

ARMED FORCES DISPATCH



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 Serving active duty and retired military personnel, veterans and civil service employees

SIXTY-THIRD YEAR NO. 28
 DECEMBER 8, 2023



GAUNTLET MARCH Staff Sgt. Timothy Rush, Air Force Honor Guard Drill Team commander, prepares to walk through The Gauntlet during the Chicago Bulls halftime show Nov. 9, 2023. The Drill Team's routine features complex weapon exchanges, precise maneuvers and spinning weapon sequences. U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Nilsa Garcia

Cost to fully modernize 20,000 stateside Navy base buildings pegged at \$49 billion

by Alison Bath, Stars and Stripes

The Navy would have to spend more than \$49 billion to fully repair and upgrade roughly 20,000 buildings on its U.S. bases, according to a new federal report that found maintenance for housing and other facilities chronically underfunded.

Eliminating a \$17 billion maintenance backlog and making \$32 billion in improvements to the buildings would cost a little less than half of the money needed to replace them, the Congressional Budget Office said in a report released Nov. 30.

The report, based on a 2020 study, noted that the costs likely were already higher and would continue to grow.

But the CBO cast doubt on the Navy's ability to clear that maintenance backlog and further renovate and modernize its buildings to better support uses.

Because of budget pressures, the Defense Department has allowed the services to "cover less than the full amount estimated to maintain and improve" their buildings and other real property, the CBO said.

Funding for facilities in the Navy budget, excluding the Navy Reserve and Marine Corps, ranged from 70 percent to 85 percent of estimated needs between 2013 and 2022.

On average, the service spent \$2.3 billion annually between 2020 and 2022 on maintenance for its buildings and non-building structures, the report noted.

"That large and growing share of old buildings may have resulted from policies that prioritized funding for combat forces over funding for support areas such as infrastructure," the CBO said.

Worldwide, the Navy has more than 90,000 buildings covering about 693 million square feet of space.

The CBO studied 20,000 Navy buildings on 59 installations. It excluded those used by the reserve, the Marine Corps or other government departments.

Nearly half of the buildings studied had surpassed their intended useful life of 49 years, the CBO said.

Buildings used for family housing, utilities and ground improvements had higher amounts of deferred maintenance. Troop housing and food service, maintenance and production, and operation and training facilities each had more than \$2 billion in total deferred maintenance, according to the report.

Those used for medical services often needed roofing upgrades, electrical system repairs or other improvements to make them fully functional, the report stated.

Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam in Hawaii, Naval Base Kitsap-Bremerton in Washington state and Naval Base Coronado had deferred maintenance costs that were significantly higher than the \$280 million average for Navy bases, according to the report.

VIPERS AND HEAVY HAULERS RETURN HOME FROM INDO-PACIFIC DEPLOYMENT

by Maj. Natalie Batcheler
 MCAS MIRAMAR - The Marines and Sailors of Marine Light Attack Helicopter Squadron 169 and Marine Heavy

Helicopter Squadron 462, 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing, returned from deployments in support of the Unit Deployment Program and 31st Marine Expeditionary

Unit to their home stations at Camp Pendleton and MCAS Miramar, respectively, earlier this month.

The HMLA-169 "Vipers" and HMH-462 "Heavy Haulers" demonstrated adaptability and versatility by task-organizing their squadrons into elements for two different deployments each.

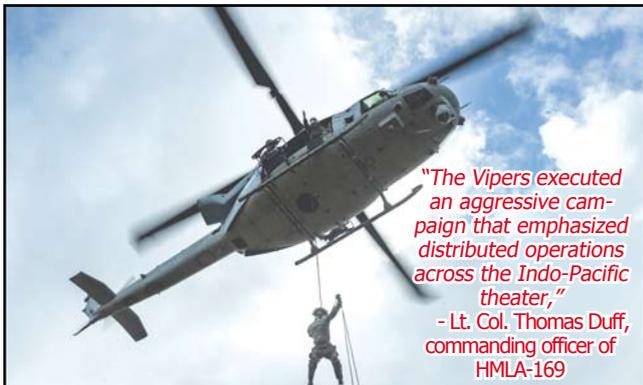
The Heavy Haulers also attached the remaining third of their squadron to Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron 163, yielding a reinforced assault support squadron, which supported a bilateral exercise and relief efforts in the Philippines this summer.

UDP enhances the United States' forward presence and

provides a consistent and rapid response capability. The program aims to maintain combat readiness, deter aggression, and strengthen alliances and partnerships in the Indo-Pacific region. UDP reinforces the Marine Corps' ability to maneuver to key maritime terrain rapidly, establish resilient air command and control, and generate aviation combat power from distributed locations.

The 31st MEU is the Marine Corps' only permanently forward-deployed MEU and is the nation's expeditionary force in readiness in the Indo-Pacific region.

The Vipers' UH-1Y Venom and AH-1Z Viper aircraft and the Heavy Haulers' CH-53E see **Marines, page 12**



"The Vipers executed an aggressive campaign that emphasized distributed operations across the Indo-Pacific theater,"
 - Lt. Col. Thomas Duff, commanding officer of HMLA-169

Marines with III Marine Expeditionary Force rappel from a UH-1Y Venom assigned to Marine Light Attack Helicopter Squadron 169 during special patrol insertion and extraction training at Okinawa, Japan, Sept. 21, 2023. U.S. Marine Corps photo by Cpl. Tyler M. Andrews

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For information on the Dec. 9 'battle of the services.' Follow game day at www.armynavygame.com.

See page 15

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U.S. warship responds to Houthi-claimed attacks on 3 commercial ships in Red Sea

Stars and Stripes
Staff and wire reports

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates - Three commercial ships came under attack Nov. 3 four times by drones and missiles in the Red Sea, and a U.S. warship there responded to the distress calls as part of an hourslong assault claimed by Yemen's Houthi rebels, officials said.

The attack potentially marked a major escalation in a series of maritime attacks in the Middle East linked to the Israel-Hamas war as multiple vessels found themselves in the crosshairs of a single Houthi assault for the first time in the conflict.

The attacks began at approximately 9:15 a.m. when USS *Carney* detected an anti-ship ballistic missile attack fired from Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen toward the Bahamas-flagged bulk carrier *Unity Explorer*, U.S. Central Command said in a news release. Three hours later, at around noon, *Carney* shot down a drone that was headed for it, also launched from Yemen, though it was not clear if *Carney* was the target, CENTCOM said.

Soon after, *Unity Explorer* reported being struck by a missile also fired from Houthi-controlled Yemen, sustaining minor damage. While responding, *Carney* shot down another drone aimed at *Unity Explorer*, with no damage or injuries to either ship or crew, CENTCOM said.

About three hours later, the Panamanian-flagged, Bermuda and U.K. owned and operated bulk container ship *M/V Number 9* was struck by another missile while operating in international shipping lanes in the Red Sea. The carrier reported no damage or casualties, CENTCOM said.

At approximately 4:30 p.m., the Panamanian-flagged bulk carrier *M/V Sophie II* was struck by another missile. *Carney* responded to the distress call and reported no significant

damage, but shot down another drone headed in its direction while enroute to render support, CENTCOM said.

"These attacks represent a direct threat to international commerce and maritime security," CENTCOM said in the release. "They have jeopardized the lives of international crews representing multiple countries around the world. We also have every reason to believe that these attacks, while launched by the Houthis in Yemen, are fully enabled by Iran. The United States will consider all appropriate responses in full coordination with its international allies and partners."

Carney is an Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer that's already shot down multiple rockets the Houthis have fired toward Israel so far in the war. It wasn't damaged in the attack and no injuries were reported on board, said a U.S. official who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss early details of a military operation.

Assessments were still being made on the *Unity Explorer*, the *Associated Press* reported.

The British military earlier said there had been a suspected drone attack and explosions in the Red Sea, without elaborating.

Houthi military spokesman Brig. Gen. Yahya Saree claimed the attacks on two vessels, saying the *Unity Explorer* was hit by a missile and the *Number 9* by a drone while in the Bab el-Mandeb Strait that links the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden.

Saree did not mention any U.S. warship being involved in the attack.

