

Career Information

Navy shifts 2021 fitness cycle to July ... plus Interpersonal Edge 'Brighter days ahead.'

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ARMY MAKES WORLD WAR I 'HARLEM HELLFIGHTERS' NICKNAME OFFICIAL AFTER MORE THAN A CENTURY FOR NATIONAL GUARD UNIT

by Chad Garland,
Stars and Stripes

They called themselves the "Black Rattlers" and the French dubbed them "Men of Bronze," but the Army now officially recognizes a historic Harlem unit by what the enemy called them in World War I - the "Hellfighters."

The "Harlem Hellfighters" is now the official special designation for the 369th Sustainment Brigade, the New York National Guard said Jan. 29. The unit traces its lineage to the all-Black 369th Infantry Regiment, which earned the moniker over a century ago in fierce fighting that's been credited with helping to break down racial barriers.

The regiment was the first unit of the American Expeditionary Force in World War I that allowed Blacks to serve.

But they were denied a send-off parade with the 42nd Infantry Division, known as the "Rainbow Division," after their commander was told they couldn't participate because "black is not a color in the rainbow." The soldiers fought under the French army because white American troops refused to fight alongside them.

They proved themselves in 191 days of continuous combat, suffering 1,500 dead and wounded. They outpaced their French



In this National Guard historic painting by H. Charles McBarron, soldiers of the 369th Infantry Regiment go into action near Sechault, France, on Sept. 29, 1918 during the Meuse-Argonne offensive. The unit was dubbed the Hellfighters by the Germans, and while the nickname has been used for more than 100 years, it was only officially recognized by the Army in September 2020.

counterparts by 7 miles in at least one offensive, and were the first French, British or American soldiers to reach the Rhine River at the end of the war.

On their return home, the unit's 3,000 soldiers were honored by throngs of New Yorkers who turned up for a victory parade up 5th Avenue in February 1919.

"Racial lines were for the time displaced," the New York Tribune wrote. "The color of their skin had nothing to do with the occasion. The blood they shed in France was as red as any other."

Headquartered in the Manhattan neighborhood of Harlem, the regiment had earned 11 French citations and a unit Croix

de Guerre, France's highest military honor, which was also awarded to some 170 Hellfighters for individual acts of gallantry.

One of them was Pvt. Henry Johnson, a 5-foot-4-inch soldier weighing 130 pounds, who fought off some 20 Germans near his unit's trench line one night in May 1918.

He was wounded 21 times, but denied a Purple Heart and disability allowance after the war. Hailed by former President Theodore Roosevelt as one of the war's five bravest soldiers, he died destitute in 1929. It would take another 86 years for the U.S. to recognize his bravery with a Medal of Honor in 2015.

A few years later, while working on a display at the newly renovated Harlem Armory in 2019, New York State Military Museum director Courtney

Burns discovered the unit's nickname had never been officially recognized.

"That was such a glaring error," the statement quoted Burns as saying.

He notified Col. Seth Morgulas, the 369th Sustainment Brigade's commander, who called the omission "crazy" and noted that Harlem River Drive, which runs by the armory, had been renamed "Harlem Hellfighters Drive" in 2003.

cont'd page 5

\$211 million worth of cocaine seized in international waters

SAN DIEGO - Coast Guard and Navy personnel offloaded approximately 11,400 pounds of cocaine and 9,000 pounds of marijuana Feb. 1, amounting to more than \$211 million from seizures in international waters of the Eastern Pacific Ocean.

The offload is the result of interdictions made by Coast Guard Law Enforcement Detachment 407 (LEDET) personnel, who operated aboard Navy ship *Gabrielle Giffords*, and three separate Coast Guard cutter crews between October and December.

"When you are covering a drug-smuggling transit zone the size of the continental United States, every ship makes a huge difference," said Lt. Jonathan Dietrich. "The seamless integration between our Law Enforcement Detachment and the crew of *USS Gabrielle Giffords* was a major reason why we were successful in interdicting such a large amount of drugs and prevent them from reaching our streets."

"The impressive results of the *USS Gabrielle Giffords* deployment and drug offload represent more than just a local victory of keeping drugs off our streets," said Rear Adm. Brian Penoyer. "The Coast Guard and the Navy have worked together for years to keep our waters and shores safe from a number of maritime threats, and we are honored to continue that tradition as we look toward the future."

COMSTOCK, GABRIELLE GIFFORDS RETURN FROM DEPLOYMENT

SAN DIEGO - *USS Comstock* amphibious dock landing ship and *USS Gabrielle Giffords* littoral combat ship recently returned to Naval Base San Diego following deployments to the 7th Fleet and U.S. 4th Fleet areas of operation.

"Our *Comstock* crew has demonstrated the utmost professionalism and flexibility conducting a range of diverse operations during this deployment," said Cmdr. Kevin Culver, commanding officer

of *Comstock*. "I am proud to be a part of this talented and resilient team."

3rd Fleet leads naval forces in the Indo-Pacific and provides the realistic, relevant training necessary to flawlessly execute our Navy's timeless roles of sea control and power projection. U.S. 3rd Fleet works in close coordination with other numbered fleets to provide commanders with capable, ready assets to deploy forward and win in day-today



competition, in crisis, and in conflict.

USS Gabrielle Giffords returned to her homeport here following a 17-month rotational deployment to the U.S. 7th Fleet and U.S. 4th Fleet areas of operation.

"I'm incredibly proud of the *Gabrielle Giffords* team and all they have accomplished," said Cmdr. Rion Martin, the commanding officer of *Gabrielle Giffords*. "From executive

officer to Culinary Specialist Seaman Norfleet, we have all led and followed one another. This dynamic team of Sailors, Coast Guardsmen and Marines demonstrated sustained superior performance with physical, mental and emotional toughness while executing a range of maritime operations."

The Navy's 7th Fleet is headquartered at Fleet Activities Yokosuka, Japan. At present, it's the largest of the forward-

deployed U.S. fleets, with 60 to 70 ships, 300 aircraft and 40,000 Navy, Marine Corps personnel, and Coast Guard support personnel.

The 4th Fleet is the Naval Component Command of Southern Command. Headquartered at Naval Station Mayport, it's responsible for Navy ships, aircraft and submarines operating in the Caribbean Sea, and the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans around Central and South America.

Nimitz aircraft carrier heads home to Washington after extended Middle East deployment

by Caitlin Doornbos,
Stars and Stripes

Aircraft carrier USS *Nimitz* is headed home to Bremerton, Wash., after an extended deployment in the Middle East, a Navy official told *Stars and Stripes* by e-mail on Feb. 2.

Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin over the weekend called the carrier and its strike group home, according to a Feb. 1 report by *Naval Institute News*.

Nimitz was conducting flight operations in the Arabian Sea as of last week, according to Navy photos published online last Wednesday. On Monday, it was operating “west of India,” according to USNI News.

On New Year’s Eve, then-Acting Secretary of Defense Chris Miller ordered the ship home from the Middle East. But he reversed that decision four days later, citing Iranian threats of “severe revenge” a year after the United States killed Iran’s leading military commander, Gen. Qassem Soleimani, in a Baghdad drone strike Jan. 3, 2020.

“Due to the recent threats issued by Iranian leaders against President Trump and other U.S. government officials, I have ordered USS *Nimitz* to halt its routine redeployment,” Miller said at the time.

As President Joe Biden’s administration works to renew ne-



A Sailor directs an aircraft on the flight deck of aircraft carrier *Nimitz* Jan. 17. *Nimitz*, the flagship of Nimitz Carrier Strike Group, is deployed to the U.S. 5th Fleet area of operations to ensure maritime stability and security in the Central Region. Navy photo by MCSN Joseph Calabrese

gotiations with Tehran regarding its nuclear program, immediate tensions with Iran are “seeming to ease a bit,” the *New York Times* reported Tuesday.

Though *Nimitz* deployed in June, most of its more than 5,000 Sailors have been on the

ship since early April because of coronavirus quarantine precautions and pre-deployment training, according to a June 8 report by the *Kitsap Sun* in Washington.

The deployment itself has lasted 241 days, the Navy’s longest deployment since USS *Abraham Lincoln* returned to San Diego on Jan. 20 after 295 days at sea, according to USNI.

During its deployment, *Nimitz* supported U.S. troops in Somalia, provided air cover during the troop drawdowns in Africa and “conducted operations and exercises that strengthened enduring partnerships and alliances in the U.S. Central Command and U.S. Indo-Pacific Command areas of responsibility,” said Miller.

