

# ARMED FORCES DISPATCH



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**GENDER REVEAL** Interior Communications Electrician 2nd Class Henry Johnson, from San Diego, celebrates a gender reveal aboard aircraft carrier USS Theodore Roosevelt, May 6, 2024. Theodore Roosevelt, flagship of Carrier Strike Group Nine, is underway conducting routine operations in the 7th Fleet area of operations. U.S. Navy photo by MC2 Andrew Benvie

## Construction begins in Point Loma for military Child Development Center

by Mario Icarl, NAVFAC Southwest

SAN DIEGO - Naval Facilities Engineering Systems Command Southwest joined members from Naval Base Point Loma, Navy Region Southwest, and contracted partners from RA Burch to mark the start of construction for a child development center for Naval Base Point Loma May 10 here.

"It's truly a pleasure to be here with everyone to share our pride in military families and our unwavering support and commitment to the needs of our military children," said Naval Base Point Loma Commanding Officer Capt. Jeff Yackeren. "This endeavor is a result of the Navy's relentless efforts to expand child care facilities, reduce waiting lists, and streamline the child placement process to a goal of three months or less. The current waitlist, which fluctuates on a daily basis, stands at approximately 1,600 children. It is our aim to address this demand and provide timely childcare services to our military families."

The planned 35,987 square foot child development center project is a large classification design and construction project. The Child Development Center, when completed, is scheduled to provide childcare and development services for children in age groups of infants and pre-toddlers, toddlers, and pre-school and pre-kindergarten. The NBPL Child Development Center was designed to have adequate space for children between six weeks and 5 years of age.

This project was designed to provide an essential facility offering military personnel and authorized civilians and their families with full time, quality childcare and development for 292 children. This project is in support of and in addition to the existing Patrick Wade Child Development Center which is located less than one mile northwest of the proposed site.

The Child Development at Naval Base Point Loma ensures the continuity of care for service members. This project provides a new code compliant Child Development Center and is centrally located to serve the San Diego metropolitan region. The construction site is in close proximity to Interstate 5 and 8 freeways, which makes the facility easily accessible for child drop-off and pick-up.

## Cruz assumes command of Carrier Strike Group 3

SAN DIEGO - Rear Adm. Kevin Lenox was relieved by Rear Adm. Adan Cruz as commander, Carrier Strike Group (CSG) 3, during a change of command ceremony held at Naval Air Station North Island, May 8. Lenox served as commander of CSG-3 from September 2022 to May 2024. During his tenure, he led the Abraham Lincoln Carrier Strike Group through a major planned incremental availability, surface warfare advance tactical training, and deployment workups with a specific focus on advanced warfighting readiness. Prior to taking command of CSG-3, Cruz served as the deputy director, Politico-Military Affairs (Middle East/Africa) J-5 for the Joint Staff.

## NAVY SHIP RUNS AGROUND AFTER LEAVING WEST AFRICAN PORT; NO INJURIES REPORTED

by Alison Bath  
 Stars and Stripes

A U.S. Navy ship participating in a military exercise in the Gulf of

Guinea ran aground last week as it was leaving a port in West Africa.

Expeditionary sea base USS Hershel "Woody" Williams got

stuck May 9 shortly after leaving Libreville, Gabon, U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa said May 10 in a statement.

The ship broke free at about 5 p.m., local time, May 9, at high tide, said Lt. Cmdr. Jason Tross, a spokesman for NAVEUR-AF. There were no injuries or major damage, Tross said.

The Navy did not say how far the ship had transited after leaving the port before running aground or if it was accompanied by a tugboat at the time. It also wasn't stated whether a pilot, often required to help a ship navigate ports, was on board.

A pilot was aboard Woody Williams when it came into the port

May 5. Two tugboats helped the ship, which is slightly shorter than an aircraft carrier in length, through the port and into a berthing.

The Navy said it wouldn't release further details due to an ongoing investigation.

The ship uses a hybrid crew of about 50 civilian mariners responsible for navigation and maintenance. About three civilians, including a navigator and lookout, typically man the bridge. The ship mostly relies on an automated system for navigation, which can be disengaged if needed.

<https://www.stripes.com/theaters/africa/2024-05-10/navy-woody-williams-grounded-africa-13817257.html>



USS Hershel "Woody" Williams pulls into port at Libreville, Gabon, on May 5, 2024. U.S. Africa Command photo by Takisha Miller

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## Retired special warfare commander lauds value of strong allied relationships

by Matthew Olay

Former leader of U.S. Special Operations Command and retired Navy four-star admiral William H. McRaven discussed the value of developing and maintaining strong relationships within the international special warfare community during a fireside chat May 9 at the Special Operations Forces 2024 convention in Tampa, Fla.

During a one-hour interview led by veteran television investigative correspondent Catherine Herridge that covered a wide range of topics, McRaven consistently underscored the importance of having trust-based partnerships to facilitate communications among SOF organizations across the globe.

“It’s personal relationships ... it’s always about personal relationships,” McRaven said, when asked about the key factors that make up a successful SOF organization.

“We used to talk about the War on Terror as a war about relationships. It was how ... we build relationships with our Iraqi partners, with our Afghan partners with our NATO partners and allies from around the world ... You’ve got to build that personal relationship because they’ve got to trust you, and you’ve got to trust them.”

McRaven emphasized that a strong working relationship between SOF organizations can’t be established without first having trust.

