

# ARMED FORCES DISPATCH



National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day is a solemn observance in the United States that honors and remembers the victims of the attack on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, on December 7, 1941.

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Col. Kareem Montague, deputy commanding general for support, 4th Infantry Division, runs onto Empower Field at Mile High stadium with Courtland Sutton, a Denver Broncos wide receiver, before the Broncos' Salute to Service game in Denver Nov. 19, 2023. Prior to the game, service members from each military branch joined the Denver Broncos on the field for the National Anthem. U.S. Space Force photo by Senior Airman Madelyn Yopez

## Navy gives \$1 million to start historic hangar fire clean-up

by Gary Warner, Stars and Stripes

The Navy has sent \$1 million to the city of Tustin, Calif., to jump-start clean-up of the fire that destroyed a World War II blimp hangar on a former military air station.

"Demolition is the plan, but it's not scheduled yet. We have to find out the best way to get this done," said Christopher Dunne, spokesman for the Naval Facilities Engineering Command in Washington, D.C.

A fire broke out Nov. 7 at Hangar 1, one of a pair of 17-story tall wooden hangars on the former Marine Corps Air Station Tustin, which closed in 1999.



Built at the outbreak of World War II, the hangars housed blimps that patrolled the coast looking for Japanese submarines. They remained on the base as it transitioned over the decades to a helicopter air station of the 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing. When the base closed, the Navy conveyed 1,300 acres to local governments for housing, businesses and a large public park.

A historic blimp hangar burns in Tustin, Calif., Tuesday, Nov. 7, 2023. Photo courtesy of U.S. Marine Corps

The Navy retained 225 acres that included the hangars until an agreement could be reached on their future use. Nearly three decades later, no plan has won approval from federal and local governments.

Hangar 1 had been unused since a 2013 windstorm damaged its roof. The cause of the fire is still under investigation.

The Orange County Fire Authority fought the blaze for several hours, including calling in air drops of fire retardant by leased CH-47 Chinook helicopters.

The fire continued to burn for over a week before rains doused the final hot spots.

Smoke from the fire released large amounts of asbestos, arsenic, lead, nickel and benzene into the air across a heavily urbanized portion of the county of more than 3.2 million people.

A state of emergency was declared, closing nearby schools, businesses and public parks. Residents were advised to stay inside their homes with windows sealed.

Residents said it was often impossible to avoid the mix of wood particles and toxic materials in ash that spread for miles beyond the hangar.

"I still woke up in the morning with ash on my eyelids," said Karen Kelso, a resident of nearby North Tustin.

Local leaders in Tustin and Orange County have been calling for the immediate demolition of the wrecked hangar.

Orange County Third District Supervisor Don Wagner said Tuesday that he expected the demolition to begin shortly. Tustin Mayor Austin Lumbard also said on Tuesday that the demolition would likely begin "later this week."

But the property is under Navy control. An agreement signed Nov. 10 between the Navy and local officials sent the \$1 million to begin clean-up. The funds came from the Navy's budget for implementing the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) actions that shuttered dozens of bases at the end of the Cold War in the 1990s.

## VA ANNOUNCES CHANGES MEANT TO STOP FORECLOSURES ON VETERANS USING VA-BACKED LOANS

by Rose L. Thayer  
 Stars and Stripes

Veterans Affairs is extending a pandemic-era program that helped financially-strapped veterans keep their homes after criticism that it wasn't doing enough to prevent those with VA-backed

loans from foreclosure.

The VA also called on mortgage servicers to pause foreclosures of VA-guaranteed loans through May 31, to allow the VA to present workable home retention solutions, VA Press

Secretary Terrence Hayes said recently.

"By pausing foreclosures and extending the COVID-19 Refund Modification program, we can continue assisting veterans with their loans while we launch our newest home retention option, the VA Servicing Purchase (VASP) program," he said.

Through VASP, the VA will purchase defaulted VA loans from mortgage servicers, modify the loans, and then place them in the VA-owned portfolio as direct loans.

"This will empower us to work with veterans experiencing severe financial hardship to adjust their loans – and their

monthly payments – so they can keep their homes," Hayes said.

The announcement followed a letter sent Wednesday to VA Secretary Denis McDonough from four Democratic senators asking him to protect veterans from foreclosure even as the pandemic-era program for mortgage forbearance ended one year ago.

"During the pandemic, the Department of Veterans Affairs helped thousands of veterans and servicemembers stay in their homes. But part of the program that helped them get back on track with their payments expired last year, leaving many veterans facing foreclosure," see VA, page 12



Chula Vista VA Clinic. Photo courtesy of Veterans Affairs

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### Army-Navy football

For information on the Dec. 9 'battle of the services.' Follow game day at [www.armynavygame.com](http://www.armynavygame.com).

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## U.S. endorses responsible AI measures for global militaries

by David Vergun  
DOD News

The United States government is leading global efforts to build strong norms that will promote the responsible military use of artificial intelligence and autonomous systems. Earlier this month, the State Department announced that 47 states have now endorsed the "Political Declaration on Responsible Military Use of Artificial Intelligence and Autonomy" that the government first launched at The Hague on Feb. 16.

AI refers to the ability of machines to perform tasks that would otherwise require human intelligence, such as recognizing patterns, learning from experience, drawing conclusions, making predictions or generating recommendations.

Military AI capabilities includes not only weapons but also decision support systems that help defense leaders at all levels make better and more timely decisions, from the battlefield to the boardroom, and systems relating to everything from finance, payroll, and accounting, to the recruiting, retention, and promotion of personnel, to collection and fusion of intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance data.

"The United States has been a global leader in responsible military use of AI and autonomy, with the Department of Defense championing ethical AI principles and policies on autonomy in weapon systems for over a decade. The political declaration builds on these efforts. It advances international norms on responsible military use of AI and autonomy, provides a basis for building common understanding, and creates a community for all states to exchange best practices," said Sasha Baker, under secretary of defense for policy.

The Defense Department has led the world through publishing a series of policies on military AI and autonomy, most recently the Data, Analytics, and AI Adoption Strategy released on November 2.

The declaration consists of a series of non-legally binding guidelines describing best practices for responsible military use of AI. These guidelines include ensuring that military AI systems are auditable, have explicit and well-defined uses, are subject to rigorous testing and evaluation across their lifecycle, have the ability to detect and avoid unintended behaviors, and that high-consequence applications undergo senior-level review.

As the State Department's press release on November 13 states: "This groundbreaking initiative contains 10 concrete measures to guide the responsible development and use of military applications of AI and autonomy. The declaration and the measures it outlines, are an important step in building an international framework of responsibility to allow states to harness the benefits of AI while mitigating the risks. The U.S. is committed to working together with other endorsing states to build on this important development."

The 10 measures are:

- States should ensure their military organizations adopt and implement these principles for the responsible development, deployment, and use of AI capabilities.
- States should take appropriate steps, such as legal reviews, to ensure that their military AI capabilities will be used consistent with their respective obligations under international law, in particular international humanitarian law. States should also consider how to use military AI capabilities to enhance their implementation of international humanitarian law and to improve the protection of civilians and civilian objects in armed conflict.
- States should ensure that

senior officials effectively and appropriately oversee the development and deployment of military AI capabilities with high-consequence applications, including, but not limited to, such weapon systems.

• States should take proactive steps to minimize unintended



**A MARTAC T-38 Devil Ray unmanned surface vessel, attached to U.S. 5th Fleet's Task Force 59, sails in the Arabian Gulf, Oct. 26. U.S. Navy photo by MC2 Jacob Vernier**

bias in military AI capabilities.

• States should ensure that relevant personnel exercise appropriate care in the development, deployment, and use of military AI capabilities, including weapon systems incorporating such capabilities.

• States should ensure that military AI capabilities are developed with methodologies, data sources, design procedures, and documentation that are transparent to and auditable by their relevant defense person-

nel.

- States should ensure that personnel who use or approve the use of military AI capabilities are trained so they sufficiently understand the capabilities and limitations of those systems in order to make appropriate context-informed judgments on the use of those systems and to mitigate the risk of automation bias.
- States should ensure that military AI capabilities have explicit, well-defined uses and that they are designed and engineered to fulfill those intended functions.
- States should ensure that the safety, security, and effectiveness of military AI capabilities are subject to appropriate and rigorous testing and assurance within their well-defined uses and across their entire lifecycles. For self-learning or continuously updating military AI capabilities, States should ensure that critical safety features have not been degraded, through processes such as monitoring.
- States should implement appropriate safeguards to mitigate risks of failures in military AI capabilities, such as the ability to detect and avoid unintended consequences and the ability to respond, for example by disengaging or deactivating deployed systems, when such systems demonstrate unintended behavior.



