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Photo by Takahiro Takiguchi, Stripes Guam

# Day trippin' in Japan

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File photo

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INSIDE INFO



**AIRLINE FARES: WHAT TO KNOW, WHAT YOU NEED**  
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## Christmas Drop kicks off Dec. 9

36TH WING  
ANDERSEN AIR FORCE BASE – The 68th iteration of Operation Christmas Drop is set to take to the Pacific skies, Dec. 9 hosted by the 36th Wing. The Department of Defense's longest recurring humanitarian mission is a long-standing annual tradition of packaging and delivering food, tools and toys to more than 57 remote islands in the South-Eastern Pacific, including the Commonwealth of

the Northern Mariana Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, and the Republic of Palau. During the weeklong international charity effort, Pacific Air Forces airpower ambassadors from Andersen AFB, Guam, Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii and Yokota Air Base, Japan, will work with their partners of the Japanese, Australian and, for the first time, New Zealand air forces and includes observers

from Bangladesh, Malaysia, Mongolia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand to execute low-cost, low-altitude training air drops. The aerial delivery will serve as valuable interoperability training for the partner nations while delivering various donations provided by private donors, charitable organizations and the University of Guam. The tradition began during the Christmas season in 1952 when a B-29 Superfortress

aircrew saw islanders waving at them from Kapingamarangi atoll, 3,500 miles southwest of Hawaii. In the spirit of Christmas the aircrew dropped a bundle of supplies attached to a parachute to the islanders below, giving the operation its name. Today, air drop operations include more than 50 islands throughout the Pacific. Operation Christmas Drop includes airmen and assets

SEE CHRISTMAS ON PAGE 2

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# CHRISTMAS: 70-year mission continues

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

from the 374th Airlift Wing, Yokota Air Base, Japan; the 36th Wing, Andersen Air Force Base, Guam; 734th Air Mobility Squadron, Andersen AFB, the 515th Air Mobility Operations Wing, Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii; the University of Guam; and the 'Operation Christmas Drop' private organization which leads the fundraising and donations for the operation. Andersen is used as a "base camp" to airlift the donated goods to islanders throughout Micronesia.

Utilizing the Denton Program, which allows private U.S. citizens and organizations to use space available on U.S. military cargo planes to transport humanitarian goods to countries in need, the C-130J Super Hercules crews airdrop food, supplies, educational materials, and toys to islanders throughout the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas, Federated States of Micronesia, and Republic of Palau. These islands are some of the most remote locations on the globe spanning a distance nearly as broad as the continental U.S.

Months leading up the drop dates, volunteers create donation drop-off boxes and raise

money from local businesses and citizens. A week before the drop, volunteer airmen, soldiers, sailors, Marines, civilians, contractors and families assist in picking up and sorting the donations. After the goods are sorted, riggers from Yokota and Andersen volunteers build dozens of boxes to hold the materials, most containing school supplies, clothing, rice, fishing equipment and toys.

Each year, the Christmas drops serve as a proving ground for the techniques used and shared with regional partners in preparation for response to natural disasters all too common across this region.

Air crews are linked to the village via ham radio as they fly overhead and drop supplies. The event provides readiness training to participating aircrew, allowing them to gain experience in conducting airdrops while providing critical supplies to 56 Micronesian islands impacting about 20,000 people.

Low-Cost Low-Altitude airdrop is cost-efficient and easy to apply across the global airlift community, utilizing readily available resources and repurposed personnel parachutes to build supply pallets at a fraction



Royal Australian Air Force Sgt. Karl Penny looks out as a parachute carries humanitarian aid down to the atoll of Kapingamarangi, Federated States of Micronesia, during Operation Christmas Drop 2018. Photo by Senior Airman Matthew Gilmore, U.S. Air Force

of the cost of other airdrop bundles. These pallets are dropped at low-altitude to improve drop accuracy.

Demonstrating and executing LCLA drops alongside regional allies is just one example of the USAF actively pursuing and participating in interoperability partner training to increase

Humanitarian Assistance/Disaster Relief operational capabilities while ensuring stability in the Indo-Pacific region.

Nearly seven decades and more than 1 million pounds of charitable goods later, the 2019 missions are set to carry on this tradition of international goodwill.

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# Key West changes command

BY LT.J.G. MEAGAN MORRISON,  
COMMANDER, SUBMARINE SQUADRON

SANTA RITA – Cmdr. Michael McGuire relieved Cmdr. Grady Hill as commanding officer of Los Angeles-class fast attack submarine USS Key West (SSN 722) in a time-honored change of command ceremony at Naval Base Guam, Nov. 13.

Capt. Tim Poe, Commander, Submarine Squadron Fifteen, was the guest speaker for the ceremony. He congratulated Hill on an outstanding job during his tenure.

“Rest assured that you have just completed one of the most challenging jobs in the Navy,” said Poe. “Your can-do attitude and track record of always meeting your milestones and commitments has set a new standard in Guam.”

Poe went on to say that he could always rely on Hill and the crew of Key West to rise to any challenge. Following his speech, Poe presented Hill, a native of Austin, Texas, with a Meritorious Service Medal for

his tenure as commanding officer.

As Hill took the podium for the last time, he spoke to the crew of the Key West.

“Your unwavering enthusiasm, devotion to duty, and commitment to each other is awe inspiring,” said Hill. “From my first moment on board Key West, I could feel the pulse of excitement and esprit de corps that runs through the crew. It’s invigorating and I absolutely love it!

He continued his message to the crew by explaining the ship’s motto: *Libertate Clavis Tenacitas Et Ingenuim*.

“The key to freedom is tenacity and resourcefulness,” said Hill. “The crew, chiefs, and officers of Key West fully embody these character traits. Never giving up in the face of adversity of overwhelming odds. Always looking for an alternative, viable solution to the most difficult challenges.”

Hill is scheduled to report to the Chief of Naval Operations Staff in Washington, D.C. as his



Cmdr. Grady Hill, commanding officer of the USS Key West, addresses attendees during a change of command ceremony aboard the Los Angeles-class fast attack submarine. Photos by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Kelsey J. Hockenberge, U.S. Navy

next command.

McGuire, a native of West Babylon, New York, excitedly addressed his crew upon assuming command of Key West.

“I am here to fight with you, and alongside you,” said McGuire. “As the first millennial captain of USS Key West, I know that we are all part of the strongest generations to serve our fine country. We have not dealt with just the threat of war, but have dealt with a generation of war. We all our stories of what brought us here, but today we stand in unity. We stand ready to fight and we stand poised on the front lines ready to face our adversaries.”



Cmdr. Grady Hill is piped ashore after relinquishing command of the Los Angeles-class fast attack submarine USS Key West.

# Andersen conducts fuel spill exercise

STORY AND PHOTO BY  
AIRMAN 1ST CLASS MICHAEL MURPHY,  
36TH WING

ANDERSEN AIR FORCE BASE – The 36th Wing Inspector General team conducted a fuel spill exercise at the split of Arc Light Boulevard and Carolines Avenue here on Nov. 6 at 8:30 a.m.

The exercise was a test for Andersen emergency personnel in their responsiveness and capability to properly contain a 6,000 gallon fuel spill. The simulation included a vehicle crashing into a fuel truck, resulting in the fuel spill. Water was used in place of actual fuel.

The exercise is regularly conducted across the Department of Defense.

“It’s required by law,” said Tracy Taylor, Defense Logistics Agency contractor, and Taylor and Taylor Consulting president. “You have the Oil Pollution Act of 1990 that basically requires installations like this and industries to conduct annual training and exercises to prevent or at least prepare to respond to a spill like this.”

Spills can cause a variety of



Staff Sgt. Jacob Hester (left), and Senior Airman Luis Leon, 36th Civil Engineer Squadron firefighters, respond to a simulated fire during a fuel spill exercise on Andersen Air Force Base.

issues, including financial loss, man hours, and possible environmental impact.

“To conduct and exercise and verify your plan and ensure your equipment is operational just means that you are on top

when the real thing happens,” said Taylor.

The looming concern for this particular exercise was the environmental impact from a fuel spill.

“This is relatively easy to

clean up because it’s a hard surface but where it reaches that grassy area, all of that soil would need to be taken up and remediated or just flat out disposed of,” said Jeff Laitila, 36th Civil Engineer Squadron environmental flight chief. “That’s where the cost really comes into play.”

Laitila said that the perspective for the environmental team attending the exercise wasn’t from a fire, safety and health side, but from what the damage would be environmentally. They wanted to see what the flow would actually look like and where potential threats are and how to minimize it.

“Containment,” said Laitila. “That’s the key. The smaller the area you have to clean up is directly related to the cost and the damage to the environment.”

Laitila estimated that in the possibility of a real world scenario where a fuel spill was not properly contained, that the cleanup could be substantial, costing AAFB a team of three to four contractors working for almost three to four months to

do the job right.

The first line in responding to the event was Airman 1st Class Zachary Alcantara, 36th Logistics Readiness Squadron distro operator, who was driving the truck when it began. Alcantara says that he was glad to be the one responding and welcomed the training, even though it was a little nerve wracking.

“I was hoping to walk away with more knowledge,” said Alcantara. “And not just from my shop’s response, but the other agencies responses because I knew that there was going to be at least two or three other agencies coming out to help respond. I was hoping to just walk away with more confidence for next time.”

Overall, the exercise was labeled a success, said both Taylor and Laitila.

“This has been a great simulation where they actually dumped a bunch of water to simulate fuel,” said Laitila. “There is no substitute to seeing where things would actually go in the event that something happens. They have done it well.”



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# Warrior Care more than expert medical treatment

BY MILITARY HEALTH SYSTEM COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE

Service members who become wounded, ill, or injured can count on the Military Health System's unparalleled medical care. But that's only one aspect of their journey from recovery to rehabilitation and reintegration. Recovery care coordinators help align medical and nonmedical care, enabling service members and their families to utilize all the assistance available to them as they embrace their new normal.

"A lot of us just want to give back," said retired Navy Chief Petty Officer Joshua Arnold, a recovery care coordinator at Naval Support Activity, Bethesda in Maryland.

"We've seen friends, comrades in arms go through difficult periods after becoming ill or injured," Arnold said. "So there's always motivation to come to work and do the very best you can do, for as long as you can."

Recovery care coordinators,

or RCCs, are embedded at MTFs and installations across the country. They work within the Army Recovery Care Program, Navy Wounded Warrior, Air Force Wounded Warrior Program, Marine Corps Wounded Warrior Regiment, and Special Operations Command Warrior Care Program.

Service members, families, and caregivers may be referred to the program by medical or administrative personnel, family members and even friends, said Jonathan Morris, program manager. They also can self-refer.

After enrolling in the program, RCCs work with individuals in coordination with their family members and medical providers. The RCC creates a plan by identifying each person's needs and goals, and the resources needed to achieve those. That might include assistive technology, education, housing, and employment.

"Communication is a big part of our job," said Patrick Figueroa, an RCC at Walter Reed



A sailor in the Navy's Wounded Warrior program at Naval Support Activity in Bethesda, Maryland, sits poolside after training. Photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Christopher Hurd

National Military Medical Center in Bethesda.

"We communicate with the service member's medical providers. We communicate with their chain of command, and with their nonmedical care managers," said Figueroa, a former

Navy Fleet Marine Force corpsman.

"And we communicate with their families, to make sure they know what's going on and are getting all of the services and benefits available to them," he said. "A lot of times we're able to shed light on something and say, 'That issue over there might not be getting resolved because of this issue over here.'"

The work can be emotionally exhausting but also rewarding. "One of the coolest things is when a family member says, 'Thank you so much for everything you've done' for their son or daughter or spouse," Figueroa said.

The population of service members using RCCs also

includes those with invisible wounds, such as a traumatic brain injury. Figueroa recalls one case with a particularly gratifying outcome.

"A service member came into the program with combat-related post-traumatic stress disorder and was reluctant to do anything," Figueroa recalled. "But baby step by baby step, we were able to gain his trust and build a plan with him."

Within two years, Figueroa said, the service member medically retired and successfully transitioned into a high-paying career in the private sector.

Morris notes that service members might incur an illness or injury at any time while on active duty. Some will recover and return to full and restricted duty. Others will transition from the military to civilian status. And some may not survive.

"We see a lot of illness and with that, the abrupt impact it can have on family members," Arnold said. "But there's a lot of good in a service member comforted by knowing that after they're gone, their family is going to be OK."

Sandra Mason is director of the DHA's Recovery Care Coordination Program. "I've been doing this for 11 years," she said. "It's always reassuring to know that the service the RCCs provide is attentive, accurate, and beneficial. Wounded, injured, and ill service members can count on us to make their lives a little easier."

