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SIXTIETH YEAR NO. 44

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 2021

MARINE CORPS SEEKS TO MAKE 'SMARTER' FORCE WITH NEW COURSE AT CAMP PENDLETON'S INFANTRY SCHOOL

by Chad Garland,
Stars and Stripes

The Marine Corps is ditching some of its formation marches and adding board games to a new, longer entry-level infantry training course aimed at creating Marines who can better think and act for themselves.

The Infantry Marine Course pilot program launched last month at the service's School of Infantry-West on Camp Pendleton, where instructors were pictured instructing new Marines on how chess relates to battlefield tactics. The course focuses less on micromanagement and more on individual responsibility, the service said in a statement.

"Rote memorization, instant obedience to orders are good for certain things, and they're not getting thrown away from this course," Chief Warrant Officer 3 A.J. Pascuiti, the training battalion's gunner, said in Friday's statement. "We're just going a step further, and understanding that the individual - and a collective of individuals - is what wins in combat."

The new course was developed over a year and is based on Commandant Gen. David Berger's plan for revamping the service for future conflicts.

Under Berger's vision, grunts will be expected to fight in small units that will be highly mobile and independent, and often dispersed far from headquarters. The new course is aimed at giving rookie Marines the tactical and cognitive skills to act on their own, and takes a



"fundamentally different approach" than its eight-week predecessor, the Corps said.

"To be more dispersed and more precise, we need privates now that can operate by themselves and don't have to be told and shown where to go all the time," said Lt. Col. Walker Koury, the training battalion's commander.

The unit's Alpha Company is taking the course first before a second one launches at Camp Lejeune, N.C., later this spring. It's expected to alternate two more cycles between the east and west coasts before being finalized next

year, the statement said.

Private Francesco Baffa aligns optics on his rifle as part of the first week of the infantry course at Camp Pendleton. Photo by Andrew Cortez

Already about double the length of the course it's meant to replace, the pilot is expected to eventually grow to 18 weeks, USNI News reported late last year. The added time and a dedicated combat instructor to lead each squad of 14 Marines allows for more practical application and repetitions, the service said in its statement.

Reflecting the transition from the industrial era to the information

age, the Marine Corps' seeks to shift from creating what Koury described as "automatons" to what Pascuiti has called "autonomous Marines."

"Through freedom of thought and freedom of action ... they'll have a higher level of understanding," Pascuiti said. "Rather than 'Do a thing because I said so,' it's 'get to a fundamental end state, and here are the tools that can help you achieve that goal.'"

After initial training on a topic,

Marines will be expected to apply their own thinking the next time it comes up. Instead of following itemized gear lists and being marched where they need to be, they'll be expected to be more responsible for themselves throughout the course.

Playing chess is meant to encourage them to think about their actions in a complex environment. They'll also no longer be trained in terms of narrow specialties such as rifleman, machine gunner, mortarman or anti-tank missileman, but instead will be expected to be proficient in every company-level weapon by graduation.

"The infantry Marine of the future will be able to do all (the skills of the specialties) and understand when and where that skill needs to be ap-

plied," said Staff Sgt. Jude Stewart, the lead marksmanship instructor for Alpha Company.

During the first nine weeks, trainees will learn individual skills in weapons handling, land navigation and radio communications, mainly using the M27 Infantry Automatic Rifle.

Later weeks of the training will focus on testing knowledge while working in fire teams and squads, learning to patrol over complex terrain and employ fire and maneuver tactics. Students will lead several force-on-force actions during the latter phase.

"What we have to recognize is these young Marines, through a collective of individuals, will win the day for us," Pascuiti said.

CNO in San Diego, meets with NAVWAR team on fleet modernization

by Elisha Gamboa

The Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) met with Naval Information Warfare Systems Command (NAVWAR) top leaders and engineering experts Feb. 22 at Naval Information Warfare Center (NIWC) Pacific in San Diego, to discuss a project aimed at integrating sensors, platforms and weapons to provide decision superiority over potential adversaries.

NAVWAR Commander Rear Adm. Doug Small welcomed CNO Adm. Mike Gilday and gave him an update on his team's progress to speed the delivery of advanced capabilities in support of Project Overmatch, an initiative Gilday stood up on Oct. 1, 2020.

"As we adapt to an increasingly complex security environment, it is imperative that the Navy develop a warfighting network of networks to support a future fleet of manned and unmanned vessels," said Gilday.

"Information has become the cornerstone of how we operate, and we need to be able to decide and act faster than anyone else. Sim-

see CNO, page 7

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Science & Engineering
Honor Society Awareness
Humorists Are Artists Month
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The Arts Month
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Nat'l March Into Literacy
Nat'l Noodle Month
Nat'l Nutrition Month
Nat'l On-Hold Month
Nat'l Peanut Month
Nat'l Social Work Month
Nat'l Umbrella Month
Nat'l Women's History
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Paws To Read Month
Play The Recorder Month
Poison Prevention Awareness
Quinoa Month

Save The Vaquita Month
Save Your Vision Month
Sing With Your Child Month
Small Press Month
Social Work Month
Spiritual Wellness Month
Supply Management Month
Transgender Month of
Action for Healthcare Equality
Trisomy Awareness Month
Vascular Abnormalities
Awareness Month
Women's History Month

Pilot program previews future of Surface Warfare Tactical Training

From SMWDC Public Affairs
SAN DIEGO - The Navy Surface Force kicked off the New Year with a six-month pilot program designed to align and standardize Surface Warfare training from a knowledge-based to a skills-based approach. The Surface Warfare Combat Training Continuum (SWCTC), developed as the central Surface Warfare Tactical Training Strategy, commenced aboard USS *Spruance* (DDG 111) in San Diego and USS *Forrest Sherman* (DDG 98) in Norfolk.

The Surface Warfare Combat Training Continuum (SWCTC) Task Force – comprised of Naval Surface and Mine Warfighting Development Center (SMWDC), Center for Surface Combat Systems, Surface Warfare Schools Command, and Afloat Training Group Pacific, worked together to deliver more efficient Surface tactical watchstander training

and implement a High-End Fight Training Continuum.

“Leaders across the surface warfare training enterprise have reviewed every surface warfare tactical watch station qualification and gleaned the attributes, roughly 1,200, that are necessary to be competent and successful warriors,” said Vice Adm. Roy Kitchener, Commander, Naval Surface Forces. “From those identified attributes, we acknowledged the commonalities and distilled them to a list of nearly 150 vital skills and 10 core competencies. This pilot program will assess the feasibility of implementing SWCTC aboard ships, and evaluate the efficacy of the training approach in achieving basic, advanced, and High-End Fight Training proficiency.”

SWCTC, informed by an extensive review of surface warfighting qualifications conducted by

the SWCTC Executive Steering Committee, will also include an automated system that tracks a tactical watchstander’s career qualifications, currency, proficiency, and experience. SWCTC will provide the framework for delivering schoolhouse and at sea training and support to sustain mariner and warfighting skills throughout careers.

The crews aboard *Forrest Sherman* and *Spruance* will receive segments of SWCTC data-based policy relating to DDG 51 class/platform Surface Tactical Training Syllabus and Tactical Action Officer grading criteria. SMWDC Task Force leads and Warfare Tactics Instructors (WTIs) will visit the warships and serve as advisors, analyze data, and collect feedback from the units that will aid in the development of follow-on implementation policies.

“The grand design is for a training system of systems that will track the skills attainment and currency of Surface Warfare Officers and enlisted Sailors as they progress from accession throughout their entire career,” said Cmdr. William Blodgett, SWCTC Task Force West Coast Lead. “This improved system will enable tracking of individual qualifications and will better enable the community to ensure warships have fully qualified watch team members when they are ready to



SMWDC’s Lt. Cmdr. Chris Rakoski, a Warfare Tactics Instructor, advises combat information center watchstanders at sea aboard USS Essex (LHD 2) in January. Navy photo by MC2 Devin Alexondra Lowe

deploy, independent of whether or not the team member completed the OFRP training cycle with the warship.”

SMWDC and the WTI program are critical enablers that help standardize, implement, and deliver tactical training. Through SWCTC, tactical watchstanders will maintain proficiency in a series of tactical tasks that will increase with complexity as warfighting competencies improve. This will result in

higher levels of training readiness, warfighting capability, and tools for career-long tactical development of Surface Warriors.

The overall goal of SWCTC is to track performance and experience in a wide-array of tactical environments, very similar to a mariner skills log book for combat information center watchstanders. The end state is better understanding of whether watchstanders and watch teams either possess the

requisite skills or need more experience in a particular area in order to perform the task at hand.