### Army

- Former sergeant major of the Army talks fitness, fate of the leg tuck
- Battalion commander, nephew of prominent politician, relieved at JBLM

### Navy

- Navy opening more subs to women as new female officers double
- No one was injured when a Navy plane landed in a Hawaii bay, but some fear environmental damage
- Navy stands up Sailor quality-of-life reforms in Newport News shipyard
- U.S., Philippines begin three days of joint patrols in the South China Sea
- Navy delays unmanned MQ-25A Stingray timeline after IG warnings

### Marine Corps

- I'll bounce back, top Marine vows in 1st video since cardiac arrest
- Marines in dress blues who brawled with civilians in Texas bar district not facing punishment
- End of an era: The last class of Marine Scout Snipers graduates on Dec. 15
- Marine commander considers liberty changes following off-base incidents in Japan
- Marine-turned-JBLM cop disputes report he assaulted Soldier

### Air Force

- U.S.A.F. gets final MH-139 test helicopter as production ramps up
- Texas tried to block an Air Force spouse's occupational license. She sued and won, setting a legal precedent.
- Air Force to upgrade pilot eyewear with laser, ballistic protection
- New Mexico Air Force Base issues 'all clear' after active shooter lock down
- As its last weather satellites age, DOD works on plans for a new generation

### Space Force

- Group of lawmakers urge Kendall to speed new F-16 jets, upgrades for Taiwan
- More F-35s arrive in Okinawa, bolstering 5th-gen forces near Taiwan

### Coast Guard

- Space Force records first suicides since service's founding in 2019
- Coast Guard intercepts 'suspicious vessel' near Malibu, detains 23 undocumented immigrants
- Coast Guard rescues a couple and their dog stranded off Florida's Gulf Coast

### National Guard

- National Guardsman who feds say went AWOL after Biden's election is charged with assaulting officers on Jan. 6

## MONTHLY OBSERVANCES: December

Nat'l Egg Nog Month  
Made In America Month  
Universal Human Rights  
World AIDS Awareness  
Nat'l Pear Month  
Buckwheat Month  
Worldwide Food Service  
Safety Month  
Tropical Fruits Month  
Nat'l Fruit Cake Month  
Root Vegetable Month  
Noodle Ring Month  
Handwashing Awareness  
Procrastination Awareness  
Nat'l Car Donation  
TTTS Awareness Month  
Learn A Foreign Language

Seasonal Affective  
Disorder Awareness Month  
Tomato and Winter  
Squash  
Quince and Watermelon  
Art and Architecture Month  
Bingo's Birthday Month  
Hi Neighbor Month  
Int'l Calendar Awareness  
Int'l Sharps Injury  
Prevention Awareness  
Love Your Neighbor Month  
Merry Merchants Month  
Nat'l Closed Caption TV  
Nat'l Drunk and Drugged  
Driving Awareness Month  
Nat'l Identity Theft Preven-

tion and Awareness Month  
Nat'l Impaired Driving  
Prevention Month  
Nat'l Sign Up for Summer  
Camp Month  
Nat'l Stress-Free Family  
Holiday Month  
Nat'l Tie Month  
Nat'l Write a Business Plan  
Poor Looking Winter Mont  
Read A New Book Month  
Safe Toys and Gifts Month  
Spiritual Literacy Month  
Wear Brown Shoes Month  
Write to a Friend Month  
Cooked Grasshoppers  
Art and Architecture

Egg Nog Month  
Handwashing Awareness  
Hi Neighbor Month  
Made in America Month  
Nat'l Identity Theft  
Prevention and Awareness  
Read a New Book Month  
Root Vegetables Month  
Safe Toys and Gifts  
Sign Up for Summer  
Camp Month  
Stress-Free Family  
Holiday  
Tomato and Winter  
Squash  
Universal Human Rights  
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# U.S. Navy seizes attackers who held Israel-linked tanker

## Missiles from rebel-controlled Yemen follow

(STARS AND STRIPES) DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — Armed assailants seized and later let go of a tanker linked to Israel off the coast of Yemen on Nov. 26 before being apprehended by the U.S. Navy, officials said. Two ballistic missiles fired from Houthi-controlled Yemen then landed near a U.S. warship aiding the tanker in the Gulf of Aden, raising the stakes amid a series of ship attacks linked to the Israel-Hamas war.

Yemen's internationally recognized

government blamed the Iranian-backed Houthi rebels for the attack, though the rebels in control of the capital, Sanaa, did not acknowledge either the seizure or the missile attack.

The attackers seized the Liberian-flagged Central Park, managed by Zodiac Maritime, in the Gulf of Aden, the company, the U.S. and British militaries and private intelligence firm Ambrey said.

The U.S. military's Central Command said in a statement Nov. 27 that its forces and allies, including destroyer USS *Mason*,

responded to the seizure and demanded the armed assailants release the tanker.

"Subsequently, five armed individuals debarked the ship and attempted to flee via their small boat," Central Command said. "*Mason* pursued the attackers resulting in their eventual surrender."

The Central Command did not identify the attackers, but said a missile launch from Houthi-controlled Yemen followed early Monday morning.

"The missiles landed in the

Gulf of Aden approximately 10 nautical miles from the ships," the statement said. "USS *Mason* ... was concluding its response to the M/V Central Park distress call at the time of the missile launches. There was no damage or reported injuries from either vessel during this incident."

Early Monday morning, Zodiac said the vessel carrying phosphoric acid and its crew of 22 sailors from Bulgaria, Georgia, India, the Philippines, Russia, Turkey and Vietnam were unharmed.

"We would like to thank the coalition forces who responded quickly, protecting assets in the area and upholding international maritime law," the company said.

Zodiac described the vessel as being owned by Clumvez Shipping Inc., though other records directly linked Zodiac as the owner. London-based Zodiac Maritime is part of Israeli billionaire Eyal Ofer's Zodiac Group.

Yemen's internationally recognized government, which is based out of nearby

Aden, blamed the rebels for the seizure in a statement carried by their state-run news agency.

Continue reading at [https://www.stripes.com/theaters/middle\\_east/2023-11-26/houthi-missiles-us-warship-12177610.html](https://www.stripes.com/theaters/middle_east/2023-11-26/houthi-missiles-us-warship-12177610.html).

The attack happened in a part of the Gulf of Aden that is in theory under the control of that government's forces and is fairly distant from Houthi-controlled territory in the country. Somali pirates are not known to operate in that area.

# CNO, MCPON visit Indo-Pacific to underscore commitment to allies, visit Sailors

WASHINGTON, DC — Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Lisa Franchetti and Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy James Honea traveled to Guam, Japan and the Republic of Korea (ROK) to underscore the U.S. Navy's unwavering focus on the Indo-Pacific and to engage with forward deployed Sailors Nov. 20-25.

Franchetti and Honea began

their trip in Guam with an all-hands call. The dialogue covered topics like quality of service initiatives and recruiting, it also centered on Franchetti's focus on the important role of our forward-postured forces serving at Joint Region Marianas and on applying a warfighting lens to everything the Navy does.

"I'm incredibly proud of the

work you do, providing options, flexibility, and decision space to our nation's leaders. What you do matters every day to our Navy and to our nation," said Franchetti. "Each of you are forward-deployed supporting our allies and partners and reinforcing our strategic relationships in this very critical region of the world. As I begin my tenure as CNO I'm fo-

cused on ensuring you have what you need to preserve the peace, respond in crisis, and, if called, win decisively in war."

MCPON said, "I'd ask that everyone in this room be very clear on what their priorities are, focus on what matters, then ask yourself, 'how can I get better? How can I help my shipmates be better?'" Honea said. "I charge

all of you to be a citizen and belong — make your teams better. Make our Navy better."

The next stop on their Indo-Pacific tour was Japan, where Franchetti discussed the strength of the U.S.-Japan alliance and the importance of the Navy-to-Navy relationship in facing the challenges to a free and open Indo-Pacific. CNO emphasized

the value of planning, exercising and operating together to enhance interoperability between the two fleets. She further expressed how the strong network of allies and partners across the Indo-Pacific ensures the stability and security of the region and facilitates the preservation of the rules-based international order.



**PALM SPRINGS (Nov. 11, 2023)** Retired Marine Corps Cpl. Dorothee Irwin, a World War II veteran, sits with her family during the 26th annual Palm Springs Veterans Day Parade here. Courtesy photo



**DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA NATIONAL GUARD (Nov. 17, 2023)** Harlem Globetrotters "Too Tall" Winston and "Wham" Middleton thank District of Columbia National Guard members, while also participating in a holiday meal distribution during a Operation Homefront "Holiday Meals for Military" event here. Operation Homefront provides programs designed to build strong, stable, and secure military families. U.S. Air National Guard photo by MSgt Arthur M. Wright



**PALAU INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT (Nov. 7, 2023)** The Army's 3rd Multi-Domain Task Force, 17th Field Artillery Brigade, the 25th Combat Aviation Brigade and the Air Force conduct its second rapid deployment live fire exercise in 48 hours here. U.S. Army photo by Spc. Christopher Smith

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# Medal of Honor Spotlight: Army Lt. Col. Don C. Faith Jr. and the Korean War

by Katie Lange  
DOD News

Army Lt. Col. Don Carlos Faith Jr. was one of thousands of men forced to fight through frigid conditions and overwhelming odds during the Korean War's Battle of Chosin Reservoir. He didn't survive the ordeal, but the leadership and bravery he showed while commanding troops earned him a posthumous Medal of Honor.

Faith was born Aug. 26, 1918, in Washington, Indiana, to parents Katherine and Don Faith Sr., who was a World War I Army general. As an Army brat, the younger Don and his two brothers, Francis and Edwin, grew up all over the world, including in China, the Philippines, Georgia and Washington, D.C.

In the late 1930s, Faith attended Georgetown University, where his father was then the director of veterans' education, according to a 1950 edition of the Washington, D.C. newspaper, The Evening Star. But by June 1941, he decided he wanted to follow in his father's footsteps by joining the Army, months before Pearl Harbor would thrust the U.S. into World War II.

