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APRIL 8, 2025



**EAR TO EAR** A Soldier reunites with a loved one in Harrisburg, Pa., March 26, 2025, upon returning from a mobilization with a military police company at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. U.S. Army photo by Sgt. 1st Class Shane Smith

## U.S. joins India to launch Exercise Tiger Triumph

by Lt. Cmdr. Seth Koenig

VISAKHAPATNAM, India - Indian and U.S. armed forces held the opening ceremony to launch this year's Exercise Tiger Triumph in Visakhapatnam, India, on April 1.

U.S. Navy units including landing ship dock USS *Comstock* (LSD 45), with embarked U.S. Marines, and destroyer USS *Ralph Johnson* (DDG 114) are scheduled to participate in the exercise.

"The operations and associated tactics and procedures that we will plan, execute and refine with our Indian partners will greatly expand our joint combined capacity to respond to any crisis," said Rear Adm. Greg Newkirk, commander of the Navy's Task Force 70 and the joint U.S. forces participating in the exercise. "Tiger Triumph 25 represents the joint forces of two strategic partners enhancing our shared multi-domain awareness and ability to operate more effectively in those commonly understood domains. This is essential to prepare for any contingency that could emerge."

This is the fourth time U.S. and Indian forces have come together for Tiger Triumph, a joint India-U.S. amphibious exercise. The exercise will involve approximately 3,000 personnel and at least four ships and seven aircraft from the two countries.

Tiger Triumph 25, which is scheduled to take place over a two-week period, continues the joint and combined forces' ongoing efforts to improve interoperability for humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) operations.

"The longstanding strategic partnership between India and the United States is based on shared democratic values and convergence of ideas and interests on bilateral, regional and global issues," said the Indian Navy's Rear Adm. Susheel Manon, flag officer commanding the Eastern Fleet. "Tiger Triumph 2025, the fourth edition of this joint exercise is an initiative aimed at furthering our common vision for the Indo-Pacific, specifically dealing with the aspect of humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. Exercise Tiger Triumph is an integrated and complex exercise, in terms of the number of assets and personnel involved, with a direct joint tri-services flavor."

Exercise events include subject matter expert exchanges, an amphibious beach landing, and establishment of an emergency medical treatment station at the site.

## STATEMENT ON COVID-19 RETURN TO SERVICE

Chief Pentagon Spokesman Sean Parnell provided the following statement:

We're committed to doing right by those who were affected by the Department's former

COVID-19 vaccination policy. For the roughly 8,700 service members who were separated

solely for refusing the vaccine, this is an opportunity to return to service - and we want them to know the door is open.

As of April 7, the Department will begin outreach to ensure each of these individuals receives clear information on how to pursue reinstatement.

Their service mattered then, and it still matters now.

We're ready to welcome them back!

NOTE: The process for reinstatement and potential benefits includes back pay, bonus payments, and/or compensation. DoD is ensuring a smooth transition for those who choose to return.



## Coast Guard, Navy rescues 18 people from disabled vessel off San Diego coast

from Coast Guard Pacific Southwest

SAN DIEGO - A Coast Guard Air Station San Diego MH-60 Jayhawk helicopter aircrew and the crew of destroyer USS *Spruance* rescued 17 aliens and one American aboard a disabled and adrift vessel approximately 50 miles southwest of San Diego in late March. A 35-foot vessel with 18 individuals aboard was spotted in international waters taking on water and requesting assistance during the early morning incident. *Spruance* launched a 7-meter rigid hull inflatable boat crew to assist. The 18 individuals were rescued from the water and safely brought aboard *Spruance*. Watchstanders from Coast Guard Sector San Diego then launched an MH-60 Jayhawk helicopter aircrew to transport the persons from *Spruance* to Coast Guard Sector San Diego. All 17 aliens and the one American were brought to Sector San Diego over two separate flights due to passenger constraints. In another Coast Guard release, cutter *Narwhal* interdicted 22 aliens aboard a 45-foot cabin cruiser approximately six miles west of Point Loma April 6. At approximately 1:35 p.m., *Narwhal*'s crew encountered the vessel and conducted a boarding. The boarding team discovered 19 adult males, one adult female, one male minor and one female minor, all of whom claimed Mexican nationality. The Coast Guard brought the aliens to Ballast Point where they were transferred to Imperial Beach Border Patrol personnel.

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# ONE DIGITAL DESTINATION, MILLIONS OF OPPORTUNITIES

by Devon Bistarkey  
Defense Innovation Unit

Companies and academic institutions will soon be able to match their technologies and products to real Defense Department business opportunities using the latest generative artificial intelligence tools in a secure platform.

For the department, this means platform users can discover commercial and academic capabilities that meet their mission needs in one digital location.

The Defense Innovation Unit is partnering with commercial technology companies to develop the DOD Digital OnRamp platform in collaboration with organizations across the department, including service members, acquisition professionals, research scientists and the innovation community.

Leveraging the latest advancements in AI and large language model technologies, the OnRamp tool will be a single sign-on platform that simplifies and enhances the process of matching private sector capabilities with defense opportunities.



**A team of Defense Department drone operators and experts test the technical capabilities of various uncrewed aerial systems during a Defense Innovation Unit-led prize challenge to identify platforms. Defense Innovation Unit photo by Devon Bistarkey**

“As a matching tool for commercial technology and the department, we are seamlessly and securely integrating data sets to help the commercial sector find the best fit for their technology matched to a defense need with the training and support needed while also making commercial and academic solutions visible to department employees trying to solve a mission problem,” said Cheryl Ingstad, DIU deputy director of digital platforms and developer ecosystem.

The goal is to ease the burden of navigating the disconnected ecosystem of websites that serve as entry points to DOD solicitations. It is a key step in how

the department is providing a low-barrier-of-entry capability for the private sector to discover defense opportunities. Rapid and frictionless discovery of opportunities, aligned with training resources, will accelerate the adoption of commercial technologies at scale.

American innovators with dual-use technologies want to engage with DOD but encounter complexities in the bureaucracy, Ingstad said.

By surveying and analyzing how private sector users find opportunities across the defense marketplace, Ingstad’s team discovered that many nontra-

ditional technology companies spend significant time networking through human contacts to arrive at the appropriate opportunity. Many others devote numerous hours to multiple DOD websites and platforms, all with different search functions and entry requirements. OnRamp aims to simplify the search process by using AI-powered conversational search tools to make matches instantly.

“Imagine the speed and scale of innovation that can be achieved when an AI-enabled platform connects countless companies, professors and students to billions of dollars of DOD opportunities,” Ingstad said. “This platform will offer a free, intuitive pathway for companies to find an opportunity — and for DOD employees to find commercial solutions to mission problems.”

For industry, the platform represents a transformative shift in how the department historically, and sometimes disjointedly,

shares opportunities for doing business with the government. The OnRamp platform is analogous to travel search websites, which save users from searching individual airline or hotel sites to find the best fares. Likewise, the platform represents a single entry point for DOD to an ever-growing number of enormous data sources, including DOD platforms with commercial technology data.

OnRamp will also direct users to helpful training while reducing the burden of having users learn multiple website interfaces and the need to apply for multiple accounts to find opportunities.

As a single navigation point, the platform will also push opportunities to innovators versus relying on them to conduct independent searches at the exact release time of an opportunity. The platform will maintain a real-time repository of private sector capabilities within its see **OnRamp, page 4**



**FIFE AND DRUMS** Members of the Army Old Guard's Fife and Drum Corps perform during the Washington Tattoo at George Washington University's Lisner Auditorium in Washington, March 29, 2025. The event was intended to raise awareness for mental health U.S. Army photo



**HELPING HANDS** U.S. Indo-Pacific Command military personnel work alongside Thai military and first responders near the collapsed State Audit Office building in Bangkok, that fell after a 7.7 magnitude earthquake affected Thailand and its neighboring countries, March 28, 2025. U.S. Air Force photo by Sgt. Matthew Wisher



**REVERENT RETURN** Walter LaSota, a Marine Corps veteran who served in World War II, and his daughter, Cynthia LaSota, place flowers on the monument plaque on Sugar Loaf Hill in Okinawa, Japan, April 1, 2025. LaSota, a two-time Purple Heart recipient, returned to the island through an Eagle Society program that helps WWII veterans return to the sites where they once battled. U.S. Marine Corps photo by Cpl. Jesse Davis

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## DOD task force to assess progress of DEI elimination

by Matthew Olay, DOD News

A nine-member Defense Department task force headed by Jules W. Hurst III, an Army veteran who is performing the duties of undersecretary of defense for personnel and readiness, will visit numerous military installations, including military service academies, in April and early May.

The task force will evaluate the implementation of Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth's recent "Restoring America's Fighting Force" memorandum. Signed Jan. 29, 2025, and addressed to all senior DOD leaders, the memo called for the creation of a task force to eliminate diversity, equity, and inclusion offices and initiatives. Hurst led the creation of the task force, which first issued guidance across the department. That task force has now entered the validation phase of the department's accomplishments.

Hurst said the task force's job is to ensure military installations have a thorough understanding of the secretary's directive so

DOD leaders can be successful.

