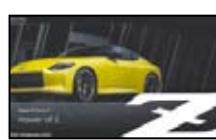


## Career & Education

Navy could return to using photos for promotions, personnel chief says.

See page 6

## AutoMatters & More



Z Proto story in Nissan Z: 50 Years of Exhilarating Performance.

See page 9

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V-J Day in Times Square, a photograph by Alfred Eisenstaedt, celebrating the victory over Japan and the end of World War II.

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SIXTY-FIRST YEAR NO. 16  
THURSDAY, AUGUST 12, 2021

## THIRD FLEET HQ DEPLOYS TO HAWAII FOR NAVY'S UNPRECEDENTED FIVE-FLEET GLOBAL COMBAT EXERCISES

by Wyatt Olson,  
Stars and Stripes

JOINT BASE PEARL HARBOR-HICKAM, Hawaii - For the remainder of August, the San Diego-based 3rd Fleet will be headquartered in a scrum of tents in Hawaii while its command takes part in unprecedented, worldwide Navy drills.

Large Scale Exercise 2021 kicked off last week, with synchronized training taking place among five numbered fleets within U.S. Fleet Forces Command, U.S. Pacific Fleet and U.S. Naval Forces Europe.

"The training is based on a progression of fleet battle problems and scenarios that will assess and refine modern warfare concepts, including distributed maritime operations, expeditionary advanced base operations, and littoral operations in a contested environment," the Navy said in a news release last week.

The worldwide exercise is a subset of the even more extensive Large Scale Global Exercise 21, according to a separate news release last week by U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, whose job it is to make the joint force, multinational exercise a reality.

Large Scale Global Exercise



Vice Adm. Steve Koehler, commander of the Navy's 3rd Fleet, speaks with reporters at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii, Aug. 9. Navy photo by MC1 Danny Kelley

21 incorporates the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps for training with military forces from the United Kingdom, Australia and Japan through Aug. 27.

Roughly a dozen dark-green tents were pitched a week ago at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam to serve as 3rd Fleet's temporary home.

"I've brought the entire headquarters function here, inside

this expeditionary mock capability," fleet commander Vice Adm. Steve Koehler told reporters while standing near the tents.

"So, I'm command-and-controlling all of 3rd Fleet - both within the exercise and real world - from here," he said. The fleet includes 100 ships, 400 aircraft and roughly 68,000 personnel, he said.

The scale of the maritime training is unprecedented in the

modern era, Koehler said.

"When you're looking across the large-scale naval exercise here that we're doing, certainly in my 35 years this is the first of a kind where we are bringing in all of the naval forces together, synchronized across the whole Navy, in the meetings that we're having all day long across these 17 time zones," he said.

"Right now, we're exercising combat scenarios across the

entire maritime of the globe," he said.

The global exercise force - which also includes elements of the Navy's 2nd, 4th, 6th and 7th Fleets - includes about 36 vessels at sea, from carriers to submarines, as well as "an unlimited array of constructive, or computer-generated units," 3rd Fleet said in a news release Aug. 9.

The exercise fleet Koehler

## Carlos Del Toro confirmed as the 78th Navy secretary

WASHINGTON - Carlos Del Toro, a Navy veteran and CEO for an engineering and consulting firm, was confirmed by the Senate as the 78th Navy secretary, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said. The Senate on Saturday confirmed Del Toro as the Navy's top civilian leader two months after President Joe Biden nominated him for the position. Del Toro, who immigrated to the United States in 1962 with his family, is now the first Navy secretary born in Cuba. Del Toro graduated from the Naval Academy, Naval Postgraduate School and Naval War College and spent 22 years on active duty in the service, according to his biography on the academy's alumni association website. He also spent five years as a civilian employee for the Navy, including as senior military assistant to the director for programs analysis and evaluation. He was sworn in as Secretary of the Navy on Aug. 9



Carlos Del Toro, sworn in as the 78th Secretary of the Navy. Courtesy photo

## ACTIVE DUTY GOLF TOURNAMENT TO KICKOFF FLEET WEEK SAN DIEGO '21

SAN DIEGO - The San Diego Fleet Week Foundation will kick off its 2021 schedule of events to honor and thank the men and women of the Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard with an all active duty golf tournament on Sept. 8 at the Singing Hills Golf Resort in El Cajon.

Approximately 150 junior officers and enlisted men and women will be hosted to a full day of golf which will include lunch and a post golf reception as well as on course refreshments. Golfers will compete in a scramble format for individual

and team prizes as well as the Fleet Week "Inter-Service Trophy" which will be awarded to a four-person team from the Navy, Marine Corps, or Coast Guard that posts the lowest score.

