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BIG PUSH Navy Seaman Jon Anderson Aquino moves ordnance on the flight deck of aircraft carrier **USS Carl Vinson** in the South China Sea, Jan. 7, 2025. U.S. Navy photo by MC3 Nathan Jordan

Defense Innovation Board recommendations continue to advance national security efforts

by C. Todd Lopez, DOD News

Over the past three years, the Defense Innovation Board has been a powerful advisory resource to advance innovation within the Defense Department, and to provide the secretary and deputy secretaries of defense with independent, practical, and actionable advice and recommendations about how to make use of that innovation.

“The Defense Innovation Board has played a pivotal role in driving innovation within the [Defense Department],” said Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III. “Over the past four years, the DIB’s diverse expertise and practical recommendations have provided the department with valuable insights and actionable strategies to accelerate innovation at speed and scale, ensuring that the DOD remains at the forefront of technological advancements and prepared to meet the challenges of the future.”

The board originally stood up in February 2016. After a brief hiatus and subsequent reappointed in 2021, the insights and recommendations provided by the DIB have continued to strengthen department efforts to scale and adopt innovative technologies and systems.

“Innovation is a never-ending imperative for DOD, and I’m deeply proud of the progress we’ve made over the last four years — substantially lowering barriers to innovation across the DOD-enterprise, from the boardroom to the battlespace,” said Deputy Secretary of Defense Kathleen Hicks. “There’s no doubt about it: innovation adoption is fundamentally a change-management problem. That’s why we’ve employed an effective theory of change — building trust and confidence across the defense enterprise, demonstrating what’s possible, rewarding game-changers, and promoting the best ideas and success through teamwork.”

Board Chairman Michael M. Bloomberg was nominated to lead the board in February 2022 by Austin. Since that time, he has guided board efforts related to artificial intelligence, software, data, digital transformation, culture change and workforce development.

“Serving on the Defense Innovation Board has been an honor and a responsibility we committed to in support of our men and women in uniform,” Bloomberg said.

Since its reappointment, the DIB has delivered eight significant studies with more than 150 strategic and tactical recommendations meant to breach innovation barriers and furnish state-of-the-art capabilities to the warfighter more quickly and at scale.

MARINES, MARRIED, MAJORS | THIRD MAW COUPLE PROMOTES TOGETHER

by Maj. Natalie Batcheler
3rd Marine Aircraft Wing

MCAS MIRAMAR - Two Marine officers stood at attention side by side as the 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing Commanding General, Maj. Gen. James Wellons, promoted them to the rank of major on Jan. 6.

Majors Connor and Leah Deignan held back smiles as they ceremoniously pinned golden oak leaves onto each other’s collars.

They attended The Basic School concurrently in 2015,

after commissioning through Platoon Leaders Courses at their respective universities— Leah from Ball State University and Connor from the University of Massachusetts Lowell. A few years later, they got married.

Now, 10 years into their careers, Connor is a CH-53E Super Stallion helicopter pilot assigned to Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron (HMH) 361, Marine Aircraft Group 16, while Leah is an aircraft maintenance officer, with Aviation Logistics Department.

Both have faced the challenges and rewards of service. Leah deployed with the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit, and Connor has completed three deployments to Okinawa, Japan, with HMH-361 under the Unit Deployment Program.

They weren’t the only Deignans around during the two most recent deployments,

though. While Connor was in Okinawa, Leah managed the home front with an infant and a toddler in tow.

“Leah consistently demonstrates the remarkable ability to excel in two demanding roles: being an exceptional mother and a distinguished Marine officer,” said Col. Thomas Fuss, Assistant Chief of Staff, ALD. “She sets the standard for balancing work and life, thriving in both areas. We take immense pride in her performance, as she has provided unparalleled support to all units throughout 3rd MAW.”

Leah credited their success to the unwavering support of family, friends, and the tight-knit network at HMH-361.

“We’ve been able to lean heavily on our family and friends,” she shared. “It was certainly a team effort between our families this past summer, multiple fam- see **Marines, page 2**



Maj. Leah Deignan, left, and Maj. Connor Deignan are shown with their children after a ceremony promoting the two to major at MCAS Miramar Jan. 6. U.S. Marine Corps photo by Lance Cpl. Jennifer Sanchez

National Guard fights California wildfires, additional assets remain on standby

by Matthew Olay, DOD News

Soldiers and Airmen from California’s Army National Guard and Air National Guard spent last weekend combating the multiple wildfires that have been wreaking destruction in Los Angeles County for the past week. “As the situation with the devastating California wildfires continues to evolve, [Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III] remains closely engaged and committed to supporting the response efforts,” Pentagon Press Secretary Air Force Maj. Gen. Pat Ryder told the media during a briefing Jan. 13. “The department remains committed to providing assistance and support to those affected by the wildfires,” Ryder added. “And we’ll continue to work closely with our federal, state and local partners to respond to this disaster as we enter the final days of the current administration.” There are currently eight Modular Airborne Fire Fighting System-equipped C-130 Hercules aircraft currently on station at Channel Islands Air National Guard Station in nearby Ventura County working to assist in firefighting efforts, Ryder said.

<https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/4027855/national-guard-fights-california-wildfires-additional-assets-remain-on-standby/>

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Securing critical minerals vital to national security, official say

by David Vergun, DOD News

Secure sourcing of critical minerals is critical to the defense industrial base, which uses them to produce virtually every Defense Department system, from unmanned aerial systems and fighter jets to submarines, said Adam Burstein.

Burstein, technical director for strategic and critical materials in the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Industrial Base Policy, spoke Jan. 10 at the Naval War College in Newport, R.I.

“Recent disruptions [due to] adversarial actions have underscored what we have long recognized, that it is more urgent than ever to build capability and resilience in supply chains for critical minerals,” he said.

To do so, DOD must address challenges. Besides adversarial disruptions of critical minerals, there are other problems related to critical minerals like insufficient labor and training in the U.S. to meet defense production demand, and inadequate

U.S. and allied sourcing for key materials and production, Burstein said.

An example of disruption vulnerabilities, he said, has been China’s attempts to impose export bans on key materials such as gallium, germanium and antimony.

“[This has] demonstrated China’s willingness to cause such a disruption to critical U.S. supply chains and highlights the urgency of securing our supply chains against such tactics,” he said.

Industrial-based policies focus on increased domestic mining and processing and align with broader DOD objectives to secure critical supply chains, he said.

For example, since 2020 DOD has awarded more than \$439 million to establish domestic rare earth element supply chains, he said.

There are 17 elements on the periodic table referred

to as rare earth. DOD needs nearly all of them in some capacity, he noted.

To address this critical need, the department has embarked on a five-year rare earth investment strategy to build domestic capacity. There is only one rare earth mine currently active in the United States, he noted.

Partnering with allies is also key to success, he said. Earlier this year, Congress added the United Kingdom and Australia as domestic sources, in addition to Canada, for purposes of the Defense Production Act.

“This means we can now make direct investments in our closest partners and reflects the enduring commitment of the U.S. government to partner with key allies over the long term,” Burstein said.

For instance, last year, the U.S. issued multiple DPA awards to projects based in Canada, which also received joint funding from the Canadian government. These projects are targeted

to increase the secure supply of key materials, including cobalt, graphite and tungsten, he said.

“By partnering with our close allies, we can capitalize on opportunities to leverage each other’s strengths to mutually reinforce our domestic and allied defense industrial bases,” he said.

This includes 19 security supply cooperation arrangements that the U.S. has with partner nations, which allow DOD to request priority delivery for DOD contracts, subcontracts, and allow the signatory nations to request the same of the U.S., he said.

“These agreements further demonstrate DOD is committed to strengthening and expanding existing alliances and forging new partnerships that increase capabilities and strengthen defense industrial bases,” he said.

Stockpiling of critical minerals is another DOD strategy that reduces risk from unanticipated demand spikes or supply chain disruptions, essentially acting as shock absorbers, Burstein said.



A sailor assigned to fast attack submarine USS Hawaii stands watch before the ship undergoes maintenance from submarine tender USS Emory S. Land during a scheduled port visit to HMAS Stirling Navy Base, Australia, Aug. 23, 2024. U.S. Navy photo by Petty Officer 1st Class Victoria Mejicanos



A Stratofortress bomber from Barksdale AFB, La., sits on the runway at Andersen AFB, Guam, in support of a U.S. Strategic Command bomber task force, April 17, 2021. U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Jovante Johnson

DC, Maryland, Pennsylvania Guard support election certification

by Master Sgt. Arthur Wright

District of Columbia National Guard WASHINGTON - District of Columbia, Maryland and Pennsylvania National Guard members were deputized by Capitol Police as a reserve force for the 2025 counting and certification of electoral votes Jan.