“When it comes to building relationships and doing anything else beyond that - sharing intelligence, partnering on tactical missions - you’ve got to start with trust.”

McRaven elaborated on the topic by saying that there is very little tolerance for violating such trust.

“Trust is not ... ‘three strikes and you’re out’; trust is ... ‘two strikes and you’re out.’ Because, if you build trust, and you once, the trust factor will hold for a little while,” he said.

“But if you undermine your allies and your colleagues a second time, you’re done.”

When asked if there are challenges to establishing such trustful relationships in parts of the globe that don’t share those same trust-based values, McRaven pushed back slightly, saying that militaries worldwide share the same values.

“I think, across the board, militaries have core values,” he said.

“They understand the value of good order and discipline; they understand the value of the mission; they understand the value of doing things the right way; they understand how to make sure that you don’t have collateral damage that really exceeds the nature of the mission.”

For an example of SOF personnel from a variety of nations being able to come together and efficiently work as a unit, McRaven mentioned the SOF ‘24 capabilities demonstration that took place in the bay just outside of the convention center on May 8.

The demonstration - which simulated an attack on the Tampa Bay Convention Center by a notional, unnamed enemy - showcased U.S. SOF teams collaborating with SOF personnel from nine other nations.

“You can line up on the pier out here by the convention center; and their uniforms are all different, the color of their skin may be different, their religion may be different, their ethnicity may be different,” McRaven said.

“But then, here, they’re all kind of the same — and you can spot them coming a mile away. So, I do think relationships are built on trust.”

When asked about potential challenges to building strong, international SOF relationships, McRaven said inaction is the primary impediment.

“We know how to build the relationships; now we just have to do it,” he said, adding that Socom and the various theater special operations commands around the globe need to consistently be building relationships in support of the combatant commander in the respective regions.

As the chat wound down, McRaven said that during times of relative peace when countries aren’t sharing the battlefield together, it’s crucial to be proactive in building relationships.

“Because - believe it or not - sooner or later you’re going to find yourself on the battlefield again, in a place you’ve never heard of, at a fight you never thought would happen,” McRaven said. “And if you haven’t built these relationships ... then you’re not going to be able to move as quickly and you’re not going to be as successful.”

“So, take whatever you learn this week, take it home, and then find ways to continue to build the relationship.”



**RAZZLE DAZZLE** | Air Force F-22 Raptor Demonstration Team pilot Capt. Samuel “Razz” Larson deploys flares over the Gulf of Mexico during the 2024 Gulf Coast Salute Air Show in Panama City Beach, Fla., May 4, 2024. U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Stefan Alvarez

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Top 5

- Bodycam footage shows deputy shot Airman seconds after opening door
- Watchdog blasts VA for errors leading to \$11M in improper bonuses
- Confusion swirls over Western tank caveats in Ukraine
- Army debuts new recruiting ads aimed at high-tech civilians rather than Soldiers
- Storied Marine Corps jet to make final appearance at Cherry Point Air Show as service transitions to F-35

Army

- Army sends HIMARS rocket launcher island hopping in the Philippines
- New tech means defense outweighs offense, says Army Futures Command chief
- Army veteran convicted of 2001 murder of pregnant Soldier
- Drones could guide every bit of an Army division's firepower, 101st CO says

Navy

- Navy offering big bucks to keep aviation officers in uniform
- Russian, Thai among 14 languages that can earn Sailors bonus cash
- Toxicologist testifies jet fuel in Navy water did not sicken plaintiffs in Hawaii
- China condemns USS Halsey's passage through Taiwan Strait (read this story, page 6)
- Navy probes apparent drone footage of USS Ronald Reagan posted on social media

Marine Corps

- Prosecutors charge Marine caught fleeing Japanese convenience store with knife
- Marines want to wear their uniform for high school graduation, but their school said no
- 'I could do anything now': Top enlisted Marine reflects on his citizenship journey as new Americans are naturalized on USS Bataan

Air Force

- 'Strength through support': New Wright-Patterson commander introduces himself on YouTube
- Air Force nears Wedgetail deal with Boeing after jostle over costs
- What drives the general who ordered missile cancer study: 'If I don't care, who does?'

# JUNIOR ENLISTED TO GET 20% PAY BUMP, E5S GET 13% MORE UNDER HOUSE PLAN

by Leo Shane III

MILITARY TIMES - House lawmakers' plans to overhaul military pay tables next year would result in a nearly 20 percent basic salary boost for troops ranked E-4 and below and a substantial bump for E-5s as well.

Under plans unveiled May 13, House Armed Services Committee members next week will consider language in their annual defense authorization bill draft that includes highly revised military pay tables designed to bring all junior enlisted pay to at least \$30,000 a year.

Currently, some young enlisted service members can make as little as \$24,000 in basic pay, although that total does not include other compensation such as housing allowances and free health care.

But both Republicans and Democrats on the panel have expressed concerns that enlisted troops' low base pay make it difficult for military recruiters to woo young adults away from civilian careers, where a \$15-per-hour wage translates into just over \$30,000 a year in salary.

Last month, committee leaders announced a broad plan to boost all pay for all troops ranked E-4 and below by 15%, a move that would add several hundred dollars in monthly pay for those individuals.

