

Marine Corps Identifies Personnel Killed in AAV Mishap



Naval Air Crewman (Helicopter) 2nd Class Joseph Rivera, a search-and-rescue swimmer assigned to the amphibious assault ship USS Makin Island, looks out of an MH-60 Seahawk helicopter while conducting search-and-rescue following an amphibious assault vehicle mishap off the coast of Southern California on July 30. U.S. MARINE CORPS / Lance Cpl. Mackenzie Binion

MARINE CORPS BASE CAMP PENDLETON, Calif. – Officials with the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit, I Marine Expeditionary Force, have identified the one Marine who was killed and seven other Marines and one Sailor who are presumed dead after an amphibious assault vehicle mishap on July 30.

Lance Cpl. Guillermo S. Perez, 20, of New Braunfels, Texas, was pronounced dead at the scene before being transported by helicopter to Scripps Memorial Hospital in San Diego. He was a rifleman with Bravo Company, Battalion Landing Team 1/4, 15th MEU.

The seven Marines – all riflemen – and one Navy hospital corpsman were from Bravo Company, Battalion 1/4 of the 15th MEU. The presumed dead are:

- Pfc. Bryan J. Baltierra, 19, of Corona, California
- Lance Cpl. Marco A. Barranco, 21, of Montebello, California
- Pfc. Evan A. Bath, 19, of Oak Creek, Wisconsin
- Pfc. Jack Ryan Ostrovsky, 21, of Bend, Oregon
- Cpl. Wesley A. Rodd, 23, of Harris, Texas
- Lance Cpl. Chase D. Sweetwood, 19, of Portland, Oregon
- Cpl. Cesar A. Villanueva, 21, of Riverside, California

- Navy Hospitalman Christopher Gnem, 22, of Stockton, California

The injured were:

- A Marine rifleman with Bravo Company, BLT 1/4, 15th MEU. The Marine was transported from the scene to Scripps Memorial Hospital by helicopter and was in critical condition.
- A Marine assault amphibious vehicle crew member with Mechanized Company, BLT 1/4, 15th MEU. The Marine was transported from the scene to Scripps Memorial Hospital by helicopter and was in critical condition. He has since been upgraded to stable condition.

In total, 16 personnel were aboard the AAV when on July 30 around 5:45 p.m. they reported taking on water while conducting shore-to-ship waterborne operations training in the vicinity of San Clemente Island off the coast of Southern California. Five Marines were rescued and brought aboard the USS Somerset.

Defense Secretary Mark Esper issued the following statement: "A grateful nation and the Department of Defense grieves the tragic loss of the Marines and Sailor lost in the amphibious assault vehicle accident off the coast of San Clemente Island. Our prayers and condolences are with the family and friends of these brave young men. Their service, commitment and courage will always be remembered by the nation they served.

"While the incident remains under investigation, I want to assure our service members and their families that we are committed to gathering all the facts, understanding exactly how this incident occurred, and preventing similar tragedies in the future."

Okinawa COVID-19 Spread Slows as Marines Phase in More Aggressive Testing



Okinawa Prefectural Government representatives meet with Marine Corps Installations Pacific leadership and health professionals to discuss COVID-19 information at Camp Foster Naval Hospital. The parties present agreed to continue openly communicating and meeting regularly via teleconference to ensure proper protective measures are met. U.S. MARINE CORPS / Lance Cpl. Karis Mattingly

ARLINGTON, Va. – U.S. Marine Corps leaders on Okinawa have relaxed restrictions for some essential off-base activities as the spread of COVID-19 on the island has slowed and U.S. military headquarters in Japan ordered a more rigorous novel coronavirus testing policy for personnel arriving on the island.

On July 29, Okinawa-based Marine Corps Installations Pacific (MCIPAC) reported that no one affiliated with the Marines on the island – uniformed, family member, or civilian employee – had tested positive for COVID-19 in the previous 24 hours. “We are still testing some groups and will be testing close contacts before they can exit quarantine,” Maj. Kenneth Kunze, an MCIPAC spokesman, said in a July 29 statement e-mailed to *Seapower*.

