

# STARS AND STRIPES<sup>®</sup>

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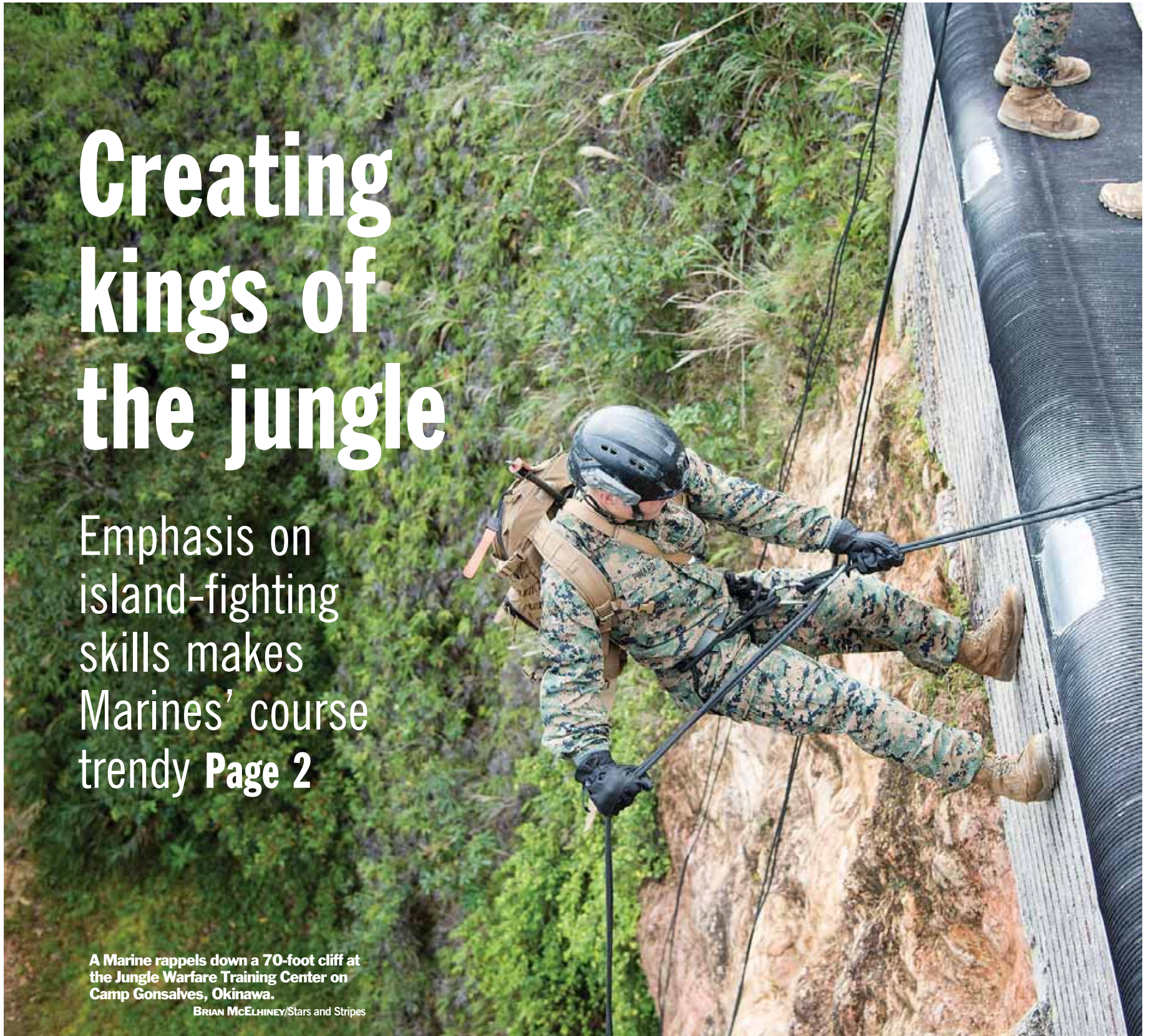
FRIDAY, DECEMBER 27, 2024

## Creating kings of the jungle

Emphasis on  
island-fighting  
skills makes  
Marines' course  
trendy **Page 2**

A Marine rappels down a 70-foot cliff at the Jungle Warfare Training Center on Camp Gonsalves, Okinawa.

