT Act related benefits. Department officials said there is an upcoming deadline on Aug. 9. Most veterans who file a claim, or submit their intent to file a claim, before Aug. 10, 2023, will have their benefits, if granted, backdated to Aug. 10, 2022, when Biden signed the act into law.

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MILITARY

Expert: Fighter rotations give US an edge

Swap from F-15s on Okinawa lets US disperse advanced aircraft

By **SETH ROBSON**
Stars and Stripes

TOKYO — Replacing squadrons of F-15 Eagles on Okinawa with rotating contingents of more advanced fighters will allow U.S. forces to disperse and survive if a war with China breaks out over Taiwan, a Japanese security expert said recently.

Fighter swaps was one topic that Takuya Matsuda, a research fellow with the Yokosuka Council on Asia-Pacific Studies, touched on during a public forum at Fussa Citizen's Hall, just outside the gates of Yokota Air Base in western Tokyo.

Two F-15C/D squadrons at Kadena Air Base, Okinawa — nearly 50 fighters — are being phased out over two years and replaced by rotating squadrons of aircraft from as far away as Germany and Alaska. The inventory of replacements thus far includes F-22 Raptor stealth fighters and F-16 Fighting Falcons.

China's force of hundreds of missile launchers with the ability to strike Okinawa factors into the decision to retire Kade-

na's two permanent F-15 squadrons, Matsuda said.

"Kadena demonstrates U.S. commitment to defense of the first island chain," he said.

The first island chain includes Taiwan, Okinawa and the Philippines and separates the East and South China Seas from the Pacific Ocean. Military strategists believe that China's goal is to push American and allied forces out of both seas.

Many people instinctively criticized the plan to withdraw the F-15s from Okinawa, Matsuda said.

For example, retired Air Force Lt. Gen. Dan Leaf, a former deputy commander of the U.S. Pacific Command, said withdrawing the Eagles sent China the wrong message.

"It is a lack of commitment in their minds," he said Nov. 16, after the Air Force announced the plan. "In terms of deterrence it's a net negative. That element can't be undone by saying we are going to rotate, or the planes are more capable."

However, Matsuda noted Kadena's proximity to a poten-



ALEXIS REDIN/U.S. Air Force

Pacific Air Forces commander Gen. Ken Wilsbach pilots an F-15D Eagle assigned to Kadena Air Base, Okinawa, over the Pacific Ocean in April.

tial combat zone near Taiwan, which Beijing considers a breakaway province that must be reunified with the mainland, by force if necessary.

"Resilience comes into play," he said.

Scattering forces away from

Kadena in a conflict heightens their ability to recover from an attack, fight on and deprive China of a quick and decisive victory, Matsuda said.

In Ukraine, Russia sought such a decisive victory but was unable to capture the country's

capital, Kyiv, last year, he said.

The U.S. and Japan could turn a Taiwan conflict into a war of attrition and increase the costs for China, Matsuda said.

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Air Force offers recruiting medals to combat shortfall

By **DOUG G. WARE**
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Air Force is now offering promotions and multiple decorations to airmen and Space Force guardians when they help sign up new recruits as a way to expand enlistment efforts and overcome struggles attracting enough troops, the service announced recently.

Each service branch has had difficulties recruiting enough troops in recent years. The Air Force's active-duty target for 2023 is almost 27,000 new recruits — a number that leaders in the service have already said they won't reach.

To help, the Air Force unveiled two new programs that add recruiting incentives — one for existing airmen and guardians and another for new Air Force and Space Force recruits.

Existing airmen and guardians can earn as many as three medals for referring recruits and new enlistees can earn quick promotions if they refer friends.

In the program called the Stellar Talent Acquisition

Recruiting Referral, if an existing airman or guardian refers one candidate, they would receive an Air and Space Achievement Medal. They could earn another Air and Space Achievement Medal with three referrals and an Air and Space Commendation Medal with five referrals.

The Air and Space Achievement Medal has existed since 1980 and is awarded to airmen and guardians for "outstanding achievement or meritorious service" or acts of courage. It has a blue and silver ribbon and a silver medal with thunderbolts and wings.

The Air and Space Commendation Medal is award to those who distinguish themselves by "meritorious achievement and service," according to the Air Force. It has a blue and gold ribbon and a bronze medal stamped with the seal of the Air Force.

In the program called Stripes for Referrals, new airman and guardian recruits can earn quicker promotions if they refer other candidates before they enter basic training.

The program allows referring recruits to be promoted to the rank of E-2 if they bring in two enlistees or the rank of E-3 if they bring in four candidates who join the Delayed Entry Program or Delayed Entry Training.

Both new incentive programs are intended "to inspire the next generation to serve in the Air Force and Space Force," the services said.

Earlier this year, the Air Force estimated it would be about 10% short of its recruiting goal for 2023. During a congressional hearing last month, Air Force Gen. David Allvin, the service chief of staff, said the service expects to be about 10,000 short in its total force, which includes active-duty and Reserve airmen and members of the Air National Guard.