Read Mr. Thomas McCaffery's memo officially recognizing November as Warrior Care Month.

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Information Systems Technician 2nd Class Andrew Collins, a sailor assigned to the submarine tender USS Emory S. Land, plays ball with a little girl at the Bagong Pag-Asa Youth Rehabilitation Center during a community relations event on Nov. 12. Land is deployed to the U.S. 7th Fleet area of operations to support theater security cooperation efforts in the Indo-Pacific region. Photos by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Jordyn Diomedede, U.S. Navy



Lt. Wilking Jean, chaplain of the submarine tender USS Emory S. Land, participates in a sack race with the children.



Sailors play sports with children.

# All about the kids



Sailors assigned to the submarine tender USS Emory S. Land hand candy and food to children.



Sailors played games and visited with children at the Bagong Pag-Asa Youth Rehabilitation Center Nov. 12.

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Airmen assigned to the 168th Wing shuffle through an out-processing line Nov. 14 at Eielson Air Force Base, Alaska, as they prepare for a deployment to Andersen AFB. Photo by Senior Master Sgt. Paul Mann, U.S. Air National Guard

# 168th airmen head south for the winter

BY SENIOR MASTER SGT. PAUL MANN, 168TH WING

EIELSON AIR FORCE BASE, Alaska — Nineteen Airmen assigned to the 168th Wing, Alaska Air National Guard, ventured out of Alaska's below freezing temperatures en route to Andersen Air Force Base, Guam, and its 80-degree days.

Each year, airmen from the 168th Wing deploy to Guam in support of the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command's Theater Security Package and Continuous Bomber Presence, supporting daily KC-135R Stratotanker refueling and maintenance operations.

Over the next six months, more than 70 aircrew, maintenance, and support personnel from the wing will spend time in the U.S. territory, often forward deploying to other countries in the region.

In addition to the support mission these airmen provide, the deployment also presents training and mission challenges that are not seen in Alaska's subarctic region.

"Navigation over different parts of the Pacific Ocean, differing climates, working with foreign embassies and foreign customs officials are all things we experience during this deployment," said Master Sgt. Christian Willey, 168th Air Refueling Squadron.

Traveling to foreign nations around that part of the globe presents both logistical and technical challenges for the aircrew and maintenance airmen. Some of the locales are less than austere, some lack the proper facilities for working on the aircraft, but all provide new opportunities for wing airmen.

"You never know what type of facility you'll be working out of, or who you are going to be working alongside," said Chief Master Sgt. Gary Critchfield, component maintenance flight chief, 168th Maintenance Squadron, "but this is great training and experience for everyone who participates."

The first group of replacements will arrive in mid-December, with subsequent rotations taking place about every 30 days.

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APO/FPO/DPO AE ZIP 093	<b>N/A</b>	<b>Dec. 9</b>	<b>Dec. 9</b>	<b>Dec. 4</b>	<b>Nov. 27</b>	<b>Nov. 6</b>
APO/FPO/DPO AE ZIPs 094-099	<b>Dec. 18</b>	<b>Dec. 11</b>	<b>Dec. 11</b>	<b>Dec. 4</b>	<b>Nov. 27</b>	<b>Nov. 6</b>
APO/FPO/DPO AA ZIP 340	<b>Dec. 18</b>	<b>Dec. 11</b>	<b>Dec. 11</b>	<b>Dec. 4</b>	<b>Nov. 27</b>	<b>Nov. 6</b>
APO/FPO/DPO AP ZIPs 962-966	<b>Dec. 18</b>	<b>Dec. 11</b>	<b>Dec. 11</b>	<b>Dec. 4</b>	<b>Nov. 27</b>	<b>Nov. 6</b>

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

■ Select a box strong enough to protect the contents and appropriate for the amount and size of items inside.

■ Leave space for cushioning inside the carton, using bubble wrap, Styrofoam peanuts, or newspaper to protect the contents.

■ Use tape designed for shipping, using enough to secure the opening and seams of the box.

■ Put newspaper or packing material in hollow items to avoid damage during transport.

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– Military Postal Service Agency

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**LOW MILEAGE!**  
2018 Chevy Impala C1809057 was \$29,995 **\$23,995**  
LT package, MyLink infotainment center, alloy wheels, full-sized sedan.



**ADVENTURE PACKAGE!**  
2017 Chevy Colorado GU19R0673 was \$29,990 **\$29,990**  
4WD Work Truck, V6 automatic, 4.2 Diagonal color display.



**ADVENTURE PACKAGE!**  
2019 Toyota RAV4 GU19T0637 was \$33,995 **\$31,995**  
All-wheel drive, Leather interior, Multi-terrain, in Sparkling Blue.



**RWD SCAT PACK!**  
2018 Dodge Challenger GU19T0924 was \$35,990 **\$35,990**  
6.4L V8 SRT Hemi, 6-speed manual, remote keyless entry



**4x4 V8 Low miles!**  
2018 Chevy Silverado C18040118 was \$37,995 **\$37,995**  
LT Package, V8 automatic transmission, regular cab.



**LOW MILEAGE**  
2018 Chevy Silverado C18080046 was \$39,990 **\$39,990**  
LT package, Extended cab pickup, V6 automatic trans.



**LOW MILEAGE**  
2017 Lexus RC 350 GU19T0815 was \$43,990 **\$43,990**  
Rear-wheel drive V6 automatic, 18-in 5-spoke alloy wheels.



**LOW MILEAGE**  
2018 Chevy Silverado C18020100 was \$45,995 **\$45,995**  
LTZ Package, V8 automatic transmission, 4,675 mi.



**4x4 Z71 Package!**  
2018 Chevy Silverado C18040112 was \$45,995 **\$45,995**  
LTZ Package, V8 automatic transmission, 3,556 mi.



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2019 Chevy Silverado 2500 C19060004 was \$61,995 **\$61,995**  
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**Great Value!**  
2016 Chevy Spark GU19P0752 was \$11,995 **\$11,995**  
Hatchback, rear view camera, bluetooth, alloy wheels.



**Great Value!**  
2016 Mitsubishi Lancer GU19P0800 was \$12,990 **\$12,990**  
Alloy wheels, automatic transmission, back-up camera.



**Great Value!**  
2016 Nissan Sentra GU19P0840 was \$12,990 **\$12,990**  
Great gas mileage, cold AC, automatic transmission.



**Great Value!**  
2016 Buick Verano GU19P0835 was \$13,990 **\$13,990**  
6-speed automatic, bluetooth connectivity.



**Great Value!**  
2015 Nissan Rogue GU19P0802 was \$13,990 **\$13,990**  
Remote keyless entry, metal-look chrome interior accents.



**Seats 7 Comfortably!**  
2015 Honda Odyssey GU19P0807 was \$16,990 **\$16,990**  
LX package, bucket seats, V6 automatic transmission.



**Great Value!**  
2016 Nissan Altima GU19P0844 was \$15,990 **\$15,990**  
Alloy wheels, cold AC, automatic transmission, back-up camera.



**Great Value!**  
2015 Ford Explorer GU19P0804 was \$20,990 **\$20,990**  
Alloy wheels, V6 automatic trans., remote keyless entry.



**Full-sized Hybrid!**  
2017 Toyota Prius V GU19P0690 was \$21,990 **\$21,990**  
Hybrid, alloy wheels, spacious interior, hatchback.



**F-Sport!**  
2015 Lexus IS 250 GU19T0750 was \$24,990 **\$24,990**  
Alloy wheels, cold AC, automatic transmission, leather interior



**SXT Package!**  
2016 Dodge Charger GU19T0865 was \$27,990 **\$27,990**  
SXT package, 8-speed automatic, V6.



**LOW MILEAGE SS!**  
2017 Chevy Colorado GU19R0675 was \$27,990 **\$27,990**  
Access cab, alloy wheels, automatic transmission, back-up camera.



**LOW MILEAGE SS!**  
2017 GMC Canyon GU19T0844 was \$28,990 **\$28,990**  
V6 automatic transmission, bluetooth connectivity.



**LOW MILEAGE SS!**  
2016 GMC Canyon GU19P0713 was \$29,990 **\$29,990**  
V6 automatic transmission, four door, bluetooth connectivity.



**LOW MILEAGE SS!**  
2017 Chevy Camaro GU19T0707 was \$39,995 **\$39,995**  
Alloy wheels, low mileage, V8 automatic transmission.



**V8 DENALI HD**  
2016 GMC Sierra GU19T0829 was \$49,990 **\$49,990**  
V8 2500 Crew Cab, Automatic 4WD, Suspension package.



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2015 Jeep Grand Cherokee GU19T0608 was \$48,990 **\$48,990**  
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**Affordable Luxury!**  
2016 Chevy Cruze GU19T0753 was \$11,990 **\$11,990**  
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**Affordable Luxury!**  
2012 Lexus ES 350 GU19T0718 was \$13,990 **\$13,990**  
17-in. 5-spoke alloy wheels, V6 automatic transmission.



**Affordable Luxury!**  
2013 Toyota Sienna GU19T0636 was \$13,990 **\$13,990**  
7-seater, captain seats, bluetooth connectivity, automatic trans.



**Spacious Interior!**  
2014 Ford Flex GU19T0828 was \$14,990 **\$14,990**  
V6 automatic transmission, SUV SE Package FWD



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2016 Honda Pilot GU19T0737 was \$21,990 **\$21,990**  
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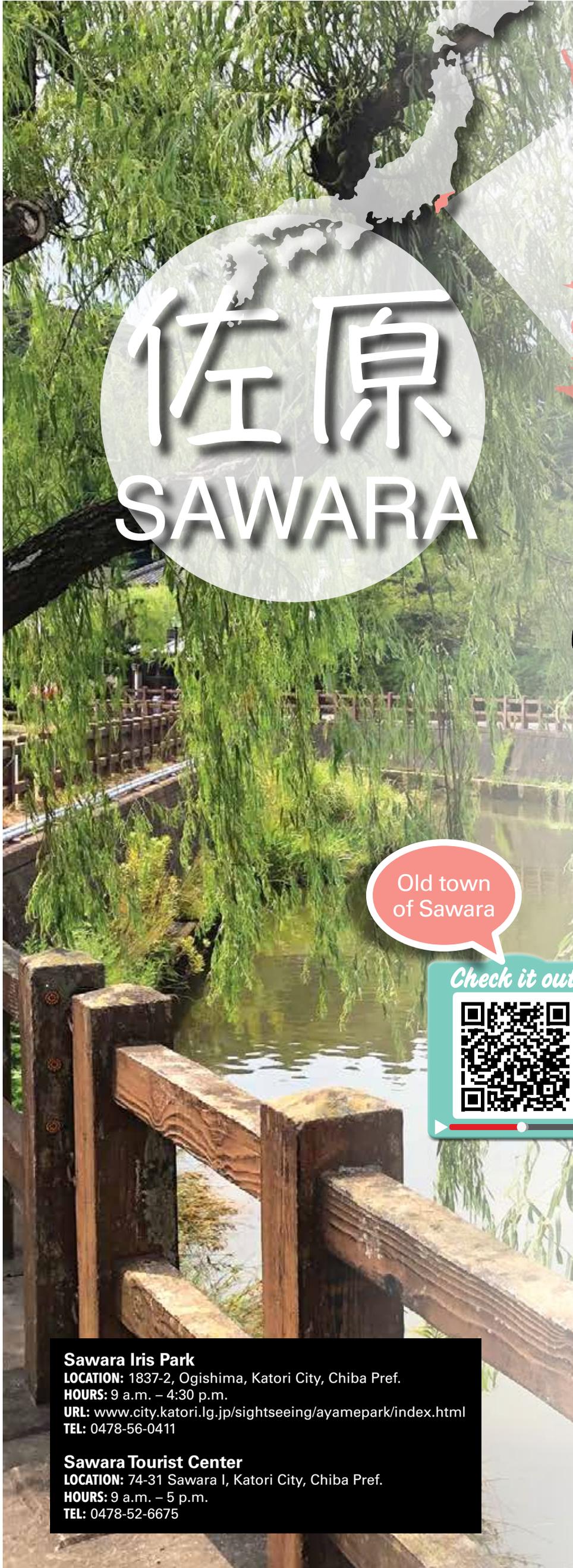


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佐原  
SAWARA



Sawara ★★Katori Jingu Shrine  
Shinshoji Temple ★★Narita Airport ✈

# Little Edo has old

STORY AND PHOTOS BY TAKAHIRO TAKIGUCHI,  
STRIPES GUAM

**B**efore visiting in Japan, you may have imagined the streets here to be scenes of a movie, with old cobblestone roads and wooden buildings found in the Edo Era (1603-1867). You may have imagined running into samurai or kabuki actors in old Tokyo or the former capital of the Shogunate Government.