"When a policy is issued, you want to ensure seamless implementation from the headquarters down to the unit level," he said. He added that the task force will also ensure the policy is implemented correctly and that the service academies are returning to solely merit-based practices.

"My team and I are traveling to installations and service academies to ensure the president and secretary's intent and guidance are being carried out across the department. We want to hear from the leaders and service members on the ground, identify any challenges to implementation, and help our warfighters overcome these obstacles," Hurst said.

He also noted that the task force wants frank feedback, honesty and candor from the people they interact with during the upcoming visits, as such feedback is necessary to ensure consistency across the force.

"Really, it's an educational

visit for us to make sure that we have conveyed what [President Donald J. Trump and the secretary] want [to communicate] to the force and that they understand it," Hurst said.

He acknowledged that moving from policy issuance to full implementation at the ground level requires significant work, communication and validation, and that issues usually occur because individuals interpret policies differently, rather than because of intentional mistakes by the force.

As an example, Hurst referenced a challenge regarding the removal of culturally and historically significant content from some DOD organizations.

"I think the department is executing well and that organizations are exercising more diligence as they go through these processes to make sure they're compliant [with the policy] but not overzealous," Hurst said.

He also said that one of the task force's key priorities is ensuring the sites they visit in the coming weeks have returned to a culture of meritocracy.

Meritocracy is one of five key

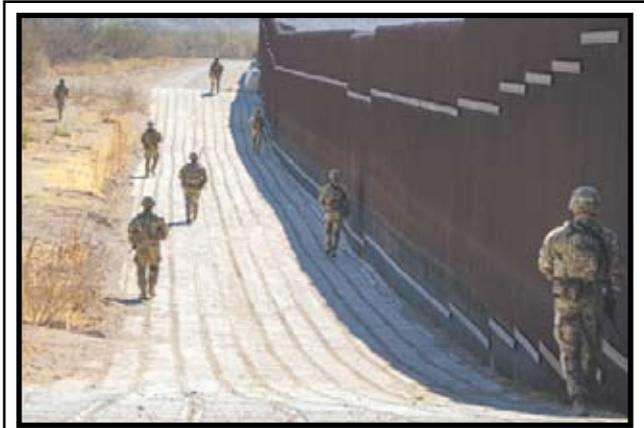
focus points the defense secretary mapped out in his Jan. 25, 2025, message to the force, along with lethality, accountability, readiness and standards.

"This is about the Department of Defense getting back to merit-based, colorblind policies because, at the end of the day, our responsibility is to make sure that we take the best people and put them in positions of responsibility to lead America's sons and daughters," Hurst said.

He said that DoD owes the American people the best fighting force it can possibly muster, which involves getting the best people in positions of responsibility that are in accordance with their talents.

The task force will visit six military installations, including two military service academies, over the next four weeks. The military services and DOD components plan to conduct similar validation exercises during the coming months, to ensure that the department delivers on the intent of the "Restoring America's Fighting Force" memo.

The task force will produce a final report on DOD's actions to terminate any DEI initiatives no later than June 1, 2025.



**SQUAD PATROL** Soldiers conduct a dismounted squad patrol along the southern border near Sierra Blanca, Texas, March 31, 2025. U.S. Army photo by Pvt. Malik Waddy-Fiffee

### Armed Forces Dispatch

published by Western States Weeklies, Inc.

2604 B-280 El Camino Real, Carlsbad, CA 92008

619-280-2985 • E-mail: editor@navydispatch.com

Editor.....Scott Sutherland

The Dispatch is published online weekly on Thursdays, and in print on the 1st & 16th of each month by Western States Weeklies, Inc., as a commercial, free-enterprise newspaper. The editorial objective of the Dispatch is to promote support for a strong military presence. Contents of the Armed Forces Dispatch are not necessarily the official views of, or endorsed by, the U.S. Government, the Department of Defense, the U.S. Navy or U.S. Marine Corps. The opinions and views of writers whose materials appear herein are those of the writers and not the publishers. Appearance of advertising does not constitute endorsement by the Department of Defense or any other DOD component, this newspaper, or Western States Weeklies, Inc. Subscription cost is \$75/year.

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- 'Psychological warfare': Veterans fired from Federal Government speak out at informal hearing

# Air Force changes rules for pregnant aircrew - again

by Greg Hadley

Air & Space Forces Magazine

The Air Force is changing its policy for pregnant aircrew, generally reverting to rules set in 2019 that barred female aviators from flying during the first trimester - or from flying in aircraft with ejection seats at all - due to potential risks to the pilot and her unborn fetus.

The changes come in response to commanders and medical experts concerned about "accepting unknown risk as well as potential damage or loss of multi-million-dollar aircraft if something unexpected where to tragically occur," a spokesperson for Chief of Staff Gen. David W. Allvin told *Air & Space Forces Magazine*.

But advocates in favor of a more lenient policy put in place in 2022 charge that the revision is based not on data but on personal feelings toward pregnancy.

In 2019, the Air Force eased its policies for some pregnant aircrew, but retained restrictions for most aviators once they had a confirmed positive pregnancy test. At that point, pregnant fliers were grounded until 12 weeks, and fighter and bomber pilots remained grounded for the entire pregnancy because of concerns about the potential impact of G-forces and ejection seats on pregnant women and the unborn.

Aviators in non-ejection seat aircraft with a "normal" pregnancy could be cleared to fly

with approval from local commanders, flight surgeons, and obstetrics providers up to 28 weeks, at which point all pregnant aircrew were grounded for the duration of the pregnancy.

In 2022, however, the Biden administration changed the policy again, allowing pregnant aviators to seek a waiver to fly any aircraft during any trimester, and allowing non-ejection seat aircrew to fly with just base-level clearance from 12 to 28 weeks. At no point were pregnant aircrew members ever required to fly.

Now the Air Force is revising the rules again, reinstating the first trimester and aircraft restrictions barring all pregnant aircrew from flight until 12 weeks, and barring pregnant aviators from flying "high performance aircraft or aircraft with ejection seats at any time," according to an Air Force release. Officials cited the increased risk of miscarriage during the first trimester and the lack of "definitive medical research on G-force impact" as reasons for reverting to earlier policy.

But the new policy also increases the window when aircrew can fly, from 12-28 weeks under the 2022 policy to 12-32 weeks under the new rules. The

waiver authority for allowing those members to fly during that period is now at the major command level, however, ensuring a



**A pregnant Airman conducts pre-flight inspections Oct. 25, 2022, at Hurlburt Field, Fla. U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Caleb Pavao**

more consistent approach across an entire community. An Air Force spokesperson said this will result in better decisions because major commands will see more cases "in the aggregate."

Around 20 percent of pregnancies end in miscarriage - the numbers are lower for women in their 20s - and about 80 percent of miscarriages happen in the first trimester, according to medical data.

A briefing prepared by the Air Force Medical Service produced after the 2019 policy was implemented but before the 2022 change, said it is "unknown if aviation will increase risk of first trimester miscarriage but should be assumed that they will occur at least as frequent as in ground setting."

Factors like acceleration, strong vibrations, and high Gs encountered in flight or in case of ejection from a high-performance aircraft were all cited as potential risk factors for pregnancy loss in the briefing. But the briefing also noted a lack of medical studies directly measuring the impacts of vibration and acceleration on pregnancy loss. Indeed, civilian researchers have noted that pregnant women are often excluded from most medical studies, leading to a lack of data on pregnancy.

That lack of detailed data is impacting Air Force decisions, advocates for female fliers say. The policy "is being pulled back, not because of science, not because it's a data-driven decision," said Lt. Col. Sharon Arana, a former member of Air Combat Command's now-disbanded Sword Athena team. "It's being pulled back out of fear."

Air Force officials could not immediately say if the service has tracked data on the impacts of the 2022 policy on pregnancy outcomes, and the Air Force Surgeon General's office did not reply to a query. The service release did cite "medical data indicating that there is no significant risk increase between weeks 28-32 as the reason it expanded that window."

The CSAF's spokesperson also could not say if an aircrew member's pregnancy has ever contributed to a mishap resulting in damage or loss of an aircraft. Though cited by the Air Force as a concern among commanders, no recent Accident Investigation Board results released by the Air Force have cited an aviator's pregnancy. Not all such reports are made public, however. Advocates likewise said they have heard of no such instances.

Advocates argue that, in the absence of clear medical evidence, medical providers are defaulting to over-caution. "The medical community, in my experience, in the Air Force, tends to be very, very risk-averse," said a former volunteer with the Women's Initiatives Team, which pushed for the 2022 policy revisions. "So would they ever want to put themselves in a situation where they have cleared somebody to fly and then something bad happens? ... Even if that's not a conscious bias, it's definitely an unconscious one."

Continue reading at <https://www.airandspaceforces.com/air-force-changes-rules-pregnant-aircrew-again/>.

**OnRamp**

continued from page 2

secure database that government users can search. This capability enhances the conduct of due diligence activities in a secure environment. DIU is evaluating user experience surveys and technical data from a December 2024 technology demonstration to develop requirements for the next phase — delivering the minimum viable product later this year. "DIU, in partnership with the greater Defense Innovation Community of Entities, is excited to bring speed and scale through this digital platform to the commercial innovators across America," Ingstad said.