BRIAN McELHINEY/Stars and Stripes





## COVER STORY

# Course hones skills in jungle warfare

## Okinawa Marines prep for possibility of island conflict

By BRIAN McELHINEY  
*Stars and Stripes*

CAMP GONSALVES, Okinawa — About 40 Marines took turns descending a 45-foot cliff — a hasty rappelling obstacle — part of a weeklong course designed to teach them and other service members how to fight and survive in a jungle environment.

Instructors at the cliff bottom — “jungle leaders” — called out encouragement, shouting out when to crawl, walk and run.

“Right now, because it’s the beginning of the day, they’re just going through without any equipment on,” Gunnery Sgt. Caleb Holsinger, the basic jungle skills course chief, said during a media tour of the center. “But later on in the day you’ll see rifles and packs and stuff like that going down both of these.”

The potential for conflict in the Indo-Pacific has heightened the importance of jungle warfare training in recent years, according to Lt. Col. Kelly Candies, director of the Jungle Warfare Training Center.

For example, while no Marine is required to take jungle warfare training, the recently created 12th Marine Littoral Regiment based at Camp Hansen is considering the course.

Littoral regiments are designed as smaller, mobile units inserted within enemy missile range to seize and hold key Pacific islands and deny enemy vessels access to surrounding areas, a key tenet of the Marine Corps’ island-fighting doctrine in its Force Design plan.

At the rappelling site, the 45-degree hasty rappel seemed a bit less daunting than the nearly vertical, 70-foot-high main rappelling cliff.

The hardest part for Marines rappelling from the 70-foot cliff is just “getting off that platform,” said Cpl. Irving Gomez, a jungle leader.

“We do brief them on, when they first originally get here, how tall the cliff is just to get them mentally pre-



PHOTOS BY BRIAN McELHINEY/Stars and Stripes

Marines make a camp fire at the Jungle Warfare Training Center on Camp Gonsalves, Okinawa.



Marine Sgt. Camden Rose, left, a jungle leader at the Jungle Warfare Training Center, demonstrates how to secure a casualty to a stretcher.

pared,” he said, looking down from the cliff top. “But we don’t have a smaller one. They see a good and bad demo, and that would be their view of seeing and getting confident and ready for the rappel.”

The Jungle Warfare Training Center — the only one of its kind in the Department of Defense — was established in 1958 across 17,000 acres of mountains and jungle in the north of Okinawa. It’s open to Marines, sailors, soldiers and airmen, as well as other

NATO forces and Japanese troops, Holsinger said.

The center offers four courses: basic jungle skills; a five-week jungle leaders’ course that qualifies service members to lead other troops through jungle terrain; a jungle medicine course; and a jungle communications course. Units can also use the center to do their own training, Holsinger said.

About 7,000 to 10,000 troops come through the center each year, he said.

About 160 Marines from several



Marines practice hasty rappelling down a 45-foot cliffside.

units signed up for the basic jungle skills course.

They practiced at several stations: cliff rappelling; survival skills such as fire-making, finding water and building shelters; patrolling; and combat casualty care. They were scheduled to be tested the next day for their certifications, Holsinger said.

The course concluded with a nearly four-mile, 18-obstacle jungle course.

“The importance is that we are prepared to do our job in any environment,” Candies said. “Being here helps build confidence with our allies and partners.”

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## MILITARY

# Master sergeant wins \$250K on TV show

Air National Guard NCO and 3 others complete challenge on 'The Summit'

By JEREMY STILLWAGNER  
*Stars and Stripes*

YOKOTA AIR BASE, Japan — Ladeania Jackson, an Air National Guard master sergeant, and three others who completed a 14-day challenge in the Southern Alps of New Zealand shared a \$1 million prize on the reality TV show "The Summit."