Today, it may seem like those times are gone in Tokyo, a megapolis with huge skyscrapers, modern infrastructure and transportation, but you'll find old Tokyo if you know where to look.

In the area there are several towns known as "Koedo," or little Edo, that preserve the original townhouses and streets from the era, allowing for a glimpse at the former glory of the samurai capital.

In Chiba Prefecture, Sawara is one of those towns which can take visitors to the old-style Japan they seek. It is only a few hours' drive from most bases in the Kanto Plain via the Higashi Kanto Expressway.

Situated along the Tone River, Sawara accommodates various canals, ponds and waterways. The district is known for being a host to beautiful iris flowers, which draw many locals to enjoy them during the rainy season in early summer.

For the famous blooms, visit Sawara Iris Park, where there are over 400 different types of irises and over 1.5 million iris flowers in total between June and July. We visited the park in late June and were able to catch a park full of white, pink, violet and blue irises. The ponds, small rivers and bridges, along with traditional boats operated by ladies in blue kimonos, brought a touch of nostalgia. I suggest hopping on a boat to enjoy the irises on water.

After, we stopped in at the park's souvenir shops and purchased iris flowers, local food and sweets. I even indulged and had a sweet potato ice cream.

Once we'd had enough irises, our next stop was Sawara's city center.

We parked our car at a parking lot near a classic-looking wooden bridge and found ourselves in the old town of Sawara. The city center was surrounded by storehouses and merchant buildings, still standing and in remarkable condition, dating

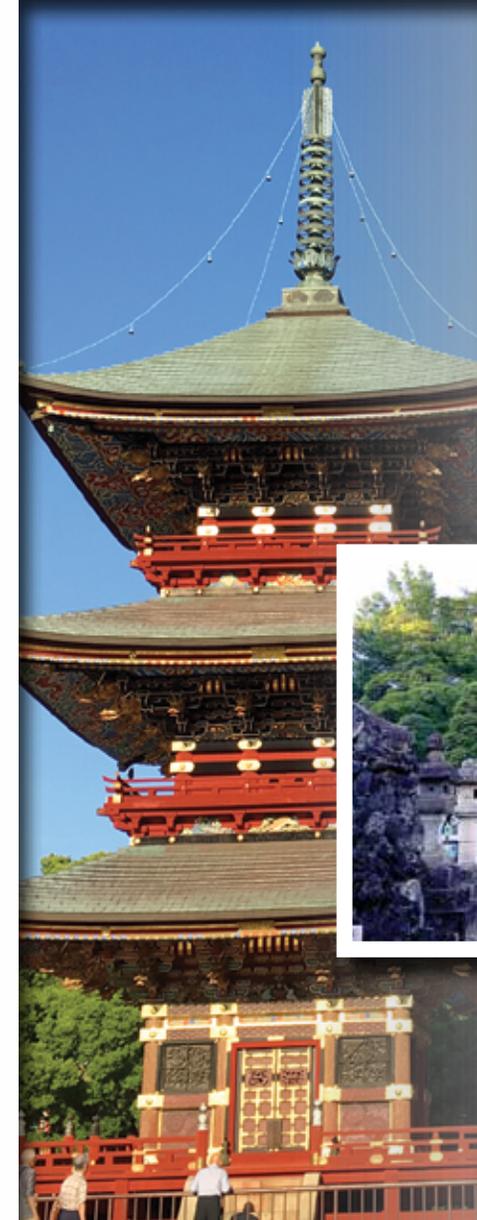
back to the late Edo period.

Willow trees lined the riverbank and the streets were lined with dark-brown wood and grey-tiled roofs. We were transported to old samurai movies.

Even more impressive is that this area is preserving its old town look and feel,

Old town of Sawara

Check it out



**Sawara Iris Park**  
**LOCATION:** 1837-2, Ogishima, Katori City, Chiba Pref.  
**HOURS:** 9 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.  
**URL:** [www.city.katori.lg.jp/sightseeing/ayamepark/index.html](http://www.city.katori.lg.jp/sightseeing/ayamepark/index.html)  
**TEL:** 0478-56-0411

**Sawara Tourist Center**  
**LOCATION:** 74-31 Sawara I, Katori City, Chiba Pref.  
**HOURS:** 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.  
**TEL:** 0478-52-6675



Sawara  
Iris Park

# ...traditional Tokyo feel

the streets we  
den buildings  
d to scenes of

functioning as a modern town. We found a grocery store, vegetable stand, hardware shop, a barber shop, liquor store and various restaurants and sweetshops inside the old buildings on the same road.

ca is not only  
but It's still

Back in its heyday, Sawara's waterway was vital for the transport of soy sauce, miso and rice from the countryside. Some of the wooden boats are still around and

we saw a few of them, except now they carry tourists instead of food staples.

Unlike more well-known Edo Era districts like Kawagoe, located just north of Yokota Air Base, or any area in Kyoto, Sawara is the place to go if you want to enjoy freely without the crowds.

takiguchi.takahiro@stripes.com



## Katori Jingu Shrine and Shinshoji Temple

STORY AND PHOTOS BY TAKAHIRO TAKIGUCHI,  
STRIPES GUAM

**O**n leaving the old town of Sawara, we headed to a majestic Shinto shrine and power spot that boasts more than 2,600 years of history and carries the highest shrine status in the nation.

Katori Jingu Shrine has been known as one of the three most prestigious Shinto shrines in Japan, ranked with Ise Shrine in Mie Prefecture and Kashima Shrine in Ibaraki Prefecture.

The enshrined deity, Futsunushi-no-Ookami, is believed to mitigate natural disasters, provide protection, and is a guardian of martial arts.

The quiet and solemn shrine is surrounded by rich, green forest. Unlike the striking vermilion-colored buildings of other shrines, the buildings of Katori Jingu Shrine are covered in a unique black lacquer. The main

shrine dates back to 1700 when it was built by the Shogun Tsunayoshi Tokugawa and is designated as an important cultural property.

After the shrine, we drove 20 minutes to Shinshoji Temple, another power spot nearby. This temple draws about 3 million visitors annually for a traditional New

Year's visit – the second largest in Japan, next to Meiji Shrine in Tokyo.

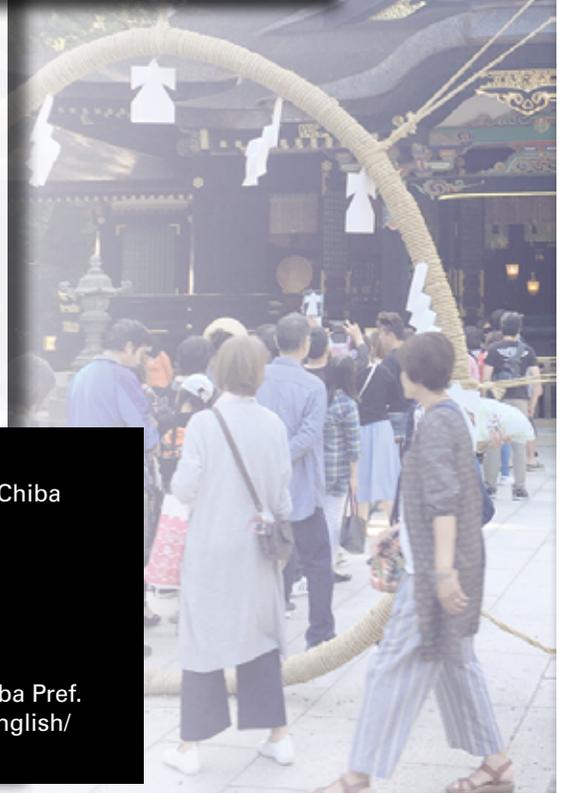
Since its foundation in 940, the temple has been known as a sanctuary to ward off evil.

According to Japanese tradition, ages 25, 42 and 60 for men, and ages 19, 33 and 60 for women are supposed to be unlucky years. When someone turns one of the unlucky ages, they visit Shinshoji in hopes of warding off evil fortune. Although I am not at an age of unluckiness, I visited the large main hall, put my hands together and wished for even better luck.

Whether you're at an unlucky age or not, Shinshoji's main hall, main gate, 3-story pagoda and elaborately-carved Shakado (hall for Buddha) are worth some time to admire and explore.

And, make sure to stop in one of the many shops and restaurants along the approach to the temple for a quick snack and some souvenirs.

Visit Sawara for the old-style charm and take a little detour for a little good luck at one or both of these interesting power spots.



**Katori Jingu Shrine**  
**LOCATION:** 1697 Katori, Katori City, Chiba Pref.  
**HOURS:** 8:30 a.m. – 5 p.m.  
**URL:** <https://katori-jingu.or.jp/>  
**TEL:** 0478-57-3211

**Shinshoji Temple**  
**LOCATION:** 1 Narita, Narita City, Chiba Pref.  
**URL:** <https://www.naritasan.or.jp/english/>  
**TEL:** 0476-22-2111



Mount Hakkoda File photo

# MAJESTIC MOUNT HAKKODA

BY TAKAHIRO TAKIGUCHI,  
STRIPES GUAM

A day trip in northern Japan with breathtaking beauty and hot springs galore

An amazing experience awaits nature lovers and curious travelers alike in the Hakkoda Mountains. Breathtaking vistas amid snowcapped mountains and emerald forests are guaranteed to inspire, while crisp air, babbling streams and chirping birds refresh. Then there are all the old-world hot springs. If there is a God's Country in Japan – surely, this is it!

The Hakkoda Mountains, aka “Mount Hakkoda,” consists of several volcanic peaks, the highest of which (5,200 feet) is Mount Odake. On a recent TDY (temporary duty) in northern Japan, I had the opportunity to take a day trip about an hour west of Misawa Air Base to see this pride and symbol of Aomori City. You can get there via Route 103, the Hakkoda-Towada Gold Line, which starts from the city center.

One of the most popular attractions in Mount Hakkoda is its “onsen,” or hot springs. The area is a home to half a dozen isolated hot springs, such as Sukayu, Yachi, Tsuta, Hokkoda and Jogakura spas.

Each is known for the distinct qualities of its hot mineral waters.

While Yachi Spa, for example, is reputed for its clear hydrogen sulfide water believed to remedy artery hardening and burns, Tsuta's, clear sodium calcium waters are said to be good for muscle soreness and nerve pain. Hakkoda Spa's light blue acid alum water are said to work on rheumatism and chronic dermatitis. Needless to say, all the spas are effective for relaxation and rejuvenation. Admission for each spa ranges from just 500-1,000 yen (\$4.50-9).

“There is no other place with such unique characteristics,” says Aomori Tourism and Convention Association's Yukitomo Yuno. “These are authentic, free-flowing, natural, hot springs, not artificially circulated spa water. You can tour and bathe each one, comparing the quality

of the waters.”

Driving the Hakkoda-Towada Gold Line for a little more than a half hour, I came to Kayano Kogen (Heights) where the surrounding woods gave way to the peaks of Mount Hakkoda. The view of snow-crowned verdant mountainsides was so amazing that I couldn't help but stop the car and take to the roadside with camera in tow.

Further along, the steep winding road gave way to a well-paved thoroughfare wide enough for two cars, which allowed for a comfortable drive from which to enjoying the changing mountainside views. Although it was late May, there was still ample snow piled along the roadside.

Another half hour or so, I came to Hakkoda Ropeway Station. This ropeway gives visitors access to the mountains' uppermost slopes, which lead to the top of Tamoyachidake, one of the Hakkoda Mountains' many peaks. A circular hiking trail allows visitors to trek around a small marshland near the peak within an hour.

Passing the ropeway station, it wasn't long before the pungent smell of sulfur – a telltale sign of mineral-rich natural hot spring water – filled the air. To the initiated, this is a nostalgic aroma that conjures images of long languid soaks in piping-hot water that melts away



Jigokunuma

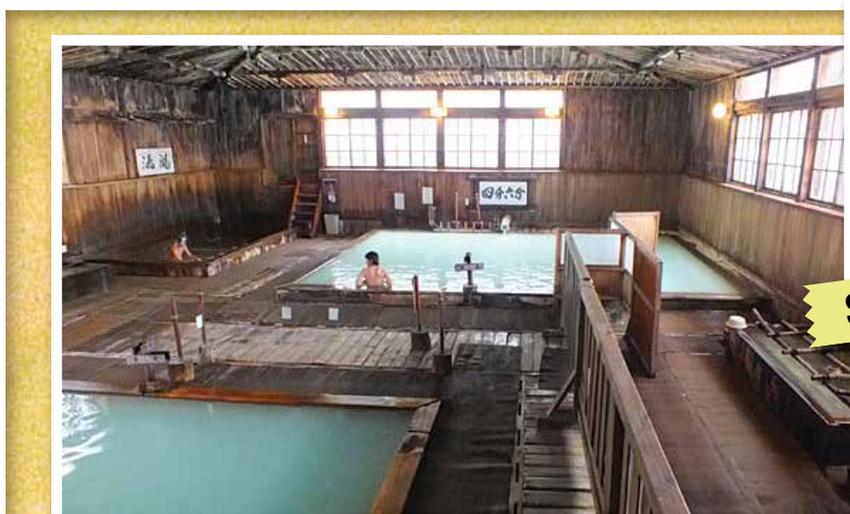
stress as you take in the majestic beauty of the natural surroundings. I saw an elegant traditional Japanese inn on my left.