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## Education benefits make stronger service members, better military

by C. Todd Lopez  
DOD News

Within the armed forces, a variety of educational benefits are available that allow service members to both improve themselves and make themselves more valuable to their service branch.

One example is the Military Tuition Assistance Program. The program is available to enlisted personnel, officers and warrant officers in the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Space Force and Coast Guard and is available only while personnel are still in service.

“The Army’s Tuition Assistance Program provides financial assistance for voluntary, off-duty civilian education programs in support of soldiers’ professional and personal self-development goals,” said Heather J. Hagan, an Army spokeswoman.

Through tuition assistance, service members can fund their civilian education with up to \$250 per credit hour, not exceeding \$4,500 annually. The program covers tuition and lab fees.

In order to take advantage of the program, service members should contact a service education counselor to discuss the application process. Tuition assistance can be used for accredited colleges and universities within the United States.

The Air Force and Navy both offer their own community colleges, where enlisted service members can earn associate degrees at no cost during their off-duty time.

Chief Petty Officer Stacy Atkinsricks, a spokesperson with the Naval Community College, said the school offers 16 fully accredited, 100 percent online, fully funded associate degrees to sailors.

The school also offers 19 professional certificates by partnering with accredited universities and colleges. Coupled with the training the Navy already provides sailors, additional education makes for better service members and a stronger military, she said.

“You [get] a more well-rounded enlisted leader,” she said. “It’s building on those 21st-century skills leaders want service members to have — critical thinking, writing [and] researching.”

The GI Bill, which includes educational benefits typically used after military service concludes, can also be used while still on active duty.

Army Capt. Kristina Muller, an acquisition officer at

the Army Test and Evaluation Command at Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland, is a graduate of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, N.Y. While in uniform, she used GI Bill benefits to attend Texas A&M University, where she earned a Master of Science degree in engineering management.

“When I originally applied to graduate schools, I found that I did not qualify for other forms of financial aid,” Muller said.



**Army Master Sgt. Andre Bland instructs a group of Clemson University Reserve Officers’ Training Corps cadets on Bowman Field, Clemson, S.C., Jan. 9, 2020. U.S. Army photo by Ken Scar**

“However, after eight years of service, I received 100 percent of the Post-9/11 GI Bill. The GI Bill provided me the opportunity to pursue my degree without monumental sacrifices to pay for school, which totaled \$30,000.”

Without that assistance from the GI Bill, Muller said, it would have taken much longer to complete her degree and would have also left her in debt.

h“The GI Bill also allowed me the flexibility in my career timeline to pursue a degree,” she said. “And it allowed me to

take an opportunity that I saw to really buckle down and complete my degree.”

Muller said that achieving her degree has led to her being a more valuable officer, which means she can better serve those who work for her, the leaders above her and the entire Army as well.

“The Army is a profession, and as professionals, we are dedicated to continuously im-

proving our units, our soldiers and ourselves,” she said. “The GI Bill allows hardworking service members to follow their interests, invest in themselves, and bring the knowledge to the workplace — whether during or after service — strengthening our nation.”

Investing in yourself, she said, allows service members to invest in the others around them, making everyone better at what they do.

“A hardworking, educated nation wins wars,” she said. “The acquisitions projects that

succeed — the ones that are the best value to taxpayers and make our military more lethal — do so because they are well planned, staffed and managed. I’m committed to equipping service members with the tools they need to create overmatch. I went to school, and I’m staying in the Army because I’m committed to winning.”

Students at civilian universities are the most typical applicants for attendance in a Reserve Officers’ Training Corps program. The Army, Navy and Air Force all host such programs at schools across the country. The Navy runs ROTC for both the Navy and Marine Corps, while the Air Force runs it for the Air Force and Space Force.

But it’s not just college freshmen who pursue an ROTC education. Across all branches of the armed forces, there are programs that allow enlisted service members to leave the military and pursue a civilian college education on an ROTC scholarship and then return later to their service as commissioned officers.

The Navy, for instance, offers the Seaman to Admiral-21 program, which allows sailors to leave the Navy for up to 36 months to attend college while still getting paid their enlisted salary. When they complete their degree, like other ROTC graduates, they earn a commission and return to the Navy as officers.

While these programs allow service members to improve themselves, they also allow the military to benefit by having more educated personnel.

“We understand that out in the ranks, out in the enlisted community, there are people with an immense amount of talent, an immense amount to offer, as far as leadership, as far as their academic power, their brain power, and we want to give them

an opportunity to use that,” said Navy Lt. Cmdr. Mack Jamieson, Naval Service Training Command spokesman.

Some of the best institutions of higher learning in the United States are run by the military, including West Point, Naval Academy in Annapolis, Md., and Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

All three schools are tough to get into, but the rewards they offer are often immeasurable. The academies are not just for recent high school graduates. Enlisted service members who qualify can attend, earn a degree, receive a commission and return to their service as officers.

Army Capt. William White, part of the admissions team at West Point, is responsible for guiding enlisted soldiers into the school.

At West Point, White said that about 5 percent of the students are prior enlisted. While not all those may be Army — some might have served in other services — West Point does reserve a total of 170 slots at the school each year for soldiers who have their commander’s endorsement. Half of those slots are for active-duty members, and half are for the National Guard and Army Reserve.

West Point has a long history of giving enlisted service members a chance to attend the school, White said.

“There’s an appetite since World War I to fill the Corps of Cadets with enlisted experience and to give enlisted personnel a path to commissioning,” White said. “We really look for soldier experience. ... We’re targeting soldier experience — you’ve gone on a [National Training Center] rotation, you’ve gone on deployment, you’ve been in the Army for one or two years.”

That experience, along with an academic aptitude to pass the rigors of West Point and a chain-of-command endorsement indicating leadership potential, are the three things needed to get a shot at an enlisted slot.

“If you kind of have all three of those things, you have good soldier experience, you have an academic aptitude ... and your chain of command is endorsing you, we want you,” White said.

At West Point, he said those soldiers will learn to be better leaders and officers, in addition to earning a degree. Their presence there also benefits the other cadets around them, who are largely young men and women straight out of high school with no military or life experience.

“They bring the maturity, the ability to teach your peers, be a peer leader, be someone in the Corps of Cadets that understands the Army, understands what looks right in a leader, and what good leaders look like, and be able to kind of carry that as a banner for their classmates,” White said.

“Some of the best officers that are produced by West Point, not all, but some of the best, are the ones that have been enlisted.”

West Point is academically and physically tough for the cadets who make the initial cut. However, for White, the biggest challenge he faces is getting enough enlisted soldiers to come to the school and prove they can do it.

“West Point struggles to get out to the enlisted force [about] what this opportunity is and that these slots are available,” he said. “I struggle really hard to get and fill my slots, and that’s a shame. West Point needs more Soldiers. We need more Soldiers in class.”

### FLEET & FAMILY SUPPORT CENTERS (SAN DIEGO METRO)

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## NASA, other components integrate aboard *Somerset* for module recovery

by Lt.j.g. Fiona Kurland

SAN DIEGO - At a moment's notice, aeronautical capsules carrying astronauts streak through Earth's atmosphere, landing in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. When a space module carrying astronauts splashes down, a joint recovery team from DoD and NASA springs into action.

One of those missions is an underway recovery test, which brings together NASA and military components. In late March, USS *Somerset* amphibious transport dock ship completed URT-12, marking a key milestone in preparation for the launch of NASA's Orion spacecraft as part of the Artemis II campaign. This will be the first crewed mission to orbit the Moon in more than 50 years, carrying four astronauts around the lunar surface.

This was the second URT in which medical personnel from

multiple commands united to execute NASA's crewed recovery operation. When the capsule splashed down, NASA flight surgeons, Explosive Ordnance Disposal Expeditionary Support Unit 1, Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron 23, and others, all embedded with *Somerset*'s medical team—conduct health checks on the Artemis II crew.

"Navy medicine has accustomed us to being adaptable. We are trained to work with many different people across all terrains," said Cmdr. Matthew Bidlack, officer in charge of Fleet Surgical Team 1. "During URT-12, we integrated multiple medical teams that don't normally work together—many of which don't typically operate on ships—with flawless cohesion."

During URT-12, the command "Splashdown!" blared over *Somerset*'s loudspeakers,

signaling the start of the simulated capsule recovery. From inflatable boats deployed from *Somerset*, to Navy divers and corpsmen, surrounded the crew module and constructed an orange buoyant ledge, known as the "front porch," around its edges for extraction.

**MH-60S Seahawks from Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron 23 lowered fast ropes, enabling crew members to rappel down to the floating capsule. Astronauts participating in the underway training were extracted one by one from the front porch. The helicopters transported them to the ship's flight deck, where naval aircrewmembers and hospital corpsmen awaited their arrival, ready to escort the astronauts to the medical ward for assessment.**

"LPDs' organic medical capabilities place us in a Role 1 medical category, providing basic first aid and trauma care. We don't have surgical capabilities unless we have the Fleet Surgical Team and Emergency Response Command on board," said Lt. Cmdr. Kristen Werten, *Somerset*'s senior medical officer. "With integrated teams, we have the capacity to operate not just one but two operating rooms simultaneously."