Army

- ◆ Soldiers tried to drink alcohol in the field, but ingested antifreeze, initial probe says
- ◆ A new sniper rifle for the Army, Marines and SOCOM
- ◆ Army robots made of robots? New LEGO-like method could make it happen
- ◆ Army algorithm first step to move artificial limbs by thought, monitor soldier fatigue
- ◆ 5 reservists, 2 New Orleans police indicted for stealing from the Army
- ◆ Army looks at Israeli precision munition for infantry squads
- ◆ Facial hair petition gains momentum after SMA tells force ‘you will not have a beard’ (Military.com) Within two days of the Army’s rollout of new hair and grooming standards primarily for female soldiers, a petition calling for the service to allow male soldiers to grow beards has gotten more than 55,000 signatures.
- ◆ Army can’t officially say who is an ‘Army Ranger’
- ◆ Trainee at Fort Jackson is shot in a ‘very serious injury incident’

Navy

- ◆ Entire *Chafee* crew headed into COVID quarantine
- ◆ Navy given OK to train in some Washington state parks
- ◆ Jacksonville’s Navy bases conduct 2-week security drill Solid Curtain-Citadel Shield
- ◆ Family, friends remember Midshipman John Monroe Johnson as superhero
- ◆ Navy looking at ways to encourage Sailors to get the coronavirus vaccine

Air Force

- ◆ F-117s cleared to refuel from all KC-135s as “retired” stealth jets expand operations
- ◆ Acting SECDEF’s goals: sustain momentum, then pass the baton

Marine Corps

- ◆ A look inside the complicated assault case the Marine Corps doesn’t want anyone talking about
- ◆ Marines deactivate 8th Marine Regiment
- ◆ Marines devoted their lives to the Corps. Then they were singled out for having children

National Guard

- ◆ 7 Hawaii National Guard members contract COVID-19 after providing Inauguration Day security
- ◆ Guard has given out nearly 38K COVID-19 vaccines to troops
- ◆ Guard has to order from DC restaurants after food contract comes up short

Coast Guard

- ◆ Cutter *Spencer* returns after \$10M cocaine, marijuana bust

- ◆ Coast Guard transfers 2 suspected smugglers, \$8.5M in seized cocaine

- Veterans**
- ◆ 500,000 veterans vaccinated at VA as deadliest month of pandemic draws to a close

Pay & Benefits

- ◆ First lady praises military teens for their efforts to help new students
- ◆ Watchdog agency to take up fight against military payday loan scams once more

Defense Industry

- ◆ Is Russia’s defense industry too busy to take on another fighter jet project?
- ◆ Meet the new hybrid tank competing for serial production in Turkey
- ◆ Lockheed’s F-35 program head to lead aeronautics biz
- ◆ Elbit signs tank, armored vehicle contract with Asia-Pacific country
- ◆ France begins backfilling its Rafale fleet after selling some to Greece



Total Navy Battle Force: 297	
Ships underway	
Deployed ships underway: 49	
Non-deployed ships underway: 39	
Total ships underway: 88	
Ships deployed by fleet	
Fleet Forces: 0	3rd Fleet: 0
4th Fleet: 2	5th Fleet: 19
6th Fleet: 13	7th Fleet: 61
Total: 95	

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Task force makes 56 recommendations to address diversity and bias

by Caitlin M. Kenney,
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON - A task force made 56 recommendations related to inclusion and diversity of personnel to improve the culture of the Navy, according to its report released Feb. 3.

"While there still is work to be done, I am confident that this report's recommendations will help make our Navy better, and we will move forward together toward meaningful long-lasting change. Make no mistake, I am personally committed to this effort," Adm. Mike Gilday, the chief of naval operations, said in a statement.

Task Force One Navy was created in July 2020 in reaction to the national uproar over the death of George Floyd and protests against police brutality and institutional racism. The group was asked to explore issues of racism, sexism and bias and how they affected the readiness of the Navy.

"We've fallen short in the past by excluding or limiting opportunity for people on the basis of race, sexual orientation, sexual identity, gender or creed," Gilday said in the statement.

"Our Navy must continue to remove barriers to service, and most importantly, be a shining

example of a workforce centered on respect, inclusive of all."

Over the next six months, the task force held 20 listening sessions with Sailors, and there were also more than 280 focus

Sailors and incorporated that into the report.

"We saw transformation watching people in sessions hear other folks' stories. That's how powerful it was," he said.

and mathematics, or STEM; and additional recommendations.

One of the recommendations is to "counter hate speech" by drafting a document that would "increase accountability and

petty officers and senior civilians who would mentor service members from different backgrounds to improve or increase retention rates and advancement opportunities for personnel from underrepresented communities.

Also recommended: A standing committee should be formed to modernize the process for naming ships, buildings and streets to honor national and historic naval figures. Currently, there are ships named after the Confederacy or white supremacists, such as USS *Chancellorsville* and the USNS *Maury*.

The report also found a lack of diversity in the aviation and submarine career fields. Two of the recommendations involve reaching out to grade schools, Historically Black Colleges and Universities and minority-serving institutions to raise

awareness of STEM career opportunities in fields such as submarines.

Creating an adviser for policy related to women's issues was also recommended after "significant feedback" from the listening sessions and focus groups, according to the report. In addition to the adviser, there would be an advisory group to provide input on such issues as uniform and grooming standards, as a way to improve retention and career progression.

The task force leadership emphasized that their work would not fade away but would continue through the Navy's larger Culture of Excellence campaign. The campaign is focused on improving overall readiness and professionalism of sailors and holding people accountable for their conduct and actions.



Service members selected for promotion arrive in formation during a promotion ceremony at Naval Station Rota, Spain, Jan. 29. Courtesy photo

groups from around the Navy, according to the report.

While the final document does not include examples of real stories that were discussed, Rear Adm. Alvin Holsey, director of the task force, said they took the empathy and respect that they heard and witnessed from the

"And then respect - one of our recommendations talks to adding respect to our core values."

The group produced 56 recommendations grouped in five areas: recruiting; talent management and retention; professional development; innovation and science, technology, engineering

awareness of derogatory language." It's meant to empower leaders by educating them on behaviors and language that constitute hate speech and encouraging action, the report says.

Another was to establish a pilot mentoring program of volunteer flag officers, master chief

"As a Naval Aviator I understand the challenges families face in support of their military member. Wings Over America Scholarship Foundation works to provide college scholarships to dependents of Naval Aviation to help them realize their educational goals. I applaud the work of WOASF and encourage others to support this worthy foundation. - President George H. W. Bush

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CNO, MCPON answer COVID vaccine questions from the fleet

Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Mike Gilday and Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy Russ Smith answered questions from Fleet Sailors about the COVID vaccine, and shared thoughts about why Sailors should get the vaccine.

Below is a transcript of the video.

CNO: Shipmates, CNO Gilday here today again with MCPON. As you know, our Navy has begun to administer the COVID-19 vaccines across the Fleet. And in the coming weeks and months ahead, more Sailors and Civilians will be eligible to receive them as vaccine production continues to ramp up.

MCPON: The COVID-19 vaccine will help stop the pandemic. And using all tools available to

MCPON: Another thing that has come up has been a question about repercussions for not volunteering to get the vaccine. YN2 Mykell Taylor, from COMSUBLANT asked in particular if it will affect leave or liberty.

CNO: Let me be clear here – while the COVID vaccine is voluntary, there will not be consequences for saying no at this time – to include the loss of



us, including the vaccine and public health measures like wearing a mask and physical distancing, will continue to prevent the virus from spreading.

CNO: MCPON and I have both received the vaccine, and during our recent trip to 5th and 6th Fleets, we saw first-hand the impressive work happening across the Fleet to administer vaccines to our Sailors and Civilians forward deployed.

MCPON: Sailors who have received the vaccine have stepped up and taken action to protect themselves, their shipmates, the Navy and our Nation. And for that we commend you.

CNO: Today, in addition to talking a little bit about the progress we're making across the Fleet with COVID vaccinations, we also wanted to take some time to address some questions that Sailors across the Fleet have asked us about the vaccine.

MCPON: One question in particular many have asked - including FC3 Cameron Parish from USS *Shiloh* - is why is this vaccine voluntary and not mandatory.

CNO: Good question, FC3. Drugs and vaccines have to be approved by the FDA to ensure only safe and effective products are available to the American public. In situations like this, when there is good scientific reason to believe a product is safe and is likely to treat or prevent disease – which there is in this case - the FDA authorized its emergency use under specific circumstances. Vaccines authorized for emergency use are not mandatory. Bottom line – the FDA has evaluated the vaccine as safe, but it will remain voluntary until official FDA approval. That said, it is impossible to contract COVID from the vaccine. It does not include any live virus.

leave or liberty. But, we urge each and every one of you to consider strongly getting this vaccine.

MCPON: Some, including IC1 Devin Haley on board USS *John C. Stennis*, have also asked when COVID mitigation measures will be reevaluated and if we still need to wear masks and practice social distancing if vaccinated? The answer, IC1, is yes, for now. We must continue to wear masks and practice social distancing until the risk of COVID-19 is substantially reduced. But we'll continue to evaluate this going forward as we return to normal.

