

# STARS STRIPES<sup>®</sup>

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## 'A place I can trust'

Tsunami-battered day care center gets new life from military, volunteers

A child at the Hoikuen Aihara nursery school and day care center opens a package of donated pencils following a recent graduation ceremony at the school. The day care center has struggled in the aftermath of the March 11, 2011, earthquake and tsunami, but survived with tireless efforts from school employees and volunteers from around the world.

ERIK SLAVIN/Stars and Stripes

## JAPAN

# Support for day care comes as surprise

By ERIK SLAVIN  
Stars and Stripes

**ISHINOMAKI, Japan** — In 2011, the Great East Japan Earthquake cracked open the Hoikuen Aihara day care and nursery school. The ensuing tsunami, which rose as high as 65 feet in this small coastal city, battered it further.

The government wrote it off as another casualty in a city full of tragedy — 3,162 dead, 430 missing, 50,000 buildings damaged or destroyed.

Three years later, at the end of a one-lane road in a neighborhood of squat, vinyl-sided warehouses and empty dirt lots, Hoikuen Aihara endures.

The renovated building is compact, but the tidy, wood-fenced playground is spacious, and today it is dotted with plastic Easter eggs donated by U.S. military families. Inside, two 6-year-old girls are giving a graduation recital for their parents and teachers.

Although Hoikuen Aihara's future remains in question, its continued existence is testament to a broad coalition of local volunteers touched by its plight, as well as the emotional and material support of foreigners who had never even heard of Ishinomaki when they helped.

"I was going to give up and close the center," Kayomi Aihara, the center's director, told Stars and Stripes during a recent visit.

Aihara's home was destroyed by the disaster. Her grandfather became gravely ill.

As she reassembled her personal affairs as best she could, the parents of some of the 60 children the center once looked after began calling. The parents needed to get back to work right away.

And so, one month after the disaster, in a city that remained largely covered in mud and rubble, the day care reopened inside an apartment.

Later that year, Aihara received a call on her cellphone from an unfamiliar number. The caller said she lived on Yokosuka Naval Base, had seen the day care center's Facebook page and wanted to help.

Aihara thought it was a prank. Why, she wondered, would the U.S. military care about saving the day care center?

Masaki Sullivan, the Navy spouse who called, helped start Helping Hands for Tohoku, an unofficial volunteer group of military families that is now has hundreds of members stationed in Japan, the United States and elsewhere.

The group had adopted a temporary housing community in another disaster-stricken area and wanted to branch out. Soon after, basic supplies started arriving at the day care, along with letters and pictures from Americans.

Aihara marveled at how Sullivan anticipated exactly what the



PHOTOS BY ERIK SLAVIN/Stars and Stripes

**Above:** One of the Hoikuen Aihara nursery school's graduates, center, stands with classmates at the school and day care center. **Below:** Children at the Hoikuen Aihara nursery school and day care center pick out donated gifts following a recent graduation ceremony.

day care center needed. It made the difference between just getting by and giving the children something more.

"We are able to save the money that we would've otherwise been spending to buy supplies and use it for events, like a Christmas party," she said.

The day care center building's renovation finished in July 2011. Concerns that another tsunami could strike kept Aihara hesitant to move back, but her options were limited and the apartment grew stifling.

After talking with parents, she moved back in summer 2012. In doing so, Aihara made a financially crippling decision: She would not take more students than her teachers could easily evacuate. That meant no more than 20 students.

The next hammer blow came in December 2012. Ishinomaki declared the day care center's neighborhood a tsunami danger

zone, thereby restricting the area to industrial use only.

When Aihara went to city officials, she was met with apathy. While they have no plans to force the day care out, she said they told her the code violation would fix itself because the ruling would discourage anyone from bringing their children there.

Day care centers normally qualify to receive assistance from Ishinomaki, but Hoikuen Aihara does not.

It is considered an unregistered day care because it does not meet a list of government standards that regulate operating hours and other procedures. Aihara opened in 1995 in hopes of cutting the long waiting lists parents faced to enroll children in the city's registered day care centers. Many Japanese cities face similar shortages of day care space.

Despite the non-enforcement, the day care will have to move anyway, said Toshihiko Fujita, a leader of a local citizen group that supports Hoikuen Aihara. Within a few years, heavy construction on embankments and other tsunami safety measures will make the area too dusty and noisy for children.