From the front porch to the medical bay, personnel were prepared to handle both nominal and contingency scenarios

throughout the URT-12 mission.

"Astronauts have a unique medical status upon returning from space, making this an involved evolution," said Capt. Matthew Tadlock, Expeditionary Strike Group 3 surgeon and officer in charge of Surface Medical Group 1. "Anytime you have aircraft involved, divers extracting people from the water, or Sailors tending lines, there's a risk of injury."

The exercises began cautiously to ensure safety, but as the mission progressed, NASA and *Somerset* crewmembers were able to increase their speed and efficiency. The data and experience gained from these recovery tests will inform future operations in preparation for Artemis II.

"I'm so excited to be part of something so historic," said Lt. Col. Cady Blaster, First Air Force, Detachment 3. "It's been amazing to see people from multiple commands come together to support a long-term presence on the Moon and the eventual goal of putting a human on Mars."

The Artemis II crewed mission will send four astronauts around the Moon and beyond in the Orion spacecraft. *see photo, page 8*

<https://www.navy.mil/Press-Office/News-Stories/Article/4139812/>

## MSRON 3 conducts a change of command

IMPERIAL BEACH - Cmdr. Alyssa Armstrong relieved Cmdr. Brandon Castle as commanding officer, Maritime Expeditionary Security Squadron (MSRON) 3, during a change-of-command ceremony late last month at Naval Outlying Landing Field here. Castle led a team of more than 300 Sailors during his 18-month tenure at MSRON-3 from Nov. 2023 to Mar. 2025. His next assignment will be serving as the commanding officer of Maritime Expeditionary Security Training and Evaluation Unit (TEU) One here. Armstrong was selected as commanding officer after completing a successful tour as MSRON-3's executive officer. "I am incredibly excited to lead the seasoned team of leaders at MSRON-3," said Armstrong. "We are a more lethal, expeditionary force because of Cmdr. Castle's legacy, and I look forward to building further upon it as our teams deploy worldwide in support of harbor and embarked maritime security."

## Spruance deploys to border mission

PETERSON SPACE FORCE BASE, Colo. - Destroyer USS *Spruance* (DDG 111) recently departed Naval Base San Diego to support U.S. Northern Command southern border operations in the USNORTHCOM area of responsibility. *Spruance* reinforces the nation's commitment to border security by enhancing maritime efforts and supporting interagency collaboration. The ship's operations highlight the Department of Defense and Navy's dedication to national security priorities, contributing to a coordinated and robust response to combating maritime related terrorism, weapons proliferation, transnational crime, piracy, environmental destruction, and illegal seaborne immigration.

"USS *Spruance*'s deployment as part of U.S. Northern Command's southern border mission brings additional capability and expands the geography of unique military capabilities working with the Department of Homeland Security," said Gen. Gregory Guillot, Commander, U.S. Northern Command.

## Marine air crew rescues stranded civilian in California desert

MARINE CORPS AIR STATION YUMA, Ariz. - A crew of Marines assigned to Marine Operational Test and Evaluation Squadron One rescued a stranded civilian in the remote California desert, demonstrating the capabilities of the CH-53K King Stallion and the Marine Corps' commitment to readiness and response.

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## West Coast Marines and Sailors expand barracks renovations



**Sgt. Joshua Joseph R. Camacho installs a portable AC unit in his barracks room at Camp Pendleton. U.S. Marine Corps photo by Lance Cpl. Noah Martinez**

CAMP PENDLETON - Barracks renovation projects are continuing at Camp Pendleton and expanding to other west coast installations as part of a surge maintenance effort from March 24 to April 11.

Capitalizing on the success of the initial Operation Clean Sweep in October 2024, that led to the completion of more than 4,500 self-help projects and more than 2,000 work orders, Marines and Sailors are again taking deliberate actions to continue improving barracks here and expand efforts to Marine Corps Air-Ground Combat Center, Twentynine Palms and Marine Corps Logistics Base Barstow, Calif., and Marine Corps Air Stations Miramar and Yuma, Ariz.

This effort, dubbed "Operation Clean Sweep II," remains focused on self-help and subject matter expert-led projects, to include drywall repair, washer and dryer repair, window screen replacement, and the installation of air conditioning units procured during the first iteration.

Marines and Sailors will be supported by volunteers, contracted labor, and U.S. Navy Seabees to apply a concerted effort to reduce the backlog

of maintenance requests and increase living standards and operational readiness across installations.

To prepare, barracks residents completed training sessions on the I Marine Expeditionary Force and Marine Corps Installations West Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton joint Barracks Policy and barracks managers were trained on procedures to better support residents when they encounter problems.

Ultimately, the goal of the year-round training sessions is to empower residents and the managers of their assigned barracks to take an active role in the

upkeep and enhancement of their environment.

The Operation Clean Sweep series is part of a larger Barracks 360 Reset joint initiative between I MEF and MCI-W created to take immediate actions to improve the readiness of our force and provide our Marines and Sailors the high standard of living that they deserve. It is in line with the Marine Corps' commitment to the long-term modernization of unaccompanied housing through the implementation of Barracks 2030, which will ensure the barracks are viable for generations of Marines to come.

## MARINES LAUNCH ATTACK DRONE TEAM

**Cpl. Joshua Barker**  
MARINE CORPS BASE QUANTICO, Va.- In January, the commanding generals of Marine Corps Training Command, Maj. Gen. Anthony M. Henderson, and Marine Corps warfighting laboratory, Brig. Gen. Simon M. Doran, established the Marine Corps Attack Drone Team in response to the rapid proliferation of armed first-person view drone technology and tactics.



**A Neros Archer first-person view drone sits on a case during a demonstration range at Weapons Training Battalion on Marine Corps Base Quantico March 7. The Marine Corps Attack Drone Team used the Neros Archer FPV drone to engage targets on the range to showcase the drone's capabilities on the battlefield. U.S. Marine Corps photo by Cpl. Joshua Barker**

The creation of MCADT comes in response to the rapid proliferation of armed first-person view drone technology and tactics observed in modern conflicts, particularly in Eastern Europe.

Now, as emerging threats continue to evolve, the Marine Corps is prioritizing the integration of FPV drone capabilities to enhance lethality and operational effectiveness across the Fleet Marine Force.

"MCADT is committed to rapidly integrating armed first-person view drones into the FMF, enhancing small-unit lethality and providing organic capabilities that warfighters currently lack" said Maj. Alejandro Tavizon, headquarters company commander at Weapons Training Battalion and officer in charge of MCADT. "By leveraging emerging technologies and refining drone employment tactics, we are ensuring that Marines remain agile, adaptive, and lethal in the modern battlespace."

MCADT will be based at WTBn-Quantico under Training Command, fostering close collaboration with the Marine Corps Warfighting Laboratory. This placement builds on 124 years of expertise from the Marine Corps Shooting Team (MCST), which has long facilitated the Corps' culture of marksmanship and paved the way for the development of this program.

The Shooting Team's legacy in precision weapons and the capabilities of the WTBn-Quantico Precision Weapons Section further enhance MCADT's mission.

The team's mission is to integrate lessons from modern

combat; represent the Marine Corps in inter-Service, national, and international competitions; and, through iterative training and competition, provide input to the development of cutting-edge FPV drone capabilities to enhance warfighting effectiveness. MCADT will:

- Develop and refine armed FPV drone training for Marines across the Total Force.

- Inform service-level requirements to ensure the rapid fielding of cutting-edge FPV technologies.

- Enhance individual and unit lethality through hands-on instruction during competitive training events.

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**PACIFIC PALISADES (April 1, 2025)** Debris removal is underway throughout Pacific Palisades, conducted by U.S. Army Corps of Engineers contractors as part of the ongoing recovery mission. ACE continues working with local, state and federal partners to include FEMA, in of support survivors impacted by the Los Angeles wildfires. U.S. Army Corps of Engineers photo by Christopher Rosario



**PACIFIC OCEAN (March 28, 2025)** Sailors assigned to amphibious transport dock USS Somerset (LPD 25), Explosive Ordnance Disposal Group 1, Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron 23 "Wildcards" and NASA personnel assist astronauts onto the "front porch" of an inflatable raft, during NASA Underway Recovery Test 12. U.S. Navy photo by MC2 Olivia Rucker

**NAVAL BASE POINT LOMA (April 4, 2025)** Capt. Will Wiley, commander, Submarine Squadron 11, presents a Junior Sailor of the Quarter



plaque to Information Systems Technician (Communications) 2nd Class Bryce J. Jackson IV during an awards-at-quarters. Jackson was selected as the Junior Sailor of the Quarter for the 2nd quarter of fiscal year 2025 at CSS-11. CSS-11 is home to four Los Angeles-class fast-attack submarines, which are capable of supporting various missions, including: anti-submarine warfare; anti-ship warfare; strike warfare; and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance. U.S. Navy photo by MC1 Aaron T. Smith

**USS Scranton receives O'Kane cribbage board**

In a ceremony presided by Rear Adm. Rick Seif, commander, Submarine Force, Pacific Fleet, the crew of Los Angeles-class fast-attack submarine USS Scranton (SSN 756) recently received the historic O'Kane cribbage board from USS Key West (SSN 722) as the oldest in-service fast-attack submarine in the Pacific Fleet.