After basic training, Faith went to Officer Candidate School and received his commission before being assigned to the 82nd Airborne Division. Faith was first stationed at Camp Claiborne in central Louisiana, where he met Barbara Wilbur. They married in November 1942 and eventually had a daughter, Bobbie.

Faith went on to serve in North

Africa, Italy, France and Germany, earning two Bronze Stars and the French Croix de Guerre for his actions. When the war was over, he was stationed for a short time in the Philippines before being sent home to serve as the Army secretary to the United Nations Military Staff Committee.

In early 1948, Faith served in China before joining occupation forces in Japan, where he was stationed when the Korean War began in June 1950. By then, he was a

**The Battle of Chosin Reservoir, as the ensuing fight is now called, was one of the most savage battles of the war, playing out in rugged, hotly contested terrain during one of the coldest winters on record for the region.**

lieutenant colonel and was given command of the 1st Battalion, 32nd Infantry Regiment. A short time later, they were sent to Korea.

By November 1950, United Nations troops, which were largely American, had pushed the North Koreans north toward the border with China. Around the same time, China decided to join the war on the enemy's side, so it sent thousands of its own troops south across the Yalu River to help the fleeing North Koreans.

The Battle of Chosin Reservoir, as the ensuing fight is now called, was one of the most savage battles of the war, playing out in rugged, hotly contested terrain during one of the coldest winters on record for

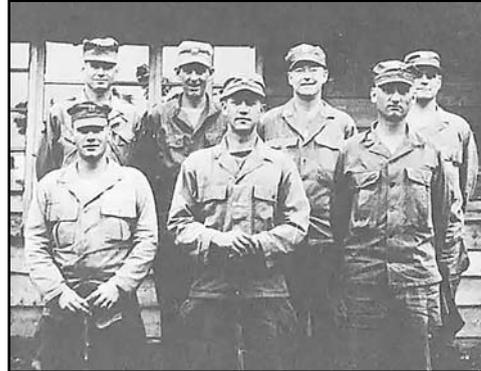
the region. Temperatures, which reached about -40 degrees Fahrenheit, were so cold that weapons malfunctioned, and foxholes couldn't be dug because the ground was too hard, historians said.

Starting on Nov. 27, 1950, about 100,000 Chinese soldiers encircled the Chosin Reservoir near the village of Sasu-ri, quickly outnumbering and outgunning about 30,000 UN troops, including Faith's 1st Battalion. When enemy troops launched a fierce attack against them, Faith directed the action amid heavy fire and even led counterattacks to restore positions that had been breached.

At one point, Faith directed an attack that would help his battalion link up with another unit, the 31st Regimental Combat Team, which was in dire need of help. Faith did reconnaissance on the route they would take and personally directed the first elements of his command across the ice-covered reservoir. He then directed the battalion's vehicles, which were loaded with wounded men, until all his command had passed through enemy fire. Only then did he allow himself to cross the reservoir.

When the battalion reached the beleaguered 31st RCT, Faith assumed their command. Nicknamed Task Force Faith, the combined unit was ordered to organize its survivors and withdraw south about 14 miles to Hagaru-ri, where they would be able to join with more friendly forces.

Although they were all exhausted by the bitter cold and physical effort, Faith rallied his men and



**Staff members of the Army 1st Battalion, 32nd Infantry Regiment in Japan in early 1950. Lt. Col. Don C. Faith Jr. is in the center, front row. Official U.S. Army photo**

launched an attack. When they were quickly stopped by enemy fire, Faith ran forward and got his stalled men moving so they could blast their way through the enemy ring.

By Dec. 1, days had passed since the troops had begun their flight south, and they were still being attacked.

According to Faith's Medal of

Honor citation, "As they came to a hairpin curve, enemy fire from a roadblock again pinned the column down. Faith organized a group of men and directed their attack on the enemy positions on the right flank. He then placed himself at the head of another group of men and, in the face of direct enemy fire, led an attack on the enemy roadblock, firing his pistol and throwing grenades."

Faith managed to get within about 30 yards of the roadblock when he was seriously wounded by grenade fragments; however, he continued to direct the attack until the roadblock was overrun. Unfortunately, Faith didn't survive his injuries and died the next day, according to the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency.

By the end of the Battle of Chosin Reservoir on Dec. 13, UN troops managed to break through the enemy siege and move south far enough to evacuate more than 100,000 North Korean refugees.

Throughout five days of action during that movement, Faith continuously disregarded his own safety, often throwing himself into the most dangerous situations to keep others safe. His actions were a great inspiration to his men, which led to him posthumously earning the Medal of Honor. His wife and daughter received it on his behalf from famed World War II Army Gen. Omar Bradley.

"Mrs. Faith, I have known Don since he was a little boy, and I'm not surprised at his leadership and courage," Bradley told Faith's wife

during a ceremony at the Pentagon, according to The Evening Star. The newspaper said nine other Korean War service members received the Medal of Honor during the same ceremony.

Sadly, Faith's remains couldn't be repatriated because of battlefield conditions at the time, so the family had nothing to bury. Instead, his name was inscribed on the Courts of the Missing at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific in Honolulu.

In 2004, joint investigators were allowed into North Korea to survey a field near the Chosin Reservoir, where they located a mass grave site, the DPAA said. Boxes of remains were exhumed and returned to the U.S. for identification. However, that process can take years due to the challenges that come with identifying remains that are lumped together.

In August 2012 — nearly 62 years after Faith died — the DPAA positively identified his remains as part of the batch that had been repatriated in 2004. Less than a year later, on April 17, 2013, Faith was finally laid to rest at Arlington National Cemetery.

Faith's name continues to live on. In the 1990's, a headquarters building was built in his honor at Fort Drum, New York. His name is also inscribed on the Korean War Veterans Memorial Wall in Washington, D.C., which was updated in 2022 to include the names of the fallen.



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## A new flight: The F-16 arrival at Fleet Readiness Center Southwest

by Janina Lamoglia, Fleet Readiness Center Southwest

NAVAL AIR STATION NORTH ISLAND - Fleet Readiness Center Southwest (FRCSW) is ushering in a new era of naval aviation as the Navy continues the gradual retirement of its legacy F/A-18A-D series.



The renowned F-16 aircraft is poised to become a major program for the FRCSW Depot team's operations. The F-16, known as the "Fighting Falcon," has been a mainstay

in air forces globally since its inception in the 1970s. Designed as a multi-role fighter, its versatility and state-of-the-art avionics have rendered it indispensable in aerial combat and strategic missions.

As the F/A-18 series approaches its retirement, FRCSW is gearing up for the inclusion of the F-16 "Fighting Falcon" in its maintenance fold. In February 2023, the Air Force repair capacity had reached its maximum so PMA-226, the F-16 Program Office, reached out to FRCSW leadership in order to assess the capability and capacity. After several visits and meetings with leadership, PMA-226 decided to entrust FRCSW with the task of establishing a depot repair line for the F-16 C and D models.

This critical decision placed the responsibility on the shoulders of FRCSW's MRO-E Offsite Division Head, Jacob Weintraub. Weintraub, an experienced engineer with over 20 years working on Hornets, now oversees the F-16 engineering and overall setup at various FRCSW locations, including MCAS Miramar, NAS Lemoore, and NAS Whidbey Island.

This transition, while daunting, is not insurmountable. Weintraub's comprehensive understanding of Navy maintenance processes, coupled with his adept technical background, ensures that the F-16's unique maintenance requirements will be met.

## Act of kindness just in time for the holidays

by Sharon StephensonPino  
Naval Base Point Loma

SAN DIEGO – In a heartwarming gesture of support and gratitude, Holy Joe's Café, made sure to continue to uphold its mission since 2006, to serve a little bit of home to those who serve our country, by donating a staggering 22 pallets of coffee to Naval Base Point Loma through the command Chaplain James "Jiho" Kim.

Chaplain Kim will ensure its distribution among the military members at Naval Base Point Loma, Naval Base San Diego, Naval Base Coronado, and Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego.

"When I received a phone call from the Founder and Executive Director of Holy Joe's Café, Tom Jastermsky, I couldn't believe his generosity to distribute such a bulk amount of coffee to our military community in San Diego," said Chaplain Kim.

Volunteer Sailors unloaded the coffee into a warehouse at Harbor Drive Annex. This



Sailors assigned to Naval Base Point Loma are shown here with pallets of coffee donated by Holy Joe's Café. U.S. Navy photo by Sharon StephensonPino

act of kindness by Holy Joe's Café comes at the perfect time, just as the holiday season approaches. Holy Joe's commitment to giving back to those who serve and protect our nation is truly commendable.

"Holy Joe's Café is known to send free coffee to U.S. military bases worldwide," Chaplain Kim said. "Holy Joe's Cafe donation was my prayer being answered as I wondered how to make an impactful holiday ministry, especially reaching out to

Sailors who may struggle with seasonal homesickness."

By providing such a substantial donation of coffee, Holy Joe's Café aims to bring a sense of warmth and comfort to the military personnel who may be far from their families during this festive period, and the importance of community and collaboration.

This act of goodwill serves as a reminder of the unity and appreciation that can be fostered during the holiday season.

"We hope the coffee opens doors for people who may want to talk with a Chaplain," said Tom Jastermsky. "For people who are dealing with whatever issues, there'll be someone to talk to with a cup of coffee."