Headquartered in San Diego, SMWDC has four Divisions in California and Virginia focused on amphibious warfare, integrated air and missile defense, anti-submarine warfare/surface warfare, and mine warfare. SMWDC’s mission is to increase Surface Force lethality, tactical proficiency, and warfighting integration across all domains.

Command Senior Enlisted Leader assignment

The Office of the Senior Enlisted Advisor to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (OSEAC) announced Feb. 18 that Navy Command Master Chief (SEAL) David L. Isom, currently assigned as the command senior enlisted leader, U.S. Special Operations Command North (SOCNORTH), Peterson Air Force Base, Colo., has been selected to replace Navy Command Master Chief (SEAL) Timothy B. Boehmer as the command senior enlisted leader for U.S. Special Operations Command Pacific (SOCPAC), Camp H.M. Smith, Hawaii.

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Austin says Afghanistan, Iraq, China among topics at NATO

by Jim Garamone

Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III briefed Pentagon reporters on the results of NATO's virtual Defense Ministerial, discussing the decisions to increase NATO support in Iraq and defer a decision about NATO troops in Afghanistan, and summarizing discussions among allies and partners about China.

It was Austin's first Pentagon briefing since taking office.

The importance of the alliance to American strategy was apparent

since Day 1, as Austin's first call upon entering the Pentagon was to NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg. Austin said the discussions were productive and covered a wide range of NATO concerns. The alliance does face challenges, including a resurgent Russia's disruptive technologies, climate change, the ongoing war in Afghanistan, the persistent threat of terrorism, and an increasingly aggressive China. Exacerbating all of these

challenges is the COVID-19 pandemic.

Austin said his first goal in the ministerial was to detail President Joe Biden's commitment to NATO and underscore



Soldiers from the 1st Battalion, 5th Infantry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, and Norwegian soldiers perform a joint combat reconnaissance patrol around Al Asad Air Base in Iraq, May 15 last year. Photo by Army Spc. Derek Mustard

that the U.S. values allies and partners around the world. He emphasized that U.S. foreign policy will be led by diplomats supported by a strong military.

"I also stressed our ironclad commitment to the security guarantee under Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty," he said. "I don't use that word 'ironclad' lightly. Our shared responsibility as allies – our duty – is to protect our populations and our territory.

And to meet that duty we require what the secretary general refers to as credible deterrence and defense."

Doing this requires commitment and funding. Austin was pleased that nine NATO allies now meet or exceed the alliance's goal of 2% of gross domestic product spent on defense. After years of reductions, the alliance is now in the seventh year of defense spending increases. "Naturally, we want this trend to continue, and we want to see every member of the alliance contribute their fair share," he said.

The secretary noted that Sweden, Finland and representatives from the European Union joined the talks and were especially helpful on their views about China. "Indeed, I applaud NATO's work on China, and I made it clear that the United States is committed to defending the international rules-based order, which China has consistently undermined for its own interests," he said.

He reiterated that the United States sees China as the pacing challenge. "We believe NATO can help us better think through our operating concepts and investment strategies, when it comes to meeting that challenge," Austin said.

The ministers spent a full day

discussing the NATO missions in Iraq and Afghanistan.

"On Iraq, I reiterated our strong commitment to the defeat of ISIS and to supporting Iraq's long-term security, stability and prosperity," he said. "That's a commitment that I made to my Iraqi counterpart and the Iraqi minister of interior just the other day after last weekend's deadly rocket attack in Erbil. I also welcomed that expanded NATO mission in Iraq that responds to the desires and aspirations of the Iraqi government."

In Afghanistan, the secretary walked the allies through U.S. thinking as the Biden administration comes to grips with the reality on the ground. "The bottom line is this: We are committed to a responsible and sustainable end to this war, while preventing Afghanistan from becoming a safe haven for terrorist groups that threaten the interest of the United States and our allies," he said.

Austin said the United States wants to see "a just and durable end" to the long-running conflict.

The administration is conducting an interagency review of the situation in Afghanistan, including all relevant options with full consideration of the see **NATO, page 4**

Army

- Army doesn't know how many extremists it has booted
- Bergdahl files lawsuit claiming undue command influence by Trump, McCain
- Green Beret pleads not guilty in deadly Illinois bowling alley attack
- Army to test new anti-missile system to protect tanks, Bradleys and Strykers
- Army's new infantry goggles put the 'Tron' in 'Army Strong'
- Army retires 'Creek' training helo

Navy

- Carrier Ike heads out on its second deployment in a year
- Nearly 1 in 4 active-duty Sailors have gotten the COVID vaccine, officials say
- No additional COVID cases on USS *Theodore Roosevelt* after 3 Sailors tested positive
- Up to 60 *Lake Champlain* Sailors in isolation after more than a dozen on board test positive for COVID-19
- Passing of the sword: In a Navy with lots of traditions, a small and very personal one continues

Air Force

- F-16s from 'Triple Nickel' and 510th train with first European air unit to acquire F-35s
- Air Force eyes budget-conscious, clean-sheet fighter jet to replace the F-16
- Base halts flight operations after 2 killed in Alabama T-38 jet crash

Marine Corps

- Marine Corps and Army faceoff during Hawaii exercise
- Marine recognized for saving drowning couple from rough waters in California

National Guard

- Wisconsin ANG identifies staff sergeant who was one of two killed in civilian plane crash

Space Force

- First Kansas Space Force recruit often asked: What's that?

Coast Guard

- Seattle-based Coast Guard icebreaker returns home after first mission in nearly 40 years to wintertime Arctic



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A Sailor assigned to USS Mobile Bay guided-missile cruiser recites the oath of enlistment inside the USS Arizona Memorial at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, April 24, 2013. Navy photo by Armando Gonzales

Sailors must reaffirm their oaths during stand-downs to address extremism in the military

by Caitlin Doornbos,
Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan - The Navy will require its Sailors to reaffirm their oaths to the Constitution during daylong unit stand-downs ordered by the defense secretary to address extremism, including white supremacy.

Chief of Naval Personnel Vice Adm. John Nowell Jr. ordered the renewed oaths Feb. 21 in a message to the fleet detailing the Navy's plans for the stand-downs that each service must complete before April 2. Both military and civilian personnel are required to participate.

"As public servants, we took an oath to the Constitution and we will not tolerate those who participate in actions that go against the fundamental principles of the oath we share, particularly actions associated with extremist or dissident ideologies," said Nowell.

Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin on Feb. 3 told each service branch to conduct 24-hour operational pauses to address extremism. His order followed the Jan. 6 insurrection at the Capitol by supporters of former President Donald Trump that included more than two dozen military veterans and at least one current service member, Pentagon spokesman John Kirby told reporters at the time.

In a video message Feb. 19, Austin encouraged service members in all branches to "revisit the oath that you took" when

they joined the military.

"Read those words again; consider what they really mean," he said. "And think about the promise that you made to yourselves and to your teammates and to your fellow citizens."

The Pentagon doesn't know how many service members are involved in extremist activity, Kirby said at a press briefing Feb. 22 in Washington. Collecting that kind of information is difficult, he said.

The defense secretary, Kirby said, "very much would like to have a better sense of the data. We need to have a better understanding of how broad and deep the problem is."

Some commands have already held their stand-downs, Kirby said. Others are waiting on training materials being prepared by the Pentagon.

During the Navy's stand-downs, commands must discuss the oath's meaning, "including what we protect (Freedom of Speech/Assembly) and the limits on these rights for service members," according to Nowell's message. Personnel must also

review prohibited activities, including "political activity and social media posts and don'ts."

Each stand-down must include a listening session, something the Navy has been pushing since last summer. Discussions on racism in the service were encouraged after the civil unrest across the country last year following the death in Minneapolis of George Floyd, an unarmed Black man killed by a white police officer who knelt on his neck.

"Every commander or commanding officer will continue to conduct listening sessions and get it into their battle rhythm," said Nowell. "This is where the hard work of establishing trust and connectedness starts."

Kirby told reporters Feb. 22 he didn't expect information on numbers of service members involved in extremism to come from those sessions, but "clearly it's about trying to get a better grasp of the degree to which the problem exists."

Nowell in his message said the initiative is meant to "ensure service members and civilian personnel clearly understand the damaging effects of extremism and begin developing more effective, sustainable ways to eliminate the corrosive impacts extremist activity can have on our force."

