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OKINAWA MAY Bulletin

THE REVIEW OF A PLACE REN+



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Issue 17 >> May 14, 2025

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VOICE PAPER
features Okinawa's
local events, off-base
locations, and U.S.
military activity on the
island and across the
Asia-Pacific region.

Duty on the island

U.S. Marines fly out of Kadena



(U.S. Marine Corps photo by Cpl. Chloe Johnson)

U.S. Marine Corps Lance Cpl. Austin Gardner, left, a fixed-wing aircraft mechanic signals to Capt. Daniel Park, a pilot, both with Marine Fighter Attack Squadron (VMFA) 214, Marine Aircraft Group 12, 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, before takeoff from Kadena Air Base, April 4. VMFA-214, an F-35B squadron from Marine Corps Air Station Arizona, deployed to augment MAG-12, 1st MAW under the Unit Deployment Program, which provides U.S.-based units with operational experience in the Indo-Pacific. VMFA-214 conducted flight operations out of Kadena Air Base to enhance combat readiness and showcase sustained aerial superiority.

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U.S. and Japan Joint Law Enforcement Patrol



(U.S. Marine Corps photo by Staff Sgt. Maximiliano Rosas)

U.S. Marine Corps Col. David M. Banning, center, assistant chief of staff G-3, Marine Corps Installations Pacific speaks with Japanese police officers after a joint law enforcement patrol in Okinawa City, on April 18. The Patrol reinforced bilateral cooperation and ensures the safety and security of both U.S. personnel and the local community.

Shikina family hosts U.S. service members at Ishigaki Memorial Ceremony 80th anniversary

U.S. Marines and Sailors pose for a photo with the Shikana family during the 80th Ishigaki Memorial Ceremony on Ishigaki, April 15. The memorial was held to honor the death of 3 naval aviators who died on the island during World War II and to promote peace and friendship.

Earth Day 2025



(U.S. Marine Corps photo by Cpl. Jesse Davis)

U.S. service members and local Japanese preschool students plant mangrove trees during an Earth Day cleanup and tree-planting event at Nature Mirai in Kin Town, April 25. Marine Corps Installations Pacific coordinated a week of Earth Day events to reinforce relationships between U.S. service members and the Okinawa community, and to preserve Okinawa's environment. The volunteers were from the Camp Hansen Single Marine Program, Hamada Preschool, and Namisato Preschool.

Ie Shima Lighthouse Memorial Service

U.S. Marine Corps Col. Mark Walker, left, commanding officer of Headquarters and Support Battalion, Marine Corps Installations Pacific, and Brig. Gen. Trevor Hall, commanding general of the 3rd Marine Expeditionary Brigade, bow during the Ie Shima Lighthouse Memorial Service on Ie Shima, April 21. The memorial service was held to commemorate the casualties of World War II, the Ie Shima lighthouse keeper, and his family.



(U.S. Marine Corps photo by Lance Cpl. Brody Robertson)

USMC WWII Veteran visits Okinawa and battle sites from WWII



(U.S. Marine Corps photo by Cpl. Jesse Davis)

Walter LaSota, right, a U.S. Marine Corps veteran of World War II, and his daughter Cynthia LaSota place flowers on the monument plaque on Sugar Loaf Hill, April 1. The two-time Purple Heart recipient LaSota returned to the island for the first time in 80 years with help from the Eagle Society, which brings WWII veterans back to their battle sites. LoSota visited multiple sites including Toguchi Beach, where he landed on the island, and Sugar Loaf Hill, where he was wounded twice. LaSota was a private first class with India Company, 22nd Marine Regiment, 6th Marine Division.



(U.S. Marine Corps photo by Sgt. Frank Webb)

MAY-JUNE bulletin

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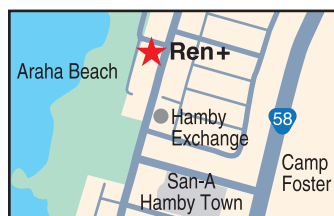


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421st EFS bolsters Kadena's fighter presence

Story by Staff Sgt. Dwane Young
18th Wing Public Affaris



A U.S. Air Force F-35A Lightning II pilot assigned to the 421st Expeditionary Fighter Squadron, Hill Air Force Base, Utah, poses for a picture after landing at Kadena Air Base, April 24.

(U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Arnet Tamayo)

KADENA AIR BASE – F-35A Lightning IIs assigned to the 421st Expeditionary Fighter Squadron, Hill Air Force Base, Utah, touched down at Kadena Air Base, April 24, completing the latest round of U.S. Air Force fighter deployments to the Pacific.

As the Keystone of the Pacific, Kadena is a pivotal hub for Agile Combat Employment, which allows squadrons like the 421st EFS to project combat power in concert with U.S. allies and partners.

This rotation pairs the 421st

A U.S. Air Force F-15E Strike Eagle assigned to the 336th Expeditionary Fighter Squadron lands at Kadena Air Base, April 6.