"The Yemeni armed forces continue to prevent Israeli ships from navigating the Red Sea (and Gulf of Aden) until the Israeli aggression against our steadfast brothers in the Gaza Strip stops," Saree said. "The



Destroyer USS *Carney* shoots down a combination of Houthi missiles and unmanned aerial vehicles in the Red Sea, Oct. 19, 2023. *Carney* and multiple commercial ships came under attack Sunday, Dec. 3, in the Red Sea, the Pentagon said, potentially marking a major escalation in a series of maritime attacks in the Mideast linked to the Israel-Hamas war. U.S. Navy photo by Aaron Lau

Yemeni armed forces renew their warning to all Israeli ships or those associated with Israelis that they will become a legitimate target if they violate what is stated in this statement."

Saree also identified the first vessel as the *Unity Explorer*, which is owned by a British firm that includes Dan David Ungar, who lives in Israel, as one of its officers. The second was a Panamanian-flagged container ship called *Number 9*, which is linked to Bernhard Schulte Shipmanagement. Managers for the two vessels could not be immediately reached for comment.

Israeli media identified Ungar as being the son of Israeli shipping billionaire Abraham "Rami" Ungar.

The Houthis have been launching a series of attacks on vessels in the Red Sea, as well as launching drones and missiles targeting Israel amid the war.

Global shipping had increasingly been targeted as the Israel-Hamas war threatens to become a wider regional conflict — even as a truce briefly halted fighting and Hamas exchanged hostages for Palestinian prisoners held by Israel. However, the collapse of

the truce and the resumption of punishing Israeli airstrikes and its ground offensive there had raised the risk of the seaborne attacks resuming.

Earlier in November, the Houthis seized a vehicle transport ship also linked to Israel in the Red Sea off Yemen. The rebels still hold the vessel near the port city of Hodeida. Missiles also landed near another U.S. warship last week after it assisted a vessel linked to Israel that had briefly been seized by gunmen.

However, the Houthis had not directly targeted the Americans

PENTAGON (Nov. 28, 2023)

Charlie, the Joint Staff Facility Dog assigned to J3, celebrates his third birthday amongst members of the Joint Staff here. Charlie has been specially trained in Animal Assisted Intervention to offer stress relief and support to those who serve our nation tirelessly.



DOD Photo by Staff Sgt. Alexander Nieves



Top 5

- Extremism stand-down checked a box with no lasting result, critics say
- Marine Corps looks at ocean glider for rapid re-supply to fight China
- First US submarine repairs in Australia scheduled for summer
- Defense Innovation Unit to host Replicator technology summit
- U.S. Coast Guard leaders long concealed a critical report about racism, hazing and sexual misconduct **Army**
- A Soldier died of cancer at 26. Her family says the Army is to blame.
- A problem-solving shop fosters 'culture of innovation' at Fort Stewart
- Army staff sergeant jumps into action after car crash, saves Soldier
- A role model: Christopher Siwanowicz remembered by family, fellow Army Ranger

Navy

- Navy launches efficiency drive in pursuit of savings
- USS *Indianapolis* teams with drones to destroy boat in Persian Gulf exercise

Marine Corps

- Slain Marine's family fails to win lawsuit against Alec Baldwin
- A Marine recruiter's 'grooming' of a teenage recruit led to an investigation. The family says he's still terrorizing them.
- Former Marine pleads guilty to firebombing Planned Parenthood

Air Force

- Air Force colonels to mourn suicide victim whose father sought Pentagon presence
- New schedule for Sentinel coming soon, says ICBM modernization boss
- Father loses 80 pounds, joins Air Force alongside his 2 sons

Space Force

- S. Korea spy satellite to lift off at Vandenberg days after N. Korea launches one

for some time, further raising the stakes in the growing maritime conflict. In 2016, the U.S. launched Tomahawk cruise

missiles that destroyed three coastal radar sites in Houthi-controlled territory to retaliate for missiles being fired at U.S. Navy ships at the time.

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Editor.....Scott Sutherland

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DOD plans Indo-Pacific innovation challenge

by David Vergun
DOD News

Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III announced recently the start of a series of defense innovation challenges beginning early next year and involving industry partners in AUKUS, the trilateral security partnership between Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States.

The challenges will focus on development of improved electronic warfare systems, he said.

In making the announcement at a press conference in Mountain View, Calif., Austin was joined by Australian Deputy Prime Minister Richard Marles, who also serves as defense minister, and British Defense Secretary Grant Shapps.

The conference took place during a visit to the Defense Innovation Unit at Moffett Field. DIU is the department's premier organization for ac-

celerating the adoption of commercial technology.

The goal of AUKUS, Austin said, is a free and open Indo-Pacific region.



Royal Australian Navy clearance divers and U.S. explosive ordnance Sailors conduct hull search operations in Sydney, Australia, during Exercise Malabar 2023. U.S. Navy photo by MC3 Matthew Castro

The defense leaders at DIU saw capability demonstrations focused on such things as artificial intelligence, integrated air defense systems, tactical augmented reality, space architecture and virtual training for air dominance.

A senior defense official said

that AUKUS is collaborating on artificial intelligence, autonomy, advanced cyber, electronic warfare, hypersonics, counterhypersonics, quantum technologies and undersea warfare.

The official also said the three nations are also establishing an AUKUS Industry Forum with trilateral government and industry representatives to help inform policy, technical and commercial frameworks to facilitate the development and delivery of advanced capabilities. The initial meeting of that forum will occur in the first half of 2024.

The official noted that work is on pace for the nuclear-powered, conventionally-armed attack submarine program.

Austin: In troubling times, world needs U.S. leadership

by C. Todd Lopez
DOD News

Editor's note: Read this story in its entirety at <https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/3604791/>.

As the world considers the repercussions of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the brutal Hamas terrorist attack on Israel, an increasingly assertive China, and the disturbing aspirations of nations like Iran and North Korea, it considers also what the role of the United States will be—and what its role must be is leadership, said the U.S. secretary of defense.

"We're living through challenging times," said Lloyd J. Austin III, who spoke Nov. 2 at the Reagan National Defense Forum in Simi Valley, Calif. "That includes the major conflicts facing our fellow democracies, Israel and Ukraine; bullying and coercion from an increasingly assertive China; and a worldwide battle between democracy and autocracy."

When the world appears to be in disarray, Austin said, U.S.

allies and partners look to the United States to see what must be done. And the U.S. must not waiver in providing leadership and decision-making.

"These are the times when both our friends and our rivals look to America," he said. "These are the times when the American people count on their leaders to come together. And these are the times when global security relies on American unity and American strength."

Since the end of World War II, Austin said, the world has adhered to a rules-based international order, developed with U.S. leadership, that has provided not just the U.S., but the entire world an unprecedented period of peace and prosperity. Neither that rules-based order nor U.S. leadership must be allowed to falter, he said.

"The world built by American leadership can only be maintained by American leadership," Austin said. "American leadership rallies our allies and partners to uphold our shared security. And it inspires ordinary

people around the world to work together toward a brighter future."

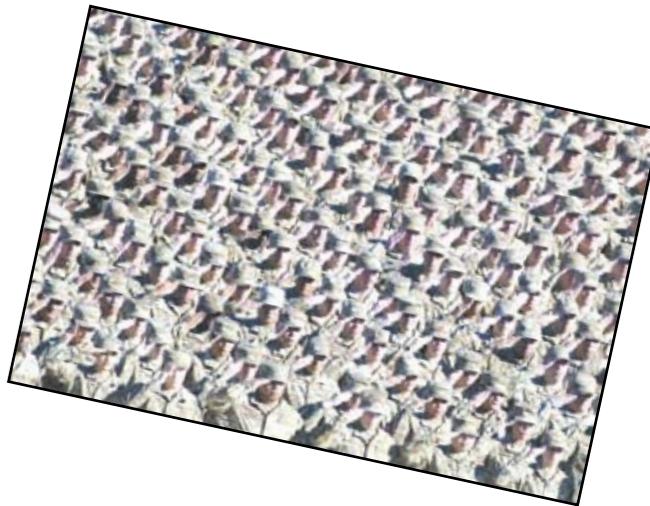
Inside the U.S., Austin said, some Americans have shied away from the country's role as a global leader and prefer instead that the U.S. move toward isolationism. Austin said that's been a mistake in the past and is a mistake today, as well.