Nowell said Navy personnel may be participating in extremism just by posting, retweeting or liking an offensive post on social media. "Extremism often breeds hatred and if left unchecked, it can erode the trust in connectedness, something that is so vital to our operational readiness," he said in the video. "You may not personally know any shipmates with extremist beliefs, but I assure you that those forces of darkness are among us."



Total Navy Battle Force: 297
Ships underway
 Deployed ships underway: 56
 Non-deployed ships underway: 36
 Total ships underway: 92
Ships deployed by fleet

Fleet Forces: 1	3rd Fleet: 4
4th Fleet: 3	5th Fleet: 19
6th Fleet: 15	7th Fleet: 56
Total: 98	



NATO

continued from page 3

consequences of any potential course of action, Austin said.

"We are mindful of the looming deadlines," he continued. "But we want to do this methodically and deliberately."

Austin said the Taliban violence is too high and that more progress must be made in Afghan-led negotiations. "I urge all parties to choose the path towards peace," he said. "The violence must decrease now. I told our allies that no matter what the outcome of our review, the United States will not undertake

a hasty or disorderly withdrawal from Afghanistan that puts their forces or the alliance's reputation at risk."

No decisions about future force posture have been made, the secretary said. In the meantime, current missions will continue and commanders have the right and the responsibility to defend themselves and their Afghan partners against attack.

Any move ahead will be made after consultations among all those interested parties. "There will be no surprises," he said. "We will consult each other, consult together, decide together and act together."

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Dying Navy veteran's story resonates as Black History Month lesson

by Jeff Jardine

One summer afternoon in the late 1950s, eight-year-old Phillip Willis, Jr. took a break from mowing lawns at a home in Jackson, Miss. Having worked up a thirst, Willis asked his employer, a white woman, for a glass of water.

That simple and reasonable request required minimal physical effort on the woman's part. Mainly, it required mere humanity and compassion for a young Black kid toiling in the stifling heat and humidity. She begrudgingly gave him the water, Willis said, along with a not-so-subtle reminder that he was a Black in America's Deep South during the Jim Crow era.

"She looked at me and said, 'Yeah, but don't you come in the house, you hear me?'" Willis said. "She went to the (kitchen) counter and got a mayonnaise jar and gave me a glass of water in it. No ice - just regular tap water. Then she sat there and watched me drink it, like I was going to steal it while I was drinking it."

When he finished, she took the jar from him and threw it into the trash.

"She closed the screen door and locked it, and said, 'If there is nothing else, you can get about your business,'" Willis said. "That was the attitude I got."



Phillip Willis, Jr.

Many years later, Willis got the last word (which we will save for the ending of this story). In the meantime, count that experience among the reasons Willis - now 70, and a Navy veteran in hospice care resulting from exposure to Agent Orange during the Vietnam War - offered to share it with CalVet during Black History Month.

Willis said doctors in mid-August gave him three to six months to live.

"It's been six months," he said. "I'm still here and I'm not going anywhere."

"Nobody knows the day or the hour, but I know he's going out as a champion and he's worked so

hard," wife Darlene Willis said.

That eight-year-old - whose grandfather had been enslaved - grew up and went on to study chemistry at Jackson State (then College, now University). When his draft notice arrived before his senior year, Willis enlisted in the Navy, knowing induction into the Army and the jungles of Southeast Asia, otherwise beckoned.

During the war, Willis served aboard destroyer escort USS *Hepburn* in 1972 and 1973. The ship steamed into the Gulf of Tonkin, well within the 12-mile range, exposing its crew to Agent Orange, a defoliant used to eliminate the dense growth the enemy soldiers used as cover. Agent Orange causes cancer and numerous other ailments including pulmonary fibrosis, which afflicts Willis. He also suffers from PTSD.

The Navy left discernible scars in many ways not unlike what he remembered from back home in Mississippi, where his father worked as a janitor for a Jackson Coca-Cola distributorship. Every Fourth of July, his dad would barbecue for the white workers.

"But Blacks and whites were not able to sit down with each other in Jackson," he said. The Black workers returned the following day, heated up the leftovers, and

celebrated their Fourth on the Fifth.

Willis himself returned to a nation that treated many Vietnam veterans horribly. Willis' son, James C. Willis, wrote about his father while contributing to a new book titled, "REVEALED: True Testimonials and Lessons Learned on Covert and Blatant Racial Experience," and authored by Dr. Darlene V. Willis, a psychologist who is Phillip's wife and James' mother.

"... the 'love for troops' that we now, rightfully, know as normal, was not extended to soldiers, especially Black soldiers, once they returned to the States," James Willis wrote. "So, after fighting for the country, witnessing sites unimaginable, my father and his heroic colleagues returned to insults and disrespect, along with limited to no resources to help heal their wartime traumas."

Indeed, while in a grocery store one day in San Marcos, Phillip Willis said he waited in the checkout line behind a white woman who unloaded her goods onto the counter.

"She looked up and saw me and stopped," Willis said. "She went back to her cart and grabbed her purse and put it under her arm. Then she proceeded to take out an

EBT (electronic benefits transfer) card. That's a welfare card. I'm paying for her groceries and she thinks I am going to steal her purse. Amazing!"

After leaving active duty in 1973, Willis served in the Naval Reserve for eight more years while building what became a long and successful career in the finance industry and in real estate. His wife, Darlene, is a psychologist, author, and nationally recognized speaker. They recently moved from San Diego to Manteca, in the Northern San Joaquin Valley. Their two sons, Phillip and James, both work for the non-profit Concerned Parents Alliance/College Bound Programs, which the Willis family created.

They feel Black History Month is vital to all Americans. Knowing about the discrimination every day folks like Phillip Willis endured - and still do - is just as valuable and educational as the stories of well-known historical figures.

"We're forever grateful to the Frederick Douglasses, Sojourner Truths, and Maya Angelou, and Martin Luther King, et cetera," Darlene Willis said. "But there are



Navy veteran Phillip Willis and his wife Darlene.

real people like my husband and the countless others that experienced things that aren't necessarily told in the history books."

In his final days, Phillip Willis Jr.'s stories resonate more than ever.

Like the one about an eight-year-old wanting a glass of ice-cold water on a steaming hot Mississippi day in the late 1950s. That story now has a most fitting ending, as son James wrote:

"My dad not only still passes that house when we visit Jackson, he stops by to check on the tenants, as he now owns that very house. While I can say with great certainty that my dad will never live in that house, I know he has great pride in owning something that he was once denied access to." <https://www.calvet.ca.gov/>

VA approves a dozen new Fisher House sites

Homes provide no-cost temporary housing for Veterans' families and caregivers

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) approved 12 VA medical centers as new priority sites for future Fisher Houses to keep Veterans' loved ones together during medical care.

These homes provide short-term accommodations for families and caregivers of hospitalized active-duty or retired military members and Veterans who do not live within commuting distance of a hospital.

"Fisher Houses help enhance VA's services and resources, providing Veterans, their families and caregivers a comforting space to reside during potentially stressful times of recovery and rehabilitation," said Acting VA Secretary Dat Tran. "The new priority sites will expand the VA Fisher House footprint to 76 homes. These homes sit on VA hospital campuses and are free to our Veterans, families and caregivers."

Approved sites located in the U.S. include: Atlanta VA Health Care System, GA.

Carl Vinson VA Medical Center, GA.
Central Arkansas Veterans Health Care System, AR.
Durham VA Health Care System, NC.
Fargo VA Health Care System, ND.
Fayetteville Coastal Health Care System, NC.
Iowa City VA Health Care System, IA.
Memphis VA Healthcare System, TN.
Oklahoma City VA Health Care System, OK.
Phoenix VA Health Care System, AZ.
VA Palo Alto Health Care System, CA.
William S. Middleton Memorial Veterans Hospital, WI.

In addition to 15 houses in various stages of construction planning, the Fisher House Foundation has donated and built 49 Fisher Houses for VA and 42 for the Department of Defense (DOD). Upon completion of a Fisher House, VA and DOD assume responsibility for their operation, maintenance, upkeep and staffing.

In 2019 and 2020, VA Fisher Houses accommodated more than 47,401 families, saving guests more than \$32 million in lodging expenses.

Individuals may request Fisher House accommodations by contacting the Fisher House directly or their assigned VA social worker.

Millions in grant funding for adaptive sports to support disabled veterans offered by VA

Community organizations may now apply online

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is accepting applications from community organizations through March 31 - for up to \$16 million in grant funding - to provide adaptive sports and therapeutic recreational opportunities for disabled veterans and members of the armed forces.

