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SIXTY-THIRD YEAR NO. 7 THURSDAY, JULY 6, 2023



HOOD FLYOVER: F-15C Eagles fly near a KC-135 Stratotanker over Mount Hood in Oregon as part of Operation Centennial Contact, June 27, 2023. The movement, which also included flights over Yellowstone National Park, Mount Rushmore and Glacier National Park, was part of Air Mobility Command's celebration of 100 years of air refueling operations. U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Lawrence Sena

SUBPAC HONORS OMBUDSMAN OF THE YEAR

by Petty Officer 2nd Class Aaron Smith

SAN DIEGO - Commander Submarine Forces Pacific awarded their Ombudsman of the Year award to USS Alexandria's (SSN-757) ombudsman.

Alexandra Nelms work on behalf of the Alexandria crew earned her this recognition.

"Being an ombudsman is already a rewarding job, being selected for such an honorable



Capt. Christopher Rose, commanding officer of submarine Alexandria, shares a moment with Alexandra Nelms and her children after she was selected as the 2022 Commander Submarine Forces Pacific Ombudsman of the Year. U.S. Navy photo by Petty Officer 1st **Class Tiarra Brown**

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award is the icing on the cake,' said Nelms. "Knowing that the challenges I faced, countless working hours, and always putting what's best for my command and its families ... being recognized on such a high level is humbling.'

Ombudsman from around the fleet were nominated by their respective commanding officers for the outstanding award, but Nelms' work stood out.

"This is my third submarine and she is one of the best ombudsmen I have worked with," Lt. Cmdr. Christopher Kitt, Alexandria's executive officer. "She always has a pulse on what's going on with the families when we're out. She knows what needs to happen before she even contacts us, she knows all the local resources and is a great asset to us and our families."

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of Destiny.

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While the award formally recognizes her work as an ombudsman the award also honors the dedication and the contributions of all ombudsman

"Being an ombudsman is an enormous undertaking that requires a lot of responsibility, professionalism and organizational skills," said Nelms. "Ombudsman like myself serve as an official role to its command on a volunteer basis, yet I have met some of the hardest workers within this community. We understand how vital this role is

Appointed by commanding officers, Ombudsman are Navy Spouse volunteers who are professionally trained to inform and act as referral specialists. They serve as communication links between the commanding officers and the families.

See page 9

Carrier Nimitz steams into North Island to conclude Indo-Pacific deployment

In a U.S. Naval Institute report, aircraft carrier USS Nimitz pulled into Naval Air Station North Island June 28 after a nearly seven-month deployment to the Indo-Pacific

As part of post-deployment offloading, Nimitz parted with elements of Car-rier Air Wing 17 at North Island before heading to its homeport at Naval Base Kitsap in Bremerton, Wash. The air wing started flying off last Tuesday.



Sailors aboard aircraft carrier Nimitz prepare to go ashore June 28. U.S. Navy photo

As reported in Armed Forces Dispatch June 29, destroyer Decatur returned home with cruiser Bunker Hill after supporting the Nimitz Carrier Strike Group.

When Nimitz deployed in early December, the CSG included Bunker Hill, staff of Destroyer Squadron 9, and five destroyers - Decatur, Paul Hamilton, Chung-Hoon, Wayne E. Meyer and Shoup. Wayne E. Meyer came home Tuesday, while Chung-Hoon returned on June 20, according to a Navy news release. Both destroyers are homeported at Naval Station Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.

"For seven months, the Nimitz Carrier Strike Group demonstrated our ironclad commitment to partners and allies in the Indo-Pacific region," said Rear Adm. Jennifer Couture, the commander of Carrier Strike Group 11, in a Navy news release.

"During this deployment, Sailors of every rank and rate displayed a vigorous work ethic and a humble devotion to duty and I want to thank them and their families for their sacrifice.

During deployment, the Nimitz CSG drilled with partners and allies in the region like Japan and India, and participated in a Large Scale Global Exercise.



Fortunately, there are strategies and treatments that work to relieve PTSD symptoms. Don't wait, seek help today: www.health.mil/ptsd.

Base Movie Schedule The Boogeyman (2023), No Hard Feelings, Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse, About My Father See page 10

U.S., Republic of Singapore Navies conduct Exercise Pacific Griffin 2023

by Ensign Rebecca Moore

PHILIPPINE SEA - The U.S. and Republic of Singapore navies recently conducted combined naval training near Guam during exercise Pacific Criffin Guam during exercise Pacific Griffin.

Pacific Griffin 2023 is the fourth iteration of the biennial maritime exercise between the two navies. Conducted in the waters near Guam, the two navies will enhance combined maritime proficiency while strengthening relationships during two weeks of dynamic training evolutions ashore and at sea. The exercise is an extension of the longstanding bilateral engagement series, Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training (CARAT), which the two navies have conducted annually since 1995.

Navy Capt. Sean Lewis, deputy commodore, Destroyer Squadron (DESRON) 7, said Pacific Griffin 2023 would enhance mutual understanding, demonstrate maritime capabilities and deepen the long-standing partnership between the two navies.

"For more than 55 years, U.S. and Republic of Singapore forces have forged an enduring relationship based on robust security, defense cooperation, and lasting people-to-people ties," said Lewis. "We have an unwavering commitment to our partners in this region. Pacific Griffin provides a challenging and technologically advanced training opportunity that allows us to become more dynamic and build competencies as an integrated maritime force.'

The U.S. and Singapore work together frequently on a number of initiatives and conduct regular personnel exchanges, participating in bilateral and multilateral exercises such as CARAT. Southeast Asia Cooperation and Training

(SEACAT), and Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC), as well as multi-national counter-piracy activities.

Pacific Griffin 2023 will have events ashore and at sea, including combined afloat sea combat training, anti-submarine warfare and anti-air warfare demonstrations, and replenishment at sea.

Participating U.S. Navy as-sets include littoral combat ship USS Manchester (LCS 14), Ticonderoga-class guided-missile cruiser USS Shiloh (CG 67), dry cargo ammunition ship USNS Cesar Chavez (T-AKE 14), and maritime patrol aircraft from CTF-72.

San Diego-based Manchester, an Independence-variant littoral combat ship, is on a rotational deployment, operating in the U.S. 7th fleet area of operations to enhance interoperability with allies and partners and serve as a ready-response force in support of a free and open Indo-Pacific region.

As the U.S. Navy's forwarddeployed DESRON in Southeast Asia, DESRON 7 serves as the primary tactical and operational commander of littoral combat ships rotationally deployed to Singapore, functions as Commander, Task Force 76/3 Sea Combat Commander, and builds partnerships through training exercises and military-to-military engagements as the executing agent of Commander, Task Group CARAT. ############

Littoral Combat Ship USS Manchester (LCS 14) and Formidable-class stealth frigate RSS Tenacious (71) (right) transit the Philippine Sea during Exercise Pacific Griffin, June 22. Pacific Griffin 2023 is the fourth iteration of the biennial maritime exercise between the U.S. and Republic of Singapore. Pacific Griffin 2023 is the fourth iteration of the biennial maritime exercise between the U.S. and Republic of Singapore. Conducted in the waters near Guam, the two navies enhance combined maritime proficiency while strengthening relationships during two weeks of dynamic training evolutions ashore and at sea. U.S. Navy photo by MC2 Christopher Thomas





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National Military

Milley makes case for rules-based order, deterrence in new era

by Jim Garamone DOD News

. The international rules-based order and the strategy of deterrence are not esoteric principles, but ideas that undergird peace in our world and are worth defending, Gen. Mark A. Milley, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff said at the National Press Club June 30

Milley spoke at the Newsmakers Lunch and also addressed the latest reports from Ukraine.