The 16 contestants who started the show carried a share of the prize money in their backpacks but, as they dropped out, surrendered it to those who carried on.

Jackson — known as "Punkin Jackson" on the show — said she has been an avid reality TV fan since childhood. When she found out about auditions for "The Summit" through an Instagram post, she seized the opportunity.

"We had no idea what exactly we were signing up for," she told Stars and Stripes in an interview recently at Yokota, an airlift hub in western Tokyo. "I just thought it would be a great experience and a great opportunity."

A native of Columbus, Miss., Jackson serves with the 194th Air Support Operations Group at Camp Murray, Wash. But her home is at Yokota with her spouse, Senior Master Sgt. Tamika Boler of the 374th Logistics Readiness Squadron.

Jackson went home with \$250,000 and plans to use the money to expand her family. It will cover some of the cost of in vitro fertilization, she said in a Facebook message.

Jackson said the competitors weren't told what they had signed up for until the first day of filming.

They were given 14 days to scale a mountain while carrying an equal share of a \$1 million prize in addition to all their gear. Anyone who made it to the top would win a share of the prize money, but if no one completed the journey, all the money would be lost.

"Hearing those words was a shock, to say the least," Jackson said. "None of us had any kind of hiking experience



Air National Guard Master Sgt. Ladeania Jackson competes on the reality TV show "The Summit."

**"None of us had any kind of hiking experience or mountain climbing experience, so it was going to be challenging for sure. I was getting what I signed up for, a challenge."**

Ladeania Jackson

or mountain climbing experience, so it was going to be challenging for sure. I was getting what I signed up for, a challenge."

As their trek wore on, contestants were eliminated through votes and challenges until the final three reached the summit of Mount Head.

"We all had a goal to make it to the top, and to be one of the three that made it, win the game and accomplish

that goal, was an amazing feeling that is truly hard to describe," Jackson said.

The show averaged 2.1 million viewers per episode, according to TV tracker tvseriesfinale.com, but earned mixed reviews.

"The Summit" ends up a cheap knockoff of the CBS network's defining reality show, "Survivor," said Kelly Lawler, TV critic for USA Today.

The show is "too physically difficult



Ladeania Jackson

**Jackson shared a \$1 million prize on "The Summit."**

for most of its contestants and full of nonsensical twists and rules that make it hard to understand, let alone get sucked into," she wrote in September. "There's very little suspense to a show where it seems clear the biggest guy is probably going to be the winner."

Joel Keller of the Decider website was kinder. "The vistas in that part of the world are spectacular," he wrote Sept. 29. "The show is worth watching just to show this group going from the lush greenery at the base of the mountain to the Arctic conditions near the top."

Jackson hopes to compete on more reality TV shows and is eager for the next challenge.

"Your mind is your biggest obstacle," she said. "If you can get over that, you can accomplish any dream or goal you set out to accomplish."

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## EUROPE

# Rotations costlier than permanent bases

Study finds sending armor brigades to Europe costs \$70M more per year

By JOHN VANDIVER  
*Stars and Stripes*

STUTT GART, Germany — Rotating an Army tank brigade to Europe costs nearly \$70 million more per year than basing that unit permanently in either Germany or Poland, according to new research.

The findings, contained in an Atlantic Council report, come as debate about the future shape of the U.S. mission in Europe is likely to intensify in President-elect Donald Trump's new term.

At the end of his first tenure, Trump sought to move 12,000 troops out of Germany, including the 2nd Cavalry Regiment in Vilseck, and send a large portion of them back to the United States.

Pentagon officials, with a track record of favoring the flexibility and perceived efficiencies of a rotational force model, argued at the time that the loss of a combat brigade in Europe could be offset by boosting rotations to the Continent.

However, an analysis of several years' worth of Army data comparing the costs of rotating armored brigades to Europe versus basing them there shows large savings would result from permanent overseas basing arrangements.

"Why isn't the United States pursuing it more aggressively? That remains unclear, but politics is probably partially to blame," wrote Army War College professor John Deni, who conducted the analysis for the Atlantic Council think tank.