VA research and clinical experience shows that physical activity is important to maintaining good health and improving overall quality of life.

VA awards grants to qualifying organizations to plan, develop, manage and implement a variety of sports and activities for Veterans, including cycling, kayaking, ar-

chery and skiing. To be eligible for a grant, an organization must be a non-federal entity with significant experience in managing a large-scale adaptive sports program.

"Through these grants, VA is extending its reach to assist organizations that help veterans in their communities to engage in sports and recreation," said VA Director of the National Veterans Sports Programs and Special Events Leif Nelson. "Veterans will have more opportunities to learn new skills related to their sport of choice and embrace the positive influence and benefits of adaptive sports and equine activities."

In fiscal year 2020, VA awarded nearly \$15 million in adaptive sports grants to 116 organizations headquartered in 37 states, the

District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. Programs funded through these grants are estimated to serve more than 13,000 vets and service members across the country. Of the total awarded, \$1.5 million was used to assist organizations that offer equine-assisted therapy to support mental health.

Applications must be submitted online by March 31, at 12 p.m. Pacific. VA will announce award decisions this fall based on a competitive selection.

Details of the Notice of Funding Opportunity, including frequently asked questions and additional information can be viewed under the "Grant Program" tab online at VA Adaptive Sports Grant Program at <https://www.blogs.va.gov/mvpspe/grant-program/>.



The USS Midway Museum is currently recruiting for docents, air craft restoration, ship restoration and safety volunteers. These assignments are a regular commitment of at least 6 months.

Visit this page of our website to watch fun videos about our different teams and participants: <https://www.midway.org/give-join/volunteers/volunteer-opportunities/>

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Interpersonal Edge: Here's how not to exit business relationships

by Dr. Daneen Skube,
Tribune Content Agency

Q: I have a long-term business associate and am thinking of just sending an email terminating him. I don't want to damage my reputation but it's uncomfortable to talk to people about issues. Besides I shouldn't have to justify. Is there any downside to sending an email?

A: Yes, important business relationships warrant a conversation about what you want, and the issues at play when you're thinking of terminating a professional relationship.

Think of the word "terminate." The word brings up assassination. Do you really want to end any professional relationship by "terminating" it?

In addition to harming your reputation consider the career upside of practical empathy. How do you expect to be treated in professional relationships? Would you want someone to send you a text or just break up with you via e-mail?

Most of us only invest in important business relationships because we have a large element of trust the relationship will continue. We deliver high performance to others when

we experience loyalty and low anxiety about the relationship continuing.

Few of us would give much, if anything, to people prepared to terminate professional relationships last minute with no

INTERPERSONAL EDGE:

conversation. If you want to receive quality services from others commit to diplomatic conversations about what you want and no abrupt exits.

In my work I often find people feel slighted or angry about things that when discussions have occurred. These misunderstandings only occur because one or both people lack the courage or skills to have an actual conversation.

If you want to receive high performance from people with whom you have business relationships ask yourself if you are willing to discuss issues and needs. Are you willing to provide the same level of courtesy and communication that you yourself want?

In our planned obsolescence world we can treat others like disposable Kleenex. Once other

people realize we have no loyalty they will dump us if they are smart. They'll also warn everyone in our business circle to avoid us.

All good things do come to an end. How you want to leave

a business relationship is with advance notice, discussion about issues, and gratitude for everything done for you.

How you don't want to leave a business relationship is abruptly, with no conversation, and not enough notice so the other person can accept new work. Be aware the person you terminate may have turned down other projects or customers for the express purpose of serving your needs.

We all know the golden rule that we ought to treat others as we wish to be treated. If you leave business relationships with zero empathy for the impact you have on others few people will want to work with you. We only receive loyalty and empathy if we offer it to others.

In business empathy is a critical career skill. You will be

expected to negotiate problems. Obviously no one that works with you can solve problems they have no opportunity to discuss.

Lastly, if you leave a professional relationship badly you burn that bridge forever. If the day comes you need that person's help and want to walk over that bridge you will find it no longer exists.

The last word(s)

Q: Is it my imagination or Daneen Skube, Ph.D., execu-

are people behaving worse than usual these days. Is there a best way to cope with so much upsetting behavior?

A: Yes, people are flooded with stress which increases everyone's struggle with their inner self-destructiveness and self-hatred. You'll cope better if you're aware the origin of the bad behavior of others is their own self-loathing rather than a reaction deserved by you.

tive coach, trainer, therapist and speaker, also appears as the FOX Channel's "Workplace Guru" each Monday morning. She's the author of "Interpersonal Edge: Breakthrough Tools for Talking to Anyone, Anywhere, About Anything" (Hay House, 2006). You can contact Dr. Skube at www.interpersonaledge.com or 1420 NW Gilman Blvd., #2845, Issaquah, WA 98027. Sorry, no personal replies.

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Army IG to Soldiers: 'We celebrate the differences that make us stronger'

by Joseph Lacdan,
Army News Service

WASHINGTON - The Army's inspector general preaches building trust when he meets with Soldiers and civilians at Army installations throughout the country.

Lt. Gen. Leslie Smith demonstrates that in the way he listens to Soldiers as they tell their life stories or talk about their backgrounds. With Southern charm and a humility that comes from a blue-collar upbringing, the Atlanta native speaks to Army members the way he speaks to his family or old friends.

He and his wife of more than 30 years, Vanedra, have also instilled trust and respect for others in their two daughters, Taylor and Tori. Tori, the youngest, is an Army officer attending medical school at Howard University and plans to become an Army doctor.

The couple taught their chil-

dren that building trust comes from treating others equally.

"We always fall back on things that our parents taught us," Vanedra Smith said. "My mom always said, 'It's important to treat people the way that you want to be treated.' And that's one of the things that I've always instilled in my daughters, and I also let them know that there's one race: the human race."

Leslie Smith also believes that a more diverse force will make the Army stronger. Smith also joined acting Secretary of the Army John E. Whitley to speak virtually with cadets at Alabama A&M and Alabama State universities Feb. 18 and 19, as part of the Army's wider effort to recruit more African-Americans into its ranks.

"We want to make sure that we focus on a diverse group of people coming into our Army and into our armed forces, be-

cause we are representative of the nation," Smith said by video conference on Feb. 9. "So we need to fight for that talent."

Smith also recorded a special Black History Month message for the NBA's Washington Wizards to air during the team's historically black college and university night on Feb. 27. Later this year, Smith will visit Army installations as part of the Project Inclusion listening tour.

Smith praised the efforts of Project Inclusion, an initiative that includes listening sessions that are scheduled to continue on Feb. 23-25 at Fort Irwin, California. The program collects data from the sessions to identify social issues related to diversity and inclusion that can be brought up to Army leadership.

To mold the Army into a welcoming, inclusive place for all backgrounds, Smith understands Army units must be united from the ground up.

Sergeant Major of the Army Michael A. Grinston strives to foster trust at the squad level through the "This is My Squad" initiative to build greater team unity, similar to the bonds formed in special forces units. Other Army leaders, including Smith, have taken it upon themselves to spread that message throughout the force.

As the Army's inspector general, Smith doesn't take his position of influence lightly.

"If I say one thing and I do something else, that's a problem," Smith said. "So I have to make sure ... I demonstrate what I expect [Soldiers] to be. So if I expect someone to be in good physical shape, I have to be in good physical shape. If I expect people to treat everyone with dignity and respect, I have to do the same."

"All of it comes back down to trust at the individual level, the team level, the organization level and then on the Army level."



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Local Military



CNO AT NAVWAR

Andy Houck, Mark 18 Automatic Target Recognition project lead, speaks to Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Mike Gilday about unmanned undersea vehicle capabilities during a tour of Naval Information Warfare Center (NIWC) Pacific. Navy photo by MC1 John B. Hetherington

CNO
continued from page 1

ply put, Project Overmatch will provide us a decision advantage over our adversaries and help us deliver a more lethal and better-connected fleet far into the future. This is a top priority - we must deliver it."

Small echoed similar sentiments.

"CNO gave us a complex set of challenges," said Small. "This incredible team was able to show him first-hand what we've been up to over the last few months to meet them head on at the blistering pace required."

Project Overmatch is a multi-command effort aimed at enabling a Navy and Marine Corps that swarms the sea, delivering synchronized lethal and non-lethal effects from near-and-far,

15th MEU supports Operation Inherent Resolve from Makin Island ARG

ARABIAN GULF - The *Makin Island* Amphibious Ready Group and the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit began air operations in support of Operation Inherent Resolve Feb. 13.