CNO: Last question we've been asked a lot, including from FN Kelley aboard USS *Essex*, is why should we get the vaccine, and what side effects might it have? FN Kelley, while there is no way to know exactly how the COVID-19 will affect you, what we do know is the vaccine has been given to nearly 40,000 of your shipmates with little to no side effects. Additionally, it's about 95 percent effective at preventing mild or severe COVID-19 cases. The short answer: I strongly urge you to protect yourself, your shipmates and your family by getting the vaccine when you're eligible for it.

MCPON: Shipmates, I can't tell you how proud we are of the Navy's response to COVID-19. The low numbers of positives – less than 1 percent of our force - is grounded in the individual responsibility of our Sailors and leadership at the deck plate level. And for that we thank you.

CNO: Well said, MCPON. Together, along with this vaccine and your continued vigilance, we will Sink COVID. See you in the Fleet, Shipmates.

Austin directs 'zero-based review' of DOD advisory committees

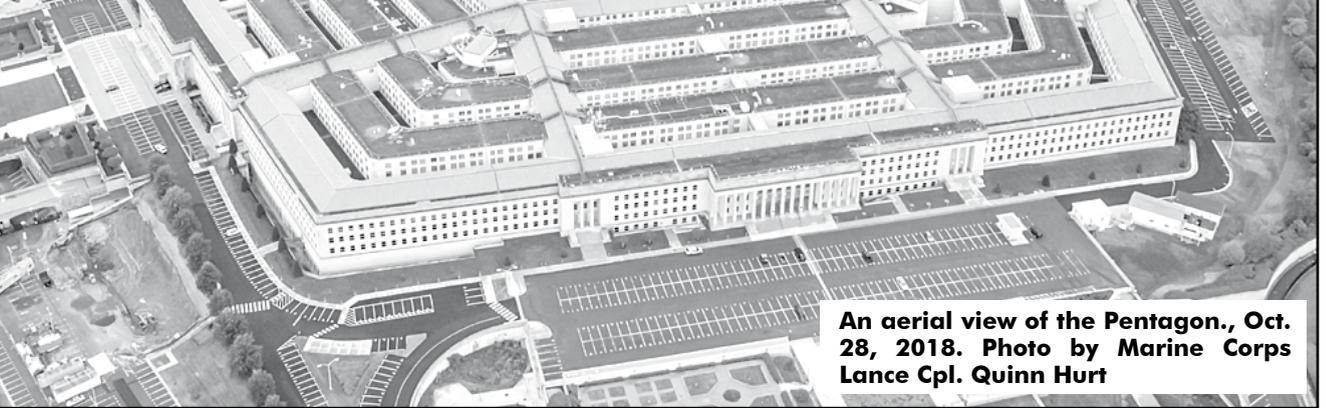
by Jim Garamone,
DOD News

Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III has directed a “zero-based review” of all Defense Department advisory committees, DOD officials said Feb. 2.

The officials, speaking on background, also said Austin directed all members of the committees to resign from the committees by Feb. 16.

The action doesn't include presidentially or congressionally appointed committees. So, while the Defense Policy Board will be affected, the visitors boards of the military academies will not.

There are at least 42 committees containing hundreds of advisors who are covered by the secretary's ruling. These committees advise on a broad swath of issues within the department including policy, personnel, business, scientific education, training, health care and memorial activities, the official said.



An aerial view of the Pentagon., Oct. 28, 2018. Photo by Marine Corps Lance Cpl. Quinn Hurt

The secretary was concerned “with the pace and the extent of recent changes to memberships of the department advisory committees done with a bit of frenetic activity in the final two months of the previous administration,” the official said. “I think it ... gave him pause to consider the

broad scope and purpose of these boards and to think about how they can best be aligned and organized and composed to provide competent, technical professional advice.”

Austin directed the interim director of administration and

management, as well as the acting general counsel of DOD, to lead the study. They must have their recommendations to the secretary of defense by June 1. “These recommendations will include items such as retention, realignment, termination, changes to mission or function,

membership, membership size, and even possible legislative changes to non-discretionary advisory committees,” officials said.

Officials said there is some overlap in the studies of many of the committees. They look at this study as a way to address that.

Software modernization means moving faster, smarter

by David Vergun,
DOD News

Software modernization is about delivering better software at a much greater speed to the warfighters, the Defense Department's acting deputy chief information officer for the information enterprise.

Danielle Metz provided a keynote address Jan. 27 from the Pentagon via remote video to Federal Computer Week's Cloud Security and Services Workshop.

The goal, she said, is to increase technological capabilities across the department and strengthen overall adoption of

DoD official discusses unmanned aircraft systems, human decision-making, AI

by C. Todd Lopez, DOD News

Editor's note: Read this story in its entirety by searching <https://www.defense.gov/Explore/News/>.

Defeating a swarm of small unmanned aircraft systems may one day require faster decision making than what a single human being can provide, and may mean the use of artificial intelligence to make those decisions. Right now, though, rules of engagement still require a human in the loop.

“Right now we don't have the authority to have a human out of the loop,” Col. Marc E. Pelini, the division chief for capabilities and requirements within the Joint Counter-Unmanned Aircraft Systems Office, said during a teleconference. “Based on the existing Department of Defense policy, you have to have a human within the decision cycle at some point to authorize the engagement.”

But given the threat of UAS swarms, Pelini said he knows there is talk about developing artificial intelligence capabilities to enable “in-the-loop” or “out-of-the-loop” human decision-making.

“When you're starting to see swarming activities of hundreds or potentially thousands [of UAS] in the future, obviously you want your system to operate as fast [as possible] to provide those weaponizing solutions to the operator, or operate within a set of parameters,” Pelini said. “But that's really kind of defined right now in the policy realm.”

enterprise systems to expand the competitive space in the cyber domain, as outlined in the Digital Modernization Strategy, which is a cornerstone of the National Defense Strategy.

Spotlight: National Defense Strategy

That is achieved through innovation, resilient cybersecurity and cultivation of talent, she added.

Metz spoke about the great power competition with Russia and China and how it relates to cyberspace and other domains: “We can't always count on having the newest capability or the greatest capacity in our

forces. We must identify new advantages of our near-peer adversaries, and how we operate as a cohesive, integrated joint force. The Digital Modernization Strategy is the pursuit of new sources of advantage in future conflicts.

“Lots of the traditional advantages that DOD has enjoyed are being eroded and will continue to erode over the next 10 years, we need to look for new sources of advantage,” Metz continued.

The way the department develops and deploys software production systems is a source of new advantage, she said. This source is the bedrock of the department's software modernization strategy.

The challenge, according to a recent DOD report, is recruiting, retaining, managing and developing a robust software workforce.

“There are two major institutional and cultural challenges that we are tackling: the rapid delivery of small amounts of capability into production, and transforming the processes to focus on software delivery, instead of hardware platforms,” she said.

The first cultural challenge is the rapid delivery of small amounts of capability into production. This is now common practice in the commercial software development industry. Current industry wisdom is to

adopt a dev ops [development of information technology operations], or dev sec ops [referring to cybersecurity] model, delivering a minimum viable product, she said.

Dev ops, or development of information technology operations, has to do with the goal of increasing the speed of software delivery by enabling continuous collaboration, communication, automation and integration. Dev sec ops is a shortcut for dev ops, with the added “sec” referring to cybersecurity.

The second cultural challenge is that nearly all of the processes in the department push back on the idea of rapid delivery of small amounts of capability into production, she said. These processes have been refined throughout the decades of building big hardware-intensive weapons platforms.

However, not everything that a department delivers is an aircraft carrier or a bomber or satellite constellation, Metz said.

The way the department budgets, does acquisitions and build requirements, all need to be transformed in order to deliver more agility, she said.

“We are actively improving those business processes and changing the conversation [about] how we deliver software. There is good work going on in every area,” Metz said.

Acting Secretary of VA: VA extends existing moratorium on evictions and foreclosures until March 31

by Dat P. Tran,

Acting Secretary of Veterans Affairs

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is steadfast leading the way in President Joseph Biden's Jan. 22 Executive Order to deliver economic relief to Americans amid the COVID-19 crisis by addressing economic hardships the veteran community faces during the ongoing pandemic.

Through no fault of their own, our veterans and their loved ones continue to face economic hardship due to the pandemic. I want to assure veterans, their family members, survivors and caregivers that we're doing everything



Acting Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dat P. Tran

we can to lessen their burden and worry.

Effective immediately,

VA will extend the existing moratorium on evictions and foreclosures until March 31, 2021. VA borrowers experi-

encing financial hardship due to COVID-19 can review VA guidance for borrowers or call 877-827-3702.

VA is also looking for immediate ways to help over 2 million veterans maintain their financial footing by exploring options to ease the burden of federal collections on compensation and pension overpayments, and medical and education-related debts.

VA will provide updated information and guidance for veterans at va.gov on this effort as soon as possible. VA is focused on lessening these financial hardships for America's veterans.

We'll continue to work with our partners in Congress and Veterans Service Organizations to honor our Veterans and their families by providing care and benefits they earned and deserve.