"Just because the center is nonregistered, the city won't help as all," Fujita said. "The children are the future of Ishinomaki, but the city doesn't even have policies to help them."

Fujita described himself as a "walking zombie" for years after his parents died in the tsunami. He threw himself into volunteer work, but still felt empty.



In January, he heard about Hoikuen Aihara's plight. He now considers helping the day center "my life's work," he said.

The center plans to file for nonprofit status in July and hopes to gain approval by the end of the year, Fujita said, making it eligible for tax breaks and facilitating contributions.

They likely will need the financial help for a new home. The cost of land rose quickly as a result of the tsunami and new restrictions on building near the coast.

The current location deterred some parents from returning with their children, but others say Hoikuen Aihara's actions during the disaster gave them reason to return.

"I know it is a place I can trust," said Yuko Sato, whose daughter Ayane, 6, just graduated.

Flooding trapped Yuko Sato on the third floor of city hall for three days following the tsunami.

Tomohiro Sato, her husband, picked up Ayane from the day care shortly after the earthquake struck. The two of them ran as

quickly as they could to their home, about 2 miles away.

The tsunami followed them to the steps of their house and sloshed through the first floor.

They survived on a few snacks they bought at Disneyland Tokyo a few days before, which Tomohiro grabbed from the first floor of the tall fell.

Tomohiro and Ayane remained stuck on the second floor of their home for two nights.

"She didn't cry," Tomohiro said. "She said, 'Here, Daddy,' and offered a snack. I learned how strong children can be."

The Satos have since repaired their house. Soon, their daughter will go off to a new school. But the Satos said they will always appreciate the help that the children of Hoikuen Aihara received from so many people.

"I feel apologetic that many people from around the world are thinking about us and are supporting us," Tomohiro said. "But I am very thankful."

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SOURCE: ESRI

MCT

For more on the tsunami-battered day care, go to [stripes.com/godaycare](http://stripes.com/godaycare)



MILITARY

# Military seeks to curb alcohol abuse with outside help

By JON HARPER  
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Pentagon is targeting alcohol consumption in its battle to curb sexual assaults in the military.

Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel announced a department-wide review of the services' alcohol policies the same day that the Pentagon released its latest report on sexual assault within the ranks. The Defense Department revealed there were more than 5,000 reports of sexual assault by servicemembers in fiscal 2013, a 50 percent increase over the previous year.

More than two-thirds of the sexual assault reports involved alcohol use by either the victim, the assailant or both, according to the Pentagon.

Officials have said the actual number of sexual assaults is much higher because many troops are reluctant to report such attacks.

"[The alcohol policies] will be revised, where necessary, to address risks that alcohol poses to others, including the risk that alcohol is used as a weapon against victims in a predatory way," Hagel said during a news conference with reporters.

Maj. Gen. Jeffrey Snow, the director of DOD's Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office, said the services will share the findings of their reviews with Hagel, but wouldn't say what specific measures are being considered.

He did say the services will look outside the military for help in tackling the problem. Encouraging responsible sales practices, as well as training bartenders and other alcohol providers in communities around military installations, will be a key part of the effort, he told reporters.

Nate Galbreath, a senior adviser to SAPRO, said two state-level initiatives were "promising" models that DOD could follow. One is California's Responsible Beverage Service program, which aims to prevent bar and restaurant patrons from getting dangerously drunk.

## 2 state initiatives

"This is training providers to understand how people consume alcohol, what its effects are on the body and how to maybe serve people in a way that diminishes those impacts, those effects on the body so that they don't get intoxicated as quickly," Galbreath said.

Providing a food menu to someone who orders a drink and encouraging them to eat something to slow the absorption of

alcohol into the system is one method that is used, according to Galbreath.

"You [also] look at times associated with when you sell things. Do you really need to sell someone five fifths of bourbon at 2 in the morning? Probably not," he said.

Galbreath also pointed to Arizona's Safer Bars Alliance, which established practices that bar owners and staff can adopt to mitigate the risk of sexual assault in their establishments through interventions and other safety measures. Citing data obtained by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, he said communities that use those kinds of approaches have seen a decrease in violent crimes.