However, specifics of the plan released this week show an even more generous base pay hike. Committee staffers confirmed

**AN E-5 WITH SIX YEARS SERVICE CAN EXPECT A PAY BOOST OF ABOUT \$4,300 NEXT YEAR UNDER THE HOUSE PLAN. AN E-5 WITH EIGHT YEARS WILL GET \$3,500 RAISE.**

the 15 percent boost does not include a 4.5 percent increase planned for all troops, bringing the actual salary increase planned by the committee to 19.5 percent next year.

For an E-2 with two years of military service, that increase will mean about \$5,000 in extra pay next year. For an E-4 with four years of military service, it's almost \$7,500 more in salary.

To ensure E-4s aren't getting paid more than E-5s, the pay table overhaul also includes increases for mid-career enlisted troops. Combined with the 4.5 percent across-the-board raise, some E-5s could see up to a 12.5 percent pay increase next year.

An E-5 with six years service can expect a pay boost of about \$4,300 next year under the house plan. An E-5 with eight years will get a \$3,500 raise.

All other ranks would see the 4.5 percent pay increase.

But whether that plan can become law remains unclear.

House Armed Services Committee leaders have vowed to push for the military salary increases, and will vote on the

currently drafting its own version of the authorization bill — have deflected questions on the issue, saying they need to see what the total costs will be and how that fits into other military priorities.

House committee officials said the price tag for the pay raise and other compensation reforms — including increasing housing stipends and broadening eligibility for the military's Basic Needs Allowance — will cost about \$4.2 billion this year. Total military spending outlined in the authorization bill is nearly \$882 billion.

Even if the pay raise is signed into law later this year, appropriators will still need to pass budget language to supply funding for the higher salaries.

## Army implements enhanced security measures for data

by Gabriel Archer, Army News Service

FORT HUACHUCA, Ariz. - In a strategic move to bolster data security and protect against evolving cyber threats, the Army announces significant changes to access protocols for Army 365 services. With the maturation of remote capabilities and the introduction of more secure alternatives such as Azure Virtual Desktop and Hypori, the Army is prioritizing the safeguarding of sensitive information. During the initial deployment of Army 365 amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, access and downloads were permitted from webmail to ensure continuity of operations. However, recognizing the escalating sophistication of cyber-attacks, the Army is transitioning to more secure platforms like AVD, Hypori and future offerings like Intune Mobile Access Management. Effective June 1, 2024, the Network Enterprise Technology Command will begin blocking access to all Army 365 services, including webmail. <https://www.army.mil/article/276112/>

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The primary function of the CENEODDIVE is to support innovative human performance solutions that meet the needs of the fleet, by identifying and implementing the most efficient methods of training and delivery for Sailors in the domain, while ensuring advancement opportunities and requisite competency levels for all personnel are maintained. CENEODDIVE provides lifelong learning opportunities in areas of both personal and professional development.

**OCEANSIDE, Calif. (May 6, 2024)** Sailors assigned to West-coast explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) units practice body control techniques in a wind tunnel in preparation for military free fall operations. EOD Group One, a component of Navy Expeditionary Combat Command, mans, trains, and equips west-coast based EOD and mobile dive and salvage forces in support of the fleet, special operations, and joint combined and contingency operations. U.S. Navy photo by Lt. j.g. Rae Timberlake



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**Where We Are Going.** The threats to our nation and our interests are real and growing. The strategic environment has changed; gone are the days of operating from a maritime sanctuary against competitors who cannot threaten us. The National Defense Strategy makes clear that we must defend our homeland, deter strategic attack, deter and be prepared to prevail in conflict against the People's Republic of China, and meet the acute challenge of an aggressive Russia and other persistent threats. Our adversaries have designed their militaries to overcome our traditional sources of strength. **We must move rapidly to stay ahead** and continuously create warfighting advantages. We must think, act, and operate differently, leveraging wargaming and experimentation to integrate conventional capability with hybrid, unmanned, and disruptive technologies. Tomorrow's battlefield will be incredibly challenging and complex. **To win decisively in that environment, our Sailors must be the best warfighters in the world** with the best systems, weapons, and platforms to ensure we can defeat our adversaries. We will **put more players on the field—platforms** that are ready with the right capabilities, weapons and sustainment, and **people** who are ready with the right skills, tools, training, and mindset.

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## Destroyer *Halsey* conducts freedom of navigation operations in the South China Sea

from Commander,  
U.S. 7th Fleet Public Affairs

SOUTH CHINA SEA - On May 10, Navy destroyer *Halsey* (DDG 97) asserted navigational rights and freedoms in the South China Sea near the Paracel Islands, consistent with international Law.

At the conclusion of the operation, USS *Halsey* exited the excessive claim and continued operations in the South China Sea. This freedom of navigation operation, or FONOP, upheld the rights, freedoms, and lawful uses of the sea recognized in international law by challenging the restrictions on innocent passage imposed by the People's Republic of China (PRC), Taiwan, and Vietnam and also by challenging the PRC's claim to straight baselines enclosing the Paracel Islands.

Unlawful and sweeping maritime claims in the South China Sea pose a serious threat to the freedom of the seas, including the freedoms of navigation and overflight, free trade and unimpeded commerce, and freedom of economic opportunity for South China Sea littoral nations.

The United States challeng-



In this USS *Halsey* Facebook post from March 29, crewmembers take a break from small boat ops. Courtesy photo

es excessive maritime claims around the world regardless of the identity of the claimant. Customary international law reflected in the 1982 Law of the Sea Convention protects certain rights, freedoms and lawful uses of the sea enjoyed by all nations. The international community has an enduring role in preserving the freedom of the seas, which is critical to global security, stability, and prosperity.