“Leadership is confident that we have contained the outbreak and are working hard to continue to mitigate the spread as the number of cases within the civilian population continues to rise on Okinawa and service members and families continue to [permanent change of station] to the island.”

Also on July 29, U.S. Forces-Japan, a component of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command overseeing all U.S. defense issues in Japan, directed all Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) personnel to undergo COVID-19 exit tests prior to release from the 14-day restriction of movement (ROM) already required of all new arrivals, including military, civilians, families and contractors.

“Leadership is confident that we have contained the outbreak and are working hard to continue to mitigate the spread as the number of cases within the civilian population continues to rise on Okinawa and service members and families continue to PCS to the island.”

Maj. Kenneth Kunze, MCIPAC spokesman

Exit testing will be done between day 10 and 14 of the ROM requirement, and individuals must complete their full 14 days of isolation, regardless of the test result. Individuals testing positive will move from ROM into isolation. Component commanders were directed to develop and implement safety procedures for the new testing. Japanese officials in Okinawa and Tokyo have complained that the U.S. military was not doing enough to ensure all their arrivals from overseas were being tested.

On July 28, the Marines loosened some restrictions on off-base activities on Okinawa, which has been under stricter health protection rules than bases in Japan since July 11. Restrictions were eased on outdoor physical fitness activities and visiting off-base essential services like doctors, veterinarians, banks, grocery stores and gas stations. While personnel and their families may opt to use off-base schools and child-care centers, off-base liberty and recreation still are prohibited.

Navy and Marine Corps medical personnel, after “vigorous contact tracing and conducting more than 4,500 COVID-19 tests

in the past month,” have identified two clusters, III Marine Expeditionary Force said in a press release. Those clusters are at Camp Hansen and Marine Corps Air Station Futenma, both of which are on Okinawa. Most of these individuals have been in quarantine since July 18, some since July 12, III MEF said on a Facebook posting.

“The level of testing has decreased over the last few days as the large batch testing of entire groups and units on Camp Hansen and MCAS Futenma have [been] reduced,” Kunze said.

As of July 24, there were 189 cases of COVID-19 at U.S. military installations in Japan and outlying islands, according to U.S. Forces-Japan. They included 84 at Camp Hansen, the worst-hit, 78 at MCAS Futenma, and two at Kadena Air Base, a U.S. Air Force facility, all on Okinawa. Two other Marine Corps installations on Okinawa, Camps Courtney and Kinser, each reported one person testing positive.

MCAS Iwakuni and Naval Air Facility Atsugi in Japan both reported three cases each and Fleet Activities, Yokosuka, reported nine cases. The remaining cases were at Army and Air Force bases in Japan.

More Okinawa Marines, One in Australia Test Positive for COVID-19



Marine Lance Cpl. Aaron Santos conducts temperature checks on outbound traffic at Camp Courtney, Okinawa, Japan. In light of recent COVID-19 events there, Marines stationed on Okinawa

have taken additional precautions by conducting temperature checks at the entrance of gates and essential services. U.S. MARINE CORPS

ARLINGTON, Va. – The number of personnel testing positive for COVID-19 at U.S. Marine Corps bases on Okinawa has grown to 136, according to the provincial governor of the Japanese island.

Gov. Denny Tamaki told reporters in Tokyo that another 36 cases have been reported at Camp Hansen, one of the first two facilities reporting novel coronavirus-positive clusters on Okinawa, the Associated Press reported July 16.

Like many Okinawans, Tamaki has been critical of the large U.S. military presence there, citing increased noise, crime, and aircraft accidents. He flew to Tokyo to complain to Japanese Defense Minister Taro Kono that he was not getting enough information about the outbreaks among Marines on Okinawa and asked Kono to urge the U.S. military to be more cooperative.

