

ARMED FORCES DISPATCH



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ANDERSEN AIR FORCE BASE, GUAM -- U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. Jeffrey Furnary, 36th Expeditionary Airlift Squadron director of operations, communicates by radio with C-130 pilots at Andersen Air Force Base, Guam, Dec. 10, 2022, during Operation Christmas Drop 2022. Eight C-130 aircraft from the U.S. Air Force, Royal Australian Air Force, Japan Air Self-Defense Force, Republic of Korea Air Force and Royal New Zealand Air Force delivered 209 bundles weighing a total of more than 71,000 pounds as part of Operation Christmas Drop, an event meant to assist remote island communities in the Federated States of Micronesia and Republic of Palau. U.S. Air Force photo by Yasuo Osakabe



Above: Japan Air Self-Defense Force aircrew with the 401st Tactical Airlift Squadron wave at members of the U.S. Air Force during a multinational elephant walk at Andersen Air Force Base, Guam, Dec. 10, 2022, as part of Operation Christmas Drop 2022.



U.S. Air Force C-130J Super Hercules aircrews with the 36th Expeditionary Airlift Squadron, salute fellow airmen at Andersen Air Force Base, Guam, Dec. 10, 2022, during a multinational elephant walk as part of Operation Christmas Drop 2022.

Photo on left: Aircrew of a C-130H Hercules with 40 Squadron, Royal New Zealand Air Force, wave at members of partner nation air forces at Andersen Air Force Base, Guam, Dec. 10, 2022, during a multinational elephant walk as part of Operation Christmas Drop 2022.

Future Navy amphibious assault ship to honor Marine battles in Iraq

by Jonathan Snyder, Stars and Stripes

A future America-class amphibious assault ship will bear the name USS Fallujah to commemorate the battles Marines fought in that city during the Iraq War, Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro announced last Tuesday.

"It is an honor to memorialize the Marines, Soldiers, and coalition partners that fought valiantly and those that sacrificed their lives during both battles of Fallujah," Del Toro said at a press briefing. "This namesake deserves to be in the pantheon of iconic Marine Corps battles and the [amphibious assault ship's] unique capabilities will serve as a stark reminder to everyone around the world of the bravery, courage, and commitment to freedom displayed by those who fought in the battle."

America-class warships are the largest amphibious assault vessels in the Navy's fleet. They carry Marines to the scene of conflict or disaster, where their aircraft move them from ship to shore.

They are also small aircraft carriers designed to carry the F-35B Lightning II, a fighter capable of vertical takeoffs and short-landings, and the MV-22 Osprey tiltrotor aircraft.

The two ships of its class in service - *America* and *Tripoli* - were built with enlarged hangar decks, enhanced aviation maintenance facilities, increased aviation fuel capacity and additional aviation storerooms, according to the Navy.

America-class ships also provide a broader, more flexible command-and-control capability.

A third ship in the class, USS Bougainville, is under construction at Huntington Ingalls Industries in Pascagoula, Miss., and is expected to join the fleet in 2024, according to a Navy factsheet.

The two battles fought in Fallujah, Iraq, in 2004, first in April and again in November and December, are considered the bloodiest fighting of the Iraq War and the fiercest urban combat involving Marines since the Battle of Hue City in 1968. More than 100 coalition troops were killed and over 600 wounded, according to the Navy.

B-2 stealth bomber grounded for the Rose Bowl in wake of crash landing

By Corey Dickstein, Stars and Stripes

The Air Force has grounded its fleet of B-2 Spirit stealth bombers after one of the jets capable of delivering nuclear and conventional bombs was damaged in an emergency landing earlier this month, service officials said.

The 20-bomber fleet was grounded as of Dec. 16 so officials could inspect the aging fleet of planes for potential safety issues, the service said in a statement. Service officials didn't say how long the grounding was expected to last, but they canceled planned B-2 flyovers of the Rose Parade and Rose Bowl Game on Jan. 2 in Pasadena.

"Our No. 1 concern is the safety and security of our personnel and fleet," said Col. Daniel Diehl, the commander of the 509th Bomb Wing, which flies B-2s. "We deeply regret having to make this decision so close to the event, but we are committed to returning to Pasadena in 2024. Although we aren't participating in this flyover, we remain steadfast in our commitment to answer our nation's call."

The B-2 fleet is based at Whiteman Air Force Base, Mo., and the active-duty 509th Bomb Wing and the Air National Guard's 131st Bomb Wing can fly the aircraft from that location on missions across the globe. The bombers, specially designed to evade advanced air defenses, can fly about 6,000 nautical miles without being refueled. The Air Force has flown the \$1.1 billion aircraft since 1993.

The grounding came about a week after a B-2 crash-landed at Whiteman on Dec. 10. The plane's co-pilots were not injured in that landing, but the aircraft suffered fire and other damage during the landing, Air Force officials said.

The service attributed the incident to "an in-flight malfunction" during a routine training flight. Air Force officials have declined to provide further details about the incident, and spokespersons for the 509th Bomb Wing didn't immediately respond Dec. 19 for a request for more information.

That incident marked the second crash landing for the B-2 fleet in just more than one year. In September 2021, another B-2 - the Spirit of Georgia - skidded off the runway during an emergency landing.

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DRIVES**

Pentagon to raise military housing allowances in U.S. by 12% on average

by Alexander Riedel
Stars and Stripes

Financial assistance for housing is on the way in the new year for the vast majority of service members stationed in the U.S.

Nearly 97 percent of stateside military families are going to see a boost to their Basic Allowance for Housing, with an average increase of 12.1 percent, the Pentagon announced in a statement last Wednesday.

The new rates take effect Jan. 1 and reflect the largest year-over-year jump to housing allowances in many years. Housing allowance payments totaling an estimated \$26.8 billion will be paid to roughly 1 million service members next year, according to the statement.

Many service members have faced long waiting lists for on-base housing and found themselves priced out of quality off-base housing.

“The significant increase ... is reflective of the unique market conditions experienced across many locations nationwide over the past year,” the Defense Department statement said.

Basic housing allowance rates are calculated based on recipients’ rank, location and number of dependents. The payments aim to allow service members to afford housing on par with that of civilians earning comparable incomes in the local area.

In October, the DOD temporarily increased housing allowances in 28 locations where home prices exceeded 20 percent of the area’s BAH rate. While those enhanced rates are set to expire Dec. 31, most will remain the same, the department said.

The highest increases were



seen in California and Florida, according to an online DOD table. For example, an E-5 with dependents who is stationed near Twentynine Palms, Calif., saw a jump of 60 percent in October, from \$1,461 to \$2,352.

Allowance calculations also factor in the average cost of utilities, including electricity, heat, water and sewer payments.

Since 2019, service members have been expected to pay about 5 percent of rental or monthly mortgage costs out of pocket.

Proposed legislation under the Basic Allowance for Housing Restoration Act, introduced earlier this year, would restore the full housing allowance for service members and their families.

Pentagon officials base new housing rates on cost data collected annually for approximately 300 military housing areas in the United States, including Alaska and Hawaii.

DoD announced state-side rates for housing allowance beginning Jan. 1. Many service members have faced long waiting lists for on-base housing while being priced out of off-base housing. US Army photo by D. Malta

Five areas are slated to see a rate decrease, including Lake Charles, La., which is down 10 percent; Holloman Air Force Base, N.M., down 4 percent; Vance Air Force Base, Okla., and Long Island, N.Y., each of which is down 2 percent, according to reporting by *Military Times*.

Members stationed overseas are not going to see an immediate benefit from the change as BAH and Overseas Housing Allowance are based on different market and local survey data.

Service members can calculate their BAH payment by using the Basic Allowance for Housing calculator online.

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Service members may soon have way to recoup pet relocation costs

by Jennifer H. Svan, Stars and Stripes

Service members preparing for a military move with their pets may get some much-needed relief from exorbitant shipping costs, following the Senate's approval Dec. 15 of the \$847 billion defense spending package.

Buried in the 4,000-page document is a small provision that for the first time authorizes the Pentagon to reimburse military members for household pet transportation fees.

Those costs have soared in recent years, with fewer commercial airlines allowing pet owners to transport their animals in the cabin or as cargo.

