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USS Iwo Jima Docks in Crown Bay for R&R, Recalling an Era When Navy Visits Energized St. Thomas

The USS Iwo Jima, carrying 3,700 personnel including 800 contractors, is docked at Crown Bay's Austin Monsanto Marine Terminal for three to four days of R&R, recalling the decades when such carriers boosted St. Thomas's economy.

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The USS Iwo Jima, a U.S. Navy amphibious assault ship, docked at the Austin Monsanto Marine Terminal in Crown Bay, St. Thomas on Friday, Oct. 3, 2025. By. DEAR PRODUCTIONS.

The USS Iwo Jima on Friday moored at the V.I. Port Authority's Austin "Babe" Monsanto Marine Terminal in Crown Bay, an arrival that has already drawn onlookers to the waterfront.

The amphibious assault vessel is carrying 3,700 people, including 800 contractors, and—according to individuals familiar with the stop—is here for Rest and Recuperation (R&R) over the next three to four days. The terminal, one of St. Thomas’s principal berths, sits within the Crown Bay complex on the island’s south side.

[\[Watch: USS Iwo Jima warship docks at Crown Bay in St. Thomas\]](#)

The ship’s presence is striking for its scale and its cargo: fighter jets, helicopters, and other military gear, along with Navy and Marine personnel. It also revives memories of a well-established pattern from decades past, when large U.S. Navy vessels regularly visited St. Thomas and provided a welcome lift to the local economy. Among those earlier ships were the USS Dwight D. Eisenhower—a Nimitz-class carrier—the USS Nimitz, and the USS Forrestal, names that became familiar in the harbor during busier years of naval port calls.



The USS Iwo Jima, a U.S. Navy amphibious assault ship, docked at the Austin Monsanto Marine Terminal in Crown Bay, St. Thomas, carrying 3,700 personnel including 800 contractors for a three- to four-day Rest and Recuperation visit. (Credit: V.I. CONSORTIUM)

Back then, these visits were more than brief stopovers. Wives, girlfriends, children, and other family members frequently flew to the U.S. Virgin Islands to reunite after long stretches at sea. They rented hotel rooms, filled popular restaurants and bars, and spread out across the island—from the Charlotte Amalie waterfront and spots like the Greenhouse to the beaches at Magens Bay—creating a noticeable surge in business across the hospitality sector. The Iwo Jima’s arrival brings that era to mind, and locals expect town to be lively tonight as service members and their families explore the island.

Whether this visit proves to be a one-off or the start of a renewed rhythm of naval calls remains to be seen. For now, the ship’s R&R stop offers a short window of respite for its complement and a timely boost for St. Thomas businesses, much like the established program of years past that tied major U.S. Navy port visits to economic activity on the island.

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