VA administers 1 million COVID-19 doses, publishes facility vaccination numbers

Veterans Affairs reached a milestone in just a month and a half's time administering 1 million doses of the COVID-19 vaccine to veterans and VA health care workers.

As of Feb. 2, VA has dispensed at least one dose of either the Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna vaccine to more than 582,000 veterans and has fully vaccinated over 44,000, totaling more than 626,000 doses. This is in addition to administering more than 401,000 doses to VA employees, and more than 1,200 vaccine doses to federal partners.

"In addition to administering 1 million doses of the COVID-19 vaccine, VA has begun publishing the number of veterans who have received Pfizer BioNTech or Moderna vaccines at each facility across its enterprise," said Acting VA Secretary Dat Tran. "The number of doses administered to veterans at each facility will be updated daily on the VA COVID-19 National Summary website."

VA employees across the country are working diligently to vaccinate the department's health care personnel and the most vulnerable veterans as quickly as possible. Making the

data about vaccine doses administered to veterans available publicly, VA is taking another step toward being as transparent as possible during the pandemic.

VA is currently providing vaccines at more than 215 sites nationally with plans to expand to additional sites as vaccine supplies increase. As with states distributing vaccines, VA is currently in the limited supply phase, anticipating an increase in weekly vaccine doses in March. Until VA receives an increase in vaccines, many facilities may temporarily run out of vaccines for short periods of time.

VA will continue to follow current Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance and the VA COVID-19 Vaccination Distribution Plan until new CDC guidance is available. The distribution plan lays out VA's overarching intent but implementation of vaccination on a large scale requires agility and flexibility in order to meet the daily threats posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The federal government will continue to work with states and the private sector to effectively execute an aggressive vaccina-

tion strategy, focusing on the immediate actions necessary to convert vaccines into vaccinations.

Social Security Matters About registering for SS & Medicare

by Russell Gloor

Dear Rusty: I have a big 65th birthday coming up mid-March and would like your advice on registering for Social Security and Medicare. I am now unemployed, but I am seeking another gig to get me to age 67 before taking Social Security.

Signed: Wondering Senior

Dear Wondering: You do not need to "register" with Social Security in advance. You don't need to do anything with Social Security until you are ready to claim your benefits. Since you were born in 1956, your full retirement age (FRA) for Social Security purposes is 66 plus 4 months, and that is when you will be entitled to 100 percent of the benefit you've earned from a lifetime of working. But you can, if you wish, also wait beyond your FRA to get an even bigger benefit. For each month you delay after your FRA you'll earn Delayed Retirement Credits of .667 percent, which is 8 percent additional benefit for each year you wait. That can continue up to age 70 when your maximum benefit will be reached. In your case that would mean an age 70 benefit 29 percent more than your FRA benefit amount. But whenever you're ready, you can apply for Social Security online at www.ssa.gov/retire (you must first create your "My Social Security" account to apply online).

Medicare is an entirely separate program and, unless you have "creditable" employer healthcare coverage from a new job, you should enroll in Medicare a bit prior to your 65th birthday ("creditable" coverage is a group plan with at least 20 participants). This would be during your Medicare Initial Enrollment Period (IEP), which is a 7-month window starting 3 months before the month you turn 65 and ending 3 months after the month you turn 65. If you don't enroll in Medicare during your IEP and enroll later, and if you didn't have creditable employer healthcare coverage after age 65, you will be subject to a late enrollment penalty, which will permanently increase your Medicare Part B (and Part D) premiums.

Medicare Part B is coverage for doctors & outpatient services, and Part D is prescription drug coverage, both of which require a premium; Medicare Part A is hospitalization coverage which is free if you're eligible for Social Security. If you have "creditable" employer coverage when you turn 65, you can simply delay enrolling in Medicare Part B until your employer coverage is about to end, or until after it ends during an 8 month Special Enrollment Period during which you can enroll in Medicare Part B without penalty. But for Part D prescription drug coverage, you must enroll in a private plan within 63 days of your 65th birthday, or the end of your employer drug coverage, or you will incur a Part D late enrollment penalty for enrolling later. And remember that Medicare late enrollment penalties never go away - they are recurring for the rest of your life.

The bottom line is this: you don't need to pre-register for either Social Security or Medicare. You can simply enroll when you are ready for benefits to start (keeping in mind that for Medicare, you must have "creditable" alternative coverage after age 65 to avoid late enrollment penalties).

Russell Gloor is a certified Social Security advisor with the Association of Mature American Citizens. This article is intended for information purposes only.



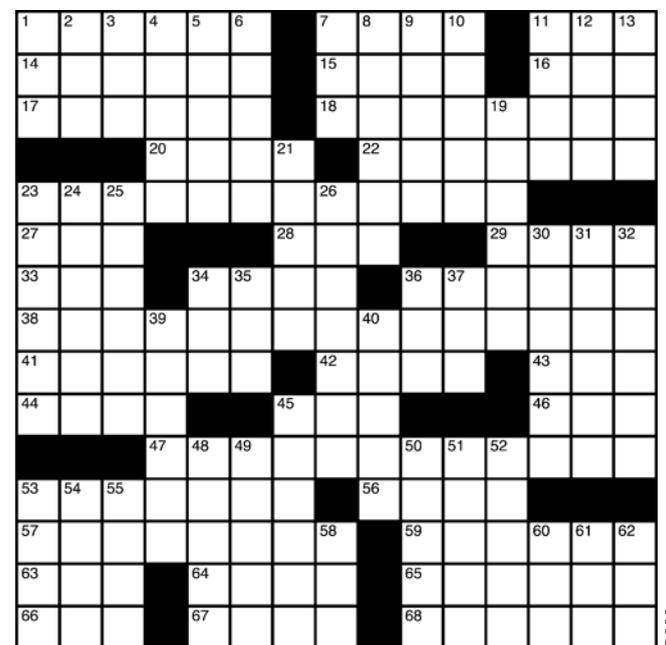
Crossword Puzzle

Across

- 1 Big divides
- 7 Vat sediment
- 11 Swindler
- 14 Aid, as a fallen teammate
- 15 Munch Museum city
- 16 Crazy Eights relative
- 17 Connected
- 18 Power of a Hummer?
- 20 Greek group
- 22 Discreetly, in slang
- 23 Enormous card revealed at end of magician's routine?
- 27 Form fig.
- 28 Fictional anchor Nessman
- 29 Goes apace
- 33 "Your point being?"
- 34 _ 51
- 36 The slightest bit
- 38 Tattoo depicting the last woolly mammoth?
- 41 Avoids
- 42 Muslim leader
- 43 Carol contraction
- 44 Immobilize with a charge
- 45 "Moby-Dick" setting
- 46 Bullring bravo
- 47 Avian mascot on a refueling vessel?
- 53 Three on a match, they say
- 56 Ikea purchase
- 57 Hotel employee who only works one day a month?
- 59 Acted greenly?
- 63 It usually needs breaking
- 64 1968 self-named folk album
- 65 Stands in a studio
- 66 Wrap up
- 67 Changes to green, say
- 68 Subject of a 2016 U.K. referendum, and a hint to five puzzle answers

Down

- 1 Comic Margaret
- 2 Egg producer
- 3 The lot
- 4 Calvin's spaceman alter ego, in comics
- 5 Literature Nobel Alice
- 6 Weapon for Goliath
- 7 Teammate of Babe
- 8 Legally prevents
- 9 Justice Kagan
- 10 Cymbal sound?
- 11 "Friday I'm in Love" band, with "The"
- 12 Saved, in a way
- 13 Holiday song
- 19 "Ah, I see what you meant"
- 21 Household cleaning brand
- 23 Give a hand
- 24 Dolphins Hall of Famer Larry
- 25 Japanese mushrooms
- 26 More substantial
- 30 "Will this work for you?"
- 31 French star
- 32 Longtime breath freshener
- 34 Back to a mate
- 35 Dorm, briefly
- 36 Gasteyer of "SNL" (1996-2002)
- 37 Network for film buffs
- 39 Chocolatey Post cereal
- 40 Apple models
- 45 Declining due to age
- 48 "Grr!"
- 49 Comic Denis
- 50 Biblical mount
- 51 "The bad news is ..."
- 52 It might have a champion
- 53 Sound _
- 54 Score after deuce
- 55 Monopoly card
- 58 Mexican pair
- 60 _ roles
- 61 Inventor Whitney
- 62 Summer hrs.



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Hellfighters

continued from page 1

Over about a year, officials gathered materials needed to seek the designation, for which the Army requires a battalion or brigade to show its nickname has been in use for at least 30 years, or 50 years for company-level designation, the Guard said.

It wasn't hard to verify the unit's claim, said Joseph Seymour, a historian at the Army Center of Military History at Fort McNair in Washington. It's just that nobody had ever done so officially.

"They are a very famous unit," Seymour said in the statement. "It is one of those things that everybody knew about, but because everybody knew about it, they never submitted a request for distinctive designation."