With limited pet spaces on military flights, more families have been forced to use pet shipping services, which can cost thousands of dollars, depending on pet size and destination.

The Defense Department up until now did not reimburse service members for pet shipping fees, though some help was available through no-interest loans and grants offered by military relief societies.

The legislation approved Thursday says each of the military services' secretaries "may reimburse a member for any cost related to the relocation of a pet" up to \$4,000 per move to or from a duty station outside the continental United States and up to \$550 for a move within the United States.

The measure is part of the sweeping National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2023, which began Oct.

1. The bill awaits President Joe Biden's signature. The founder of Leave No Paws Behind USA, a nonprofit organization that assists military families with pet transportation costs to and from overseas, said the provision will go a long way in defraying expenses.

The proposed reimbursements are "huge, regardless of what rank or where you are in your military career," Liz Hensel said Friday.

This will help "military families of all branches alleviate some of that financial burden," she said.

Hensel, a Marine Corps veteran and military spouse, started advocating for military families and their pets four years ago, when her family moved from California to Japan with their German shepherd, Prince.

Storm at Naval Station Rota strikes Air Force planes, damages facilities

STARS AND STRIPES - An unexpectedly severe storm packing high winds at Naval Station Rota in Spain impacted three U.S. Air Force cargo planes and damaged the roof at the base gym, military officials said last Wednesday.

Two C-5M Super Galaxy and one C-17 Globemaster III aircraft, operated by the U.S. Air Force's 521st Air Mobility Operations Wing, "were af-



Courtesy/photo

The family lucked out, securing one of the limited pet spaces on the military-contracted Patriot Express for less than \$300. But while doing research, Hensel learned that families were paying anywhere from \$3,000 to \$7,000 to move their pets.

"I knew that wasn't right," she said. "My husband is deployed right now and per usual, our pets are what is keeping" the family grounded. "They're such an important part of our military family."

Hensel said Sen. Corey Booker, a

New Jersey Democrat, spearheaded the movement to help military families moving with pets after she contacted him two years ago.

It's unclear from the language in the NDAA provision whether the benefit can be applied retroactively to military families that paid for pet transportation after the start of the 2023 fiscal year.

"Hopefully I can use this," a person posted Friday on Leave No Paws Behind's Facebook page. "I just dropped 6 grand to get my dogs here to Japan. They fly here in 4 days."

fected by the high winds while parked on the ramp," Air Force Capt. Emma Quirk, a wing spokeswoman, said in an email statement.

The severity of Storm Efrain's impact on the planes was unclear Wednesday.

No injuries were reported, wing officials said.

Hundreds across the country were evacuated from homes as Efrain brought hurricane-force

winds and torrential downpours to Spain's southern regions of Extremadura, Castilla-La Mancha and Andalusia.

Storm winds also rerouted traffic near the gym, aquatic center, post office and other community facilities, Naval Station Rota said Wednesday on its Facebook page.

Damage estimates on base were not immediately available.

Army

- 'We kept going': Fort Detrick Soldiers reflect on experience at grueling Army competition
- Army is testing out slightly less miserable CBRN gear
- Army to start rotating Arlington horses to bigger pasture following deaths



Navy

- USS Tripoli facing ongoing drinking water issues
- Virginia attack boat program stalled over Tomahawk, hypersonic missile insurance rift
- 'Warm welcome back': USS Ronald Reagan returns to Yokosuka just in time for the holidays

Marine Corps

- Watch pilot eject after F-35B crashes on Texas runway
- Meet Joy Maria Kitashima, the Marine Corps' 1st female force sergeant major
- Drill instructor arraigned in recruit's heat injury death
- Marine marksmen bring hope, luck and skill to Okinawa range for Far East contest

Air Force

- Cloud-friendly Air Force has eyes on Pentagon's JWCC contract
- New B-21 test aircraft heraldry, barely visible at rollout, revealed
- Air Force postal clerk earns perfect score in German military skills challenge
- Severe weather hits near nuclear bomber bases; no damage reported

- C.G. rescues 3 people in Gulf after helicopter crash
- Alaska National Guard brings Santa to Scammon Bay

- 12-week military parental leave benefit will be in place by next month

Coast Guard

- Surgeon general urges vets to get updated COVID vaccine now
- Veteran lied about having a disorder to scam the VA out of over \$500,000, feds say
- Veteran swindles Navy members and loses money on 'risky' GameStop investment, feds say
- 'It still hurts': One of the last Merrill's Marauders dies in Alabama at 101

Pay & Benefits

- 12-week military parental leave benefit will be in place by next month

Veterans

- Surgeon general urges vets to get updated COVID vaccine now
- Veteran lied about having a disorder to scam the VA out of over \$500,000, feds say
- Veteran swindles Navy members and loses money on 'risky' GameStop investment, feds say
- 'It still hurts': One of the last Merrill's Marauders dies in Alabama at 101

Military Culture & History

- Tyler Perry will tell the story of an all-Black, all-female WWII battalion in a new movie
- Why Army scientists were called in to investigate the death of a Red Panda at the National Zoo

Early Bird Brief is DoD's morning round-up of the day's most important military and defense-industry stories.

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Future of US Navy base in Diego Garcia hinges on UK-Mauritius negotiations

by Wyatt Olson
Stars and Stripes

Negotiations now underway between the United Kingdom and a tiny Indian Ocean nation could have significant repercussions for a strategically located U.S. Navy installation on the island of Diego Garcia.

The British Indian Ocean Territory, which includes Diego Garcia, has been mired in controversy since the late 1960s when the British expelled the roughly 2,000 island inhabitants to clear the way for construction of a joint U.K.-U.S. military base.

Naval Support Facility Diego Garcia hosts units from the U.S. Navy, Air Force and Space Force and the U.K. Royal Navy. Located in the center of the Indian Ocean, the island's airfield can accommodate bombers, which are in relatively close range of Middle Eastern and South Asian hotspots.

The original 50-year agreement between the U.S. and U.K. was extended in 2016 and is set to expire in 2036.

Most of the locals forced out 50 years ago ended up in Mauritius and the Seychelles, where many have for decades petitioned to return to the island.

Mauritius has also maintained it holds rightful sovereignty over the entire British Indian Ocean Territory, which is made up of roughly 1,000 mostly tiny islands. The U.K. has consistently rejected Mauritius' claims and insisted that returning the original inhabitants would not be feasible.

Last month, the U.K. and Mauritian governments announced they would begin negotiations to resolve "all outstanding issues" on the territory, according to a Nov. 22 brief published by The House of Commons Library, a research arm within the U.K. Parliament.

U.S. officials have shown no inclination to abandon the island, a position highlighted last week during a visit to Diego Garcia by the head of U.S. Pacific Fleet.

Adm. Samuel Paparo spent last Thursday and Friday meeting with the installation's leadership, uniformed personnel and contract workers to discuss the importance of the facility for supporting operational forces deployed to the Indian Ocean, the Navy said in a news release Friday.

"The visit underscored the strategic importance of Diego Garcia to an enduring free and open Indo-Pacific by enabling presence, assured access, and defense to the global commons," the news release stated.

Diego Garcia was a key logistical hub during America's 20-year military intervention in Afghanistan.

Some British and American observers are concerned that China would fill any vacuum created by a withdrawal of U.S. and British military presence on Diego Garcia.

Source: Stars and Stripes. Continue reading at <https://www.stripes.com/branches/navy/2022-12-12/diego-garcia-navy-indian-ocean-china-8396930.html>.

Air Force gunship crews awarded MacKay Trophy for 'most meritorious flight' of 2021

by Airman 1st Class Natalie Fiorilli
1st Special Operations Wing Public Affairs

HURLBURT FIELD, Fla. - Chaos.

In one word, that's how the Air Force AC-130J Ghost Rider gunship crews of Shadow 77 and Shadow 78 described the scene of Kabul, Afghanistan, Aug. 15, 2021.

"There were just cars and people everywhere trying to get on to the airfield," said 1st Lt. William Bachmann, 73rd Special Operations Squadron copilot aboard Shadow 78.