"If we forfeit our position of responsibility, our rivals and our foes will be glad to fill that vacuum," he said. "In every generation, some Americans prefer isolation to engagement — and they try to pull up the drawbridge. They try to kick loose the cornerstone of American leadership. And they try to undermine the security architecture that has produced decades of prosperity without great-power war."

Were the U.S. to shirk its leadership role, he said, America's enemies and the enemies of its allies would only be emboldened. And that failure to lead would put the security and wellbeing of the United States and its allies at risk.



MCAS KANOEHE, Hawaii (Dec. 3, 2023) The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the Hawaii Division of Aquatic Resources survey the coral and ecosystems where a Navy P-8A Poseidon had been just off the runway here. U.S. Marine Corps photo by Lance Cpl. Hunter Jones



MESA, Arizona (Dec. 3, 2023) Airmen from the Arizona Air National Guard's 162nd Air Refueling Wing salute the U.S. flag for the playing of the National Anthem during the Arizona Muster 2023. More than 3,200 citizen Soldiers and Airmen stood together in a patriotic muster to provide accountability to Gov. Katie Hobbs, commander-in-chief of the Arizona National Guard. U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. 1st Class Brian A. Barbour



ANDERSEN AIR FORCE BASE, Guam (Nov. 28, 2023) Air Force Maj. Zach Overbey, 36th Expeditionary Airlift Squadron Operation Christmas Drop 2023 (OCD 23) mission commander, greets Republic of Korea Air Force Lt. Col. Minji Kim in support of OCD 23. This year marks the third occurrence of ROKAF participation in OCD, enhancing airlift interoperability and teamwork with Indo-Pacific Allies and ensuring collective readiness. U.S. Air Force photo by Yasuo Osakabe

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Navy raises crashed P-8A Poseidon aircraft from Hawaii's Kaneohe Bay



The Navy on Saturday raised a P-8A Poseidon aircraft from the water after it overshot a runway and splashed into Hawaii's Kaneohe Bay on Nov. 20.

Officials were planning a press conference for Monday to discuss the effort.

The Poseidon slammed into the environmentally

sensitive bay about 10 miles from Honolulu after overshooting the runway at Marine Corps Base Ha-

waii. None of the nine people on board were injured. The cause of the crash is under investigation.

A Navy P-8A Poseidon that overshot a Hawaii runway and crashed into Kaneohe Bay on Nov. 20 was pulled out of the drink Dec. 2, the Navy said. U.S. Marine Corps photo by Lance Cpl. Tania Guerrero



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◆ DOD in Photos 2023 ◆

Take a look at the Defense Department and its people through the eyes of military photographers during operations, training activities, humanitarian missions and other major events of 2023.



<https://www.defense.gov/Multimedia/Experience/DOD-In-Photos-2023/>

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CATCH THE GAME SATURDAY, DEC. 9, AT 15:00 ET ON CBS.



Naval Medical Center San Diego recognizes 16 civilians staff members with the Defense Health Agency's Length Of Service (LOS) Award for their respective 20-40 years of federal service milestones. The mission of NMCS D is to prepare service members to deploy in support of operational forces, deliver high quality health care services and shape the future of military medicine through education, training and research. U.S. Navy photo by Retail Services Specialist 2nd Class Quanticia Dozier-Small s



Length Of Service Award recognition for NMCS D civilians

Naval Medical Center San Diego (NMCS D) recognized 16 civilians staff members with the Defense Health Agency's Length Of Service (LOS) Award for their respective 20-40 years of federal service milestones Nov. 28.

The award encompasses total years of federal service, which for some entails prior active duty time.

"I started my federal civilian career in 2013, yet I've been affiliated with the federal government since joining the U.S. Navy in 1988 when I enlisted in my hometown of Quezon City, Philippines," said Enrico Sarmiento, NMCS D's Public Health Department physician assistant. "It's an absolute honor to be recognized by leadership and our friends and colleagues."

Sarmiento is just one example of NMCS D's civilian workforce who not only bring to the forefront their extensive experience within their respective specialties, but also their devotion to service.

"There is no other place I'd

rather be than to be working at NMCS D. Especially in a place like San Diego, where options —many extremely lucrative — abound; yet, for me it's always been about continuing to be part of this team," expressed Sarmiento.

The team Sarmiento refers to is the team that contributes directly to supporting the warfighter.

Navy christens amphibious assault ship Bougainville

"Bougainville's christening symbolizes their enduring legacy — a legacy etched into the very soul of this vessel." — Major Gen. James Adams.

The Navy christened its newest America-class amphibious assault ship, the future USS Bougainville (LHA 8), during a ceremony Dec. 2, in Pascagoula, Miss.

Under Secretary of the Navy Eric Raven delivered the christening ceremony's principal address. Remarks were also provided by Vice Adm. Del Crandall Jr., Judge Advocate General of the Navy, and Maj. Gen. James H. Adams III, nominated to the position of Deputy Commandant of the Marine Corps for Programs and Resources. The ship's sponsor is Ellyn Dunford, wife of Gen. Joseph F. Dunford Jr., 19th Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and 36th Commandant of the Marine Corps.

Bougainville is the third ship of the America-class of amphibious assault ships built to facilitate forward presence and power projection. LHA 8 is the first Flight I ship of the America-class with a reincorporated well deck to increase operational flexibility while maximizing the aviation capability inherent on the Flight 0 ships.

"In my capacity I have the privilege and responsibility to conduct employment suitability assessments, annual exams, pre-deployment screenings, etc.," explained Sarmiento. "Occupational Medicine has a reach in how our fleet operates and it is something we approach with the utmost respect and consideration because we know it matters."

With his pending retirement

in the not too distant future, Sarmiento reflects upon his service.

"The hardest thing for me at the present moment is knowing that I'm inching closer to retirement. However, during my active duty time, and now my civilian service, I know that NMCS D, the Navy, and our nation are in great hands thanks to the willingness of so many who elect to serve and defend our nation. As a civilian physician assistant, I would tell anyone who is interested in this field to seriously consider us."

For civilian employment opportunities at NMCS D or other locations, visit www.USAjobs.gov.

The mission of NMCS D is to prepare service members to deploy in support of operational forces, deliver high quality health care services and shape the future of military medicine through education, training and research. NMCS D employs more than 6,000 active-duty military personnel, civilians and contractors in southern California to provide patients with world-class care anytime, anywhere.

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CNAF holds two-day training symposium for major commanders

by Lt.j.g. Gabriel Wahl

Commander, Naval Air Forces
Commander, Naval Air Forces (CNAF) recently held its annual Major Commanders Training Symposium (MCTS), a two-day event for Navy captains currently in key leadership billets across the aviation community.

The symposium aligned priorities to deliver capability and capacity to win in the great power competition, highlighted key aspects of generating future readiness across the force and focused on achieving revolutionary training.

Adm. Samuel Paparo, commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet, joined MCTS virtually and offered strategic perspectives of leading the Navy in the Indo-Pacific.

“Naval Aviation will be a major player in any future conflict,” said Paparo. “The hard decisions you make, the way you train your warfighters and your investment now is critical moving into the next decade.”

Paparo added that Naval Aviation is a critical force enabler in the most mobile and lethal system of joint all-domain capacity on the planet.

Key issues included CNAF focus areas, budget and recapitalization and pilot production.

Several lectures were led by specialized experts, one of them being Dr. Steve Spear from MIT’s Sloan School. He provided unique insight on how to turn high-hazard situations into low-risk evolutions through persistent leadership and resolving problems immediately while they are small, before they grow into pinnacle events.

“Leadership development continues throughout the span of your entire career, and so must your continued learning,” said Rear Adm. Douglas Verissimo, commander, Naval Air Force Atlantic. “This dedicated time together reinforces priorities across the Naval Aviation Enterprise, addresses key issues facing our community and strengthens relationships within our team.”

Fifty-six officers attended MCTS, including aircraft carrier commanding officers, carrier air wing commanders, commodores, installation commanders and acquisition leaders.