"Save the International Rules-Based Order' doesn't have the same cache as 'Remember Pearl Harbor.' You won't see that on bumper stickers on vehicles in the Pentagon parking lot. But the rules-based order came about for good reason," Milley said.

"A few years ago, I was at Normandy, and I talked to a sergeant from the 82nd Airborne Division; he was in a wheelchair, and he had parachuted into D-Day ahead of the amphibious forces. I leaned over and asked him what his biggest lesson was from World War II. I expected him to give me some sort of tactical advice on maneuver and shooting. But he didn't. He looked up at me and tears welled up in his eyes, and he said, 'General, never let it happen again."

The rules-based international order was what that paratrooper's generation put in place to ensure a great powers war would not happen again. Milley noted that between 1914 and 1945 - World War I and World War II - approximately 150 million people were killed.

"It was the most violent three decades ever recorded in human history, all in the conduct of great power war," the general said. Two world wars and 30 years, two continents destroyed, millions killed, more refugees than at any point in history, systemic genocide of an entire ethnic and religious community. And, of course, the dropping of two nuclear weapons. It was a global slaughterhouse by any measure. And the world collectively said in 1945, never again."

The peace established by this framework has lasted almost 80 years. It has proven its worth, but the rules-based international order is under great stress today, Milley said. "In particular, Russia's unprovoked and illegal invasion of Ukraine is a direct frontal assault on that rules-based international order," he said. "We're now well over a year into this invasion. The bravery and resilience of the Ukrainian people are truly an inspiration to us all."

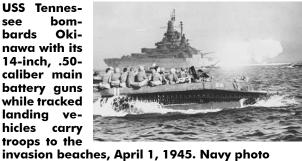
Nations around the world have rallied to Ukraine's side and have been supplying the capabilities needed to defend the country. "We have said our political leaders have said multiple times that our task is to ensure that Ukraine has the support it needs to remain free

USS Tennesbomsee bards Okinawa with its 14-inch, .50caliber main battery guns while tracked landing vehicles carry troops to the

and independent." the chairman said. "And we're doing that in order to make sure that rules-based international order holds.'

Across the world, China is looking to rewrite those rules even though China has perhaps been the greatest beneficiary of those rules. "China's economy has been growing rapidly for the last four decades, as we all know, and is now leveraging its financial power to build up an incredibly powerful military," the general said. "They're well into doing that."

Chinese leaders have stated they want "to be the regional hegemonic in Asia within the next 10 years, and they want to exceed global U.S. military power by midcentury," Milley said. "The geostrategic history of this century will likely be determined by the



United States-China relationship and whether it remains in a competition or tips into great power war.'

All of this is affected by rapidly advancing technology that is causing the most significant fundamental change in the character of war ever recorded in history, the general said. "The nature of war, [Prussian general and military theorist Carl von] Clausewitz tells us, is not likely to change," he said. "It's a human interaction. It's a political act where one side is trying to impose its political will on the other side through the use of organized violence. It involves fear and friction, confusion and death.

But the character of war does change, Milley said. "The character of war refers to how, where, when and with what weapons you fight," he said. "That changes fundamentally, every so often, and, right now, currently, we are in that midst.'

The last time there was such a change was in the 1930s when Nazi Germany combined radios, aircraft, armored wheeled and tracked vehicles and created the Lightning War that overran Europe in only 18 months.

"Today, unlike at any time in history, we are in an age of incredible ability to surveil," Milley said. "We have the ability to see and sense the environment. ... We have the ubiquitous ability to see anywhere on the globe at any moment in time. And we can do that with incredible precision. Think about all the sensors that are in this room, right this minute. Every GPS watch every iPhone, every Fitbit, all of them are sensors."

"Our ability to see and sense the environment is unprecedented, and what you can see, you can shoot and hit with precision munitions, you can hit it great range, and with great accuracy.

Robotics will play an increasing role with unmanned aerial vehicles, unmanned maritime vessels and unmanned ground vehicles. These are becoming important components of nearly every military, the general said. "In fact, in the next 10 to 15 years, we're likely to see that at least third of the advanced industrial militaries of the world likely will be robotic," he said. "Think of a pilotless Air Force, or a sailor-less Navy, or crew-less tank. The battlefield of the future will require rapid and constant movement, and the ability to remain small and relatively invisible, just to survive.'

Perhaps the biggest change is the rapid onset of artificial intelligence, and quantum computing. "Sun Tzu tells us, 'See yourself and see the enemy, and you win 1,000 battles," Milley said. "Artificial intelligence and quantum computing are going to do exactly that. We will be able to see ourselves and see the enemy in much more significant ways than we can now.

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Department of Navy expands support services for sexual harassment

Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro signed a new policy, in June, expanding available support services for victims of sexual harassment.

Effective immediately, uniformed military personnel who experience sexual harassment are eligible to receive the range of support options available to victims of sexual assault through the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Program. The new policy implements requirements of the FY 2022 National Defense Authorization Act and Independent Review Commission recommendations.

"This policy reflects the Department's commitment to creating a culture of dignity and respect, and strengthening

victim support services," said Del Toro. "We take victims' experiences seriously, and we are committed to creating an environment where victims of sexual harassment are heard. validated, and feel safe to report their experience and receive supportive services.

Victims of sexual harassment now have the option to receive

Air Force releases FY24 special duty assignment pay adjustments ARLINGTON, Va. (AFNS) - The Air Force The changes will take effect Oct. 1.

has completed its annual review of special duty assignment pay for enlisted members using a new board process to ensure appropriate distribution based off the SDAP definition.

The review focused on identifying personnel in extremely demanding positions with unusually challenging responsibilities based on a defendable scoring methodology, and decisions were made agnostic of budgetary funding.

When reviewing more than 100 career fields, the board was unaware of the budgeted SDAP funds until after each request was considered if SDAP was warranted.

The Air Force approved 70 specialties to receive SDAP in FY24. Of those approved, four were initial requests that were certified for the first time, 48 were recertified at their current rate 11 increased rate and seven decreased rate to maintain parity with specialties of similar duties, responsibilities and training.

The DAF eliminated 33 existing rules because they no longer met the criteria for SDAP and disapproved 15 new requests for the same reason.

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The SDAP board used specific criteria when reviewing each request. To be considered, the specialty and individual assignment must meet

one or more of the following criteria: •Duties require extremely demanding personal effort to ensure mission accomplishment.

•Position requires greater responsibility or difficulty beyond what is normally expected for the member's grade.

•Position/duties require special qualifications met through rigorous screening and/or special schooling.

Members currently serving in a field that will be removed from the SDAP list will continue to receive special duty assignment pay at a rate of one-half their original SDAP through Sept. 30, 2024. Those whose SDAP will be reduced will be given 90 days before the reduced rate will become effective. Personnel receiving an increase in SDAP will see it reflected beginning Oct. 1.

Visit https://myfss.us.af.mil/USAFCommunity/ to view the full special duty assignment pay list and program updates.

crisis intervention, safety assessments, counseling resources. victim advocacy support and to discuss reporting options with SAPR personnel.

"Preventing sexual harassment within an organization requires a comprehensive and multifaceted approach," said Andrea Goldstein, acting director, DON Office of Force Resiliency. 'We will continue to implement policies and procedures that clearly define sexual harassment, improve victim response, and educate members on the importance of bystander intervention, to reduce the likelihood of sexual harassment occurring."