For the crews of Shadow 77 and 78, the mission to support the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan during Operation Freedom's Sentinel would go on to last nearly 30 hours combined - resulting in the evacuation of roughly 2,000 Americans.

Those members of the 73rd SOS were honored for their efforts as recipients of the 2021 MacKay Trophy during a ceremony at the National Museum of the Air Force at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio, Dec. 7.

The trophy, which is administered by the Air Force and the National Aeronautic Association for the "most meritorious flight" of the year by an Air Force person or organization, was presented to the crew by Vice Chief of Staff of the Air Force Gen. David Allvin, alongside NAA President Greg Principato.

"Shadow 77 and Shadow 78 - you own, now, a special place," Allvin said. "Your name is on the same board with the greats ... there's not many that can say that. You earned your way onto that by being the best Airmen that you could when the nation called upon you."

Not a matter of "if" but "when"

In the days and weeks leading up to Aug. 15, the gunship crews tracked the latest updates as Taliban forces made advances throughout Afghanistan.

At the time, the members of the 73rd SOS at Hurlburt Field, were deployed to Al Dhafra Air Base in the United Arab Emirates.

The crews remained on standby to support the U.S. withdrawal.

"[We knew] it was going to happen at some point and that we were definitely going to be part of it," Bachmann said. "It was surreal."

On the morning of Aug. 15, the team assigned to Shadow 77 woke up to a notification telling them to report earlier than planned.

Capt. Lawrence Bria, 73rd SOS aircraft commander of Shadow 77, said the crews had just enough time to quickly grab food before heading to the gunship to get ready for takeoff.

"We didn't know how long the night was going to go," Bria said. "But, as we flew toward Afghanistan, we talked about how we were going to be there as long as we needed to be and as long as leadership would allow us to be there."

Source: Department of the Air Force. Continue reading at <https://www.af.mil/News/>.

DOD official: Norms must be established in space

by C. Todd Lopez

Last week, the United Nations approved a resolution calling on nations not to conduct destructive, direct-ascent antisatellite missile tests. The United States agreed to the resolution, while China and Russia were among just nine countries that voted against it.

Refraining from conducting those kinds of tests in space, in part, prevents the creation of new and dangerous space debris.

John F. Plumb, the assistant secretary of defense for space policy, said the agreement not to conduct such tests is just one of many norms that will need to be established in space to make that domain safe for everybody who wants to operate there. "Voting against it ... could be for all sorts of reasons," Plumb said during a discussion at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. "I'm not giving them an excuse, you don't have to vote for it to comply with it. You don't have to vote for it to have some version of it that you might enforce."

Norms in space, he said, can be established without a vote.

As the U.S. and other nations move into space, there will need to be norms established just as there are norms in place for operations on land, in the air, at sea, and even under the sea, Plumb said.

"We have established, over long periods of time, norms at sea to avoid collision - norms in the air to avoid collisions. Norms undersea. All sorts of places - ground, surface, air, subsurface - any operational domain," Plumb said.

Those established behaviors, he said, do more than just avoid collisions. They also provide a way for everybody operating in a domain to know when another actor's intentions are hostile.

Norms on the sea have existed for generations, Plumb said. In the air, for a little over 100 years. But in space, they must be established, because it is a relatively new domain for many of the nations and businesses operating there now.

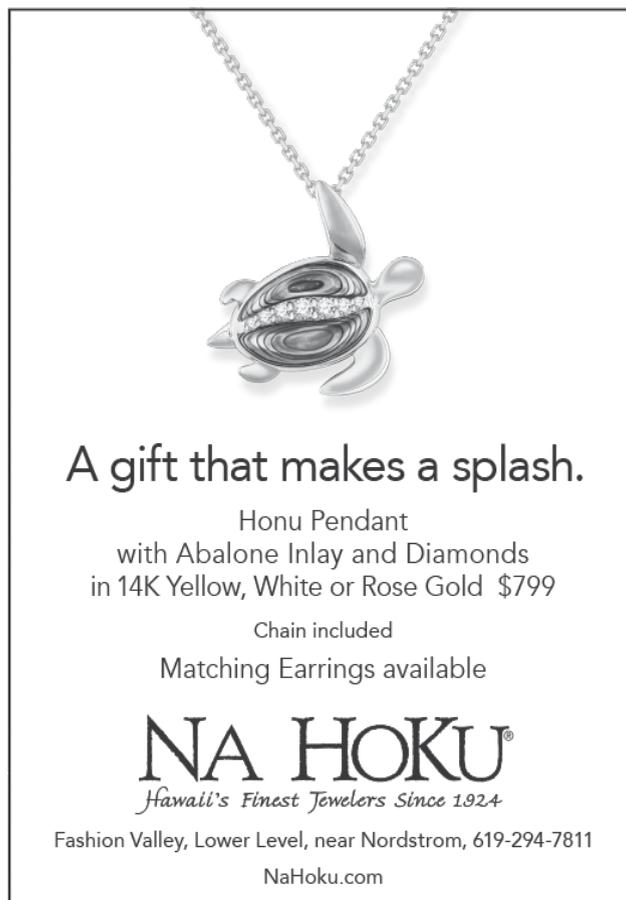
"There are all sorts of commercial companies operating all sorts of craft ... the number is going up," he said. "I think the more we can develop norms that make sense for protection of a safe, secure, stable space environment, the better it is for all spacefaring nations. It lowers the risk of miscalculation and potential escalation, accidental escalation."

With so many entities operating in space - many in the U.S. and many that are partners or aspiring partners of the federal government, Plumb said an issue his office is tackling is the overclassification of information in the space domain.

Overclassification of information - where information is marked at a higher classification than it might need to be - makes it more difficult to share information with mission partners, including partner nations, other federal partners, and commercial entities.

"I think there's clearly industry ramifications," he said. "Especially companies that might have to build entire architectures of classified information handling that can't talk to other parts of their company. We have to solve these problems so we can have our industrial base be able to move faster."

Source: Department of Defense, <https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/>



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These are approximate positions of the Navy's deployed carrier strike groups & amphibious ready groups throughout the world as of Dec. 19, 2022, based on Navy and public data. You can access this and other information through the U.S. Naval Institute's portal at <https://news.usni.org/topstories>.

Ships Underway
Total Battle Force: 293
(USS 237, USNS 56)
Deployed ships: 102
(USS 68, USNS 34)
Underway: 55
(50 Deployed, 5 Local)
Ships Deployed by Fleet
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4th Fleet, 1;
5th Fleet, 12;
6th Fleet, 21;
7th Fleet, 66.
Total 102

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SECNAV congratulates NPS Fall Quarter graduates, announces new Naval education vision

by Petty Officer 2nd Class
Leonard Weston
Naval Postgraduate School

Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro recognized 337 graduates, including 40 international students from 24 countries as the commencement speaker for the Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) during the school's Fall Quarter graduation ceremony, Dec. 16.

Del Toro, a former Navy surface warfare officer and an alumnus of NPS' space systems engineering program, also had a new announcement to the graduating class.

"I am pleased to announce a bold new vision for the naval education and innovation ecosystem," said Del Toro. "First, we're establishing the Naval Education Board comprised of senior department of the Navy leaders, for strong naval education governance. Second, we are increasing naval education resources and investments to meet the department's true education requirements," he continued. "And third, a new Naval Education Strategy that is aligned with my strategic guidance is in the works."

Del Toro also detailed his long-term vision to develop a Naval Innovation Center at NPS, which he described as a "premier military education facility tailored to innovation and experimentation, serving as a technology resource for Navy and Marine Corps warfighting development commands, as well as a go-to partner of the defense industrial base, the technology sector, and academia.

"This Naval Innovation Center at NPS will support all of our innovation efforts, from NavalX and the Marine Innovation Unit to the corridors of the Pentagon, as well as to our commanders distributed across the globe," he continued.

NPS President retired Vice Adm. Ann E. Rondeau provided the opening comments for the ceremony and welcomed the graduating students and their families and friends with a reminder that NPS is "where science meets the art of warfare."

"This is more than a tagline," said Rondeau. "In this phrase, you are the art of warfare. All of you bring your mid-career operational experience to NPS and apply it to your curricula. Through you and our distinguished facul-

ty, we deliver results throughout the year aligned to naval and defense priorities."