6. At the request of the Secret Service, approximately 500 Guard members trained in civil disturbance operations served in ready response status to support Capitol Police if needed.

“Our ability to critically think, analyze a scenario, maintain safety and identify the com-

mander’s intent is a testament to the National Guard’s capabilities and the agility of Citizen-Soldiers and -Airmen,” said Maj. Michelle A. Watkis, battalion administrative officer, 372nd Military Police Battalion. “We’re well-trained and postured to be ready when called upon.”

The D.C. National Guard has a storied legacy in response support for domestic operations and National Special Security Events. Guardsmen support interagency partnerships that allow civilian agencies to focus on mission end state and public safety.

“We’re a force multiplier comprised of multi-capable Soldiers and Airmen who are accustomed to providing an addition level of safety and expertise,” Watkis said.

Amid a snowstorm Jan. 6, the D.C. National Guard was also asked to assist the city’s public safety mission. Soldiers and

High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicles provided mobility support operations across multiple police districts until normal operations resumed.

“There are regions in the city — like District 3 and District 4 — that are very hilly, and with poor weather conditions pose greater difficulty navigating. Our members were authorized to transport police as needed,” said Sgt. Maj. Gerald Harmon, 372nd Military Police Battalion Operations sergeant major.

Additionally, the first snow of the year included support to D.C. Fire and Emergency Medical Services. “We had vehicles stationed at fire stations in case they were needed to respond,” Harmon said.

<https://www.nationalguard.mil/News/Article-View/Article/4023825/dc-maryland-pennsylvania-guard-support-election-certification/>

Marines

continued from page 1

ily members flew out from the east coast to help me raise two kids under two.”

Connor’s professionalism and leadership haven’t gone unnoticed either. Lt. Col. Kyleigh Cullen, the HMM-361 commanding officer, spoke highly of his dedication: “Connor is the epitome of professionalism — an exceptional CH-53E pilot and a respected leader in the Flying Tiger Ready Room. His unwavering dedication to the squadron is nothing short of inspiring, and it’s clear that his success is made possible by Leah’s steadfast support. They are a remarkable team, and their partnership enables them to thrive in their every endeavor.”

Less than 5 percent of Marines are married to fellow Marines, and even fewer of those couples

have children. The Deignans represent a rare and inspiring example of balancing service, family, and career.

“To be a Marine, married to a Marine, and have a family, is another level of commitment that is just remarkable,” Maj. Gen. Wellons said following the promotion ceremony.

For the Deignans, their journey is one of hard work, sacrifice, and resilience. Moments like this promotion, however, highlight the deeply rewarding nature of their shared service.

“We have always made sure we’ve done what’s best for our children and each other’s career — we’re partners, always ready to support one another and fill the gaps,” Leah reflected. “At the end of the day, we come together as a family and make the most of the time we have.”

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Hicks outlines plan tied to strategic competition with China

by Matthew Olay
DOD News

Deputy Defense Secretary Kathleen Hicks spoke about “four lessons” she views as critical for prevailing in the U.S. strategic competition with China during a keynote address Jan. 10 at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies in Washington.

Titled “Outpacing the PRC: Lessons Learned for Strategic Competition,” Hicks said that staying focused on top priorities, appreciating that execution or delivery is paramount, recognizing that the U.S. has strong competitive advantages it must leverage and attending to one’s own actions and words are all necessary to prevail in such a competition.

Pointing out that “competition” is not synonymous with “conflict,” Hicks said nobody should seek the devastation that armed conflict with China would bring.

“Instead,” Hicks said, “we want the [the People’s Republic of China] leadership to wake up each day, consider the risks of aggression and think to themselves, ‘Today is not the day’; and for them to think

that — today and every day — between now and 2027, in 2035, 2049 and beyond.”

In terms of staying focused on priorities, Hicks pointed out that the challenge posed by China isn’t by any means new, and that the Pentagon and multiple administrations roughly over the past quarter century have been tracking China’s determination to build a modern military.

“So, [current defense policy makers] came into office determined to build on the progress of our predecessors — from both parties — and to unlock necessary changes,” Hicks said.

“Senior decision makers must rigorously align ends, ways and means to ensure the strategy itself remains right and DOD can deliver on it,” she continued, adding that it’s the responsibility of those same decision makers to drive change from the top if the strategy isn’t working.

On the topic of execution and delivery, Hicks listed numerous examples of capabilities the U.S. military has produced during the ongoing competition with China.

“From day one, we’ve focused relentlessly on driving changes needed to outpace the PRC and ensure our enduring military advantage,” Hicks said. “The result has been a

“talented fast followers.”

“So, we must be careful about what we say and what we show, because a long-term investment can only be revealed



Deputy Defense Secretary Kathleen Hicks delivers remarks on the strategic competition with the People’s Republic of China at Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies in Washington Jan. 10. Courtesy Photo

more modernized, lethal, agile force across our capabilities, operational concepts, posture and much more.”

Hicks also cautioned, however, that China’s advanced methods of intellectual property theft and its large-scale industrial capacity make China

once,” Hicks said. “And we must be constantly pushing to grow our lead.”

Turning next to leveraging competitive advantages, Hicks explained how the U.S.’ strong alliances across the globe prove to be a force multiplier that makes the country stronger.

“Around the world, America’s friends and allies have been substantially contributing to the common defense ... And when Beijing sees — as they did last year — navy ships from Canada, Germany and [other countries] peacefully sailing through the Taiwan Strait, they’re reminded that America is hardly the only democracy that wants to see stability and prosperity prevail over chaos and conflict,” Hicks said.

She also explained that, domestically, DOD working across government, industry, academia and non-profits — as well as partnering with Congress and other government agencies — is also a good example of leveraging advantages.

In addressing her fourth insight, Hicks cautioned the audience to attend to their actions and words, so far as how it relates to how China might view them.

“After all, we want our operations, activities, investments and messages to maintain deterrence — not needlessly provoke Beijing into starting a war,” Hicks said.

“We don’t believe conflict

is inevitable, but it’s our job to prevent war by always being ready for war if it comes. So, where Beijing might see DOD anticipating a potential conflict, that’s because we’re concerned Beijing will instigate one,” Hicks explained, adding that both the U.S. and China must work hard to avoid such understandings in that dynamic.

With her tour as deputy defense secretary winding down over the next 10 days, Hicks wrapped up her remarks praising the progress that the men and women who make up DOD have made over the past four years, while also providing words of encouragement for those who will contribute to national security in the future.

“As I leave this, my third tour in government ... I will be watching for my successors to build on our progress with their own. I will be rooting for those who continue to stand the watch for our nation: our warfighters, civilians, military families and all who support them,” Hicks said.

“And they will remain in my prayers, as they help defend us all.”

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DEL TORO NAMES 4 FUTURE NAVY SUBMARINES AFTER MAJOR U.S. CITIES AND RIVER



STARS AND STRIPES • Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro named three Virginia-class submarines on Jan. 13 to be the future USS Potomac (SSN 814), the future USS Norfolk (SSN 815), the future USS Brooklyn (SSN 816) and one Columbia-class ballistic missile submarine to be named the future USS Groton (SSBN-828).

"Today's submarine force is the most capable force in the world and in the history of the U.S. Navy," said Secretary Del Toro in a news release. "It is my honor and privilege to announce the names of the future submarines which will protect us from deep below the ocean's waves."

The future Potomac honors the major river in the east central United States. This will be the seventh Navy ship to bear the name. The future Norfolk honors the city in Virginia which is home to the world's largest Naval station. This will be the fourth Navy vessel to bear the name. The future Brooklyn honors the New York City borough, home to the Brooklyn Navy Yard which constructed some of the Navy's most famous vessels. This will be the fourth Navy vessel to bear the name.

Virginia-class attack submarines are designed to seek and destroy enemy submarines and surface ships. They are capable

of projecting power with Tomahawk cruise missiles and special operations forces; carrying out intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance missions; supporting battle group operations; and engaging in mine warfare.

The future ballistic-missile submarine, Groton, honors the port town in Connecticut, known as the submarine capital of the world. This will be the fourth Navy vessel to bear the name.

The Columbia class is a new class designed to replace the existing Ohio-class ballistic missile submarines. They serve as an undetectable launch platform for submarine-launched ballistic

Attack submarine USS Texas departs Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in Maine for sea trials on Dec. 6, 2024. U.S. Navy photo by Branden Bourque

missiles. They are designed specifically for stealth and the precise delivery of nuclear warheads.

The lead sub in the new class, USS District of Columbia, began in October 2020 and is expected to enter service by 2031.

<https://www.stripes.com/branches/navy/2025-01-14/del-toro-names-future-navy-submarines-16479630.html>

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Navy to tailor assignments for Sailors with special-needs family members

by Jonathan Snyder
Stars and Stripes

The Navy has changed its Exceptional Family Member Program to tailor Sailors' duty assignments to the services available to their special-needs family members.