“Nearly all of us in this room commanded squadrons as O-5s, where our leadership objectives focused on warfighting and

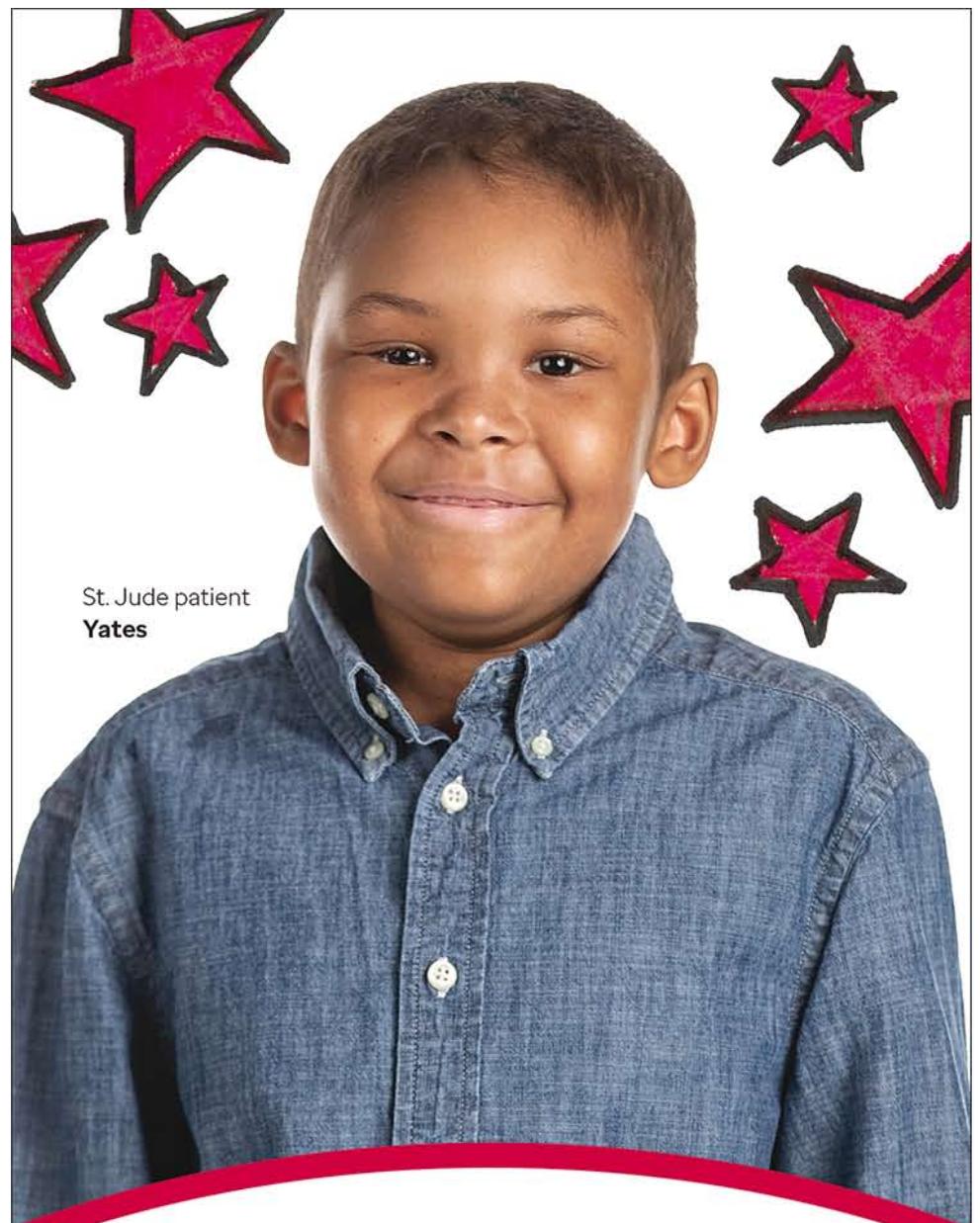
readiness,” said Capt. Robert Majoris, commander, Strategic Communications Wing 1, who attended MCTS.

“The training at this level opened the aperture to strategic priorities and thoughtful approaches to tackling complex issues facing Naval Aviation, as well as shared perspectives from each of our roles.”

Other topics covered enlisted manning, officer community updates from Navy Personnel Command and military justice reform. Commander, Navy Recruiting Command, Rear Adm. Lex Walker, provided recruitment updates and offered ways for aviation leaders to inspire the future generation of Sailors.

Commander, Naval Air Forces is the type commander for Naval Aviation that oversees the U.S. Navy’s aircraft carriers, carrier air wings, squadrons, support facilities, and training commands.

Based at Naval Air Station North Island CNAF is responsible for manning, training, and equipping deployable combat-ready Naval Aviation forces to compete and win in any environment.

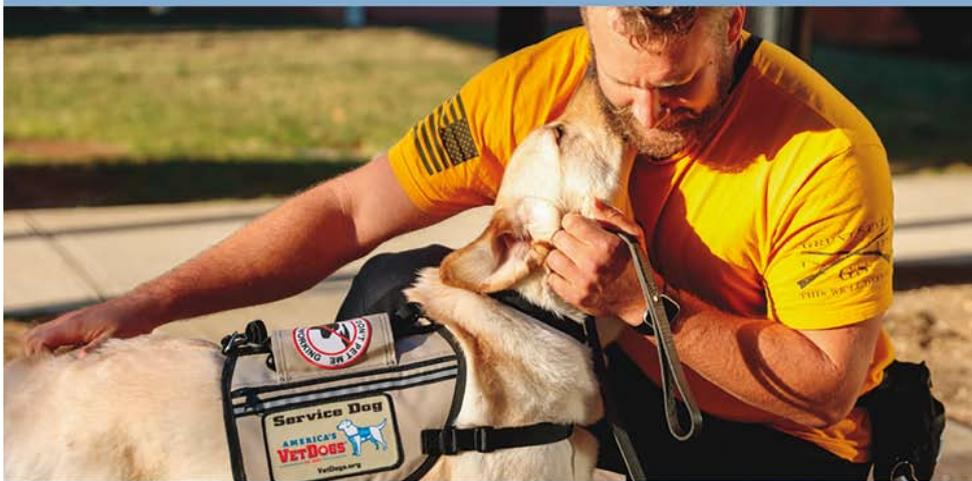


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Navy Talent Acquisition Group Southwest changes leadership



Navy Talent Acquisition Group Southwest CO, Cmdr. Elizabeth E. McMullen. U.S. Navy photo

highest quality Sailors in order to project American influence where it is needed the most.

“What the Sailors and civilians of NTAG Southwest achieved in the most challenging recruiting environment in our nation’s history is nothing short of remarkable. They were as committed to personal and professional development as they were to achieving recruiting excellence,” said Bushey. “It was an absolute honor to lead Navy Recruiting Command’s Flagship NTAG and I am certain that we achieved our mission of manning the Fleet.”

SAN DIEGO – Navy Talent Acquisition Group (NTAG) Southwest held a change of command ceremony aboard USS Midway Museum flight deck Dec. 5. Cmdr. Keith J. Bushey, from Speigletown, N.Y., was relieved by Cmdr. Elizabeth E. McMullen, from Lynn, Mass., as NTAG Southwest’s commanding officer.

Bushey’s follow on assignment will be Reserve Talent Acquisition Group Southwest, where he will serve as it’s first ever CO.

Under Bushey’s leadership NTAG Southwest recruited 7,897 Future Sailors which directly supported the fleet’s manning requirements and ensured that the Navy has the

NTAG Southwest’s area of responsibility encompasses more than 210,000 square miles covering southern California, southern Nevada and western Arizona. Headquartered at Naval Base Point Loma, San Diego, the command has 43 recruiting stations and employs more than 275 Sailors and civilian personnel.