Close air support operations and defensive counter air support operations were carried out by Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron 164 (Reinforced), the aviation combat element of the 15th MEU, as part of broader U.S. Central Command counterterrorism operations in the region.

Marine Corps F-35B Lightning II aircraft departed from *Makin Island* amphibious assault ship, flagship of the MIARG, to execute the long-range strike.

Daly appointed to rear admiral (lower half)

Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III announced Feb. 24 that the president has nominated Capt. William R. Daly for appointment to the rank of rear admiral (lower half). Daly is currently serving as chief of staff, Naval Surface Forces/Naval Surface Force, Pacific Fleet, San Diego.

every axis and every domain. Critical to Project Overmatch is the development of networks, infrastructure, data architecture, tools and analytics that support the operational and developmental environment that will enable sustained maritime dominance using manned and unmanned systems.

Additionally, Project Overmatch will leverage the latest in digital technologies such as state-of-the-art artificial intelligence, machine learning, and information and networking technologies for improved fleet readiness worldwide. This includes the NAVWAR developed Overmatch Software Armory, a cloud-enabled digital environment using industry-standard development, security and operation (DevSecOps) principles that brings the rapid delivery of software capability to the fleet.

"Long range F-35B Lightning II strike operations demonstrate the ARG/MEU's ability to project air power well beyond the shore," said Marine Corps Col. Christopher J. Bronzi, 15th MEU commanding officer. "We look forward to exercising the capabilities in our arsenal while in theater and remain ready to deliver those capabilities at any time if called upon."

Makin Island ARG transited through the Strait of Hormuz and into the Arabian Gulf on Feb. 8. MIARG and 15th MEU's presence in the U.S. 5th Fleet area of operations demonstrates the U.S. and its regional partners' commitment to the freedom of navigation.

"We're at an exciting crossroads," said Rebecca Gassler, Project Overmatch chief engineer and Program Executive Office for Integrated Warfare Systems, Command and Control Directorate (PEO IWS 6) technical director. "We have been given the charter to realize a conceptual Naval Operational Architecture through the integration of our legacy systems, new systems, and science and technology, in the most rapid manner possible, to support fleet priorities. We are driving technical and programmatic evolution through extensive use of concepts and techniques. This includes agile management, model-based systems engineering, user centered design and DevSecOps."

To equip the fleet with these modern capabilities, Small and his team are also engaging with academia and industry, both defense and commercial, using industry days. Small recently held a Project Overmatch Industry Day, Dec. 15, where over 180 companies had the opportunity to learn about the project's vision, the current technological state, and the challenges and opportunities that would benefit from private sector support. At the event, he emphasized the importance of government-industry partnerships in support of the project and highlighted his plans to hold additional industry days, with the next one planned to be held on the East Coast.

About NAVWAR:

NAVWAR identifies, develops, delivers and sustains information warfighting capabilities and services that enable naval, joint, coalition and other national missions operating in warfighting domains from seabed to space and through cyberspace. NAVWAR consists of more than 11,000 civilian, active duty and reserve professionals located around the world.

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Local Military News Bits

Corona Navy scientist awarded \$300K research grant for measurement technology ... A Naval Surface Warfare Center (NSWC) Corona Division scientist was awarded a \$300,000 grant to help blast his research from a laboratory in the Inland Empire to all corners of the Department of Defense. Dr. Joseph Fiordilino, a mathematician and scientist working on directed energy applications in NSWC Corona's Measurement Science and Engineering Department, received funding for his grant proposal "Improving modeling and simulation and experiments to aid directed energy atmospheric measurements." The grant was awarded through the Science, Mathematics and Research for Transformation (SMART) Scholar program, a DOD-funded science, technology, engineering and math program. Fiordilino said the funding will allow him to continue developing directed energy modeling and simulation code and validation data sets to meet new warfighter demands, which are evolving year over year.

Pendleton Marine swims 250 meters, saves drowning couple ... CAMP PENDLETON - A young Marine was recognized for actions taken on Feb. 15 when he saved the lives of two civilian kayakers at the 21 Area Boat Basin. Cpl. Jordan Perez, a combat engineer, was present when a married couple was calling for help from the water. Perez estimated that he swam 250 meters to reach the kayakers and bring them to shore - a feat that may have proven impossible for some. Perez received a challenge coin from Marine Brig. Gen. Dan Conley, the commanding general of Marine Corps Installations West/Camp Pendleton on Feb. 19.

USAV Worthy crew receives COVID-19 vaccine ... Members of the Missile Range Instrumentation Ship USAV *Worthy* crew received the first doses in their COVID-19 vaccine series recently with support from DoD medical personnel in California. The ship arrived at Naval Base Point Loma in December for annual scheduled maintenance after more than 20 days at sea. "At the time, California COVID cases were reported as 'skyrocketing' past 106,000 cases in two days," said Bess Buchanan, a Kwajalein physician assistant traveling with the *Worthy*. The crew practiced social distancing and pandemic safety protocols. They set up a pier-side checkpoint and sanitization station to keep the ship COVID-free and to screen all individuals before boarding. Naval Base Point Loma is one of the few initial distribution sites that would provide the vaccine to DOD uniformed service members, retirees, dependents, civilian employees and select DOD contract personnel, Buchanan said.

Navy food managers transition to virtual training visits ... The Navy Food Management Team with NAVSUP Fleet Logistics Center San Diego, recently completed the second, and more refined, virtual training assist visit with USS *Essex* Feb. 12. Prior to last month, when the team conducted its first virtual training visit with hospital ship *Mercy*, they were still conducting in-person visits for deploying units or for emergencies, if the ship or Type commander requested assistance. The last in-person training session was conducted in October 2020. Previous Navy Food Management policy required Navy Food Management Teams to visit each Navy installation facility at least once every 24 months. The need to abide by COVID-19 safety protocol presented compliance challenges for both NFMAs and all general messes afloat and ashore. The updated policy titled Food Flash 20-#08, was released Dec. 11, and directed all NFMAs to maximize the use of virtual tools such as Microsoft Teams, Zoom, and video/phone conferencing to conduct training assist visits.

by Amber Kurka

The staff at the MCAS Miramar Veterinary Treatment Facility are no strangers to overcoming adversity and finding creative solutions to keep the mission going.

For the last three years the team has conquered one operational hurdle after another, such as juggling staffing shortages and COVID-19 operation restrictions, in order to continue to care for their furry patients.

"The number one mission for VTFs like Miramar is to provide veterinary medical care to government-owned animals, such as military working dogs,"



said Sgt. Ashley Santacroce, former noncommissioned officer in charge of Miramar VTF and an animal care specialist. "So it was really important that we kept the mission going, no matter what challenges we faced."

In addition to MWDs, VTFs often provide care to pets

owned by military members, retirees and dependents.

"This secondary service, to provide care to privately-owned animals, benefits the clinic since it sharpens the veterinarians' and staff's medical skills to sustain our main mission, caring for MWDs," said Santacroce.

While VTFs benefit local military communities by providing services to pet owners, they also mean more patients for staff members to see and provide services.

"We take care of 46 military working dogs, 69 non-DoD government-owned animals, see VTF, page 9

This week's snapshots



SAN DIEGO
Feb. 11, 2021

Culinary Specialist Seaman Apprentice Jose Garza prepares a tray of lemon cake in the bake shop aboard USS *Tripoli* amphibious assault ship. Navy photo by MC1 Christopher B. Janik



CAMP PENDLETON
Feb. 12, 2021

Marines set a defensive position near a CH-53E Super Stallion on range 800 during Chromite Watchfire. Chromite Watchfire is a training exercise that focuses on Navy and Marine Corps integration as well as combat readiness. Photo by Lance Cpl. Quince Bisard



CORONADO
Jan. 26, 2021

Steelworker Constructionman Elam Winston, attached to Amphibious Construction Battalion 1, welds a stanchion during repairs to an elevated platform. Navy photo by MC2 Storm Henry



USS JOHN FINN, AT SEA
Feb. 19, 2021

Sailors move in to fight a simulated fire during a damage control drill on the flight deck of the destroyer USS *John Finn* (DDG 113). *John Finn* is part of the Theodore Roosevelt Carrier Strike Group, is on deployment to the 7th Fleet. Navy photo by MC3 Jason Waite



MCRD SAN DIEGO
Feb. 17, 2021

Recruits with Charlie Company, 1st Recruit Training Battalion, participate in the Combat Conditioning Course. The course exposed recruits to the physical demands they could be faced with during a combat situation. Marine Corps photo by Lance Cpl. Zachary T. Beatty



USS STERETT, AT SEA
Feb. 16, 2021

Sailors stand watch in the combat information center aboard USS *Sterett* (DDG 104) guided-missile destroyer. *Sterett* is part of the Nimitz Carrier Strike Group and is deployed conducting maritime security operations and theater security cooperation efforts. Navy photo by MCSN Drace Wilson

Search <https://www.navy.mil/Resources/Photo-Gallery/> for more photos that might interest you.