Rondeau stressed that to out-fight an adversary, warfighters must first be equipped to out-think them. When all things are equal in competition or combat, the human element is the decisive difference.

"As part of the Naval Education Enterprise, NPS uniquely serves as the fusion of defense-focused education, research and innovation," said Rondeau. "We work to empower you, our warrior scholars, to make a difference while you are here and then take what you learned to lead more decisively upon your return to the operational forces.

"You have established a strong bond with your fellow students and our faculty, bonds which will help you back in the fleet and operational forces. Use us!" she continued. "There are so many NPS alumni out there like you. Join them, and you will be stronger together."

Before introducing the commencement speaker, Rondeau proudly informed the audience of the newest inductee into the NPS Hall of Fame, retired Adm.

Cecil Haney. A dual degree alumnus of NPS, Haney would go on to become commander of the U.S. Pacific Fleet as well as U.S. Strategic Command, and was officially welcomed into the school's prestigious community of alumni and friends, Dec. 15.

Del Toro then took to the podium to congratulate the Fall Quarter class, opening his address by reminding the students of the honor to study and work alongside their peers representing the joint force and partner nations from around the world.

"You've had the opportunity to learn together, study together, to interact both inside and outside of the classroom, and perhaps best of all, to discuss complex problems and solve them," he said.

"The solutions to the many challenges to our national security will require analytical thinking and creative strategic problem-solving," added Del Toro. "The graduates here today know a thing or two about that."

Del Toro continued, mentioning the recent acceptance of NPS into the University Consortium for Applied Hypersonics (UCAH).

USNS John Lewis answers call for help at sea

by Sarah Burford, Military Sealift Command Pacific

The crew of fleet replenishment oiler USNS John Lewis (T-AO 205) gave an early holiday gift to a boater stranded at sea, when the ship answered a distress call off the coast of Southern California.

Lewis received a distress call from a man whose sailboat had been damaged in a storm, that tore his sails and caused the boat to take on water. Once the boater was located, the ship was able to maneuver next to the damaged sailboat. The man on the sailboat, was then able to climb Lewis' pilot ladder. Once on board the ship, he was given a security check, a medical examination, a shower, a hot meal, clothes and a ride to San Diego.

"Once we got this poor guy on board, we found out that he had been stranded for five days!" said Capt. Dan Glazier, *John Lewis*' civil service master. "I'm glad we were in the area and were able to help! Everything has a purpose, and now this guy can make it home for the holidays rather than the alternative, stuck on the ocean."

The 746 foot *Lewis* is the first of the new John Lewis-class of fleet replenishment oilers, and one of MSC's newest ships, having been christened in 2021 and accepted into MSC's fleet in 2022. It can carry 162,000 barrels of diesel ship fuel, aviation fuel and dry stores cargo. It has double hulls to protect against oil spills and strengthened cargo and ballast tanks.





K-9 handler is Navy

Sailor in the Spotlight

by Ensign Drew Verbis

Naval Base Ventura County
POINT MUGU - Master-at-Arms 3rd Class Chanel Aginaga, from Visalia, Calif., assigned to Naval Base Ventura County (NBVC) Force Protection, has been recognized as the Nov. 2022 Sailor in the Spotlight.

“Aginaga is an integral member of the team,” said Senior Chief Master-at-Arms Zachary Hough, senior enlisted advisor, NBVC. “She works hard to improve our force protection’s positive performance marks for current and future Naval security requirements.”

Aginaga has served for three years, reporting to NBVC in 2020. She graduated from Naval Technical Training Center Lackland, San Antonio, Texas.

“I didn’t join to be a K-9 Handler, said Aginaga. “When the opportunity presented itself, I understood its importance, I felt lucky, and I’m honored to be part of this community.”

Whether executing crime prevention programs or carrying out anti-terrorism measures, the Sailors working as the Navy’s military police are trained to handle difficult situations. Select members can train to become a

K-9 Handlers which specialize in explosive and drug detection, and patrol missions. Handlers form an unshakable bond with their dogs, one that often lives into the dog’s retirement, where many are eventually adopted by their handlers.

“My step-dad served in the military and that was a big part of my decision to join,” said MA3. “I think service provides experience that is unique from the civilian world, not everyone gets to do this, and I look forward to re-enlistment.”

The Sailor in the Spotlight is a program that recognizes Sailors who display outstanding drive and dedication.

“Sailors are our top priority,” said NBVC Command Master Chief William Kumley. “Petty officer Aginaga is leading the change for mission readiness and supporting our tenant commands.”

NBVC is comprised of three distinct operational facilities: Point Mugu, Port Hueneme and San Nicolas Island. It is Ventura County’s largest employer and protects Southern California’s largest coastal wetlands through its award-winning environmental program.

Master-at-Arms 3rd Class Chanel Aginaga, from Visalia, Calif., assigned to Naval Base Ventura County (NBVC) Force Protection, has been recognized as the Nov. 2022 Sailor in the Spotlight. NBVC is a strategically located Naval installation composed of three operating facilities: Point Mugu, Port Hueneme and San Nicolas Island. NBVC is the home of the Pacific Seabees, West Coast E-2D Hawkeyes, 3 warfare centers and 80 tenants. US Navy illustration by Ensign Drew Verbis

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PACIFIC OCEAN (Dec. 18, 2022) - Navy Sailors guide two F/A-18E Super Hornets to the flight deck elevator aboard aircraft carrier *Nimitz*. *Nimitz* is underway conducting routine operations. US Navy photo by MC3 Kevin Tang



PORT HUENEME (Dec. 18, 2022) - Expeditionary fast transport *City of Bismarck* makes a port call on board Naval Base Ventura County. *Bismarck* is operated by the Military Sealift Command and is the first naval service ship to honor Bismarck, N.D. US Navy photo by BM2 Javier Garza



MCAS MIRAMAR (Dec. 15, 2022) - Cpl. Raquel Dertes (left), the administration noncommissioned officer in charge with Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron (VMM) 163, is meritoriously promoted to sergeant by Staff Sgt. Chantelle Jackson, administration chief, with VMM-163, Marine Aircraft Group 16, 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing here. Dertes is a native of Naples, Fla., and Jackson is a native of Saint Ann, Jamaica. US Marine Corps photo by Cpl. Sean Potter



MCAS MIRAMAR (Dec. 15, 2022) - Navy Command Master Chief Peter T. Torres, the incoming command master chief of 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing, speaks during a change of charge ceremony here. In a Marine Corps unit, the command master chief functions as the principle Navy enlisted advisor to the commander in order to facilitate naval integration and keep the command aware of welfare and morale of its Sailors. US Marine Corps photo by Cpl. Levi Voss

High & tight at MCRD



DEC. 19, 2022 - This Marine Corps photo by Cpl. Julian Elliott-Drouin shows a drill instructor with Delta Company leading recruits in Marine Corps Martial Arts Program techniques.

Bootcamp challenge

DEC. 19, 2022 - Cpl. Joshua M. Dreher captured this holiday photo of Cpl. Manny, mascot of MCRD, San Diego, with Marines attached to Support Battalion, MCRD.



Manny's fan club

Holiday Guide: Events, festivals, attractions and parades

Celebrate the holidays in San Diego with a partial list of events, festivals, parades, attractions and theme park activities.

- Dec. 28, 5 p.m. - SDCCU Holiday Bowl and KGB Sky Show at Petco Park
 - Dec. 28 - Port of San Diego Holiday Bowl Parade
 - Last day, Jan. 8 - Rady Children's Ice Rick at Liberty Station
 - Last day, New Years Day - Hotel Del Coronado Skating By The Sea
 - Last day, Dec. 31 - How the Grinch Stole Christmas at the Old Globe Theatre
 - Last day, Jan. 8 - A Very Furry Christmas at Sesame Place
 - Last day, New Years Day - Winter Wonder Beachside at Belmont Park
 - Last day, Jan. 8 - SeaWorld Christmas Celebration
 - Last day, New Years Day - Lightscape at the San Diego Botanical Gardens
 - Last day, Jan. 8 - Holidays at LEGOLAND
 - Last day, Jan. 2 (select days) - Wild Holidays at the San Diego Zoo Safari Park
 - Last day, New Years Day (select days) - Snow and Glow at the Del Mar Fairgrounds
 - Last day, New Years Day - Jungle Bells at the San Diego Zoo
- Courtesy of Newsradio 600 KOGO - San Diego's News & Information Station*





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Discrimination, sex assault are among barriers that prevent more women from serving in special ops forces, watchdog study says

by Doug G. Ware
Stars and Stripes

Editor's note: Read this story in its entirety at <https://www.stripes.com/theaters/us/2022-12-16/special-operations-women-study-pentagon-8445539.html>.