(U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Karina Lopez)

with additional F-35A's from the 355th Expeditionary Fighter Squadron, Eielson AFB, Alaska, and F-15Es from the 336th EFS, Seymour Johnson AFB along with 18th Wing Operations and Maintenance groups.

"The black widows are thrilled to be back and flying with our allies and partners here at Kadena," said Lt. Col. Bryan Mussler, 421st EFS commander. "Our unit values the distinctive training opportunities afforded by our deployment to the Indo-Pacific and is eager to

contribute to the mission.

The F-35A is the U.S. Air Force's latest fifth-generation fighter. It is an agile, versatile, high-performance, 9g capable multirole fighter that combines stealth, sensor fusion and unprecedented situational awareness.

These continuous rotations of aircraft at Kadena ensure the 18th Wing remains flexible and postured to deliver lethal and credible airpower to deter acts of aggression.

Throughout these deployments, the 18th Wing will continue to

comply with applicable bilateral agreements with the Government of Japan regarding noise abatement. All visiting aircrews are briefed on local noise abatement procedures and mission planners will continue to give due consideration to limit local impacts.

Modernizing capabilities in the Indo-Pacific theater remains a top priority. Kadena aircraft rotations exemplify the DoD's continued commitment to maintain a continuous fighter presence while awaiting the arrival of the F-15EX.



A U.S. Air Force F-35A Lightning II assigned to the 355th Expeditionary Fighter Squadron lands at Kadena Air Base, April 3.

(U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Melany Bermudez)

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Honoring Ancestors Tradition of Shimi in Okinawa

Story & Photos by Senior Airman Luis E. Rios Calderon
18th Wing Public Affaris

KADENA AIR BASE – Each year in Spring, Okinawan families observe Shimi, a deeply rooted cultural tradition centered around honoring their ancestors. During this time, families come together to clean ancestral tombs, offer food and gifts, and gather in front of these sacred spaces. This custom is one of the most significant and meaningful practices in Okinawan culture.

The tombs themselves are treated with profound respect, passed down through generations, and house the remains of relatives from the father's lineage, including fathers, spouses, grandparents, and other ancestors. The remains are placed in ceremonial urns within a spacious interior, reflecting the importance of honoring the family as a unit rather than focusing on individuals.

Once a year, families are

granted entry to Kadena to visit their ancestral tombs. During this five-hour period, they clean, make offerings, and pray. This time is solemn and celebratory as families reconnect with their heritage and pay their respects.

However, clearing a year's worth of overgrowth and jungle vegetation around the tombs can be physically demanding for elderly family members. In a gesture of community solidarity, several 18th Wing Airmen volunteered their time to assist the families.

U.S. Air Force Airman 1st Class Michael Haines, 18th Munitions Squadron precision guided munitions crew chief, said that families usually have to spend their limited time cleaning instead of honoring their loved ones. The 18th Wing Airmen volunteers take care of the challenging cleanup work in advance so they can focus

on paying their respects.

Many of these tombs, particularly those in the 18th MUNS area, date back to before 1945. Most belong to families from the nearby village of Kina in Yomitan, further emphasizing their historical and cultural significance.

"I've found it connecting, with these being ancestral sites that have been here for generations coming out here to help them out has felt rewarding," said U.S. Air Force Airman 1st Class Cadence Grooms, 18th MUNS combat plans and mobility technician. "They are kind enough to allow us to be stationed out here, and this is one of the ways we can help them out and give back to them."

Through efforts like these, Shimi continues to serve not only as a time of remembrance, but also as a bridge between generations, cultures, and communities.



U.S. Air Force Airmen assigned to the 18th Munitions Squadron, pose for a group photo after a tomb clean-up in preparation for Shimi at Kadena Air Base, April 9.



U.S. Air Force Airmen assigned to the 18th Munitions Squadron, clean up overgrown vegetation surrounding an Okinawan family's tomb in preparation for Shimi at Kadena Air Base, April 9.



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Mission Readiness in Focus During Senior DoD Health Visit to U.S. Naval Hospital Okinawa

Story & Photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class
Trey Fowler
U.S. Naval Hospital Okinawa

Susan Orsega, center, deputy assistant secretary of defense for health services policy and oversight, meets with U.S. Naval Hospital Okinawa Director Capt. Kathleen Cooperman, left of center, and hospital leadership during a visit to the facility April 9.



CAMP FOSTER – U.S. Naval Hospital (USNH) Okinawa hosted Susan Orsega, deputy assistant secretary of defense for health services policy and oversight, during a visit April 9 that focused on health care delivery and operational readiness across the Indo-Pacific.

After touring clinical areas and meeting with leadership, Orsega held a town hall with hospital staff. She outlined Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs Dr. Stephen Ferrara's priorities, which include directly engaging with troops to understand their unique challenges and find solutions to improve efficiency. She underscored the administration's commitment to ensuring a healthcare force ready to defend the nation and meet their dual missions of ensuring warfighter health and readiness and delivering health care excellence to all beneficiaries.