## Troops react

Soldiers interviewed at Kleber Kaserne, a small Army post in Kaiserslautern, Germany, were skeptical that additional policies limiting alcohol use would do anything to curb sexual assault. More needs to be done, they said, to encourage personal responsibility, because servicemembers will always find ways to get alcohol.

"I don't think there's much more that they can do," said Army Spc. Darius Lesane, 21, of Jacksonville, N.C. "When it comes down to alcohol consumption, it comes down to the particular person. You know, everybody in the military, we're all adults here. You should be able to have that self-control that comes with the responsibility of drinking alcohol.

"The government, they're going to keep trying to come up with more restrictions and more rules, but in the end it all just comes down to the individual person," he said.

"There ain't no way they can ban alcohol for soldiers," said Pvt. Lloyd Brown, of Casselberry, Fla. "Soldiers will always find a way to get alcohol, whether they go out and buy it or find someone else to buy it for them."

"Making the barracks dry or having pubs and bars stop serving after 2 (a.m.), that's not going to necessarily do anything," said Army Spc. Tequan McFarley, 30, of the Bronx, N.Y. "Who's to say that these guys won't find it somewhere else or go somewhere else and possibly get themselves



ILLUSTRATION BY BEV SCHILLING/Stars and Stripes

## Military efforts to limit alcohol sales

- Navy Exchange minimarts are required to limit alcohol products to no more than 10 percent of retail floor space and to stock single-use alcohol detection devices.
- The Navy and the Marine Corps exchanges stop selling alcohol at 10 p.m.
- Eighth Army leaders in Korea also stop alcohol sales at on-base shoppettes and liquor stores at 10 p.m. The amount of alcohol soldiers can keep in their barracks room is limited.
- Similar bans are in effect in Kaiserslautern, Grafenwoehr and Spangdahlem, Germany.

into more trouble in pursuit of that? It just comes down to being responsible."

Army Pfc. Vanessa Miranda, 21, of Eureka, Calif., said alcohol can be a problem for some individuals but doesn't know what the military can do to fix it.

"Some people have problems in their lives before they get drunk, so when they get drunk, they go out and they fight or they go out and get really slammered, and they get, like, taken over by other people. That's when things happen, I guess," she said.

Restricting alcohol sales after 2 a.m., like some bars in the States do, doesn't seem to her to be a good solution.

"That's not going to do anything," she said. "By 2 o'clock, everybody's drunk already."

## Restrictions

Overseas, the U.S. military has repeatedly taken steps to curb alcohol use, particularly in South

Korea and Japan.

In 2011, two rape cases within two weeks — both committed by soldiers who had been drinking — led U.S. Forces Korea commanders to place troops under an off-post nighttime curfew that remains in effect.

Military leaders in Japan enacted a similar curfew in 2012 after two sailors who had been drinking brutally raped an Okinawan woman.

In addition, servicemembers assigned to Japan are required to complete sexual assault prevention and response training within 12 months of their arrival or they are barred from off-base liberty altogether.

The U.S. also routinely sends military police patrols to bar districts outside bases to ensure troops aren't misbehaving. It's not uncommon to see uniformed personnel walking among people partying in the streets of Seoul or Tokyo. The same is true in Kaiserslautern, Germany, near

Ramstein Air Base.

Other steps include limiting alcohol sales on base.

The Navy announced new limits to alcohol sales last July as part of a package of initiatives aimed at preventing sexual assaults. Alcohol sales are now restricted to the hours between 6 a.m. and 10 p.m., and Navy Exchange mini-marts are required to limit alcohol products to no more than 10 percent of their retail floor space. Exchanges are also required under the rules to stock single-use alcohol detection devices.

The Marine Corps followed suit in September, restricting alcohol sales at exchanges to between 8 a.m. and 10 p.m. and picking up the 10 percent rule. Corps leaders also promised to limit alcohol promotion and marketing on bases.

Eighth Army leaders in Korea issued an order in November 2012 that stopped alcohol sales at on-base shoppettes and liquor stores at 10 p.m. and limited the amount of alcohol soldiers can keep in their barracks room.

The commander of the 86th Airlift Wing issued a similar ban in the Kaiserslautern Military Community, restricting alcohol sales between 1 and 6 a.m. at AAFES facilities.

Similar bans are also in effect elsewhere in Germany, including Grafenwoehr and Spangdahlem Air Base.