The policy clarifies that while victims of sexual harassment may receive victim support services from SAPR Program Office, the Military Equal Opportunity Program will continue to process and track military sexual harassment complaints.

Additionally, in accordance with the DON No Wrong Door policy, a victim of sexual harassment may contact any victim care and support office to receive services or, with the victim's permission, receive a warm hand-off to the appropriate service provider.

Army

 An Army couple had their daughter at a military hospital. Then the collections calls started for \$600,000. Army sergeant honored for saving man from burning car Navy

•Navy crafts new cyber rating, designator to streamline roles

 Navy forcing its recruiters to work six days a week Aircraft carrier Abraham Lincoln suffers electrical fire in port

 Nuclear sub visits Faroe Islands amid underwater tensions with Russia

 USS Nimitz concludes seven-month-long deployment to Indo-Pacific (see story, page 1)

Marine Corps

Pressed to prove value of amphibious ships, Marines seek to add drones

Air Force

·Head of ICBM cancer study says the Air Force is 'fully invested'

·Air Force Academy applications bounce back after drop •New study: USAF needs big cash infusion to ward off fighter fleet 'collapse'

·Second Fairchild airman accused in plot to steal ammunition from base sentenced to probation

 Just 14.5 percent of eligible airmen make tech sergeant, lowest rate in 27 years

 MacDill Air Force Base leader retires after 30 years of service

•NORAD, allies practice intercepting B-1s returning from Europe

Space Force

·Space Force still figuring out how bad the fuel spill atop a sacred Hawaiian volcano was

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armedforcesdispatch.com THURSDAY, JULY 6,

Local Military

COMNAVSURFPAC hosts second annual Junior Officer Training Symposium

Courtesy Story

Commander, Naval Surface Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet SAN DIEGO – Commander, Naval Surface Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet (COMNAVSURFPAC) hosted the second annual Junior Officer Training Symposium (JOTS) event in San Diego, June 28.

The one-day symposium brought together more than 170 junior Surface Warfare Officers (SWOs) from ships across the Surface Force to foster a wide-ranging discussion about owning and transforming the culture of the Surface Force. The event provided Junior Officers (JOs) an opportunity to network with other officers, have candid discussions about improving the Surface community, and provide feedback to senior leaders.

The symposium also provided a venue for Vice Adm. Roy Kitchener, Commander, Naval Surface Forces to bring JOs together to discuss future challenges and ways to enhance warfighting, connectedness, and team building.

"It is critical that we build connected combat teams who are valued, appreciated, and empowered," said Kitchener during the event opening remarks. "This symposium is about listening to our wardroom, having frank and honest discussions, and taking meaningful actions to make our community better. Make no mistake, we own our culture."

Lt. j.g. Malachi Seib, junior officer aboard USS *Chafee* (DDG 90), highlighted the value of the symposium and his takeaways from the event.

"Being able to share ideas with other junior officers and with leadership about how we can better prepare and improve as warfighters was invaluable," said Seib. "We're excited to share our feedback this year and years to come."

The mission of Commander, Naval Surface Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet is to man, train, and equip the Surface Force to provide fleet commanders with credible naval power to control the sea and project power ashore.



Aircraft carrier *Abraham Lincoln* suffers electrical fire while in port

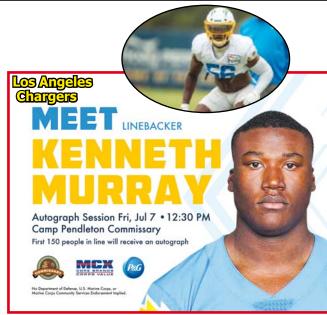
According to the Navy, Sailors aboard aircraft carrier Abraham Lincoln successfully extinguished an electrical fire that broke out 28 June.

The ship's nonessential personnel were safely evacuated from the vessel, and no one suffered injuries during this event, Cmdr. Zach Harrell, a spokesman associated with Naval Air Forces, informed Defense News. According to Harrell, the in-port emergency team on the aircraft carrier responded to an electrical fire that broke out in the compartment of the forward emergency diesel generator.

He added that the fire was extinguished within 10 minutes.

Harrell observed that zero foul play is suspected. An assessment is underway to see the extent of the damage done to the vessel.

The ship was undertaking its planned maintenance, otherwise called a planned incremental availability, while it was on the pier side at the Naval Air Station in North Island when the fire broke out. NAVAL MEDICAL CENTER SAN DIEGO - Navy Medicine Readiness and Training Command San Diego's Chief's Mess recently hosted a CPO Farewell Red Carpet Walk celebrating the retirement of Jeff Apana after more than 37 years of federal service. Entering the Navy as a dental technician, Apana rose to of master chief serving as NMCSD's Deputy Command Master Chief. He subsequently retired to serve in his current capacity as the Patient Experience Officer here, a role that his co-workers said he has fulfilled "with nothing but passion, service, sensibility, and selflessness." Apana was presented a Meritorious Civilian Service Award by Capt. Elizabeth Adriano, NMRTC San Diego's commander, and provided remarks and farewells thanking the Chief's Mess and leadership for their fellowship. From the staff here ... "Fair Winds and Following Seas Jeff! You've become a Navy Medicine Institution within your own right."



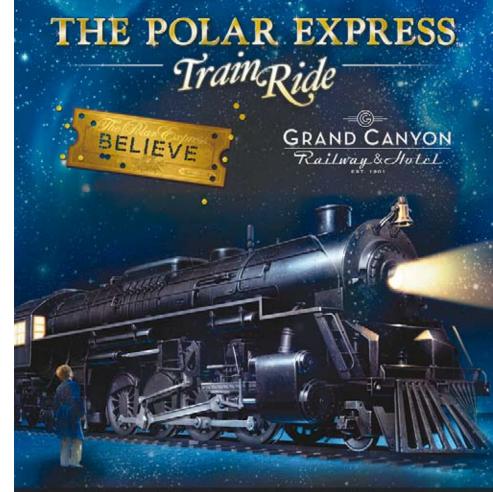


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Marine F-35Cs fly from Miramar to Australia, in 1st for U.S. military

by Irene Loewenson

MARINE CORPS TIMES - A Marine aviation squadron flew F-35 Lightning II fighter jets all the way from California to Australia for the first time in the history of the U.S. military, according to the Marine Corps.

Making four stopovers en route, the four F-35C jets from Marine Corps Air Station Miramar's Fighter Attack Squadron 314 traversed the approximately 7,800 miles over the Pacific in preparation for training with the Australian air force, according to a June 23 Marine news release.

It marked the first time U.S. F-35 aircraft have made this journey, although Australian F-35As have previously flown from the United States to Australia in the delivery process, according to Marine spokeswoman Maj. Natalie Batcheler.

The F-35Cs' trip, which began June 17 and concluded June 22, is "a testament to their capability," Batcheler said.

In January 2020, 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing's Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 314 became the first Marine aviation unit to transition to



Marine Lt. Col. Michael O'Brien, center, and Maj Robert Ahern prepare to conduct aerial refueling over the Pacific Ocean June 17. U.S. Marine Corps photo by Lance Cpl. Gadiel Zaragoza

the F-35C, from the aging F/A-18 Hornet. (The same aircraft wing's Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 311 became the second in April.)

Two years after the transi-

tion to the F-35C, the "Black Knights" - as Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 314's members are called - became the first Marines to deploy the variant on an aircraft carrier, Abraham Lincoln

The more prevalent F-35 variant in the Marine Corps is the F-35B, which can conduct short takeoffs and vertical landings, making it nimble enough to operate from the smaller amphibious ships that often transport Marines.