The total price tag for an armored brigade's nine-month rotation is \$1.14 billion, roughly \$70 million more than the cost of stationing the same unit in Germany or Poland, his report said. The latest results corroborate research he did nearly a decade ago on the same issue.

Reasons for the higher cost include the expenses of moving troops and



TREVARES JOHNSON/U.S. Army

**M1 Abrams tanks from the 2nd Armored Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, arrive on Polish soil in August 2023. The total price tag for an armored brigade's nine-month rotation is \$1.14 billion.**



DAVIDE DALLA MASSARA/U.S. Army

**Army M2A3 Bradley Fighting Vehicles are offloaded from a cargo vessel at the port of Alexandroupolis, Greece, in March for a nine-month deployment.**

their gear from ports in the United States to Europe, along with predeployment training and sustainment requirements overseas.

Establishing a permanent presence also would reduce the family separations that come with long deployments and potentially send a stronger deterrence signal to Russia, Deni said.

In the aftermath of the Cold War, the U.S. military reduced its European footprint, which at one time was in the range of 300,000 troops.

Today, there are about 65,000 personnel based in Europe, with rotational forces augmenting the mission. Rotations increased following Russia's 2014 invasion of Ukraine and the start of the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war in February 2022.

The next Trump administration will

likely take numerous factors into consideration when it assesses the U.S. European Command mission.

One aspect that drove Trump's push to pull forces out of Germany at the tail end of his first term was political tension with Berlin and frustration over Germany's many years of paltry defense spending.

It's unclear whether Trump will be satisfied with Germany's recent defense spending increases, which have put the country in compliance with NATO's benchmark of dedicating at least 2% of gross domestic product toward defense.

Another factor that could come into play in weighing the options is the potential threat posed by China and the competition for military resources in the Pacific.

China hawks in Trump's orbit and Vice President-elect JD Vance have argued that European countries should shoulder much more of the security burden on the Continent so that the U.S. can focus on China.

Deni argues that from a fiscal perspective, there should be little debate over the savings that could be achieved by shifting to a permanent basing model in Europe for armored units.

One obstacle could be resistance from politicians in states where the rotational troops are based, who are loath "to see their district or state lose a military unit" because of the jobs associated with it, Deni said.

But there are other drawbacks to rotations that the Army could be overlooking, he said. While advocates for the rotational approach talk up the training benefits of brigades packing up for big moves back and forth across the Atlantic Ocean, the gains could be short-lived.

Just "as rotationally deployed US troops in Europe learn the rules of the road (literally) and gain an understanding of their operating environment, their nine-month rotation ends, and they redeploy home, with most of the knowledge gained and the networks developed lost," Deni said.

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## MILITARY

# Officer's creativity making mark on Japan

## Navy commander exercising artistic talents at Atsugi

BY JUAN KING  
*Stars and Stripes*

NAVAL AIR FACILITY ATSUGI, Japan — An officer on this installation southwest of Tokyo is exercising his artistic side with contributions to the Navy and local Japanese communities.

Cmdr. Daniel Ropp, assigned to Fleet Readiness Center Western Pacific, has been creating art throughout his 20-year military career, finding joy in the impact his work has on others.

"When I make art or any creative process, it is genuinely rewarding," said the native of York, Pa.

Ropp said he has never really settled on a particular subject, though he experiments with portraiture, reflective items and aviation-related art.

Now in his third tour at NAF Atsugi, Ropp was recognized on Dec. 3 by Ayase Mayor Yoshihiko Katsukawa for a painting he submitted for the Ayase BaseSide Festival.

That Halloween painting depicts two Japanese American children dressed in traditional American scary costumes with a glowing jack-o'-lantern under a full moon. It is scheduled to be on display at Ayase City Hall for the remainder of the year.

Although naturally talented, Ropp said he never attended art school but honed his skills in sketching and painting over the years. Throughout his Navy career, he has designed unit shirts and morale patches but has expanded his focus in recent years.