Case managers will coordinate those assignments, rather than sending sailors to duty stations according to blanket categories that appeared to fit their families' special needs, said a spokesman for Navy Personnel Command.

The Navy announced the changes last month and plans to implement them gradually, in line with other service branches, by October, the end of fiscal 2025, according to a Navy press release Dec. 9.

The service amended its EFMP program to comply with the policy required by the Department of Defense, personnel command spokesman Lt. Cmdr.



The Exceptional Family Member Program, or EFMP, provides programs for military dependents with special needs and helps them find services and information both online and at their duty station. U.S. Navy photo by Jason Bortz

Stuart Phillips said by e-mail.

"This change results in a tailored assignment process that addresses the specific needs of the service member and their exceptional family member instead of relying on blanket categories to drive the assignment process," Phillips told *Stars and Stripes*.

The mandatory program assists Sailors by ensuring they are assigned to areas where they can find medical, dental and mental health care; developmental or educational assistance; and adaptive equipment, services and technology for family members with special needs, according to the Navy website.

The category system lumped sailors with similar needs into groups. The new process employs a "direct concierge approach" between a Sailor and a case manager that lifts limitations and opens assignments that may have been previously denied, Phillips said.

The case managers are working for a central command, he wrote.

"Consolidating these functions under the same roof enables a better identification and enrollment process, provides individualized assignment case management, and ensures the healthcare and educational services for our Navy EFMP families are considered before they [permanently change their stations]," Phillips said.

An advocate with the National Military Family Association believes the change is a better option for Sailors and their families than the previous tier system.

"I think that any time that you're dealing with a family or a family member as an individual, rather than as part of a tier, I think that's preferable," Eileen Huck, the association's government relations director, said by phone recently.

"So, I think if the end result of this is that detailers and EFMP personnel look more closely at every family situation and their unique needs and try to place them accordingly, I think that's the outcome that we would want to see," she said.

The new process will allow more transparency to enlisted Sailors and remove perceived barriers by allowing them to view available billets and apply for orders through MyNavy As-

ignment based on their career needs and EFMP considerations, Phillips said.

"Sailors in the EFM program are also now more empowered as they can request second reviews of assignments through [Navy Personnel Command] EFMP office if they believe an assignment may be medically or educationally inappropriate," he said.

Huck said it's important for families to understand the new system and how it's intended to work.

"And it's also important for the Navy to hear from families about what's working, what's not working, and so they can try to better meet the needs of families," she said.

SAN DIEGO METRO CALENDAR OF EVENTS

JANUARY 11-20

SEAWORLD INSIDE LOOK

Location: Seaworld

Cost: Prices vary

More information: www.seaworld.com/san-diego/events/inside-look/

JANUARY 18-29

SAN DIEGO UNDERGROUND FILM FESTIVAL

Location: Downtown

Cost: Free

More information: www.sandiego.org/explore/events/film

JANUARY 18

KIDS MARATHON MILE AT LEGOLAND CALIFORNIA

Location: LEGOLAND

Cost: \$40

More information: www.inmotionevents.com/event/kids-marathon-mile

JANUARY 24-26

SAN DIEGO LUNAR NEW YEAR FESTIVAL

Location: North Park

Cost: Free

More information: sdlunarnewyearfestival.com/

AI Hackathon for students to solve military operational problems

by Lt. Kristina Wiedemann
NPS Public Affairs

MONTEREY, Calif. - The Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) recently hosted its inaugural artificial intelligence (AI) Hackathon event in the Emerging Technology and Innovation Lab on campus here recently.

The event was the culmination of a course designed to give students hands-on experience in applying AI and machine learning (ML) technologies to real-world defense problems in partnership with the Marine Corps Tactical Systems Support Activity.

Three teams of students worked to refine and enhance the Lessons Learned/After Action Report support tool—a critical system developed for the Marine Corps Center for Lessons Learned—to analyze operations and foster organizational improvements across the force. Students leveraged the power of NPS's High Performance Computing (HPC) Center and its "Hamming" supercomputer to apply AI and ML techniques to analyze data and improve the tool's ability to provide

actionable feedback.

The Lessons Learned tool is vital for the Marine Corps as it captures valuable insights from every operation, ultimately shaping future missions and improving effectiveness. MCTSSA approached NPS to work with students on applying cutting-edge technologies to enhance the tool's capabilities, ensuring that the Marine Corps can continue to evolve and adapt to new challenges.

AI is one of 14 critical defense technology areas in the National Defense S&T Strategy. With a focus on AI/ML, the event reflected the growing importance of these technologies in modern military operations. The course provided in-depth knowledge of AI/ML tools and platforms, including real-world project analysis, team collaboration, and the integration of industry-standard and emerging technologies.

"We've spent this quarter exploring the available AI and ML tools, learning both how to use them effectively and how to collaborate

in applying the technologies to real-world problems," said Lt. Cmdr. Margaret Graves, an NPS graduate student who participated in the event. "The Hackathon format provides a unique opportunity to synthesize our skills as a team and contribute to potential solutions that could directly support the Marine Corps in enhancing operational readiness."

In addition to the technical challenge, the event fostered significant opportunities for skill expansion, networking, and cross-disciplinary collaboration. Students had the chance to work closely with their peers from different military services and specialties, exchanging ideas and strategies to tackle the task at hand. The event also allowed them to connect with industry professionals and military experts who provided mentorship and guidance throughout the competition.

The AI Hackathon concluded with public presentations where teams showcased their solutions to military leaders and industry experts. This brief provided an oppor-

tunity for students to demonstrate the tangible outcomes of their hard work and to receive feedback that will further shape their academic and professional growth.

"This event is a great example of how NPS blends academia with practical application," said Mathias Kolsch, an associate professor in the computer science department. "By working side-by-side with MCTSSA and using cutting-edge tools like LLM toolchains on our GPU-studded Hamming supercomputer, these students gained hands-on experience that will serve them in the short term as well as throughout their careers. It's an excellent example of how our curriculum prepares students for the challenges they will face in the military and in the rapidly evolving field of technology."

By encouraging realistic engineering team collaboration and the use of cutting-edge technologies, the AI Hackathon is setting the stage for the next generation of military and civilian leaders.

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Local Military

Marine Corps Reserve: Opportunities for aviators through Direct Affiliation Program

by Capt. Stephanie Davis
3rd Marine Aircraft Wing
MCAS MIRAMAR - Maj.
Gen. James Wellons, com-

manding general of 3rd Marine
Aircraft Wing, and Maj. Gen.
John Kelliher III, commanding
general of 4th MAW, spoke to

officers about the Marine Corps
Reserve during a brief on the
Direct Affiliation Program here
on Jan. 10.

DAP allows Marines to transition directly to the reserve after leaving active duty, offering benefits such as a guaranteed Select Marine Corps Reserve or Individual Mobilization Augmentee billet of choice and maintaining eligibility to transfer education benefits.

“I understand how hard the decision is because you know exactly what you’re walking away from—it’s about being part of something great,” Wellons said. “That’s why we place such a strong emphasis on talent management and programs like DAP, to retain our top talent and ensure you can continue contributing to the Marine Corps in meaningful ways.”

For many Marines, joining the reserve provides an opportunity to pursue new professional careers while staying connected to the Marine Corps. For pilots, this

often means continuing to fly. A panel of reserve officers shared their experiences transitioning from active duty to reserve squadrons, balancing civilian careers, family responsibilities, and service.

There are 4th MAW squadrons across the United States, including five on the West Coast. These squadrons regularly train alongside active-duty forces at MCAS Miramar, Camp Pendleton, and MCAS Yuma. Among them is Marine Fighter Training Squadron 401, an adversary squadron based at MCAS Yuma known as the “Snipers,” one of only two adversary squadrons in the Marine Corps.

Pilots can also explore non-flying roles within squadrons and units.

“Your experience as a pilot is beneficial in a range of roles at squadrons that routinely interact

with aviation or support aviation operations,” said Maj. Brian Spooner, a former 3rd MAW MV-22B Osprey pilot with Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron 364 who now serves with Marine Wing Support Squadron 473.

Reserve Marines also support 3rd MAW’s active-duty forces as part of an IMA detachment or through Active-Duty Operational Support orders. “The IMA program gives me flexibility,” said Lt. Col. Monica Moon, the 3rd MAW IMA detachment G-1 assistant chief of staff, who has spent 16 years in the reserve. “I’ve had opportunities to travel, support a range of operations, and even take a pause in my reserve career when needed.”