The F-35C is meant to be flown from aircraft carriers or land bases, according to the Marine Corps' 2022 aviation plan. Its greater internal fuel capacity allows it to cover longer distances than the F-35B.

Construction begins in El Centro for 'state-of-the-art- federal fire station

by Mario Icari

EL CENTRO, Calif. - Personnel with Naval Facilities Engineering Systems Command (NAVFAC) Southwest, Naval Air Facility El Centro. and contract partners attended a groundbreaking ceremony held June 22 in Naval Air Facility El Centro which commemorated the official start of construction on a structural and aircraft rescue fire station.

'This state-of-the-art fa-

safeguard the lives of emergency responders and protect essential equipment by adhering to the highest building and safety codes," said Laurie Scott, NAVFAC Southwest commanding officer.

"This project proves that together, we can construct a resilient facility that provides a beacon of safety and comfort for those who protect us.'

NAVFAC Southwest awarded a contract, Sept. 1, 2022, in

to RO Construction of Carlsbad to execute work on the replacement project to replace two structurally deficient 80-year old facilities, correcting four major seismic deficiencies. 10 fire and life safety issues, and six American Disability Act violations across multiple building and fire safety codes with one code-compliant fire station facility.

The facility, once completed, will meet current building and safety codes and will be better

suited to protect emergency responders and essential equipment required to supporting the mission of NAF El Centro

Naval Air Facility El Centro, one of the Navy's premier tactical training air installations, supports the combat training and readiness of the Warfighter which includes air operations support to operational fleet and training squadrons as well as squadrons from other services



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Special Warfare Center welcomes new command master chief; First SWCC to hold position

by Petty Officer 1st Class Sean Weir Naval Special Warfare Command

Naval Special Warfare Center welcomed CMDCM Joaquin Martinez as its newest command master chief June 29.

Martinez, who most recently held the position of Deputy Force Master Chief at Naval Special Warfare Command, assumed the responsibilities as NSWCEN senior enlisted leader from CMDCM (SEAL) Neil Shaw.

Command master chiefs serve as command-level senior enlisted

leaders and have a significant role in every aspect of command-wide readiness and mission accomplishment. They report directly to the commanding officer and work closely with the executive officer in the formulation and implementation of all policies concerning the morale,



welfare, job satisfaction, discipline, utilization, and training of enlisted personnel. Additionally, they are directly responsible for the professional development of the command's Chiefs Mess.

"It'ss an absolute honor to be selected as the Naval Special Warfare Center Command Master Chief," said Martinez. "There have been many great SEAL Master Chiefs that paved the way for our process of selecting, assessing, and training our SEAL and SWCC operators. When I joined the Navy over thirty years ago, I could never have imagined that I would have been blessed with the opportunity to lead amongst our nation's finest warriors. It is humbling to follow the long list of many respected leaders and legends of NSW."

In September 1992, he enlisted in the Navy and attended boot camp at Naval Recruit Training Command, San Diego. He entered Special Warfare Combat Crewman (SWCC) training and graduated with Class 33 in August 2000.

"Prior to attending SWCC Training, I was a Boatswain's Mate in the Fleet. The experience provided me a foundation of leadership and a view of the Chiefs Mess that resonates with me to this day. The SWCC community has matured over the years and continually evolved to meet the needs of Special Operations and the Navy. I've been fortunate to be a part of many key milestones that highlight how far we've come along," said Martinez. "I'm honored that I have been selected as the first Special Warfare Boat Operator [CMDCM] from a pool of many talented SWCC and SEAL master chiefs."

IWTC celebrates enlisted advancement

by Chief Warrant Officer 3 Richard H. Blankenship

SAN DIEGO – Information Warfare Training Command (IWTC) San Diego marked the end of the spring advancement cycle by frocking Sailors selected for promotion during a ceremony recently.

A total of 25 petty officers were recognized across the command in San Diego and training sites in Washington, Hawaii, and Japan.

Friends and family were in attendance to proudly "frock" their Sailors to the next paygrade, which is an administrative authorization to assume the title and wear the uniform of a higher pay grade without entitlement to the pay and allowances of that grade—a tradition that provides early recognition for Sailors selected for promotion.

Frocked personnel consisted of instructors, staff, and students in multiple courses including: Cryptologic Technician Collections 1st Class Wesley Devoss; Electronics Technicians 1st Class Lewis Eleanor, Jonathan Cavalluzzi, and Diego Murrietta; Information Technology Specialists 1st Class Renezimichael Banez, Mike Garza, Jesus Marreronavarro, Francis Marte, Stephanie Poe, Jorge Roggero, Donzel Simuel, Logan Smith, Lorenzell Terry, Melanie Vanhees, and Matthew Volk; Electronics Technician 2nd Class Jadan Zetina; Information Technology Specialists 2nd Class Cameron Johnson, Zachary Lafser, Deandra Littlejohn, Jacob Masner, Maximillia Owens, Nichole Tann, and Roshaw Murraine; and Cryptologic Technicians Collections 3rd Class Daniel Hect, and Jaqwan Johnson.

IWTC San Diego's Commanding Officer, Cmdr. Greg Gabriel, highlighted the importance of friends and family participating in their loved ones Navy traditions.

"These noteworthy accomplishments by our Sailors would not be possible without the selfless, loving encouragement of our families and friends. Their steadfast support is truly vital to the continued success of our Navy," said Gabriel. IWTC San Diego also had several senior enlisted advance-

IWTC San Diego also had several senior enlisted advancement selections this year as Cryptologic Technician Technical Senior Chief Gary Bixby screened for master chief and Cryptologic Technician Collection Chiefs Elizabeth Stanton, and Julius Fair, and Information Technology Specialist Chief Michael Schwartz were all frocked to senior chief.

Graber assumes command of USS Nimitz

SAN DIEGO - Capt. Douglas Graber relieved Capt. Craig Sicola as commanding officer of aircraft carrier *Nimitz* during a change of command ceremony June 29.

Nimitz, the flagship of Carrier Strike Group 11, arrived to San Diego on June 28 following a seven month deployment.

Sicola took command of Nimitz on July 29, 2021 and led the ship through its maintenance phase, work-up cycle and various certifications.

"I'm truly grateful to each and every *Nimitz* Sailor for the honor to serve as your commanding officer," said Sicola. "This tour has been the highlight of my career, and I am humbled by the incredible passion and dedication you all showed daily. Thank you to the *Nimitz* crew and your families for the sacrifices you continue to make in service to our country."

Sicola made history by completing the 350,000th arrested aircraft landing on *Nimitz* while sailing in the South China Sea.



Rear Adm. Jennifer Couture, commander, Carrier Strike Group 11 congratulates Capt. Craig Sicola, former *Nimitz* commanding officer. U.S. Navy photo by MC2 Joseph Calabrese

Sicola, along with Cmdr. Luke Edwards, commanding officer of the "Fighting Redcocks" of Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 22 piloted the arrested landing in a F/A-18F Super Hornet on April 22, 2023. *Nimitz* is the oldest-serving U.S commissioned aircraft carrier in the world and the first active U.S. Navy carrier in the Fleet to reach this milestone.

Sicola will report to Commander, Naval Air Forces staff.

Graber was designated a naval flight officer in March 1999. "Thank you and congratulations to Captain Sicola for an outstanding tour," said Graber. "As we look forward, we will ensure that we are ready and focused on maintaining the warfighting advantage needed to win. Our teamwork is tradition on Nimitz, and there is nothing we cannot accomplish together."

An integral part of Pacific Fleet, U.S. 3rd Fleet leads naval forces in the Indo-Pacific and provides realistic, relevant training necessary to execute the Navy's role across the full spectrum of military operations - from combat operations to humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.