In keeping with U.S. Defense Department policy, the Marine Corps itself will not disclose how many Marines and Sailors on Okinawa are infected, but they have been sharing that information with health officials in the Okinawa Provincial Government. A Marine official has said the numbers Tamaki has been giving to the news media have been accurate.

In addition to outbreaks at Camp Hansen and Marine Corps Air Station Futenma, which the Marine Corps has acknowledged, Tamaki said others included Camp Kinser and Camp McTureous. The Kinser and McTureous cases did not constitute additional outbreaks, the Marines maintained.



A member of Marine Rotational Force Darwin, in Australia's Northern Territory, takes a COVID-19 test. One Marine there also has tested positive for the novel coronavirus and is in isolation at a hospital there. MARINE ROTATIONAL FORCE DARWIN

via Facebook

The Camp McTureous case “was directly related to someone returning from the U.S. That person didn’t test positive until showing symptoms and being tested shortly after returning home. All residents of that home were isolated upon return and that was an isolated case,” Maj. Kenneth Kunze, a spokesperson for Marine Corps Installations Pacific (MCIPAC), said in a statement. Likewise, the other case “involved a resident of Camp Kinser, but that case was related to the Camp Hansen cluster and was not a new or different outbreak,” Kunze said.

On July 11, MCIPAC ordered an enhanced lockdown at all Marine installations across Okinawa. That included closing all nonessential facilities and limiting mess halls, exchanges, commissaries, base restaurants and food courts to take-out service. The new restrictions apply to all uniformed and civilian Marine personnel based on Okinawa.

Meanwhile, a member of the Marine Rotational Force Darwin, in Australia’s Northern Territory, has tested positive for COVID-19 as well.

The infected Marine arrived with the most recent wave of Marines on July 8. All the others received initial negative results, following a strict 14-day quarantine in barracks upon arrival in Australia, according to an announcement posted July 10 on the Rotational Force’s Facebook page.

The Marine is currently under strict isolation at Royal Darwin Hospital and the Northern Territory government is providing support. All those who may have interacted with the infected Marine have been identified and placed under quarantine for a minimum of 14-days and will receive additional testing.

Medical specialists will continue to monitor the health of all Marines. Should the condition of any become serious, they will be to Royal Darwin Hospital for follow on observation, testing and treatment, the announcement said.

The Marine Corps has been deploying Marines to northern Australia for an annual six-month rotation since 2012, but this year's deployment was postponed in March over concerns about possible COVID-19 exposure. The decision to resume in May came after Australia granted an exemption to its travel restrictions.

Bell Boeing Delivers First V-22 Osprey to Japan



A V-22 Osprey aircraft bound for the Japan Ground Self Defense Force based at Camp Kisarazu departs on July 10 from Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, Japan. The ferry flight from MCAS Iwakuni marked the delivery of the first V-22 to the Japan Self Defense Force. U.S. MARINE CORPS / Cpl. Lauren Brune
CAMP KISARAZU, Japan – Bell Boeing delivered the first V-22 Osprey to Camp Kisarazu in Japan on July 10, the company said in a release. The Japan Ground Self-Defense Force (JGSDF) is the first operator of the V-22 outside of the U.S. military.

“The delivery of the first Japanese V-22 is an important milestone and represents our strong partnership with the government of Japan,” said Shane Openshaw, Boeing vice president of Tiltrotor Programs and Bell Boeing deputy program director. “The Osprey’s ability to carry out the toughest missions in the most challenging operating environments will reshape what is possible for the Japan Ground Self Defense Force.”

The V-22 can conduct multiple missions not possible with traditional rotorcraft or fixed-wing aircraft, improving mission efficiency and reducing logistic costs. Japan’s V-22

has a unique configuration with a customer-specific communication system. The marinized design resists corrosion and reduces the cost of long-term maintenance. JGSDF service members have been training with U.S. Marines for the last month to gain aircraft proficiency before delivery of their first V-22.