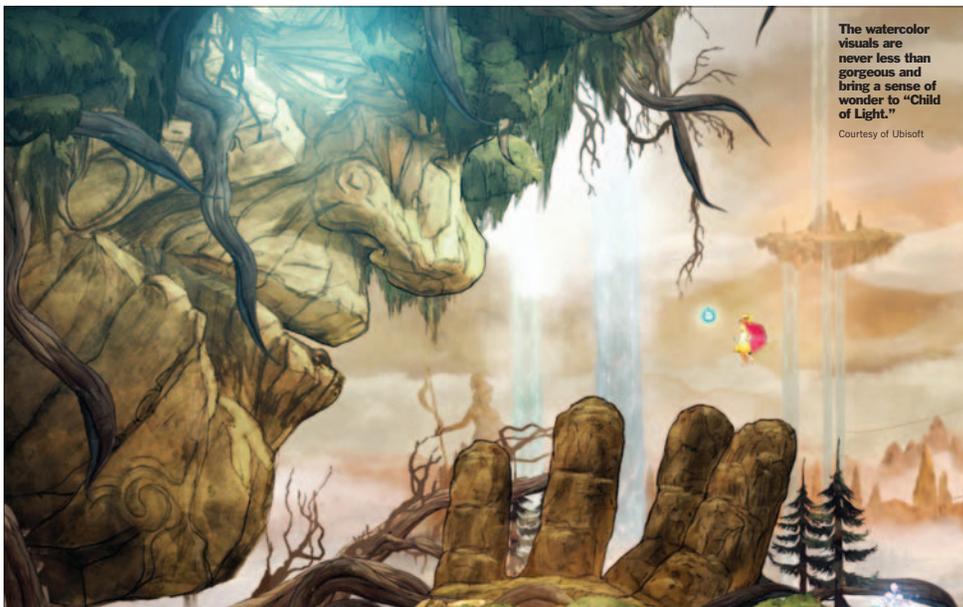
In Korea, officials also mandated that on-post clubs take steps to identify underage patrons, such as issuing wristbands and prohibiting the sale of pitchers of beer that could easily be distributed to underage drinkers.

Stars and Stripes reporters Steven Beardsley, Jennifer Svan, Erik Stavin and Ashley Rowland contributed to this report.  
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Army Spc. Darius Lesane  
Kleber Kaserne post in Kaiserslautern, Germany

**“The government, they’re going to keep trying to come up with more restrictions and more rules, but in the end it all comes down to the individual person.”**

## VIDEO GAMES



The watercolor visuals are never less than gorgeous and bring a sense of wonder to 'Child of Light.'

Courtesy of Ubisoft

# A FANTASTIC FAIRYTALE

With stunning visuals, soundtrack, 'Child of Light' satisfies gamers of all ages, levels

BY MICHAEL S. DARNELL  
Stars and Stripes

It's understandable to be a little hesitant of budget games.

Steam and mobile markets are flush with budget games that really are just cheap knock-offs of famous RPGs, free-to-play money traps and plain broken games. That's not to say inexpensive games can't be high-quality; groundbreaking games like "Braid" and "Spelunky" have proven that creative budget games can very easily end up on "Game of the Year" lists.

The most recent game that proves low-cost doesn't have to mean low-quality is a charming, \$15 role-playing game from Ubisoft Montreal called "Child of Light."

"Child of Light" is the fairytale of Aurora, a princess of Austria, who falls into an unnatural sleep. She awakes in the magical world of Lemuria, which is home to giant talking mice, morose jesters and ancient warrior clans. This strange world is brought to life with stunning watercolor visuals that make any given screenshot a veritable work of art.

The depth and detail of the painted world would make even a boring game set on its surface entertaining. I spent plenty of time exploring the nooks and crannies of Lemuria, not for the hidden potions and upgrades, but to see if I could catch a glimpse of some sun-drenched vista I had overlooked before.

The watercolors are not just a pretty background for a story, they're also used to help tell the story of Lemuria. The colors are muted and a bit darker, setting a somber tone that the plot matches perfectly. Aurora's story is not a happy one, and the game takes some fairly dark turns along the way. In that regard, it's more akin to the 2006 fantasy movie "Pan's Labyrinth" than anything put out by Disney.