<https://www.dvidshub.net/news/489062/marine-corps-reserve-brief-highlights-opportunities-aviators-through-direct-affiliation-program>

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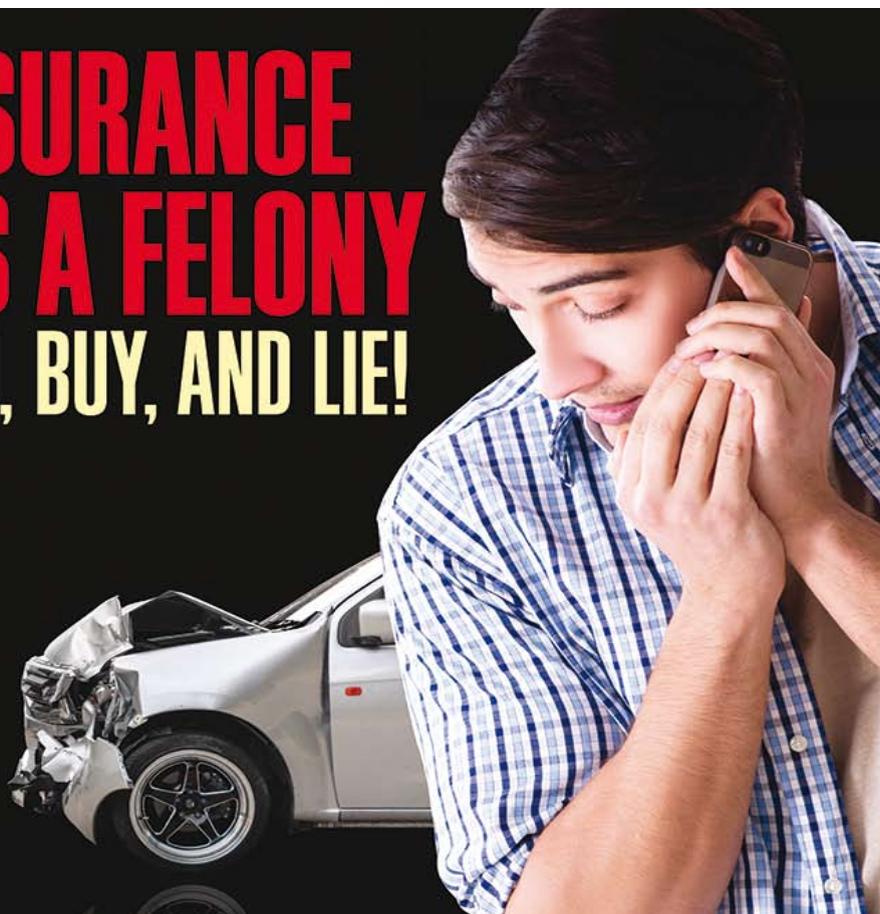
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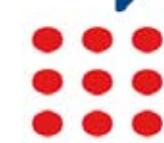
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City of El Cajon invites service members to join its Veterans Coalition

by Debbie Sklar
Times of San Diego

Calling all vets: The city of El Cajon is seeking passionate and committed veterans to join its Veterans Coalition, an advisory group dedicated to addressing the needs and concerns of local veterans and their families.

The Veterans Coalition plays a pivotal role in uplifting El Cajon's veteran community. From advising city staff on critical issues, to selecting the annual Veteran of the Year, and counseling the city on the new Veteran's Memorial, this coalition provides an opportunity for members to make a lasting impact.

Who Should Apply:

- Active duty, reservists and honorably discharged members of the U.S. Armed Forces.
- Individuals who want to serve and advocate for the veteran community.

Why Join?

- Shape initiatives that directly support veterans and their dependents.
- Engage with city leadership and the wider community.
- Be part of a team creating meaningful, positive change.

Details to Apply:

- Deadline: Friday, Feb. 7
- Term: One year (quarterly meetings)



•Applications: Available online at www.elcajon.gov/VeteransCoalition.

•Contact: Deputy Director Julie Alon at (619) 441-1540 or email jalon@elcajon.gov

Applicants must be an active-duty member of the U.S. Armed Forces, a reservist, and/or honorably discharged from service, as well as a resident of the city of El Cajon for the duration of

your term and/or be an active member of a non-profit veterans' organization based within the city of El Cajon.

The city of El Cajon honors and values its veterans. Joining the Veterans Coalition offers a platform to share your voice, represent fellow servicemembers, and drive initiatives that improve the lives of military families in the community.



Sterett, underway
USS STERETT (Jan. 11, 2025) Gas Turbine Systems Technician (Mechanical) Fireman Manuel Gutierrez, left, trains Electrician's Mate 2nd Class Robbie Zepponi, on how to note readings on an air compressor in a main engineering space aboard Sterett. U.S. Navy photo by MC3 Brianna Walker

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Veterans can learn to write their service story as part of Military Memoir Project

by Blake Stilwell

There's a good chance that everyone who served in the military has their own personal story to tell. That's just the nature of military service. Some of us may want to impart what we've learned in tough situations; others might have an extraordinary tale of overcoming adversity. And then, of course, there are those who just have an incredible story of missions completed or battlefield survival.

Kristin Bentley is an award-winning, bestselling author and military spouse whose husband joined Army Special Forces in the wake of the 9/11 attacks. A long career in publishing led her to found E.P. House, a boutique publishing firm, in 2020. Along the way, she met hundreds, potentially thousands, of veterans who shared a common desire to write their own stories. Now, Bentley is dedicating part of her time and her business to helping veterans tell those stories with the Military Memoir Project.

No matter what story a veteran might have to tell, writing a book (or even a chapter of a book) is no small feat, and Bentley is no stranger to those kinds of feats -- or to the struggles that can come with military life.

"My husband traded his career in finance for an Army uniform and deployed with a special operations unit at the height of the war," Bentley told *Military.com*. "It was a crash course in inner strength, one I wasn't prepared for but couldn't avoid. But those 16 years as a military spouse taught me what I was truly made of. The hard times shaped me, the victories strengthened me, and the sacrifices gave me a perspective I wouldn't trade for anything. Military life transformed me."

After launching E.P. House,

Bentley began to seek out veterans, hearing about their service and their desire to share with others. She found their stories profound and significant. She noted that, almost without exception, those veterans were interested in sharing their lives and lessons learned with others.

"These are the stories that shape history, offering insights into courage and the human spirit," Bentley said. "What stands out most is the universal desire among veterans to serve

the nonprofit Military Memoir Project with the goal of training veterans to write chapters and books, then publishing them in a series of anthologies.

The Military Memoir Project is currently looking for veteran authors to join the project and contribute to the first book, titled "Legacy Makers: Untold Military Stories of Community and Change."

"What's missing from the literary world in terms of mili-

ing, interested veterans will take three live writing coaching sessions, similar to the E.P. House Masterclass that has trained hundreds of veteran authors and led to publishing careers. Along with personalized feedback, authors will get E.P. House's chapter planning book to help structure their writing and complete a manuscript. Once the training sessions are complete, each author will submit a chapter for review from the publisher, the same process every author goes through when finishing a written work.

The project is open to all vets of all eras, including current service members, with the goal of contributing to a richer, more comprehensive understanding of the military experience.

"Military stories matter because they capture the courage, loyalty and purpose that shape not only individuals but also history itself," Bentley said. "These stories go beyond personal experiences -- they reveal universal truths about service, sacrifice and human spirit, inspiring others and preserving legacies for generations to come. By sharing them, we honor those who've lived them and connect communities in meaningful ways."

Applicants to the Military Memoir Project will receive training and coaching from publishing industry professionals (including Bentley herself) and will work alongside other veterans learning the same process. Everyone in the program will take the same author training and can submit their finished work for inclusion in the anthology book, but not every chapter will be included.

To apply, visit the Military Memoir Project page on the E.P. House website at <https://ephouse.co/>.



The E.P. House Military Memoir Project is taking applicants now. Kristin Bentley with E.P. House bestselling author, West Point professor and Military Memoir Project Executive Director Logan Phillips. Photo courtesy of Kristin Bentley

and live with purpose. Their impactful lives, rich with meaning and value, align deeply with the heart of our mission; to amplify voices that inspire, connect and leave a lasting legacy."

Bentley has since worked with a number of veteran authors to help them write their books, publish them through E.P. House and help promote them to reach a broader audience, such as Army veteran Logan Phillips' "Number Your Stories and Lead Like a Legend."

Bentley's work has resulted in many veteran voices reaching bestseller status, but she's not content to rest on those laurels. Recently, she launched

tary voice is a broader diversity of perspectives -- especially those of spouses and veterans, whose experiences go beyond the battlefield," said Bentley. "Too often, military narratives focus solely on combat, leaving out the deeply personal, complex stories of community and healing that shape the lives of service members and those who support them. We need more space for these voices to share untold stories that reflect the full spectrum of the military experience, offering insight, connection and understanding to a wider audience."

