



The Knox County Joint Veterans Council are looking for **volunteers!!!**

The Knox County Joint Veterans Council is located at the Knox County Veterans Service Office located at 105 E Chestnut St. Mount Vernon, Ohio. The post conducts regular meetings on the third Thursday of each month. The meeting time is 7:00 P.M. **Contact Carol Riley @**

[740-504-3264](tel:740-504-3264) if you are interested in volunteering. Thank you!



They stand guard silently, vigilantly through whatever Mother Nature dares throw at them. They do so with great pride to honor one of their own. And they do this without thought of payment. For them, honoring a fallen brother-in-arms is compensation enough.

For the families of the deceased soldier, they are the ever-watchful sentinels, and their selfless act is a much-appreciated tribute.

US Space Command fully operational four years after reinstatement

WASHINGTON — More than four years after being reinstated, U.S. Space Command is now fully operational.

The milestone, which the command announced Dec. 15, is essentially a recognition that SPACECOM meets the criteria to execute the full range of its mission to deliver a range of space capabilities to military users and combatant commanders. “Since its establishment in 2019, USSPACECOM has been singularly focused on delivering exquisite capability to the joint force to deter conflict, defend our vital interests, and, if necessary, defeat aggression,” Commander Gen. James Dickinson said in a statement. “Thanks to the disciplined initiative of our people and the support of our joint, combined and partnered team, I can confidently say we have reached full operational capability.”

The criteria for full operations includes things like demonstrating its ability to meet operational responsibilities, developing a skilled workforce and having the infrastructure and processes in place to support its work. The command achieved initial operations in 2021 and Dickinson has since said that meeting the requirements to be fully functioning required the organization to have a permanent headquarters. Checking that box has been a long, contentious process, however, involving multiple reviews from government watchdog agencies and debates between states vying to host the command — namely, Colorado and Alabama.

As he was leaving office in 2021, Trump announced Huntsville, Ala. as his choice to host the command’s headquarters. That decision was met with immediate pushback from Colorado lawmakers, who called the Air Force-led process “fundamentally flawed.” Rep. Doug Lamborn, R-Colo., requested a Government Accountability Office review of the decision and a DoD inspector general investigation. Both agencies concluded in 2022 that while the basing process lacked transparency and credibility, the Air Force followed the law when choosing Huntsville.

Meanwhile, the Defense Department initiated a new selection process. And despite the conclusions from GAO and the inspector general’s office, the Biden administration announced July 31 that Space Command would remain in Colorado Springs, reversing Trump’s decision. In turn, House Armed Services Chairman Mike Rogers, a Republican from Alabama, quickly launch a congressional investigation. He threatened to subpoena DoD officials for documentation of the Air Force’s selection process and called for additional reviews from GAO and the inspector general.

The Fiscal 2024 National Defense Authorization Act, which Congress passed this week, includes a provision that stalls funding to construct the Colorado Springs headquarters until those agencies conclude their reviews next July.

Lamborn praised Space Command’s full operational capability milestone in a Dec. 15 statement, calling it “the pinnacle” of years of hard work by DoD space leaders. “This designation conveys that USSPACECOM is now fully manned and operated by an adequately trained, equipped, and supported military force at Peterson Space Force Base in Colorado Springs, Colorado,” he said.

Last surviving Alaskan taken by Japan during WWII dies

ANCHORAGE, Alaska — Gregory Golodoff spent most of his years on a quiet Alaska island, living an ordinary life, managing a co-op store, fishing for crab and serving as the village council president. But Golodoff’s recent death at the age of 84 has reopened a chapter of American history and stirred up memories of a long-forgotten Japanese invasion that prompted the only World War II battle on North American soil. Golodoff was the last survivor among 41 residents imprisoned in Japan after Japanese troops captured remote Attu Island during World War II. He was 3 when the island was taken. He died Nov. 17 in Anchorage, his family said. His sister, Elizabeth “Liz” Golodoff Kudrin, the second-to-last surviving Attuan, died in February at 82. Three of their siblings died in captivity. “The eldest generation has passed away to the other side,” said Helena Schmitz, the great-granddaughter of the last Attu chief, who died in Japan along with his son.

Attu is a desolate, mountainous slab of tundra, about 20 miles (32 kilometers) wide by 35 miles (56 kilometers) long, and sits between the North Pacific Ocean and Bering Sea on the volcanic Ring of Fire. It’s the most westerly island in the Aleutian chain — closer to Russia than mainland Alaska — and was one of just a few U.S. territories, along with Guam, the Philippines and the nearby island of Kiska, taken by enemy forces during the war. The American effort to reclaim Attu in 1943 amid frigid rain, dense fog and hurricane-force winds became known as World War II’s “forgotten battle.” About 2,500 Japanese soldiers perished, many in hand-to-hand combat or by suicide; 28 survived. Roughly 550 U.S. soldiers died. Initially trained and equipped to fight in the North African desert, many suffered from frostbite and exposure due to inadequate gear. Even after the surviving captives were freed at the close of the war, they were not allowed to return to Attu because the U.S. military decided it would be too expensive to rebuild the community. Most were sent to the island of Atka, about 200 miles (322 kilometers) away. With the loss of their homeland, the Attuans’ language, Sakinam Tunuu, is now all but gone, spoken only by members of Schmitz’s immediate family. The distinctive basket-weaving style of the island is practiced by just three or four weavers, and not all are of Attuan descent. Schmitz runs a nonprofit named Atux Forever to revive the cultural heritage.