As the coffee from Holy Joe's Café is distributed among the military members in and around San Diego, it is sure to bring a sense of comfort, joy, and gratitude. The warmth of a great cup of coffee can provide a moment of respite and a reminder that their service is valued and greatly appreciated.

"It's more than a cup of coffee, it is a commitment that keeps coffee and conversation flowing," Jastermsky continued. "For Holy Joe's, it means a lot to help other people and we just want to give a big thank you for all that service members do."

"Thank you, Tom and Holy Joe's Café, for allowing Chaplains to spread love and coffee to our Sailors and Marines," said Chaplain Kim.

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# With a third of homeless veterans living in California, Newsom backs new housing strategy

by Shreya Agrawal  
CalMatters

California has poured billions of dollars into finding homes for unhoused veterans, but the number of former military service members living on the street has held steady for almost a decade. Today, a third of the nation's unhoused veterans are in California.

Gov. Gavin Newsom proposes a significant change in the state's strategy for ending veteran homelessness. His plan, included in a \$6.4 billion mental health bond he's sending to voters in the March primary election, would set aside funding specifically for veterans with serious behavioral health conditions.

That's a shift from California's last two major efforts to fund housing for veterans, both of which created units for a general population of former military service members.

The first effort began in the late 1990s, when the state built seven new veterans' homes over a period of 17 years. Today those veterans homes are underused. They were built to house about 2,400 people, but only 1,575 veterans live in them. The 300-unit veterans home in Barstow was so underutilized in 2020 that Newsom moved to close it as he braced for a pandemic recession, although lawmakers blocked him from shutting the site.

The second push centered on a pair of ballot measures voters approved in 2014 and in 2018 that allocated \$4.6 billion to build housing specifically for former military service members. The money created the Veterans Housing and Homelessness Prevention Program, which has supported the construction of about 3,250 housing units for veterans to date.

Veterans advocates and state officials view the programs — along with federal efforts led by the Department of Veterans Affairs — as successful in reducing homelessness among former military service members. In the last 12 years, veteran homelessness in California has decreased by more than 30%.

But the trend in California mostly accounts for gains made during the Obama administration, when veteran homelessness peaked nationwide and the Department of Veterans Affairs moved aggressively to place former troops in housing. Since 2014, the number of homeless veterans in California has mostly plateaued around 10,000 to 12,000 people, according to annual counts released by the Department of Housing and Urban Development. See report at <https://datawrapper.dwcdn.net/Z2Fqo/1/>

Alex Visotzky, senior California policy fellow at the National Alliance

to End Homelessness, said the high numbers of veteran homelessness result from the challenges veterans face on returning home in California's competitive housing market.

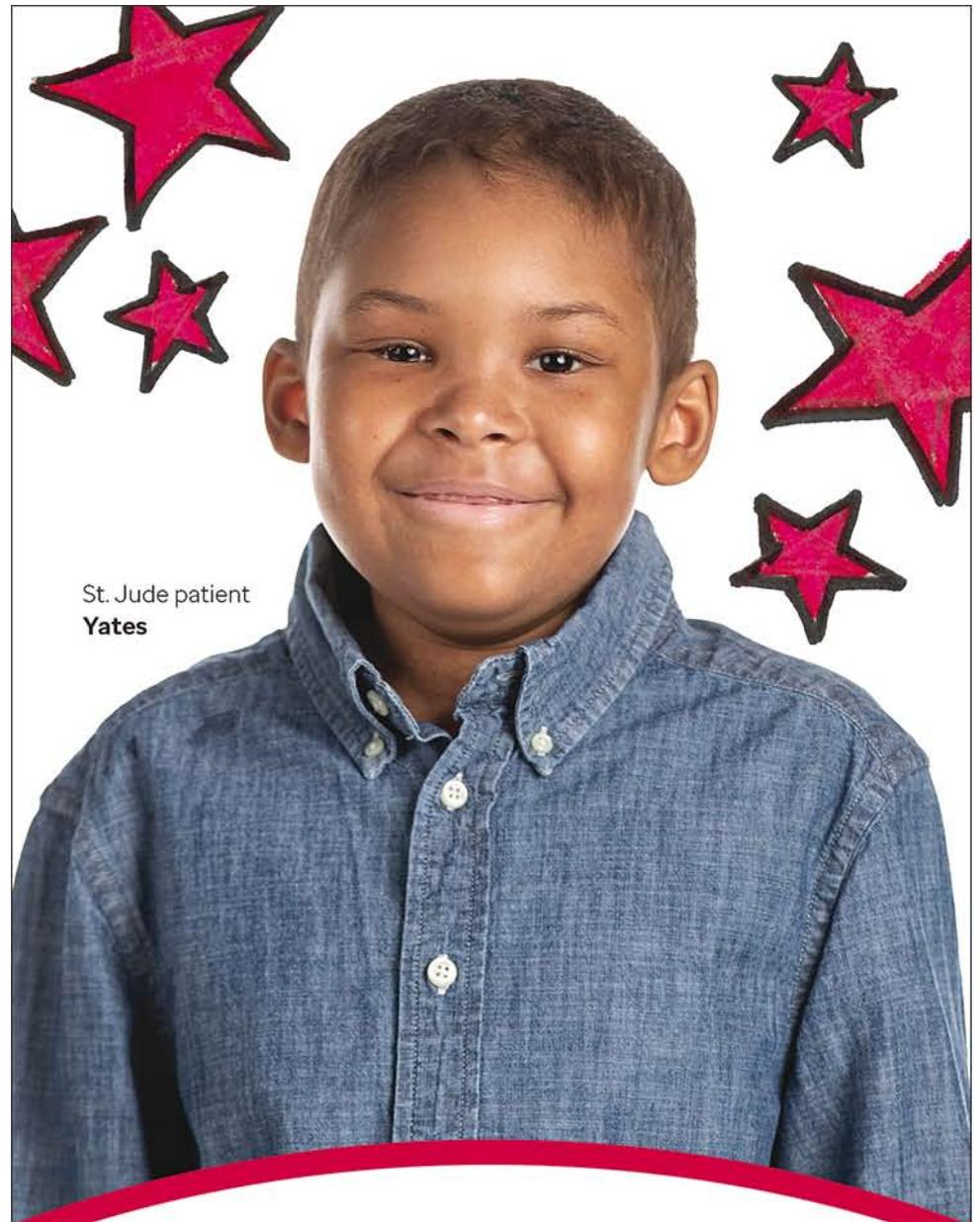
"When housing markets are unaffordable and incredibly competitive, those with the greatest needs are going to be more likely to fall out," he said.

Newsom's new strategy in the mental health bond, advocates say, should help those most in need. The California Department of Veterans Affairs estimates that half of the state's unhoused veterans suffer from some kind of behavioral health issue.

The money in the bond would go to the state's Department of Housing and Community Development, which would work with CalVet "to focus specifically on housing veterans experiencing behavioral health challenges," said Assemblymember Jacqui Irwin, the Thousand Oaks Democrat who wrote the bill that ultimately put the bond on the ballot.

Studies have shown veterans are overrepresented in the nation's homeless population. They may experience personal challenges, such as post-traumatic stress disorders or other mental health issues as well as disabilities related to their military service.

Full story at [www.afdispatch.com](http://www.afdispatch.com)

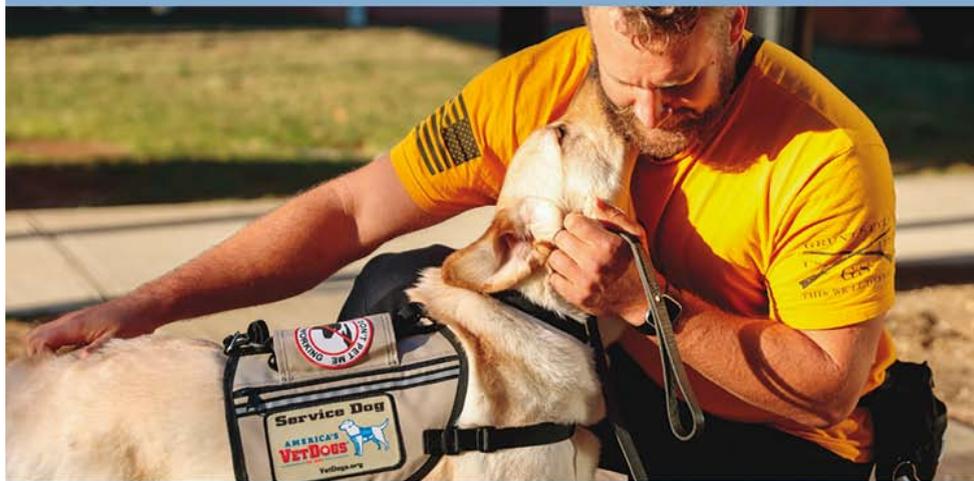


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# Carl Vinson Carrier Strike Group arrives in Busan, Republic of Korea



USS Carl Vinson (CVN 70), the flagship of Carrier Strike Group (CSG) 1, arrived in the Republic of Korea (ROK) for a scheduled port visit Nov. 21. "An aircraft carrier port visit demonstrates the United States' commitment to the alliance between the U.S. and the Republic of Korea," said Rear Adm. Carlos Sardiello, commander, CSG-1. "Cooperation between the U.S. and Republic of Korea navies is critical to maintaining peace and security in North-east Asia and the Korean Peninsula."