"I genuinely enjoy experimenting with all mediums and have experimented with drawing, acrylic and oil painting, large-scale spray paint murals, sculpture, and carving," he said.

Using spray paint, he has performed live speed painting at NAF Atsugi open-base events, supporting the Morale, Welfare and Recreation department.

Ropp said he is scheduled to complete a large mural early next year in nearby Yamato and has a goal of getting more public art into the community.



JEREMY STILLWAGNER/Stars and Stripes

**Navy Cmdr. Daniel Ropp, of Fleet Readiness Center Western Pacific, poses in front of a mural he painted for the library at Naval Air Facility Atsugi, Japan.**



Daniel Ropp

**Ropp has been creating art throughout his 20-year military career, finding joy in the impact his work has on others.**

He said his artistic objectives are twofold.

"Sometimes I want to create something from my imagination that plays with different elements, and on some other pieces I genuinely want to create a piece to help build community and tell a story of that organization or group," he said.

After becoming more comfortable with public art exhibitions in 2021,

Ropp said he pushed his works out to social media. About three years ago, he established a dedicated Instagram page, @flysurrealart, and a webpage, www.flysurreal.com, to show off his creations.

Each piece requires significant time and effort, Ropp explained. Paintings like the one displayed at Ayase City Hall vary in complexity, depending on materials, size and detail.



JEREMY STILLWAGNER/Stars and Stripes

**This painting by Ropp will be on display at Ayase City Hall through the end of the year.**

**"When I make art or any creative process, it is genuinely rewarding."**

**Navy Cmdr. Daniel Ropp**

"For some complex oil paintings, it can take months because of the curing required," he wrote. "For some acrylic paintings, it can take about 12 to 24 work hours, and for live paintings, I strive to complete them between 4 to 7 hours so they can be completed in a single sitting."

A large-scale mural, like one he created for NAF Atsugi's library, could take months. It shows a compilation of children's story book characters, such as from the 1982 book, "The Big Friendly Giant," by Roald Dahl. Ropp used his personal leave time to complete that project.

"I wanted to put as many different elements and Easter eggs throughout the mural so that when people view it, they are always looking and discovering new parts of it," he said.

Ropp was deeply moved by the recognition he recently received from Ayase city.

"I was completely surprised, humbled and grateful," he said. "I am glad that something like art can be used to connect communities and find common ground in our humanity."

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## MILITARY

# Coast Guard blamed for Arctic cutter delays

Bipartisan criticism leveled at service as Russia, China increase activity

BY GARY WARNER  
*Stars and Stripes*

A House panel leveled bipartisan criticism at the Coast Guard for delays in building Polar Security cutters needed to offset the growing Russian and Chinese activity in the Arctic.

U.S. Rep. Carlos Gimenez, R-Fla., chair of the House Homeland Security Subcommittee on Transportation and Maritime Security, said he called the hearing in the final days of the current session of Congress to underline the urgency in the face of ramped-up joint military operations by Russia and China in the region.

“We are reviewing the progress — or lack thereof — of the Coast Guard’s Polar Security Cutter program,” Gimenez said.

Climate change has opened sea lanes in the polar region during the summer months, with Russia and China recently operating joint naval exercises around the Bering Sea near Alaska.

The Coast Guard has reported that Russia has 55 icebreakers, including seven heavy icebreakers capable of slicing through ice up to 2 meters in thickness.

Some of the icebreakers are nuclear-powered, allowing them to operate without refueling.

China has declared itself a “near-Arctic” nation and has fast-tracked icebreaker construction. It has four icebreakers, with a fifth due to launch in 2025. The government of President Xi Jinping has cut the construction time for new icebreakers to 30 months.

The Coast Guard operates just two icebreakers — the 48-year-old heavy icebreaker Polar Star, and the 27-year-old medium icebreaker Healy.

Congress approved \$125 million to purchase the only commercially available icebreaker, the 12-year-old Aiviq, which was painted in U.S. Coast Guard colors and intended to be homeported in Juneau, Alaska.