The request was approved in September, memorializing the regiment's historical nickname, said the statement released days before the start of Black History Month. The regiment joins over 700 units in the Army, some no longer active, which have official special designations, including 13 in the New York National Guard.

Navy shifts 2021 fitness cycle to July

Editor's note: Refer to this story at <https://www.navy.mil/Press-Office/News-Stories/Article/2485706/navy-shifts-2021-fitness-cycle-to-july/>.

by MC1 Mark D. Faram

The Navy is shifting the dates of the single, six-month physical fitness assessment cycle during calendar year 2021 to July 1 through December 31, to continue to mitigate COVID-19 impacts to the fleet.

The single 2021 cycle was initially announced in November's NAVADMIN 304/20 and was originally scheduled for March 1 through Sept. 30. That message is cancelled and replaced by NAVADMIN 024/21, which shifts the dates between July 1 and December 31. The new message was released on Jan. 27.

"Shifting the PFA cycle to July allows the Navy to execute the PFA after the primary influenza season while allowing time for COVID-19 vaccines to be more widely distributed," said Vice Adm. John B Nowell, Jr., chief of naval personnel.

COVID-19 prevention efforts resulted in the cancellation of



Officer Candidate Gabriel Dabbs, an Officer Candidate School student, leads physical fitness instruction at Officer Training Command Newport, R.I. Navy photo by Madeline Emsick

both of 2020's semi-annual Physical Fitness Assessments. Out of an abundance of caution, the Navy decided to proceed with a single cycle for 2021 as the COVID pandemic is showing no signs of abating yet.

DoD has long mandated all services conduct annual fitness testing. That mandate for fitness testing means that no exemptions will be allowed for those who scored excellent or above from the previous 2019 cycle. However, going forward, those who score excellent or outstanding on the 2021 PFA will be exempt from participation in the first PFA cycle of 2022.

A new Physical Readiness

Program Guide 15 outlines how to conduct all testing to mitigate the possibility of spreading the COVID-19 virus. It is now available for download on the Physical Readiness Program Website.

Twice annual testing cycles are expected to resume as permitted and it is hoped that will happen during CY 2022.

What's not changing is the cycle's big updates to the Physical Readiness Test (PRT). The rollout of the forearm plank, which will replace the curl-up as a test of core strength, and the introduction of the 2000-meter row as a new optional cardio event, will go on as planned.

Positive anticipation = Brighter days ahead

by Dr. Daneen Skube,
Tribune Content Agency

Q: I feel so relieved that we actually have a vaccine and that it's coming our way to help us create herd immunity and get our work and lives back on track. Am I a fool for feeling and thinking optimistically that we have brighter days ahead?

A: No, in fact positive anticipation often results in a psychological mindset that creates better circumstances. Here's an easy example: take two people with two different expectations where both people hear, "Good Morning!" from a co-worker. The first person anticipates a friendly workplace and feels welcomed. The second person anticipates hostility and barks back, "Don't tell me what kind of morning to have!"

There's a saying that we often see in our outer world what we expect from our inner world. Obviously I'm not recommending you go around idealistically trusting everyone but when you behave as if people are in your corner others will often become a better version of themselves.

With clients I often recommend they treat every new person they meet as if the stranger is kind, honest and helpful. At

the same time, I recommend my clients maintain a healthy skepticism and trust others only after watching their behavior. You can maintain an inner skepticism while maintaining an outer demeanor of friendly positive anticipation.

Interestingly even difficult people will shape up when you accuse them of being considerate, kind or helpful. The more difficult a person or situation

INTERPERSONAL EDGE

is the more infrequently that person or situation ever receives positive feedback.

Another fabulous feature of positive anticipation is you walk out your door every morning expecting to find friends, help and resources. Consider who you feel like helping. If someone approaches you with a smile, a kind word, and warmth wouldn't you automatically behave with more generosity even on a bad day?

Yes, there are people that will treat you poorly no matter what you do. When you find a person that is immune to any positive treatment from you walk away. Don't comment, or make a snarky parting remark. Silence and walking away is the best gift

you can provide to these folks.

When you start your job at 8 a.m. tomorrow morning try on an attitude of positive anticipation that you will find friends, kindness and learn new things. One of my favorite things to do when I call customer service and a representative asks, "How may I provide you with excellent service today?" is to say, "Thank you and I bet you will!" Guess what... they do.

Ask yourself with each person and situation you encounter today, "How can I approach this with an attitude of positive anticipation?" and you will become your own architect of brighter days ahead

The last word(s)

Q: I look back at 2020 and don't feel I did anything really well not my work, parenting, or my marriage. Did some people pull off better performance last year?

A: Nope, forgive yourself because you're a member of a global low-functioning club with plenty of company. During severe adversity sometimes high performance looks like just putting one foot in front of the other until you reach the other side of a crisis.

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Local Military

Hawaii-based USS *Chafee* Sailors quarantine in San Diego



USS *Chafee*, shown here on Dec. 9 firing a Block V Tomahawk missile.

Sailors aboard a Hawaii-based ship, in San Diego for training, have tested positive for COVID-19.

USS *Chafee* transited to San Diego from Hawaii for Surface Warfare Advanced Tactical Training, or SWATT, which started earlier in January.

Cmdr. Sean Robertson, a spokesman for the Navy's 3rd Fleet, said about a dozen person-

nel assigned to USS *Chafee*, now in San Diego, tested positive for coronavirus and are off the ship. The destroyer has a crew of about 350.

"In order to ensure the health of the force and guarantee mission readiness, most of the crew members assigned to USS *Chafee* have been placed in a Restriction-of-Movement (ROM) status in hotels in the local San

Diego area," Robertson said. "A caretaker crew will remain aboard in order to support the ship's operational and material readiness, and execute necessary support functions."

"Individuals who were in close contact with those sailors are also off the ship and are in quarantine while they monitor for any symptoms," Robertson said Friday. "The ship remains

able to meet its mission." No *Chafee* Sailors have been hospitalized and all positives are in isolation, he said.

"To reassure sailors and their families, all *Chafee* Sailors will be tested today (Friday, Jan. 29)," Robertson said. "We're looking to take care of the crew."

An unidentified Sailor aboard *Chafee* told *Navy Times* in a story that ran Thursday that

several of the ship's cooks tested positive for COVID-19 during the transit from Hawaii. The ship arrived for training last Saturday (Jan. 23), according to the publication. "Before pulling into San Diego, we had seven people in quarantine and three tested positive," the Sailor told *Navy Times*.

There was no word about when USS *Chafee* will return to Hawaii.

This week's snapshots



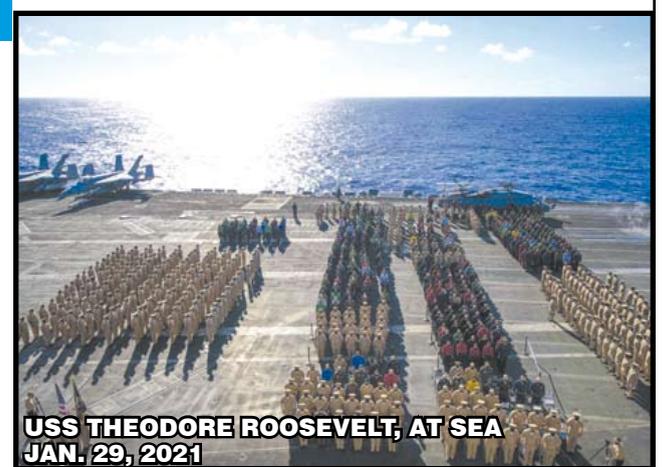
USS THEODORE ROOSEVELT, AT SEA JAN. 28, 2021

Sailors drive forklifts on the flight deck of San Diego-based aircraft carrier *Theodore Roosevelt* (CVN 71) during a replenishment-at-sea with dry cargo and ammunition ship USNS *Charles Drew* (T-AKE 10). Navy photo by MC3 Zachary Wheeler



USS STERETT, AT SEA JAN. 27, 2021

Sailors prepare for a night live-fire exercise on the flight deck the guided-missile destroyer. *Sterett* is part of the *Nimitz* strike group, deployed to the 5th Fleet area of operations to ensure maritime stability and security in the Central Region, connecting the Mediterranean and Pacific through the Western Indian Ocean. Navy photo by MCSN Drace Wilson



USS THEODORE ROOSEVELT, AT SEA JAN. 29, 2021

Sailors stand in formation during a chief petty officer pinning ceremony. The *Theodore Roosevelt* Carrier Strike Group is on deployment to the U.S. 7th Fleet area of operations. Navy photo by MCSN Eduardo A. Torres

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BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Artist's odyssey: John Eric Demery, Jr.

by MC3

Michael A. Lee

In Atlanta, Ga., during the early 1990's, a seven-year-old John Eric Demery, Jr. sat in his family home and started to draw. It was a creative escape that he began just a year earlier. The sketch captured the attention of Demery's mother.