A decidedly melancholic soundtrack lends to this unhappy atmosphere even more, with piano and flute compositions that set a relaxing, albeit depressing, tone. Noted French-Canadian singer-songwriter Cœur de Pirate composed the soundtrack, and her work has elevated it from background music to something to be sought out long after the game is turned off.

The game itself draws heavily from its fairytale setting. Without spoiling too much, Aurora is told by a mysterious woman that in order to awake from her real-life coma, she must bring together Lemuria's sun, moon and stars. This being a fairytale, she runs afoul of an evil queen who has her own designs for Lemuria's future.

Aurora's story is told entirely in

rhyme, which is a cute device that works at times. It's clear when the rhymes were forced, and sometimes this leads to some awkward phrasing that obscures what is being said. When it works, it lends to the atmosphere greatly; when it doesn't, it's a nuisance that had me itching for the skip button.

Lemuria is explorable in two dimensions, with an emphasis on vertically. Shortly after arriving, Aurora is given the ability to fly, which sets up some great level design that has you exploring up and down as much as left and right. The landscape is dotted with treasure



chests and puzzles waiting to be solved, none of which are exactly brain busters, but offer a fun diversion from time to time. There are also many monsters to be slain along the way, which is done with a turn-based combat system. The hook that makes this combat system work is the time gauge that dictates the flow of battle. Two of your party members will face down varying numbers of enemies. Each character gets a turn to cue an action, whether attacking, casting a spell or using a healing item. These actions can be interrupted by an enemy hitting you first and causing the action to be canceled.

It takes some getting used to, and at first the ease at which your party is able

Overall grade: **A+**

to cancel out an enemy's action, combined with the great amounts of healing items found everywhere, can make the game seem too easy. By the end of the game, though, the enemies are using the timing to their advantage, making every encounter equally dangerous.

Outside of combat, you'll pick up side quests, chase down bits of poetry floating on the wind and gather crystals that double as weapon and armor buffs. The side quests are pretty basic, but there are enough of them to keep the game from feeling rote. It's a basic role-playing game that offers enough simplicity for newcomers to the genre, but has enough meat to satisfy cantankerous old fans like myself.

"Child of Light" is a game that breaks all of the rules. It's inexpensive, but nothing about it feels cheap or denigrated because of the price. It's an artistic game that doesn't forget for a second that it's a game, and not a moving art installation. It's touching without being cloying and lengthy without becoming dull. If you can afford the \$15 price tag and have ever enjoyed a role-playing game in your life, this should be the next game in your wish list.

**Bottom Line:** A+ "Child of Light" is the early front-runner for 2014's game of the year.

**Platforms:** PC, PS4, Xbox One, PS3, Xbox 360 and Wii U

JAPAN



PHOTOS BY ERIC GUZMAN/Stars and Stripes

MOJA in the House in Shibuya-ku, Tokyo, Japan, offers a wide variety of soul food items. The restaurant accommodates 124 and is open every day from 11 a.m. to midnight.

# After Hours: Japan

By ERIC GUZMAN  
Stars and Stripes

Japanese cuisine is amazing enough in its own right, but what makes dining in Japan especially interesting is the ability of Japanese chefs to take the quirks and qualities of other cultures and turn them into a uniquely Japanese dish.

Earlier this year, McDonald's served up an American vintage burger that included "Chicago-style steak sauce" and mashed potatoes. Wendy's introduced the world to lobster burgers and caviar burgers in 2012. Even Krispy Kreme has gotten into the act, last month treating customers to doughnut ice cream sundaes.

But foodies looking to add a little more soul to their lives need look no further than MOJA in the House in Shibuya-ku.

MOJA offers a wide variety of items on its menu, from chili and nachos to red velvet cheesecake, but it's the house waffle chicken that steals the show.

The chicken, covered in a cornmeal-based fish fry-style batter, is fried perfectly, ending up crispy and slightly salty on the outside while the chicken breast inside remains moist, tender and packed with flavor. The chicken sits atop two savory waffles, which are almost a meal in their own right.