The move was a stopgap measure



RYAN GRAVES/U.S. Coast Guard

**The Coast Guard operates just two icebreakers, including the 48-year-old heavy icebreaker Polar Star.**



U.S. House of Representatives

**U.S. Rep. Carlos Gimenez, R-Fla., and U.S. Rep. Shri Thanedar, D-Mich., at a hearing of the House Homeland Security Committee’s Subcommittee on Transportation and Maritime Security on Dec. 18.**

while the Coast Guard attempted to catch up on its plan to build three new heavy icebreakers, called Polar Security Cutters, six years behind schedule.

“While the Coast Guard has thankfully awarded a contract to acquire a commercially available icebreaker, this is only a temporary fix,” Gimenez said.

U.S. Rep. Shri Thanedar, D-Mich., the ranking Democrat on the committee, pointed to a recent Congressional Budget Office report that showed the first Polar Security Cutters was unlikely to start service until 2030. The report put the price of the three-ship plan at \$5.1 billion — about 60% more than original estimates.

“There is something terribly wrong here,” he said. “Here we are in 2024, and the Coast Guard is only now starting work on the first new cutter.”

Coast Guard Vice Admiral Thomas Allan, deputy commandant for mission support, said he was not at the hearing to “make excuses.”

Allan was asked if he believed Russia and China have an advantage over the United States in the Arctic region because of their icebreaker fleets.

“Yes, I do,” Allan replied.

Allan said the U.S. had not built a heavy icebreaker in almost 50 years. Expertise in the design and construction of the ships has to be rebuilt. Just as several Navy programs for carriers, submarines, frigates and other ships are behind schedule and over budget,

the Coast Guard faces the same challenges of too many vessels vying for work at too few shipyards short of experienced workers.

“I am clear-eyed about the issues,” Allan said.

Gimenez said the delays were still extraordinary.

“It’s been six years since this program was authorized, and we still don’t have a final design,” he said. “It only took us nine years to get to the moon.”

To compensate for the lack of icebreakers, Allan said the Coast Guard plans to increase the number of helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft deployed to the region.

Allan said the Coast Guard needs its budget to grow from \$12 billion to \$20 billion and have up to nine icebreakers, including at least three capable of cutting through up to two meters of ice.

The number would place the U.S. behind Russia and China but would be capable of maintaining “sovereignty of our waters,” Allan said.

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MILITARY

# Active-duty troops eligible for health benefit

Many service members will be able to enroll in flexible spending accounts starting next year

By JONATHAN SNYDER  
*Stars and Stripes*

Many service members may enroll in a tax-advantaged flexible spending account starting next year to help pay medical expenses not covered by Tricare, a Department of Defense spokesman told Stars and Stripes.

“A Health Care Flexible Spending Account is an optional benefit that enables service members to set aside up to \$3,300 in pre-tax earnings to pay for health expenses such as co-pays and cost shares, vision, dental, and drug store items,” Joshua Wick wrote in a recent email.

Only active-component service members and Guard Reserve members on Title 10 orders are eligible to participate in the Health Care Flexible

Spending Account and Dependent Care Flexible Spending Account programs, according to fsafeds.gov website.

Reserve members not on Title 10 orders and U.S. Coast Guardsmen are not eligible for either program.

Uniformed service members may enroll during a special period March 3-31. Afterward, first-year service members may enroll during normal Federal Benefits Open Season that occurs mid-November to mid-December, Wick said.

One advocacy group is pleased that the department has extended flexible spending accounts to service members, but it has reservations.

For example, the accounts might justify increases to Tricare premiums,

Karen Ruedisueli, health affairs director for the Military Officers Association of America, said by phone Monday.

“Sometimes in the civilian sector the pre-tax savings that are realized through flexible spending accounts are used to justify health plan cost increases, and we would be adamantly opposed to that,” she said.

Wick recommends eligible service members calculate how much they spend on out-of-pocket health care such as co-payments, vision or dental care for themselves and family over the course of a year.

“Service members who use an HCFSA can save on taxes while paying for these costs since using an HCFSA can lower their tax liability, or how

much of their total earnings is subject to taxation,” he said.