The U.S. upholds freedom of navigation for all nations as a principle. As long as some countries continue to claim and assert limits on rights that exceed their authority under international law, the United States will continue to defend the

rights and freedoms of the sea guaranteed to all. No member of the international community should be intimidated or coerced into giving up their rights and freedoms.

The PRC, Taiwan, and Vietnam each claim sovereignty over the Paracel Islands. In violation of international law, all three claimants require either permission or advance notification before a military vessel or warship engages in "innocent passage" through the territorial sea.

Under customary international law as reflected in the Law of the Sea Convention, the ships of all States – including their warships – enjoy the right of innocent

pass through the territorial sea. The unilateral imposition of any authorization or advance-notification requirement for innocent passage is unlawful. By engaging in innocent passage without giving prior notification to or asking permission from any of the claimants, the United

States challenged these unlawful restrictions imposed by the PRC, Taiwan, and Vietnam. The United States demonstrated that innocent passage is not subject to such restrictions.

The United States also challenged the PRC's 1996 declara-

tion of straight baselines encompassing the Paracel Islands. Regardless of which claimant has sovereignty over these islands, it is unlawful to draw straight baselines around the Paracel Islands in their entirety.

Customary international law as reflected in the Law of the Sea Convention is both clear and comprehensive regarding the circumstances under which States can depart from "normal" baselines. The PRC-claimed straight baselines violate customary international law reflected in Article 7 of the Law of the Sea Convention.

Furthermore, international law does not permit continental State, like the PRC, to establish baselines around entire dispersed island groups. With these baselines, the PRC has attempted to claim more internal waters, territorial sea, exclusive economic zone, and continental shelf than it is entitled to under international law.

U.S. forces operate in the South China Sea on a daily basis, as they have for more than a century. They routinely operate in close coordination with like-minded allies and partners that share our commitment to uphold a free and open international order that promotes security and prosperity.



**OCEANSIDE (May 8, 2024) Esther C. Sanchez, center right, the mayor of Oceanside, presents a proclamation in honor of National Military Appreciation Month, to Marine Corps Col. Daniel Whitley, right, the deputy commander of Marine Corps Installations West, and members of the San Diego County Veterans Writing Group at a city council meeting here. Camp Pendleton is committed to strengthening and continuing the positive relationships with the city of Oceanside and other surrounding communities. National Military Appreciation Month was created to raise awareness and encourage celebration and appreciation for those who serve and have served in the. Armed Forces. U.S. Marine Corps photo by Sgt. Erin A. VandeHoef**

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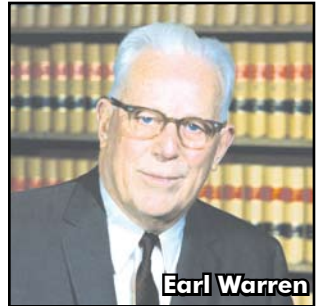


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## Fleet Replenishment Oiler USNS Earl Warren (T-AO 207) delivered to Navy

Military Sealift Command took delivery of its newest fleet replenishment oiler, USNS Earl Warren (T-AO 207), from shipbuilder General Dynamics NASSCO in San Diego, May 7.

The 746 foot Warren is the third ship in the 20-ship John Lewis-class, previously known



Earl Warren

as the TAO(X). Following more testing and trials, the ship will

crewed and sailed by MSC, providing logistics support to Navy ships at sea. Lewis class oilers, such as Warren will replace the current Kaiser Class fleet replenishment oilers and they age out of the fleet.

The ship honors Earl Warren, an American attorney, politician, and jurist who served as the 14th Chief Justice of the United States from 1953 to 1969. Warren wrote the majority opinions in landmark civil rights cases such as Brown v. Board of Education, Reynolds v. Sims, Miranda v. Arizona and Loving v. Virginia.



NASSCO file photo of USNS Earl Warren.

Warren also led the Warren Commission, a presidential commission that investigated the 1963 assassination of President John F. Kennedy. Warren also

served as Governor of California from 1943 to 1953, and is the last chief justice to have served in an elected office before nomination to the Supreme Court. Warren is considered to be one of the most influential Supreme Court justices and political leaders in the history of the United States.

The John Lewis class honors prominent civil rights leaders

### Flag officer announcement - Wade

Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III announced May 9 that the president has nominated Vice Adm. John F. Wade for reappointment to the grade of vice admiral, with assignment as commander, 3rd Fleet, San Diego. Wade most recently served as commander, Task Force Red Hill, Camp H.S. Smith, Hawaii.

and activists. Several more Lewis class oilers are currently being built by General Dynamics NASSCO which are USNS Robert F. Kennedy, USNS Lucy Stone and USNS Sojourner Truth, USNS Thurgood Marshall and USNS Ruth Bader Ginsburg, and USNS Harriet Tubman are under contract.

MSC directs and supports operations for approximately 140 civilian-crewed ships that replenish Navy ships at sea, conduct specialized missions, preposition combat cargo at sea around the world, perform a variety of support services, and move military equipment and supplies to deployed U.S. forces. MSC exists to support the joint warfighter across the full spectrum of military operations, with a workforce that includes approximately 6,000 civil service mariners and 1,100 contract mariners, supported by 1,500 shore staff and 1,400 active duty and reserve military personnel.



Official Navy bio photo of Vice Adm. John F. Wade.