The O'Kane cribbage board traces its roots to the Pacific Theater of World War II. Then-Lt. Richard "Dick" O'Kane, executive officer of USS Wahoo (SS 283), played a game of cribbage with commanding officer Lt. Cmdr. Dudley "Mush" Morton while on patrol in the Yellow Sea in April 1943. As legend has it, this patrol was the first in this area during the war, and to ease tensions, O'Kane and Morton played a game of cribbage, a time-honored submarine tradition.

During the game, Morton dealt O'Kane a rare perfect hand, 29 points, a good omen to Wahoo's crew. Wahoo went on to sink two Japanese freighters the same night. In another game only a few days later, Morton dealt a 28-point hand, as Wahoo's crew sank three more enemy ships.

O'Kane went on to command USS Tang (SS 306), a legendary World War II submarine. During five war patrols, Tang was credited with sinking more than 30 ships displacing over 118,000 tons, by far the most ships and highest tonnage sunk in the war by one submarine. At the end of her fifth war patrol on Oct. 25, 1944, Tang was struck by her own torpedo and O'Kane and eight other survivors were captured as prisoners of war.

At his retirement in 1957, O'Kane was advanced to rear admiral, with a Medal of Honor, three Navy Crosses and three Silver Star awards to his name. The crew of the second USS Tang (SS 563) presented a cribbage board to O'Kane to replace the one he lost in 1944, which his wife later gifted to the Submarine Force upon his death in 1994.

Commissioned in Norfolk, Virginia, Jan. 26, 1991, and now the oldest attack submarine in the Pacific, Scranton recently marked its 34th year of service, coinciding with the upcoming 250th anniversary of the Navy and the 125th anniversary of the U.S. Submarine Force.

Scranton is one of four Los Angeles-class submarines assigned to Commander, Submarine Squadron 11, and calls San Diego and Naval Base Point Loma home.

"Scranton's crew is proud to carry on this incredible legacy as the holders of the O'Kane cribbage board," said Cmdr. Jeff Ransom, Scranton's commander. "This ship has had generations of capable and professional submariners, and we are excited to continue to add to 34 years of history here on Scranton."

**Navy & Marine Corps most recent special and general court-martial results**

The following reports the results of the most recent Navy & Marine Corps special and general court-martial in San Diego.

**Navy Region Southwest**

General Court-Martial

At a general court-martial in San Diego, AO2 Jose Velazquez Vazquez pled guilty pursuant to a plea agreement to one specification of indecent conduct, and one specification of making a false official statement. On Feb. 12, consistent with the plea agreement, the military judge sentenced him to 18 months confinement, reduction in paygrade to E-1, and a Bad Conduct Discharge.

**Camp Pendleton**

General Court-Martial

At a general court-martial, a military judge convicted Private J. A. Neil, pursuant to the accused's pleas, of violation of assault upon a non-commissioned officer. Consistent with the plea agreement, the military judge sentenced the accused to a bad conduct discharge, and confinement for 173 days.

Special Court-Martial

At a special court-martial, a military judge convicted Lance Cpl. J. M. Morales Valentin, pursuant to the accused's pleas, of drunk driving. Consistent with the plea agreement, the military judge sentenced the accused to 30 days confinement, 2/3 forfeitures of 1 month, and reduction to E-1.

**MCAS Miramar**

General Court-Martial

At a general court-martial, a military judge convicted Cpl. C. A. Caldwell, pursuant to the accused's pleas, of possession of a controlled substance with intent to distribute, violation of a lawful general order, and conspiracy. Consistent with the plea agreement, the military judge sentenced the accused to a dishonorable discharge, confinement of 72 months, total forfeitures, and reduction to E-1.

Special Court-Martial

At a special court-martial, a military judge convicted Lance Cpl. J. D. Childress, pursuant to the accused's pleas, violation of conspiracy, and possession of a controlled substance. Consistent with the plea agreement, the military judge sentenced the accused to confinement for 3 months, and reduction to E-1.

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## The Meat & Potatoes of Life



by  
Lisa  
Smith  
Molinari

To my mother, a first grade teacher for 30 years, every day was an opportunity to make a difference in the life of some squirmy, rag tag, grubby little six-year-old. And cussing, therefore, was out of the question.

Other than an occasional cathartic “Damn!” (considered quite proper in her home state of Kentucky) my mother rarely uttered a legitimate swear word. When frustrated, she would sometimes begin to form the “sh” sound, but just as we thought she was about to emit a well-known expletive, the word would morph into “SHHugar!” or “SHHoot!” or a long string of biblical characters such as “SHHadrach, Meshach, and Abednego!”

Although she flirted with minor cuss words, there was one word that would never, and I mean never, pass over my mother’s tangerine tinted lips: The “F-word.”

Nowadays the F-word has, like other formerly risqué endeavors such as tattoos and thong bathing suits, become rather commonplace. It’s all over the streaming channels, movie screens, Internet and workplaces. Modern society has become de-sensitized to swearing over the last few decades, but back in the 70s and 80s when I was a kid, the F-word was quite taboo.

As far as my mother was con-

## A word about the ‘F-word’

cerned, the F-word was not an appropriate form of verbal communication. Whatever emotional cleansing or free expression might be gleaned from blurting that particular cuss word was outweighed by one’s ethical obligation to civilization.

Having grown up under my mother’s influence, I never really took to cussing either.

“Pardon my French,” a woman in my writer’s group whispered to me once after she’d told a particularly expressive story punctuated by the F-word. In my eclectic writers’ group, everyone but me swore regularly and freely, but there was no need for her to apologize. I get it. To many people in our modern world, cuss words effectively communicate a particular level of anger, annoyance, surprise or frustration. These words flow naturally from their lips and pens as a form of free expression.

However, when I swear, it comes out as immature as a seventh grader on the middle school bus, despite the fact that I’m 58 years old. It’s not that I’ve lived a sheltered life; I am the wife of a Navy man with the proverbial mouth of a sailor, and have worked in offices where the F-word was casually batted about by both men and women like whiffle balls. I’ve often felt pressured to use the F-word to fit in, but I’ve never been able to make it work for me.

I must admit, there have been times when I’ve really wanted to blurt out something foul -- on the highway, during arguments with my husband, or when trying to get the cap off of a bottle of ibuprofen when I’m particularly hormonal -- and wished there was

an effective alternative to blurting the F-word.

Even my mother once sought her own alternative to the F-word.

It was 1979, and I was watching my parents argue at our kitchen table. Nothing heated, just a garden-variety marital disagreement. While I sat spreading peanut butter on saltines, my mother gave up arguing, expelled a heavy sigh, and went back to silently scribbling in her sketchbook.

My father got the final word, but my mother didn’t seem bothered. She calmly finished her drawing, got up, and excused herself from the room, leaving her sketchpad propped against the napkin caddy.

Back then, we all knew my mother would never say the F-word, much less make the infamous symbolic hand gesture for it. But, on this particular day, she found a way to express her feelings without compromising her ethical standards or tarnishing her spotless reputation as a first-grade teacher.

There on Mom’s sketchpad, for all the world to see, was drawn a perfect replica of a human hand -- skin, knuckles, fingernails and all -- flipping my father “The Bird.”

That day, I learned a few things from my mother’s unique example. That there are always alternatives to swearing. That I should weigh my options before letting any expletives fly. And that, if there’s a way to swear with class, my mother had definitely put her finger on it.

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## Celebrating 50 years — auto racing returns this week to the streets of Long Beach

This week, “50 Years at Full Speed” is celebrated at the Acura Grand Prix of Long Beach. To commemorate the event, a new logo was developed by Acura and the Grand Prix Association of Long Beach. It evokes a 1970s feel with a stylized “50” that resembles both a racetrack and a “retro” racing logo of the era. In addition, the “50” includes a checkered flag positioned in the lower right portion of the zero and the primary version of the logo will appear in “Long Beach Blue,” featured on multiple limited editions of Acura vehicles dating back to the first-generation NSX.

The headline race of the event will once again be the IndyCar race — the third on the 2025 NTT INDYCAR SERIES calendar, following close behind the Inaugural Thermal Club IndyCar Grand Prix (for coverage of that event, complete with extensive original photography, see <https://automatters.net/inaugural-thermal-club-indycar-grand-prix-two-thumbs-up/>.)

The Acura Grand Prix of Long Beach also includes exciting racing from other series. We learned about race car engineering and design for a car from one of those series at a panel discussion at last year’s event about, and as reported by AutoDesignO Automotive Design Organization (thank you!).

That car was the Acura ARX-06. Members of the panel included Acura’s design team and the co-owner of one of the teams. The moderator of the panel was Eric Noble of The CARLAB. Following the panel discussion, the panelists led us outside where they pointed out various design and engineering elements of the Acura ARX-06.

This Thursday will be Thunder Thursday, a free-to-the-public event that annually marks the start of the Acura Grand Prix of Long Beach race weekend. It starts at 6 p.m. with activities for the entire family.