Stone lanterns and large signs announcing “Sukayu Spa” in Japanese greeted me at one of the nation's most famous hot springs. Although hot springs have been a way of life in Japan for centuries, this is the first national government-designated “hot spring health resort.” It was dubbed so 60 years ago because of its sulfur-rich waters, old-world allure, traditional indoor baths and surrounding natural beauty – a model example of the Japanese onsen, according to Yuno.

During the daytime, the bath is open to non-staying visitors for 600 yen. Drop by the spa and experience the famous Hiba-Sennin-Buro, or bath for a 1,000 people. The



Oirase Stream



File Photos



Sukayu Spa and Manjufukashi

**Hours:** 7 a.m. - 5:30 p.m. for non-staying guests (8-9 a.m. women only)  
**Admission:** 1,000 yen (including towel)  
 Overnight stay at inn: 8,250 yen (\$75)  
 Manjufukashi is open 24 hours; admission is free  
**URL:** <http://www.sukayu.jp/>  
**Tel:** 017-738-6400

Yachi Spa



**Hours:** 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. for non-staying guests  
**Admission:** 600 yen (\$5)  
 Overnight stay at inn: 10,230 yen  
**URL:** [www.yachionsen.com](http://www.yachionsen.com)  
**Tel:** 0176-74-1181



Suirenuma Photo by Takahiro Takiguchi

name of this large traditionally crafted wooden pool is an exaggeration in that it could probably only hold about 100 people at once. But it is usual in more ways than one.

To my surprise, there is no nearby place to shower and wash your body before entering the bath in this large wooden room, as is usually the case. You can't use soap in the bath either. You just ladle some of the water over your body for a rinse before taking a dip. What's also unusual is that this a co-ed bath with just a partition in one corner of the pool. When I was there, men occupied the center of pool, while women seemed to take up behind the partition.

The strong smell is a clear indicator that the white-green-colored water here is rich in sulfur. It was not too hot, but a brief 10- to 15-minute bath made me very warm. According to the posted signs, this hot spring contains acid-sulfur and works for various symptoms, such as diabetes, skin diseases and muscle aches.

A spa employee told me that there were guests staying for more than a month for their hot-spring treatment. The facility also has restaurant and shop. Besides the large mixed-gender

bath, the spa has smaller baths furnished with showers and washing space as well as segregated pools.

If you don't want to take a bath in public, take a 15-minute walk down to a unique hot-spring shack, called Manjufukashi (literally, bun-steamer). This is a wooden shack with long wooden benches over an underground hot spring. Hot steam wafts upward heating up fully clothed recliners from the legs up.

Near Sukayu Spa, there is an active volcanic zone with a sulfuric pond where you can explore along a short trail that leads to a stream fed by hot spring water. The 1,180-foot-long, 400-foot-tall Jogakura Bridge – Japan's largest arch bridge – is also nearby.

The road between Sukayu and Yachi Spa is closed due to heavy snow during wintertime. However, you can see fantastic snow walls when it reopens in April, according to Aomori Tourism's Yuno.

"The snow on the road is removed and piled on the shoulders of the road, making 33-foot snow walls along the road," he says. "It is really an amazing sight."

I was too late to see the snow walls, but I did have a chance to take in beautiful



Jogakura Bridge

Suirenuma swamp on drive. The road in this area widens, allowing parking for several cars. There is a trail to a wooden observation deck that offers spectacular views of a lovely small pond, marsh and Mount Hakkoda. The clear pond reflected the mountains like a mirror.

At Yachi Spa, the route is divided into two. If you have time, take the right to another famed attraction, Lake Towada and Oirase Stream. If you are on your way back home, take the left, which leads you to Aomori City via Tashirota Marshland and see memorial statue of Hakkoda Incident.

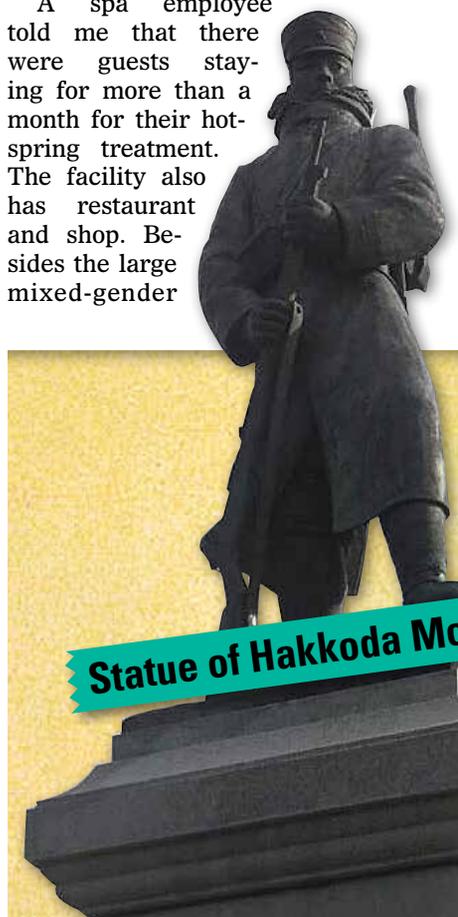
The memorial statue was built in memory of 199 out of 210 Japanese

Imperial soldiers who lost their way and died attempting to cross Mount Hakkoda during a cold-weather military exercise in 1902.

The marshland is a treasure trove of alpine plants, lakes and marshes. You can park your car and stroll among the bog rosemary, day lilies and azalea bushes. Hakkoda Spa is just at the entrance of marshland. This spa is popular for its beautiful transparent blue water.

I didn't have time to try this hot spring out this time, but I look forward it on my next trip to take in all the beauty that Mount Hakkoda has to offer.

[takiguchi.takahiro@stripes.com](mailto:takiguchi.takahiro@stripes.com)



Statue of Hakkoda Mountain Incident

Address: Yokouchi, Yaegikuchinai, Aomori City  
Parking and visitors' shop "Dozo Chaya" are available  
Tel: 017-723-4670



Hakkoda Ropeway

Hours: 9 a.m. - 4:20 p.m. (until 3:40 p.m. between mid-November and February)  
Fare 1,250 yen (one way), 2,000 yen (round trip)  
URL: [www.hakkoda-ropeway.jp/lang/en.html](http://www.hakkoda-ropeway.jp/lang/en.html)  
Tel: 017-738-0343

# Ushiku Daibutsu

## The largest Buddha statue in Japan

STORY AND PHOTOS BY BRAD STEPHENS,  
JAPAN TRAVEL

In Ibaraki Prefecture, in a town called Ushiku, there is a statue of a Buddha that has been recognized and recorded in the Guinness World Records. This Buddha has been acknowledged as being the largest Buddha in the world! It is 120 meters tall and weighs about 200kg. The width of the left hand is 18 meters long, so the Buddha statues in Nara and Kamakura can fit right into its palm. Ushiku Daibutsu itself has many attractions for you to enjoy.

You can actually go inside the statue and there are many exhibits for you to look at and learn from. The highest you can go is up to its chest and there you will be able to gaze at scenery in all four directions. There are also gift shops located throughout the statue, so be sure to purchase a souvenir before you depart.

There are many attractions around the Buddha statue. They have a petting zoo in the back. There are bunnies, hamsters, and goats for you to feed and pet throughout the day. They also have shows where you can see monkeys perform all sorts of tricks, so be sure to check it out while you are there. Of course, all of this is included in your ticket. There is no entry fee to the side attractions.

There is also an alleyway comprised of souvenir shops and restaurants, which would be a nice place for you to take a break and have a snack before continuing with your sightseeing.

Kids under the 3 years old can enter the park and the buddha, free of charge. It would be wise to get the entire package, because it will cost you extra if you change your mind about entering the buddha or not after you purchase the ticket.



Model of the Ushiku Daibutsu's head.



A place for you to rinse your mouth and wash your hands before going in the sacred area.



Two bunnies relaxing under a bench.



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Budget Travel Guide **JAPAN**

**FOOD**

STORY AND PHOTOS BY  
IGNATIUS KOH,  
JAPAN TRAVEL

**F**orget the notion that Japan is expensive. With Japan Travel's budget travel guides, you can discover Japan on a shoestring, but not miss out on anything this country has to offer.

**Overview**

Japan has a diverse cuisine that is unique as it is mouth-watering, making it a haven for foodies. However, the constant eating might be a cause for monetary concern. But with this guide, you can satisfy yourself with all kinds of Japanese food and still have money to spare.



Matsuya is a classic and affordable chain restaurant.

**Gyudon eateries**

These are where the salarymen have a quick lunch or dinner — places such as Matsuya, Yoshinoya, and Sukiya top the list. These incredibly cheap places offer meals for as low as ¥400 for a bowl of gyudon (beef bowl). Imagine paying with only one coin! And with unlimited refills of ice water, your hunger and thirst will definitely be satiated.

Most of these outlets can be found across Tokyo, and in Japan's bigger cities, making it a convenient and affordable dining option.



Ichiran is a famous ramen chain that offers affordable specialised cuisine that is a cut above regular shops.

**B-grade gourmet**

These are more specialised places, which means they usually serve one kind of food i.e. ramen, curry rice, soba. These places usually serve better food than chain restaurants or gyudon eateries as they have specialties. Popular names such as Ichiran, Go Go Curry, and Abura Soba are the places to go for a delicious and filling meal. What's even better is that a regular meal at these outlets only cost an average of ¥700-900! Of course, additional toppings increases the price but a standard meal is still good for value. For sushi lovers, the Hamazushi chain offers a plate of sushi at only ¥100 (subject to tax) so your options are not limited.



Shops hidden in the back alleys often provide good value and are delicious.

**Hidden eats**

These are the shops you find while wandering aimlessly through the back alleys or smaller streets. They are hidden from sight but usually have the best tasting food, made from recipes known only to the owners. As these shops are located in places with lower human traffic, rent is typically cheaper, and so the price of food is also lower than what you would get from shops along main streets. The most appealing option to the avid traveller, standalone indie shops are gems waiting to be discovered all over Japan so start exploring!



There will always be a combini within 100 metres from where you are so you will never go hungry or thirsty.

**Convenience stores/ supermarkets**

A late night option, food at convenience stores — better known as “combini” — and supermarkets like bento, and other hot food (karaage, croquettes, yakitori) that were unsold during the day are packed into bags and sold at discounted prices up to 50% during closing hours.

This means that if a single yakitori stick costs ¥200 normally, unsold ones may be grouped in sets of three sticks and sold for a total of ¥300 instead of the ¥600 it might cost during the day. For someone not fussy with food, these are good options for supper as the food is still very much edible, albeit a little cold.

Of course, if your budget allows for more extravagant dining, feel free to indulge in Japan's thriving food scene. But don't feel bad for travelling on a budget when you can still enjoy similar food at a more affordable price.