## NEWS IN PHOTOS



**SHARP TURN** Sailors operate a rigid-hull inflatable boat while conducting waterborne operations with amphibious dock landing ship *USS Harpers Ferry* during Exercise Balikatan 24 at Naval Detachment Oyster Bay, Philippines, May 4, 2024. Balikatan is an exercise between U.S. and Philippine armed forces designed to strengthen bilateral interoperability, capabilities, trust and cooperation built over decades of shared experiences. U.S. Navy photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Sang Kim



**SOUTH CHINA SEA** (May 7, 2024) Hospital Corpsman 2nd Class Jorelyn Calam teaches a CPR course in the mess decks aboard aircraft carrier *USS Theodore Roosevelt* May 7, 2024. U.S. Navy photo by MC3 Ikia Walker

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## Movie review: Thumbs up for The Fall Guy



Returning to the big screen after his starring role in The Barbie Movie, Ryan Gosling stars in The Fall Guy — an action-packed tribute to stunt performers in the movies.

Gosling plays the role of Colt Seavers — a stuntman who “gets blown up, shot, crashed, thrown through windows and dropped from the highest of heights, all for our entertainment. And now, fresh off an almost career-ending accident, this working-class hero has to track down a missing movie star, solve a conspiracy and try to win back the love of his life (Emily Blunt starring as Jody Moreno, director of the movie) while still doing his day job. What could possibly go right?”

The Fall Guy includes the movie industry’s first ever film credit of Stunt Designer, received by Chris O’Hara, president of Stunts Unlimited, and who is renowned as a stunt coordinator and second unit director. The Stunt Designer moniker goes beyond the traditional title of Stunt Coordinator (an official Screen Actors Guild credit that is also recognized by the Directors Guild of America). This credit represents a new benchmark that accurately reflects “the high-level artistic contribution of world-class Stunt Coordinators like O’Hara.

These are artists who do more than coordinate the logistics of stunts; they design and create them.” “Stunt Designers are the creative architects behind fight scenes, high falls, and more, and deserve to be recognized for their contributions,” said David Leitch, director, blockbuster filmmaker and a former stunt coordinator.

The Fall Guy was originally a TV series from the ‘80s. It “was a reflection of that era, celebrat-

ing the cowboy spirit of stunt work,” director David Leitch says. “Back then, stunts were about sheer toughness, fearlessness, and guts. While there were tricks of the trade, these stunts still came with a lot of pain.

My journey in the stunt world began during the transition from this old-school era to the modern era where stunt work began embracing new technologies and practices.

As I entered the industry, visual effects and special effects were starting to revolutionize the stunt world. Wire rigs, the removal of those wires via VFX and other innovations were transforming the way stunts were performed.

While shooting The Matrix, I had the opportunity to witness the cutting edge of technology and the collaborative efforts that were shaping the future of stunts.

For me, it was natural to embrace both sides of stunt performing—the old-school toughness and the evolving world of visual effects. So, now, with The Fall Guy, I’m paying tribute to my early career journey as a stunt performer.

While we incorporate some nods to the role of visual effects, the film maintains a raw and practical element in every stunt. With this film, we aimed to deliver action that was true to the spirit of the stunt community by incorporating techniques that have become somewhat of a lost art.”

The cannon roll was a particularly spectacular stunt featured in The Fall Guy. “Stunt double

Logan Holladay broke the Guinness World Record for cannon rolls in a car with eight and a half rolls.”

These days, sequences like the Alma/Colt chase sequence, in which a garbage truck dragged Ryan Gosling on a spinning bin through the streets of Sydney, Australia, included a thrilling scene on the iconic Sydney Harbour Bridge that “would normally be done with blue screen,” but “the team decided to film the scene entirely practically” — old school.

Another exciting stunt was a jaw-dropping 225-foot car jump, “performed by seasoned driver Logan Holladay in a specially designed vehicle, crafted for practical, in-camera authenticity that could handle such an extreme leap. At the apex of the jump, the truck was close to 80 feet in the air.

Other wild stunts included a boat jump, a high fall from a helicopter, numerous fights, fiery explosions and much, much more. Multiple costume variations were required “to address the complexity of action scenes.” Oh, and be sure to stick around for the credits to see a cameo that you will not want to miss. Thumbs up!

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.

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## I fought the lawn, the lawn won

Every year, when the the forsythia is in bloom and the neighborhood greens up with tender blades of new grass, I can’t wait to escape the chilly confines of our drafty old house and head outdoors.

Admittedly, I romanticize this annual occurrence, envisioning myself dreamily stepping barefoot onto the lawn, wearing a flowing sundress and a straw hat, and carrying a basket for placing freshly picked flowers. Like some kind of suburban Snow White, I picture baby bunnies at my feet, tweeting robins landing on my shoulders, and cheeky squirrels scampering along bud-studded tree limbs nearby.

I prepare for my springtime sojourn by buying myself a spiffy new pair of gardening gloves, along with a surprisingly overpriced array of horticultural items such as grass seed, lime, fertilizer, loam, planting soil, annuals, perennials, vegetables, shrubs, bulbs, tomato cages, plant stakes, fence stakes, hardware cloth, weed block, ethanol-free fuel, grub killer, and at least four cubic yards of mulch.

The credit card bill won’t come for a month, so I remain blissfully in denial of my reckless spending, and resolve to occupy the entire weekend gardening. Besides, after almost three decades of active duty military life, during which we lived for many years in base housing practically devoid of permissible planting spaces, I deserve to indulge my gardening fantasies.