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LOCAL PHOTO GALLERY



BUSAN, REPUBLIC OF KOREA (Nov. 21, 2023) Capt. Matthew Thomas, left, commanding officer of carrier *Carl Vinson*, receives a lei during a welcoming ceremony here. *USS Carl Vinson* is in Republic of Korea for a scheduled port visit. U.S. Navy photo by MC3 Joshua Sapien



SANTA CLARA, Calif. (Nov. 19, 2023) A member of the Navy parachute team, the Leap Frogs, exits a C-17 Globemaster III aircraft here. U.S. Navy official photo



PACIFIC OCEAN (Dec. 1, 2023) Seaman Mildred Binezewski, from East Hartford, Conn., stands watch on the fantail aboard Nimitz-class aircraft carrier *USS Abraham Lincoln* (CVN 72). *Abraham Lincoln* is currently underway conducting routine operations in the Pacific Ocean. U.S. Navy photo by MC3 Jett Morgan

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HONIARA, Solomon Islands (Nov. 27, 2023) Navy Cmdr. Gabriel Valerio examines a mass in a patient's eye at the National Referral Hospital here as part of Pacific Partnership 2024. U.S. Navy photo by MCSA Gavin Arnoldhendershot

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A Marine with Fox Company, 2nd Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division, provides aid to a simulated civilian casualty during a mass casualty training scenario for a simulated embassy reinforcement during a mission rehearsal exercise as part of Exercise Steel Knight 23.2 at Camp Pendleton Nov. 29. U.S. Marine Corps photo by Cpl. Earik Barton

Steel Knight 23: Marines reinforce embassy

by Cpl. Earik Barton, 1st Marine Division

U.S. Marines with Fox Company, 2nd Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division, demonstrated their proficiency and flexibility during a simulated embassy reinforcement Nov. 29 as part of Exercise Steel Knight 23.2.

The embassy reinforcement at Camp Pendleton served as the cornerstone event for 5th Marines' mission rehearsal exercise to certify the regiment to deploy as Marine Rotational Force - Darwin in 2024.

"The embassy reinforcement for Steel Knight [23.2] is the culmination of a large amount of coordination throughout I Marine Expeditionary Force," said Capt. Austin Dickey, company commander of Fox Co., 2nd Bn., 5th Marines.

Steel Knight 23.2 has components of I MEF deployed across a large geographic space, from Southwest Arizona through most of California, with various locations simulating islands spread across the Pacific. This dispersion causes friction inherent to the tyranny of distance that forces the MEF to adapt and grow as a fighting force.

"You're going to see communication issues," explained Dickey. "That is something we have been presented an opportunity to learn with – the various waveforms and learning how to get (communications) up at far distances – and then once we have those waveforms up, actually coordinating and communicating to different agencies."

At the beginning of Steel Knight, the Marines and Sailors of the battalion, as well as the regimental headquarters, relocated to Yuma, Arizona, where they set up a combat operations center and continued to plan and train. When the order came to conduct the embassy reinforcement, Fox Co. boarded MV-22B Osprey tiltrotor aircraft assigned to Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron (VMM) 164, Marine Aircraft Group 39, 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing, and flew to the simulated embassy at Camp Pendleton, ready to respond to the unknown situation they would find on the ground.

"I was proud with what the company did, short notice with the timeline, short notice with the order drop," said Dickey. "I'm proud of the Marines, going through rehearsals, going through the order brief, really being locked on with the pre-combat checks, pre-combat inspections. Fox Co. always has something to learn but we are in a pretty good place, and we are ready today to go perform the missions that the Marine Corps and the United States needs us to."

See <https://www.dvidshub.net/image/8143176/steel-knight-232-2nd-bn-5th-marines-reinforces-embassy>.

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Career and Education

Brown: Young people consider military service if they know enough about it

by C. Todd Lopez
DOD News

Getting young people to choose a career in the military will require more people talking about what opportunities there are in the service, said the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

During a discussion at the Reagan National Defense Forum in Simi Valley, Calif., Air Force Gen. CQ Brown, Jr., said there's great opportunity in military service. To get young people to consider it for themselves, they just need to hear more about it.

"I think about the opportunities and the things that young people will have the opportunity to do if they were to join our military," he said. "We've got to talk about that. And partly the reason I say that is because I believe young people only aspire to be what they see or know about. If you don't know about the opportunities of serving in the military, you may never pursue that career field."

Brown said in his own life, he was encouraged by his parents to serve in the military and expected initially that he'd serve only a short amount of time.

"My degree is in engineering," he said. "I was going to be an Air Force engineer for four years and get out."

While in college, he said he got an opportunity to ride in a T-37 Tweet, an Air Force trainer aircraft. That experience, he said, changed his outlook on what his military service could be.

"I became an F-16 pilot, and I still get to fly today. It's those kinds of opportunities, I think, that you just don't know until you have a chance to experience it," he said. "And whether you stay for just a handful of years or you stay in for a handful of decades, there are great opportunities serving in our military."

Following the end of the Cold War, Brown said, the U.S. military contracted in size as military bases shut down, and there were fewer opportunities for young people to interact with service members. Educating young people about military service must be a nationwide effort now, he said.

"One of the goals we have to do as a nation is to talk about our military and the opportunities," he said. "And I try to do that when I go out and travel — because you don't know what you

don't know."

The 2023 Reagan National Defense Survey indicated that some Americans think the U.S. military is too focused on social issues at the expense of a focus on warfighting. But Brown said that isn't the case.

"I would say honing our warfighting skills has primacy in everything we do," he said. "That's why we exist: to fight and win our nation's wars. We want to be so good at what we do that our adversaries [say], 'Not today, not tomorrow, not ever.' We do that because we bring in our nation's best from all backgrounds. And I'm extremely proud of our service members, every single one of them."

As he travels around the U.S. military and meets with service members, Brown said he can see where their focus is.

"I'm just so amazed by the young people that come into our military. And when I go out and talk to them, they are focused on warfighting. They are focused on getting the mission done, and they're just they're amazing young people, and I'm just proud to be able to work with them."



A "night of arrivals" staff member motivates new recruits as they line up at the in-processing center at Great Lakes, Ill., April 20, 2023. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Air Force Gen. CQ Brown, Jr., discussed how to attract young people into military service at the Reagan National Defense Forum in California. U.S. Navy photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Olympia Martin

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The abominable shopping season strikes again

The Meat & Potatoes of Life



by
Lisa
Smith
Molinari

Like most military families struggling to climb the never-ending series of financial peaks along life's path, we've always been uneasy about money. Mortgages, car loans, school tuition, music lessons, credit card payments, repair bills, sports fees, application fees, grocery bills, insurance bills, and all the other costs that encumber the typical military family, pile up into a seemingly overwhelming mountain of expenses to climb.

We trudge up each treacherous peak, wondering if we'll ever get out of debt, save enough for college, and make it to retirement. We kept at it, believing that one day, we'll finally reach the summit and plant a flag signaling that our personal financial goals have been achieved. It will be all downhill from there.

After more than 30 years of marriage, we still haven't planted that flag. Every pay raise my husband received over the years seemed accompanied by more expenses, so that our uncomfortable debt-income ratio never seemed to improve. As our household income increased, our lifestyle absorbed it without much notice, and we trudged on, never really finding that windfall of profit we'd been looking for all our lives.

We keep climbing from one crum-

bling, financial ledge to the next, in an unending quest for the pinnacle of financial stability and freedom. Sometimes we think we've found a foothold, but something always seems to come along and knock us into another crevasse of debt. Our saboteurs aren't polar bears, mountain goats, or the Abominable Snowman. The monetary enemies we've faced were surprise roof leaks, transmission failures, tax assessments, and college tuition bills.

And now, in December, we must take on the monster that visits its fiscal devastation upon us annually — the Holiday Shopping Season.

"Now, kids, your father and I are NOT going to buy a lot of Christmas presents this year," I've told our three children every December since they were in middle school. Despite their "we've heard this before" eye-rolling, I've sincerely meant it every time. The problem: Once I get out into the frenzy of holiday shoppers, I lose my way. Despite careful budgeting and planning, I am bombarded by a blizzard of twinkle lights, eye-catching displays, irresistible sales, fuzzy slippers, cheese log samples, ingenious gadgets, two-for-one deals, and unsolicited perfume spritzes.

I've never been a savvy customer — but rather, a "misfit shopper" — so, like the preacher's daughter at the frat party, I sometimes don't know when to stop and find myself easily manipulated into doing very bad things.

I show up at the mall armed with good intentions, a budgeted list of specific items, and a plan to go home and cook an economical dinner. The

next thing I know, I've overdosed on department store fragrances and Harry & David samples. My husband and kids have called numerous times, wondering why I haven't come home yet. My automobile is stuffed to the moon roof with shopping bags, half of which contain items I bought for myself.