“We have had the pleasure of working with the JGSDF state-side to produce, develop, train and maintain their initial fleet of aircraft,” said Marine Corps Col. Matthew Kelly, program manager for the V-22 Joint Program Office (PMA-275). “This arrival marks a key step in standing up its V-22 fleet, and more importantly, the continued collaboration between our nations.”

Japan joins the U.S. Marines, Navy and Air Force in operating the V-22. These aircraft support multiple missions, including the transportation of personnel, supplies, and equipment; humanitarian support and search and rescue missions; long-range personnel recovery. With more than 500,000 flight hours, the V-22 is one of the most in-demand platforms in military aviation, providing safe, survivable, combat-proven mission success only capable with the tiltrotor range, speed and versatility of the Osprey.

COVID-19 Breaks Out on Okinawa as About 90 Marines Test Positive



Marines carry a combat rubber raiding craft during a squad competition on Okinawa on July 7. COVID-19 has broken out

among about 90 Marines there, Marine commanders confirmed on July 13. U.S. MARINE CORPS / Sgt. Audrey M. C. Rampton
At least two U.S. Marine Corps bases on Okinawa are reporting clusters of COVID-19 infections, leading Marine leaders to reinstitute stringent protective measures on the Japanese island, home to numerous U.S. military installations.

“After months with no confirmed COVID-19 infections on Okinawa, this week the Marine Corps experienced two localized clusters of individuals who tested positive for the virus,” Okinawa-based Marine Corps Installations Pacific (MCIPAC) announced.

The installations where personnel tested positive were identified as Camp Hansen and Marine Corps Air Station Futenma, both on the southern part of the island. All personnel who tested positive for the novel coronavirus are in isolation, the announcement stated.

In keeping with Defense Department policy, the Marine Corps did not disclose how many Marines and Sailors were infected, but media outlets, quoting local officials, placed the number in the 90s.

On July 10, Marine Forces Japan – also known as III Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF) – reintroduced Health Protection Condition “Charlie” to limit the spread of the virus by further restricting off-base activities, including prohibiting personnel from using non-military public transportation, eating in off-base restaurants and going off base for nonessential services.

In response to the increased health protection directive, the next day MCIPAC ordered an enhanced lockdown at all Marine installations across Okinawa. This included closing all nonessential facilities. Dining will be take-out only at mess halls, exchanges, commissaries, base restaurants and food courts. Personnel will have to get permission from a Marine

colonel or a Navy commander for off-base activities. The new restrictions apply to all uniformed and civilian III MEF and MCIPAC personnel.

U.S. Air Force Brigadier Gen. Joel Carey, commander of the 18th Air Wing at Kadena Air Base, ordered the base to transition from Health Protection Condition Bravo back to the more rigorous Charlie, effective immediately. The U.S. COVID-19 cases have primarily been Marines assigned to MCAS Futenma and Camp Hansen, Carey said.

“Patients have been a mix of both travel-related and those with origins we’ve yet to be able to identify, indicating the potential of a re-emergence of community spread,” he said. COVID-19 may already be spreading. “We have confirmed the presence of COVID-19 aboard the air station,” Col. Lance Lewis, commander of Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, Japan, announced July 12 on the facility’s Facebook page. He added there was no risk to the base.

“COVID was brought here from overseas travelers. As we planned, the positive travelers were contained within their quarters, and our social distancing and strict adherence to [restriction on movement] worked.” The air base is still operating under HPCON Bravo and all liberty policies remain the same, Lewis said.

**Indonesia Cleared for
Possible Acquisition of**

MV-22s



An MV-22B Osprey conducts deck landing qualifications aboard the amphibious assault ship USS Bataan on June 28. The State Department has approved the sale of the MV-22 to Indonesia. U.S. MARINE CORPS / Cpl. Tanner Seims

ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. State Department has approved the possible sale of Bell-Boeing MV-22 Osprey tilt-rotor aircraft to the Indonesian government, the Defense Security Cooperation Agency said in a release.