During the first sunny weekend in mid-April, I burst from our front door, donning my new gardening gloves. Standing on our porch surveying the blank canvas of our neglected yard, I detect the aroma of soil, grass, and fragrant flowering trees. I hear birds chirping and bees buzzing. I see tulips, daffodils, and verdant shoots of lilies and irises waving gently in the breeze. My mouth waters, anticipating the icy cold beer I’ll drink at the end of the day,

after I’ve transformed our yard into Epcot.

I close my eyes and inhale deeply, allowing the fresh spring air to fill the depths of my overwintered lungs while envisioning the Monet-esque garden masterpiece I will soon create.

### The Meat & Potatoes of Life



by  
Lisa  
Smith  
Molinari

“A-CHOO!” I emit involuntarily, knocking myself off balance and temporarily silencing the birds. “Must’ve inhaled a gnat,” I conclude, completely ignorant of the histamine reaction that will soon turn my sinuses into a veritable swamp.

I tromp off the porch and into the yard, ready to begin. But I stop, realizing there are many things to do. Cut grass, weed wack, rake beds, trim shrubs, edge sidewalks, pull weeds, erect barriers, fertilize, treat, mulch, prune, plow, and plant. “Where do I start?” I wonder.

A pungent odor wafts up to my nostrils, and I glance down at my shoe. “First task — pick up doggy doo.” Thirty minutes later, I’ve filled an entire shopping bag, convinced that our yellow lab has secretly been

ordering Uber Eats.

Despite nearly dislocating my shoulder starting the lawn equipment, I mow, trim, blow, and bag the clippings, while wearing safety glasses so scratched, I can’t see that my lines aren’t straight. While digging weeds in the vegetable garden, my nose begins a drip that will last a month. While planting the azaleas, I develop a limp reminiscent of Quasimodo. While hacking at a root, my tennis elbow flares. While under the hedges, my knee locks up.

Exhausted and seizing in hip, knee, neck, elbow, back and shoulder pains, I collect my garden tools, checking behind me to see if I’ve left my vertebrae, meniscus, or uterus in the yard somewhere. I decide I can put one small finishing touch on my garden before knocking off. I spread a bit of mulch around the mailbox, only to have a sudden breeze blow the shredded wood bits into my eye.

Two weeks later, my garden masterpiece still isn’t complete. I’ve been too busy taking allergy meds for incessant post nasal drip. I had to ask my foot doctor for a cortisone shot for my limp. When my eye swelled up, a nurse practitioner at urgent care prescribed antibiotics for an eye infection. And thanks to all the Ben Gay I’ve slathered over my aching joints, I can’t smell the flowers anyway.

I’ll get back out into my garden eventually, because if you give a weed an inch, it’ll take a yard.

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**Thursday - May 16**  
6:00 PM Civil War r  
**Friday - May 17**  
6pm Ministry of Ungentlemanly Warfare r  
**Saturday - May 18**  
1pm Abigail r  
3:30 PM Civil War r  
6pm Ministry of Ungentlemanly Warfare r  
**Sunday - May 19**  
1pm \*LAST SHOWING\* Godzilla x Kong: The New Empire pg13  
3:30pm The First Omen r  
**Thursday - May 23**  
6pm Ministry of Ungentlemanly Warfare r  
3:30 PM Monkey Man r  
**Friday - May 24**  
6:00 PM The Garfield Movie pg  
**Saturday - May 25**  
1:00 PM The Garfield Movie pg  
3:10pm Ministry of Ungentlemanly Warfare r  
6:00 PM Challengers r  
**Sunday - May 26**  
1:00 PM The Garfield Movie pg  
3:10 PM Challengers r  
**Thursday - May 30**  
6:00 PM The Garfield Movie pg

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

**Thursday - May 16**  
6:00 PM SPECIAL SCREENING ANNIVERSARY TOP GUN 1986  
8:30 PM Civil War r  
**Friday - May 17**  
6pm Ministry of Ungentlemanly Warfare r  
**Saturday - May 18**  
3:30pm Godzilla x Kong: New Empire pg13  
6:00 PM Abigail r  
**Sunday - May 19**  
1pm Ministry of Ungentlemanly Warfare r  
3:40 PM Abigail r  
**Thursday - May 23**  
6pm Ministry of Ungentlemanly Warfare r  
**Friday - May 24**  
6:00 PM Challengers r  
**Saturday - May 25**  
3:30 PM The Garfield Movie pg  
6:00 PM Challengers r  
**Sunday - May 26**  
1:00 PM The Garfield Movie pg  
3:20 PM Challengers r  
**Thursday - May 30**  
6pm Young Woman and the Sea (ADVANCE SCREENING) pg

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

**Saturday, May 18**  
1:30pm Godzilla x Kong: The New Empire (PG13)  
4:30pm Monkey Man (R)  
**Saturday, May 25**  
1:30pm The Garfield Movie (PG)  
4:00pm The First Omen (R)  
**Saturday, June 1** ?  
**Saturday, June 8**  
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1:30pm \*The Garfield Movie (PG)