WASHINGTON - There are several possible reasons why less than 10 percent of the military's special operations forces are women - including discrimination, sexual assault and conflicting military policies, a government watchdog concluded in a study released last week.

In 2021, fewer than one in 10 special operations forces troops were women, according to Special Operations Command, or SOCOM, the military's unified command that oversees the special operations components of the Army, Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps.

"Women make up less than 10 percent of SOCOM service members, compared with about 19 percent DOD-wide," according to the report. "SOCOM leaders have acknowledged existing issues of gender discrimination, sexual harassment and assault,



An Army Green Beret displays a unit patch and tabs. Army photo by Austin Berner

and career impediments, and the need to do more."

The disproportionately low percentage of women serving in special operations forces sparked the Government Accountability Office study, which concluded several factors are probably responsible - including gender bias, sexual assault and harassment and conflicting policies across the Defense Department.

Another possible reason for fewer women serving in special operations roles is SOCOM is not getting important data that could help prevent and respond to the barriers faced by women, according to the study.

"SOCOM has limited access to timely, accurate, and complete

data on its personnel, including incidents of gender discrimination, sexual harassment, and sexual assault," the 169-page GAO study states. "While SOCOM has taken some steps to address its data access limitations, the [Pentagon] has not established a collaborative process to ensure SOCOM has access. Without such a process to facilitate SOCOM's access to needed data, SOCOM leadership will not be positioned to identify trends or address urgent concerns."

The report identified several other likely barriers to women serving in the special forces. They include demanding physical standards, pregnancy and child care issues, social support and isolation and reduced access to women's health care.

Further, the GAO found conflicting policies across the military. It said some of the branches have policies within special operations environments that do not align with the Pentagon policies.

For example, under Defense Department policy, complaints about gender discrimination or sexual assault in joint environments must be handled by the

accuser's service branch. The Army, Marines and Air Force have policies, however, that state such complaints must be handled by the offender's branch.

"Without the military services revising their policies ... to help ensure alignment with DOD policies, such cases could be processed inconsistently across [the department]," the study states.

The GAO report makes several department-wide and branch-specific recommendations:

- Army, Marine Corps and Air Force policies for discrimination and harassment in joint environments should be revised to align with the Pentagon's policy.

- The Pentagon should create a collaborative process to share data that could help SOCOM prevent and respond to barriers for women in special operations.

- The Pentagon should clarify which office will create required annual assessments on the integration of women into previously closed positions, such as special operations forces.

- The Pentagon should create a consistent process for use of those annual assessments - including a plan of action to address barriers to women in special operations forces.

- The Pentagon should do a comprehensive analysis about barriers for women serving in special operations forces.

- After the comprehensive analysis, the Pentagon should develop a plan to address barriers or career impediments for women in special operations forces - and it should include clear goals, objectives, metrics and milestones.

The GAO said the study is based on policy reviews, interviews with various Pentagon and SOCOM officials, conversations with officials at five special operations installations and interviews with 51 women who serve or formerly served in special operations forces.

Biggest-ever group of Ventura County students graduate from pre-engineering program

by Thomas McMahon

Naval Surface Warfare Center, Port Hueneme Division

PORT HUENEME - More than 30 high school students from around Ventura County graduated this week from Naval Surface Warfare Center, Port Hueneme Division's fall 2022 Pre-Engineering Program - the biggest cohort to date for the rigorous after-school program.

The Dec. 13 graduation ceremony at the Oxnard Harbor District office in Port Hueneme culminated a 12-week career exploration course in which 32 students from Oxnard Union High School District, Ventura Unified School District (USD) and Santa Paula USD learned from real-life naval engineers and gained hands-on experience.

"One of the beauties of this program is what we call positive professional touch points," said Ramon Flores, NSWC PHD's science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) coordinator, speaking to families at the graduation. "Your students had the opportunity to engage with more than 30 engineers and scientists over the course of 12 weeks to learn all things engineering."

NSWC PHD facilitates the Pre-Engineering Program twice per year in partnership with the school districts and other naval organizations. The fall 2022 session was the first to include students from Santa Paula USD, which signed an Educational Partnership Agreement with NSWC PHD in July, enabling the naval command to share educational resources with the school district.

During the Pre-Engineering Program, students rotated through engineering instructors to hear their career stories and to design, build and test projects that represent several disciplines, from systems and electrical engineering to environmental and aeronautical engineering. The instructors were professional engineers with NSWC PHD, Naval Facilities Engineering and Expeditionary Warfare Center Naval Base Ventura County, the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, and the Engineering Duty Officer School on the NSWC PHD campus.

For example, Alan Jaeger, a manager with NSWC PHD's research and technology office, taught a class on unmanned systems, such as aerial drones, at the command's Fathomwerx Lab in the Port of Hueneme. The students learned how unmanned systems work and what they can do, from environmental tasks to search and rescue to naval missions. The aspiring engineers then built their own unmanned aerial vehicles and flew them in Fathomwerx Lab's nearly 40-foot-tall indoor drone cage. "It was a great opportunity for the students to learn about UAVs from a systems engineering approach and then get the hands-on experience of building one and flying it," Jaeger said.

After applying for the competitive Pre-Engineering Program through their school counselors, the selected participants took the weekly classes at Fathomwerx Lab on top of their regular academic schedules. After completing the program, the students earned credit toward graduation, a certificate of achievement and a letter of recommendation signed by NSWC PHD Deputy Technical Director Michael Ladner.

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Webinars of Intrigue: How CALTAP went virtual during the pandemic to keep vets connected

by Jeff Jardine

California Dept of Veterans

Editor's Note: Read this story in its entirety at <https://calvet-connect.blog/2022/12/15/cal-tapintrigue/>

When the COVID-19 pandemic arrived in early 2020 and shut many things down, CalVet stepped up.

When other offices stopped answering their phones or were unable to reply, CalVet picked up.

When military bases, college campuses, and other community-based points of connection closed, CalVet booted up and took vital information right into the veterans' homes via webinars.

Clearly, while the pandemic altered the way we all live and work, it didn't change the needs of California's 1.6 million veterans nor those about to join them as they prepared to leave the military. In fact, they needed help and services perhaps more than ever during a time of personal and public health risks, job layoffs, and other uncertainties.

CalVet quickly adapted to keep them connected, especially,

through outreach programs like the California Transition Assistance Program, or CalTAP.

"Our CalTAP staff pivoted during the early weeks of the pandemic by creating and hosting virtual informational sessions and webinars at an astounding pace," said Keith Boylan, deputy secretary of the Veterans Services Division. "I believe it made a difference in veterans' lives and demonstrated what this team is capable of."

Like other government agencies, CalVet headquarters in Sacramento closed to public access in March 2020 and employees began working remotely. Calls to headquarters immediately began rolling over to CalVet's eight Local Interagency Network Coordinators throughout the state, enabling callers to speak with a CalVet rep directly during business hours. That helped individual vets get answers. Reaching the masses required a more high-tech approach.

CalTAP helps veterans and their families connect with the community-based system of care across all segments of the veteran life cycle. When the bases and campuses closed, CalTAP quickly transitioned from in-

person – their primary method of outreach – to online webinars. In doing so, CalVet maintained the access to outreach, County Veterans Service Offices, and the ability to make general inquiries that veterans and their families rely upon. Additionally, the department opened its virtual platform to trusted community partners that were struggling to maintain service levels.

Created in 2017, CalTAP sought to connect with vets far upstream from the normal contact period that's done after separation from the military, and link them to benefits specifically available to California veterans. The program debuted with a presentation at Ventura College and made its first base appearance at Camp Pendleton in June 2018.