Secretary of defense's most recent flag officer announcements

Editor's note: You can access the complete list of flag officer announcements at <https://www.defense.gov/Newsroom/>.

Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III announced Feb. 24 that the president has made the following nominations:

Rear Adm. (lower half) James A. Aiken for appointment to the rank of rear admiral. Aiken is currently serving as commander, Carrier Strike Group Three, Bremerton, Wash.

Rear Adm. (lower half) Michael E. Boyle for appointment to the rank of rear admiral. Boyle is currently serving as director, maritime operations, U.S. Pacific Fleet, Pearl Harbor.

Rear Adm. (lower half) Keith B. Davids for appointment to the rank of rear admiral. Davids is currently serving as commander, Special Operations Command South, U.S. Southern Command, Homestead Air Reserve Base, Fla.

Rear Adm. (lower half) Leonard C. Dollaga for appointment to the rank of rear admiral. Dollaga is currently serving as commander, Submarine Group Seven; commander, Task Force

Seven Four; and commander, Task Force Five Four, Yokosuka, Japan.

Rear Adm. (lower half) Christopher S. Gray for appointment to the rank of rear admiral. Gray is currently serving as commander, Region Europe, Africa, Central; and commander, Maritime Air Forces, Naples, Italy.

Rear Adm. (lower half) John E. Gumbleton for appointment to the rank of rear admiral. Gumbleton is currently serving as deputy assistant secretary of the Navy for budget; and director, Fiscal Management Division, N82, Office of CNO, Washington, D.C.

Rear Adm. (lower half) Sara A. Joyner for appointment to the rank of rear admiral. Joyner is currently serving as chief of legislative affairs, Washington, D.C.

Rear Adm. (lower half) James A. Kirk for appointment to the rank of rear admiral. Kirk is currently serving as commander, Carrier Strike Group Eleven, Everett, Wash.

Rear Adm. (lower half) Andrew J. Loiselle for appointment to the rank of rear admiral. Loiselle is currently serving as

commander, Carrier Strike Group Four, Norfolk, Va.

Rear Adm. (lower half) Brendan R. McLane for appointment to rear admiral. McLane is serving as special assistant to commander, Fleet Forces Command, Norfolk.

Rear Adm. (lower half) Peter G. Vasely for appointment to rear admiral. Vasely is serving as director for operations, Defense Intelligence Agency, Washington, D.C.

Rear Adm. (lower half) James P. Waters III for appointment to rear admiral. Waters is serving as commander, Submarine Group Two, Norfolk.

Rear Adm. (lower half) George M. Wikoff for appointment to rear admiral. Wikoff is special assistant to the deputy chief of naval operations for operations, plans and strategy, N3/N5, Office of CNO, Washington, D.C.

Capt. Christopher D. Alexander for appointment to rear admiral (lower half). Alexander is the commanding officer, Surface Warfare Officer School Command, Newport, R.I.

Capt. Sean Bailey for appoint-

ment rear admiral (lower half). Bailey is serving as chief of staff, NAF Atlantic, Norfolk.

Capt. Thomas Buchanan for appointment to the rank of rear admiral (lower half). Buchanan is serving as commandant of mid-shipman, Naval Academy.

VTF continued from page 8

and roughly 7,000 privately-owned animals," said Dr. (Capt.) Caitlin Sullivan, a veterinarian who is the San Diego Branch Chief.

With more than 7,100 patients to care for, the team at Miramar has always had a busy work load. So when Santacroce joined the team in 2017, she was eager to tackle the challenge as the new VTF NCOIC. "I wasn't an NCOIC at my previous duty station, so when I got here I didn't really know what to expect, but I was ready to learn the job and run with it," she said.

"So when I first got to Miramar, I leaned on the leadership that was there and they really guided me into the position," she said. "I was fortunate enough to have three specialists, so they focused on the military work-

Capt. Christopher J. Cavanaugh for appointment to rear admiral (lower half). Cavanaugh is currently serving as director, submarine/nuclear officer distribution, Personnel Command, Millington, Tenn.

Capt. Brad Collins for appoint-

ing dog mission while I learned how to run the clinic, since our lead GS veterinarian was also a reservist who was getting ready to deploy."

Little did Santacroce know that her work would be cut out for her. While her team was initially fully staffed with Soldiers and nonappropriated fund employees, the team dwindled over the next two years due to deployments, turnover, and permanent change of station rotations.

"My last Soldier ended up reclassing at the end of 2019," explained Santacroce. "So by the end of the year, I was the last military member in the clinic.

"While I still had a few NAF employees and one NAF veterinarian working at the clinic," she said, "I had assumed the entire mission that all of the military personnel were in charge of since our GS veterinarian never re-

ment to rear admiral (lower half). Collins is currently serving as chief of staff, Installation Command, Washington, D.C.

Capt. Jennifer Couture for appointment to rear admiral (lower half). Couture is assistant chief of staff, NSF, Atlantic, Norfolk.

turned and our clinic didn't have a dedicated OIC at the time."

For Santacroce, that meant juggling the workload for four MWD kennels and five government owned facilities that included animals for the Department of Homeland Security.

"I had to coordinate care for all of the animals, such as scheduling and managing appointments and vaccines for the dogs, while making sure treatments were done on time to keep them mission ready," Santacroce said.

In addition to taking care of the MWD mission, Santacroce also had to ensure that the NAF staff and clinic were following all operational and administrative requirements.

Continue reading at <https://www.dvidshub.net/news/389240/mcas-miramar-vtf-overcomes-adversity-get-mission-done>.

Electric race scooter series

The upper-most level of world-wide motorsports has been too dependent upon money and not enough about taking care of our environment. In response, the eSkootr Championship will be a global, intense, fiercely competitive, affordable and environmentally-friendly motorsports championship that will be contested by highly skilled, brave athletes from around the world - on powerful scooters.

The racing professionals will be chosen "from a truly diverse cross-section of competitors - including racing drivers, cyclists, skaters, snowboarders, motorcyclists, and even esports racers."

The competitors' race scooters will most certainly not be run-of-the-mill scooters that you could buy almost anywhere. These will be purpose-built, high-speed (60mph, 100km/h) scooters that are strictly intended for use in professional motorsports at this, the highest level. Accordingly, the people who will ride on them must be world-class athletes, the best of the best.

The scooters will be electric. The eSC has already partnered with a recognized high-technology provider on the spec of its first race model. Since they're scooters, they will literally and figuratively provide a small footprint, representing and advocating for a sustainable mode of urban transportation that will not require ever-increasing ribbons of traffic-clogged, multi-lane roadways.

The race circuits will be conveniently located in the heart of major cities, making them easy for spectators to get to. The eSC will showcase sustainable urban transportation in densely populated areas where eScooters, ebikes and bicycles all share space together. At each venue city, the series will bring together representatives from government, industry and civil society who will help define the policies and practices to build and deliver this vision of future urban transportation.

The eSkootr Championship was inspired by the very best that professional motorsports has to offer. Its COO is Formula 1 broadcaster and former A1 GP racing driver Khalil Beschir, with support from Formula E racer and UN Ambassador Lucas di Grassi, and former Formula 1 driver Alex Wurz. Cristiana Pace - whose motorsports career spans over 20 years and who's one of the motorsports world's leading authorities on sustainability - has been appointed the chair of its Sustainability Commission, the body that will oversee the growth and development of sustainable

and environmental practices within the series and via its technical partnerships.

According to Hrag Sarkissian, eSkootr Championship CEO and co-founder, "The eSC will define how micromobility and motor racing could and should work together - not only by making the partnership wholly environmentally sustainable, but by also using it to dynamically fast-track concepts and ideas that can reframe mobility for every level of society."

"After seeing the potential for the growth of micromobility and escooters, we spent several years developing a concept and vision for the Electric Scooter Championship. More recently, the coronavirus has further developed the conversation about how we can do things better; how we can make effective, meaningful change that has a positive impact on our cities and the people around us," said Khalil Beschir.