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-Dr. Enric Sala, Explorer-in-Residence, National Geographic

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HONDA	RIDGELINE	2013	50170	5FPYK1F28DB017753	BLUE	\$19,995	AUTOMATIC
TOYOTA	TACOMA	2015	90690	5TFJX4CN4FX061690	BLACK	\$17,995	AUTOMATIC
FORD	F150	2013	58520	1FTEX1CM6DFB62997	SILVER	\$15,995	AUTOMATIC
TOYOTA	TACOMA ACCESS	2012	66200	5TFUX4EN5CX015873	WHITE	\$14,995	AUTOMATIC
NISSAN	XTERRA	2014	33217	5N1AN0NU7EN804531	SILVER	\$14,995	AUTOMATIC
LEXUS	LS 460 L	2010	49696	JTHGL1EF8A5039561	RED	\$14,995	AUTOMATIC
TOYOTA	RAV4	2015	41569	JTMZFREV2FJ035057	BLACK	\$14,995	AUTOMATIC
DODGE	RAM 1500 QUAD CAB	2010	53014	1D7RB1GK4AS196440	SILVER	\$13,495	AUTOMATIC
LEXUS	ES350	2013	62710	JTHBK1GG4D2008459	BLACK	\$13,495	AUTOMATIC
TOYOTA	4RUNNER	2008	107399	JTEBU14RX8K018318	BLACK	\$11,995	AUTOMATIC
SUBARU	OUTBACK	2011	87835	4S4BRBCC0B3440362	BLUE	\$9,995	AUTOMATIC
ISUZU	ASCENDER	2006	151043	4NUES16S266701308	BLACK	\$7,995	AUTOMATIC
HYUNDAI	ELANTRA GT	2014	72269	KMHD35LH5EU164198	RED	\$9,995	AUTOMATIC
HYUNDAI	ACCENT	2014	50690	KMHCT5AE6EU142859	BROWN	\$8,995	AUTOMATIC
HYUNDAI	VELOSTER COUPE	2012	57016	KMHTC6AD9CU074776	ORANGE	\$8,495	AUTOMATIC
MAZDA	MAZDA 3	2013	61465	JM1BL1TF7D1818248	WHITE	\$8,495	AUTOMATIC
ACURA	MDX	2007	47969	2HNYD28277H525534	WHITE	\$7,995	AUTOMATIC
TOYOTA	RAV4	2007	83544	JTMZD33V876025319	BLUE	\$6,995	AUTOMATIC
CHEVROLET	SILVERADO 1500 REG CAB 4X4	2010	36723	1GCPKPEA1AZ210039	WHITE	\$6,995	AUTOMATIC
MERCEDES-BENZ	E320	2001	165511	WDBJF82J91X058316	BEIGE	\$3,995	AUTOMATIC
PONTIAC	GRAND PRIX	2003		1G2WR52123F162303	WHITE	\$2,495	AUTOMATIC
HONDA	CIVIC	2003	119552	1HGES16333L028774	GREEN/SILVER	\$2,495	AUTOMATIC
CADILLAC	DEVILLE	1994	100000+	1G6KD52BXRU215824	WHITE	\$495	AUTOMATIC

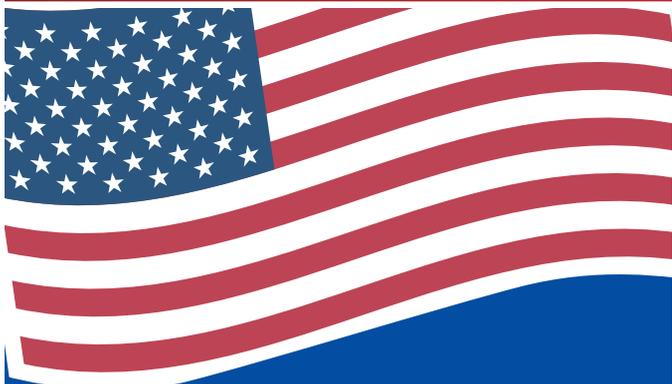
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# Boonie Stomps Guam

INFORMATION PROVIDED BY GUAM BOONIE STOMPERS

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

**Sinesa Falls**

**For more information:**  
[www.facebook.com/GuamBoonieStompersInc](http://www.facebook.com/GuamBoonieStompersInc)  
or call 787-4238.

<b>Nov. 30</b> <b>Tony's Falls</b>	<i>Medium/Easy</i> 3 hours for 1 mile
<b>Dec. 7</b> <b>Sinesa Falls</b>	<i>Very Difficult</i> 6 hours for 6 miles

We offer a great way to keep the kids entertained or walk off all those turkey sandwiches. Offering a variety of ways to get there, we hike to Tony's waterfall, a great place for jumping and swimming. The more adventurous can try the medium or difficult routes to see more great waterfalls.

**Bring:** 2 quarts water, hiking shoes, gloves, swim suit, sun screen, lunch, and camera.

**Special conditions:** Sword grass, mud, and moderately steep slopes.

**Dec. 7 Sinesa Falls** Very Difficult 6 hours for 6 miles

We hike to a beautiful large waterfall that is seldom visited, then upriver to Lower Sigua Falls. On the way we visit the tank farm and explore a shady waterfall filled jungle river.

**Bring:** 4 quarts water, get wet shoes, swimsuit, gloves, sun screen, insect repellent, lunch and snacks, and camera.

**Special conditions:** Rope climbing up and down, steep slopes, slippery mud, walking in water over slippery rocks, and a very long hike

**Complete 10 Boonie Stomps to earn a Boonie Stomp T-Shirt!**

**Stomp Tip:**

- 1) Alcohol and hiking do not mix.
- 2) Do not bring beverages with caffeine on hikes.
- 3) Bring plenty of water with you on hikes.
- 4) Do not hike alone and let someone know where you are going and your return time.
- 5) Always carry a well stocked personal first aid kit.
- 6) When hiking, lots of little snacks are better than one big meal
- 7) Always bring a small flashlight in case you get lost, or delayed. Save your phone battery for calls.

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

# GUESS

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# Airline fares are complicated, so here's how to know which one you need

BY HANNAH SAMPSON,  
THE WASHINGTON POST

I first knew something was amiss when I couldn't choose a seat for a work trip to London. I checked around, then discovered the horror: I had unintentionally booked an international trip with a highly restrictive "basic economy" fare.

Ultimately, I paid extra to choose my seats and avoid the fate of spending nearly seven hours sandwiched in a middle seat. But that unpleasant surprise is becoming more frequent as airlines increasingly carve their cabins into smaller sections with varying perks.

Deciphering the language is no easy task. Depending on the airline, travelers might see fares called Saver, Blue Basic, Main Cabin, Comfort Plus, Premium Plus, Mint or Polaris.



United Airlines shows Premium Plus seats while unveiling a new design for its planes April 24 at O'Hare International Airport. Photo by Brian Cassella, Chicago Tribune, TNS

And even when fares are comparable, the details may vary slightly from carrier to carrier. "It's really, really confusing,"

says Henry Harteveltdt, a travel-industry analyst at Atmosphere Research Group.

Almost all major U.S.-based airlines that aren't ultra-low-cost carriers now sell a form of basic economy, as well as regular old economy (often with extra-legroom upgrades available). American, United and Delta offer "premium economy" sections on certain long-haul flights, a step up from standard coach seats. And in many cases, first class is actually going away in favor of high-end business class.

For consumers, the changes in recent years mean a new kind of vigilance is required to know what they're getting into before they step on a plane. Want to bring carry-on luggage? Expecting to choose your seat? Want extra legroom? Read the fine print!

With that in mind, here's an overview of the options travelers might find on most U.S. carriers, as well as who should choose — or avoid — each.

though they don't guarantee space in the overhead bin will be available by the time people board. Most airlines don't let basic economy passengers choose a seat until they check in or at all, though JetBlue allows travelers to pay a fee to choose their seat in advance.

**Also known as:** Saver on Alaska Airlines, Blue Basic on JetBlue, Main Cabin Basic on Hawaiian.

**Who it's for:** Definitely not families who need to sit together; in most cases, passengers can't be sure they'll be in seats even near each other. This is really for bargain hunters willing to sacrifice control whose plans aren't subject to change. They shouldn't mind sitting in a middle seat or handing their bag over to be gate checked if overhead compartments are full by the time they get on board. Late airport arrivers are in good shape, since basic economy boards last.



This is the cheapest, least flexible, unfriendliest fare you can book. It comes with so many restrictions — no refunds, no changes, last to board — that airlines remind passengers what they'll be missing out on if they book the ticket.

Seth Kaplan, an airline expert, says the message comes across as: "Are you sure you really want this? This terrible, awful thing that we happen to be selling?"

Not all basic economy is created equal. On United, for example, passengers can only bring a personal item that fits under the seat. Delta, American, Alaska, Hawaiian and JetBlue, on the other hand, allow a carry-on and personal item,



Here we have the section most travelers will recognize, though not necessarily love. You can pick your seat, you can bring the standard carry-on bag and personal item, and you'll board close to the end but not absolutely last.

There is a wrinkle though: Several airlines now offer moderate upgrades in the standard economy cabin to sweeten the experience a little. Delta's Comfort Plus boasts early boarding, dedicated overhead bin space, up to three more inches of legroom, booze on most flights and "premium" snacks and meals on long-haul international flights as well as some domestic flights. With Main Cabin Extra, American promises more room at the front of coach, early boarding and free

beer, wine, spirits and snacks. United's Economy Plus gets extra legroom plus a seat closer to the front of the cabin. On Alaska Airlines, "premium class" includes four inches more of legroom, priority boarding and free alcoholic drinks.

**Also known as:** Blue on JetBlue and Main Cabin on Delta, American and Alaska.

**Who it's for:** The everytraveler who doesn't need a lot of extras (but doesn't want to be at the complete mercy of the airline). Families can swing this without worrying about getting split up. Business travelers with skimpy expense accounts. And depending on the route, extra legroom upgrades can be a modest expense for a little more comfort — a perk worth considering even for those who aren't big spenders.



A newer category in the U.S., this isn't available everywhere — generally just on select international routes. It's a separate section of the cabin with cushier seats, better food, an expedited security process, priority boarding and other perks. These seats come with privilege, no doubt, but still carry the down-to-earth "economy" moniker.

"There's just a population of people in the world who want something nicer than economy and are willing to pay, but can't afford business class," Kaplan says.

**Also known as:** Premium Select on Delta, Premium Plus on United.

**Who it's for:** Some business travelers will be able to get away with these seats. Leisure travelers who aren't pinching pennies and value a more comfortable long-haul trip (but don't want to splurge for the truly extravagant options) can find a happy medium here. And maybe royalty? Prince Harry, according to media reports, was spotted in a premium economy cabin on All Nippon Airways heading back to London from Japan earlier this month.



Often, business class is the top-of-the-line option, but bear in mind the international or cross-country experience will be better than a short-haul trip. Airlines really want to keep high rollers happy, so expect lie-flat seats, ↗

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

Pinky

I'm a baby girl of 7 weeks and I'm the ding dang cutest thang you have ever seen! I'm full of life and love and want to share both with you!

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

## BEER-Y

CHRISTMAS AND A Hoppy NEW YEAR!



File photo

high-end food, comfy amenities, more attentive service and an all-around better experience. Prices are significantly higher than economy products.

**Also known as:** Mint on Jet-Blue, Delta One, Polaris on United

**Who it's for:** Travelers who aren't paying their own way or have lots of miles to redeem.



Once the epitome of travel luxury, first class is becoming a little less aspirational these days.

"Business class got so nice, long-haul, that ... a lot of airlines started getting rid of first class because nobody needed anything nicer than business class," Kaplan says.

Delta, American and United all offer domestic first class

with wider seats, more legroom, priority boarding and better food. And American has an international and cross-country product on certain aircraft called Flagship First that offers a lie-flat seat, "chef-inspired dining," private check-in and more.

**Who it's for:** More often, no one. What's the point? Maybe if there's no room left in business class, or if first class is a true bucket list item, travelers will want to splurge.



This is actually an economy product only available on Air New Zealand, and technically it's called "Economy Sky-couch." The product has earned the nickname "cuddle class" because it allows a row of three economy seats to be turned into a couch with an extra footrest

that gives the cushion more room.

**Who it's for:** Honeymooners, couples who want to snooze in close quarters, families with small kids who could use the space or solo travelers who want to stretch out across three seats.



Etihad Airways offers this three-room apartment on one type of aircraft to or from a handful of destinations. It comes with a private bedroom, living space, shower, in-flight butler and limo to the airport.

**Who it's for:** Anyone who wants to fly in the comfort and privacy of their own three-room home. Or travelers who want a private jet-like experience on the same plane as others who will be jealous of them.