"I drew an eagle at age seven and my mother has kept it ever since," said Demery. "I am almost 40 years old now."

As it turned out, drawing an eagle was fitting for Demery. After joining the Navy in June 2008, he eventually found himself assigned as a personnel specialist aboard aircraft carrier USS *Carl Vinson* (CVN 70), nicknamed "The Gold Eagle."

Stationed in Bremerton, Wash., at the time of this story, the distance between "The Gold Eagle" and Demery's hometown of Atlanta is immense: 2,681.5 miles, to be exact. Despite the distance, the spirit of Atlanta never left him. Demery's time in the Navy gave him determination and discipline, which renewed his motivation to tell stories through his art.

Demery believes that comic books represent the highest level of art, and his art has become a conduit of self-expression. Three of his biggest influences are his city, his upbringing and his love for Atlanta's rap scene. Mixed in with Marvel's Spider-Man comics, those three subjects have informed Demery's distinctive artistic style.

"You must really know how to create the world around you," said Demery.

In high school, Demery began a mission to use his drawing skills to bring a story to life. His drawings reflected his world, and the backgrounds of his earlier stories infused with urban influences and a style that truly represented Atlanta.

The written word soon followed, and the characters he created spoke the way Demery spoke: with a distinctive, urban, Southern drawl synonymous with Atlanta and its residents. Through his characters, Demery captured the dialect and the spirit of the city.

Years later, Demery graduated from high school. With his diploma in hand and the skyline of Atlanta in the background, Demery already had a lifetime of experiences behind him. He grew up in what he described as a rough neighborhood, with poverty, crime and racism being commonplace.

Around the same time, rap music was igniting an artistic renaissance in Atlanta. To Demery, one group in particular stood out from the crowd: the unapologetic, chart-topping rap duo Outkast. The local group had risen to popularity in the mid-90s and distinguished themselves by breaking free from the sound of popular East Coast and West Coast rap of the time. Instead, they stayed true to their roots and created a sound of their own, a sound that represented the South. At the end of the song 'Chonkyfire,' Outkast famously stated, "The South has something to say." Headphones on and pen in hand, Demery agreed. He decided to create a graphic novel that fused elements of his own background, the music of Outkast, and the superhero stories which he loved. The story of Demery's superhero would paint a picture of the city that was honest and realistic, uncompromising and raw.

"I wanted to tell the experiences of where I lived and mix it with superhero themes," said Demery.

A hero had to save the city. Who would that hero be, and what would he stand for? Demery wanted his hero to be a local, he had to blend in with Atlanta's neighborhoods. He wouldn't be some outside influence, but instead he would rise from the streets to become the influence. For the name, Demery decided on a moniker he used while rap-

ping: Chronicle the Outboi. The name was inspired by Demery's admiration for the producer and rapper Big Boi, who, along with Andre 3000, was a member of Outkast. In true superhero fashion, the hero's name was more than a clever musical influence.

"Outboi stands for One Used to Battle Our Ignorance," said Demery.

One element that is central to the graphic novel "Chronicle the Outboi," and is part of what makes it unique among comic books, is the thematic and stylistic influence of "the trap." A common theme in rap and drug-dealing culture, a trap is a physical space where illegal drugs are bought and sold. Not only is the trap a source of revenue, it is also a place to kick back, relax and listen to music. Demery was exposed to this environment, but had since distanced himself from the trap life and only used the culture as an artistic influence.

"No one has ever done it before, mixing what they call 'the trap' with comics," said Demery.

WHEN DEMERY STARTED COLLEGE, THE "CHRONICLE THE OUTBOI" GRAPHIC NOVEL TOOK SHAPE AS HE BEGAN WRITING, DRAWING AND ORGANIZING THE PROJECT. HOWEVER, IN DEMERY'S WORDS, ART IS, "A 'CIRCLE OF LIFE' TYPE THING."

His years in college came to an abrupt end around the economic collapse of 2008. To ensure a safe future for himself and his community, Demery enlisted in the Navy shortly after. This new, more financially stable life allowed Demery to continue his work.

While in the Navy, he produced 104 pages of what he would describe as his mission, and he firmly believed the comic's popularity would explode once the public had

a chance to read it.

The graphic novel found a captive audience among Demery's fellow Sailors. Culinary Specialist 2nd Class Derrick Barbee, also assigned to *Vinson*, is an Atlanta native. After learning they shared a hometown, Demery approached Barbee with a published version of his comic. From the imagery of the hero on the cover alone, Barbee felt this comic would be different. He was in disbelief that a fellow Sailor could create an entire comic on his own.

"It's crazy what people do outside of the Navy, how creative they can be," said Barbee.

Many people stay true to their roots, but Demery had truly captured his hometown. Also, it was clear to his shipmates that Outboi was more than just a character in Demery's comic. Demery and Outboi were connected. In their own ways, both Demery and Outboi wanted to ensure the safety of their community. One Demery defended the neighborhoods of Atlanta wearing a mask. The other wore a uniform defending his home's interest abroad. Outboi was designed to combat the adversities Demery saw every day growing up. Demery wanted to bring light to the problems of his old neighborhood. Outboi used his powers to stop drug use and crime in the community and give back to the poor.

"The comic, it rang true from the slang to the scenery," stated Barbee. "The whole thing gave me Outkast vibes and old hip-hop Atlanta vibes."

Barbee said he plans to show the graphic novel to his friends on his next visit home. After so many years of turning concepts into characters, dialogue and illustrations, he finally turned his city and his upbringing into art. Years of work, preparation and experiences had come together and Demery's hard work paid off.

Demery credited his time in the **cont'd next page**



Personnel Specialist 2nd Class John Eric Demery Jr., stationed aboard aircraft carrier USS *Carl Vinson*, dedicated his free time to complete the 104 page graphic novel entitled, *Chronicle the Outboi*. As a personnel specialist, Demery helps other Sailors with military pay, benefits and travel. Navy photo

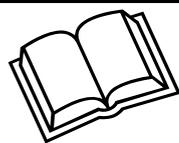
2021 Black History Month

African-American/Black History Month is an annual celebration which recognizes the significant contributions of African-Americans throughout our nation's history, through their contributions in arts, entertainment, law, politics, sciences, sports and so much more.

The history of African-American/Black History Month traces back to 1915, when the "Father of Black History Month," Dr. Carter G. Woodson, founded the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, which is currently known as the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH). Through their diligence and commitment to African American citizens, Dr. Woodson and the ASALH introduced the first Negro History Week in February 1926.

In 1976, President Gerald Ford issued the first African-American History Month proclamation, calling upon the Americans to celebrate this observance each February. Since that time, U.S. presidents have issued proclamations to pay tribute to African Americans.

In recognition of African-American/Black History Month 2021, this year's theme is "The Black Family: Representation, Identity, and Diversity." Of the black family, the Study of African American Life and History says, "Its representation, identity, and diversity have been revered, stereotyped, and vilified from the days of slavery to our own time. The black family knows no single location, since family reunions and genetic-ancestry searches testify to the spread of family members across states, nations, and continents."



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New skipper



Capt. P. Scott Miller makes his first remarks to the crew of USS Carl Vinson aircraft carrier after relieving Capt. Matt Paradise as Vinson's skipper. Facebook photo

Artist continued from page 8

Navy for giving him the discipline to see it through. Navy life gave Demery the focus and drive to work towards the goal he had since high school. Now a petty officer 2nd class, Demery could add author to his list of accomplishments.

"I see this as a mission, and the Navy is always on a mission," said Demery. Now, Demery sells his comic online and around the greater Seattle and Tacoma areas. In the meantime, he is always looking ahead and continues to

pursue his passion by telling other stories.

"I have plans to put my Navy experiences into word and art," said Demery.

The future for John Eric Demery, Jr. is that of a Sailor and an artist. He will continue his mission to engage audiences with vivid stories that speak to real-life issues. His mother might have been the first to notice his talents, but in a world where a new superhero movie is released almost every week, the next big crime fighter may emerge from the city streets of Atlanta.

Large audience attends virtual Earthquake Recovery Industry Day

NAVAL AIR WEAPONS STATION CHINALAKE-Naval Facilities Engineering Systems Command Officer in Charge of Construction China Lake and NAVFAC Southwest partnered with the City of Ridgecrest to host its first virtual China Lake Earthquake Recovery Industry Day held Jan. 27.

"This is the fourth industry forum for the earthquake recovery program, but the first held in a virtual environment," said OICC CL Commanding Officer Capt. Laurie Scott. "With face-to-face events severely restricted due to COVID-19, we felt it was very important to engage virtually."

The goal of the industry forum was to provide the current status of the earthquake recovery program to the local community and businesses who are looking for potential opportunities to support this critical effort.

"We built the program based on the feedback received from previous forums, so we look forward to receiving comments and addressing questions in order to keep this multi-billion dollar recovery effort on track," said Scott.

More than 400 people representing over 170 organizations

attended the event.