Bottles of Tabasco sauce and imported Canadian maple syrup are offered with every plate to help patrons tweak the balance of sweets, salts and spices to their liking. The drink menu is packed to



The red velvet cake is covered in berries, frosting and syrup and has a cheesecake center.

the brim with cocktails and craft beers, both foreign and domestic. Brooklyn Lager seems to be a restaurant favorite as it's included in many of their cocktails, namely the love hanger. A mix of lager, Jack Daniels whiskey and grenadine syrup served in a pint glass, the love hanger tastes a lot better than it sounds.

Also available are non-alcoholic juices and blended drinks, which are all cleverly named and changed out weekly. The parmyxovirus biology juice, a mix of fruits, vegetables and MOJA in the House's own homemade syrup, is very popular.

The 124 seats inside MOJA in the House are available for weddings, parties and dinner reservations. Booth seating is available,



The love hanger is a tasty mix of Brooklyn Lager, Jack Daniels whiskey and grenadine syrup.

along with couples' tables and long tables for larger parties.

The trendy, warmly lit decor is a welcome escape from the neon glow of nearby Shibuya Crossing, which is known as the world's busiest intersection in terms of both pedestrian traffic and flashing billboards.

Jazz music combines with irresistible aromas from the open kitchen to create a welcoming atmosphere. The Wi-Fi connection and power outlets at every table are an added convenience.

MOJA in the House, which is about a 15-minute walk from Shibuya Station, is a great place to visit to quell your soul food cravings.

guzman.eric@stripes.com



The house waffle chicken, MOJA in the House's most popular menu item, pairs a fried chicken breast with crispy, golden waffles.

## MOJA IN THE HOUSE

Address: COI Nishi-Aoyama Bldg. B1-2F, 1-Chome-11 Shibuya, Shibuya-ku, Tokyo. The nearest subway station is Shibuya Station, a five-minute walk from Tower Records. Prices: All meals are reason-

ably priced and start at \$10. English menu available upon request. Website: [cafecompany.co.jp/brands/moja](http://cafecompany.co.jp/brands/moja) (Japanese only) Phone: 03-6418-8144

— Eric Guzman

## QUICK TRIPS: JAPAN

# Calling all thrill-seekers

Record-breaking rides, fun for all can be found at Fuji-Q Highland

BY ERIC GUZMAN  
Stars and Stripes

**T**hrill-seeking families looking for a roller coaster fix during the warmer months need look no farther than Mount Fuji.

At the foot of Japan's most famous mountain sits Fuji-Q Highland, which provides just the right mix of drops, turns and spirals to get the adrenaline pumping.

While the four main roller coasters are for adults, there are kid-friendly alternatives available at the park's Thomas Town children's area, including smaller roller coasters, tower swings and a water park.

The main attractions at the park are, of course, the roller coasters — Fujiyama, Takabisha, Eejanaika and Dodonpa.

All four have set a world record at one point or another; Dodonpa is the fastest-accelerating roller coaster in the world, and Takabisha owns the record for steepest free fall. Eejanaika is one of

only seven "4th dimension" roller coasters, meaning the seats can rotate forward or backward 360 degrees in a controlled spin.

There is no shortage of other entertainment around Fuji-Q. Evangelion: World features 3-D shows based on popular Japanese anime. You can also spend time at the Super Scary Labyrinth of Fear, the Ultimate Fort or the Shining Flower ferris wheel.

Food and drink options within the park vary, and include everything from curry and rice to pizza. Canned beer is also available at the park.

Lines at Fuji-Q can sometimes exceed two hours for one ride on the weekends, so it is recommended to schedule visits during the week to avoid long waits. When planning a trip, it is also recommended to check the weather, as most of the larger coasters stop for high winds and rain.

All stations at Fuji-Q offer English menus and instructions, and there are employees throughout the park to assist guests, as needed.



NOVA AGENCY/Stars and Stripes



PHOTOS BY ERIC GUZMAN/Stars and Stripes

With a 121-degree drop angle, Takabisha at Fuji-Q Highland in Japan is the world's steepest roller coaster.



In addition to roller coasters, Fuji-Q Highland offers plenty of other attractions, including water rides.

## ON THE QT

### DIRECTIONS

Take the train to Fuji-Q Highland Station (about \$26 and 120 minutes from Shinjuku Station). A round-trip bus ticket costs \$75. Passes with discount rates are available through the Fuji Q website.