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Tennessee Air Guard remotely pilots MQ-9 from California

SMYRNA Tenn. - The Tennessee Air National Guard remotely flew an unmanned. MO-9 Reaper from California to Tennessee recently without ground crews and support facilities usually deployed for line-of-sight taxiing, takeoff and landing.

As part of exercise Whiskey Fury, designed around the Air Force's new Agile Combat Employment model, Guardsmen piloted the MQ-9 to a successful takeoff and landing.

Key to the success of this exercise is a state-of-the-art technology called Satellite Launch and Recovery (SLR), which fundamentally changes how MQ-9s are flown and supported.

What SLR does is take forward-deployed crews out of the equation," said Lt. Col. John Woods, a Tennessee ANG assistant director of operations.

The new technology significantly reduces the need for equipment and support.

'The airplane is still being flown through the satellite, but based on an auto takeoff and landing profile we've built into it that basically allows the aircraft to go and land on its

own," Woods said. "It knows exactly where it is and where the runway is."

Woods emphasized the pilot is always in command and can take over at any time.

The 163rd Attack Wing, March Air Reserve Base, Calif. provided the aircraft and maintenance personnel as part of the exercise











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(1) Col. Nathan S. Marvel, right, and Col. Jeremie N. Hes-ter, participate in a MAG-39, 3rd MAW change of command ceremony at Camp Pendleton June 23, 2023. the incoming commanding officer of MAG-39, 3rd MAW. U.S. Marine

(2) Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Fuels) 3rd Class Richard Mobia empties a fuel hose June 29, 2023, in the hangar bay aboard USS Tripoli. U.S. Navy photo by MC2 Austyn Riley (3) Aircrew Survival Equipmentman 1st Class Kaseen Bouche serves pizza to Aviation Support Equipment Technician Air-man Travarion Parkman June 6, 2023, in the mess decks aboard USS Abraham Lincoln. U.S. Navy photo by MC3 Jacqueline Orender

(4) A Marine with India Company, 3rd Recruit Training Battalion, is greeted by a guest following a graduation ceremony at Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego, June 30, 2023. U.S. Marine Corps photo by Lance Cpl. Francisco Angel

(5) A Marine sings the national anthem during the Joint Women's Leadership Symposium at the San Diego Conven-tion Center June 29, 2023. U.S. Marine Corps photo by Sgt. Andrew Cortez







Veterans News

Preventing harassment for LGBTQ + veterans and VA employees

by Tisha Petelo Program Specialist, Assault and Harassment Prevention

Dana Brunson has served as a social worker at VA for nearly 20 years. In 2016, she was appointed to a new position at her facility: LGBTO+ Veteran Care Coordinator (VCC) This new work immediately became a passion and focus of Brunson's career, as she became increasingly aware of the need for improved health care for LGBTQ+ Veterans.

Brunson currently leads VA's LGBTQ+ VCC Program, working with more than 200 LG-BTQ+ VCCs at VA medical facilities across the nation.

"LGBTQ+ VCCs serve as leaders, advocates and educators who work to ensure affirming and equitable health care for LGBTQ+ Veterans at VA," explained Brunson. "LGBTQ+ VCCs raise awareness about the importance of assessing sexual orientation and gender identity as key factors in health outcomes for all Veterans. They are VA's ambassadors to the LGBTQ+ Veteran community working to ensure LGBTQ+ Veterans



Two LGBTQ+ women with Pride flag. Courtesy photo

choose VA to achieve their best health

Veterans contact the program seeking information about health care services provided to LGBTO+ Veterans and how to access those resources. These Veterans often report gaps and barriers to care at their local facilities and request help navigating solutions. They also contact the VCCs when they have experienced hostile, discriminatory or harassing communication or behavior at a VA facility. "VA working to ensure all

Veterans feel welcome and affirmed at VA."

"I am inspired by the devotion, resilience and progress made by LGBTQ+ VCCs in this challenging work. We all have a part in creating a culture that prioritizes the safety and wellbeing of LGBTQ+ Veterans and employees. Every LGBTQ+ Veteran's experience is unique. VA is working to ensure that all Veterans consistently feel welcome and affirmed at VA.' Brunson added.

Some of the ways VA works to improve the experiences of LGBTQ+ Veterans are:

•Ensuring there is at least one LGBTQ+ VCC at every VA medical facility

•Producing LGBTQ+ health awareness materials

•Prominently displaying LG-BTQ+ signage that promotes a welcoming environment and explains why sexual orientation and gender identity matters in health care

•Educating staff on respectful communication and best practices in assessment and care for LGBTO+ Veterans

•Creating health equity for all

"I think LGBTO+ Veterans have begun to experience the culture change VA is working toward, but it is a work in progress. LGBTQ+ VCCs do an excellent job creating a welcoming and affirming environment. They are reducing stigma that we know still exist in health care," Brunson said.

When VA providers are sensitive to the unique experiences and needs of LGBTQ+Veterans, VA can better help Veterans through routine and preventative care. When VA employees are intentional about creating an affirming environment where LGBTO+ Veterans feel welcome and safe, the overall experience of LGBTQ+ Veterans at VA

facilities is more positive.

"The White Ribbon VA movement is important to me and to the LGBTQ+ Health Program because it calls every VA employee to never commit, excuse or stay silent about sexual identity harassment or violence," Brunson said.

LGBTO+ Veterans and VA employees can search the LG-BTQ+ VCC directory on VA's

Retroactive toxic exposure benefits deadline approaching

(va.gov)

FLEET RESERVE ASSOCIATION - The Department of Veterans Affairs wants veterans to be aware that veterans who apply for the PACT Act payouts within a year of the bill signing are potentially eligible for retroactive benefits back to that date.

But veterans who enroll after August 9, 2023, will only receive payouts back to their date of filing. Since the PACT Act was signed into law on August 10, 2022, more than 660,000 veterans have applied for benefits, and the VA has paid out more than \$1.4 billion in benefits.

The law provides presumptive benefit status for 12 types of cancer and 12 other respiratory illnesses linked to burn pit exposure in the Gulf War, the War in Afghanistan and the War in Iraq; hypertension and monoclonal gammopathy of undetermined significance (MGUS) for veterans who served in Vietnam; and radiation-related illnesses for veterans who served in several new locations in the 1960s and early 1970s. Veterans or their family members can also get information about PACT Act benefits by visiting the VA's website or by calling 1-800-MYVA411 (1-800-698-2411).

Military medicine changes affect force's past and future

The Meat & Potatoes



Making the turn into the unguarded Naval Clinic gate, I glance south at the long-abandoned buildings with crumbling soffits and vines invading their broken windows. The Naval Hospital closed in 1997, leaving the handsome brick buildings to ruin.

I turn away from the cracked concrete tufted with weeds and make my way to the Clinic on the medical campus. Near the entrance stands a neat line of new Navy recruits, garbed in regulation blue sweats, waiting for a government van to take them back to base.

Inside I carry my ID card to the scanning machine. I grumble, seeing that the old machine I'd used since we'd PCSed here in 2013 was gone, replaced by a newfangled model.

I hold my ID up to a lighted slot, but nothing happens. No bleep, no bloop, no nothing. After waving my ID around, I see another lighted slot a foot lower. I do half plié squat to save my lower back from bending and hear, "BLEEP!"

The machine's screen asks me a series of questions before spitting out #F361. I grab a copy of the free town newspaper, take a seat, and turn to the udoku puzzle.