"We appreciated the opportunity to highlight both our capabilities and the unique challenges that come with serving in a forward-deployed environment," said Capt. Kathleen Cooperman, USNH Okinawa director. "It was

a valuable conversation about how we sustain readiness while continuing to deliver high-quality care to our beneficiaries and maintain the readiness of our warfighters and our medical force."

Earlier in the day, Orsega received a strategic overview from Marine Corps Installations Pacific leadership and attended a listening session about the pilot health insurance enhancement for Department of Defense civilian employees in Japan.

During her visit to the hospital, Orsega and USNH Okinawa leadership discussed regional mission demands, workforce challenges, and the hospital's role in supporting U.S. Indo-Pacific Command objectives. She also received a briefing on how the hospital operates as a regional referral hub and medical contingency platform for the broader theater.

Her tour included stops at the Armed Services Blood Bank Center, where she learned about blood collection and distribution capabilities in support of joint operations, and the sterile processing department, which is critical for the hospital's surgical readiness.

Throughout the visit, Orsega engaged directly with staff and asked questions about daily operations, resourcing, and the unique dynamics of delivering care in a joint, forward-deployed environment to gain a comprehensive understanding of the hospital's operational landscape and identify potential areas for support and future efficiencies.

"Serving on the front lines of the Indo-Pacific region, we are always balancing the needs of our patients with our responsibility to be ready for anything," said Cooperman. "I'm so proud of our team. They're incredibly dedicated and they make sure our warfighters and their families get excellent care while staying ready to support any mission that comes our way."

U.S. Naval Hospital Okinawa plays a vital role in delivering care to 47,000 service members, families, and other eligible beneficiaries in the western Pacific region. The hospital also serves as a key regional referral center and supports contingency and humanitarian assistance operations throughout the first island chain.

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KAIJU RAIN



U.S. Marines with the All-Domain Operations Center, III Marine Expeditionary Force Information Group, establish a forward operating center during Exercise Kaiju Rain 25 at Camp Courtney, April 15. The exercise is designed to enhance the unit's ability to conduct command and control, employ sensor capabilities, and integrate multi-domain operations in support of III MEF, joint forces, and allied and partner nations in the Indo-Pacific region.

(U.S. Marine Corps photo by Master Sgt. Ezekiel R. Kitandwe)



(U.S. Marine Corps photo by Cpl. Kira Ducato)

Staff Sgt. Daniel Torres and Staff Sgt. Maxwell Carlson place an Unmanned Underwater Vehicle on level ground during a UUV Recovery rehearsal for exercise Kaiju Rain on Kin Blue, April 17.



(U.S. Marine Corps photo by Sgt. William N. Wallace)

Lance Cpl. Dylan Diep, left, and Cpl. Jason Schubert, right, fuel a raw water pump to purify sea water in support of Exercise Kaiju Rain at Ie Shima, April 19. Water purification technicians enhance the self-sustainability of the Marines on exercise, limiting the need for resupplies.



Sgt. Brett White assembles an augmented parachute system in support of Exercise Kaiju Rain at Ie Shima, April 21.

(U.S. Marine Corps photo by Sgt. William N. Wallace)



(U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Arnet Tamayo)

U.S. service members, Department of Defense civilians and their families participate in the 12th Annual Memorial for the Bataan Death March at Kadena Air Base, April 19.

(Continued from page 7)

"Though he survived physically, he carried the emotional scars of war, struggling with post-traumatic stress disorder for much of his life."

It's here that I begin to realize the major difference between what my crew and I were about to indulge in by choice, and what those aforementioned prisoners of war had to endure against their will.

And as we all line up to begin the march (to the soundtrack of AC/DC, Ja-Rule, and The Lord of the Rings), a chilling thought makes its way into my over-caf-feinated brain.

Okinawa's placement in the Indo-Pacific area of responsibility makes it a prime strategic focal point, making Kadena the keystone provider of superior

airpower to the region.

It also makes it a target – this is our reality.

The Airmen, Soldiers, Sailors and Marines stationed in the region hold a responsibility to remember the hardship men like Elizabeth's grandfather endured. Not just because it connects us to a larger story of sacrifice and resilience, but because it could happen again.

It could happen to us.

During mile one, everyone rushes out, fueled by pride and endorphins. During miles 2-4, the pace steadies.

By mile five, it slows. By mile six it crawls. By mile seven, we're all limping to the finish line through shin splints, pinched spines and twisted ankles.

As the leader of my squadron's

physical fitness program, I hold a lot of pride in my ability to push through tough challenges. However, the March humbles me year after year.

Not because it's hard, but because it's 10,000-times easier than what those 70,000 POWs went through.

Like the rest of Team Kadena, my connection to the event and responsibility to our area of responsibility keeps me coming back every year.

"As we come together every year for this memorial, I'm reminded of the courage and sacrifice made by so many," Loeffler said. "It's a privilege to be part of something that allows us to pay tribute to their memory, and to ensure that the story of the Bataan Death March is never forgotten."