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**The Weekly Crossword**

by Margie E. Burke

**ACROSS**

- 1 Hook for large fish
- 5 Like some cycles
- 10 Played for a sap
- 14 Superfruit berry
- 15 Battery terminal
- 16 Hot rock
- 17 Runner's sore spot
- 18 Measure up
- 20 Coat-of-arms system
- 22 Purpose
- 23 Doom's partner
- 24 Poker stake
- 25 Type of fever or break
- 27 Roundabout
- 31 Decided upon
- 32 Clarence was one in a classic holiday film
- 33 Down in the dumps
- 34 Major defeat
- 35 Curl one's lip
- 36 Lunch place
- 37 Late columnist Landers
- 38 Bake in a shallow dish
- 39 Audition tapes
- 40 Olympic winner
- 42 Stir up, as trouble
- 43 Brood
- 44 Communion plate
- 45 Fill, as a tenant
- 48 Half of PG
- 51 Erroneous warning
- 53 Fairy follower
- 54 Chimney channel
- 55 Dentist's request
- 56 Flatten, in a way
- 57 Iditarod racer
- 58 Steer away
- 59 "The \_\_\_ have it"

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	
14				15					16				
17				18				19					
20				21				22					
		23				24							
25	26					27				28	29	30	
31						32				33			
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37						38				39			
40										42			
45	46	47										49	50
51										53			
54												56	
57												59	

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- 2 Pain in the neck
- 3 Fun house setting
- 4 Adam Lambert was one, in 2009
- 5 Pomeranian, for one
- 6 Relieve of weapons
- 7 Like a busybody
- 8 Infomercials, e.g.
- 9 String around a finger
- 10 Northern Ireland province
- 11 Fill beyond full
- 12 Type of keel
- 13 Bull's-eye hitter
- 19 "\_\_\_ we meet again"
- 21 Like Silver's rider
- 24 Sandler film, "\_\_\_ Management"
- 25 "Beat it!"
- 26 Conversation piece?
- 27 Like some gases
- 28 CBS series that featured Holmes and Watson
- 29 List starter
- 30 Chubby
- 31 Pomeranian's dance
- 32 Cordial flavoring
- 35 Boat-building site
- 36 Madness
- 38 It may be slippery
- 39 Shower with love
- 41 Smiling, perhaps
- 42 Dairyman, e.g.
- 44 Anagram for "spare"
- 45 "Tip" or "rip" finish
- 46 Poker action
- 47 Sleuth's find
- 48 Breathe hard
- 49 Skin soother
- 50 Periscope part
- 52 Make stuff up

**Answers to Last Week's Crossword:**

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

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JANUARY 11 - JANUARY 17, 2019 **FREE**

**Stripes Sports Trivia**

Who was the first player, after a record-breaking season in which he led his team to an NBA-record 73 wins and set an individual record of 402 three-pointers (smashing his own previous league record of 286 set the year before), in NBA history to be elected league MVP by a unanimous vote?

**Answer**

Golden State Warriors guard Stephen Curry

**SUDOKU**

Difficulty: Medium

Edited by Margie E. Burke

**HOW TO SOLVE:**

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

Answers to Last Week's Sudoku:

8	1	9	6	2	7	3	4	5
5	6	2	8	3	4	9	1	7
7	3	4	5	9	1	8	6	2
2	8	6	1	7	3	4	5	9
3	9	7	4	5	2	6	8	1
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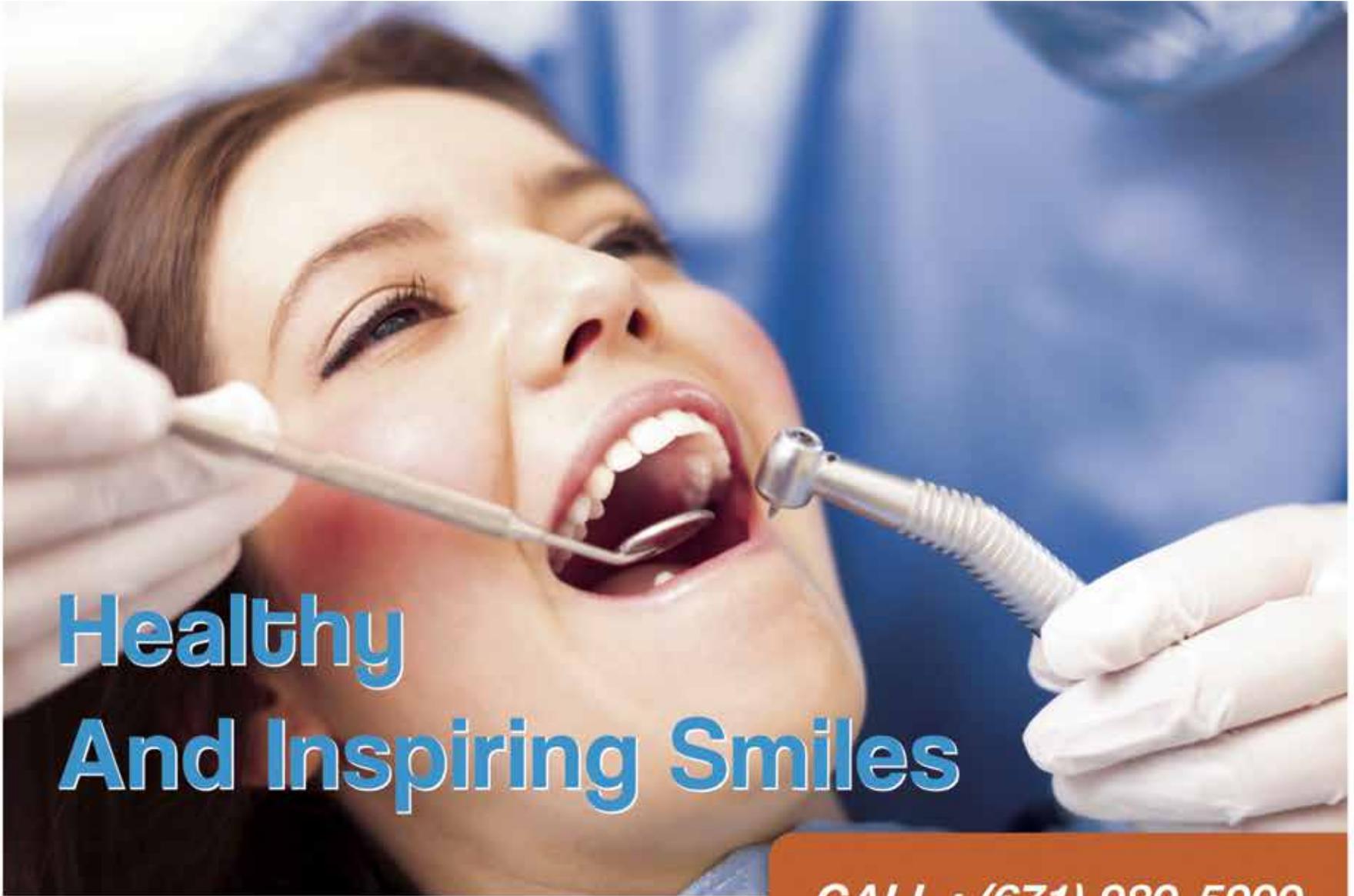
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## The hand to beat

Weaponry-themed cards a hit with service members

Top: A soldier uses playing cards released by Army Training and Doctrine Command featuring vehicles and weapons used by Russia, China and Iran. Above: The ace of spades in the Russian deck shows the SA-17, a surface-to-air missile system.

U.S. Army photos

Page 2

## MILITARY

# Army's playing cards feature military weapons

By JENNIFER H. SVAN  
Stars and Stripes

KAISERSLAUTERN, Germany — An ace of spades embellished with a Russian-made SA-17 could tip a game of Texas Hold 'em in a soldier's favor while also helping him identify a surface-to-air missile system on the ground.

The Army has a new line of playing cards featuring military weapons used by Russia, China and Iran — countries the Pentagon has identified as potential threats.

The cards are proving so popular that more than 70,000 decks have been distributed since they first were printed this summer. Army Training and Doctrine Command's intelligence branch developed "Worldwide Equipment Identification" cards to help soldiers learn about the weapons and vehicles, the Army said in a statement last week.

The command distributed an initial print run of 9,800 packs of cards featur-

**'You don't have to have a security clearance, you don't have to be assigned to a special unit. Everybody has access to these cards, and I think that's what really sold them.'**

Fred Batchelor

Army Training and Doctrine Command

ing Chinese vehicles and weapons in July. Supplies ran out after only three weeks.

"That's when I think it just went viral," said Fred Batchelor, a director in TRADOC's intelligence section, the statement said.

Anyone can have the cards, he said.

"You don't have to have a security clearance, you don't have to be assigned to a special unit," he said in the statement. "Everybody has access to these cards, and I think that's what really sold them."

To date, TRADOC has released 30,000

decks of Chinese weapons-themed playing cards and 38,000 packs of the Russian ones to service members. The 33,000 decks featuring Iranian equipment are the latest to be released, available to units since Oct. 9.

The cards, designed by Army Training Support Center graphic artist Robin Hicks, depict pictures of tanks, rocket launchers and air defense systems, among other weapons.

The 10 of hearts in the Iranian deck, for instance, shows a multiple rocket

launcher.

More decks could be printed in the future, including some featuring vehicles and weapons belonging to friendly forces and adversaries, Batchelor said.

Soldiers and units can order the cards through their installation training support centers.

Playing cards has long been a favorite pastime for U.S. troops in major conflicts. The decks have changed as U.S. adversaries have changed.

During the Iraq War, the Pentagon's "55 most wanted" comprised a deck of key Iraqi leaders U.S. troops were supposed to pursue, kill or capture. Saddam Hussein was depicted on the ace of spades.

As a supplement to the physical cards, a digital card-memory game that soldiers can access on their devices is also available at TRADOC's App Gateway, located at <https://public.tag.army.mil>.

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# Air Force Arctic survival kit surprises testers

By JAMES BOLINGER  
Stars and Stripes

A cold-weather survival kit under development at Eielson Air Force Base, Alaska, was designed to keep F-35A Lightning II pilots alive at 40 degrees below zero.

Thanks to a thermometer glitch, the kit surprised its testers on Nov. 5 by keeping subjects reasonably warm for six hours in temperatures that dropped below minus 65, said Tech. Sgt. Garrett Wright, operations noncommissioned officer for the Arctic Survival School, 66th Training Squadron, Detachment 1.

One of the four test subjects, Lt. Col. James Christensen, a pilot and commander of the 356th Fighter Squadron at Eielson, reviewed the kit in an email to Stars and Stripes.

"This would enable pilots to survive for hours while awaiting rescue," he wrote. "However, I was never really warm or comfortable in that environment with this gear. I still had cold legs, feet and face, and the hands were a problem throughout the test. It will keep you alive, but not comfortable. Don't touch anything metal at that temperature!"

The test was successful, but the Air Force has yet to decide whether to include the new survival kit on board the stealth fighters when they arrive at the reactivated 356th in 2020.

Airmen at the Eielson survival school created the kit after the Air Force discovered the equipment in older fighters like the F-16 Fighting Falcon would not fit underneath the F-35A's ejection seat, Wright said by phone. He began working on the project 1½ half years ago.

"I quickly realized that it was about two-thirds the size of the kit used for aircraft like the F-16," he said. "The sleeping bag would not fit under the ejection seat, so we needed something else that would fit and allow pilots to survive."

The sleeping bag was the major struggle for the team, because, according to Wright, the best bags are filled with down, which do not retain their insulation properties very well after they have been vacuum sealed.

The team opted for a system by Wiggy Industries of Grand Junction, Colo., that



BEAUX HEBERT/U.S. Air Force

**U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Garrett Wright, left, the 66th Training Squadron, Detachment 1, Arctic Survival School noncommissioned officer in charge of operations, monitors Lt. Col. James Christensen, 356th Fighter Squadron commander, in an F-35A Lightning II survival kit test in Fairbanks, Alaska, on Nov. 5.**

incorporates a synthetic insulating fiber called Lamilite into a poncho and pants that can be converted into a sleeping bag. According to the company website, Lamilite does not lose its ability to "re-loft" even after being vacuum packed.

The new kit also includes a raft that can be used as a shelter, wool mittens, six hand warmers that last 12 hours each, flares, a survival beacon, a space blanket and a Leatherman multitool, Wright said.

The kit also includes a short saw and redesigned shovel that would fit the cramped space. The saw and shovel are used to build snow shelters.

"The system we tested has a lot of individual components to put on," Christensen said in his email. "It was difficult with my cold hands to get all of the gear on

in a timely manner, but after everything was on, the system provided excellent protection.

"By using all of the pilot cold weather clothing, plus the survival system and the one-man life raft, I could build a cocoon of warm air surrounding my body," he said.

The squadron commander recalled the chilling details of the survival test, which took place in test chambers at the International Arctic Research Center at the University of Alaska Fairbanks.

"Any piece of exposed skin began to ache immediately," Christensen wrote in his email. "Within 30 seconds, the fingers would feel pain and within 90 seconds they would go numb. I would have to stop working to warm them up again. I was very careful to protect the nose and

cheeks from exposure as well."

The system was designed for temperatures around minus 40, but a fluke at the test facility brought the temperature below minus 65, Wright said.

About five hours into the test, while taking digital temperature readings and checking on the test subjects, Wright said he felt something was off and asked the facility staff for a mercury thermometer.

His digital thermometer indicated minus 40 in the colder chamber, but after five minutes the mercury thermometer dropped below minus 65. He said the team knew for sure the kit would function beyond its intended parameters.

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MILITARY



JACOB HANCOCK/U.S. Navy

U.S. Marines participate in assault amphibious vehicle drills aboard the USS Germantown while underway in the Bay of Bengal, India, during exercise Tiger Triumph on Nov. 18.