Thunder Thursday will include an NTT INDYCAR SERIES pit stop competition on Shoreline Drive, west of Pine Ave., lighting up the streets at 6:45 p.m. There will be four

cars representing four INDYCAR teams competing for a \$10,000 prize: in the first round, Alex Palou, driving the #10 Chip Ganassi Racing Honda, will take on Christian Rasmussen in the #21 Ed Carpenter Racing Chevrolet, while Will Power, driving the #12 Team Penske Chevrolet will go up against Graham Rahal in the #15

**AutoMatters™ & More**



by Jan Wagner

Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing Honda. The two winning teams will go on to the final round, while the other two teams will face off in a consolation matchup to determine third place overall.

In addition, the always-exciting FreestyleMX freestyle motocross demonstrations will take over Shoreline Drive briefly at 6:30 p.m. and for a full show at 7:45 p.m. Within The Pike Outlets, fans will enjoy interactive photo booths and live music from Emerald Street Band and Manuel The Band on stage in the Main Plaza. Food will also be available in the Main Plaza, as will, for fans 21 and older, a Beer Garden.

Other attractions include a classic

car show located on The Paseo, with local antique and vintage cars; race cars from the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship including the Acura ARX-06 hybrid GT Prototype (GTP) car, and GT America series that will race over the weekend, and for the third time, Iron Goddess, an all-female motorcycle show on Bay Street. Plus, the IMSA and GT America drivers will sign autographs!

In celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Acura Grand Prix of Long Beach, the Petersen Automotive Museum will host a special exhibit showcasing five historic race cars spanning the three iconic racing eras – Formula 5000, Formula 1 and IndyCar – representing the evolution of open-wheel racing at North America’s premier street race. The cars will later take to the track during the Historic Formula Exhibition on race weekend, providing fans with a thrilling glimpse into motorsports history with the three types of cars racing together for the first time.

In addition to the feature NTT INDYCAR SERIES race, the event will also include the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCarChampionship. The weekend will also include the Super Drift Challenge under the lights on Friday and Saturday nights, plus doubleheader action from Robby Gordon’s SPEED Energy Stadium Super Trucks, GT America Powered by AWS and the Historic Formula Exhibition.

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## Veterans News

# Veterans could get service dogs for free under proposed legislation

by Linda F. Hersey  
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON - Army veteran Bob Ouellette and Cooper, a 9-year-old golden retriever, were outside the Capitol on April 2 to support a bill that would fund \$10 million annually for grants to provide service dogs to veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injuries.

The bill — called the Service Dogs Assisting Veterans Act or SAVES Act — would authorize the Department of Veterans Affairs for the first time to award grants to nonprofits to provide service dogs at no cost to veterans with disabilities.

Ouellette works with Warrior Canine Connection, a Maryland nonprofit that breeds, trains and pairs service dogs with eligible veterans. But he also attended the event as an advocate for his son, an Army veteran with PTSD and TBI who relies on a service dog to assist with his daily interactions that include at-

tending classes at the University of Maryland.

“When my son first came home after tours in Iraq and Afghanistan, he would stay up in his room — not engage or talk with anyone. But when he got his dog, he became sociable and would talk with us,” said Ouellette about his son, Rusty Ouellette, a former sergeant medically retired from the military.

The SAVES Act was reintroduced in the House on April 2 after failing to advance to a final vote in fiscal 2024. Under the new legislation, it also will fund grants to train service dogs for veterans with hearing loss, blindness, paralysis and health conditions from military sexual trauma.

“The [VA] secretary shall award grants, on a competitive basis, to nonprofit organizations to assist such organizations in carrying out programs to provide service dogs to eligible veterans,” according to the legislation.

A companion bill is expected to be introduced next month in the Senate, according to the office of Rep. Morgan Luttrell, R-Texas, who is leading the House bill. He was joined at the news conference by about a dozen lawmakers from both political parties, as well as veterans and service dog organizations.

“This legislation is about giving our heroes the tools they need to thrive — not just survive — when they come home,” said Luttrell, a former Navy SEAL and chairman of the House Veterans’ Affairs Committee’s subpanel on disability assistance and memorial affairs.

More than 450,000 returning service members have been diagnosed with traumatic brain injuries in the past 20 years, according to the VA. Serious head injuries place veterans at greater risk for unemployment, homelessness, substance abuse and suicide.

Disabled American Veterans, the Elizabeth Dole Foundation,

the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America and Semper K9 Assistance Dogs are among more than two dozen nonprofits that have endorsed the bill. Luttrell and other speakers at the news conference said they believe the SAVES Act will help ease suicide risks among veterans and help them better manage the pressures of transitioning to civilian life.

Having a service dog gives veterans a sense of purpose that they might lack after leaving the military, Luttrell said.

“As a member of the Veterans’ Affairs Committee and proud grandson of veterans, I know we need to do more to help our veterans address both the visible and invisible wounds of war,” said Rep. Morgan McGarvey, D-Ky. “These brave men and women put on the uniform to defend our freedom, and we have a moral obligation to support them.”

“Our veterans have sacrificed so much for our country, and we

owe it to them to provide every possible resource to support their recovery and well-being,” Luttrell said.

But training an assistance dog costs on average about \$50,000, according to nonprofits that breed, train and pair dogs with veterans. The SAVES Act would establish a five-year, \$50 million VA-administered grant program for eligible nonprofit organizations. It would enable the organizations to provide trained service dogs to qualifying disabled veterans at no cost.

Organizations now depend on

donations to fund operations. The legislation will ultimately put more service dogs in the hands of veterans “with visible and invisible disabilities,” said Bill McCabe, vice president of government and external affairs at K9s for Warriors, which provides specially trained service dogs to disabled veterans who’ve experienced a brain injury, PTSD and military sexual trauma.

Under the legislation, qualifying nonprofits would have to meet standards established by an accreditation organization with protocols for training assistance animals.



# CLASSIFIED ADS

## SOCIAL SECURITY MATTERS

### About when to claim Social Security and taxation of benefits

*Dear Rusty: I am 65 and currently working full-time. Can I apply for and start receiving my Social Security benefit? I'd expect to have to pay income tax on it if/when I do.*  
Signed: Curious Worker

**Dear Curious Worker:** If you are working full time, you should likely delay claiming Social Security at this time. At age 65, you haven't yet reached your SS full retirement age (FRA), so you will be subject to Social Security's "annual earnings test" which limits how much you can earn from work while collecting early benefits. The earnings limit for 2025 is \$23,400 and if you earn more than the annual limit, SS will take away \$1 in benefits for every \$2 you are over the limit. If you earn significantly over the limit, you may even be temporarily ineligible to collect SS benefits. FYI, the annual earnings limit goes away when you reach your full retirement age, which for you is 66 years and 10 months, or March 2026.

As you obviously already know, a portion of your Social Security may be subject to income tax after you start collecting. The threshold for taxation of SS benefits depends on your IRS filing status – if you file your taxes as a single and your combined income from all sources (including half of the SS benefit you received during the tax year) exceeds \$25,000 then 50% of your received SS benefits are taxable. But if you file taxes as "married/jointly" and your combined income is over \$32,000, then up to 85% of your received SS benefits are taxable. Thus, whenever you claim SS, you may wish to consider having income tax withheld from your SS benefit. This is optional, and you can do this by submitting IRS Form W-4V to your local Social Security office, or you could choose to increase your income tax withholding at work or, alternatively, pay estimated income taxes quarterly.

So, whether you can claim Social Security now depends entirely on how much you will earn from working full time prior to your FRA. If you exceed the annual earnings limit before your FRA, SS will take away some of your benefits or, if you greatly exceed the earnings limit, you may even be temporarily ineligible to get benefits (until you either reach your FRA or earn less). But note, if you decide to claim early and any SS benefits are withheld because you exceeded the earnings limit, you will get credit for that (in the form of a slightly increased benefit) after you reach your full retirement age.

*This article is intended for information purposes only and does not represent legal or financial guidance. It presents the opinions and interpretations of the AMAC Foundation's staff, trained and accredited by the National Social Security Association (NSSA).*

## 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.navylifefsw.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 Pet Pantry offers help to pet parents in need

San Diego Humane Society is supporting families and their pets who need a little extra help. Through the Community Pet Pantry, anyone can visit our campus locations in El Cajon, Escondido, Oceanside and San Diego between 10 a.m. and 6 p.m., Tuesday through Sunday, to pick up a bag of dog or cat food as well as other supplies as available. No appointment is needed. Tuesday-Sunday | 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.

### San Diego Humane Society Campus Locations

El Cajon Campus  
1373 N. Marshall Ave.  
El Cajon, CA 92020

Oceanside Campus  
572 Airport Road  
Oceanside, CA 92058

Escondido Campus  
3500 Burnet Drive  
Escondido, CA 92027

San Diego Campus  
5480 Gaines Street  
San Diego, CA 92110

## ARMED FORCES DISPATCH CLASSIFIEDS

To place your ad, please call our Classified Advertising Department at (619) 280-2985.