If concluded, Indonesia would be the third nation to procure the MV-22, the others being the United States and Japan.

Indonesia requested eight Block C Ospreys as well as engines, various avionics, and machine guns, including spares. Also included in the deal, estimated to cost \$2 billion, is the Joint Mission Planning System, publications, repair for parts, aircraft ferry and tanker support, support and test equipment, and U.S. government and contractor engineering support.

“The proposed sale of aircraft and support will enhance Indonesia’s humanitarian and disaster relief capabilities and support amphibious operations,” the release said. “This sale will promote burden sharing and interoperability with U.S. Forces. Indonesia is not expected to have any difficulties absorbing these aircraft into its armed forces.”

The prime contractors for the Osprey are a joint venture of Bell Textron Inc. of Amarillo, Texas, and The Boeing Co. Of Ridley Park, Pennsylvania.

Marine Corps Activates Second F-35B Fleet Replacement Squadron



Lt. Col. Carlton A. Wilson and Sgt. Maj. Gary L. Weller assumed command of Marine Fighter Attack Training Squadron 502 during an activation and redesignation ceremony at Marine Corps Air Station Beaufort on June 26. U.S. Marine Corps/Lance Cpl. Nicholas Buss

ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Marine Corps has activated a second fleet replacement squadron to train aviators to fly its F-35B Lightning II strike fighters.

Marine Fighter Attack Training Squadron 502 (VMFAT-502) was activated on June 26 at Marine Corps Air Station Beaufort, South Carolina, and eventually will help carry the load of F-35B training as the Marines increase the number of F-35Bs in the Corps.

Beaufort also is the location of the first F-35B replacement training squadron, VMFAT-501. Sometime in the future, the VMFAT-502 will move to MCAS Miramar, California.

VMFAT-502 actually is a reactivation of Marine Attack Squadron 513 (VMA-513), an AV-8B Harrier II squadron that was deactivated in 2013. Upon reactivation, VMA-513 was redesignated VMFAT-502 the same day of the reactivation ceremony.

VMFAT-502 will be known as the “Nightmares,” carrying on the traditions of VMA-513. The squadron originally was activated in 1944 and in its various iterations over the years has seen combat in World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the Persian Gulf War, and Operation Enduring Freedom.

Lt. Col. Carlton A. Wilson is the first commanding officer of

Navy Orders 2 MQ-9 Reaper UAVs for Marine Corps



An MQ-9 Reaper sits on the flight line at Hurlburt Field, Florida, in 2014. U.S. AIR FORCE / Staff Sgt. John Bainter
ARLINGTON, Va. – The Naval Air Systems Command has ordered two MQ-9A Reaper unmanned aerial vehicles for the Marine Corps.

The Naval Air Systems Command ordered the two Reapers from General Atomics Aeronautical Systems Inc. (GA-ASI), of Poway, California, with a \$26.9 million firm-fixed-price contract, according to the June 22 Defense Department announcement. The contract also provides for one dual-control mobile ground-control station, one modular data center and one mobile ground-control station

The MQ-9 Reaper is a medium-altitude, long-endurance unmanned aerial vehicle used for surveillance and strike operations. The Reaper is a battle-proven development of the RQ-1 Predator, upgraded for longer endurance, a heavier payload, and the ability to launch heavier precision munitions in a benign aerial environment.

The Marine Corps selected the Reaper in 2018 to fill an urgent needs request for intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) in support of forward operations in Southwest Asia. GA-ASI has provided ISR services since September 2018 through contractor-owned/contractor-operated (COCO) Reapers and their teams to support Marine Corp forces in Afghanistan. Marine UAV squadrons (VMUs) have been learning

to operate the Reaper in preparation for the Corps' procurement of government-owned/government operated MQ-9s. On March 20, 2020, a Marine crew of VMU-1 controlled a COCO Reaper for the first time on an operational mission in support of forward-deployed ground forces.

The Marine Corps plans to begin operations with its own Reapers in 2021.