TONI BURTON/U.S. Navy

Indian navy's amphibious warfare ship INS Airavat sails in the Bay of Bengal, India.



TONI BURTON/U.S. Navy

A landing craft assigned to Naval Beach Unit 7 transits from the dock landing ship USS Germantown



Above: U.S. assault amphibious vehicles depart the dock landing ship USS Germantown for a beach landing during exercise Tiger Triumph on Nov. 19. Left: Boatswain's mates prepare to launch a landing craft from the USS Germantown during exercise Tiger Triumph on Nov. 17.

Photos by Toni Burton U.S. Navy



JULIAN TURNER/U.S. Navy

Sailors aboard the dock landing ship USS Germantown man the rails as the ship pulls into Visakhapatnam, India, as part of exercise Tiger Triumph on Nov. 13.

# 'A logical step'

## US Marines, Indian military build ties in first Tiger Triumph exercise

By J.P. LAWRENCE  
*Stars and Stripes*

U.S. Marines and sailors were in eastern India for the inaugural Tiger Triumph humanitarian exercise, a drill that U.S. officials and analysts say is part of a growing partnership in a region where China is increasingly active.

Exercise organizers said Tiger Triumph is the first drill of its kind to include the U.S. military and all three of India's armed services.

On Nov. 13, the Marines built a humanitarian relief camp as part of a simulated response to a natural disaster, said Marine 1st Lt. Tori Sharpe, a spokeswoman for the exercise.

The nine-day exercise, which wrapped up Nov. 14, brought together more than 500 U.S. Marines and sailors, and 1,200 Indian sailors, soldiers and airmen. The Marines traveled from Okinawa to Vishakhapatnam, India, where the drills kicked off Nov. 13, Sharpe said.

The exercise, which kicked off with the arrival of the dock landing ship USS Germantown, comes at a time when China is gaining influence in the Indo-Pacific region. U.S. policymakers view India as an ally in balancing Chinese ambitions.

Cpl. Christian Salvaggio of the 3rd Marine Division said his platoon mixed in with an Indian army platoon. Service members from both countries were able to train, hang out, and play soccer and volleyball, he said.

At sea, Salvaggio rode on the INS Jalashwa, a landing platform dock, as both forces sailed about 100 miles south to the city of Kakinada.

After arriving, Salvaggio's platoon rode to the beach aboard an Indian landing craft.

"It's a very cool experience, a

lot more room than we're used to, but it was a lot faster as well," Salvaggio said.

After landing, the two forces built a field hospital and brought supplies ashore, Sharpe said.

The exercise mimicked disasters occurring in areas where security was problematic.

"We've brought weapons ashore, but (the exercise) is to focus on helping a population affected by a natural disaster," said Lt. Col. Dana S. Demer, the Marine task force commander.

Units went out on patrols, where they found actors who portrayed displaced civilians, Sharpe said. After moving them to the field hospital, troops from both countries called in a helicopter to evacuate the victims.

While the U.S. and India have trained together for decades, American diplomats said they hope Tiger Triumph will enhance military-to-military relations between the two nations.

"Military collaboration between India and the United States is a result of growing, high-level trust and consistent effort to broaden the ways in which we can work together," U.S. Ambassador to India Kenneth Juster said in a statement.

The U.S. and India have grown closer on defense issues, having signed several agreements in recent years, said Michael Kugelman, deputy director of the Asia program at the Washington, D.C.-based Wilson Center.

This includes the designation in 2016 of India as a major defense partner and the sale of U.S.-made Apache attack helicopters to the nation.

"The Tiger Triumph exercise is a logical step for the U.S.-India relationship," Kugelman said.

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## MILITARY

# Vietnam to receive a second US Coast Guard cutter

By WYATT OLSON  
*Stars and Stripes*

Secretary of Defense Mark Esper said that Vietnam will receive a second Coast Guard cutter from the United States



Esper

“This ship represents another concrete symbol for our strengthening relationship,” Esper said during a speech to a group of students at the Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam in Hanoi. “Not only does this cooperation enhance the security of Vietnam and the broader region, but it also builds

trust and mutual respect, which creates harmony between our people.”

The Vietnam Coast Guard received the first cutter in May 2017. The decommissioned U.S. Coast Guard Hamilton-class cutter Morgenthau was originally commissioned in 1969.

A statement from the U.S. Embassy in Hanoi in 2017 said the first cutter would be renamed CSB 8020 and be used to improve the Vietnam Coast Guard’s “maritime domain awareness.”

Esper’s speech Nov. 13 left no doubt that the transfer is in direct response to China’s assertions of sovereignty over most of the South China Sea, which is believed to hold a wealth of petroleum and minerals. It is also a major shipping route.

“The long period of peace, which enabled the economic rise of nearly every Asian nation, is yielding to a renewed style of Chinese conduct that infringes on the sovereign rights of other

states,” Esper said.

During his past week of travel to South Korea, Thailand and the Philippines, Esper spoke with defense leaders and officials with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

“In just about every conversation I had, there was one theme that consistently emerged, one theme,” he said. “And that is the international rules-based order that has enabled the prosperity and security of the Indo-Pacific nations for decades is now under duress.

“As a result, the sovereignty of proud and independent Indo-Pacific nations is being threatened.”

Vietnam and China vessels routinely clash in the sea, sometimes within Vietnam’s exclusive economic zone.

In July, China dispatched a ship into Vietnam’s exclusive economic zone to conduct a month of seismic surveying.

In a 2016 decision, the Per-



CORY MENDENHALL/U.S. Coast Guard

The Coast Guard cutter Morgenthau, shown getting underway in 2010 at San Pedro, Calif., was the first cutter transferred to Vietnam, in 2017.

manent Court of Arbitration in The Hague invalidated China’s claim over most of the South China Sea in a case brought to the international tribunal by the Philippines.

“We are committed to expanding our strategic partnership [with Vietnam] by increasing cooperation in areas of common interest, such as maritime security, peacekeeping operations, humanitarian assistance and

disaster relief,” Esper said. “This includes providing Vietnam the capabilities it needs to protect its sovereignty and national natural resources so that it can continue to thrive.”

The U.S. has delivered 18 patrol boats to Vietnam since 2017, most recently with the transfer last spring of six patrol boats valued at \$12 million.

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# GIs training in S. Korea get look at Cold War-era tank

By MATTHEW KEELER  
*Stars and Stripes*

POCHEON, South Korea — Soldiers of the U.S. 3rd Armored Brigade Combat Team, nearly five months into a nine-month rotation in South Korea, peered this week inside a Cold War relic, one they may still encounter on the battlefield.

At the Rodriguez Live Fire Range, troops of 3rd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment out of Fort Hood, Texas, inspected Russian T-80 battle tanks courtesy of their South Korean army hosts. South Korea still fields the T-80 as part of its arsenal.

“This is an opportunity for my soldiers to take a look at a T-80U tank,” Sgt. 1st Class Travis Husted, a platoon sergeant, told Stars and Stripes. “It gives the opportunity to crawl around, check out their capabilities, limitations and understanding, due to the fact that it’s a type of tank that threat countries often use.

“It’s an opportunity for them to understand what they are going to be up against, possibly.”

South Korea’s own 3rd Armored Brigade brought the tanks to the complex. It acquired dozens of T-80Us from Russia in the mid-1990s to satisfy debts left by the former Soviet Union.

South Korea also fields two newer battle tanks, the K1 Type-88 and the more recent K2 Black Panther. U.S. forces employ the M1 Abrams battle tank.

At the live fire range the tank crews from Fort Hood train as a single four-man team: tank commander, gunner, loader and driver.

Pvt. Christian Pelissier, a loader on an Abrams, said this was the first Korean tank he has seen since joining the brigade in July.

“You can tell the equipment is outdated, and it’s actually pretty cool they’re able to adapt to that and still use it in modern battlefields,” he said. “I was able to hop



MATTHEW KEELER/Stars and Stripes

South Korean soldiers prepare a T-80U battle tank for an exercise at Rodriguez Live Fire Range in Pocheon, South Korea, on Nov. 19.

in the gunner seat and the driver’s seat and have a look around. I also didn’t even know that it was auto-loading.”

The two brigades held a battle drill involving two South Korean and four U.S. tanks and 16 soldiers on the range, even after the U.S. and South Korea postponed a joint air drill a week ago in the wake of complaints from North Korea.

The North characterizes U.S.-South

Korean military exercises as rehearsals for invasion. U.S. Defense Secretary Mark Esper postponed the air force drill as an “act of goodwill” meant to bring the North back to negotiations aimed at eliminating its nuclear arsenal. The North dismissed the gesture as insufficient.

For the U.S. tankers, working with an ally was a valuable experience, said Husted.

“One of the most delicate tasks that we have as an armored force is coordinating with adjacent units — that’s a task that we have a hard time mastering within our own army,” he said. “Having the opportunity to go outside to a friendly nation and coordinate with their tank units and master it here is pretty unique.”

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## PACIFIC

# Survivors, families suing over Fitzgerald collision

By CAITLIN DOORNBOS  
Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — Survivors of the USS Fitzgerald collision, along with the families of seven sailors killed, are seeking more than \$287 million from the company that chartered the merchant vessel that collided with the guided-missile cruiser in 2017, their attorney told Stars and Stripes recently.

Forty-seven plaintiffs filed two lawsuits Nov. 19 in Louisiana's Eastern District Court against NYK Line, a Japanese shipping company that chartered the Philippine-flagged container ship ACX Crystal. Forty of the plaintiffs are survivors and seven are family members of those killed. The two groups filed separate lawsuits.

The plaintiffs' attorney, David Schloss, of Washington, said the accident caused his clients injuries, mental anguish, lost wages, pain and suffering and "predeath fright."

The collision happened June 17, 2017, about 60 nautical miles southwest of Yokosuka, where the warship was based at the time. Official reports have not assigned liability for the crash to either ship.

The Navy in its November 2017 post-collision report took responsibility for crew actions that led to the tragedy — such as poor watch-standing and crew exhaustion — but said the "relative performance and fault of the vessels is an open (maritime) law issue."

In its report, the Navy specifically addressed the Fitzgerald's movements, not those of the ACX Crystal.

"The Navy is not concerned about the mistakes made by Crystal," the report said. "Instead, the Navy is focused on the performance of its ships and what we could have done differently to avoid these mishaps."

## 'A wall of water'

In a September interview, Schloss said he'd hired a forensic psychologist who will testify that the fallen sailors knew they were dying as their berthing area flooded.

"Several witnesses recall ... a wall of water rushing toward them," according to the lawsuit. "The water pressure was so intense that several sailors were pulled away from the port side scuttle exit by the rushing water."

Autopsies revealed no sailors died in the immediate impact but rather by inhaling seawater.

"They were conscious for two to three minutes knowing they were drowning," Schloss said.

Two of his clients had to close the berthing exit "to protect the structural integrity of the whole ship," while knowing sailors remained inside, according to the lawsuit.

Nearly all his clients battle post-traumatic stress disorder since the collision, Schloss said in September. Many were



U.S. Navy

**The USS Fitzgerald sits in dry dock at Yokosuka Naval Base, Japan, after it was damaged in a deadly collision with a merchant vessel on June 17, 2017. Survivors of the crash and families of those killed are suing the company that chartered the merchant vessel.**

sent back to the U.S. for treatment, required in-patient care, were put on mental health medication or assigned limited duty as a result. Eleven have or will be discharged from the Navy for disabilities they received in the collision.

In August, a Japan Transport Safety Board report identified key factors that contributed to the collision, but the report did not place blame on either party. While it listed some Fitzgerald faults, including ineffective watch-standing, as causal factors, it also said the ACX Crystal's crew should have done more to prevent the collision.

The board's report said the merchant ship's crew "expected that the USS Fitzgerald would recognize them and avoid ACX Crystal," so it did not change its course or speed before the collision.

It also failed to sound a horn to properly warn the Fitzgerald of the impending danger.

"When (a) vessel fails to understand the intentions or actions of other vessels, or there is doubt that other vessels are

taking sufficient action to avoid a collision, warning signals shall be sounded," said a translated copy of the report.

The sailors are not pursuing legal action against the Navy; U.S. law bars service members from suing the government for on-the-job injuries, Schloss said. However, outside parties can be held responsible.

Attempts to reach attorneys for NYK were unsuccessful.

NYK is a Japanese company, but Schloss said U.S. courts can have jurisdiction over the case because NYK has a large global network spanning 60 regions and countries, including the United States. The company employs about 35,000 people, has a fleet of 710 ships and has consolidated revenue of about \$17.1 billion, according to its website.