PHOTO - Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Lisa Franchetti and Master Chief Petty Officer with Vinson Sailors. U.S. Navy photo

The visit to Busan helps enhance relationships with ROK leaders and the local population. Additionally, the visit provides the opportunity for Sailors and civilians to rest and recharge while being able to experience the Republic of Korea.

"Port visits by U.S. ships are

routine in the Republic of Korea," said Capt. Matthew Thomas, commanding officer, USS Carl Vinson. "We are honored to be guests, and our crew looks forward to cultural exchange, including several community relations events, alongside the people of the Republic of Korea."

Vinson is scheduled to host ship tours for several U.S. and ROK dignitaries, conduct multiple key leader engagements ashore, and well participate in community outreach and sporting events.

"We're honored to pay a port visit to the Republic of Korea, especially in a year marking the

70th Anniversary of the Armistice and the establishment of the U.S.-Republic of Korea alliance," said Capt. Winston Scott, commander of the on board air wing. "Our Sailors look forward to participating in professional engagements and community service projects while meeting and engaging with the local community of South Korea."

## Engineers join VA leaders to celebrate completion of new parking structure

SAN DIEGO - Representatives with the Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District joined leaders from the Department of Veterans Affairs San Diego Health Care System and contractors recently to cut the ribbon for a new parking structure at the San Diego VA Medical Center campus. The seven-level parking structure was completed by Archer Western Federal Joint Venture of San Diego in September and will accommodate about 900 vehicles. This is the first of a four-phase construction contract completed at the campus.

## Navy gives \$1 million to start historic hangar fire clean-up in Southern California

STARS AND STRIPES - The Navy has sent \$1 million to the city of Tustin to jump-start clean-up of the fire that destroyed a World War II blimp hangar on a former military air station. "Demolition is the plan, but it's not scheduled yet. We have to find out the best way to get this done," said Chris Dunne, spokesman for the Naval Facilities Engineering Command. A fire broke out Nov. 7 at Hangar 1, one of a pair of 17-story tall wooden hangars on the former MCAS Tustin, which closed in 1999. Built at the outbreak of World War II, the hangars housed blimps that patrolled the coast looking for Japanese subs. They remained on the base as it transitioned over the decades to a helicopter air station. When the base closed, the Navy conveyed 1,300 acres to local governments for housing, businesses and a large public park.

## Navy works with UC Riverside to advance major computing breakthrough

by Brianna Alexander

The Naval Engineering Education Consortium, teamed with the University of California, Riverside, is helping further technological advancements by studying quantum computing. UCR professors and students are using predictive quantum simulations to control electrons and qubits (the basic unit of memory) for quantum computers. In contrast to classical computers, quantum computers rely on quantum states to store data and perform some computations that classical computers cannot handle. Researchers will be able to solve significant mathematical problems and tasks that are currently difficult and/or impossible for existing computers and humans.

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**LOCAL PHOTO GALLERY**



**PHILIPPINE SEA (Nov. 19, 2023)** Sailors assigned to Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Sterett (DDG 104) transfer tri-walls off-ship during a replenishment-at-sea with the fleet replenishment oiler USNS Yukon (T-AO 202). U.S. Navy photo by MC1 Charles J. Scudella III



**NAVAL BASE SAN DIEGO (Nov. 22, 2023)** Cmdr. Adam Ochs, center, the commanding officer of Independence-variant littoral combat ship USS Santa Barbara (LCS 32) Blue crew, salutes side-boys during a change of command ceremony held on the ship's flight deck. U.S. Navy photo by MC1 Vance Hand



**MCRD SAN DIEGO (Nov. 14, 2023)** Marine Corps recruits take part in a confidence course during drill instructor school here. U.S. Marine Corps photo by Lance Cpl. Francisco Angel

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**TONGA (Nov. 17, 2023)** Army Capt. Ashley Kotran conducts canine training during Pacific Partnership 2023. Pacific Partnership is the largest annual multinational humanitarian assistance and disaster relief preparedness mission conducted in the Indo-Pacific. U. S. Navy photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Megan Alexander

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Perioperative nurses attached to Navy Medical Center San Diego, pose for a group photo during Perioperative Nurses Week 2023. NMCS D San Diego's mission is to prepare service members to deploy in support of operational forces, deliver high quality healthcare services and shape the future of military medicine through education, training and research. NMCS D San Diego employs more than 6,000 active duty military personnel, civilians and contractors in Southern California to provide patients with world-class care anytime, anywhere. (Courtesy Photo)

## NMCS D celebrates Perioperative Nurses

by MC3 Raphael McCoy

Naval Medical Center San Diego celebrates Perioperative Nurses Week by acknowledging the amazing work our outstanding nurses continually provide to our patients.

Perioperative nurses play an integral role in the operating room making sure logistics are cared for and provide much needed assistance to the operating surgeons and nurses during surgeries.

"As a perioperative nurse you're there to own the room, own the space, make sure everybody has what they need", said LT Margaret Taylor, NMCS D Clinical Nurse Specialist. "You learn about everything from what the instruments are called to safety precautions within the operating room, how to correctly position the patient, how to prep the skin, for the surgery that you're having. We also learn how to help our anesthesia team, at the head of the bed during intubation and extubation, as that can be a tricky time. You want to make sure that you're providing an extra set of hands, and aware of how to help them do their job. And so that the patient has what they need. You make sure the patient is safe to go in for the surgery."

Not only are these nurses trained to assist in multiple forms of technology, sterilization processes, safety caution procedures and prep, they are also the runners who make certain there are no loose ends.

"If there's something that comes

up that we didn't discuss in the beginning of the case, then we're out running for it," said Taylor. "We bring it into the room. There's also some logistics that goes back and forth. We're constantly talking to the family, we're talking to the PACU (Post-Anesthesia Care Unit), we're just a moving train, just constantly bringing the patients in and out and making sure everything's good to go at a fast pace, making sure that we can get everything done that needs to be done."

While these nurses are not performing the surgeries themselves, NMCS D understands and values the vital role the nurses continue to fill day in and day out.

"It's nice to have a week because our nurses grind a lot," expressed Taylor. "We're always constantly grinding, so to have a week set aside, having recognition for the work that you've put in from everyone, not just nurses, but the surgeons and the techs and nine seater providers, everyone in the community is just like, 'Hey, thank you for what you do.'"

NMCS D wishes our perioperative nurses a wonderful end to Perioperative Nurses Week!

*NMCS D mission is to prepare service members to deploy in support of operational forces, deliver high quality healthcare services and shape the future of military medicine through education, training and research. NMCS D employs more than 6,000 active duty military personnel, civilians and contractors in Southern California to provide patients with world-class care anytime, anywhere.*

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# Career and Education

## Air Force chief of staff inspires during Thanksgiving visit

by Christa D'Andrea  
37th Training Wing Public Affairs

JOINT BASE SAN ANTONIO-LACKLAND, Texas - Just ahead of the Thanksgiving holiday, Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. David Allvin made his first visit to the 37th Training Wing, marking the occasion by presiding over the oath of enlistment for 756 graduating Airmen.

Allvin emphasized the importance of service in the U.S. Air Force, highlighting the commitment and dedication of the next generation.

"Congratulations, you made the team," Allvin said to the newly graduated Airmen. "This is a team that requires commitment."

He went on to say that Airmen today are serving in a "time of consequence" and their commitment to service has never been

more important.

Additionally, Allvin's address was a reminder of the magnitude of the oath they were about to take and what is yet to come in the next chapter of their life as an American Airman, reminding them to serve honorably.

Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force JoAnne S. Bass also attended the event and imparted her own words of wisdom and encouragement.

"I was you over 30 years ago when I joined this winning team," Bass said.

Bass told the crowd she signed up for the G.I. Bill and to "figure out life." Four years later, she signed up again to pay off her car.

"Somewhere I learned what it really meant to be on this winning team and what it means to wear

our nation's cloth," she added.

She then asked the graduates to make the organization better, to make their career fields better and to make the Air Force better.

During the senior leader's visit to the 37th Training Wing, they made a brief stop at the 344th Training Squadron where they were met by Senior Master Sgt. Ladiwina Gilly, Air Force Recruiting Schoolhouse superintendent.

Gilly spoke about the crucial role the schoolhouse plays in preparing recruiters to inspire and engage with the public, and showcased the behind-the-scenes role-playing training that was ongoing at the time. Additionally, Gilly described the schoolhouse's "Seats to Streets" effort.

The program is a modernized approach for recruiting students to help sharpen their skills by leaving the simulated lab room environment and taking to the streets to interact with people. With basic training graduations occurring 48 times per year, future recruiters have many opportunities to engage with guests at the Airman's Coin Ceremony on Wednesdays.

"Seats to Streets effectively trains students on rejection and how to respond when told 'no,'" Gilly said.

She emphasized to leadership that learning how to accept rejection was an important part of the training process.

Allvin and Bass visited with more than 60 of the Air Force's newest recruiters in training and were able to gain insights into the training processes.

Following the recruiting schoolhouse, the visit continued along the training continuum to basic military training to tour BMT facilities and observe training in action.

While touring a dormitory and observing a trainee's bed and locker area, Allvin decided to "pull a 341" from a trainee who was only in their second week of training. He indicated on the 341 that "this is impressive ... keep pushing" and signed it "CSAF #23."

A form 341 is used to document discrepancies or excellence for trainee performance. The CSAF's note of encouragement was left on the trainee's bed, only



**Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. David Allvin reviews a basic military training graduation ceremony at Joint Base San Antonio, Texas, Nov. 21. U.S. Air Force photo by Gregory T. Walker**

to be discovered later.