**Bob Hope Theater** 577-4143 MCAS Miramar Bldg 2242

**Friday, May 17**  
6pm Ministry of Ungentlemanly Warfare (R)  
**Saturday, May 18**  
3pm Godzilla x Kong: New Empire PG-13  
6:30 PM - Abigail R  
**Sunday, May 19**  
12pm Godzilla x Kong: New Empire PG-13  
3pm Ministry of Ungentlemanly Warfare (R)  
**Friday, May 24**  
6:00 PM - Challengers (R)  
**Saturday, May 25**  
3:00 PM - The Garfield Movie PG  
6:30pm Ministry Ungentlemanly Warfare R  
**Sunday, May 26**  
12:00 PM - The Garfield Movie (PG)  
3:00 PM - Challengers (R)

## SOCIAL SECURITY MATTERS

### Widower's retirement stymied by Social Security's "WEP" and "GPO" rules

*Dear Rusty: My wife passed away 4 years ago. I want to retire so called SSA and was told I can collect my own SS at 62, reduced by WEP. My wife's SS was greater than mine, but they said I do not qualify for hers at age 60 because of the GPO. This seems odd that I get zero for her; however I can collect mine at the two thirds reduction at 62. Is this true? This zero dollar amount places my retirement on hold for now. I was counting on her SS. Signed: Discouraged Widower*

**Dear Discouraged:** The Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and the Government Pension Offset (GPO) are two of the most confusing (and unpopular) of Social Security's myriad rules. From the way you describe your conversation with the Social Security Administration, it doesn't appear to have concluded with you fully understanding how these provisions work, so allow me to elaborate.

WEP and GPO affect anyone who has a retirement pension from a federal, state, or local government agency which did not participate in Social Security, meaning neither the employee nor the employer paid into Social Security based on the employee's earnings. Obviously, you have such a pension, which means that WEP will reduce any Social Security retirement benefit you have earned from other employment where SS payroll taxes were withheld, and the GPO will affect any survivor benefit you are entitled to.

WEP affects only the SS retirement benefit you earned elsewhere; WEP does not affect any surviving spouse benefit you might be entitled to from your wife. Rather, it is the GPO which affects your survivor benefit, again because of your state retirement (called a "non-covered pension" - one earned without contributing to Social Security). The GPO will reduce any surviving spouse benefit you might be entitled to by 2/3rds of the amount of your "non-covered" state pension. Depending on the size of your state pension, that reduction may entirely eliminate your surviving spouse benefit from your wife.

Under normal SS rules, a surviving spouse does not become eligible for survivor benefits until they reach age 60 (age 50 if disabled). Normally, a surviving spouse benefit claimed at age 60 is reduced by 28.5% and it is the GPO (not WEP) that will affect your survivor benefit whenever you claim it. However, even without GPO, your age 60 survivor benefit amount would be only 71.5% of the amount your wife was receiving (or entitled to receive) at her death. If you are already collecting your non-covered state pension when you claim your SS survivor benefit from your wife, then that reduced age 60 survivor benefit would be offset by 2/3rds of the amount of your state pension. And that (according to what Social Security told you) is what eliminated your age 60 eligibility for a surviving spouse benefit from your wife. If you don't claim it at 60 your survivor benefit will continue to grow until you reach your full retirement age (FRA) of 67, but if 2/3rds of your state pension is more than 100% of your SS survivor benefit, you still won't get any surviving spouse benefit from your wife's record.

A further consequence of your non-covered state pension is that the SS retirement benefit you earned elsewhere will be reduced by WEP. WEP will reduce, but cannot eliminate, your Social Security retirement benefit. The WEP formula is complex but, generally, your WEP-based Social Security retirement benefit will likely be roughly half of what you would get if you did not have a state "non-covered pension." You could claim your WEP-reduced SS retirement benefit as early as age 62 or, if financially feasible, delay longer to get a somewhat higher (but still reduced) amount. Just FYI, your state employer had an obligation to fully inform you of the consequences of not contributing to Social Security while earning your state pension. It appears as though they may not have fulfilled that obligation.

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## CROSSWORD PUZZLE

- Across**
- From \_\_\_ faintly
  - 5 Demanding quality
  - 10 Yamaha's Grizzly and Kodiak, briefly
  - 14 Francis used a Jeep Wrangler as one in 2015
  - 16 Creep up on
  - 17 Distortion for a cause
  - 18 "Santa Claus and His Works" artist, 1866
  - 19 Cloud-based access provider?
  - 20 Silver Spring, Md., is part of it
  - 22 Places to learn perspective
  - 25 "Given what we know ..."
  - 28 Likely to carry
  - 29 Sanctions
  - 32 Its co-founder said, "I do get disappointed that so many members spend so much time solving puzzles"
  - 33 French toast word
  - 34 Dandy
  - 35 Irregular, as a job
  - 36 Most provocative
  - 38 Unsettle
  - 39 Backpacker's chain
  - 40 Bucks
  - 41 Proven al sauce
  - 43 Often eponymous period
  - 44 Engage
  - 45 Feign interest in
  - 46 Pick-up artists?
  - 49 Dish from Valencian for "frying pan"
  - 51 To whom Brando said, "I coulda been a contender"
  - 55 Longtime morning host
  - 56 One of several coming out together
  - 59 Fix, in a way
  - 60 Arch supports
  - 61 Clip
  - 62 Gets in the game
  - 63 Sprawling
- Down**
- 1 Cell lineup
  - 2 Stronghold
  - 3 Per
  - 4 Wins again
  - 5 Writer's resource
  - 6 Bridge beams
  - 7 Negroni need
  - 8 Worn out
  - 9 Screen displays
  - 10 Year's record
  - 11 Emotional oxyoron
  - 12 Pottery wheel product
  - 13 Mex. title
  - 15 Like Amazonian society
  - 21 Some WWII message transmitters
  - 23 Certain horse race
  - 24 Tweaks
  - 25 It may lead to un matrimonio
  - 26 Ritual Jewish feast
  - 27 The Mahabharata, e.g.
  - 30 Billabong Zoo resident
  - 31 Sail-extending pole
  - 33 Red Baron attire, Snoopy-style
  - 37 Carrier to Malta
  - 42 1994 sci-fi memoir
  - 45 Derby dads
  - 47 Thrill
  - 48 Cosmetic counter name
  - 49 Make ready
  - 50 Musical with the song "Another Pyramid"
  - 52 Bash
  - 53 Seine summers
  - 54 Catch one's breath
  - 57 Overnight spot
  - 58 March Madness network