Last Carrier Deployment for Marine Corps Legacy F/A-18 Hornets Underway



An F/A-18C Hornet of VMFA-323 lands on the flight deck of the aircraft carrier USS Nimitz on May 7. U.S. Navy/Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Olivia Banmally Nichols
ARLINGTON, Va. – When the aircraft carrier USS Nimitz deployed last week for a major deployment in the Pacific Ocean, it was carrying a bit of history. On board as a unit of Carrier Air Wing 17 was Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 323 (VMFA-323), taking the F/A-18C Hornet on its last scheduled carrier deployment.

The “Death Rattlers” of VMFA-323 left with the Nimitz on June 8. The squadron is the only Marine squadron assigned to a carrier air wing, down from a peak of four VMFAs assigned a few years ago under the TACAIR Integration Concept. VMFA-314, the Corps' first F-35C squadron, is scheduled to deploy as a unit of a carrier air wing in 2022 as a resumption of the TACAIR Integration concept.

The last Navy legacy Hornet squadron to deploy on a carrier was Strike Fighter Squadron 34 (VFA 34), which returned home in April 2018 from a deployment with Carrier Air Wing 2 on board the USS Carl Vinson. VFA-34 transferred its last F/A-18C on Feb. 1, 2019, and has upgraded to the F/A-18E Super Hornet.

BAE to Install Infrared Countermeasures on Marine KC-130J Aircraft



A CH-53K King Stallion helicopter plugs into a drogue towed behind a KC-130J tanker during an aerial refueling test in April. Marine KC-130Js are getting an infrared countermeasures system. Lockheed Martin/Dane Wiedmann via U.S. Marine Corps ARLINGTON, Va. – The Marine Corps' KC-130J Super Hercules tanker/transport aircraft is getting an infrared countermeasures system at last.

The U.S. Navy's Naval Air Warfare Center Aircraft Division's Aircraft Prototyping Systems Division has awarded BAE Systems a prime position on a \$26.7 million task order to install, integrate and test the Large Aircraft Infrared Countermeasures (LAIRCM) system on KC-130Js.

The LAIRCM system, built by Northrop Grumman, is a tail-mounted pod with a turreted laser system that "improves aircraft capability and survivability by countering advanced infrared missile system threats," according to a BAE Systems release.

The LAIRCM uses laser beams to detect and disable the seekers

of incoming infrared-seeking missiles.

Until now, Marine Corps KC-130Js have operated in combat zones such as Afghanistan and Iraq but without a defensive countermeasures system. Some KC-130Js have operated in direct combat with the Harvest HAWK system, which includes Hellfire, Griffin and Viper Strike missiles for close air support missions.

David Nagy, director of flight solutions for BAE, told *Seapower* that the LAIRCM systems procured from Northrop Grumman will be provided by the government to BAE for installation on the aircraft. BAE will install the LAIRCM systems in up to 19 KC-130Js under the contract over the next five years, if all options are exercised.

The work will be performed in Crestview, Florida, in partnership with Vertex Aerospace Aircraft Integration and Sustainment Division. Under previous contracts, the BAE-Vertex team has installed LAIRCM systems on Air Force and foreign military aircraft,

“The BAE Systems turnkey solution provides program management, inventory control, engineering support, installation, and system testing of the DoN [Department of the Navy] LAIRCM upgrade,” the release said. “Aircraft maintenance and support activities will also be provided as required. This is the second task order awarded to BAE Systems under the Prototyping and Limited Production indefinite delivery indefinite quantity contract.”

“The program office looks forward to working with BAE Systems on the DoN LAIRCM installations,” said Navy Capt. Steven Nassau, program manager for Naval Air Systems Command’s PMA-207, as noted in the BAE Systems release.

“This competitive award will allow the Marine Corps to move from government depot installation to industry without a gap in services. It is a great reflection on the dedication of the

KC-130J Mission Systems Team and the contracts office. It also speaks to the flexibility of both the Navy and industry.”