At the conclusion of the tour, Allvin and Bass expressed their gratitude for the warm welcome and praised the dedication and

professionalism of the Airmen at the 37 TRW.

The visit underscored the vital role the wing plays in shaping the future of the Air Force.



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## Hide-a-beds, septic tanks, and other holiday traditions

With a tiny snort, you awaken from a bad dream about being tied to a railroad track with a locomotive barreling toward you. You grope in the darkness, relieved to find yourself in a bed, with no threat of being torn to smithereens by an oncoming freight train.

Relieved yet half-conscious, you exhale with a soft grumble, smack your lips, and turn on your side to nuzzle back into your pillow.

“Ouch!” What’s that dull pain across the middle of your back? It dawns on you: “I’m not in my own bed.” You pluck your eyelids open, one after the other, and in the dim early morning light, you take in your surroundings to allow your internal GPS to determine it’s location.

Wood paneling. Burnt sienna sculpted carpeting. Wagon wheel light fixture. Console television. Framed portrait of you in the fourth grade with an enormous split between your two front teeth. And an excruciatingly uncomfortable metal bar pressing against the middle of your back.

Rerouting...

“Oh yeah,” you finally recall, “It’s the holidays. I’m at my mother’s house. In the basement that my parents converted into a family room in 1977. On the old hide-a-bed couch.”

Although you’d rather lay there uncomfortably, reminiscing about growing up in that little brick ranch, nature calls. You slowly roll your aching torso to the edge of the paper-thin mattress, setting off a cacophony of squeaking springs. Standing silently by the brown, orange, and harvest gold plaid couch, you wait until you’re certain your spouse

is still asleep, before tip-toeing up the carpeted basement stairs to the bathroom.

Ever since moving out of your childhood home, you’ve enjoyed basic human entitlements such as public drinking and waste water systems. You’ve become accustomed to the ample gush of clear, potable water from faucets, shower heads, and toilet tanks.

But in the one tiny bathroom shared by every living soul in your

### The Meat & Potatoes of Life



by  
Lisa  
Smith  
Molinari

mother’s crowded house, there are plumbing issues you’ve long since forgotten about. As you open the door and flick on the noisy Nutone fan light, you spy the coral orange Formica countertops and mint green porcelain that were original to your 1950s childhood home. You step inside, and detect the familiar odor of rotten eggs.

You are about to blame Uncle Eddie, who went overboard on the sausage dip the night before, but then you remember. The sulfur-ey well water is the source of the offending odor, something you were immune to while growing up in that house.

Beside the crocheted tissue box cover is a note from your mother, reminding the family of the limitations of the old well and septic tank: “If it’s brown, flush it down, but if

it’s yellow, let it mellow.” You sit on the mint-green commode, leafing through an old National Geographic, wondering how on Earth you grew up this way.

After waiting a minute for the water supply to recover from your flush, you get in the shower. Your pampered hair follicles will have to survive the 79 cent bottle of VO5 Strawberries and Cream shampoo your mother bought at the dollar store. Mid-lather, one of the kids knocks, begging, “I gotta go!”

Ignoring Grammy’s hand-written sign, she flushes. You yelp, as scalding hot water cascades from the shower head. There’s another knock at the bathroom door, as other family members enter to brush their teeth and use the toilet while you brave water temperature fluctuations behind the frosted glass shower doors.

Eventually, you emerge from the only bathroom, dressed and ready for another day of visiting with family over the holidays. You might get dirty looks from your relatives, who have to wait an hour for the hot water supply to build back up before they can shower. You might have frizzy hair from your mother’s cheap shampoo. And you might suffer a back spasm from sleeping on that damned hide-a-bed.

But you won’t mind because you realize that having family to visit with over the holidays is a blessing. These quirky people brought you into this world and are the reason you’re never really alone. No matter how annoying holiday family visits might seem, when you consider the alternative, you know it’s all relative.

## VA continued from page 1

said Sen. Tim Kaine of Virginia, who authored the letter alongside Sens. Sherrod Brown of Ohio, Jack Reed of Rhode Island and Jon Tester of Montana.

Those who took advantage of the program were told they would not have to repay all missed payments at once, but that scenario was happening to some homeowners, according to an investigation by National Public Radio. A secondary option to refinance didn’t help as it would mean higher interest rates and higher monthly payments.

These options left veterans worse off than borrowers with Federal Housing Administration

loans or loans backed by Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, which allow borrowers to move missed payments to the end of their loan term, the senators wrote.

“Tens of thousands of veterans and servicemembers are left with no viable options to get back on track with payments and save their homes. Stories from across the country show that this is already having severe consequences for veterans and their families,” the senators wrote.

With the extension of the mortgage forbearance program, the VA will allow veterans to obtain a zero-interest, deferred-payment loan from VA to cover missed payments and modify their existing VA-guaranteed

loan to achieve affordable monthly payments for the duration of this extension, Hayes said.

The VA helped more than 145,000 veterans and their families retain their homes and avoid foreclosure during the past year, Hayes said. Foreclosure rates of VA-backed mortgages are among the lowest in the country, said.

“And at the same time, we know that there are still veterans struggling to make their payments,” Hayes said.

He urged any veteran struggling with making mortgage payments to connect with the VA at [www.va.gov/housing-assistance](http://www.va.gov/housing-assistance) or 877-827-3702.

## AutoMatters™ & More by Jan Wagner



Sphere Entertainment Company describes the Sphere as “a next-generation entertainment medium that is redefining the future of live entertainment ... powered by cutting-edge technologies that ignites the senses and transports audiences to places both real and imagined.”

The Sphere opened in September 2023 and has already become perhaps the most widely recognized landmark in Las Vegas. Considering its iconic competition, that is really saying something. It is so large, colorful and bright that it dominates the Las Vegas Skyline day and night.

“U2’s The Edge calls it ‘a canvas of unparalleled scale.’ Darren Aronofsky is using it to ‘...immerse [people] in the wonder, awe and beauty of the natural world.’ Whatever you see at Sphere, it’s going to be unlike anything else.”

“The Sphere Experience starts with Aura, our real-life humanoid robot, who will take you on a tour into the future of technology. The Experience continues with a specially commissioned film by acclaimed director, Darren Aronofsky. Part sci-fi story, part nature documentary, ‘Postcard From Earth’ takes advantage of all

## Las Vegas SPHERE - a modern wonder of the world

Sphere’s experiential technologies to make you feel like you’re anywhere but Las Vegas.”

These descriptions by the company do not come close to describing the absolutely mind-blowing, unbelievably immersive experience that awaits you at the \$2.3 billion, 17,600-seat Sphere. Try to imagine that you are seated in a really HUGE dome, and on the inside of that dome is the equivalent of an ultra-high-resolution OLED TV screen — so clear, sharp and realistic that it is like actually being where the shots were taken.

That realism is amplified by Sphere Immersive Sound: the world’s largest concert-grade audio system, which was specifically developed for Sphere’s unique curved interior. This custom-designed audio technology, which includes 167,000 individually amplified loudspeaker drivers, makes the Sphere’s audio unlike that of any other venue in the world, providing audio with unmatched clarity and precision to every guest, no matter where they are seated. It is like the sounds that you are hearing come precisely from where the sources are that you are seeing on the huge video dome.

That’s not all. The Sphere has its own weather, that includes wind effects to accompany what you see happening in the dome, and the seats vibrate to further enhance your experience.

“Postcard From Earth” will take you on a breathtaking journey through space and around the world. I have had the extreme pleasure of seeing “Postcard From Earth” twice: once while seated high up in the middle area of the stadium seating, and the second time while seated very low down and also in the middle of the stadium seating area. Without a doubt, that is the best place from which to view the show. While I prefer sitting up high in a relatively small IMAX dome, to avoid neck strain, the SPHERE is so much larger that you can comfortably turn and look around.

If you want to check it out for yourself on a visit to Las Vegas, be aware that it can be a lot further away from where you are when you see it than you think it is. Since it looked reasonably close, on Halloween evening — after the SEMA Show had ended for the day, I decided to take what I expected to be a short walk over to take some photos of it. Well, let me tell you, it was not a short walk! Of course, by the time that I realized that, I had already walked so far that it made no sense to turn around, go back to where my car was parked, and drive over there. Lesson learned.

The Sphere will host a wide variety of events and experiences, including concerts and residencies from the world’s biggest artists. The Company is having discussions regarding the development of Sphere in other forward-thinking cities.”

Ticket prices for “Postcard From Earth” currently range from \$69 to \$249, and the price gets significantly more expensive as the date and time of the show approaches and the tickets sell, so reserve early. For more information about the Las Vegas Sphere, and the U2 rock band’s residency there, visit the official website at: <https://www.thespherevegas.com>.

To explore a wide variety of content dating back to 2002, with the most photos and the latest text, visit “AutoMatters & More” at <https://automatters.net>. Search by title or topic in the Search Bar in the middle of the Home Page, or click on the blue ‘years’ boxes and browse. Copyright © 2023 by Jan Wagner – AutoMatters & More #817

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## DHA Health Hazard Assessment team doing critical work to improve warfighter brain health

by Douglas Holl,

Defense Centers for Public Health  
Aberdeen Public Affairs

**ABERDEEN PROVING GROUND, Md.** – A little over a year ago, in June 2022, the Department of Defense launched the Warfighter Brain Health Initiative to bring together the operational and medical communities in a more unified approach toward optimizing service member brain health and countering traumatic brain injuries. The WBHI specifically focuses on assessing cognitive capabilities, monitoring brain threats, to include blast overpressure, and minimizing the effects and risk from exposures and TBIs to improve a warfighter's overall performance.