The new Air Force recruiting efforts follow a similar plan that the Army rolled out this year, which offers points toward promotions or a new recruiting ribbon. The Air Force has already implemented other efforts to boost recruiting, such as cash bonuses and an accelerated U.S.



MATTHEW DAVIS/U.S. Air Force

U.S. Space Force recruits recite the oath of enlistment during a ceremony in Arizona. The Air Force plans to boost recruiting by offering medals and promotions to airmen and guardians who help bring more troops into the services.

citizenship track for foreign-born enlistees — the first group of whom became naturalized American citizens during basic training and graduated a couple weeks ago.

If the Air Force doesn't meet its active-duty recruiting goal of almost 27,000 this year, it will be the first time since 1999 that it has missed that mark, according to Alex Wagner, assistant secretary of the Air Force for manpower and reserve affairs.

Part of the problem with recruiting is the candidate pool

has become smaller in recent the years. According to recent Pentagon data, only 23% of young Americans between the ages of 17 and 24 qualify academically and physically to serve in the armed forces — a statistic one Air Force general called "staggering."

"That is a very troubling statistic, not just for us but for America," said Maj. Gen. Edward Thomas, commander of the Air Force Recruiting Service.

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PACIFIC



PHOTOS BY EMILY WEISS/U.S. Marine Corps

Aboard a CH-53E Super Stallion, Staff Sgt. Joseph McDonnell lowers supplies to the Ohio-class ballistic missile submarine USS Maine in the Philippine Sea.

Marines resupply submarine in Pacific

Delivery was the first of its kind to an Ohio-class sub

BY MATTHEW M. BURKE
Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — A Marine helicopter squadron from Okinawa for the first time delivered supplies to an Ohio-class ballistic missile submarine transiting the Philippine Sea, a practice integral to the Corps' island-hopping doctrine.

Two CH-53E Super Stallions dropped "mission-essential equipment" to the USS Maine by a "vertical replenishment," according to a III Marine Expeditionary Force news release. The Super Stallions are assigned to Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 462 of the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing.

Airborne delivery allows Navy assets like the Maine to resupply without disrupting "maritime security operations," a key tenet of the Marine Corps' role as a "stand-in force," the statement said.

Stand-in force is a concept born from Commandant Gen. David Berger's Force Design 2030, the operational doctrine at all levels of the Marine Corps,

especially in the Pacific where the U.S. military is training to deter potential Chinese aggression and maintain open sea lanes. It calls for inserting smaller, mobile units within range of enemy missiles to seize and hold key islands and deny enemy vessels access to the surrounding seas.

The "1st MAW's persistent and forward presence makes it the backbone of the stand-in force's expeditionary capability," Col. Christopher Murray, Marine Aircraft Group 36 commander, said in the release. "The intricacies of seamlessly sustaining the force through naval integration and aviation-delivered logistics is a testament to our adaptability, readiness, and ability to project power within the Indo-Pacific."

The recent drop was the first of its kind to an Ohio-class submarine, 1st Marine Aircraft Wing spokesman Maj. Rob Martins said in an email.

The Marine Corps does not discuss mission-specific cargo due to operational security, Martins said. Photos posted to De-

fense Department websites showed a black, plastic case being attached to one of the Super Stallion's integrated hoists.

The hoists secure the cargo, guide its descent to a designated area, release and retrieve the hoist cable, Martins said. The Super Stallion, a heavy-lift variant of the CH-53 helicopter, can carry 16 tons of cargo at sea level for 50 nautical miles and return.

Martins declined to discuss how often the sea-service replenishes other submarine classes in the region. He referred all submarine-related questions to Pacific Fleet's Submarine Force, which did not immediately respond to an email seeking comment.

The Maine was commissioned in 1995 and is homeported at Naval Submarine Base Bangor, Wash. The nuclear-powered sub hosts 155 sailors and features an armament of MK-48 torpedoes and up to 20 Trident II D-5 ballistic missiles.

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A Marine Corps CH-53E Super Stallion prepares to drop supplies to the USS Maine.

MILITARY

Gender-neutral dress code adopted by DODEA

New rules will go into effect at all 160 schools July 1

By JENNIFER H. SVAN
Stars and Stripes

Students at Defense Department schools will no longer have to measure the lengths of their skirts and shorts, or leave their ball caps at home on bad hair days.

The Department of Defense Education Activity has approved a new gender-neutral student dress code that goes into effect July 1 at all 160 DODEA schools in the Pacific, Europe and Americas regions, including Puerto Rico and Cuba.

The policy doesn't include language that focuses on one gender exclusively or single out styles of dress specific to a race or religion, said Joy Medley, a DODEA education specialist.

How much skin students may show above the knees will no longer be measured by inch counts or "the fingertip rule," which required a hemline to extend below the fingertips with arms hanging to the sides.