Across from me sits a very old man wearing a cap emblazoned with

"WWII Veteran." A young pharmacy tech walks out to personally explain his medications. Everyone else has to wait to be called to the windows. He deserves special treatment. The tech talks loudly to the WWII vet, who takes shaky notes. "You gotta go to college to figure this stuff out!" he jokes. Behind the WWII vet stand a dozen more new recruits in blue sweats, waiting for their

numbers to be called.

The Navy's past and future rely on military medicine. I've relied on it, too, for three decades, but something seems fundamentally changed. Even with Tricare updates, Genesis systems and newfangled machines, military healthcare has become exponentially more frustrating and unresponsive.

While waiting for #F361 to be called, I recall my recent visit with my newly-assigned primary care manager at the clinic. I'd brought a list of my current health concerns and planned on asking my PCM to renew two expired referrals and assess pains I was having in my neck and back. Fifty-seven is no picnic.

First, the corpsman made a thorough record of my concerns. Then, my PCM entered the room, carrying only a pen and Post-It Notes. I assumed the corpsman had briefed her, but she stared blankly at me and said, "Why am I seeing you today, Mrs. Molinari?"

I reached into my purse, smoothing the written list I'd already crumpled, and rattled off my health concerns again. She thinks I'm a hypochondriac, I realized, then said, "I swear, I'm usually quite healthy, but I've been having a lot of joint and back pain lately.

"Hot compresses?" she suggested when I said the pain in my neck.

"A chiropractor?" she said when I explained my lower back pain, never writing anything on her Post It Notes.

After leaving the clinic, I concluded that my PCM had declined to address my neck and back pain — for those issues, I was on my own.

Inevitably, my neck pain got worse, until it burned and radiated down my shoulders. A few weeks after my appointment, I felt a shooting pain in my left shoulder, which gradually got worse. "I'd better call my PCM," I thought.

"Appointments are at least three weeks out," the scheduler said. "Currently, she is the only provider available at this facility. If you can't wait, you'll have to go to Urgent Care in town to ask for referrals.

Refusing to use Urgent Care as my PCM, I booked an appointment at the Naval Clinic three weeks out. In the meantime, my nursing student daughter fashioned a sling out of a scarf to support my painful shoulder as if we were pioneers.

At the pharmacy, a second old man stares at the newfangled ID scanner.

'What's wrong?!" the WWII vet bellows jovially to his comrade, "Having trouble with that machine? You gotta go to college to figure this stuff out!'

"Ticket #F361 at window number four," an automated voice commands, rescuing me from my melancholy.

Movie review - Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny

Set primarily in 1969, with flashbacks to establish the backstory in World War II, Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny is the final Indiana Jones adventure - undoubtedly due to Harrison Ford's advanced age. Nevertheless, his on-screen persona is immediately recognizable, com-plete with his leather jacket, brown fedora and intimidating, loudly cracking bullwhip.

If you enjoyed the previous Indiana Jones movies, you will not be disappointed with this globe-trotting final installment. It has everything, beginning with fights with dastardly Nazis, and moving along to improbably campy derring-do atop a rapidly moving train, behind the wheels of automobiles, endless chases on foot and appropriate one-liners.

This time around Ford portrays a reluctant Indiana Jones. A professor at Hunter College in New York, he's facing his imminent retirement. His students find him boring. He lives a rather sedate, peaceful, uneventful life and he seems to be quite content with that. Soon however, he is dragged kicking and screaming out of his retirement by someone from his past who needs his help. Of course, that character is much more than they initially appear to be, a situation that inevitably leads to Professor Jones' efforts to try to save the world from an unimaginably horrible, history-changing, dire fate.

That said, important aspects of this movie merit criticism. Right at the start, the World War II fighting scenes are dark. I'm not talking about dark in tone (although it can be argued that they are that, too), but rather they are literally too dark Much of the action takes place in near darkness - so much so that you can barely see the details of the action and the stunts.

which were no doubt produced at very great expense. Why would they do that - and at a preview screening

AutoMatters™&More



was distracting and unnecessarily

That's not all. I soon became dis-

you, I'll tell you that the really cool stuff related to the dial of destiny - the Archimedes Dial - happens close to the end of the film. The bulk of the film, however, was made up of silly, wildly improbable chases. The hero Tuk-Tuk vehicle which, by its fraillooking appearance should have been quite fragile, instead was seemingly indestructible as it endured innumerable impacts - many if not almost all of which should surely have caused it to fail massively, but instead it continued on, again and again. I'm talking about a degree of silliness almost as ridiculous as Wile E. Coyote falling off of cliffs while in the almost futile pursuit of the Road Runner

the film was undercranked, so that when it was played back at normal speed the cars appear to be sped up, which looked very fake. These days car chases in the movies, especially stratospherically high-budget movies, feature much more realistic chase scenes which at least look like they might somehow be possible - but not here. Be prepared to Laugh Out Loud. Unless you're a really little kid (in which case you would probably not be reading this review), you just won't be able to take what you see seriously.

It used to be that in movie car chases

national LGBTQ+ Health web-

site or email the LGBTO+Health

Program at vhalgbtq+health@

va.gov to request the name and

contact information for their lo-

For more information about

how you can prevent instances

of harassment at VA, or for access to additional resources,

visit VHA Assault and Harass-

ment Prevention Office Home

cal LGBTO+ VCC.

I left the theater wishing that the script had focused more of its attention on the really clever, jaw-dropping stuff that focused on what the dial of destiny was capable of doing.

Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny was directed by James Mangold (Ford v Ferrari) and, in addition **THORSON** to Harrison Ford, its stars include Phoebe Waller-Bridge (Fleabag), Antonio Banderas (Pain and Glory), Karen Allen and John Rhys-Davies (Raiders of the Lost Ark), Shaunette Renée Wilson (Black Panther) and Thomas Kretschmann (Das Boot).

Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny is in theaters now. To see an official trailer, visit: https://movies. disney.com/indiana-jones-and-thedial-of-destiny.

To explore a wide variety of content dating back to 2002, 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 **p** on the blue 'years' boxes and browse.

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by Jan Wagner of the film in IMAX, no less? That annoving.

tracted by another serious technical problem, but this one continued throughout the film. The sound was so distorted at times that I couldn't understand the dialog. It was as if the audio track was being played through the theater's sound system at way too high an audio level. I'll put that one on the theater. Hopefully your screening will be better.

Without spoiling the details for





THINGS TO DO AROUND TOWN

over 175 exhibits of beads, aemstones, one-of-a-kind jewelry, designer clothing, jewelry-making supplies, vintage finds, and antiq-

uities. Sheraton San Diego Hotel and Marina, 1380 Harbor Island , San Diego, 92101 Who's Bad – The Ultimate Michael Jackson Experience, Sat,

July 8. Moonlight Amphitheatre, Vista www.moonlightstage.com Snakes & More Snakes, Sat. July 8, 10-11am. Free. Bruce Ireland, crew of snake wranglers will share latest stories along with some recent rescues. Family event interesting for both adults and kids, age 4+. Meet

at Nature Ctr. Batiquitos Lagoon Nature Center, 7380 Gabbiano Ln, Carlsbad, 92009 Viva La Frida: Celebration of

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Frida Kahlo, Sat, July 8, noon-8pm. Free. Day filled with all things Frida Kahlo from themed art shows, live art, painting classes, flower crown workshops, games of Loteria, shopping, dining, to a Frida Kahlo Look-a-like contest. Frida inspired attire highly encouraged. Free family friendly event. 2060 Block of Logan Ave to South 26th St, Barrio Logan