If their calculations are off, service members may carry over up to \$660 of unused funds in their flexible savings accounts into the next year if they re-enroll during open season, he said.

“Service members can monitor the balance of their account and status of claims any time through the year using the FSAFEDS website or mobile app,” he said.

Don’t put more money in your flexible spending account than you think you’ll spend within a year, or risk losing anything above the carry over amount, according to healthcare.gov.

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## IG finds poor air quality at US base in Africa

By JOHN VANDIVER  
*Stars and Stripes*

U.S. Navy officials in charge of the military’s main operating base in Africa put troops at higher risk of exposure to toxic air by not heeding environmental safety requirements, a Defense Department probe found.

A whistleblower complaint alleging that command staff at Camp Lemonnier in Djibouti ignored ongoing hazardous air quality conditions prompted the investigation by the inspector general.

U.S. Naval Forces Europe and Africa did not identify actions to lessen the impact of poor air quality on deployed personnel, the IG said in a report released Nov. 20. The IG also said Navy officials overseeing the camp hadn’t sufficiently advised incoming service members and civilians of Djibouti’s poor air quality and the medical risks associated with it.

U.S. Africa Command and Navy officials said corrective actions are being taken.

The IG said the Navy’s lack of a plan meant that AFRICOM couldn’t determine whether air quality at Camp

Lemonnier, which is in the heart of an city with a history of burning trash, has worsened over the past six years.

“Such exposure can adversely impact the health of those on the ground and decrease readiness, causing the DoD to incur costs for veteran care that could be avoided with proper notification and mitigation procedures,” Inspector General Robert Storch said in a statement.

Toxic air exposure has been a longstanding health concern for U.S. troops deployed around the world. The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, where many service members were exposed to toxins incinerated in burn pits, put a spotlight on the various health issues veterans have faced.

In 2022, Congress passed a law that expanded health care and disability benefits for millions of veterans exposed to such toxins during their careers.

In the city of Djibouti, the capital of the country of the same name, the problem relates mainly to residential trash burning near Camp Lemonnier, where about 4,000 U.S. personnel are based.



CAMP LEMONNIER/Facebook

**Service members take the command fitness leader certification course on Camp Lemonnier, Djibouti, in November. Base officials are encouraging personnel to conduct non-essential activities indoors when air quality is poor.**

Between June and July, the IG did its own air assessment in the city and found that air quality was consistently well above the level that the World Health Organization identifies as safe for human health.

The base is encouraging personnel to go indoors for activities that aren’t essential to the mission when air quality is bad, Navy officials said.

AFRICOM said it will ensure that a wide range of reforms are implemented by spring of next year. The measures include staff requirements and timelines for annual environmental reviews at Camp Lemonnier and other deployed locations, AFRICOM said.

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MILITARY

# Judge nixes Confederate name

## Suit sought to add Mosby to fort's Ranger monument

By COREY DICKSTEIN  
*Stars and Stripes*

ATLANTA — A federal judge dismissed an Army Ranger foundation's lawsuit seeking the reinstatement of a prominent Confederate officer's name to the Ranger memorial at Fort Moore.



Mosby

U.S. District Judge Clay Land wrote he was unpersuaded by the National Ranger Memorial Foundation's arguments that the Defense Department overstepped its

authority in removing the name of Confederate Col. John S. Mosby from the Georgia post's monument.

The judge wrote the Pentagon acted appropriately and lawfully in removing Mosby's name under the 2020 law that established a method to remove items honoring the Confederacy and those who served it voluntarily from U.S. military installations.

"Congress ... has the authority to decide whether Mosby should be memorialized and honored on a United States military installation," Land wrote in the 24-page order issued just days after a Dec. 12 hearing in Columbus, Ga. "Congress has determined that he should not be, and the court finds that its determination was prop-



NATIONAL RANGER FOUNDATION/Facebook

**A lawsuit filed by an Army Ranger foundation seeking the reinstatement of a Confederate officer's name to the Ranger memorial at Fort Moore, Ga., was dismissed.**

erly implemented by the secretary of defense."