The updated guidelines posted on DODEA's website simply call for "tops with sleeves" and "solid clothing (not transparent or translucent) that fully covers the top and bottom, from armpit to mid-thigh."

The rules do away with myriad standards that sometimes differed between schools on the same base. Some barred spaghetti straps, halter tops, baggy pants, "excessively tight" Spandex and headbands, among other things.

The new dress code is easier for families to follow and simpler for principals to enforce, Medley said.

Ripped jeans will be allowed, which is something Medley said students asked to have approved. So will hats, which girls particularly wanted for "bad hair days," she said.

However, the focus on gender neutrality means that the new permissiveness will apply to all.

"We couldn't say girls can wear hats, but boys couldn't," Medley added.

Most schools didn't allow students to wear baseball caps inside buildings, she said, a rule that reflects the military etiquette of removing hats indoors. They will be allowed as long as the brim doesn't obscure the face.

Shoes must be safe for school, with slippers banned unless approved by the principal. Open toe shoes with a strap across the heel are allowed.

"The goal, from the outset, was to create a dress code that is equitable, nonbiased and supports the learning environment while allowing individual expression," said Will Griffin, a DODEA spokesman.

Much of what students aren't allowed to wear hasn't changed, Griffin said. That includes anything that promotes violence, contains curse words, or depicts drugs, alcohol or tobacco products.

"If a student couldn't wear a T-shirt with a big marijuana leaf last year, that is still true," Griffin said.

Clothing deemed discriminatory, pornographic, obscene or promoting something illegal still isn't allowed.

When the new rules go into effect, minor violations such as wearing something off the shoulder won't get a student suspended or sent to the nurse's office until a parent can bring a change of clothes.

Across the United States, stories of dress code issues have drawn national attention, as schools battle with parents, students and civil rights advocates on the fairness of the standards and the disciplinary measures



AKIFUMI ISHIKAWA/Stars and Stripes

Defense Department schools are set to enforce a new dress code that will apply worldwide beginning July 1.

enforcing them.

DODEA is focusing on "teachable moments," where a teacher and student discuss what's permissible, Medley said.

"Our goal is for our students not to lose any instructional time" because of what they're wearing, she said.

Discipline might be appropriate for "a repeated thing or attitude of the student," Medley said.

DODEA's education policy division, along with a civil rights steering committee and diversity, equity and inclusion specialists began revising the dress code in

fall 2021. They reviewed U.S. trends and took input from school and community members.

Some 460 responses were received from students, parents, school personnel and administrators during a public comment period, with students providing the most feedback, Medley said.

"They wanted to be able to express themselves, to have their own individuality and to feel like they were part of the decision of what they could wear to school," she said.

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Air Force upgrades its troubled myEval system

By JONATHAN SNYDER
Stars and Stripes

The Air Force in March quietly launched myEval 2.0, an updated version of its personnel evaluation platform, following complaints about its usability when it debuted more than a year ago.

The app, an effort by the service to create a user-friendly performance review system, returned March 13 for colonel evaluations, Air Force spokeswo-

men Deana Heitzman told Stars and Stripes recently by email.

She said the Air Force made no official announcement of myEval's return while it tested the improved system on a small group.

"It officially launched before the colonel's static close-out date, one of the smallest groups myEval would process at the same time," Heitzman said. "We wanted to ensure the system worked

as intended prior to an official announcement."

The system has been available to officers and senior noncommissioned officers since May 9, Heitzman said. Noncommissioned officers should have access this summer.

The myEval system launched in January 2022 and was abruptly taken down in November after a large number of complaints about its functionality. Chief

Master Sgt. of the Air Force JoAnne Bass in the fall promised "a better version of myEval and more transparency" on the next rollout.

Heitzman said the improved myEval system is appearing in increments to allow its managers to better address faults and questions as they arise.

"The reason why they're doing it is to just make sure that they're focusing on the people that are inputting things now," she said. "So, if there's any issues, they can address it immediately."

So far, the new version of myEval is "working pretty well," Heitzman said.

"They're doing instant push updates whenever it is needed, but those are very minimal," she said.

MyEval 2.0 incorporates policy changes seamlessly, uses fewer pop ups, has secure cloud data storage and a click-to-sign signature function, all of which is internal to the system, Heitzman said.

The system runs on the Salesforce platform and is part of the myFSS overhaul of Air Force personnel management. Salesforce is a cloud-based customer relationship management platform that enables businesses to manage all relationships and interactions with customers and potential customers, according to its website.

Heitzman could not confirm which company has the myEval contract or how much the contract costs.

The previous myEval issues included various evaluation errors, evaluations routed to the incorrect rating officials and training challenges, Heitzman said in December.

"So basically, it was a whole new system, they took all of the feedback from the 1.0, and implemented it into 2.0 to where it's working," she said recently by phone.

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