VERSES FROM THE HOLY QUR'AN

With The Name of The One True *G-D, The Merciful Benefactor, The Merciful Redeemer Al An'am (The Cattle)

(The Creator is the) Originator of the Heavens and Earth: How can HE have a son; when HE has no companion (wife)?

HE created everything, and HE has full knowledge of all things.

That is The One True G-D, your Lord-Creator! There is no god but HE, The Creator of everything; so worship HIM. HE is responsible for everything.

No vision can comprehend HIM, but HIS comprehension is over all vision. HE is above all comprehensions, yet is acquainted with everything.

"Now have come to you, from your Lord-Creator, understanding (to open your eyes): If any will see, It will be for (the good of) his own soul.

If any will be blind, it will be to his own (harm):

I am not (here) to watch over your actions"

Thus do **WE explain the Revelations by diverse (symbols) lest they say, "you have been taught (by others)." And that WE may make the logic clear to those with knowledge.

Follow what you are taught by Inspiration from your Lord-Creator: There is no god but HE: And turn away from those who join (false) gods with The One True G-D.

If it had been G-D's Plan, they would not have worshiped false gods; but WE did not make you a guardian over them, nor to be a manager of their affairs.

Do not disrespect those whom they worship beside The One True G-D; lest they out of hostility and ignorance disrespect G-D.

WE made attractive to every community of people, its own doings.

In the end (of their lives) they will return to their Lord-Creator. Then WE will then tell them the truth of everything they did (in life).

*G-D instead of God. God when spelt backwards is *dog*. This is not a proper spelling for a word, that is used for The All-Mighty Creator of the Heavens and Earth.

** WE, Ourselves, US as revealed in the Qur'an is a reference to the Angels who have been assigned by The Creator to control everything in HIS creation.



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Yahya Abdullah



Translation of the
Qur'an in Japanese
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4 Okinawa Rail Ecology Center



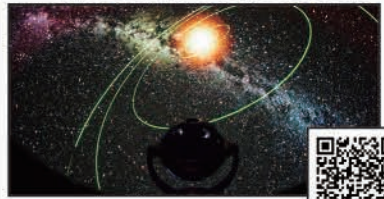
5 Nago Museum



6 Yuntanza Museum



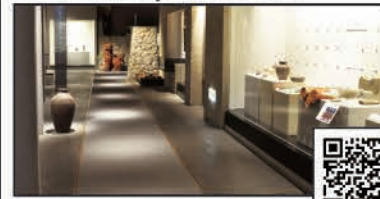
7 Oceanic Culture Museum Planetarium



8 The Former Japanese Navy Underground Headquarters



9 Naha City Tsuboya Pottery Museum



10 Naha City Museum of History



11 Itoman Tourism and Cultural Exchange Center



12 Onna Village Cultural & Information Center



15 Urasoe Art Museum



16 Okinawa Municipal Museum



17 Okinawa Prefectural Peace Memorial Museum



13 Okinawa Karate Kaikan



14 Okinawa Traditional Craft Center



Easter Fun Brings Communities Together



U.S. Army Garrison Okinawa welcomed local and American families for a morning of Easter traditions, strengthening bonds between the installation and the surrounding community, at Torii Station, April 26.

Story & Photo by Natalie Stanley
U.S. Army Garrison Okinawa

TORII STATION – The Easter Bunny hopped over to U.S. Army Garrison Okinawa on April 26 for the annual Easter egg hunt and story time event, welcoming children from Sobe Ward, the Wanpaku Children's Association, and the American community.

The event brought both local and American families together

to share in the time-honored tradition of Easter egg hunting and a chance to enjoy a morning of stories and fun.

Community events like this strengthen bonds between the Garrison and its host nation neighbors by fostering friendship, understanding, and a shared sense of community.

"This was a great opportunity to share a tradition with the local children, many of whom do not typically celebrate this holiday," said Yoshua Andersson, community relations specialist. "Fun events like an egg hunt are a wonderful icebreaker between our cultures and help strengthen our friendships."

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U.S. Military Support to Search and Rescue Efforts in Thailand Conclude

Members of a U.S. military Joint Engineer Response team assess damage and structural integrity after a 7.7 magnitude earthquake affected Thailand and its neighbor countries on March 28.



(Courtesy photo)

BANGKOK, Thailand — At the request of the Kingdom of Thailand, more than 100 U.S. Army, Marine Corps, Air Force and Navy servicemembers from U.S. Indo-Pacific Command deployed

to Thailand March 28 to April 4 to assist Thai military and first responders in search and rescue efforts after a 7.7 magnitude earthquake affected Thailand and its neighbor countries on March 28.

The U.S. military contingent included specialized search and rescue personnel from the U.S. Army and U.S. Air Force who possess extensive rescue expertise, two unmanned aircraft systems with thermal detection capability, and U.S. Army Engineers and U.S. Navy Seabees with expertise in structural security. These assets and personnel are invaluable to humanitarian aid and disaster response operations.