Much of what is known about the Alaska Natives’ time in Japan is chronicled in the book “Attu Boy,” written by Golodoff’s older brother, Nick, with assistance from his editor, Rachel Mason, a cultural anthropologist with the National Park Service in Anchorage. Mason knew the three siblings. Gregory and Liz had little memory of Attu or Japan, and neither liked to talk about it, she said. Nick Golodoff, who was 6 when he was captured, had a childlike innocence about his time as a prisoner, Mason noted. The cover of his book featured a photograph of him riding on the back of a Japanese soldier, both smiling. That experience was far from typical. Of the Attu residents interned in Japan, 22 died from malnutrition, starvation or tuberculosis. Schmitz’s great-grandfather, Mike Hodikoff, died with his son of food poisoning from eating rotten garbage while in Japanese captivity, the book noted.

Japanese soldiers landed on Attu Island on June 7, 1942, when residents were attending services at the Russian Orthodox church. Some ran for their rifles, but Hodikoff told them, “Do not shoot, maybe the Americans can save us yet,” according to the book. Instead, the village radio operator, Charles Foster Jones, was shot and killed before he could alert authorities, becoming the only U.S. civilian killed by the invading forces in North America, according to a tribute to Jones by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. The other residents — all Alaska Natives except for Jones’ wife, a white teacher from New Jersey named Etta Jones — were kept captive in their homes for three months before being told to pack up and bring what food they could for the journey to Japan. They first went to Kiska, another Alaska island; one Attu resident died on the way. Stuffed in the cargo hold of a ship, the others embarked on a two-week voyage to Sapporo, the largest city on Japan’s Hokkaido Island, where they were kept in four rooms in an abandoned dormitory. Only Etta Jones was separated from them and taken in a different boat to an internment facility in Yokohama, south of Tokyo.

One Japanese guard complained the Attuans ate better than the Japanese, but conditions worsened when the Alaskans ran out of the food they brought. The Golodoffs’ mother, Olean, and others were forced to work long hours in a clay mine. As their numbers dwindled, she also became the cook for the surviving POWs, though there was little to make. She was reduced to gathering orange peels off the street and cooking them on top of a heater, said George Kudrin, who married Olean’s daughter Liz in Atka after he returned from the Vietnam War. Greg Golodoff’s wife of 50 years, Pauline, said he never spoke with her about his experience in Japan or about being the last living resident of Attu.

Texas Guard's Operation Lone Star to continue beyond 2024 election

The Texas National Guard will continue its state-controlled mission to patrol the Texas-Mexico border through at least the end of 2024, according to a planning document obtained by Army Times.

The mission, known as Operation Lone Star, consists of thousands of Texas Guard members and state law enforcement officers. Texas officials say the troops and troopers aim to stem the flow of undocumented migrants and both drug and human smuggling along the state's 1,200-mile-long border with Mexico.

The internal document indicated that the mission is authorized to continue with its current manning levels and equipment through Dec. 31, 2024. The Texas Military Department did not provide a statement before this article's publication deadline.

Although Gov. Greg Abbott and other state leaders claim success, citing questionable arrest and drug seizure statistics, Operation Lone Star has cost the state billions of dollars. The mission's supporters claim such expenditure is necessary due to what they perceive as inaction from the Biden administration.

Other Republican-led states have contributed small numbers of Guardsmen to the mission for short, highly publicized stints, and former president Donald Trump held a campaign event last month in Edinburg, Texas, after serving Thanksgiving meals to Lone Star troops with Abbott.

When Texas officials dramatically expanded Operation Lone Star by thousands of Guardsmen in the fall of 2021, they largely did so through involuntary mobilizations. Once at the border, troops found difficult living conditions, pay problems and other hardships detailed in a series of investigative reports by Military Times and The Texas Tribune. After a series of high-profile firings, including the early retirement of the Texas National Guard's top general, those problems have slowly improved.

Other problems have persisted, exacerbated by the sometimes unclear lines between the Guard's federal and state operating authorities. At least four intelligence officers have received internal administrative discipline for their alleged violations of rules barring state-run spy operations, a Military Times and Texas Tribune investigation found.

Operation Lone Star has also led to numerous legal battles. A number of arrests (on trespassing charges authorized by agreements between the state and private landowners) have led to civil rights lawsuits. The Department of Justice successfully sued the state over a floating barrier it deployed in the Rio Grande, and the 5th Circuit is deliberating whether federal Border Patrol agents can remove razor wire placed by state-controlled National Guard troops.



Pictures of the Month



A Navy F/A-18 Super Hornet receives fuel from an Air Force KC-135 Stratotanker over the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility, Dec. 2, 2023.



A Navy MH-60S Sea Hawk helicopter heads to a logistical resupply during Stand-in Force Exercise at Camp Fuji, Japan, Dec. 4, 2023.