## ROY'S SUDOKU

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# Uniformed Services University of Health Sciences Brigade visits NMCS D

by MC2 Celia Martin

Uniformed Services University of Health Sciences Brigade leadership visited Naval Medical Center San Diego to connect with NMCS D leadership and tour the campus, last month,

During the visit, the USUHS Brigade, including Col. Albert Kinkead, USUHS brigade commander, Lt. Col. Angela Yarnell, USUHS deputy professor of military science, and Master Chief Hospital Corpsman Michael Jimenez, USUHS Brigade's senior enlisted leader, toured various departments around NMCS D's campus, including the bio skills and simulation training center, and the comprehensive combat and complex casualty care (C5) department.

"USUHS is our partner and making these connections is very beneficial," said Capt. Eugenio Lujan, NMCS D's director for professional education. "Together we're creating the next generation of healthcare professionals. A lot of their graduates will either rotate here as medical students or follow on as interns and residents, so we have a vested interest in ensuring that they have the best education possible. I think this visit and tour was very informative from their standpoint and from ours."

During the simulation and bio skills center tour, the team had the opportunity to speak with Capt. Cory Gaconnet, NMCS D's bio skills and simulation training center department head, and see the various spaces and equipment that students and staff use for training including everything from wound identification and care, simulating labor and delivery, and various surgical and non-surgical procedures.

The team was then led on a tour of C5 by Tabitha Shannon, NMCS D's C5 division officer, where they were able to tour the rehabilitation courtyard, see the physical therapy center and meet with NMCS D's prosthetist, Nathaniel Leoncio.

"Getting to see the simulation center and speaking with Capt. Gaconnet was very beneficial," said Col. Albert Kinkead. "C5 was amazing too, we got to see the courtyard that was developed in a way that allows the patients to adjust to their new prosthetics on different terrains. I also really enjoyed seeing the prosthetic lab and meeting and speaking with Leoncio, and hearing about what actually goes into making the prosthetics."

Following the tour, USUHS leadership met with Capt. Elizabeth Adriano, NMCS D's di-

rector, Capt. Marcy Morlock, NMCS D's executive officer, and Command Master Chief Petty Officer Adolfo Gonzalez, NMCS D's senior enlisted leader, for a discussion before departing.

"The visit went very well, the team here is fabulous and I got to meet a lot of really good people who are doing amazing things," said Kinkead. "From my standpoint as the brigade commander, I'm trying to meet as many people as I can where our students come and interact so I can be a conduit of information and give them the best experience possible. Our goal is to be good teammates with the facilities that are hosting our students."

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 5,000 active-duty military personnel, civilians, and contractors in southern California to provide patients with world-class care anytime, anywhere. Anchored in Excellence, Committed to Health.*



Uniformed Services University of Health Science Brigade leadership and Naval Medical Center San Diego leadership and team members pose for a group photo at NMCS D, April 24, 2024. Navy Medicine Readiness and Training Command San Diego's mission is to prepare service members to deploy in support of operational forces, deliver high quality healthcare services and shape the future of military medicine through education, training and research. U.S. Navy photo by MC2 Celia Martin.

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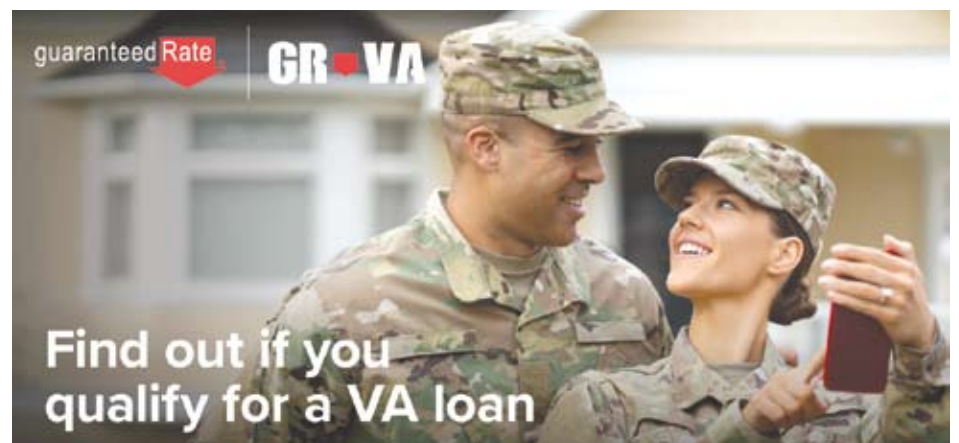
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