### CAREGIVER

**CAREGIVER/CNA** – 25 years experience. 24 hour live-in. California requirements. Call for more info 760-234-2644. 4/1

### CATERING

We can cater your event with the 'Best Mexican food in San Diego!' Military Discount. El Indio 619-299-0333

### HELP WANTED

**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.

### HELP WANTED

**Delivery driver.** 2 Thursday mornings a month. Must have own vehicle w/proof of insurance. Approx. 3 hours \$80. Milspouse/retired military pref. Nat'l City area. 619-280-2985.

**USS Midway Museum** is recruiting volunteers for docents, air craft restoration, ship restoration and safety. [www.midway.org/give-join/volunteers/volunteer-opportunities/](http://www.midway.org/give-join/volunteers/volunteer-opportunities/)

### RENTALS APARTMENTS

**BONSALL** – 2BR/2BA fully furnished, W/D \$3200/mo. utilities & high speed internet included. Pet ok. 760-758-8582. 4/1

**CHULA VISTA** – 2BR/2BA. \$2700 (265 Woodlawn) & 3BR/2.5BA \$3800. New construction, near I-5, W/D in unit, 10 minutes to NASNI/32nd. 619-454-2545. 4/1

**CORONADO** – 1 BR apt. lovely, quiet, tv & internet included, laundry on-site. Terrace view to SD & bay. 1 year lease \$3000/mo. all utilities included 619-435-8738. 5/1

**MOUNTAIN VIEW** – 1BR/1BA. Gated parking, utilities included, 1 year lease, no smoking, no pets. \$1750/mo. [pjaptsd@gmail.com](mailto:pjaptsd@gmail.com) 4/1

**NORTH PARK** – Fully furn. 1BR apartment in lovely area, near restaurants, bars, Walkable! \$2,500/mo. Call for showing (858)967-0147. 4/1

**PACIFIC BEACH** – Sunny 2BR, one mile from beach, very walkable to restaurants, bars. \$3,650/mo. Call for showing (858)967-0147. 4/1

### RENTALS APARTMENTS

#### AVAILABLE NOW!!!

1, 2 or 3 BR's Apartments, Townhouses & Houses

#### MOVE-IN SPECIAL!

### LEADINGHAM REALTY

1062 Palm Ave., Imperial Beach  
619-424-8600

### RENTALS CONDOS

**BONITA** – 1BR/1BA. 766 Sq ft, fully renovated, patio, green belt access, off street parking. \$2500/mo. 619-852-1598. 4/1

### RENTALS HOUSES

**Beautiful one of a kind 4BR/3.5BA in Chula Vista**



Email Jessica at [jessica@socalprem.com](mailto:jessica@socalprem.com) to schedule a tour

"Mid pleasures and palaces though we may roam, Be it ever so humble, there's no place like home." --John Howard Payne

### RENTALS HOUSES

**SAN DIEGO** – 3BR/3BA, 2 car garage. No smoking/drinking/drugs/pets, no evictions. W/D hookups. \$250 off 1st month rent. \$3250/mo. 4300 Newton Ave. 951-210-8392. 4/1

### ROOM FOR RENT

**NATIONAL CITY** – 5 min. from 32nd St. Dry side, close to Petco Park. Kitchen has diner theme & all appli, large patio. \$1200/mo. 619-908-9977. 4/1

### STABLES

**HORSE BOARDING CARLSBAD** \$400/month Western casual, family-oriented ranch. We have roomy 12x48 or 12x24 corrals and provide a veterinarian recommended diet twice daily. **760.840.0187**

### THRIFT STORE

## AMVETS NEW STORE NOW OPEN IN OCEANSIDE

40,000 clothing items & 10,000 miscellaneous items on our floor daily!

1527-A Mission Ave., Oceanside Just east of I-5 (760) 286-8880  
Open 7 days a week 9am-7pm  
Sales support veterans & their families

### 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/>

## 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. <http://www.veteranmuseum.org/>  
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  
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

## Armed Forces Dispatch • (619) 280-2985

Published by Western States Weeklies, Inc.  
2604 B-280 El Camino Real, Carlsbad, CA 92008  
E-mail: [editor@navydispatch.com](mailto:editor@navydispatch.com)

### Friends don't make friends wait in hot cars!

When the outside temp is 90° your car heats up to 109° in 15 minutes and 124° in 30 minutes.  
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## ARMED SERVICES YMCA CAMP PENDLETON

STRENGTHENING OUR MILITARY FAMILY (TM)

### WHO WE ARE

The mission of the Armed Services YMCA Camp Pendleton is to enhance the lives of military members and their families in spirit, mind, and body through programs relevant to unique challenges of military life. For the past 81 years, our goal has been to strengthen military families who work or reside on Camp Pendleton.



### OUR CORE PROGRAMS

#### FISHER CHILDREN'S CENTER

Offers accessible, accredited, quality and affordable childcare for young children to help prepare them for future success.

#### CAMP HERO

Encourages healthy living and provides outdoor activities and social bonding opportunities for military children.

#### HOLIDAY SUPPORT

Toy giveaways and financial assistance for active duty service members and their families during the holidays.

#### OPERATION LITTLE LEARNERS

An interactive parent and child education program that offers parents and their preschoolers an opportunity to learn and grow.

#### OPERATION KID COMFORT

Custom, hand-made quilts to help children cope with the separation of a parent's deployment.

#### SOI RECREATION CENTER

Open on the weekends, this recreation space provides a place for School of Infantry students to relax and recharge.

#### OPERATION HERO

A no-cost after school program designed to help military kids who may be struggling with change get back on track at home and in school.

#### SERVICE EVENTS

Support military families through dances, giveaways, and community events.

#### FOOD DISTRIBUTION & FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Assistance with food, diapers, gas, and other necessities through monthly distributions, a food pantry, and emergency commissary and gas cards.

## Enjoy the outdoors, support local farmers at one of the county's farmer's markets

At daily San Diego farmers markets in neighborhoods throughout the county, you can sample fresh-from-the-farm produce from regional farmers and tasty treats from local artisans.

For more information about farmers markets around San Diego County, visit the San Diego County Farm Bureau website at <http://www.sdfarmbureau.org/farmers-market/>. *Days and times are subject to change. Please email us any corrections: editor@navydispatch.com Subject: Farmers Market Correx*

### Coronado Certified Farmers Market

Tuesday: 2:30pm-6pm  
Coronado Ferry Landing, 1201 First St at B Ave, Coronado, CA 92118

### Downtown / Gaslamp Quarter City Heights Certified Farmers Market

Saturday: 9am-1pm  
On Wightman St from Fairmount Ave to 43rd St, San Diego, CA 92105

**Gaslamp Artisan Market**  
Saturday & Sunday: 11am-4pm

Fifth Ave from Island Ave to J St. and Island Ave from Fourth Ave to Fifth Ave, San Diego, CA 92101  
**Little Italy Mercato Certified Farmers Market**

Saturday: 8am-2pm  
501 W Date St from Kettner Blvd to Front St, San Diego, CA 92101  
**Tuna Harbor Docks Market**  
Saturday: 8am-1pm  
598 Harbor Ln - Fish Harbor Pier (near Tuna Harbor), San Diego, CA 92101

### Hillcrest / Uptown Hillcrest Certified Farmers Market

Sunday: 9am-2pm  
3960 Normal St from Lincoln Ave to University Ave, San Diego, CA 92103

**North Park Thursday Certified Farmers Market**  
Thursday: 3pm-7:30pm  
2900 North Park Way from 30th St to Granada Ave, San Diego, CA 92104

**La Jolla La Jolla Open Aire Market**  
Sunday: 9am-1pm  
7300 Block of Girard Ave at Genter St, La Jolla, CA 92037

### Mission Bay and Beaches Ocean Beach Certified Farmers Market

Wednesday: 4pm-8pm  
4900 Newport Ave from Cable St to Bacon St, San Diego, CA 92107

**Pacific Beach Certified Farmers Market**  
Saturday: 8am-12pm  
4150 Mission Blvd from Reed St to Pacific Beach Blvd, PB, CA 92109

**Pacific Beach Tuesday Certified Farmers Market**  
Tuesday: 2pm-7pm  
4500 Bayard St. from Garnet Ave to Hornblend St  
San Diego, CA 92109

### Mission Valley and Old Town Kearny Mesa Certified Farmers Market

Saturday: 10:30am-2:30pm  
Service Road from Lightwave Ave to Spectrum Center Blvd, San Diego, CA 92123

### South Bay Chula Vista - Otay Ranch Certified Farmers Market

Tuesday: 4pm-8pm  
2015 Birch Rd. and Eastlake Blvd. Chula Vista, CA 91915

**Imperial Beach Certified Farmers Market**  
Friday: 2pm-7pm (April - Sept.)  
Friday: 2pm-6pm (Oct - March)

Imperial Beach Pier Plaza, 10 Evergreen Ave, Imperial Beach, CA 91932

**South Bay Certified Farmers Market**  
Wednesday: 3-7pm  
4475 Bonita Rd. Bonita, CA 91902

### East County Borrego Springs Certified Farmers Market

Friday: 7am-Noon (October - April, closed May - September)  
Christmas Circle, 700 Palm Canyon Dr and Borrego Springs Rd  
Borrego Springs, CA 92004