Wildlife Walk, Sat, July 8 1-2pm. Free. Take a hike with a Park Ranger to "meet the neighbors" at Chollas Lake Park. If you are curious about the wild and feral animals that reside in our park, this program will delight you. Note that this ranger-lead walk is 1.5 miles long on dirt surfaces with some hills and steps. Bring water, sun protection and sturdy shoes. Meet near the comfort station at the north end of the parking lot. Chollas Lake, 6350 College Grove Drive, San Diego, 92115

Bayfest - San Diego Bay Festival, Sat, July 8. Damian Mar-ley, Common Kings, Koffee, Prof, Denm, and Kahlil Nash, with DJ sets from Unite and Green T. Waterfront Park www.sandiegobayfest.com

The Swinging' Johnsons, Sat, July 8, 5:30-7:30pm. Free. South State Beach Camp-Carlsbad 7201 Carlsbad Blvd, ground, Carlsbad, 92008

Tuna Harbor Dockside Market,

San Diego's historic commercial fishing and aquaculture industries. local customers - both the public and professional chefs can purchase fresh-caught seafood and aquafarmed seaweed direct from local fishermen. Tuna Harbor Dockside Market, 598 Harbor

& Sundays, 9:30-11am. Free. Guided nature walk-learn about plants, animals, geology, history of park. San Carlos. mtrp.org Charlie Puth at The Rady Shell at

Jacobs Park, Sun, July 9, 7:30pm. www.theshell.org 70th Annual World Championship Over-the-Line at Fiesta Island, Sat-Sun, July 8-9, 15-16, 7:30am. www.ombac.org/over-

Catfish stocked at Lake Jennings. Night fishing Fri & Sat til midnight. Shoreline fishing 8am-5pm every day at campground. \$4-\$12. https://lakejennings.org/ Cruisin' Grand Escondido. Escondido's Grand Ave from Orange St to Ivv St. is the place to be on Friday nights through September. Sreets host parade of pre-1970s autos for Cruisin' Grand. Vintage autos - from American Hot Rods, Classics, Antiques, and Customs span seven blocks of the city's downtown. In addition enjoy all that downtown Escondido has to offer, including great restaurants, breweries and pubs, stores, boutiques, and live performance ven-

Escondido Cars & Coffee. Every Sunday Morning, 8-11am. Free. Kit Carson Park, 3333 Bear Valley Parkway, Escondido. Cars, trucks, bikes! Waterski & Wakeboard on Mission Bay, Sundays 8-11am; Thursdays 5-8pm. Convair Waterski Club active year-round on Mission Bay. Club provides two ski boats for waterskiing and wakeboarding, with free instruction and equipment available on request. Meet: south end of Crown Point Beach. Guests of any skill level are welcome. Info: convairwaterskiclub@gmail.com. Crown Point. 3700 Crown Point Dr, SD, 92109 San Diego International Summer Organ Festival, Mondays, 7:30pm through Labor Day. Free. Spreckels Organ Pavilion in Balboa Park. www.spreckelsorgan.org

ues. www.cruisingrand.net

All-Levels Donation Yoga at Sunset Cliffs. Every Saturday, 9am. Sunset Cliffs Natural Park at Sunset Cliffs Blvd & Adair St. Thursday Storytimes, Free. Ongoing. Preschool Storytime for age 3-5. All children welcome. Poway Library, 13137 Poway Rd.

MOVIES AT THE BASES

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

Bob Hope Theater 577-4143 MCAS Miramar Bldg 2242 Friday, July 7 6pm Transformers: Rise of Beasts pg13 Saturday, July 8 3pm Spider-Man: Spider-Verse pg 6:30pm About My Father pg13 Sunday, July 9 noon The Little Mermaid (2023) pg 3pm Transformers: Rise of Beasts pg13 **Pendleton Theater** and Training Center Bldg 1330 Mainside (Across from Mainside Center) Saturday, July 8 1:30pm No Hard Feelings (R) Naval Base Theater - NBSD, Navai Dase 110-111 3465 Senn Rd. FREE entry to the first 300 customers (per showing), no outside food, concessions will be available. Thursday, July 6 6pm Spider-Man: Spider-Verse pg 6pm Spider-Mar Friday, July 7

5:40pm About My Father pg13 7:40pm Transformers: Rise of Beasts pg13

Saturday, July 8 2:50pm The Little Mermaid pg 6pm Transformers: Rise of Beasts pg13 Sunday, July 9 1pm Spider-Man: Spider-Verse pg 4pm Transformers: Rise of Beasts pg13 Wednesday, July 12

6pm About My Father pg13 8pm The Boogevman (2023) pg13 Thursday - July 13 6:20pm Transformers: Rise of Beasts pg13 For updates check https://sandiego

navylifesw.com/movies,

Lowry Theater - NASNI, Bldg. 650 Outside food and beverage are NOT permitted. Debit/credit cards only. Friday, July 7 6pm Transformers: Rise of Beasts pg13 Saturday, July 8 1pm About My Father pg13 pm Fast X pg13 6pm Transformers: Rise of Beasts pg13 Sunday, July 9 1pm Spider-Man: Spider-Verse pg 4pm Transformers: Rise of Beasts pg13 Updates: navvlifesw.com Q-Zone - NAB Bldg. 337 • 619-437-3190 Family Friendly Movies:

Tues, Thur, Sat: 11 am. NDVDs NDVDs -- Free Admission Thursday, July 6 11am Inside Out pg 5pm Cocaine Bear r Friday, July 7 5pm Renfield r Saturday, July 8 11am Trolls 2: World Tour pg Monday, July 10 5pm Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen pg13 **Tuesday, July 11** 11am Mrs Harris Goes to Paris pg 5pm Iron Man 2 pg13 Wednesday, July 12 5pm A Thousand and One r Thursday, July 13 11am Lightyear pg 5pm Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret, pg13 Friday, July 14 5pmThe Pope's Exorcist r

SOCIAL SECURITY MATTERS Working widow seeks maximum Social Security benefits

Dear Rusty: I was widowed years ago and, when I approached age 60, I looked into Social Security survivor benefits based on my late husband's record. He started receiving Social Security shortly before he died at \$1,200 per month. My income at age 60 was \$42,000 and, since Social Security would keep \$1 for every \$2 above the limit (around \$15,000 at that time), I did not apply. Next year I will reach my full retirement age of 661/2, but I plan to work until I am 70. Will I be able to receive full survivor benefits next year if I continue to work? I plan to switch to my own Social Security benefit at age 70, which will be higher than my husband received. Since I am waiting to apply for survivor benefits, will there be an increase in the amount I receive? I am a municipal employee and when I retire, I will collect from the state retirement system. I paid into the state retirement system and also paid Social Security taxes, so will my state pension have any impact on my Social Security? Signed: Still Working

Dear Still Working: Congratulations on having an excellent strategy for maximizing your survivor benefit as well as your personal SS retirement benefit. Once you reach your full retirement age (FRA) next year, you are no longer subject to Social Security's "earnings test" and can collect Social Security benefits without those benefits being affected by your work earnings.

Your surviving spouse benefit will be more because you are waiting until your full retirement age to claim it. At your FRA you can claim your full survivor benefit from your deceased husband (without reduction) and collect only that while still allowing your personal SS retirement benefit to grow to maximum when you are 70. Then, at age 70, you can switch from your smaller survivor benefit to your maximum SS retirement benefit and collect that higher amount for the rest of your life. Essentially, your survivor benefit reaches maximum at your FRA and your personal SS retirement benefit reaches maximum at age 70.