### ADDRESS

5-6-1 Shin-Nishihara, Fujiyoshida, Yamanashi Prefecture 403-0017, Japan

### COSTS

Visitors can pay a 1,400 yen (\$14) entrance fee and then buy individual tickets for each ride, or they can pay 5,200 yen (\$52), which grants them

access to the park and unlimited access to the rides.

### TIMES

Fuji-Q Highland is open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on weekdays and from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. on weekends. The park also takes occasional holidays, so check the website in advance.

### FOOD

Restaurants and snack shacks offer a variety of treats.

### INFORMATION

Website: [www.fujiq.jp/en/](http://www.fujiq.jp/en/);  
Phone: 0555-23-2111

— Eric Guzman



Above: Visitors to the park's gift shop can pick up souvenirs and refreshments.

Right: Three-dimensional re-enactments of scenes from "Rebuild of Evangelion," a Japanese animated film series and a reboot of the original "Neon Genesis Evangelion" anime TV series, can be seen at Evangelion: World.



## MILITARY

# Kamikaze farewell letters offered to United Nations

By MATTHEW M. BURKE  
AND HANA KUSUMOTO

Stars and Stripes

MINAMIKYUSHU, Japan — If a Japanese city has its way, the last letters home from World War II kamikaze pilots could be listed on a U.N. registry that seeks to recognize and preserve culturally important film, art and historical documents.

The letters, vetted by military censors, offer a striking glimpse into the minds of Imperial Japanese soldiers during the war. Some vow to kill American servicemen, while others express sadness at their impending death. “We had been thinking about a way to send out a message that there should be no wars to the world and how to eliminate wars,” said Takeshi Kawatoko, a retired Japanese Army colonel who now is an official at the Chiran Peace Museum for Kamikaze Pilots, the old kamikaze air base-turned-custodian of the letters.

“We learned about a way to plead [our message] to the world,” he said.

Minamikyushu, the city in southern Japan where the museum is located, submitted a proposal on Feb. 4, seeking recognition for 333 letters and farewell notes from their museum collection — items that can be directly correlated to a specific pilot.

Officials from the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo declined to comment and would not say whether the U.S. government would oppose such a move. Officials from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization said a listing on the Memory of the World Register does not honor any person or event, nor does it indicate approval or endorsement.

Inclusion in the registry serves to raise awareness for the need to preserve historical records and understand different belief systems and ideologies as well as the motivation behind certain actions. The decision for inscription is made by a panel of experts working within a range of criteria to determine authenticity, world significance and uniqueness or rarity, UNESCO officials said. A decision on the letters is expected by mid-2015.

“Its registers serve to highlight those items that have had an influence, either positive or negative, on the course of history,” said Joise Springer, the program specialist responsible for Memory of the World. “From this perspective, they contribute to UNESCO’s mandate of building peace in the minds of men and women.”

The registry includes a wide assort-



MATTHEW M. BURKE/Stars and Stripes

The city of Minamikyushu, Japan, has submitted 333 letters and farewell notes by Japan’s World War II kamikaze pilots for consideration in the United Nations Memory of the World Register.

ment of entries from “The Wizard of Oz” to the Magna Carta. It also includes other items that might be deemed controversial, from archives of human rights abuses to records from the Holocaust and slavery.

“None of these generated any discussion in the press when they were listed, so presumably these records were not considered controversial,” Springer said. “The listing of slavery records did not commemorate their inherent atrocities or condone the practice.”

Just under half of the 1,036 army kamikaze to die in the battle for Okinawa at the end of World War II flew from Chiran, museum officials said. The majority were teens or college age — called “the young boy pilots.”

Their story was uniquely tragic. The base in Chiran, a small village that has since been absorbed by Minamikyushu, was set up in December 1941 as a branch of the Tachiarai Military Pilot School, museum officials said. Aerial suicide attacks weren’t used until October 1944 at the Battle of Leyte, named for the typhoon that defeated Kublai Khan as he tried to invade Japan from the sea in 1281.

In March 1945 — with American forces bearing down on Okinawa and the Japanese mainland — the air base switched its focus to the kamikaze to “save” Japan’s mainland. The operation was over by July, with 439 dead from Chiran.

Before departing for their final mission, they left behind about 4,000 letters and other writings that are on display at the museum along with other items.