### La Mesa Village Certified Farmers Market

Friday: 3pm-7pm  
La Mesa Blvd from Palm Ave and Allison Ave, La Mesa, CA 91942

**Santee Certified Farmers Market**  
Wednesday: 3pm-7pm (March - October)

Wednesday: 2:30pm-6:30pm (November - February)  
9600 Carlton Hills Blvd and Mast Blvd, Santee, CA 92071

### Santa Ysabel Certified Farmers Market

Sunday: Noon-4pm  
21887 Washington St at Hwy 78 and Hwy 79. Santa Ysabel, CA 92070

### North Coastal Carlsbad State Street Certified Farmers Market

Wednesday: 3pm-7pm (March- Oct)  
Wednesday: 3pm-6pm (Nov-Feb)

2900 State St from Carlsbad Village Dr to Grand Ave, Carlsbad, CA 92008

**Del Mar Certified Farmers Market**  
Saturday: Noon-4pm  
Civic Center, 1050 Camino Del Mar, Del Mar, CA 92014

### Leucadia Certified Farmers Market

Sunday: 10am-2pm  
Paul Ecke Elementary, 185 Union St, Encinitas, CA 92024

### Oceanside Certified Farmers Market

Thursday: 9am-1pm  
Pier View Way and Coast Hwy 101, Oceanside, CA 92054

### Rancho Santa Fe Certified Farmers Market

Sunday: 9:30am-2pm  
Del Rayo Village Center. 16079 San Dieguito Rd, Rancho Santa Fe, CA 92091

### Solana Beach Certified Farmers Market

Sunday: Noon-4pm  
444 South Cedros Ave, Solana Beach, CA 92075

### North Inland Escondido Certified Farmers Market

Tuesday: 2:30-7pm (Oct- May)  
Tuesday: 2:30-7pm (June-Sept)  
200 East Grand Ave from N Juniper St and S Kalmia St, Escondido, CA 92025

### Fallbrook Main Avenue Certified Farmers Market

Saturday: 9:30am-2pm  
100 S Main Ave from Hawthorne and Fig, Fallbrook, CA 92028

### Mira Mesa Certified Farmers Market

Tuesday: 3pm-7pm (February - October) Opens 2nd Tues in Feb.  
Tuesday: 3pm-6pm (Nov-Dec, closed in January)

Mira Mesa High School, 10510 Reagan Rd. San Diego, CA 92126

### North San Diego (Sikes Adobe) Certified Farmers Market

Sunday: 10:30am-3:30pm  
Sikes Adobe Historic Farmstead, 12655 Sunset Dr, Escondido, CA 92025

### Poway Certified Farmers Market

Saturday: 8am-1pm  
14134 Midland Rd at Temple St  
Poway, CA 92064

### Rancho Bernardo Certified Farmers Market & Specialties

Friday: 9am-1pm  
Bernardo Winery, 13330 Paseo Del Verano Norte, San Diego, CA 92128

### San Marcos Certified Farmers Market

Tuesday: 3pm-7pm  
250 North City Dr. (between Campus Dr. and Redel Rd.), San Marcos, CA 92078

### Vista Certified Farmers Market

Saturday: 8am-Noon  
County Courthouse, 355 South Melrose Dr (south of Hacienda), Vista, CA 92081

**Veterans Crisis Line**  
Dial 988 then  
PRESS 1



## FAMILY LIVING

# What parents need to know about protecting their children from measles

(StatePoint) Ongoing measles outbreaks across the country have many families, pediatricians and public health experts concerned. Most of the people who have gotten sick, including a child who died in Texas, were not vaccinated against measles.

The best way to protect your family is by choosing to have your child immunized against measles. The MMR vaccine—which protects against measles, mumps and rubella—is the only way to prevent measles. Vitamin A, cod liver oil and other alternatives have been discussed as ways to lessen the severity of measles. However, none of these alternatives will prevent measles. Too much vitamin A can also cause severe illness. Always talk with your pediatrician first.

“The reason many parents in the United States have not had to worry about measles in decades is because of widespread immunization with this safe and effective vaccine,” said AAP president and pediatrician, Susan Kressly. “However, when immunization rates drop in a community, the disease can spread, putting everyone—especially young children—at risk.”

Before the measles vaccine was available in the United States, an average of 450 people died from measles every year, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Most of them were previously healthy children.



PHOTO SOURCE: (c) Buntiam / iStock via Getty Images Plus

Children who contract measles are at higher risk for developing more serious conditions such as pneumonia or a brain infection called encephalitis.

These complications can become deadly. Additionally, a rare but universally fatal form of brain swelling called subacute sclerosing panencephalitis can occur in healthy children years after they have recovered from measles infection.

Measles is highly contagious. The virus can live for up to two hours in the air where infected people have coughed or sneezed. Nine out of 10 people exposed to the virus who don't have immunity from the vaccine will also become infected, according to the CDC. To prevent the virus from spreading and potentially causing an outbreak, creating community immunity by reaching a high level

of vaccination rate is crucial to protect those who cannot be vaccinated.

The vast majority of parents get their children vaccinated. But because measles is so infectious, if a community's rate of vaccination dips below 95% of the population, the disease can easily spread, impacting individuals and groups of people. Check with your pediatrician today if you're unsure about your child's protection. Learn more at [HealthyChildren.org](http://HealthyChildren.org).

“No parent should have to experience the loss of a child to a preventable disease. Vaccines save lives,” said Dr. Kressly. “Pediatricians are here to talk with families about their children's health, including how they can access vaccines. We must support immunization programs so that children in every community get the opportunity to grow up healthy and strong.”



## Your Local USO Wants You!

Volunteers are our greatest asset and the backbone of the USO. Whether helping a Sailor or Marine with a connecting flight, distributing a Care Package, serving snacks with a smile, providing local information, or “welcoming home” ships and 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/>

- On the right side see “Interested in volunteering?”
- Click red “Register Here” button
- Navigate to your area
- Finally, select the USO San Diego center nearest to you!

Positions may be available around San Diego county at:

**Neil Ash Airport Center**  
**Camp Pendleton USO Center**  
**San Diego MEPS Center**  
**Special Events**



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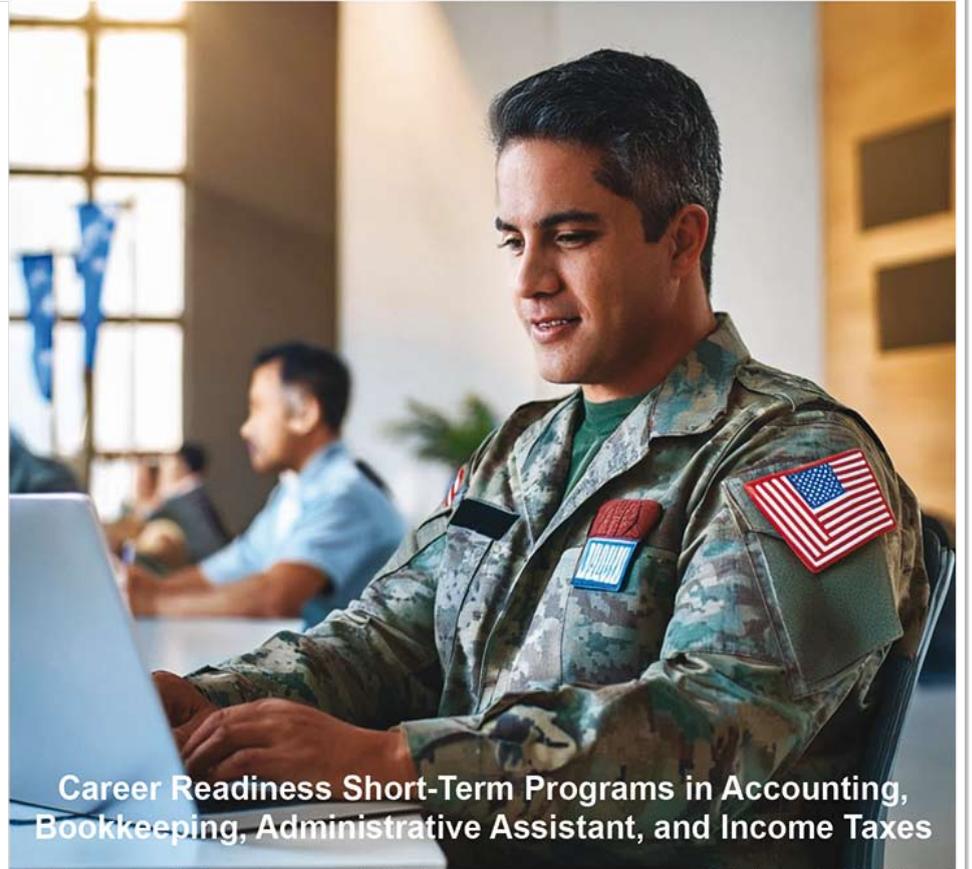
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\*We will not share information with your command per HIPAA and Title 42 CFR, but TRICARE has records of services billed (if not the medical record). Records could be accessible for a special duty screening, medical board or security clearance check.