Woozy and confused, I chew the remnants of peppermint bark I vaguely recall buying from a female elf at Macy's, run through a drive through to pick up a bucket of chicken for the family, make the humiliating "drive of shame" back home, and wonder when the avalanche of credit card bills will roll in.

What happened? Will I ever learn financial self-control and stay on course? Why am I always blinded by the blizzard of holiday shopping temptations? Am I destined to be financially adrift forever?

With predicted increasing inflation, a mortgage the size of Montana, and three demanding twenty-somethings coming home for the holidays, I will, once again, try to resist the abominable evils of the holiday shopping season. I will not try on boots, agree to an exfoliating hand massage, sample gourmet mustards, or take the tiniest whiff of perfume being spritzed my way. I must stick to my list, pay in cash, avoid anyone dressed up like an elf, and save some singles for the Salvation Army bucket.

I may not have Rudolph to guide me, but there's no need to cancel Christmas. This misfit shopper will make it through the holiday spending blizzard of 2023, and keep on climbing. Onward and upward.

MAHLE Aftermarket at SEMA Show '23

AutoMatters™ & More



by Jan Wagner

MAHLE was founded in 1920. Today, with sales well over 13 billion dollars world-

wide, Subaru, Toyota and VW/Audi. See: <https://www.us.mahle.com/en/motorsports/powerpak-pistons/>

The new Ford Godzilla 7.3L dish Power Pack Piston Set from MAHLE Motorsport (CRS-22-011-NPS 10/21/2022) features a -20.5cc crown design and is made of 2618 aluminum alloy, slipper skirt forging with a hard-anodized top ring groove. It is designed for those enthusiasts who are trying to push the limits

the performance, durability and longevity of the components.

MAHLE Clevite engine bearings have been winning NASCAR sanctioned races since the very first NASCAR Championship in 1948, and have powered every NASCAR champion since then to Victory Lane, setting the pace for quality and reliability in the most demanding settings. The bearings are available in five series to tailor to your specific needs.

The base bearings are TriMet-al (three different layers: copper-tin-lead), with an additional layer on the coated bearings. The reason for the different color on the coated versus the non-coated bearings is a result of the plating process. The moly gives a dark finish.

Coated bearings are more expensive. The base bearing is the same as the non-coated bearing, but the difference is that the moly coating puts a thermal barrier between the overlay and the oil in the journal, providing additional lubrication and therefore additional protection from friction-generated heat.

When metal parts move together, they will wear. The objective is to help determine which of those parts will wear first. It is a lot less expensive to buy a set of main bearings and replace those than it would be to replace a block or a crankshaft.



wide, over 70,000 employees, more than 150 production locations, five business units and 12 R&D centers, its future-facing strategy focuses on three fields: electrification, thermal management and components for efficient and clean internal combustion engines.

MAHLE Power Pack Piston Sets from MAHLE Motorsport are designed for engine builders who demand high quality. They are complete forged piston sets, engineered and designed for performance/racing, and include the forged pistons, low drag rings, pins and clips. Engine families include Chevy, Ford, Mopar, Acura, BMW, Honda, Mazda, Mitsubishi, Nissan, Porsche,

of their Ford Godzilla engine for very high-horsepower boosted or turbocharged builds — over a 200-pound shot of nitrous, 15 pounds of boost to the piston, for use in drag racing.

MAHLE's relationship with Porsche dates back to Porsche's beginning. Together they developed some of the best competition and sports car engines available throughout the past 90 years. MAHLE Motorsport North America has taken the extensive experience gained from its relationship with Porsche to develop a series of performance and racing piston and cylinder kits; therefore there may be visual differences that are intentional and beneficial to

These components are used for doing rebuilds on an engine, adding power to go racing or even to just get a little more performance in a daily driver and for track days on the weekends. It is always a good idea to give the MAHLE tech staff and engineering department a call to help walk you through the process.

To explore a wide variety of content dating back to 2002, with the most photos and the latest text, visit "AutoMatters & More" at <https://automatters.net>. Search by title or topic in the Search Bar in the middle of the Home Page, or click on the blue 'years' boxes and browse. Copyright © 2023 by Jan Wagner — AutoMatters & More #818

Marines

continued from page 1

Super Stallions operated across the Indo-Pacific, demonstrating the operational reach of Marine aviation.

They participated in exercises including Marine Aviation Support Activity, Talisman Sabre, Fuji Viper, Super Garuda Shield,

and Korean Marine Exchange Program, and conducted training in Okinawa, including a variety of flight operations and qualifications; maritime integration; and joint and Marine Air-Ground Task Force integration.

"The Vipers executed an aggressive campaign that empha-

sized distributed operations across the Indo-Pacific theater," said Lt. Col. Thomas Duff, commanding officer of HMLA-169. "We utilized strategic airlift, amphibious shipping, and self-deploying detachments to support five bilateral exercises and enhance interoperability with our partners in the region."



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Stamping out superbugs: A clear and present danger

Bacteria are found nearly everywhere. They're in your food, recreational waters, and even the air. Some bacteria help keep you healthy. But some can make you very sick.

If you're healthy, your body may fight off harmful bacteria on its own. But sometimes you need antibiotics. These are drugs that kill bacteria or stop them from growing. They can be critical for preventing or fighting a life-threatening disease. But over time, bacteria can become resistant to drugs that are misused or overused. That means that the drug will no longer stop them.

In the U.S., drug-resistant

bacteria infect nearly 3 million people and kill more than 35,000 every year. These "superbugs" have evolved to protect themselves against drugs. This can happen through changes in their genes. Sometimes antibiotics don't stop all the bacteria in an infection. Any bacteria that survive will continue to multiply. They may gain further drug resistance. This makes it even more difficult to control them with antibiotics.

Drug-resistant infections pose many dangers. Bacteria that are resistant to one drug may still be treatable with stronger drugs. But these backup drugs can have more serious side effects. Bacteria

that become resistant to too many drugs may be untreatable. Some medical procedures that carry a high risk of infection, like organ transplants, may become more dangerous without effective antibiotics.

Researchers are studying new ways to fight superbugs. Some are working on novel antibiotics. Another strategy uses phages, which are viruses that attack bacteria.

A team led by Dr. Vance Fowler, an infectious disease expert at Duke University, is leading a study of a phage mixture that attacks *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* bacteria. These bacteria tend to

spread in hospitals and other health care settings. They're often resistant to many antibiotics. Fowler's team is testing whether phages can be used to treat people with the infection.

They're also working on a rapid test that can tell the difference between infections caused by bacteria and those caused by viruses. Doctors could use the test to decide how to treat the infection. That could help avoid unnecessary antibiotic prescriptions.

Antibiotics don't work against viruses. Viruses cause common colds and the flu, but some bacteria can cause similar symp-

toms. Sometimes, doctors must prescribe antibiotics before they have the test results that confirm a bacterial infection.

"When you have a critically ill patient in front of you, and you are not going to know what you're treating for several days, you have to make a decision," Fowler explains.

Not starting treatment immediately can lead to life-threatening infections. But giving antibiotics to a patient who doesn't need them can also cause problems.

They can cause side effects and lead to superbugs.

There are ways people can help guard against superbugs. Use antibiotics only when they're needed. If a doctor doesn't prescribe antibiotics, don't pressure them to change their mind. And when you do get antibiotics, take them exactly as prescribed.

The best way to protect yourself and your family against harmful bacteria is to avoid infection in the first place. See the Wise Choices box for tips.

Top 10 holiday dangers for pets

SAN DIEGO — With the holiday season in full swing, San Diego Humane Society reminds pet owners to take precautions to keep their pets safe. Presents, decorations, plants and holiday foods can sometimes be harmful for our furry friends.

Here are the Top 10 Holiday Dangers for Pets:

1. Christmas trees: Christmas trees can be hazardous, especially for climbing cats. Make sure your tree is secure, preferably in a corner to reduce the likelihood of falling. Keep dangerous ornaments, such as those made of glass and tinsel (which can be choking hazards), on high branches and out of the reach of little paws.

2. Wrapped presents: If you are wrapping gifts — especially those containing food (particularly chocolate), dog treats or dog toys — keep them out of your pet's reach until they are ready to be opened. Pets have a keen sense of smell and will often unwrap presents early and eat the potentially harmful contents.