"In creating the eSC, we wanted to celebrate the concept of mobilizing cities and liberating people who have been trapped within a transport system that no longer properly works," he said. "By aligning that with a new category of motorsport - one that works for both participants and audience - we feel we can accelerate a collective conversation about mobility that will take us far into the future. When we go racing ... it will be as a means to change motorsport and mobility forever."

eSC Safety Ambassador Alex Wurz said, "As a racer, I want to create a series that has all the thrill and intensity of the motorsport series we all grew up with, but with the costs and responsibility that make it accessible and appealing to everyone." Lucas di Grassi, Formula E racer and eSC Sustainability Ambassador, tells us: "As we've already seen with Formula E, there's considerable scope for disruption within the electric mobility space, both on and off the track. And, as the discussion around micromobility grows, the Electric Scooter Championship is perfectly placed to amplify the benefits of clean, sustainable transport solutions within our everyday lives."

To see photos, and an eSC video, visit www.drivetribe.com, click on the magnifying glass, select "POSTS" and enter "AutoMatters & More #680" in their search bar. Please send your comments to AutoMatters@gmail.com. Copyright © 2021 by Jan Wagner - AutoMatters & More #680



by Jan Wagner

The Meat & Potatoes of Life



(above) The author's daughter, Anna.

by Lisa Smith Molinari

"Mom, do we have any photos of me and Dad when he came home from deployment?" our daughter asked, unwittingly sending me on a harrowing, epic journey through the storage spaces of our home.

Anna, 23-years-old, was completing an application for a fashion design opportunity that required her to tell her "life story" in photos and video clips. The employer thought it was interesting that Anna was a well-traveled military kid turned fashion designer, so she needed photos depicting her unique upbringing.

I'm usually annoyed by the tasks my perfectly capable, resident, young adult daughter lobs at me (e.g., "Could you buy more goat cheese crumbles?") But I responded, "I'm on it!" confident that I knew just where to find a photo of Anna at age ten, waving a small flag, when her Dad returned from a year-long deployment in his desert cammies.

In my youth, I was a meticulous organizer, obsessive even. I squirreled everything away in its proper place. I categorized, labeled, and indexed my belongings — everything from Tupperware to important papers. My obsessive tendencies served me well into my thirties, when I was spinning many plates in the air as a Navy wife and mother of three children. Order was comfort-

What I found while losing my mind

I clearly recall the rush of satisfaction I would feel after sorting our daughter's extensive Polly Pockets collection, matching pairs of tiny rubber shoes, grouping accessories, and storing everything in separate colored bins, labeled and stacked neatly on our playroom shelves.

Therefore, I had a false sense of confidence when I began my search for the deployment photographs Anna needed. I started with our computer files, because the deployment was in 2008, the year I received my first digital camera. Also, I specifically remembered a digital slideshow of the homecoming event set to "Home" by Daughtry made by one of the unit's spouses.

I sniffed at the thought, wondering if I'd cry when we played the video again.

But after scrolling through hundreds of JPEG files, I found nothing. Nada. Zip. Zilch. "Maybe I didn't use my digital camera after all?" I thought, and spent the next hour searching a closet full of old albums and shoeboxes containing photos dating from the 1980s to 2007. Aside from unearthing disturbing photos of my husband's old girlfriend, my search was fruitless.

"Aha!" I exclaimed, when I remembered that our external hard drive contained gigabytes more memorabilia. I connected the drive to my laptop and scrolled through hundreds of digital photographs and videos. Although I found nothing from homecoming, I did locate photos of every flipping statue, painting and pigeon in Italy, hours

and hours of videos of tourist spots in London, and GoPro movies from the time the kids strapped the camera to our dog.

My follicles bristled at the thought of having lost the homecoming photos and video, and I longed to sort a pile of Polly Pockets to restore some sense of order.

"It has to be somewhere!" I grumbled, determined to leave no stone unturned. I discovered nothing but soccer picnics and band concerts on old CDs I popped into our ancient iMac. A dusty file box in our attic full of pre-digital video recordings seemed promising, but we no longer had the equipment to play the clunky tapes. I was so frustrated, I actually contemplated searching for a hulking, shoulder-mounted camcorder on Ebay.

I went to bed after 1:00 am, utterly defeated. I had failed to keep a tight ship. I had loosened my grip on order. I had lost control.

The next morning, bleary-eyed and yawning, I stumbled upon three blurry digital photos of the homecoming on a scratched CD I found in a basket of computer cords, and gave them to Anna. The disappointing 24-hour search helped me realize three things. One, our family should have taken more photos and videos of each other, rather than tourist sights. Two, the advent of digital photo technology, exacerbated by the chaos of a year-long deployment, was too much for me to manage.

And, three, I'm way better looking than my husband's old girlfriend.

CLASSIFIEDS

Social Security Matters

Repaying SS money taken by politicians

Dear Rusty: It is common knowledge that over the decades politicians have taken billions if not trillions of dollars out of the Social Security fund to finance other government programs. This information is never published or addressed and having the government repay this money back to SS is never discussed, as it seems to be the most logical solution. When the SS program is financially viable again, future changes to the program can be discussed in a more meaningful way.

Signed: Informed Senior

Dear Informed: I'm afraid that what you refer to as "common knowledge" is actually a common myth, pervasive on social media but nevertheless not accurate. Here at the AMAC Foundation we have thoroughly researched this charge and reality is that every dollar ever contributed to Social Security since the program's beginning has been used only to pay benefits to beneficiaries, or to pay for the cost of running the Social Security Administration (administrative costs are about 1%). Any surplus revenue exceeding program cost was deposited into the Social Security Trust Fund as "special issue government bonds" which pay interest (at 2.2% for 2019). As of the end of 2019 there were nearly \$2.9 trillion in assets held in Social Security's Trust Funds, and none of those assets have ever been used for any purpose other than Social Security.

- Some of the myths you may have heard include:
- That President Kennedy used SS funds to pay for the Peace Corps.
 - That President Reagan used SS funds to pay for his Strategic Defense Initiative
 - That President Johnson used SS funds to pay for the war in Viet Nam

None of these are true, but the one which gains the most visibility is the last one. And that comes from an accounting gimmick that President Johnson used back in the 1960s to make the Federal debt look less than it was. When Johnson realized the Federal balance sheet didn't reflect assets held in the Social Security Trust Funds, he arranged for that balance sheet to reflect SS reserves as a Federal asset, which masked the size of Federal debt. But no Social Security money was ever taken out of the Trust Funds and, indeed, this accounting "gimmick" was reversed in the 1980s so that Social Security's reserves no longer partially offset the Federal debt in the Government's financial reporting.

I know how pervasive these allegations are, and I also know that some Americans will never be convinced that politicians have not accessed, and cannot access, Social Security's money. But by law, Social Security's assets can be used only for Social Security, and nothing else.

Some say that the assets in the Trust Funds are merely IOUs and that the actual money has been used by politicians. The Trust Funds assets are interest-bearing investment instruments which can be redeemed on demand by the Social Security Administration, as needed to pay SS program costs. Those "special issue government bonds" are backed by the "full faith and credit" of the United States Government which, in investment circles, is viewed as primarily risk-free. If they are "IOUs," it is in the same sense that the assets in a stock and bond portfolio are IOUs.

Social Security's current financial issue stems from steadily increasing life expectancies and the declining ratio of workers to beneficiaries. People are now collecting Social Security benefits for decades instead of a few years, and the number of beneficiaries is steadily increasing (about 64 million today). Simultaneously, there are now only 2.8 workers per SS beneficiary compared to, for example, 1960 when there were 5.1 workers for every beneficiary. Both these realities have resulted in the need to withdraw assets from the Trust Funds to fully pay benefit obligations. And, according to the Social Security Trustees, those Trust Fund reserves will be depleted in the early 2030s, resulting in an across the board cut in benefits – unless Congress acts soon to restore Social Security to financial solvency.