“Dear Mother,” wrote 2nd Lt. Haruo Ohbashi, who died at the age of 27 on

April 1, 1945. “How have you been? I feel that my 28 years of life was like a dream that you for your effort and love for me during these 28 years.

“So I will go today with bravery. As for my wife Ayako, please take care of her. We did not have a formal wedding ceremony yet. And we wanted to go home for once. However, we could not until now.”

Many pilots ate their last meals at the nearby Tomiya restaurant, owned and operated by Tomi Torihama, their “mother” away from home. It is widely accepted that the letters left at the air base were largely written under the thumb of military censors so their pilots might not reflect the true feelings of the pilots. Uncensored letters were left with Torihama.

Torihama fought for the pilots to be acknowledged, even as Japanese public opinion about the war reversed after it ended. Until her death, she maintained these were young men who were forced to die for something they didn’t fully believe in.

Those letters are not included in the package sent to the U.N., museum officials said. However, the proposal is supported by Torihama’s grandson, Akishisa, who runs the Hotaru-kan, or Firefly House, a museum that showcases items left behind with his grandmother.

“They only included letters at Chiran Peace Museum, which were censored,” said Akishisa, who hopes the recognition might bring visitors to his museum as well. “This was also the truth under the military administration, so I support the submission.”

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## A mother’s love can never be lost

I could write a lot about my mother: That her phone calls, letters and emails have provided me advice and encouragement on everything from middle-school research papers and prom dress decisions to missing my college-aged children. She was even present at the birth of all three of our babies, even the one born in Guam.

For love, a mom can endure 15 hours on a plane — one way, not including layovers, without complaint — to welcome a new grandchild. My mom did. She also traveled to visit us at nearly every assignment in our 20-plus-year military career, including Germany and Japan.

But there are more arduous journeys for love to endure, as well we know.

When I was 9 or 10, my mother wrote me a letter. I don’t remember when she gave it to me. I just remember having it when I was a little girl. It was short, only a few sentences, telling me she loved me, was proud of me and encouraged me to hold on to my faith.

For a long time I kept the letter in a secret compartment in the bottom of an old jewelry box. As a child, I had a habit of creating a hideout, under my bed or in a corner of the attic, depending on where we lived. The jewelry box, my favorite books and a flashlight were usually among the treasures found there.

I would take the letter out occasionally and — with the aid of the flashlight when necessary — read it and even shed tears over it, especially when one of us was angry. I knew that whatever punishment was meted out, whatever

words passed between us, Mom loved me. Her words on the paper remain clear.

When I was in high school, my parents’ divorce precipitated a move to another house. I’ve made nearly 20 moves in my life as a military child and wife, but none as painful as that one.

Hurt and angry, I refused to help pack up my life for a move I bitterly resented. The treasure box was neglected, perhaps left behind in the attic, perhaps thrown away.

So the treasures and the letter were gone — and forgotten — and after the dissolution of my family, the certainty that Mom’s decisions were made out of love for me was gone too. Our relationship was changed, tread-marked by the long procession of circumstances that follow a divorce like slow-moving cars follow a hearse.

Years went by before I knew exactly what I had lost.

In fact, I was a mother of three young children when one day — I can’t explain why — I suddenly remembered the jewelry box and its hidden contents. With bitter clarity, I also realized when it was lost and how. I couldn’t believe I had forgotten for so long. How I wished then that I could read the letter again.

Now I’m the mother of children in their teens and 20s. My mother has written me many letters in the years since that difficult chapter of my family’s history. She tells me often that she loves me, in words, deeds and transcendent flights.

I gave up the letter for lost, but rediscovered the certainty of my mother’s love for me. Our relationship has been restored — not instantly, nor easily — but still miraculously.

Last year I was looking through my old journals. Behind the very last page of the very oldest volume — my life as a 13-year-old — I found the letter, yellowed by years and creased from many readings. I don’t know how it got there or how the old pink diary kept its secret for so long. But it did.

Like the assurance of my mother’s love, the letter was not truly lost, only misplaced, waiting to be found, read and believed again.

Terri Barnes writes Spouse Calls weekly for Stars and Stripes. This column originally appeared May 9, 2010, and is excerpted here from the book “Spouse Calls: Messages From a Military Life” (Eva Resa Publishing, 2014).

### SPOUSE CALLS

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