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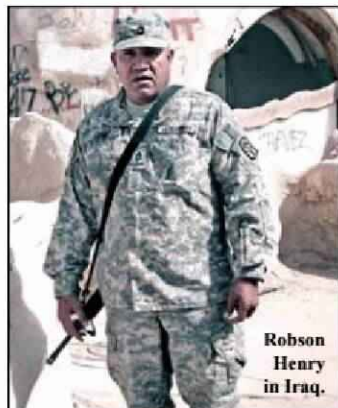
**Liam's fish comes true**  
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Robson Henry in Iraq.

## Farewell to veterans' advocate Robson Henry

GIFF JOHNSON

A 26-year veteran of the US Army and an ardent advocate for healthcare services for island veterans has died in Kosrae at the age of 66.

Kosraen Robson Henry spent nearly half his life in the US military and was part of the initial invasion of Iraq in 2003. He died of a heart attack on January 10.

A huge issue for Marshallese, Micro-

nesian and Palauan members of the US Armed Forces is that once they get out of the military and return home, there are no Veterans Administration health services available to them as there are in the US and other international locations for American veterans. In order to access medical care, island veterans must fly at their own expense to Honolulu or Guam where VA hospitals are located.

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## Robson fights for vets' benefits

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"Robson has been actively advocating to extend veteran benefits to COFA (Compact of Free Association) citizens since at least 2008-09, when I first met him," said filmmaker Nathan Fitch, who directed the award-winning *Island Soldier* film that tracked the lives of Kosraeans in the US Army — from Middle East war zones to their isolated and tranquil island home. Fitch said Robson has been active for the longest time advocating for services for veterans.

"Any progress on benefits for COFA veterans has to be part of Robson's legacy," said Fitch. "Robson was also critical in the making of *Island Soldier*, and among the first people I interviewed for the project."

Still, despite ongoing advocacy by veterans like Robson and RMI Foreign Minister Kalani Kaneko, services promised by US Congressional legislation have yet to materialize.

Earlier this month, RMI Ambassador to the US Charles Paul testified before the US House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, Subcommittee on Health to seek Congressional action to get the Veterans Administration to implement action for island veterans as mandated in recently passed legislation.

Robson was also one of the first Micronesians to join the US Army when he entered in October 13, 1987 — just a year after implementation of the first Compact of Free Association that allowed citizens of the freely associated states to join the US military.

He stayed in until October 2013, a total of 26 years, through which he was posted to locations around the world and saw tours of duty in various Middle East battle zones.

He is survived by his wife Kesia Henry, children Arcelia, Tulpe-Oleander, Lucy, Berkhart (BJ), and Robson Jr., and 14 grandchildren.

\*A similar piece appeared in the Palauan newspaper *Tia Belau*, titled "*Micronesia: Island U.S. Military Veterans Struggle to Get Healthcare*," published on February 2, 2026.