## McCain lawsuit

The Fitzgerald's was the first of two collisions involving 7th Fleet vessels in 2017. On Aug. 21, 2017, an oil tanker named the Alnic MC slammed into the port side of the destroyer USS John S. McCain, killing

10 sailors. Survivors and families of the fallen in that incident are also involved in a lawsuit against the owner of the merchant vessel.

The U.S. government, along with the families and injured sailors, countersued Energetic Tank Inc., owner of the Alnic MC, which in early 2018 in federal court sought exoneration from liability in that collision.

The 42 plaintiffs in that case are seeking more than \$66.5 million from Energetic Tank for personal injury, wrongful death and property damage.

Nearly two years later, the case is ongoing. The discovery deadline passed last month.

Attorneys collected depositions from witnesses in Japan in late September and early October for the McCain case, according to court documents. Ten of the 12 deposed are sailors, and the remaining two are civilians affiliated with Yokosuka Naval Base.

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# Japan, Australia agree to hold regular air force training

By SETH ROBSON  
Stars and Stripes

YOKOTA AIR BASE, Japan — Two of America's most important Pacific allies have agreed to participate in annual air force exercises in each other's territory starting in 2020.

The Japan Air Self-Defense Force will be a regular participant in the Pitch Black air

drills, held every two years in Australia's Northern Territory, the two countries' defense ministers announced Nov. 20. The Royal Australian Air Force will also be a regular participant in Bushido-Guardian, a bilateral fighter exercise held in Japan for the first time this year.

Japanese Defense Minister Taro Kono and his Australian

counterpart, Linda Reynolds, announced the move along with other defense cooperation in a joint statement following Reynolds' first official visit to Tokyo last week.

The pair "reaffirmed their intention to develop defence cooperation among Australia, Japan and the United States," according to the joint statement.

The ministers said they will accelerate defense cooperation, including in the fields of military exercises, personnel exchanges, space and cyber policy, defense science and technology, the joint statement said.

The pair also announced that an Australian Army liaison officer would work in the Japan Ground Self-Defense Force to

enhance cooperation.

They're also establishing an exchange program for defense scientists and engineers to deepen links between Japan's Acquisition, Technology and Logistics Agency and Australia's Defence Science and Technology Group, the pair said in their statement.

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## MILITARY

# Dog hoodie proves to be sound advice

Tests show it protects military dogs' hearing

By JOHN VANDIVER  
Stars and Stripes

A high-tech “hoodie” is being developed to protect the hearing of military working dogs who, like their human counterparts, are often exposed to loud noises in their job, the Army said recently.

Tests during helicopter operations of the Canine Auditory Protection System, which the Army is developing with biodefense and medical device company Zeteo Tech, “found a significant reduction in short-term hearing loss” in military canines, the Army said.

“Even a short helicopter flight can affect a dog’s hearing, resulting in impaired performance and inability to hear the handler’s commands, which can hinder the mission,” said Army Research Office scientist Stephen Lee in a statement.

A little more than an inch thick, the system is made of lightweight acoustic absorption materials that block unwanted sounds. The flexible system fits snugly around a dog’s head — like a hoodie — and forms a seal around the ears.

The system is compatible with goggles and allows dogs to work in tight spaces, the Army said.

The new hearing protection is a break from current products, which are “rigid, cumbersome and hard to put on the dog, with limited effectiveness in testing for the protection of canine

hearing,” the Army said.

It’s not clear when the new equipment will be made available to military dog handling units.

The incidence of hearing loss in military dogs is thought to be similar to that in human service members, for whom it ranks as the leading service-related disability within the Department of Veterans Affairs.

“Military working dogs are subjected to the same combat exposures as their military handlers ... (and) are estimated to experience similar levels of noise-exposed hearing loss,” the Army wrote in a 2017 request for proposals seeking hearing solutions for canines.

Protecting a dog’s hearing could help extend its working life, Lee said.

Military dogs carry out a range of jobs, including sniffing out roadside bombs and tracking down enemy combatants.

Last month, a Belgian Malinois named Conan garnered attention and praise from the White House, when he helped hunt down Islamic State leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi in Syria.

Conan suffered injuries that were not life-threatening when he chased al-Baghdadi into a dead-end tunnel, where the militant leader blew himself up, along with two of his children.

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**The Canine Auditory Protection System, above and left, resembles a close-fitting hood. It uniformly distributes the pressure required to hold the dogs’ hearing protection in place, while avoiding challenges associated with straps. It is also compatible with other gear used by working dogs, such as goggles.**

Zeteo Tech photos

## Thousands of student vets to see change in living stipends

By NIKKI WENTLING  
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — About 21,000 student veterans will see lower living stipends next semester after the Department of Veterans Affairs finally implements a law that alters how students are paid when they attend satellite campuses.

For veterans who take classes at a satellite or branch campus, their monthly allowances — which they use for housing, utilities and food — will be based on the cost of living in the city where they’re taking classes, rather than defaulting to their school’s main campus.

About 59,000 veterans are expected to receive increased payments because of the change, but about 21,000 will get less money, the VA estimated. GI Bill benefits go to about 500,000 students each semester.

“These changes have the potential to impact thousands,” said Rep. Phil Roe, of Tennessee, the ranking Republican on the House Committee on Veterans’ Affairs. “I’m concerned that despite VA’s best efforts, some students will be surprised when they see an unexpected decrease in payment.”

The change was part of the Forever GI

Bill, a major overhaul of veterans’ education benefits that Congress passed in 2017. The new calculation was supposed to go into effect in August 2018, but technology failures resulted in the VA sending out incorrect monthly housing stipends to thousands of veterans. Some veterans received no monthly payments at all.

After outcries from veterans and lawmakers last year, the agency halted the rollout. Now, it’s trying again.

The VA is expected to meet a Dec. 1 deadline to put the change into effect.

The Economic Opportunity subcommittee, part of the House Committee on Veterans’ Affairs, held a hearing to determine whether the VA was ready.

“We are on track to meet the target date,” said Paul Lawrence, VA undersecretary for benefits. “We are ready to roll.”

In addition to using the new calculation in the spring semester, the VA will start sending out retroactive payments to students who received lower housing payments since August 2018 than they should have under the new law.

For those students who received higher living stipends over the past year than what’s called for under the law, the VA plans to distribute notifications that the overpayments will be waived. Congress

passed a law in December that prevents the VA from trying to collect money from those students.

The VA is hiring 500 temporary employees to help with the extra work, said Charmain Bogue, executive director of Education Services at the VA. The agency will also require employees to work mandatory overtime before January, which is when the first payments are expected to go out, Bogue said.

Lawmakers expressed concerns that some of the 21,000 students who are set to receive lower payments would be unaware of the changes until they received their checks next semester.

“Our phones are going to ring off the wall,” Roe said. “Students don’t have too much money, so when you reduce the amount they have, that’s going to be a real impact. The quicker they get that information, the better.”

The VA sent emails about the changes, as well as posted on social media, Lawrence said. The agency also identified the satellite schools where students are expected to receive smaller checks and asked them to notify veterans at those campuses.

Some students could receive hundreds of dollars less each month because of the

change. Citing one example, Bogue said San Francisco has a housing allowance of \$4,300 each month, while Sacramento has \$2,500. Under the new calculation, a student attending a Sacramento branch of a San Francisco-based school would receive the lower rate.

Bogue said the VA would offer a one-time relief payment for students who unexpectedly receive less money at the start of the spring semester. Those payments typically take three months to process, but the agency is working to turn those around within two weeks, she said.

As the VA implements the new calculation, Lawrence asked lawmakers for their help explaining that the smaller payments were because of a law change, not a VA mistake.

“Our student veterans live on modest incomes, and the housing allowance will go down in certain situations,” Lawrence said. “We’d like your help to communicate this is not a VA failure — this is how the law and the rules work. We want to make sure that’s understood.”

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## MILITARY

# Navy medical team performs pop-up hospital exercise

BY CARLOS M. VAZQUEZ II  
Stars and Stripes

CAMP HANSEN, Okinawa — Navy doctors and hospital corpsmen from the 3rd Medical Battalion erected within hours recently a complex of interconnecting tents that serves as a field hospital.

They engage in the same exercise every year, but it's always the first time for some members of the unit. This year, that was Hospital Corpsman 1st Class Rosalie Gutierrez, a surgical technician and native of the Philippines.

While previously stationed at a brick-and-mortar base hospital, Gutierrez saw firsthand how the procedures performed at field hospitals, also called Role 2 facilities, saved the lives of patients brought to her hospital.

A base hospital is called a Role 3 facility.

"The care that they can do is very important because it might

take a while for the patient to get to a Role 3," she said. "So whatever intervention that they have done has already added to the patient's life."

**“Whatever intervention that they have done has already added to the patient's life.”**

**Hospital Corpsman 1st Class Rosalie Gutierrez**  
surgical technician

They can also provide needed medical services in the event of a natural disaster or humanitarian crisis in the Pacific region, said Lt. Cmdr. Brandi Sakai, an emergency medicine

physician.

"Not only does 3rd Medical Battalion provide the care for any humanitarian crisis or any fight that we may have and supports our allies, we're available for anything that may be needed in the Indo-Pacific," she said, "We're there when anyone calls."

A team of about 70 service members propped up the interconnecting tents in under four hours. The facility can treat 100 patients for 72 hours before requiring a resupply of medical

equipment.

Each tent is sectioned off for various needs, from immediate response upon patient arrival to a holding area for patients awaiting transfer to a higher level of care. One tent is dedicated to critical dental procedures. The battalion can field up to eight individual hospitals. Most recently, 3rd Medical Battalion erected Role 2 field hospitals for military exercises in Australia and the Philippines. The exercises are more than

practice, Sakai said. The doctors and corpsmen sometimes treat injured service members.

"We also spend a lot of time doing subject matter expert exchanges, and we learn from each other while sitting with our counterparts in foreign countries," she said.

"I think that's where we really make a difference in this part of the world."

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CARLOS VAZQUEZ/Stars and Stripes

**Navy doctors and hospital corpsmen assigned to the 3rd Medical Battalion work on a simulated casualty inside a Role 2 field hospital at Camp Hansen, Okinawa, on Nov. 21.**

# Navy vet found in apartment three years after he died

BY ROSE L. THAYER  
Stars and Stripes

AUSTIN, Texas — When Ronald Wayne White stopped responding to his mother's phone calls in 2016, she knew something wasn't right.

But when Doris Stevens said she contacted Dallas-area police departments about her son, a Navy veteran who had worked as a defense contractor, she couldn't get any answers.

White's body was discovered in his DeSoto, Texas, apartment recently, and a medical examiner determined he had been dead there for about three years, according to a report by WFAA, a Dallas TV station.

"A part of me is missing, and I'm not going to ever see him again," Stevens said Thursday. "I want answers."

She received the news about

her son's death from White's adult daughter and her mother, White's ex-wife. He'd been divorced for more than 20 years, Stevens said, and wasn't particularly close to either of his two adult children.

White retired from the Navy as a senior chief petty officer in 2005 and would have been about 51 years old when he died, his mother said. He had recently sold a home in Dallas and purchased a home in the Philippines, so Stevens said she did not know he had rented the apartment in DeSoto.

The DeSoto Police Department told WFAA that the DeSoto Town Center Apartments decided to investigate multiple units where it appeared tenants were not using water. Once they forced the bolted door open at White's unit, they found him dead on the kitchen floor, the TV station reported.

Stevens, who lives in Shreveport, La., but has been spending time with her daughter on Long Island, N.Y., remembered last speaking to White in November 2016. They discussed the upcoming election and that he'd decided not to move to the Philippines until after he voted.

When December rolled around, she assumed he was busy with his move. By his birthday in April, she did not hear from White and knew something was wrong. That's

when she began contacting Dallas-area police departments.

Stevens said White loved to travel and she was told by authorities that he was likely on a trip.

"Now, as I look back, all the while I'd been crying about my son in Dallas, my son was dead in that apartment complex and I didn't know," said Stevens.

DeSoto police also told WFAA that White had a month-to-month lease paid through an automatic withdrawal from an account linked to his Navy retirement. His apartment, on the third floor at the very northwest corner of the complex, is new, well-insulated and all the windows were locked and sealed tight.

A downstairs neighbor did complain about two years ago about a small amount of liquid seeping through her ceiling, the TV station reported. Maintenance personnel inspected it but moved on once it stopped and they didn't enter White's upstairs apartment when no one came to the door.

Funeral arrangements are pending, as are the results of a toxicology test that could provide answers as to how White died.

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Stevens family

**The body of retired Navy Senior Chief Petty Officer Ronald Wayne White was discovered in his DeSoto, Texas, apartment three years after he died.**

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