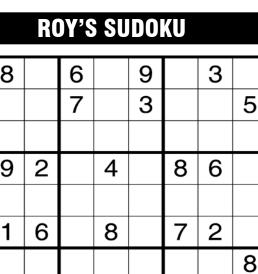
Note that you should apply for your benefits a couple of months before you wish them to start. For example, if you reach your FRA in May of next year you can apply for your survivor benefit in February or March, specifying that you wish your survivor benefit to begin in May 2024 at your full retirement age. Just be sure to emphasize that you are applying only for your survivor benefit and wish your personal SS retirement benefit to continue to grow by earning Delayed Retirement Credits (DRCs) until you are 70.

You cannot apply for your survivor benefit online, so you will need to call Social Security, at either the national number (1.800.772.1213) or your local Social Security office, to make an appointment to apply for your benefit as your husband's widow.

And to answer your last question, your state pension won't affect your monthly Social Security payments because you paid Social Security FICA payroll taxes from your municipal earnings

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Lealth & Fitness

How Cyber and IT warriors fight sensory injuries

by Janet A. Aker, MHS Communications Service members and civilians in the Department of Defense's cybersecurity and information technology fields can face unique challenges to their vision and hearing because of their workspaces.

Cyber and IT warriors commonly face a phenomenon called digital overload, which may show up as migraines and computer vision syndrome, also known as ocular fatigue or digital eyestrain. Computer vision syndrome is associated with eye irritation, redness, dryness, blurred vision, and double vision.

For example, at the U.S. Army's 780th Military Intelligence Brigade780th Military Intelligence Brigade webpage (Cyber) at Fort George G. Meade, Maryland, 80% of workspaces are typical "cube farms" with fluorescent overhead lights, according to U.S. Army Command Sgt. Maj. Jesse Potter. Most desk spaces have a minimum of dual computer monitors, with the majority having three or four monitors.

The 780th's mission is to "achieve U.S. supremacy in an increasingly contested cyberspace and electromagnetic domain." Its mission requires staff to constantly track cyber threats and implement countermeasures to mitigate potentially damaging attacks in the digital space.

The other 20% of workspaces are the brigade's operations centers, with little to no overhead light and only task-based lighting. The desks in these locations are set up in pairs with four monitors and are not generally as crowded as the rest of the office spaces, Potter said.

To counter potential vision and hearing injuries, the 780th operations center soldiers follow the "aviation model of crew rest, limiting their on-network activities to eight hours. Extending those hours requires command approval," Potter said.

Vision Injuries in the Digital Age

Digital eyestrain may be caused by poor lighting, including lighting that is too bright, glare on a digital screen, improper viewing distances, poor seating posture, and uncorrected vision problems, according to Dr. Mariia Viswanathan, vision care readiness section chief at the Defense Health Agency's Vision Center of ExcellenceVision Center of Excellence webpage.

"The extent to which individuals experience visual symptoms often depends on the level of their visual abilities and the amount of time spent looking at a digital screen," Viswanathan said. "Uncorrected vision problems like farsightedness and astigmatism, inadequate eye focusing or eye coordination abilities, and aging changes of the eyes, such as nearsightedness, can all contribute to the development of visual symptoms when using a computer or digital screen device," she explained. Workers over 50 tend to require twice the light levels of young adults to perform the same task, she noted.

"Studies have also shown that personnel become more nearsighted over time as they adapt to their tasks," said Dr. Michael Pattison, VCE program manager for readiness and operations optometry.

Vision Protection

To decrease eye injuries from electronic device work:

 Control bright light sources with proper blinds, filters, or adjustment of the room arrangement.
Use screen filters to reduce glare

and reflections off the computer screen.

• Adjust screen brightness and contrast to provide balance with room lighting and maximum visibility.

• Use the correct eye distance from the screen of about 35-40 inches.

• Use the proper angle for the screen of 10-20 degrees below or having the middle of the screen being 5-6 inches below eye level.

• Follow the 20/20/20 rule: take a 20-second break every 20 minutes and focus your vision on something 20 feet away.

Remember to blink to keep your eyes moist.

Use artificial tears, if needed.Drink lots of water, especially

during the winter months when heaters and furnaces can make the air particularly dry.

• Schedule regular comprehensive eye exams. Be sure to tell your eye doctor if you use electronic devices as part of your daily work routine. Use computer eyewear to help alleviate eye strain.Work at the computer monitor

no more than four hours straight. • Take short, frequent mini breaks

by getting up, stretching, walking around, and giving your eyes a rest from focusing on your screen.

Many visual symptoms experienced by electronics users are temporary and will decline after stopping computer work. "However, some individuals may experience continued reduced visual abilities, such as blurred distance vision, even after stopping work at a computer. If nothing is done to address the cause of the problem, the symptoms will continue to recur and perhaps worsen with future digital screen use," Viswanathan cautioned.

Given the heavy use of electronic devices across the military, DHA is looking at ways to change how it follows eye health concerns.

The VCE is sponsoring a oneyear landmark eye health study to determine the value of requiring service members to receive a comprehensive baseline eye exam to fill gaps in information and improve warfighter vision health. Current vision evaluation involves checking distance vision only at recruitment physicals.

Blue Blockers and Yellow Lenses

At the 780th, soldiers can wear yellow lenses and blue blocker glasses to protect their vision, which are the brigade's biggest purchase requests, Potter noted. The potential long-term ocular and vision effects of blue lights is being studied as part of a larger VCE research effort called the Warfighter Vision Health Plan. The soon-to-bereleased plan identifies, monitors, and works to lessen any potential threats to warfighter vision.

"Current researchNational Library of Medicine webpage is inconclusive, and more research does need to occur," Pattison said. "VCE supports efforts to determine whether blue light, as well as any other potential threats to vision being reported, are accurate and whether the use of protective devices such as light-filtering eyewear that protects the eyes are effective."

Hearing Injury Prevention

Normal conversation levels are the norm for the 780th's cube farms, but in operations spaces, sounds are kept to a whisper to allow for focus and concentration, according to Potter.

But cyber and IT warriors can still experience hearing injuries. Data centers use fans, power supplies, and other noise-hazardous equipment that can be harmful to hearing.

Normal conversational loudness ranges from 60-70 decibels. "If you need to raise your voice to speak to someone three feet away, noise levels might be over 85 decibels," Viswanathan said. The permitted exposure level for an eight-hour shift



Tacet Venari exercise participants analyze metadata to identify any suspicious activity on the network at Ramstein Air Base, Germany, in May 2022. The two-week cyber exercise provides airmen the opportunity to identify, detect, and respond to cyber threats. The exercise gives participants hands-on experience on how to recognize irregularities in the network. Cyber warriors and drone pilots face sometimes unique injuries to their vision and hearing. USAF photo by Airman 1st Class Jared Lovett

is 85 decibels for the DOD.

Ways to protect hearing include: • Avoid or limit exposure to loud sounds.

• Move away from sources of loud sounds, when possible.

• Use appropriate hearing protection devices such as earmuffs, headsets or earplugs.

• Schedule a hearing evaluation by a licensed audiologist or other qualified professional, especially if there is concern about potential hearing loss.

Almost any hearing protector, when fitted correctly, can provide 10 decibels of sound reduction, but beware of reducing sound too much, Viswanathan said. "Just as too little light can make it just as difficult to see as too much light, too little sound can make you feel isolated and less aware of your surroundings. Aim for just enough noise reduction to bring your exposure down to 75-85 decibels."

"The best thing personnel can do is get routine, periodic eye and hearing examinations," said Pattison. "Discussions with eye and hearing care professionals can assist them in optimizing their performance and help them perform the necessary tasks for the required period of time."



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