Units that supported rescue efforts include: U.S. Air Force Pararescuemen from the 31st Rescue Squadron, Kadena AB, Japan; Special Tactics Airmen and additional personnel from the 353rd Special Operations Wing, Kadena AB, Japan; U.S. Navy Seabees from Commander, Task Force - 75, U.S. 7th Fleet; special operations personnel from Special Operations Command - Pacific; U.S. Army engineers from the 25th Infantry

Division and the 130th Brigade, Schofield Barracks, Hawaii; and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers personnel.

Alongside Thai counterparts, Army and Air Force special operations and rescue personnel provide a wide array of capabilities critical to disaster response, including communications, logistics and medical expertise and civil-military engagement acumen. Military engineers are adept in wreckage and rubble stabilization techniques, which provide risk mitigation for personnel extraction teams to search for survivors.

USINDOPACOM personnel primarily supported rescue efforts at the site of the collapsed State Audit Office building in Bangkok. Servicemembers arrived in Thailand between the 28th and 30th of March to deliver critical aid and support to Thailand partners in the Indo-Pacific and began to retrograde on April 4.

Consistent training and exercises with Allies and partners ensure USINDOPACOM forces are capable and ready to rapidly respond to disasters and humanitarian crises throughout the region.

Sterilization Course Hosted by U.S. Naval Hospital Okinawa Boosts Indo-Pacific Medical Readiness



Attendees of the first-ever Asia-Pacific High-Level Sterilization Course pose for a picture during a tour of U.S. Naval Hospital Okinawa, April 10.

(Courtesy photo)

Story by Isaac Savitz
U.S. Naval Hospital Okinawa

CAMP FOSTER — U.S. Naval Hospital (USNH) Okinawa hosted the first ever Asia-Pacific region High-Level Sterilization Course. Traditionally held only on the U.S. East Coast, this highly specialized training was delivered directly to forward-deployed medical professionals, eliminating barriers like funding constraints, time zone differences, and limited access to essential sterilization resources.

The course was a collaborative effort led by Cmdr. Catherine Soteris, USNH Okinawa's main operating room department head, with virtual coordination managed by Brittney Hernandez, who works in infection prevention at the hospital.

The initiative was also supported by Lt. Cmdr. Jared Lacamiento, Hospital Corpsman 1st Class Amos Asare, and Peter Tan, a regional representative from Steris, an organization that supports patient care with an emphasis on infection prevention. And international clinical educators

from Steris University Australia and the U.S., including Annie Watt of Australia and Steve Challinor of Singapore, also contributed to the training.

While attending an annual clinical education meeting in Bethesda, Maryland, Soteris inquired about bringing the training to Okinawa. Watt, senior manager for clinical education, Asia-Pacific, and head of environmental, social, and governance for Asia-Pacific, supported the idea, aiming for maximum participation from the region.

"If we can continue to educate here, overseas, just like they do in the U.S., it is value-added," said Watt, a registered nurse. "It's all about the best patient care."

Challinor, a registered nurse for over 25 years and a clinical education fellow for Steris in Singapore, agreed. "Education is the way forward," he said. "We need to learn and improve ourselves through better understanding."

Attendees earned up to 24

continuing education units (CEUs) and received hands-on training in sterilizer troubleshooting, high-level disinfection protocols, and alternative chemical options specific to the regional supply chain. The course also strengthened collaboration across Guam, Korea, mainland Japan, Japanese medical facilities, and tri-service partners, building a sterilization network throughout the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command area of responsibility.

This course represents a significant step toward supporting regional medical readiness and mission sustainment through localized education, expert collaboration, and tailored solutions.

U.S. Naval Hospital Okinawa plays a vital role in delivering care to 47,000 service members, families, and other eligible beneficiaries in the western Pacific region. The hospital also serves as a key regional referral center and supports contingency and humanitarian assistance operations throughout the first island chain.

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Nils Mockler, former U.S. Marine Corps private first class and a veteran of the Battle of Iwo Jima, pays respects to fallen comrades during the 80th Reunion of Honor ceremony at Iwo To, March 29.

(U.S. Marine Corps photo by Gunnery Sgt. Johnathan Wright)

The 80th Annual Reunion of Honor & 250 Years of the Marine Corps

Story by Lance Cpl. Jennifer Le and 2nd Lt. Taiyo Tatara
III Marine Expeditionary Force

IWO TO – Veterans, families, active-duty U.S. Marines and Sailors, Japan Self-Defense Force members, and U.S. and Japanese dignitaries gathered for the 80th Annual Reunion of Honor at Iwo To, Japan on March 29. The event, held on the year of the 250th anniversary of the United States Marine Corps, was a memorial to the selfless service, sacrifice, and valor exhibited during the Battle of Iwo Jima.

As the nation marks the 250th year since the founding of the Marine Corps, this year's Reunion of Honor was a milestone for the Marine Corps and a tribute to

those who fought in the Battle of Iwo Jima. The reunion brought together Marines and Japan Self-Defense Forces from all generations, ranging from those who served during World War II to those currently serving in active duty. Their stories were a living testament to the struggles experienced during the Battle of Iwo Jima.