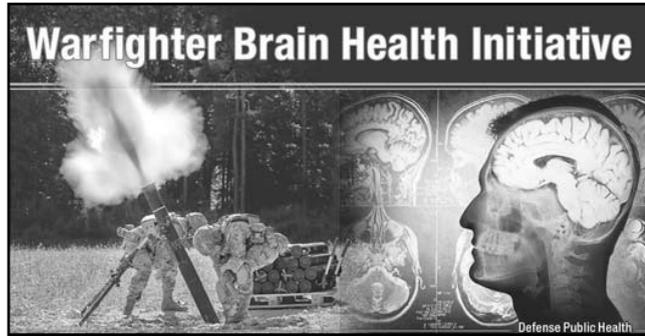
One of the goals of the initiative was to track a service member's brain health from initial entry into the military all the way to retirement.

"We want you in for the long haul, and we want you to have a highly functional and productive life when you leave the military," said Kathy Lee, lead for the WBHI and director of Casualty Management for the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs.

One of the early areas of focus for the initiative was to conduct a longitudinal medical study to improve the DOD's understanding of the impact of blast overpressure, also referred to as BOP. Blast overpressure is caused by the shock wave results firing weapons systems or explosive detonations (e.g., breaching charges). Some of the main symptoms caused by excessive BOP exposure to the brain are headaches, slowed cognitive processing or slowed reaction time.

As part of this process, OSD(HA) asked each service to identify their top 3-5 high overpressure weapon systems generating blast pressure exposure effects for service members. Then OSD(HA) used the service input, which Lee said was critical in creating a list of these "Tier 1" Weapon Systems, to place them into distinct categories:

- Shoulder Mounted Weapons**
- M3 Multi-Role Anti-Armor Anti-Personnel Weapon System (MAAWS)
  - M135 AT4 light anti-tank weapon system
  - M72 light anti-armor weapon
- .50 Caliber Weapons**
- MK15 Sniper Rifle
  - M107 Sniper Rifle
  - M2A1 Machine Gun
  - GAU-21 Machine Gun
- Indirect Fire Systems (Howitzers)**
- M119 Towed 105mm
  - M777 Towed 155mm
  - M109 Paladin SP 155mm
- Indirect Fire Systems (Mortars)**
- M224 60mm
  - M252 81mm
  - M120/M121 120mm
- Demolitions (Breaching Charges)**



**The Department of Defense launched the Warfighter Brain Health Initiative to bring together the operational and medical communities in a more unified approach toward optimizing service member brain health and countering traumatic brain injuries. The WBHI specifically focuses on assessing cognitive capabilities, monitoring brain threats, to include blast overpressure, and minimizing the effects and risk from exposures and TBI injuries to improve a warfighter's overall performance. Defense Centers for Public Health-Aberdeen graphic illustration by Joyce Kopatch**

- Door: Net Explosive Weight – 0.23 – 0.30 pounds
- Wall: New Explosive Weight – 10 – 14 pounds

The purpose of identifying these initial Tier 1 systems for review is to improve service member health assessments and outcomes, said Lee.

"We're offering a mitigation strategy to try to keep service members safe and then the recognition that if they have these symptoms, go get checked out, go and get a medical person to do some eyes on, to do a quick assessment, and check those things that we talked about," said Lee.

Included in the longitudinal medical study, the Defense Centers for Public Health-Aberdeen, formerly the U.S. Army Public Health Center, is in the process of developing Blast-related Brain Injury Interim Health Protection Criteria and associated risk assessment process. DCPH-A is the Office of Primary Responsibility, or OPR, for FY18 National Defense Authorization Act, Section 734 Line of Inquiry, LOI, 3: Exposure Environment. The LOI

### Government resources & information links on TBI and the WBHI

- DOD Warfighter Brain Health Initiative**  
DOD-WARFIGHTER-BRAIN-HEALTH-INITIATIVE-STRATEGY-AND-ACTION-PLAN.pdf
- TBI Resources for Military Leadership**  
<https://health.mil/Military-Health-Topics/Centers-of-Excellence/Traumatic-Brain-Injury-Center-of-Excellence/TBI-Resources-for-Military-Leadership>
- Blast Injury 101**  
[https://blastinjuryresearch.health.mil/index.cfm/blast\\_injury\\_101](https://blastinjuryresearch.health.mil/index.cfm/blast_injury_101)
- VA research on traumatic brain injury**  
<https://www.research.va.gov/topics/tbi.cfm>
- Brain Injury Awareness with the 19th Sgt. Maj. of the Marine Corps**  
<https://www.dvidshub.net/video/873993/brain-injury-awareness-with-19th-sgt-maj-marine-corps>
- National Intrepid Center of Excellence (NICoE) – Contributing to Force Readiness Through Research**  
NICoE Research Booklet 2020\_508\_FINAL.pdf
- The Right Information in the Right Hands at the Right Time – Chief Digital & Artificial Intelligence Office**  
[https://www.ai.mil/blog\\_02\\_04\\_21\\_merit\\_the\\_right\\_info\\_in\\_the\\_right\\_hands\\_at\\_the\\_right\\_time.html](https://www.ai.mil/blog_02_04_21_merit_the_right_info_in_the_right_hands_at_the_right_time.html)

The Defense Health Agency supports our Nation by improving health and building readiness-making extraordinary experiences ordinary and exceptional outcomes routine.

or if they needed to be updated, said Olivia Webster, a biomedical engineer with HHA and the lead investigator for LOI 3.

"We're also reviewing features of the environment to determine what was having the most impact on the exposure to the service member, and then one of the other big things that we did was have data fields developed in the Defense Occupational and Environmental Health Readiness System-Industrial Hygiene, or DOEHRs-IH, to capture BOP and Impulse Noise exposure data."

"DOEHRs-IH provides a mechanism that allows the DOD to manage occupational and environmental health risk data and actively track biological, chemical and physical health hazards to individual service members," said Webster.

One of the challenges for the team is collecting data from multiple weapons systems in extreme environmental conditions to help determine the effects of temperature, altitude and humidity on BOP exposure. To date, the team has completed occupational health assessments of the above Tier 1 Weapon Systems and Breaching Charges. These data are included as part of Joint Service member Occupational Health Assessments, or JSOHA. The JSOHA Program

3 has seven objectives, one of which is to conduct Joint Service Member Occupational Health Assessments for each of the Tier 1 Weapons Systems and Breaching Charges. The Health Hazard Assessment Division, along with Industrial Hygiene and Noise subject matter experts, at DCPH-A is supporting this effort by collecting data and measuring exposures from different weapons systems and breaching charges to make recommendations on how to help mitigate risk.

"The DCPH-A team is investigating blast waves in terms of what they call incident peak and incident impulse data," said Dr. Timothy "AJ" Kluchinsky, chief of the DCPH-A Health Hazard Assessment Division, and OPR Lead for LOI 3. "The incident peak is the highest pressure level, and the incident impulse is the highest pressure level AND the time that it is high."

One of the main goals of the team, in addition to creating the criteria to assess BOP exposures to the brain, was to review the safety precautions that existed for BOP and determine if they are sufficient

provides commanders and other risk managers with a comprehensive assessment of service member exposures to potential occupational hazards inherent to using various weapon systems during training and combat.

"We're striving to get involved in the very early stages of weapon system development to establish these criteria," said Kluchinsky. "We're establishing an equation for weapon developers, testers, and assessors to facilitate identification of the effects of a weapon on a warfighter's brain health. The ultimate goal is coming up with ways to reduce the exposure to a crew or service member, while still allowing the weapon design to meet the other key performance parameters. For example, being able to fire munitions far with so much accuracy and with so many repetitions is the goal while taking into account brain health factors. So, ultimately there's a minimum threshold and an objective associated with each key performance parameter."

Webster says one of the HHA team's goals is to associate their recommendations with the risk levels outlined in the Military Standard 882E, Department of Defense Standard Practice System Safety, which delineates the DOD approach for identifying hazards and assessing and mitigating asso-

ciated risks encountered in developing, testing, production, using and disposing of defense systems.

Kluchinsky says when it comes to BOP, the HHA team is writing the BOP assessment protocol for the WBHI. As part of the effort, the team uses approximately 60 blast gauges issued to service members who wear 3 at each firing position. Then they collect data and download that data to a laptop for processing.

Lee says one of the goals of the WBHI is to act rapidly. "We need to get the information collected by this team out to the warfighters," said Lee. "This increases the credibility that medical folks have with the operational folks to demonstrate that we are taking care of them, and we are sharing what we know as quickly as possible."

The goal is to provide this information to service members who may be experiencing symptoms. "We want to get this out to the field with the understanding that if you do have these symptoms afterwards, and you do think your thinking skills have been affected, and you do have ringing in your ears and eye movement changes, difficulty reading, things like that, that you need to go get checked out," said Lee. "Go get checked out and see, especially if they're not transient, and see what we can do to make that better."

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#### Ready to apply to be a USO San Diego volunteer?