CalTAP now operates on 26 of California's military installations and 31 institutions of higher learning. During those first two years, CalTAP hosted or participated in scores of events - all in person. Then COVID-19 stopped everything in its tracks in March 2020. With a limited staff and zero experience in remote learning, CalTAP quickly refocused.

"It took us a month," said Josh

Zebley, Marine Corps veteran and CalTAP's section chief for training and evaluations.

They mapped out a game plan that involved bringing in experts from outside agencies and stakeholders, in addition to CalTAP staff. The first two webinars, featuring Employment Development Department specialists, drew 150 and 178 participants, respectively. "People were being laid off. They definitely needed information," he said.

They followed with three consecutive webinars involving mental health, addiction and suicide prevention, and legal aid for veterans. The webinar became their lifeblood for reaching vets and their families.

"Webinars allowed us to expand our audience when we couldn't travel," said Jamie Jones, CalVet's chief of Veterans and Community Engagement.

Granted, webinars have existed for years. In CalVet's case, necessity was the mother of adaptivity rather than invention. Since launching that first one in April 2020, CalTAP has offered more than 470 virtual events that have drawn roughly 16,000 participants.

Staff has learned something from every webinar. Each live webinar includes an opportunity for the veterans to interact with the subject matter experts by asking questions for all to hear, or submitting questions that can be answered offline. And many of them are recorded and available on CalVet's YouTube channel for those who were unable to participate during the live event.

CalTAP staff also recognized the need to focus each webinar on a single topic. Staff learned that some older veterans don't understand the benefits available to them.

"We wanted to eliminate the barriers to care," Jones said. "The first elderly vets webinar, we had 120 people participate."

The early returns showed that CalTAP had tapped into something that would only get bigger and better.

"We started advertising on a large scale and covering crucial resources to all at this very scary time of uncertainty," said Jennifer Rudquist, Air Force veteran and CalTAP's training coordinator.

Today, CalTAP provides vet-

erans and their families with the full scope of education and training to meet their needs, such as job assistance and Employment Development Department resources, mental health and suicide prevention, educational opportunities, emergency preparedness, help for aging adults, benefits and resources to aid retired veterans, information about presumptive diseases and conditions, resources for women veterans, and starting a business.

They work with stakeholders such as non-profits like US-VETS and Swords to Plowshares and various other government and non-government entities.

"We highlight and partner with other divisions in CalVet such as CalVet (Veterans) Homes, CalVet (Veterans Memorials and Cemeteries) and other nongovernmental organizations that participate and help make our events meaningful to veterans and their families," Rudquist said.

Feedback from participants has been overwhelmingly positive, showing the importance of connecting veterans and their families with their community-based systems of care.

Christmas with the crud

This holiday season, I've done everything differently. Due to a nasty respiratory infection that has been terrorizing my lungs and sinuses for nearly a month, our family's time-honored Christmas traditions have been replaced with alternative holiday rituals.

Normally, I would fill bowls with festive red and green M&Ms and place them throughout the house, enticing our family members with this special holiday treat. Instead, I've adorned our house with sticky bottles of cherry flavored Robitussen DM and Kleenex tissues sopping with verdant snot. In lieu of singing Christmas carols, I've been uttering deep, raspy vocalizations that would give "Exorcist" demon Pazuzu a run for his money.

Rather than putting on my grandmother's red beaded necklace for a pop of holiday color, I'm wearing two deep circles around my eyes so dark, I look like I was hit by an Amazon delivery truck. Instead of hitting the stores for Christmas presents lovingly picked for loved ones, I've done all my shopping slumped over a laptop, ordering thoughtless gift cards with messages that say "Merry Christmas!" but really mean "Go out and buy your own damned gift this year, sucker."

In lieu of watching my favorite Christmas movies while I trim a freshly cut tree, I dragged a fake tree from the basement and plugged it in before collapsing onto the couch, where I fell asleep with my mouth open while watching a crime documentary about serial killers. I would have plugged in one of my vintage ceramic Christmas trees to light up my bedroom, but this year the outlet

beside my bed supplies electricity to a cool mist humidifier intended to liquify mucus. Rather than dreaming of dancing sugar plums, I've been

The Meat & Potatoes of Life



by
Lisa
Smith
Molinari

sleeping with my head elevated to facilitate sinus drainage, waking periodically when my lungs seize up with a sudden coughing jag.

Instead of ringing Christmas bells, I'm ringing up the Naval Health Clinic at the crack of 7:30 am to beg for a follow up appointment with my PCM because I still feel like crap after a full course of Prednisone. Instead of writing holiday cards for friends and family far and wide, I'm using my pen to complete sudoku puzzles while I wait in the base pharmacy for my prescriptions to be filled. Rather than nibbling nostalgic Christmas cookies, I've been trying to choke down Augmentin horse pills needed to kill the bacteria that conveniently infected my sinuses two weeks after a respiratory virus invaded my lungs.

Instead of celebrating Christmas like I always have with my family and our annual traditions, I've been too sick and tired to deal with it all.

The only comfort in this most unfortunate holiday has been that I am not alone. Misery loves company

as they say, and this holiday season, many people have been miserably sick like me. Hospitals all over the United States have been swamped with patients complaining of respiratory symptoms of coronavirus, flu virus, or respiratory syncytial virus (RSV). In early December, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) warned us to mask up again, not necessarily for Covid-19, but to guard against a possible "triple-demic" surge of the three viruses which could overwhelm our understaffed healthcare system.

The CDC also urged the public to get flu shots, get the latest Covid-19 booster, wash hands, social distance, take rapid tests, yaddada, yaddada, yaddada. Ironically, experts link this year's explosion in flu and RSV cases to people's vulnerable immune systems after two years of masking and minimizing exposure to viruses.

I was signed up to get my flu shot and Covid bivalent booster on December 5th at my local military health clinic. However, our clinic's Covid-19 policy wouldn't permit anyone in the facility with cough, runny nose or fever, so I had to cancel my immunizations despite the fact that I'd tested negative for Covid.

So let me get this straight... I can't get boosted for Covid because I have RSV symptoms, and I have RSV symptoms because I've been protecting myself from Covid?

Just like the holidays, I'm too sick and tired to sort it all out. Instead, I'll wish you all a Mucusy Crustmas... er, I mean, a Merry Christmas!

Review of Avatar - The Way of Water

Rarely does a sequel live up to the standard set by the original, but Avatar: The Way of Water succeeds at that lofty goal and, in some meaningful ways, goes well beyond that.

The Way of Water is set more than ten years beyond Avatar. You'll see that people have aged, and relationships have matured. The theme of family is explored.

Visually Pandora, the lush moon "which orbits a gas-giant planet called Polyphemus in the Alpha Centauri-A star system," seems more beautiful, breathtaking and real than it did before, in Avatar. The reason - 10 years of advances in filmmaking technology.

3D movies, as they were seen in theaters, used to look too dark, and the 3D effect gave some people headaches. In contrast, for The Way of Water, Dolby Vision 3D is as bright, colorful and vivid as can be, and the definition is high for the action sequences. It's truly lifelike. You'll feel like you're really on Pandora. In the theater that I was in, I also felt sudden impacts through the seat of my reclining lounge chair.

For the ultimate in realism, the specially developed "image-based facial performance capture" system accurately recorded even the smallest facial and eye movements. Underwater performance-capture sequences were actually shot underwater, with everyone - cast and crew alike - holding their breath! Kate Winslet astounded everyone by being able to hold her breath underwater for more than seven minutes.

Even though the majority of Na'vi costumes were digital on-screen,

physical costumes were also made to in order to see and realistically replicate their natural movements when worn.

As for story, admittedly it would have been difficult for The Way of Water to be better than the original. After all, the setting and the alien characters of Avatar were all new

AutoMatters™ & More by Jan Wagner



and original. The sequel is, from that respect, a continuation of what had come before it, in Avatar, complete with the Na'vi and the human Sky People, but there is more of an emphasis on the importance of family and clans, and of the spiritualism that is a fundamental part of all life on Pandora. Interpersonal relationships are explored in meaningful new ways that contribute to multiple storylines, as do the actions of the creatures and the plant life on Pandora. Much of what we hear is spoken in the language of the Na'vi, which seems quite natural. When all of this is combined with the new technology, the sense that you're really there on Pandora is heightened.