For a \$50 operations fee that keeps the nonprofit project go-



OCEANSIDE (Jan. 6, 2025) Marine Corps Lt. Col. Daniel Burton, Camp Pendleton Security and Emergency Services director, presents Camp Pendleton's response capabilities within the base's area of operations during a Veterans Association of North County board meeting here. U.S. Marine Corps photo by Lance Cpl. Jeslianne A. Torres



LOS ANGELES (Jan. 11, 2025) March Field Fire Emergency Services from March Air Reserve Base in Moreno Valley assisted in fire suppression efforts against the Eaton Fire in the Altadena Neighborhood here. Firefighters Ruben Anaya, Dakota Christensen, Brandon Dubous, Michael Goodman, and Jack Cools were assigned to Strike Team 6050A, Division N, performed overhaul duties to locate and extinguish residual fires and hot spots, preventing potential reignition and to report sensitive discoveries such as human remains or deceased pets. U.S. Air National Guard photo by Tech. Sgt. Joseph Pagan



TWENTYNINE PALMS (Dec. 19, 2024) Marines run toward the finish line during a 7th Marine Regiment infantry rifle squad competition obstacle course here. US. Marine Corps photo by Lance Cpl. Richard PerezGarcia



SOUTH CHINA SEA (Jan. 10, 2025) Sailors unload supplies aboard cruiser USS Princeton during a replenishment-at-sea with fleet replenishment oiler USNS Tippecanoe. The Carl Vinson Carrier Strike Group is underway conducting routine operations in the 7th Fleet. U.S. Navy photo by MC1 Jacob I. Allison

Authorities arrest Marine suspected of murdering his wife in California

by Drew F. Lawrence
Military.com

Local authorities arrested a Marine in California on Jan. 5, charging him with murder in connection to the death of his wife, according to military and law enforcement officials.

In the early morning hours of Jan. 5, Morongo Basin Sheriff's Station deputies arrived at the Hi Desert Medical Center in Joshua Tree, where they arrested 23-year-old Marine Cpl. Carlos Zamudio.

Zamudio had brought his wife, Savannah Encke, 21, to the emergency room with severe injuries, according to a news release from the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Office. Despite life-saving measures, Encke died at the hospital as a result

of the injuries.

Detectives with the Sheriff's Specialized Investigations Division homicide unit allege that Zamudio -- who had wounds to his face -- "was responsible for the injuries leading to ... Encke's death," according to the news release, which was issued Jan. 6.

Zamudio was arrested approximately 10 minutes after authorities arrived at the hospital, according to the news release and jail records. He is currently being held at the West Valley Detention Center with a bail set at \$1,050,000.

"1st Marine Division is aware of the arrest of one of our Marines, U.S. Marine Corps Cpl. Carlos Zamudio, by San Bernardino Sheriff's Department on Jan. 5," 1st Lt. Colton Martin, a

spokesperson for the unit, told *Military.com* in an emailed statement Wednesday.

A spokesperson for the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department told *Military.com* that Zamudio appeared in court Jan. 8. Inmate records indicate he appeared in front of the Morongo Superior Court in Joshua Tree, but did not list any legal representation.

Zamudio enlisted in the Marine Corps in 2020, attending the service's West Coast boot camp in San Diego. He was assigned as a transmission systems operator, according to his service record, which was shared with *Military.com* by the Marine Corps. He was pinned corporal in 2022.

"The circumstances surround-

ing the incident leading to the arrest are currently under investigation, and division leadership is engaged and committed to supporting local authorities on this case," Martin, the unit spokesperson, added.

The news release did not disclose the nature of Encke's injuries, nor the specific events that precipitated them. A spokesperson for the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department declined to offer additional information about the case, citing the "active and ongoing investigation."

Authorities encouraged those with information about the case to contact Detective Owenn Doman with the Specialized Investigations Division at 909-890-4904 or anonymously at 800-78CRIME.



In addition to their animal exhibits, entertainment, activities, restaurants and shopping, SeaWorld San Diego also hosts many special events throughout the year. The recent announcement for one special event caught my attention:

“Celebrate National Ugly Christmas Sweater Day with a festive evening at SeaWorld San Diego. Wear your most creative ugly Christmas sweater and join us at Nautilus Amphitheater for holiday fun hosted by Park President Tyler Carter. Take part in the Ugly Christmas Sweater Contest for a chance to win: \$1,000 for 1st place, \$500 for 2nd place (and) \$250 for 3rd place. Enjoy photo opportunities and plenty of festive fun.”

It is interesting how random events can sometimes trigger memories. This announcement made me think of my father, who had passed away several decades ago, and of his very old, one-of-a-kind sweater that had long been hanging in my clothes closet. I doubt that I’d ever worn it, but I’d kept it after my father passed away to remember him by.

This sweater has a story. Long ago my dad and two partners started a small sweater factory in Canada. Over the years it grew, a brand-new building was constructed for it, and the company earned a solid reputation all across Canada for its sweaters’ high quality and popular styles.

AutoMatters & More: A fun, new holiday tradition at SeaWorld

I wore dad’s company’s sweaters when I went skiing and I still have a few, decades later. My skiing days are probably over, but the sweaters are still as good as new.

While writing this I found a sweater catalog from 1973. Inside, on the company’s information page, I saw that my dad had autographed a photo of himself to me. Not long thereafter, my dad retired as President of the company.

To commemorate what he had built, his employees made a very special retirement gift for him: an absolutely one-of-a-kind, pullover sweater. Its mostly wool fabric was a quilt-like, sewn-together patchwork of assorted small shapes and sizes of material from among the many styles of sweaters that the company manufactured.

I thought it would be a wonderful remembrance of my dad if I were to wear that sweater in the SeaWorld contest, but I had no expectation of winning a prize for it. After all, it didn’t have any holiday graphics on it whatsoever, but I’d hoped that people would think that my sweater — and its story, were worth sharing with them.

I remember my dad as being a pretty big fellow. Of course, that was from my perspective as his much younger son. I assumed that his sweater would fit me as an adult but, just to be certain, I tried it on. Much to my surprise it was tight, but luckily its many seams held together. I carefully took it off and decided that I would enter it in SeaWorld’s contest.

On the afternoon of Dec. 20, I drove over to SeaWorld. It was cold

outside but my wool sweater kept me warm as I walked over to the onsite registration area at the Nautilus Amphitheater. Registration.

Inside the amphitheater, I saw many wonderful sweaters. Some of the entrants were individuals and others were families. Park President Tyler Carter — the competition’s enthusiastic Master of Ceremonies, called us up one-at-a-time to the front of the stage, and encouraged us to say something about our sweaters. The four judges were seated in front of the grandstand. The stage was set up for a performance of “A Stocking Full of Soul” — an entertaining, high-energy song and dance show that would follow our competition.

I discovered a video on YouTube of our Ugly Christmas Sweater Contest. Here is a link: <https://youtu.be/Kd2s7gfCpO8> (<https://youtu.be/Kd2s7gfCpO8> (dad’s sweater and I appear in the video at 07:49, 24.45, 27:21, 29:25 and 33:30).

It made me feel good that people kept approaching me to compliment dad’s sweater and its story. I think that would please him, too.

Tyler announced that the judges had decided to add two more prizes. I won one of those — a SeaWorld animal experience on a return visit — for fourth place.

To explore a wide variety of content dating back to 2002, with the most photos and the latest text, visit “AutoMatters & More” at <https://automatters.net>. Search by title or topic in the Search Bar in the middle of the Home Page, or click on the blue ‘years’ boxes and browse. Copyright © 2024 by Jan Wagner – AutoMatters & More #865

Boot camp breakthrough

“Hey, Lisa,” my friend, Marcia approached me after our Boot Camp exercise class this week. “That dinner you told us about was at Castle Hill, right? I told my husband about it, and he just couldn’t believe it.”

I was taken aback. Marcia was referring to a story I’d told a few boot-campers recently, and I was touched that she found my tale interesting enough to tell her husband.

Call me pathetic, but this little crumb of social success felt like a breakthrough.

Even though my Navy husband retired after 28 active duty years and we now live in a tiny town in Rhode Island, I still have a military spouse’s mindset, prone to insecurity after so many military moves.

After every PCS move our family experienced, I’d turned into my middle-school-aged self. “Will anyone like me?” I’d wonder, awkward and uncertain. I’d eventually find my people, but it was never easy. Even after my husband’s military retirement and move to our current home, I’ve struggled to find close pals in my local community.

Since leaving base life, I’ve longed for one or two “kitchen door” friends. The kind that show up unannounced without make up on. The kind that tell you the commissary is out of strawberries. The kind that let you vent about how long it took for your number to be called at the base pharmacy. The kind that let you be yourself and appreciate you for it.