Visit [www.USOVolunteer.org](http://www.USOVolunteer.org). Once you navigate to the webpage, click on "Volunteer at a USO Center," then click "Continental United States." Next select "California" and then the USO San Diego center nearest to you!

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- Craft & Coffee:** USO Camp Pendleton provides creative outlets for adults and children to create fun, whimsical or serious works of art through a variety of mediums. Signs up happen online and are usually advertised through the USO Camp Pendleton Facebook page.
- Command Support:** USO is here to support! We often help support command events across Camp Pendleton such as Family days and Morale Days. Commands can request support in a number of different ways, from outdoor games, a kids craft, or even our mobile photo booth. We also can help provide small refreshments. To request support, please email our Center Operations and Programs Manager, Crystal Gates at [cgates@uso.org](mailto:cgates@uso.org). All requests must be submitted within 30 days and although we try our best, not all requests can be granted.

<https://sandiego.uso.org>

# CLASSIFIED ADS

# MOVIES AT THE BASES

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<https://miramar.usmc-mccs.org/dining-entertainment/movies>  
<https://pendleton.usmc-mccs.org/dining-entertainment/theater>

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**Friday, December 1**  
 6pm Priscilla r  
**Saturday, December 2**  
 3:20pm Priscilla r  
 6pm Journey to Bethlehem pg  
**Sunday, December 3**  
 1pm Journey to Bethlehem pg  
 3:10pm Five Nights at Freddy's pg13  
**Thursday, December 7**  
 6:00pm Journey to Bethlehem pg  
 8:10pm Priscilla r  
**Friday, December 8**  
 6:00pm The Marvels pg13  
 8:20pm The Holdovers r  
**Saturday - December 9**  
 3:30pm Journey to Bethlehem pg  
 6:00pm The Marvels pg13  
**Sunday, December 10, 2023**

**Saturday, December 9**  
 3pm The Holdovers R  
 6:30pm The Marvels PG-13  
**Sunday, December 10**  
 12pm The Marvels PG-13  
 3pm Priscilla R

**Lowry Theater - NASNI,**  
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 Bldg. 650  
 Outside food and beverage are NOT permitted. Debit/credit cards only.

**Saturday, December 2**  
 1pm Journey to Bethlehem pg  
 3:30m Five Nights at Freddy's pg13  
 6pm Priscilla r  
**Sunday, December 3**  
 1pm Journey to Bethlehem pg  
 3pm ive Nights at Freddy's pg13  
**Friday, December 8**  
 6pm The Marvels pg13  
**Saturday, December 9**  
 1pm The Marvels pg13  
 3:30pm Priscilla r  
 6pm The Holdovers r  
**Sunday, December 10**  
 1pm Journey to Bethlehem pg  
 3pm The Marvels pg13

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

**Friday, December 1**  
 6pm Priscilla R  
**Saturday, December 2**  
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 6:30pm Priscilla ( R )  
**Sunday, December 3**  
 12pm Journey to Bethlehem PG  
 3pm Five Nights at Freddy's PG-13  
**Friday, December 8**  
 6pm The Marvels PG-13

**Pendleton Theater and Training Center** ★  
 Bldg 1330 Mainside (Across from Mainside Center)  
**Saturday, December 2**  
 1:30pm Journey to Bethlehem (PG)  
 4pm Five Nights at Freddy's (PG13)

# SOCIAL SECURITY MATTERS

## My birthday is on the first of the month; When should I claim Social Security?

*Dear Rusty: I will be 62 on November first and I have chosen to take my benefits early. I know that my benefit will be less than it would be if I waited and that does not concern me, but I don't want to be without income for a long period of time. I know that if my birthday is on the first or second of the month, then I can draw that month. Does that mean that when I turn 62 on November 1st that I can receive my first check on the second Wednesday of November? And should I select November as the month I'd like my benefits to start? I also read that I would be paid the month following the month I select, hence my confusion.*  
 Signed: Confused Senior

**Dear Confused:** There are a few different Social Security rules which come into play in your specific circumstance which are likely creating your confusion. First, since you will be 62 on November first, you will first become eligible for Social Security starting with the month of November. Those born on the first or second of the month are eligible for benefits for that entire month, whereas those who turn 62 later in the month wouldn't be eligible for benefits until the following month. To claim benefits, you must be 62 for the entire month and, because your birthday is on the first, your first month being 62 for the entire month will be November, and that is the month you should specify as your benefit-start month on your application.

The next thing to be aware of is that Social Security pays benefits in the month following the month those benefits are earned. That means that your November benefits will be paid in December. The exact payment date is determined by the recipients birthday – born before the eleventh of the month, SS payments are made on the second Wednesday; born between the eleventh and twentieth of the month, payments are received on the third Wednesday of the month; and for those born after the twentieth of the month, payment is received on the fourth Wednesday. Thus, since you were born on the first of the month and are claiming benefits to start in November, your first Social Security payment will be deposited in your bank account on the second Wednesday of December, and all subsequent Social Security payments will be made on that same second-Wednesday schedule.

You can apply for your Social Security benefits up to 4 months prior to the month you wish them to start, and SS recommends you apply at least 2 months prior to allow time for processing your application. On the application, they will ask which month you wish your benefits to begin, and you can indicate November to get your earliest possible payment in December. Actually, you can simply select the following option on the Social Security benefit application: "I want benefits beginning with the earliest possible month and will accept an age-related reduction," which will accomplish the same thing.

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### We're More than Just Tacos and Burritos

We started back in the '40s by hand making tortillas and supplying local restaurants. Since then, we have evolved and incorporated multiple recipes from numerous states and regions in Mexico. We always encompass the traditional method of making our food by hand.

El Indio was founded at the corner of India and Grape as a tortilla factory in August of 1940 by Ralph Pesqueira Sr. Fresh corn tortillas were made by hand. During WWII, customers from Consolidated, Convair and other nearby factories soon began asking for ready to eat lunch items. Ralph Sr. responded by making the "taquito," a word he coined meaning "little taco."

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Enjoy our Handmade Taquitos made Fresh daily from El Indio's Corn Tortillas. Taquitos can be filled with your choice of Shredded Beef, Chicken or Potatoes. They are deep fried to a crispy golden goodness and topped with your choice of Cheese, Guacamole, Salsa and Lettuce or all of the above.

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# Army-Navy Game kicks off Dec. 9

The 124th playing of the Army-Navy Game presented by USAA at Gillette Stadium in Foxborough, Mass

The Black Knights and the Midshipmen reignite their rivalry for college football's 2023 regular-season finale.

The greatest rivalry in sports will write its latest chapter on Saturday, Dec. 9 as Army and Navy square off in the final game of the 2023 regular season with bragging rights on the line. The pageantry of the Army-Navy Game presented by USAA is unmatched in sports, and CBS will have all of the action that Saturday afternoon in December.

This has become one of the most hotly contested rivalries in modern college football as Army and Navy have alternated wins over the past few years. The Black Knights walked out of 2022's installment with a 20-17 triumph after a two-overtime thriller. Five out of the last seven Army-Navy Games have been decided by a single possession.

The recent back-and-forth has come after Army won three straight in the rivalry from 2016-18. Navy has bragging rights when it comes to dominant streaks, though. That Army win in 2016 was its first in the series in 14 years. Navy won 14 straight from 2002-15, which stands as the longest winning streak in the rivalry's history. Navy leads the all-time series 62-54-7. The Midshipmen kicked off this historic rivalry with a 24-0 win in 1890.

## TRICARE 'Open Season' runs through December 12

TRICARE Open Season is here. Now through Dec. 12, most people enrolled in or eligible for TRICARE Prime goes to TRICARE or TRICARE Select goes to TRICARE Select can make enrollment changes for next year. Open season doesn't apply to everyone who uses TRICARE.

"Open season is for active duty family members and many retirees and their family members. It's also for anyone else who's eligible for TRICARE Prime or TRICARE Select, except active duty service members," said Shane Pham, a program analyst with TRICARE Policy and Programs at the Defense Health Agency. "TRICARE Open Season isn't for you if you're eligible for TRICARE For Life or a TRICARE premium-based plan."

You may also be eligible to enroll in or change your dental and vision coverage during Federal Benefits Open Season.

For more info visit <https://www.tricare.mil/openseason>

## How to watch Army vs. Navy live

Date: Saturday, Dec. 9 | Time: 3 p.m. ET  
Location: Gillette Stadium -- Foxborough, Massachusetts  
TV: CBS | Live stream: Paramount + with Showtime, +CBSsports.com, CBS Sports App (Free)



The 2023 Army West Point Nike uniforms for the Army-Navy Game tells the story of the soldiers of the 3rd Infantry Division during the opening phase of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF). This year marks the 20th Anniversary of the invasion of Iraq and the Marne Division's participation in the initiation of offensive operations in Iraq, the longest and most rapid armored advance since the Second World War. The 3rd Infantry Division's success hinged upon its ability to seize and maintain the initiative against a determined adversary in harsh and unforgiving terrain.

Navy Athletics and Under Armour unveiled their 2023 Army-Navy game uniform that will honor the Silent Service, the U.S. Submarine Force, its families and supporting personnel. The entire uniform is flooded with Eclipse Navy (UA's darkest shade of navy blue) to mimic the covert design of a submarine hull. The uniform was purposefully designed to embody the Force's nickname: Silent Service. The overall design was intended to be simple and utilitarian to convey the stealth purposes of a submarine's design.



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