Roy's Sudoku

	4	1					3
8			6			9	
	2		4		7		
4		8		3		1	
				2			
		3		8		6	4
			3		5		7
		4			2		6
3						4	1

Crossword Puzzle

Across

- 1 Hardly a routine favor
- 7 Rubs out
- 15 Project that led to the first moonwalk
- 16 "And how!"
- 17 Rounds of shots
- 18 Meditation goal
- 19 Money in music
- 20 "... a Dog": 1962 film based on a 1919 novel
- 21 Fruit with a Medjool variety
- 22 Fathers and sons
- 23 Portable Asian dwellings
- 25 "Live at Red Rocks" musician John
- 26 Fathers and sons, say
- 27 Tiny resistance unit
- 29 Petrol measure
- 31 Start of a Seuss classic
- 36 Galleria degli Uffizi city
- 37 Range in which 7 is neutral
- 38 "Swords into plowshares" prophet
- 39 Had difficulty
- 40 Maker of many jets
- 42 Fields of cookies
- 43 ___ entry
- 47 Plant that has become invasive in much of the Eastern U.S.
- 48 One acting badly
- 49 "Swan Lake" maiden
- 51 Vitamin bottle abbr.
- 52 Marathoners' sources of energy
- 54 Telemarketing tactic
- 56 "Scream" scream
- 57 Rule that keeps you from spelling weirdly?
- 58 With great intensity
- 59 Colonists
- 60 Dr. Scholl's product

Down

- 1 Stalwart political group
- 2 Apples since 2012
- 3 The best of times
- 4 Harmonica-playing chipmunk
- 5 Gin flavoring
- 6 Ring decisions
- 7 Off-the-wall
- 8 No longer fazed by
- 9 Time meas.
- 10 VA concern
- 11 Mount an attack on
- 12 Kiwi-shaped
- 13 Bashes
- 14 Just baked, say
- 20 Riches
- 23 1994 co-Nobel with Yasser and Shimon
- 24 Fluffy toy
- 26 Ex-U.N. chief Annan
- 27 "Anaconda" rapper Nicki
- 28 Kenyan tribe
- 30 Worn welcome symbol
- 32 Game show VIPs
- 33 Enclave in Italy
- 34 Warning signal
- 35 High-tech capacity units
- 37 Pie sometimes topped with pineapple
- 39 Gatherings before snaps
- 41 Salon device
- 43 Day of films
- 44 Brick of the Southwest
- 45 High land
- 46 Up in the air
- 48 Long-eared critters
- 50 Biol. branch
- 52 "Big Brother" host Julie ___ Moonves
- 53 Terrier breed from Scotland
- 55 "What ___ the odds?!"
- 56 Go downhill fast

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	
15							16							
17							18							
19						20			21					
22									24		25			
26									28					
29		30							31		32	33	34	35
36									37					
38									39					
43	44	45	46			47					48			
49					50		51				52			53
54							55				56			
57											58			
59														60

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USU cohort study investigates COVID-19 impacts on DOD personnel

The Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences' (USU) Infectious Disease Clinical Research Program is leading a multi-year study to identify risk factors for COVID-19 in the military population, understand the symptoms and disease course, and investigate clinical outcomes.

Epidemiology, Immunology, and Clinical Characteristics of Emerging Infectious Diseases with Pandemic Potential – or EPICC – study hopes to inform the Military Health System on ways to improve the patient care and treatment, infection, and disease prevention of those with COVID-19. USU is working in partnership with a network of military commands, treatment facilities, and laboratories across the country for EPICC.

Findings from the study “will support further understanding of the impact of SARS-CoV-2 infection on active-duty readiness, acute and chronic clinical outcomes, the effectiveness of new treatments and vaccines, and address questions related to the emergence of new variants and their clinical impact,” said Dr. Brian Agan, deputy science director of IDCRP and principal investigator of the study.

The study is also evaluating how long the immune response to the COVID-19 vaccines lasts, breakthrough infections – which happen when a vaccinated individual becomes sick from the same illness the vaccination is designed to prevent – and how they behave over time, and estimating vaccine effectiveness, said Agan,

who is also an employee of the Henry M. Jackson Foundation for the Advancement of Military Medicine, Inc.

Department of Defense service members and MHS beneficiaries of any age with COVID-19-like illness who are admitted to the hospital or treated as outpatients at an EPICC site can join. Likewise, those 18 years or older who have been tested for COVID-19, whether they tested positive or negative, can participate in the online portion of the study, which includes self-collected blood specimens for selected participants.

The protocol was recently updated to also enroll COVID-19 vaccine recipients and will initiate recruitment upon approval, said Navy Capt. (Dr.) Timothy Burgess, program director of IDCRP, who oversees the study. Eligible beneficiaries who are interested in participating in EPICC can submit an online screening form to join.

“In addition, asymptomatic individuals with a high risk of exposure are also eligible for enrollment in EPICC, which includes health care workers and close contacts of cases,” said Burgess. “Particularly, health care workers who have received a COVID-19 vaccination will be an important population for studies to examine vaccine effectiveness and outcomes.”

Data from inpatient, outpatient, and online participants, including their clinical characteristics, comorbidities, the clinical course of their illness, treatment, immunology, and outcomes, is being

collected for the study.

“Questionnaires are provided to enrollees to collect information on demographics, symptoms at initial presentation and chronic or persisting symptoms during follow-up, exposure history, and lifestyle factors,” said Burgess. “Clinical and research specimens collected from enrollees are examined using molecular, serological, and other immune assays in collaboration USU and non-USU partner laboratories.”

Initiated in March 2020, EPICC is expected to continue enrolling participants at least through March 2022, or for as long as needed to fill in the knowledge gaps related to this disease, explained Agan.

“Once enrolled, participants are actively followed for one year to fully capture specimens and data including chronic outcomes and sequelae and will be followed for up to four additional years through electronic medical record review,” Agan said.

EPICC is being conducted at 10 military medical treatment facilities throughout the United States:

- Brooke Army Medical Center in Fort Sam Houston, Texas
- Carl R. Darnall Army Medical Center in Fort Hood, Texas
- Fort Belvoir Community Hospital in Fort Belvoir, Virginia
- Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Washington
- Naval Medical Center Portsmouth in Portsmouth, Virginia
- Naval Medical Center San Diego in San Diego, California
- Tripler Army Medical Center in Honolulu, Hawaii
- William Beaumont Army Medical Center in El Paso, Texas
- Womack Army Medical Center in Fort Bragg, North Carolina
- Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland

Military health personnel wearing a face mask and shield speaking to a man who is wearing a face mask



Navy Hospital Corpsman 3rd Class Charles Cambern holds up a numbered sign as patients circle through to receive the COVID-19 vaccine at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, in Bethesda, Maryland. WRNMMC is one of 10 DOD sites undertaking the EPICC study to better understand COVID-19 disease. U.S. Navy photo by Ricardo Reyes.

By the first week of February, more than 1,600 active-duty service members and MHS beneficiaries had enrolled in EPICC, the majority of whom are being treated as outpatients, said Agan. Approximately half of the subjects with confirmed SARS-CoV-2 diagnoses included in EPICC are active-duty service members.

Some interesting observations the researchers found thus far are that the characteristics of hospitalized COVID-19 patients compared to those treated as outpatients has shown a higher proportion of comorbidities, with hypertension, diabetes, and obesity being most prevalent, said Agan. In fact, their findings have begun to identify why obesity is a risk factor for more severe disease.

They were also able to garner valuable insight into the risk of reinfection from a military health care worker enrolled in the study who was reinfected with a symptomatic case of COVID-19.

“A median time to recovery has been identified as 14 days, with nine lost duty days among active-duty service members,” said Agan. “These findings not only

support operational planning, but also provide an important baseline to evaluate the effectiveness of vaccines as uptake widens across the DOD.”

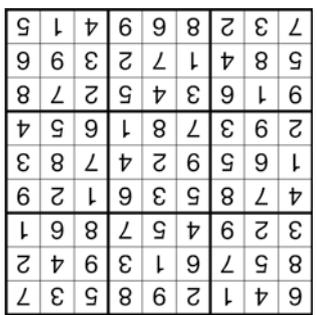
They also found that the antibody levels that cause immunity remain in individuals for more than six months post-infection and that there were no “seroreversions” after six months post-infection. Seroreversion is the loss of serologic reactivity, or the presence of a particular antigen in the blood, whether spontaneous or in response to therapy.

“With ongoing concerns about the magnitude and duration of immunity post-infection, our findings were both surprising and a relief,” said Burgess.

The researchers hope the in-

formation on the effectiveness and safety of the vaccines will alleviate concerns and encourage individuals to be vaccinated. And as the vaccine rollout expands to more recipients, the study will benefit from recruiting participants among the growing population of vaccinated recipients.

“This will enhance our ability to evaluate vaccine effectiveness in the population and if other reports showing high levels of protection are confirmed, our work may help boost confidence among those who are less certain,” said Burgess. “We are excited about the ability of the EPICC study to answer key questions for patients, health care providers, and leadership to guide decisions as we steer through the coming months of this unprecedented and historic pandemic.”



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