The event began with a ceremony where U.S. service members and Japan Self-Defense Force members, veterans, and dignitaries spoke on the significance of the gathering. The crowd stood in solemn respect

as a color guard presented the flags of the United States and Japan. A moment of silence was observed, during which attendees reflected on the Marines and Japanese soldiers who lost their lives during the Battle of Iwo Jima.

"To the fallen American and Japanese - you are not forgotten. Your legacy is not just in the history books," said Gen. Eric M. Smith, 39th Commandant of the Marine Corps. "It lives in the friendship of our nations, in the strength of our alliance, and in the peace we are committed to preserving."

(Continued on page 27)

Beef Birria Tacos 2100 yen
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cheese, onions, coriander, lime,
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Restaurant in American village for lovers of Tex-Mex cuisine

A hot spot in Mihama American Village, this bright and charming restaurant is adorned with papel picado on the ceiling and features a striking mural on the terrace, evoking the feel of a lively Mexican animated film. Savor meat dishes infused with authentic Mexican spices, along with tender and juicy birria tacos, perfectly paired with craft beer or tequila.

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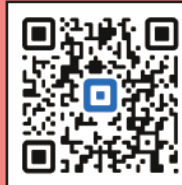


A-Side Smash Burger Hits the Wow!-spot

A-Side Smash Burger, located in Ichibankan Mall on Gate 2 Street, offers a top-tier smash burger experience with a nod to American diners and an Amsterdam-inspired twist with their ultra-thin, 100% beef patties, smashed on a hot griddle to create an irresistibly crispy crust while remaining juicy inside. These burgers stand out for both quality and flavor, delivering a unique take on the globally trending smash burger. The house-made

buns, incorporating mashed potatoes, are soft, slightly sweet, and perfectly complement the savory patties.

Diners can customize their burgers from top to bottom with the Build-Your-Own option—adding patties, cheese, sauces, and premium toppings like bacon or roasted mushrooms.



ONLINE ORDER

Specialty Burgers are also available for those who prefer a curated experience. Each burger pairs excellently with their golden, crispy fries and creative dipping sauces like truffle parmesan. Fresh-cut fries are their other specialty, and they are particular about the variety of potatoes they use. The aim is to produce fries that are crispy outside and creamy inside, and which everyone raves about.

The shop promises to serve meals within 15 minutes of the order, but for those in a hurry for lunch, an online order in advance is recommended.

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(Continued from page 25)

The ceremony featured speeches by dignitaries, a water ceremony, and a wreath laying. The dignitaries spoke about the sacrifices made and the hardships endured during the battle, honoring the bravery of those who fought. During the water ceremony, Japanese dignitaries were given a ladle of water to pour onto the Battle of Iwo Jima memorial and bowed to show respect.

The ceremony concluded with performances of "Furusato" and "Amazing Grace" by the Japan Ground Self-Defense Force Central Band and the U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Pacific Band, respectively, followed by a rifle salute by the U.S. and Japanese color guards.

The day's events concluded with attendees participating in a guided tour of key historical sites, including the beaches where the battle unfolded and Mount Suribachi. The tour provided a deeper understanding of



(U.S. Marine Corps photo by Cpl. Chloe N. McAfee)

The Chargé d'Affaires, U.S. Embassy to Japan, Joseph M. Young, left, the U.S. Secretary of Defense, Secretary Pete Hegseth, middle, and the 39th Commandant of the Marine Corps, Gen. Eric M. Smith, right, pay their respects at the 80th Iwo Jima Reunion of Honor at Iwo Jima, March 29.

the battle's challenges.

The 80th Annual Reunion of Honor was not only a remembrance to the Battle of Iwo Jima but also a reflection of the future. The event reminded all who attended of the history and strength of the U.S.-Japan alliance.

"The U.S.-Japan Alliance shows those brave men of 1945 how yesterday's enemy has become today's friend. Our Alliance has been, and remains the cornerstone of freedom, prosperity, security, and

peace in the Indo-Pacific. And it will continue," said the Honorable Peter Hegseth, U.S. Secretary of Defense.

As the sun set on a day filled with reflection, remembrance, and pride, those present knew that the Marine Corps will continue to stand strong, just as it has for 250 years. And the spirit of the Marine Corps—one of unity, resilience and sacrifice—will remain an unbreakable bond for all who have served and those who will follow in their footsteps.



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Phoenix Corporation Donates One Million Yen to USO Okinawa

USO OKINAWA -

Nestled in the second largest city of Okinawa, stands Phoenix Park Hotel, a luxurious hotel part of the Phoenix Corporation. This gorgeous hotel seeks to be a place where United States service members and their families can relax and enjoy Okinawan culture through their extravagant accommodations. Recently, owner Hawari Habrawi, presented a generous USO Proud Supporter donation of ¥1,000,000 to USO Okinawa Area Director, J. Phil VanEtten.