3. Holiday food: Pets are often not shy about taking food that is left sitting out on counters or tables. Pets should be kept away from food preparation areas or places where food will be left out unattended or for long periods of time. A few concerning foods that are common during the holidays include chocolate, bread dough, grapes/raisins, fruitcake and alcohol.

4. Toxic plants: Amaryllis, Christmas cactus, Christmas rose, evergreens, holly, ivy, juniper, lilies, mistletoe and poinsettias are examples of plants that can cause digestive upset or more severe toxicity to pets if eaten.

5. Unsafe pet toys: You will see many toys marketed as holiday gifts to pets this season — but that doesn't necessarily mean they're safe for animals.

Avoid pet toys that could be dangerous, such as those with easily detachable parts like sequins, buttons or ribbons. These items can be choking hazards or cause gastrointestinal blockages if ingested. If toys have stuffing or plastic squeakers, it's important to supervise playtime to prevent accidental ingestion.

6. Fire and string lights: Roaring fires and twinkling lights are common around the holidays, but can cause danger to pets. Place burning candles high, out of your pet's way. A dog's tail wag or a cat's curiosity could be devastating. Homes with fireplaces should use screens to avoid accidental burns. Cords from electrical string lights should be taped down or otherwise secured to prevent pets from chewing on them.

7. Snow globes: Some snow globes contain ethylene glycol, which is highly toxic to all pets. If a snow globe is broken, the sweet smell can attract a pet to lick it up, leading to a potentially fatal intoxication. As a precaution, snow globes should be kept out of reach of pets.

8. Medication: If you have visitors, pets may investigate suitcases and can get into their medications, such as pill bot-

tles or weekly pill minders. It is safer to have the visitors put their medication in a closed cabinet that is not accessible to pets.

9. Salt: Ice melt, homemade play dough and salt-dough ornaments (even when dry) can be tempting salty treats for pets, but can all also cause life-threatening imbalances in electrolytes. Pet owners should contact their local veterinary professional or the Animal Poison Control Center <<https://www.aspcapro.org/topics-animal-health/toxicology-poison-control>> if their pets get into any of these substances.

10. Open doors: Keep your pets safely indoors and always make sure they're wearing current ID tags with your phone number. Holiday distractions make it easier for pets to escape through open doors. Make sure their microchip information is up to date. If your pet is not microchipped, San Diego Humane Society offers \$25 microchips at its El Cajon, Escondido, Oceanside and San Diego Campus locations. Schedule an appointment at sdhumane.org/microchip

During the holidays, it's also important to make sure your pet has a quiet, secure place to escape the commotion. Our

pets can become stressed with noise and activity and want somewhere safe to relax. Make sure they have their bed, favorite toys, food and water, and a litter box for cats. Keep them on their regular schedule for feeding and exercise. Pets thrive on routine and increased activity during the holiday season can upset that routine. As always, be sure they get plenty of love and attention from you! For more information, visit sdhumane.org/holidaysafety

Wise choices: Guard against bacteria

- Maintain a healthy lifestyle, including proper diet and exercise. This can help prevent illnesses.
 - Get all recommended vaccinations. To learn more, visit the CDC's Vaccine Schedules ([link is external](#)).
 - Wash your hands with soap and water regularly.
 - Cover your mouth when you cough or sneeze.
- Stay home when you're sick.
- If you're prescribed an antibiotic, take it exactly as instructed by your doctor. Don't share your antibiotics with others or save them for future use.

Don't pressure your doctor to prescribe an antibiotic or take antibiotics prescribed for someone else. Overuse and misuse of antibiotics can create drug-resistant bacteria.

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Ready to apply to be a USO San Diego volunteer?

Visit www.USOVolunteer.org. Once you navigate to the webpage, click on "Volunteer at a USO Center," then click "Continental United States." Next select "California" and then the USO San Diego center nearest to you!

Camp Pendleton USO Programs Include:

USO Transitions: <https://www.uso.org/programs/uso-pathfinder-transition-program>
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MilSpouse Connect: Monthly events bringing military spouses together to connect and thrive.
Craft & Coffee: USO Camp Pendleton provides creative outlets for adults and children to create fun, whimsical or serious works of art through a variety of mediums. Signs up happen online and are usually advertised through the USO Camp Pendleton Facebook page.

Command Support: USO is here to support! We often help support command events across Camp Pendleton such as Family days and Morale Days. Commands can request support in a number of different ways, from outdoor games, a kids craft, or even our mobile photo booth. We also can help provide small refreshments. To request support, please email our Center Operations and Programs Manager, Crystal Gates at cgates@uso.org. All requests must be submitted within 30 days and although we try our best, not all requests can be granted.

<https://sandiego.uso.org>

Fitness: Start where you are and build on it

Get 150 minutes of exercise each week

Try 30 minutes 5 days a week, or 40 minutes 4 days a week -- what ever you can manage Choose what works best for your lifestyle. If you're not up for that, start somewhere. Start with 10 minutes and build up! Do what you can work up to more.

Morning workouts

Get your heart rate up first thing in the morning. While the time of day makes no difference in results, you're more likely to make excuses as the day goes by. And, amorning workout might be perfect for some 'you' time.

Build muscle

Building muscle is the key to speeding up your metabolism since muscle burns more fat at rest. Add muscle-building moves in addition to your high-intensity workouts and see long-term benefits.

CLASSIFIED ADS

MOVIES AT THE BASES

Schedules subject to change. Check for updates on line at:
<https://sandiego.navylifsw.com/> select movies from dropdown menu on left
<https://miramar.usmc-mccs.org/dining-entertainment/movies>
<https://pendleton.usmc-mccs.org/dining-entertainment/theater>

Naval Base Theater - NBSD,
 619-556-5568, Bldg. 71
 3465 Senn Rd.

Lowry Theater - NASNI,
 619-545-8479
 Bldg. 650

Friday, December 8
 6:00pm The Marvels pg13
 8:20pm The Holdovers r
Saturday, December 9
 3:30pm Journey to Bethlehem pg
 6:00pm The Marvels pg13
Sunday, December 10
 1:00pm Five Nights at Freddy's pg13
 3:20pm The Marvels pg13
Thursday, December 14
 5:50pm The Marvels pg13
 8:00pm The Holdovers r
Friday, December 15
 6pm Hunger Games: Songbirds/Snakes pg13
Saturday, December 16
 1pm Trolls Band Together pg
 3:20pm The Marvels pg13
 6pm Hunger Games: Songbirds/Snakes pg13
Sunday, December 17
 1pm Hunger Games: Songbirds/Snakes pg13
 4:20pm The Holdovers r
Wednesday, December 20
 6pm Hunger Games: Songbirds/Snakes pg13
Thursday, December 21
 6pm Trolls Band Together pg
 8pm The Marvels pg13
 For updates check <https://sandiego.navylifsw.com/movies/>

Outside food and beverage are NOT permitted. Debit/credit cards only.
Saturday, December 9
 1pm The Marvels pg13
 3:30pm Priscilla r
 6pm The Holdovers r
Sunday, December 10
 1pm Journey to Bethlehem pg
 3pm The Marvels pg13
Friday, December 15
 6pm Hunger Games: Songbirds/Snakes pg13
Saturday, December 16
 1pm Trolls Band Together pg
 3pm The Marvels pg13
 6pm Hunger Games: Songbirds/Snakes pg13
Sunday, December 17
 1pm Trolls Band Together pg
 3pm Hunger Games: Songbirds/Snakes
 Updates: navylifsw.com



SOCIAL SECURITY MATTERS

We're planning to claim at 62; What do we need to know?

Dear Rusty: My wife (born May 1962) and I (born April 1963) are retired and will soon be looking to start collecting our Social Security as we each hit 62. As this is new to us, I'm wondering what things we may need to be aware of or consider as we get closer to her 62 birthday in May. Any advice or information will be appreciated!
 Signed: Planning Ahead

Dear Planning: If you and your wife are both retired from working and have decided to start your (reduced) Social Security as soon as you are eligible at age 62, then there is nothing you need to do in advance of applying. The Social Security retirement benefit amount for each of you will be determined by your individual lifetime earnings record and your age when you claim. If either of you will be eligible for a spousal boost from the other, that will be automatically applied when both of you are collecting.