About a year ago, I discovered that the local Recreation Center of-

fered Boot Camp exercise classes, so I signed up and became a twice-a-week regular. I wanted to get in better shape, but the women in the class were equally interested in the social opportunity Boot Camp classes offered.

On Fridays after class, we’d all meet up at a local coffee shop for sweaty chat sessions. Over time, these little doses of camaraderie were like Prozac. I hadn’t found a

The Meat & Potatoes of Life



by
Lisa
Smith
Molinari

kitchen door friend yet, but I’d found camaraderie.

Boot Camp classes were not in session over the recent holidays, so five of us met up on New Year’s Eve morning, to make a feeble attempt at self-directed exercise before we gave up and headed to a coffee shop. After exercising, we opened a bottle of Prosecco one of the ladies had brought on a bench outside the Rec Center, hoping we wouldn’t get “busted” by any local cops. Giggling with my plastic cup and clowning around, I felt like a goofy middle-schooler, but in a good way.

At the coffee shop, I experienced a sense of comfort I hadn’t felt before, so I decided, for the first time with this group, to tell a meaty story.

I’ve always been a story-teller,

sometimes to the chagrin of my audience, because I enhance every detail with elaborate descriptions, exaggerated hand-gestures and facial expressions. I pride myself in telling a good story, but I don’t fully reveal this essential element of my personality until I can trust that listener will appreciate it. My best friends know that whether they laugh, cry, are fascinated or outraged, they will be entertained.

With the Prosecco’s liquid courage in my bloodstream, I relayed my story of the dinner at Castle Hill to my Boot Camp friends. To tell it right, it was necessary to transport my consciousness back to the evening in question and recount every detail. I was deep into my storytelling trance, when I approached the plot’s climax, so I paused for dramatic effect.

In that brief moment of silence, my consciousness was restored. I glanced around at the four ladies, and realized that none of them was rolling her eyes, having a side conversation, or falling asleep. They were looking right at me, frozen in suspense.

Then, I delivered the crucial pinnacle, and my friends gasped in disbelief. “What? Are you kidding? No way! That’s outrageous!” I walked home feeling great. I’d finally let go and was unguarded. I wanted to trust that my new friends’ appreciation of my authentic self was genuine.

“My husband couldn’t believe it when I told him your story!” Marcia said at Boot Camp this week, and then, I knew for certain. I’d found my people.

Veterans News

Medal of Honor Spotlight: Army Sgt. William D. Port

by Katie Lange, DOD News

Army Sgt. William David Port took his oath to protect his fellow soldiers seriously. In Vietnam, when a grenade landed among his platoon mates, he didn’t hesitate to give his life to save them. Port never made it home from war, but for his sacrifice, he posthumously received the Medal of Honor.

Port was born Oct. 31, 1941, in Petersburg, Pennsylvania, to Paul and Cecile Port. He had three brothers and a sister. After graduating from Juniata High School, Port moved about two hours east to Elizabethtown, where he first worked as a medical aide in a senior residential community known as Masonic Homes.

At some point, Port married his wife, Tonya, and they had two children, Kimberly and Nevin. Newspaper accounts also show he had another daughter, Kathryn, from a previous relationship.

Port worked for a few years as a candy manufacturer at Klein Chocolate Company before he was drafted into the Army in March 1967 at the height of the



Army Sgt. William David Port, a Medal of Honor recipient, shown here while serving in Vietnam. Photo courtesy of Congressional Medal of Honor society

Vietnam War. Five months later, he was shipped to the Southeast Asian country to serve as a rifleman with Company C of the 5th Battalion, 7th Cavalry, 1st Air Cavalry Division.

On Jan. 12, 1968, then-Pfc. Port’s platoon was on its way to cut off a group of enemy soldiers

in the Que Son Valley when they came under heavy fire from an entrenched enemy force. The intensity of the gunfire required them to quickly withdraw.

Port was wounded in the hand during the initial firefight. Despite the continuing gunfire, he ran through the area to help

a wounded soldier get back to the safety of the platoon’s perimeter.

As the assault continued, Port and three other soldiers were taking cover behind an embankment when an enemy grenade landed in their midst. Without any concern for himself, Port shouted “grenade!” to warn his fellow soldiers of the danger before hurling himself on top of the device as it exploded.

According to newspaper reports, a medic worked on Port’s injuries for more than two hours as the fight continued, but eventually heavier enemy fire forced

the unit to withdraw, and since Port appeared to be gravely injured, they were forced to leave him behind. His sacrifice, however, saved the lives of at least three men.

Port was initially listed by the Army as missing in action. The service later learned that the North Vietnamese had taken him as a prisoner and that he had died on Nov. 27, 1968, and was buried in a jungle grave with eight other men.

Port’s courage and devotion to duty were not overlooked. He was posthumously promoted to sergeant. On Aug. 6, 1970, his

widow and two of his children, Nevin and Kimberly, received the Medal of Honor on his behalf from President Richard M. Nixon during a White House ceremony. In 1975, the children also received a Bronze Star in his name at a ceremony at Fort Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania.

Port’s remains were eventually repatriated to the U.S. On Oct. 18, 1985, he was buried in Arlington National Cemetery.

Port is remembered near his hometown in Huntingdon, Pennsylvania, where a bridge crossing the Juniata River was named in his honor.

Social Security Fairness Act signed into law

President Biden has signed the Social Security Fairness Act into law, repealing the Windfall Elimination Provision and the Government Pension Offset.

These provisions had previously reduced or eliminated Social Security benefits for certain retirees with government pensions, including federal employees under the Civil Service Retirement System, teachers, firefighters, police officers, and other public sector workers.

The repeal of WEP and GPO

restores full Social Security benefits for those affected, ensuring retirees receive the payments they earned.

For many, this change will result in a significant increase in monthly benefits, ranging from \$360 to over \$1,190, depending on individual circumstances. Additionally, the law includes retroactive payments for benefits lost since January 2024, providing eligible recipients with a lump sum to make up for previous reductions.

The removal of these offsets represents a meaningful improvement in retirement security, offering greater financial stability and fairness for public sector retirees.

Review your benefits: Check your Social Security statements to understand how this change impacts your retirement income.

Contact the SSA: Reach out to the Social Security Administration to inquire about updates to your benefits and when to expect retroactive payments.

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E-mail: editor@navydispatch.com

HELP WANTED

USS Midway Museum is recruiting volunteers for docents, air craft restoration, ship restoration and safety. www.midway.org/give-join/volunteers/volunteer-opportunities/

Armed Forces Dispatch newspaper delivery driver for news racks, stands, countertops, etc. Coronado, Silver Strand, Imperial Beach. 2 Thursday mornings a month (approx 3 hours). Must have clean driving record, dependable car w/insurance, base access. 619-280-2985.

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DOWNTOWN/GASLAMP – Furnished apt. Free cable TV/wifi/laundry. Full kitchen, parking available, 1 mo. min., king size bed, no smoking, no pets. \$3500/mo. Call 619-232-4045, www.mudvilleflats.com.

"In three words I can sum up everything I've learned about life: It goes on."
Robert Frost

"You can't help what you feel, but you can help how you behave."
Margaret Atwood

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VOLUNTEERS WANTED

USS Midway Museum is recruiting volunteers for docents, air craft restoration, ship restoration and safety <https://www.midway.org/give-join/volunteers/volunteer-opportunities/>

Veterans Crisis Line
DIAL 988 then PRESS 1

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

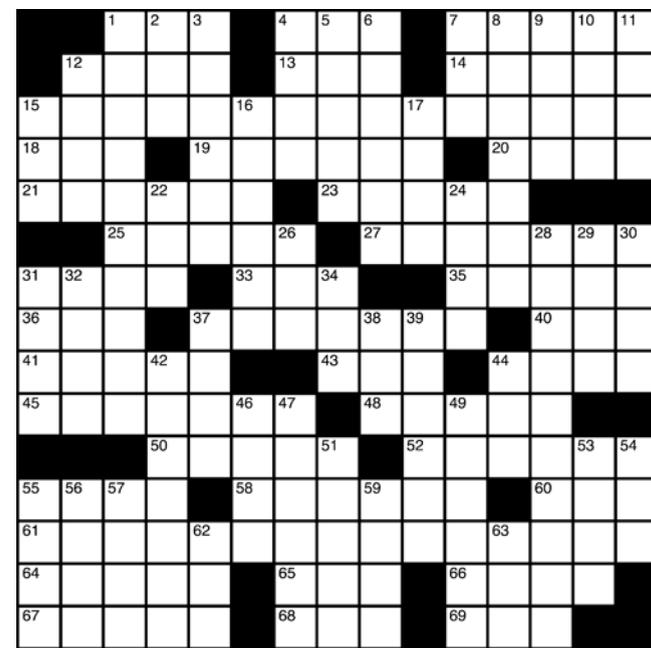
Across

1 Shipwreck signal
4 Stan of Marvel Comics
7 Catch in a trap
12 Time period
13 Off-roader's purchase, for short
14 Quest for intel
15 *Instant in which emotional decisions are made
18 Middle-earth menace
19 Female surfer
20 Times to remember
21 Got a lift, in a way
23 Popular mints
25 Tea container
27 Gradually come to be
31 Wander about
33 Pasture
35 Where one may be taken to be reprimanded
36 Verb in a recipe
37 Like jobs with no future ... and what the start of each answer to a starred clue can be?
40 Tennis court divider
41 Family gathering attendee
43 Pacific Coast st.
44 Loch with a legend
45 Ties to a post