The industry day kicked off with welcoming remarks from Naval Air Warfare Center Weapons Division Commander Rear Adm. Scott Dillon, followed by an earthquake recovery program brief given by Scott that focused on the status of MILCON and major repair projects to include the acquisition timeline for FY21 projects and establishment of the temporary employee housing camp.

Other official presentations included an overview of the 14 contractors included on the recently awarded \$2.5B MACC given by NAVFAC SW Design and Construction Director Ed Chevalier. He also included small business contact information for each contractor along with dates and times for follow-on virtual outreach events to discuss partnering opportunities. NAVFAC SW Assistant Deputy for Small Business Jennifer McGuire provided an overview of the small business program, to include information on how to do business with the government.

The weapons station's Public Works Officer Cmdr. Pete Benson provided an overview of installation level projects with the

number of planned earthquake recovery projects and project types, followed by a presentation from Ridgecrest City Manager Ron Strand, which provided a capabilities brief that focused on community infrastructure to support contractors.

The event ended with a question and answer session with each guest speaker serving as panel members. More than 30 questions were asked across various topics to include small business opportunities, acquisition timelines, technical speci-

cations, base access, and temporary employee housing.

"The turn out for this virtual event exceeded expectations and the professional manner in which it was executed along with the great questions and comments from attendees gives us great confidence that we can continue this forum regardless of environmental factors," said Scott.

Follow NAVFAC at www.twitter.com/navfac, or visit our Photostream on Flickr at www.flickr.com/photos/navfac.

San Diego Navy bases participating in major security exercise

The Navy is conducting a large-scale force protection training exercise at installations across the country, including San Diego-area bases, through Feb. 12.

Held annually, Exercise Solid Curtain/Citadel Shield enhances the training and readiness of Navy security personnel to respond to threats to installations and units. It is not a response to specific threats, but is regularly scheduled for practical experience and learning.

Measures have been taken to minimize disruptions to normal base and station operations, but during the second week, particularly Tuesday and Wednesday, Feb. 9-10, there may be times when the exercise causes increased traffic around bases or delays in base access. Area residents may also see increased security activity associated with the exercise.

These delays could impact visitors to bases, including exchange and commissary shoppers, family services clients, and individuals with medical clinic appointments. Naval Medical Center San Diego patients, visitors and hospital staff may also experience significant delays and increased traffic. Patients are advised to arrive at least 45 minutes early for scheduled medical appointments.

The Meat & Potatoes of Life



by
Lisa
Smith
Molinari

This morning, I peered at my baggy, blood-shot eyes in the bathroom mirror. It had been a rough night. Thanks to wild fluctuations in my peri-menopausal hormones, which are apparently in the throes of death, my hair was a rat's nest of sweaty tangles. I tossed two Tylenol down my gullet, hoping to relieve a crick in my neck from tossing and turning, and headache pangs from grinding my teeth.

"Today's gonna suck," I admitted to myself with a defeated sigh.

A few years ago, I could handle awful mornings like this, because I had secret coping tools at my disposal, learned over 23 years as an active duty Navy wife. However, now that my husband, Francis, has retired from the military — and now that the pandemic has him working from home and two of our adult children living under our roof again — I have no choice but to suffer through rough days in the constant company of my family.

Why can't I use those secret skills I learned as a military spouse? Because they required the one thing I no longer have — alone time.

Everyone knows that military spouses must endure frequent separations and deployments. But

Milspouses' best-kept secret: The upside of loneliness

people don't realize that military spouses are alone so often, we get good at it. Our extraordinary resilience doesn't stem from altruism, benevolence, or good character. It is a mere necessity. There's no one else there to pick up the pieces if we fall apart, so we must maintain some semblance of control.

When Francis was away, I had plenty of rough nights, when I'd wake up exhausted, wondering if I'd be able to get the kids to school, pay the orthodontist bill before it's late, unclog the toilet, power walk in the pouring rain, and figure out dinner without losing my mind.

However, I soon learned that, when I was alone, there were no witnesses. All I needed to do was find a lifeline — no matter how socially unacceptable, lazy, unsanitary or depraved — to get me through the day.

Once I dropped the kids at school, I was free to soothe my stress however I saw fit. I could open the bag of stale cheese curls left in the the minivan, and pour them directly into my upturned mouth. I could tune the radio to a 90s channel, and bellow "Gettin' Jiggy Wit It," off key. I could floss my teeth at one stoplight, and pluck my eyebrows at the next. When I'd drive past base gate guard, I'd quickly flip off the radio and wipe my cheese-stained mouth on my sleeve.

Leave no witnesses.

Back at home, I could spend an hour on the floor snuggling with

our dog, Moby, if needed. There was no one to hear me baby-talking to him or to see him licking me on the mouth. I could sit down at my desk to pay the bills, but if my eyelids got heavy, there was no guilt in plopping my head down and taking a nap. After all, the drool stain on the orthodontist's invoice seemed apropos. I would eventually unclog that toilet, but only after binge-watching DVRed episodes of "The Bachelor." The secret sleeve of Oreos I'd eat for lunch might leave me feeling too sluggish to power walk, but I'd feel no guilt putting on track pants to make it look like I did.

My secret coping strategies allowed me to function. When I was alone, there was no one to balk, demand my attention, or roll their eyes. No one to embarrass, shame or disgust. It was just me, and as I discovered over time, that could be quite wonderful.

And here I sit today, now a "veteran" military spouse, wishing I could eat a sleeve of Oreos and take a nap at my desk. But alas, my family is home, so there are witnesses. I recall my days as a lonely Navy wife with an ironic nostalgia. Military retirement, the pandemic, remote working, and quarantine may have drastically changed my circumstances, but I still remember that strangely liberating solitude — unfettered by parental responsibilities, social mores, ethical rules, and basic human decency.

The secret joy of being alone.

AutoMatters™ & More



by Jan Wagner

Long ago I used to have incredibly good hearing but, like many of you, I've gone to many car races, driven countless miles at highway speeds with the windows open and enjoyed listening to loud music on car audio systems all of my adult life. Unfortunately, listening to those loud noises has left me with permanently impaired hearing.

My hearing is not terrible, but it is bad enough that I have trouble discerning speech on the radio while driving my Miata (even with the top up), and when I sit too far away from the T.V. at home. To compensate for that, I crank the volume way up, making my hearing even worse. Likewise, I often have to ask people to repeat themselves when they speak to me.

A few months ago, my neighbor in the house next to mine told me that my T.V. was so loud that it was waking up his little children in the middle of the night, when they had to go to school the next day. I felt terrible about that and I immediately took steps to make sure that did not happen again. I turned the volume for the T.V. down so low that I needed to turn on the closed captioning to not miss some of the dialog. I also started regularly using a Bluetooth speaker than plugs into my entertainment system's Bose audio.

When I cover auto races for my column I wear hearing protection, usually in the form of seriously heavy-duty noise-reducing earmuffs. Noisy internal combustion engines made me especially appreciate the Formula E alternative — an electric formula car

Hearing loss from loud cars & audio systems? BeHear ACCESS hearing amplifier review

racing series.

To address my hearing impairment, I asked the Wear & Hear company to send me a review sample of their BeHear ACCESS personalized hearing amplifier. This device is intended for people who have mild to moderate hearing loss. In addition to the rechargeable headset (good for up to 13 hours of use), charging cradle and cord, and a carrying pouch, it includes three different sizes of ear hooks and nine different sizes of ear tips to assure a good fit.

Unlike traditional hearing aids, BeHear is very reasonably priced at \$349 on the Wear & Hear website, <https://www.wearandhear.com/product/behear-access-shop/>.

Hearing amplification uses for this Bluetooth stereo headset include live conversations, mobile phone calls, playing music, streamed audio, watching television, going to movies and concerts, enjoying the great outdoors and assistive listening functionality ("built-in Telecoil receivers ensure best possible hearing in locales equipped with hearing loop technology").

More than just a simple sound amplifier, BeHear ACCESS utilizes a dedicated, downloadable, free smartphone app that enables you to self-administer a "personal hearing assessment for automatic adjustment of the sound in each of the operational modes (ambient hearing, phone calls and audio play)." Those parameters are applied to your personal BeHear ACCESS, to fine-tune the amplified sound for your specific hearing. Many reviewers say that the app's test results are very close to what they were told by professional audiologists. Furthermore, these profiles can be modified in real time.

You can control BeHear ACCESS from the app or directly, using the controls on each of the two control boxes that are suspended from the neck band.

Features include personal sound amplification, to provide dynamic, compressed amplification of ambient sounds; EasyListen, to slow down speech dynamically during phone conversations; hearing enhancement functions, including noise reduction, echo cancellation and more; and ListenThrough, to "pass through" important ambient sounds during music playback.

There are six distinctly different, user-selectable hearing profiles: Indoor, Outdoor, Crowd, Live Music, Telecoil (Exclusive) and Telecoil (Transparent), as well as fine sound tuning capabilities.