Before you see Avatar: The Way of Water, I'd like to offer you some very important advice. Unless you have seen it recently, first watch

Avatar 2009. I thought that I remembered more of it than I did, so I didn't watch Avatar again before watching The Way of Water. That was a big mistake.

This sequel builds on the interpersonal relationships and events that were established in Avatar. Not remembering those from years ago, I sometimes struggled to comprehend the rationale for what was taking place in the sequel — so much so, that after I saw the sequel I sought out and watched Avatar again (streaming on Disney+). After doing that, the sequel made much more sense. Of course, now I want to watch the sequel again too, so that I will have seen everything in the correct sequence. It would have been much more enjoyable to have watched the two movies in their correct order the first time around.

Spend a little extra and see the sequel at a Dolby Cinema in Dolby Vision 3D, and in a theater with comfortable, reclining movie seats. This epic sequel is over three hours long.

Avatar: The Way of Water, directed by James Cameron, is in theaters now. Be sure to stay and watch the credits, where more will be revealed. Learn more about the movie at <https://www.avatar.com/movies/avatar-the-way-of-water>.

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THINGS TO DO AROUND TOWN

Holiday Festival: Camp Christmas, Wed-Fri, Dec 21-23, 5:30-9pm. \$10-\$17. Tickets online. Pine Valley Train Depot, climbing wall, bow & arrow arcade, hayrides, bbq. Altitude is 4000 ft, evenings are cold! Winter attire please-jackets, snow hats, scarves, etc. 8668 Pine Creek Road, Pine Valley, 91962

Holiday Market, Fri, Dec 23, 4-10pm, \$10-\$14. Tickets online. Artisan shops, Christmas lights, seasonal food, Santa. Petco Park, downtown SD.

Imperial Beach Farmers' Market, Fridays, 2-7pm. Free. Veggies, fruits, arts & crafts, family entertainment. IB Pier Plaza.

Guided Nature Walk, Sat, Dec 24, 8:30-10am. Free. Kumeayaay Lake Campground, Santee. mtrp.org

Guided Nature Walk, Saturdays, Dec 24, 9:30-11am. Free. Mission Trails Regional Park, San Carlos. mtrp.org

Dr. Seuss's How the Grinch Stole Christmas, Thru Dec 31, at The Old Globe. theoldglobe.org

Snow N Glow Holiday Festival, Thru Jan 1, Del Mar www.delmar-fairgrounds.com

The Festive Forest, Fri-Sun, 4:30-8:30pm. \$5-\$8. 1/2 mile holiday lights walk. Closed toe walking shoes please. Banner Ranch Julian, 36342 Highway 78. Thru Dec 31.

Lightscape, Ongoing thru Sun, Jan 1. \$18-\$29. Immersive 1 mile walk thru world of wonder, 1 million lights. Tickets online. San Diego Botanic Garden, Encinitas.

Feliz Navidad, Ongoing til Sun, Jan 1, 11am-4pm. Free. Family-friendly immersive experience designed to bring the spirit of the holidays to life. Fiesta de Reyes, Juan Street at Calhoun Street, Old Town San Diego.

Ice skating outdoors: Liberty Station, 875 Dewey Road, \$20. Hotel Del Coronado, 1500 Orange Ave, \$40.

Christmas Day, Sun, Dec 25
Escondido Cars & Coffee. Every Sunday Morning, 8-11am. Free. Kit Carson Park, 3333 Bear Valley Parkway, Escondido. Cars, trucks, bikes!
Julian Certified Farmers' Market, Sundays, 11am-4pm. Free. Wynola Farms Marketplace, 4470 Highway 78, Julian.

Kwanzaa, Mon, Dec 26
LA Chargers at Indianapolis Colts, Mon, Dec 26, 5:15pm.
Snow N Glow Holiday Festival Dec 26-Jan 1. Del Mar www.delmar-fairgrounds.com

San Diego Holiday Bowl Big Balloon Holiday Parade. Wed, Dec 28, 10am. NEW ROUTE! www.holidaybowl.com

Holiday Bowl and KGB Skyshow, Wed, Dec 28. Petco Park www.holidaybowl.com

San Diego Int'l Auto Show, Dec 30-Jan 2. SD Convention Center www.sdautoshow.com

New Years Eve, Sat, Dec 31
Nerd Comedy for New Years Eve, Sat, Dec 31, 7pm. \$35. Clever comedy and a nerdy audience make this Alcohol-Free New Year's Eve one-of-a-kind. Scientist turned comedian Tim Lee hosts with several top nerd comics in the state. Get tickets online at www.oceansidetheatre.org or call the box office at 760-433-8900.

New Year's Day, Sun, Jan 1
LA Chargers vs LA Rams, Sun, Jan 1, 5:20pm

Tournament of Roses Rose Parade, Monday, Jan 2, Pasadena
Rose Bowl NCAA at Rose Bowl, Mon, Jan 2, Pasadena

Holidays at Legoland California Resort. Thru Jan 2. legoland.com

Promenade Market downtown San Diego. 10am, Ongoing Saturdays thru Dec. Free. Enjoy crafts, coffee, and street food including Mexican, wood-fired pizza, gyros, smashed avocado toast, kettle corn, waffles and crepes, more. Ruocco Park, 585 Harbor Lane, SD, 92101.

Street Food Market. Sat-Sun, 10-4, ongoing thru Dec. Free. Lane Field Park Market is a street food market showcasing 20+ food vendors, boutique coffee, live music from 12:30-2:30pm. Food includes Vietnamese bao, Thai burgers, wood-fired pizza, waffles & crepes, Mexican, empanadas, sushi and poke, smoothies, hot mini-donuts, more. Lane Field Park, 1009 North Harbor Drive, SD.

Wishing you a safe and relaxing Holiday Season! It's not about the stuff! Watch a movie, sing some songs, take a walk, make cookies, make memories.

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MOVIES AT THE BASES

Movies & times subject to change. * Indicates last showing
 Visit navydispatch.com/entertainment_03movies.htm to find your base theatre information

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

FREE entry to the first 300 customers (per showing), no outside food, concessions will be available.

Thursday, December 22
 6pm The Menu r
Friday, December 23
 6pm Devotion pg13
Saturday, December 24
 1pm Strange World pg
Sunday, December 5
 Closed for Christmas
Thursday, December 29
 5:50pm Devotion pg13
Friday, December 30
 5:50pm I Wanna Dance With Somebody pg13
Saturday, December 31
 12:50pm Strange World pg
 3:10pm Black Panther: Wakanda Forever pg13
Sunday, January 1
 12:50pm Strange World pg
 3:10pm Devotion pg13
Thursday, January 5
 5:50pm I Wanna Dance With Somebody

Bob Hope Theater 577-4143 MCAS Miramar Bldg 2242 ★

Friday, December 23
 6pm Devotion (PG-13)
Saturday, December 24
 3pm Strange World (Animation) PG
 6:30pm Devotion PG-13
Sunday, December 25
 CLOSED: In Honor of Christmas Day
Check <http://www.mccsmiramar.com/theater/>

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

Outside food and beverage are NOT permitted. Debit/credit cards only.