48 Rene of "Get Shorty"
50 Show flexibility
52 Dampen, as sound
55 Help in a bad way?
58 Coral named for its shape
60 Wheaton who played himself on "The Big Bang Theory"
61 *Defeat soundly
64 More despicable
65 Talk trash to
66 Cork's country
67 Cowboy singer Gene
68 Uneaten morsel
69 Ship in Genesis

Down

1 *Flaky type
2 Cheerios grain
3 Came down in flakes
4 Plastering strip
5 Value system
6 Tied, as a score
7 "Seats all taken" sign
8 Archrivals
9 Asian laptop brand
10 Barrett of gossip
11 Tolkien tree race
12 Macedonian neighbor
15 MLB's Astros, on scoreboards
16 "Fiddle-___!"
17 Trifling
22 Battering ___
24 Spot on the tube
26 Vote of support
28 *Employment field
29 Keats works
30 Vets' concerns
31 Rave's partner
32 Dog in the comics
34 Brouhaha
37 Owner's document
38 Blunder
39 Mad Magazine mascot
Alfred E. ___
42 Idle talk
44 Bounced-check letters
46 Reckless
47 Racer's bathing suit
49 Naturally brewed beverage
51 Animal with a snout
53 Vitality
54 Santa helper
55 Palindromic pop group
56 Steady guy
57 Toward sunrise
59 Speedy
62 "Do or do not. There is no ___": Yoda
63 Title for Paul or Ringo



MOVIES AT THE BASES

MOVIE SCHEDULES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE SO PLEASE CHECK THE WEB SITE DAY-OF TO MAKE SURE THE TITLE AND TIME ARE STILL CORRECT...

<https://sandiego.navylifew.com/> select movies at dropdown menu on left
<https://miramar.usmc-mccs.org/dining-entertainment/movies>
<https://pendleton.usmc-mccs.org/dining-entertainment/theater>

NBSD and Lowry Theater Policy

- Outside food and beverage are NOT permitted: Sales from the snack bar support the movie program.
- These Theaters are cashless facilities. Debit and credit cards accepted only.
- **Premium Offerings**
- Audiovisual assistive equipment available to customers at the front counter.
- Handicap seats and child booster seats are available.



Movie Rating System

- G – General audiences ALL ages admitted.
- PG – Parental guidance suggested some material may not be suitable for children.
- PG-13 – Parents strongly cautioned some material may be inappropriate for children under 13.
- R – Restricted under 17 requires accompanying parent or adult guardian.

SD Humane Society Community Veterinary Program

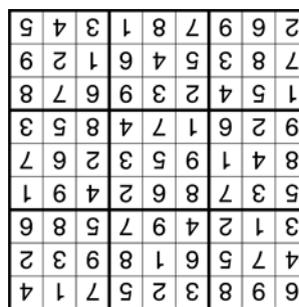
For pet families with limited financial resources, the San Diego Humane Society's Community Veterinary Program provides affordable, compassionate and exceptional veterinary care to help keep pets out of shelters and with the people who love them. Clinic services are available at our San Diego Campus by appointment only, Tuesday through Saturday from 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. We also offer mobile clinic services twice a month, bringing veterinary services directly into the communities that need them most.

Please note: The Community Veterinary Program does not provide emergency or urgent care services. Eligibility requirements for our services include: Household income under \$70k/year and/or proof of enrollment in SSI, SNAP card, SSDI, WIC, pay stub, other federal/state assistance or unemployment benefits.

<https://www.sdhumane.org/programs/community-veterinary-program/>

ROY'S SUDOKU

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Visit our military museums

The Veterans Museum at Balboa Park. The Veterans Museum and Memorial Center is a museum located in historic Balboa Park of San Diego, California. Founded in 1989, it is dedicated to create, maintain, and operate an institution to honor and perpetuate the memories of all men and women who have served in the Armed Forces of the United States of America.

Active duty military, Museum Member, Children under 12: Free
Veterans/Seniors: \$4 • Adults: \$5 • Student ID: \$2
2115 Park Blvd, San Diego (Balboa Park) • (619) 239-2300
<http://www.veteranmuseum.org/>
Hours: Call for current hours (619) 239-2300

MCRD Command Museum & Historical Society. Museum focusing on Marine Corps history from the 19th century to today is also a research library. <https://www.mcrdmuseum.org/>
Free admission • The Pass and ID Center may issue day passes to visitors who wish to visit the museum and do not possess military ID-call (619) 524-4200 for information on base access.
1600 Hochmuth Ave, San Diego, 92140 • (619) 524-4426
Hours: Mon 8am-3pm, Tue-Fri 8-4; Family day 8-5:45; Sat 10:30-5, • Closed Sunday

USS Midway Museum. The USS Midway Museum is a maritime museum located in downtown San Diego at Navy Pier. The museum consists of the aircraft carrier Midway. The ship houses an extensive collection of aircraft, many of which were built in So Cal.
FREE-Children 5 & under, Active Duty military including reservists (w/ valid ID). Adult \$34 (ages 13+). Youth \$24 (ages 4-12). Veterans (w/ID) \$24*Must show ID at entrance.
Open daily 10-5, last admission 4pm. <https://www.midway.org/>

The Ranch House Complex at Camp Pendleton. Listed as the Santa Margarita Ranch House Nat'l Historic Site and as a California State Historical Landmark. Docent-led tours are available by appointment; masks required. Please email your request to: MCBPCAMPEN_history@usmc.mil or phone (760)725-5758 The Camp Pendleton Historical Society is a 501(c)3 organization in support of the base's History and Museum's programs. Go to: www.camppendletonhistoricalsociety.org/ for information. Hours: Open daily 10am-5pm • Last admission at 4pm

Health & Fitness

Last year laid the foundation for using Artificial Intelligence in military medicine

As the Military Health System continues its mission to deliver high-quality health care to service members, retirees, and their families, it must also prepare for a future driven by innovation.

“In 2024, the Department of Defense and the MHS made significant progress in laying the foundation for integration, adoption, and use of trustworthy artificial intelligence in military medicine,” said Ms. Seileen Mullen, the acting assistant secretary of defense for health affairs. Key accomplishments include:

Comprehensive Inventory of AI Use Cases

In January 2024, the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs completed a comprehensive inventory of AI use cases across military medicine. This initiative identified over 120 active projects, spanning areas such as machine learning and predictive models for mental health, image processing for radiology, genomics and omics, natural language processing to streamline the review of clinical notes, and multiple generative AI applications for training and education.

“The inventory coordinated through my office highlighted the breadth and depth of advanced analytical applications already underway to support the health and readiness of our beneficiaries,” said Mullen.

Strengthening AI Collaboration

The spring of 2024 saw significant progress in fostering collaboration with internal and external government agencies, including the Department of Health and Human Services, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and the Food and Drug Administration.

“These partnerships were critical to make sure the MHS remains aligned with broader federal AI initiatives,” stated Mullen.

In addition, regular coordination meetings with the DOD Chief Digital and Artificial Intelligence Office, the Defense Health Agency, and the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences created a unified approach to AI innovation in military medicine.

Policy and Strategy

In the summer of 2024, HA, in collaboration with USU, finalized the MHS Digital Health Strategy. This strategy outlined a comprehensive plan to integrate digital health and AI technologies into military medicine, focusing on improving patient outcomes, operational readiness, and system efficiencies.

By fall, HA released the memo, “Planning Guidance for Artificial Intelligence in Health Care.” This document highlights seven key areas to serve as priorities



In 2024, the Military Health System made significant strides in laying the groundwork for understanding and implementing artificial intelligence into military medicine. Image by Graphic credit: Sofia Echelmeyer, Uniformed Services University.

for the soon-to-be established digital health policy council, a key pillar of the MHS governance structure.

Responsible Use of AI

During the fall of 2024, HA, in collaboration with the DOD CDAO, completed the generative artificial intelligence “red teaming” exercise. This effort aimed to identify potential vulnerabilities, biases, and risks associated with these systems in the context of military medicine. Over 200 participants, including clinical providers and health care analysts from the DHA, USU, and the services participated in the exercise, which compared three of the most popular large language models.