“Serving in the military is difficult and is full of unexpected twists and turns that we know can be challenging for families. At Phoenix Corporation, we want to do our part to support U.S. service members and their families when executing overseas orders or a deployment,” Phoenix Corporation owner, Hawari Habrawi shares. “I currently have a son serving in the United States Air Force and due to his current orders, we are unable to see him and his family very much. Because we know how challenging active-duty military life can be, we at Phoenix Corporation want to support the USO and their mission. The USO mission seeks to strengthen the well-being of America’s service members and their families and we are thrilled join along to support service members and their families.”

With the knowledge that service members and their families are thousands of miles away from



(Courtesy photo)

their home and stateside family, Hawari and his team hopes that accommodations at Phoenix Park Hotel provides them an opportunity to experience and enjoy the local Okinawan culture. It’s location in the central part of Nago, provides an excellent opportunity to explore the northern part of the island all while enjoying the hospitality the luxurious hotel provides. The hotel’s property is surrounded by beautiful turquoise beaches, historical attractions, and delicious dining experiences.

Phoenix Corporation’s generous contribution to the USO Okinawa mission supports innovative and impactful programming for the U.S. military community during their time in Okinawa. Additionally, Phoenix Corporation’s substantial donation allows the footprint of USO Okinawa to step outside our military installations and to the various parts of the surrounding community.

“Our USO Okinawa mission continues to be

extremely vital to the military commands we support as well as our U.S. service members in Okinawa, and their families. Operating in post pandemic years has come with some challenges, one of those being fewer sponsors to USO Okinawa. When sponsors like Phoenix Corporation

make significant contributions to the USO, it means a great deal to us and how we deliver support to the commands in Okinawa, our service members, and their families,” said J. Phil VanEtten, USO Okinawa Area Director. “Sponsors like the Phoenix Corporation truly make a difference and helps us with our mission. The USO exists “for the people who serve” and the Phoenix Corporation helps us provide great center operations and programs to them.”

While executing overseas orders can be a challenging process, the Phoenix Park Hotel team seeks to ease the challenge by providing a gorgeous home away from home for U.S. service members and their families, particularly with their kind hospitality, breathtaking views, and easy reservation process.

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Map: American Village, To Kadena, To Naha, Camp Lester. **GADDOU** is located near the intersection of 58 and the main road.

LUNCH SET

Vitamin D

A Rock Star Among Micronutrients

Dr. Ceabert J. Griffith

In the past few decades, one of the most contentious debates in American medicine has been using nutritional/dietary supplementation to fill gaps in our nutrition profile. Conflicting scientific studies abound. Some research has shown that dietary supplements optimize health and prevent disease, while others show no benefit or even harm. This conflicting information leaves the public wondering if the average American should take daily dietary supplements or avoid them at all costs. Are vitamins, minerals, and other nutritional supplements essential for health? Are nutritional supplements a waste of money? Are they harmful?



There is no debate about the role of vitamins, minerals, and phytonutrients in overall health and wellness. In fact, every biochemical process in the human body requires vitamins, minerals, and phytonutrients. The question is how to obtain the daily requisite vitamins, minerals, and phytonutrients. Health surveys show that more than 50% of Americans are vitamin D deficient—by definition, a public health crisis—so what is the best way to fix this preventable problem?



The Role of Vitamin D

While the “to supplement or not to supplement” debate rages, vitamin D has emerged as the unequivocal “rock star” among micronutrients. This fat-soluble vitamin has been clearly linked to cardiovascular, immune, musculoskeletal, genitourinary, and brain health, and a long list of chronic diseases have been associated with its deficiency. For example, with an upsurge in the incidence of osteoporosis

(thinning of the bones), vitamin D has materialized as a crucial player in the formation of bone. This vitamin helps regulate the blood levels of calcium and phosphorous, essential elements in building strong bones and healthy teeth and gums. Vitamin D deficiency also results in progressive hearing loss, bone deformity (e.g., rickets and osteomalacia), and muscle pain. Besides a healthy lifestyle, vitamin D also helps augment the immune system, slows the progression of arthritis, and prevents breast, prostate, and colon cancers. Australian researchers found that vitamin D supplementation successfully mitigated depressive symptoms among people suffering from seasonal affective disorder or SAD—wintertime depression linked to a lack of exposure to sunlight.

How to Get Vitamin D

The American Dietetic Association (ADA) recommends that food should always be a person’s primary source of micronutrients (i.e., vitamins and minerals) and phytonutrients. Medical and nutrition experts unanimously agree with the ADA. However, the reality is that the standard American diet is woefully deficient in nutrients, and few Americans eat in a manner that provides them with the needed micronutrients exclusively from their diet. Hence the gaps in micronutrients in the daily food intake of most Americans. Therefore, dietary/nutritional supplements are the best alternative to a suboptimal food supply and unhealthy eating style.

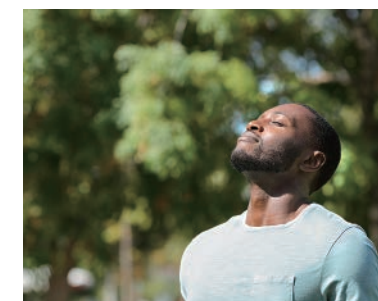
Vitamin D comes in several forms, the major ones being vitamin D2 or ergocalciferol and vitamin D3 or cholecalciferol.