Mosby was an antebellum lawyer who opposed slavery and secession but ultimately volunteered for the Confederate army out of loyalty to his family and native state of Virginia, according to his post-Civil War writings.

Known as the "Gray Ghost," Mosby commanded a cavalry battalion known as Mosby's Rangers, which conducted daring raids on Union forces, often behind their lines. In 1992, he was inducted into the initial class of the Ranger Hall of Fame. He remains the only Confederate ever admitted into the group.

Last year, the National Ranger Memorial Fund, which oversees fundraising and upkeep of the memorial, sued the Defense Department and top officials, including Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, seeking to return Mosby's name to the monument. They argued the Naming Commission, a panel created by Congress to study and make recommendations on removing Confederate-tied items from the Defense Department, omitted Mosby's name on the Ranger memorial and in the Ranger Hall of Fame in its massive list of items for removal in the annex of its first of three official reports.

But the commission did specifically identify Mosby's name for removal from those items in the body of that report, which also recommended the changing of names for nine Army posts that previously were named for Confederate leaders, including Fort Moore, which was then known as Fort Benning for Confederate Brig. Gen. Henry Benning. Fort Moore is home to the Army's Ranger School, the 75th Ranger Regiment's headquarters, its 3rd Battalion and the annual Best Ranger Competition.

Officials with the National Ranger Memorial Foundation did not immediately respond to requests for comment about the lawsuit's dismissal. Foundation officials previously had vowed to continue their efforts to have Mosby's name restored to the monument and Ranger Hall of Fame no matter the lawsuit's outcome.

Jonathan Corley, a lawyer for the Ranger foundation, told Land on Dec. 12 that the judge should allow the suit to move forward to the evidence-gathering stage to determine whether the Naming Commission had intentionally omitted Mosby's name from the list at the end of its report.

Land posited the omission was likely a "clerical error," and wrote in his order that the foundation's argument drew an "absurd conclusion" that the Naming Commission's report meant anything other than to remove Mosby's name from the monument.

The law "does not specify what form that list should take and does not mandate that it must be an itemized appendix or inventory," the judge wrote.

## Medal of Honor's early recipients are now eligible for VA markers

By LINDA F. HERSEY  
*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — Richard Hamilton received the Medal of Honor for a daring mission to ambush the CSS Abermarle, a Confederate ironclad that was ramming Union gunboats in the waterways of North Carolina in 1864.

But it was not until 2024, more than 143 years after Hamilton's death, that the Civil War veteran was commemorated with a marker recognizing his Medal of Honor at his gravesite in Camden, N.J.

"It should go without saying that every Medal of Honor recipient's story of military service should be displayed on their headstone. It is the highest military award reserved for service members who've demonstrated extraordinary bravery in combat," said Rep. Mike Bost, R-Ill., chairman of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee.

Bost led passage in the House of the Mark Our Place Act, which authorizes the "secretary of Veterans Affairs to furnish or replace a headstone, marker or medallion for the grave of an eligible Medal of Honor recipient regardless of the recipient's dates of service in the armed forces, and for other purposes."

Signed into law Nov. 24, the legislation overturned restrictions that kept the VA from providing the recognition at older gravesites out of concern for preserving their historic value, according to congressional documents.

Prior law had limited the "special markers for deceased Medal of Honor recipients who served on or after April 16, 1917, to help protect antique headstones and preserve the vista of historic cemeteries," according to a report submitted to the House Veterans' Affairs Committee in 2016 supporting the restriction.

The VA has two pending requests for providing the markers at cemeteries with passage of the legislation. The agency declined to identify the burial grounds.

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Finding a Home / Getting Your Kids Adjusted / Activities and Events / Personal Enrichment Opportunities

Stars and Stripes’ newest PCS guide is a valuable resource for service members and their families as they transition to their new duty station in the Washington, D.C. area.

The guide includes helpful information such as:

- Finding a home
- Transportation options and Metro system map
- Breaking down the cost of living
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