You'll find comprehensive "Quick Start" instructions in the box, and a library of video tutorials on the Wear & Hear website.

I listened to several tunes from my iPhone's music library and the sound was crystal clear. I was able to hear my T.V. while it was playing at a low volume level, suitable for my neighbors' peace and quiet, as well as that of any post-COVID-19 house guests that I might entertain. I quickly grew accustomed to hearing the amplified sounds of my routine activities, such as walking around my house and working in the kitchen. For more information visit <https://www.wearandhear.com>.

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Drinking water is encouraged during National Children's Dental Health Month

February is an important month in children's dental care because it marks the observance of the American Dental Association National Children's Dental Health Month (NCDHM).

It started in 1941 as a one-day event in Cleveland, Ohio. Later the ADA held the first national observance of Children's Dental Health Day on February 8, 1949. After the observance became a weeklong event in 1955, the program was extended to a month-long celebration in 1981—known today as National Children's Dental Health Month.

The February observance raises awareness of how important it is for children to develop good oral habits at an early age to ensure a lifetime of healthy smiles. The American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry recommends that children receive their first dental exam no later than one year of age to head off potential early dental problems.

Kids' dental care also depends on parents to review certain areas of prevention with their dental professional. This includes tooth decay, what thumb-sucking can

do to baby teeth and how to get your child to become familiar with his or her dental office's surroundings. In later years, your attention should focus on the prevention of crowded teeth and healthy gums, both achievable by seeing a dentist at least twice a year for an oral examination and professional cleaning.

Sipping, Snacking and Tooth Decay

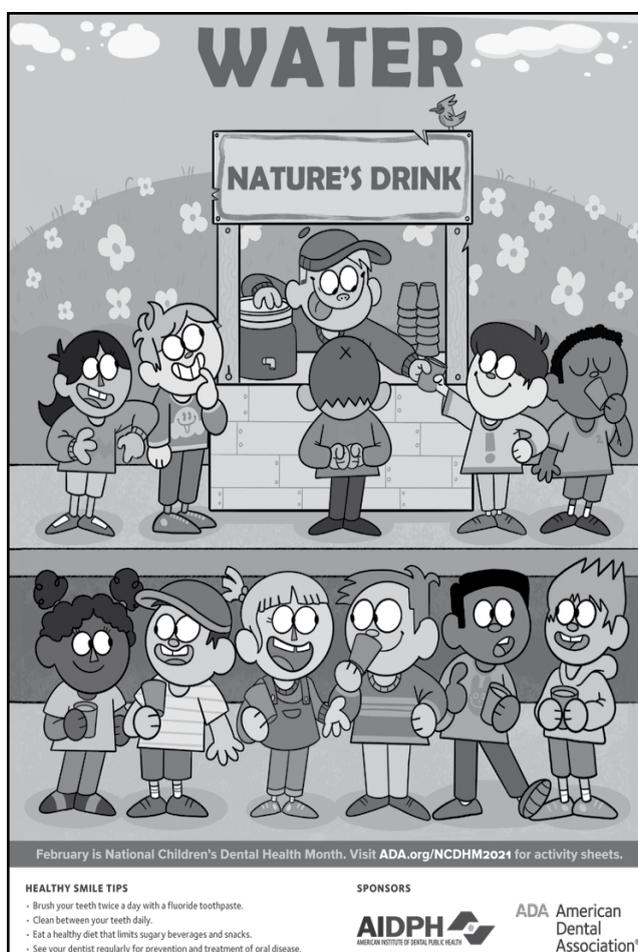
Many parents across the country will issue a common refrain at dinnertime tonight:

—You'd better eat that—it's good for you!

There's another old favorite in the parental arsenal of dietary admonitions:

—Don't eat that—it'll rot your teeth!! Now more than ever, kids are faced with a bewildering array of food choices— from fresh produce to sugar-laden processed convenience meals and snack foods.

What children eat and when they eat it may affect not only their general health but also their oral health. Americans are consuming foods and drinks high in sugar and starches more often and in larger portions than ever before.



It's clear that junk foods and drinks gradually have replaced nutritious beverages and foods for many people. For example, in the U.S., on average, individuals consume approximately 50 gallons of sugary beverages per year!

Alarming, a steady diet of sugary foods and drinks can ruin teeth, especially among those who snack throughout the day.

Common activities may contribute to the tendency toward tooth decay. These include grazing habitually on foods with minimal nutritional value, and frequently sipping on sugary drinks.

Consuming too much sugar can also affect your overall health, such as becoming overweight/obese, or getting heart disease or type 2 diabetes. When sugar is consumed over and over again in large, often hidden amounts, the harmful effect on teeth can be dramatic. Sugar on teeth provides food for bacteria, which produce acid. The acid in turn can eat away the enamel on teeth.

Almost all foods have some type of sugar that cannot and should not be eliminated from our diets. Many of these foods

contain important nutrients and add enjoyment to eating. But there is a risk for tooth decay from a diet high in sugars and starches. Starches can be found in everything from bread to pretzels to salad dressing, so read labels and plan carefully for a balanced, nutritious diet for you and your kids.

Reduce your children's risk of tooth decay:

- Sugary foods and drinks should be consumed with meals. Saliva production increases during meals and helps neutralize acid production and rinse food particles from the mouth.
- Limit between-meal snacks. If kids crave a snack, offer them nutritious foods.
- If your kids chew gum, make it sugarless. Chewing sugarless gum after eating can increase saliva flow and help wash out food and decay-producing acid.
- Monitor beverage consumption. Children should make healthy beverage choices such as water and low-fat milk.
- Help your children develop good brushing and flossing habits.
- Schedule regular dental visits.

Chocolate health claims sweet truth or bitter reality?

Love chocolate? Most of us do. It's a delicious treat. Or a quick pick-me-up after a long day. You may have heard that dark chocolate has health benefits. But is that true or just wishful thinking?

Small studies suggest that cocoa, an ingredient in chocolate, may have health benefits. It's possible that certain nutrients in cocoa could improve heart health and boost brain function, especially in older adults.

Researchers think this may be due to compounds called flavanols. Cocoa beans contain high levels of flavanols. The beans are dried and roasted to make the cocoa powder used in chocolate. Dark chocolate contains more cocoa and flavanols than other types of chocolate. Flavanols are also found in tea, red wine, apples, and berries.

The evidence linking cocoa beans and heart health has inter-

esting origins. Much of it is based on studies of the Kuna people, who live on islands off the coast of Panama. They consume a lot of cocoa.

"They pull cocoa beans off the tree, they grind them up, and they basically make a hot chocolate," explains Dr. Laura Baker, an expert in aging at Wake Forest University. "And they treat that like their water, drinking many, many cups per day."

Scientists discovered that the Kuna people had much lower rates of heart disease, even compared to people in the same region. This sparked interest in the health properties of cocoa beans.

Today, researchers are studying whether concentrated doses of cocoa flavanols can improve health. Thousands of participants are involved in studies of how cocoa supplements affect everything from eye disease to heart

health, cancer risk, and cognitive abilities.

Cocoa flavanols are believed to improve heart function and blood flow, so scientist think they may also benefit the tiny blood vessels in the brain. Baker is studying whether cocoa supplements can prevent cognitive decline in older adults. She's examining their impacts on short-term memory, focus, and overall brain function.

More than 2,000 older adults have participated in the three-year study. But it's too soon to tell whether cocoa supplements are beneficial for brain health. The study is still ongoing.

"If it works, there are no side effects for cocoa flavanols," Baker notes. "So imagine, if this works for both heart health and cognition—or just one—this would be a very simple supplement that people could add to their diet."

But you won't get nearly the same amount of cocoa flavanols in that chocolate bar—even if it is dark chocolate.

"The cocoa supplements are way more potent than the darkest of the dark chocolate bars," Baker says. Eating chocolate just isn't the same, she explains.

And there's more bitter news. Because of the added sugar and cocoa butter, chocolate contains a lot of calories and saturated fat. So it's best to enjoy those Valentine's Day chocolates in small amounts, as part of a balanced diet.



Kids will spend 11 minutes dressing Spike up like a princess.

How about two minutes to brush their teeth?

Brushing for two minutes now can save your child from severe tooth pain later. Two minutes, twice a day. They have the time. For fun, 2-minute videos to watch while brushing, go to 2min2x.org.

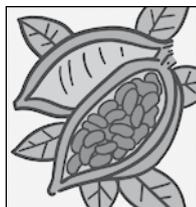


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Wise choices when eating chocolate

If you eat chocolate as a sweet treat, try to keep it as healthy as you can:

- Watch your total calories. Chocolate has a lot of calories, and gaining weight will more than wipe out any benefits you might get from the compounds in chocolate.
- Eat as dark a chocolate as you can.
- Avoid white and milk chocolates. These contain little or no cocoa.
- Make hot chocolate with unsweetened cocoa, water or non-fat milk, and little added sugar.



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