If your wife plans to claim her Social Security as soon as she is eligible, she should apply for her benefits about 3 months in advance and choose the option on the application which states "I want benefits beginning with the earliest possible month and will accept an age-related reduction." For information, an applicant must be 62 for an entire month to get benefits, so your wife's first month of eligibility will be June 2024. Social Security deals only in whole months and pays benefits in the month following the month earned; so if your wife's birthday is between the 11th and 20th of the month her first Social Security payment will be received in her bank account on the third Wednesday of July. All subsequent payments will be on that same schedule. Then, when it's time for you to claim, you should follow the same process as your wife and, if either of you is entitled to a higher amount as a spouse, it will be automatically applied when your benefits later start.

Applying for benefits is a relatively simple process if done online at www.ssa.gov/apply. Note that to apply online your wife will need to first create her personal "my Social Security" account, which is easy to do at www.ssa.gov/myaccount. To prepare for applying later, you can also create your personal online account now (it's required to apply online), at which you will see what your estimated benefit will be at different ages. Of course, your wife first (and later you) can also call Social Security at 1.800.772.1213 to request an appointment to apply for SS retirement benefits in person. Applications which are not done online are usually taken over the phone vs. requiring a visit to your local Social Security office, but applying online is, by far, the most efficient method (you can link to the application process from your online account).

One important thing to be aware of: By claiming at age 62, the monthly payment for each of you will be 70% of what it would be at your full retirement age (FRA) and that is a permanent reduction. If you expect at least average longevity - about 84 for you and 87 for your wife - and if it is financially feasible, then waiting longer to claim would yield a higher monthly amount as well as the most in cumulative lifetime benefits. For those with an FRA of 67, SS retirement benefits claimed at FRA are 30% higher than at 62 and, if claimed at 70 are 75% more than at 62. And, although the decision on when to claim is always personal, a married couple should also evaluate their joint needs when deciding. One final word of caution: although you and your wife are now retired from working, be aware that if you claim SS benefits before your FRA and return to work, Social Security has an earnings test which limits how much you can earn before some benefits are taken away. The earnings test lasts until you reach your full retirement age.

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15th Annual Gaslamp Pet Parade & Pups in the Pub Party • 1pm Saturday, December 16

'Tis the season for jingling and barking all the way with San Diego's favorite feel-good parade, the Gaslamp Quarter Holiday Pet Parade and Pups in the Pub Party! Returning Saturday, December 16, this annual local favorite tradition highlights dogs, cats, and other pets as the Gaslamp "decks the paws" for a howl-y jolly good time. Pets are the stars of the show at this parade! Attendees and their companions are encouraged to dress up in costume and compete for prizes and awards. Attendees are sure to see Santa Paws, plenty of holiday pet costumes, and unique floats with intricate detailing and matching ensembles. From seasonal costumes to the Star War's cast in fur-form, each year is a delight as contestants bring their A-game and smiling faces to the Gaslamp Quarter.

The festivities commence at 1PM as the parade takes off under the Quarter Archway and through the Gaslamp Quarter. After the parade, participants will reconvene at Island between 4th and 5th where a panel of judges will announce award winners for "Best Christmas Spirit", "Best Matching Costumes", and "Best in Show" among others.

After the parade, guests are invited to stroll to the second annual Pups in the Pub Party from 2pm through 5pm following the parade. Attendees can enjoy craft beer, complimentary goody bags, live music, boutique shopping, games for pups & people, photo ops, and more!

Furry, scaly, and feathered family members alike are welcome to jingle all the way through the Gaslamp Quarter in their best festive costumes to ring in the holiday season. Registration is \$20 per pet. The Pups in the Pub party is FREE to enter! Participants can register in advance to ensure their spot in the parade is reserved as parade slots are limited. To register, visit <https://form.jotform.com/222855348637163>

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MOVIES AT THE BASES

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Saturday, December 9
 3pm The Holdovers R
 6:30pm The Marvels PG-13
Sunday, December 10
 12pm The Marvels PG-13
 3pm Priscilla R
Friday, December 15
 6pm The Hunger Games: The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes (PG-13)
Saturday, December 16
 12pm FREE Showing: How the Grinch Stole Christmas -2000 (PG)
 3pm Trolls Band Together (PG)
 6:30pm Hunger Games: Songbirds and Snakes (PG-13)
Sunday, December 17
 12pm Trolls Band Together (PG)
 3pm The Marvels (PG-13)

Pendleton Theater and Training Center
 Bldg 1330 Mainside (Across from Mainside Center)

Saturday, December 9
 1:30pm The Marvels (PG13)
 4:00pm The Holdovers (R)

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Holiday season can increase isolation and feelings of loneliness for many aging adults

Five Ways to Bring Them More Cheer This Time of Year

The holidays can be the best of times or the worst of times. High-energy celebrations, the emphasis on good tidings of joy, and reunions with families and friends can bring happiness and comfort, but they can have the opposite effect on people feeling isolated and alone, especially older adults.

“This season can be particularly difficult for older adults who don’t have as many social connections, or are hindered by physical limitations, because of all the Sonja Rosen, MD messaging around us that emphasizes activity and connectedness,” said Sonja Rosen, MD, chief, Section of Geriatric Medicine at Cedars-Sinai.

The Surgeon General of the United States has described loneliness and isolation as an epidemic affecting 50% of the population and associated with a higher risk for cardiovascular disease, dementia, stroke, depression, anxiety and death.

“Loneliness and isolation, part of what we call ‘social determinants of health,’ are established risks for poor health and early death, especially for aging adults. The health risks are equivalent to smoking up to 15 cigarettes a day,” said Cedars-Sinai geriatrician Allison Moser Mays, MD, MAS. “But we also know that being more socially connected can actually decrease the risk of mortality by as much as 50%.”

Hearing loss, memory impairment, the inability to drive safely and other functional changes that can come with age impact the desire or ability to attend holiday gatherings and can exacerbate feelings of loneliness and anxiety.

“We see a lot of our patients not want to go out as much because they are unable to communicate well. Large gatherings of family or friends or just going out to a restaurant with others can be very stressful if they are straining to hear or have difficulty following conversations. They may prefer to stay at home and isolate rather than feel out of place or anxious,” said Mays, an assistant professor of Medicine.

Grief and loss can also be significant drivers of social isolation and loneliness as people age.

“This can be a particularly difficult time of the year for

anyone who has experienced loss or who doesn’t have that sense of community they wish they had. And that really is what defines loneliness-not having the social connections that you want,” Mays said.

Geriatricians at Cedars-Sinai routinely discuss loss and grief during patient visits and can provide referrals to social workers or grief support groups.

“If you know that an individual is feeling lonely, if they’ve shared that they wish they weren’t so alone and want help, then see if there are hurdles that are keeping them isolated, such as lacking transportation or feelings of grief and loss. Find out what you can do to help them,” said Rosen, a professor of Medicine.

Ways to Support Older People During the Holiday Season

Initiate: Check in more often with older family members and friends and gently ask how they are doing and offer support. A phone call can go a long way in Allison Moser Mays, MD, MAS nurturing connectedness.

Invite: Consider inviting them to smaller, more intimate gatherings if functional limitations are an issue. Welcome them without pressuring them to fit into your plans.

Listen: Actively listen when they want to talk, even if it is a

difficult conversation.

Accommodate: Discuss an activity or simple pleasure they would enjoy rather than insisting they participate in planned events.

Grieve: Loss is felt deeply during the holidays. Pay attention and let them know you are there to listen. Meet them where they are and do not force activities they may be anxious about.

Cedars-Sinai’s Leveraging Exercise to Age in Place (LEAP) is an evidence-based exercise program proven to decrease loneliness, social isolation and the fear of falling in older adults.

“We’ve found that purpose-driven activity is a good way to form community. In our LEAP program exercise classes, some of the participants were only coming 40% of the time, but they still felt they had a sense of community and connection to the class,” Mays said.

Loneliness and social isolation do not have to be the theme of this holiday season.

“A lot of people are embarrassed to ask for help. They’re embarrassed to be alone. But they need to know that most of us struggle with the same things at one time or another. We are all part of the same community. There is help and comfort, and we can be there for one another,” Rosen said.



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