Friday, December 23
 6pm Devotion pg13
Saturday, December 24
 3pm Strange World (Animation) PG
 6:30pm Devotion PG-13
Sunday, December 25
 CLOSED: In Honor of Christmas Day
Friday, December 30
 6pm I Wanna Dance With Somebody pg13
Saturday, December 31
 3pm Black Panther: Wakanda Forever pg13
 6pm Devotion pg13
Sunday, January 1
 1pm Strange World pg
 3pm Devotion pg13

Q-Zone - NAB Bldg. 337 • 619-437-3190 ★

Family Friendly Movies:
 Tues, Thur, Sat: 11 am. NDVDs
Friday, December 23
 11am The Santa Clause (1994) pg
 1pm Special Holiday Movie Showing
 5pm Don't Worry Darling r
Saturday, December 24
 11am A Christmas Story pg
Monday, December 26
 5pm Christmas with the Kranks pg
Tuesday, December 27
 11am Beetlejuice pg
 5pm Nope r

Pendleton Theater and Training Center ★
 Closed Dec 24 & 31

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

Across

- 1 Calendario square
- 4 SAT prep topic
- 9 George Harrison played one in "Norwegian Wood"
- 14 Point B, usually
- 15 Warren Buffett's birth city
- 16 Stunned
- 17 Makeup of some facial masks
- 18 Big wheels?
- 19 Breads sometimes served with meze
- 20 Middle of dinner?
- 21 Impolite look
- 22 Weapon for Buffy
- 23 Put down
- 25 Competitive event
- 27 Some anti-mob agents
- 28 Argument-ending words
- 31 Relevant
- 33 Fluffy herder
- 34 Kind of bird Blu is in the 2011 movie "Rio"
- 35 1981 hit known for its drum break
- 40 10th-century Holy Roman emperor
- 41 "The Bathers" artist
- 42 Mate-related
- 45 Carlisle of the Go-Go's
- 46 Waffle ___
- 47 Baja resort
- 49 Many a Snapchat user
- 50 Autumn colors
- 52 Current moment
- 55 Is in the past?
- 56 Ready to blow
- 57 Like Romantic music
- 58 Watson's co.
- 59 No-holds-barred happening
- 60 Nocturnal carnivore
- 61 Aromatic neckwear

- 62 Deltoid-working exercise
- 63 Gone from the table
- 64 "Silent Spring" subj.

Down

- 1 Lorenzo who sponsored Michelangelo
- 2 How Gregorian chants are sung
- 3 Seasons, in a way
- 4 Bks. in a set
- 5 Drop
- 6 Muscly Chevy
- 7 This minute, in Tijuana
- 8 Manicure layer
- 9 Tentative tastes
- 10 Bent on victory
- 11 Teahouse floor covering
- 12 Come to
- 13 Begrudge
- 24 Many profile portraits
- 26 Response to huge applause, maybe
- 29 Plans for losers?
- 30 It's about 950 miles north of LAX
- 32 Comic-Con event
- 34 Sports doc's pic
- 36 Gilbert and Sullivan operetta that satirizes Parliament
- 37 Out of control
- 38 Pull-out furniture item
- 39 Convey
- 42 Act stingily
- 43 Sommeller, at times
- 44 More affordable, perhaps
- 45 Brit's car hood
- 48 "Go, me!"
- 51 Spots
- 53 Sugar source
- 54 Panache

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Marine Corps veteran stays connected through service

by **Claudia Sanchez-Bustamante, MHS Communications**

At 27, U.S. Marine Corps Staff Sgt. Adam Foutz medically retired in October 2015, after nearly 10 years of dedicated military service due to complications from an autoimmune disease.

The wounded warrior enlisted in the U.S. Marines the summer prior to beginning his senior year in high school. He selected the Marines deliberately due to the impact a neighbor he met in his youth had on him.

Joining the "Crème de la crème"

Foutz was an avid runner in his youth and planned to work toward a running scholarship to go to college because he knew he and his mom couldn't afford the expense.

"I was raised by a single mother with five kids. I'm the youngest," he said. "Our area wasn't the best, and most kids got into sports, pursued education, or ended up on drugs."

He also didn't know much about the military growing up. But when a new neighbor, Tony, moved down the street from his family's home in Girard, Ohio, Foutz's world changed.

Tony, his dogs, and Foutz quickly became friends, with Tony sharing his stories about his time at QuanticoOpens FBI.gov, training dogs for the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Tony had suffered a career-ending car accident that left him paralyzed.

"I would help him with his dogs

and around the house," recalled Foutz. "He would consistently encourage me to consider leaving the area, joining the service—specifically the Marine Corps—because they were the "crème de la crème," as he would say."

Years later, the summer before starting his senior year in high school, a buddy from his cross-country running team at school invited Foutz to church.

"The youth pastor talked about finding God's plan for my life," he said. "I prayed about it, was open to it, and a month later, I got a call from a Marine Corps recruiter."

By then, it had become clear he would not get the scholarship he had sought to attend college.

"Considering all factors, my faith, and keeping my mom in mind, it seemed reasonable to pursue the Marine Corps," he said.

After all, Tony had sold him on the idea it was "the best" military branch.

"Joining the Marine Corps during a time of war didn't make the decision easier, but [my mom and I] both felt it was my calling and the right path to pursue," he said.

It was 2005. One month after the recruiter's call, Foutz enlisted in the Marines through the Delayed Entry Program. This meant he would finish high school and ship to boot camp with the Marines in an open contract after graduating.

A Successful Career

"I ended up being placed under supply administration, which I felt



Despite his medical retirement, Marine Corps veteran Adam Foutz is an active participant of the Military Adaptive Sports Program. In the photo, he runs the 2021 Virtual Challenge.

would be a great career path," said Foutz. "I thought it branched into accounting and could be a good transferable skill beyond the Marine Corps, if and when that time came."

It turned out that supply administration went into asset management, internal controls, records management, acquisitions, contracting, procurement, logistics, financial management, and some accounting, he explained—fields that taught him the skills for his current role supporting the Defense Health Agency's Contract Acquisition ExecutiveOpens Health.mil office.

During a deployment to Okinawa, Japan, Foutz was recognized for

obtaining 100% accountability of U.S. assets and managing over \$2 million in global war on terrorism funds in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom.

In later assignments, he was recognized as Marine of the Quarter and Support Marine of the Year. He also served as instructor of water survival as well as for the Marine Corps Martial Arts ProgramOpens Fitness.Marines.mil

Despite his success, in 2009, Foutz started to suffer unexpected weight loss and fatigue. It took a year for doctors to diagnose him with ulcerative colitis.

"I tried to push through it, but the severity of my condition made it difficult for me to graduate from drill instructor school," he explained. "Following the medical officer's advice, I left the program and was transferred to Marine Forces Special Operations Command, where my condition prevented me from participating in MARSOC deployments."

A relapse at a later assignment marked the beginning of Foutz's process to medically retire.

"In 2014, I was diagnosed with Crohn's disease, before attending a Medical Evaluation Board," he said. "This experience completely changed the trajectory of my life and career. I was on a relatively fast-track for promotion."

Foutz was medically retired the following year.

After his diagnosis, the treatment became more aggressive, resulting in side effects including liver

damage, decreased bone density, muscular atrophy, arthralgia, and joint pain.

"Some treatments came with neurological side effects that caused my legs to give out and overtime, caused me to struggle to walk for nearly a year," he said.

Life After Retirement

Still, retirement and the side effects of his treatment have not stopped Foutz from serving. As a wounded warrior and retiree, he continues to support the military and veteran community in his role at DHA.

He helps improve processes and manage risks "that directly support the program offices, contracts, and agreements that support our service members, veterans, and beneficiaries," he said.

He has been recognized for implementing a risk management and internal control program for the Military Health System and for assisting the DHA in drafting its "first-ever" annual financial report, among other distinctions.

In addition, he developed a new mission and vision for his life: To "give back to our service members and veterans through advocating for Military Adaptive Sports programsOpens Warriorcare.DODlive.mil and educating service members and veterans about Recovery

CoordinationOpens Warriorcare.DOD.live.mil programs."

He also actively participates in the Military Adaptive Sports Program as an athlete and advocate.

The moments of darkness helped Foutz realize he "had endless possibilities," he said. Despite struggling to walk, he worked to regain his physical strength and began participating in challenges, including a body building competition and a 50-kilometer race in 2019, and a virtual 100-mile race in 2022.

"Being connected to the active-duty military and military veteran community is invaluable," he said. "As I share my story, it reinforces the healing in my life, but I also see the hope and encouragement it brings to other wounded, ill, and injured service members and veterans."

He feels that sharing his story bridges gaps and raises awareness.

"I think we all experience setbacks and life events that require us to reevaluate our lives," he said. "By sharing and being connected, I believe it helps people to understand that—even though their circumstances may be unique—they are not alone in their recovery, in their transition, and there is more life to be lived and experienced beyond our current circumstances."



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