The exercise uncovered over 800 findings of potential biases and vulnerabilities related to using these capabilities for clinical note summarization and as a medical advisory chatbot.

“These findings will play a crucial role in shaping DOD policies on the implementation of responsible AI in military medicine,” said Mullen.

Looking Ahead in 2025

Leveraging the groundwork laid in 2024, the MHS will focus on operationalizing AI technologies, integrating AI into clinical workflows, and demonstrating the tangible impact of AI on military medicine.



On Wednesday, Jan. 8, 2025, Navy Capt. Jenny Burkett, commander of NMRTC Camp Pendleton and director of Naval Hospital Camp Pendleton, officiated a change of charge ceremony where Master Chief Petty Officer Wayne George, outgoing command master chief, relinquished his post to Master Chief Petty Officer Allan Antonio Sr. Antonio comes from his assignment as command master chief on the USS Somerset. George's next assignment is command master chief for the 1st Marine Division, I Marine Expeditionary Force, Camp Pendleton, Calif.

Health Capsules

Health consequences of early exposure to sugar

Experts recommend that kids eat no added sugars before age 2. Yet most kids are exposed to added sugars at a very early age, even before birth through their mother's bloodstream.

Scientists studied the long-term health effects of sugar exposure in the womb and early childhood. To do this, they looked at the health of adults in the United Kingdom who were conceived or born around the end of sugar rationing. The rationing had begun during World War II. The amount of sugar allowed for each person was within today's U.S. dietary guidelines. After rationing ended, sugar intake nearly doubled.

The researchers looked at data from more than 60,000 people born in the U.K. between October 1951 and March 1956. Those born before July 1954 likely had reduced exposure to sugar due to rationing. Those born in July 1954 and later didn't experience sugar rationing. As a result, they were born into a more sugar-rich environment.

Kids exposed to less sugar early in life had a lower chance of getting diabetes or high blood pressure decades later. Health benefits increased with longer exposure to rationing. For those with reduced sugar exposure for at least 19 months after birth, the risk of getting diabetes dropped by about 35%. The risk of high blood pressure dropped by about 20%.

“It is hard to find situations where people are randomly exposed to different nutritional environments early in life, and follow them for 50 to 60 years,” says Dr. Tadeja Gracner of the University of Southern California, who led the study. “The end of rationing provided us with a novel natural experiment to overcome some of these challenges.”

What are PFAS and what do they mean for our health?

Chemicals called PFAS are sometimes in the news. PFAS stands for perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances. PFAS are widely used and long-lasting. They're found in everyday items like carpets, clothes, and cookware. They have many uses. For example, they can help keep food from sticking to packages and prevent stains on fabrics. PFAS are even used in some fire-fighting foams.

These chemicals do not break down easily in the environment. And they can build up in the blood over time. Some studies have found that PFAS can be detected in the blood and urine of people and animals.

Scientists are working to better understand how PFAS might affect human health. Some studies have found links between PFAS and increased risk for some cancers. Others have found that PFAS are linked to changes in metabolism or body weight.

In the early 2000s, some PFAS chemicals were removed from consumer products. One study found that blood levels of the chemicals dropped after that. But since then, new PFAS chemicals have been created. NIH-supported studies are continuing to assess the potential health effects of these new products. But because there are thousands of variations in PFAS chemicals, they can be hard to study.

Learn more about PFAS at <https://www.niehs.nih.gov/health/topics/agents/pfas>

San Diego Outreach

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Camp Pendleton



Become a USO Volunteer

Volunteers are our greatest asset and the backbone of the USO. Whether helping a soldier with a connecting flight, distributing a Care Package, serving snacks with a smile, providing local information, or “welcoming home” troops from deployment, volunteers are vital to the success of the USO's mission. While the duties of a volunteer may vary, the goal is always the same – to improve the quality of life of service members, boost their morale, and serve as the link between service members and the American people.

Ready to apply to be a USO San Diego volunteer?

Visit <https://volunteers.uso.org/>

Once you navigate to the web page, scroll down to and look at the right side of the page to find information about volunteering.

Camp Pendleton USO Programs Include:

USO Transitions: <https://www.uso.org/programs/uso-pathfinder-transition-program>

Want to be better prepared for future success before transitioning from the military? Are you a military spouse looking for new opportunities? The USO Pathfinder® Transition Program extends the USO experience to active duty, Reserve, National Guard and military spouses by offering professional development services throughout the duration of military service as well as in preparation for life post-military.

MilSpouse Connect: Monthly events bringing military spouses together to connect and thrive.

Craft & Coffee: USO Camp Pendleton provides creative outlets for adults and children to create fun, whimsical or serious works of art through a variety of mediums. Signs up happen online and are usually advertised through the USO Camp Pendleton Facebook page.

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

<https://california.uso.org/>

Rate

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a new
beginning
for the
new year?*

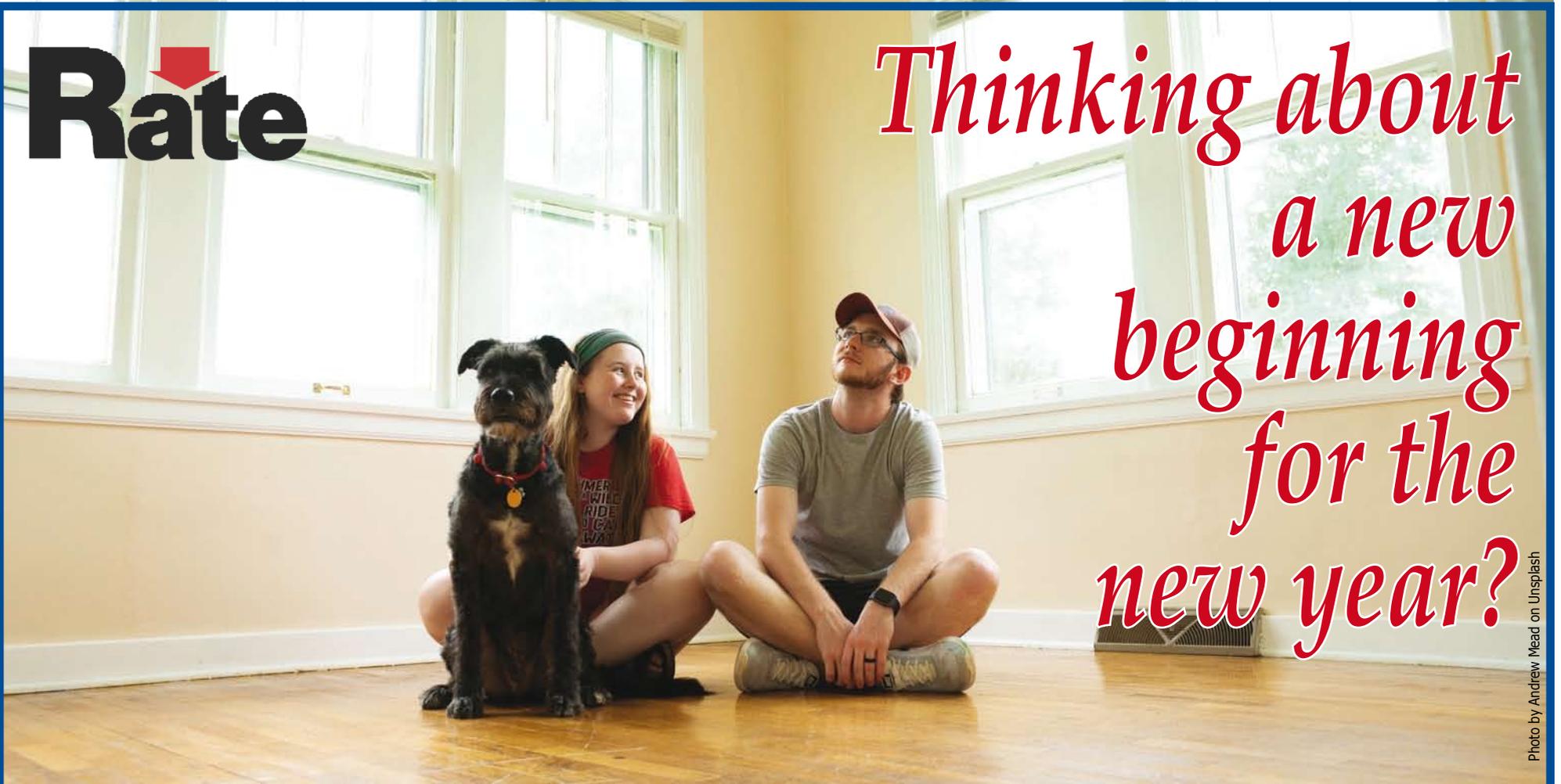


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