The most reliable food sources of vitamin D are vitamin D-fortified milk, cereals, liver, egg yolk, and fatty fish (e.g., sardines, mackerel, salmon, and herring). The body can make its supply of vitamin D upon exposure to the ultraviolet B rays in sunlight (hence its nickname the “sunshine vitamin”). An accumulated 45 minutes per week in the midday sunlight (on your face, arms, or hands) supplies your body with

the “sunshine vitamin” it needs. However, darker-skinned people may need more sun exposure than lighter-skinned people. Sunscreen is an important strategy for reducing the risk of skin cancer, but sunscreen with an SPF 15 can reduce vitamin D production by up to 95%.

If you live in northern latitudes, ask your medical provider if you should take vitamin D



supplements when sunlight is scarce. As you age, your ability to make vitamin D declines, so check with your medical provider for his/her recommendation for additional nutritional supplements—especially if you do not get vitamin D from fortified foods, such as milk. Regarding vitamin D supplementation, there is no DV for vitamin D, but adults should consume at least 400 IU daily, and people over age 50 may need up to 800 IU daily. Because vitamin D is fat-soluble, you should take it after a high-fat meal.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Dr. Ceabert J. Griffith is trained in public health and family medicine and is an Adjunct Health Sciences professor at Touro University Worldwide. He is based in Okinawa and is the author of the recently released book *“11 Power Habits of Wellness.”* and co-author of *“11 Power Habits to Defeat High Blood Pressure.”* Both books are sold on Amazon.com.

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NEWSPRINT



(U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Emma Anderson)

80th Anniversary of the Marukoyama Memorial Ceremony



(U.S. Marine Corps photo by Sgt. Randall Whiteman)

U.S. Marine Corps Maj. Matthew Forshee, left, the executive officer of Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron, Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, reads a message from the Commander of U.S. Naval Forces Japan while Takayuki Takeda, a master labor contractor with Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron, MCAS Iwakuni, translates it to the members of the Meitoku District Association during the 80th anniversary of the Marukoyama Memorial Ceremony in Kure City, Hiroshima, April. 3. The Marukoyama Memorial Ceremony is held every year in Kure during cherry blossom season to honor the crew members of the U.S. Navy TBM-3 Avenger, Torpedo Squadron 6, who died in Kure City, Hiroshima, on July 24, 1945.

CFAS Hosts Sasebo Fleet Friendship Day



(U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Raquell Williams)

Sasebo community members tour the forward-deployed amphibious assault ship USS America (LHA 6) during the Sasebo Fleet Friendship Day open-base event at Commander, Fleet Activities Sasebo (CFAS) April 5. CFAS opened its main base complex to the public to celebrate the friendship and partnership between the U.S. Navy, Japan Self-Defense Force, and the local Japanese community.

B-1B Lancers arrive at Japan for BTF 25-2 Deployment

A B-1B Lancer assigned to Dyess Air Force Base, Texas, lands at Misawa Air Base, during Bomber Task Force 25-2, April 18. Bomber missions provide opportunities to train and operate with allies and partners in joint and coalition exercises.

Yokota in Full Bloom



(U.S. Air Force photo by Yasuo Osakabe)

A U.S. Air Force C-130J Super Hercules aircraft assigned to the 36th Airlift Squadron flies over Yokota Air Base, during a training mission, April 8. The avenue opens for public viewing every spring in the base's annual Sakura Festival, a tradition dating back to 2012.

Spring Festival 2025 at Naval Air Facility Atsugi



(U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Henry Liu)

The U.S. Navy 7th Fleet Band performs for local visitors on Naval Air Facility (NAF) Atsugi during the 2025 Spring Festival held onboard the base, April 19. During this open base event, Sailors, JMSDF members, and both the NAF Atsugi and the local community outside the gate enjoyed aircraft static-displays, live music, food vendors, and a variety of performances all in celebration of the enduring partnership between the U.S. and Japan.

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May 5th: USO Kinser

May 7th: USO Hansen

For more details, please
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Memorial Day BBQ

Celebrate with USO Okinawa at the
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May 21st: USO Schwab

May 23rd: USO Futenma

May 29th: USO Hansen



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USO OKINAWA COFFEE CONNECTIONS



USO Coffee Connections
are gatherings happening
around the world to
connect military spouses
with new friends or
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Join USO Okinawa for
Coffee Connections at the
following locations:

May 16th: USO Kadena @10:00am

May 21st: USO Kinser @10:30am

May 28th: USO Futenma @10:00am



USO.org/CoffeeConnections

For more details, please
visit the Facebook page of
the respective center.

Military Spouse Appreciation Event: USO Foster "Breakfast at Fosters" May 9th

Happy BIRTHDAY!

Do you have a May birthday?
Celebrate with USO Okinawa
at the following locations:

May 5th: USO Schwab

May 8th: USO Hansen

May 22nd: USO Foster

May 26th: USO Kadena

For more details, please
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