All enlisted members as well as junior officer, (O4 & below) can register to play at the Fleet Week website at: [FLEETWEEKACTIVE.DUTYGOLFTOURNAMENT2021](http://FLEETWEEKACTIVE.DUTYGOLFTOURNAMENT2021) - Fleet Week San Diego There is a nominal charge of \$10 per golfer.

The San Diego Fleet Week Foundation is celebrating its 20th anniversary and is plan-

ning a full schedule of live events to honor and thank San Diego's active duty and veteran community. A 16-team double elimination softball tournament with military teams from the bases in the area as well as teams of first responders from the cities around San Diego Bay will start on Oct. 121 at Naval Base San Diego. Starting on Nov. 4 events will shift to downtown San Diego with military displays and ship tours at Broadway Pier as well as the Innovation Zone, Student STEM Days and Military Family Day. Other activities

scheduled to honor those who serve and have served include a Military/Veterans Art Show, as well as the General Atomics sponsored Fleet Week/SDMAC Breakfast and the Cubic sponsored Enlisted Recognition Luncheon. The series of events will wrap up on Nov. 11 with the 2nd annual Veteran Day Boat Parade around San Diego Bay and a post parade concert at Broadway Pier.

"San Diego is definitely a military town," said Bill Baugh a retired Army colonel, who is the 2021 president of the San Diego

Fleet Week Foundation. "We're proud of the work our military men and women perform, both in their service to our country and in our community, and we know that the people of San Diego join us in honoring and thanking these outstanding men and women."

For more information about San Diego Fleet Week 2021 events, visit <https://fleetweek-sandiego.org>.

### About Fleet Week San Diego

Fleet Week San Diego was created by community and business leaders to honor and cel-

brate the men and women of the military through public events and alliances that support and thank these heroes. The Chamber of Commerce gave birth to Fleet Week San Diego in 1997 and by 2001 the event had grown into a nonprofit California Public Benefit Corporation. By expressing its support for the contributions made by the sea services to the many communities of the greater San Diego region, Fleet Week San Diego helps to maintain the vision of San Diego as a patriotic, pro-military city.

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## Defense official outlines U.S. security assistance, cooperation in Middle East

by Terri Moon Cronk,  
DOD News

A Defense Department official testified about U.S. security assistance in the Middle East before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee Subcommittee on the Near East, South Asia, Central Asia and Counterterrorism, emphasizing five vital points.

Dana Stroul, deputy assistant secretary of defense for Middle East Policy, leads the development of DOD's policy and strategy for Bahrain, Egypt, Israel, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Palestinian Authority, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

Critical to DOD's role and security cooperation, Stroul noted:

Strategy drives programming and resource allocation. The interim National Security Strategy released earlier this year set out the broad parameters for how the United States will engage abroad to protect Americans at home, she said.

"In particular, it calls for doubling down on building partnerships throughout the world, because our strength is multiplied when we combine efforts to address common challenges, share costs and widen the circle of cooperation. DOD's security cooperation activities are nested within this guidance," she noted.

The State Department's diplomacy is in the lead, she said, adding that DOD programs fall within a whole-of-government approach to the region.

"We utilize security cooperation authorities and programs to expand the capabilities of willing partners to respond to urgent security needs, and invest in the institutional growth of partner forces to share the responsibility for regional security," Stroul said.

Over time, the United States' goal is to partner with self-reli-

ant, capable and accountable partner forces who will work alongside the nation to achieve mutual objectives based on shared threats and shared interests, she said. A long-term proposition, security cooperation programs are also designed to ensure that the United States maintains access to key areas



**Syrian children play with rocks in Al-Hasakah Province, Syria, Feb. 13, 2019. Continued efforts of the U.S. coalition and its partners maintain peace and stability in the region. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Ray Boyington**

and facilities to support the defense of its partners, respond to potential contingencies, and to protect U.S. personnel, she said.

Security cooperation comprises more than military sales and funding, Stroul noted.

"DOD security cooperation activities include exercises, education and training, operational planning, institutional capacity development efforts such as security sector reform, strategic planning and doctrine development, human resource

management, defense, budgeting, training and advising, as well as the transfer of defense articles and services within each of these categories," she told the panel.

There are opportunities and requirements for DOD to demonstrate and impart U.S. values

such as support for rules-based international order, respect for the rule of law and civilian control of the military and commitment to fundamental freedoms and human rights, Stroul said.

Security cooperation activities reinforce broader U.S. objectives, she said. An example is normalization, as Israel moves into the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility where the United States can use military exercises and U.S.-convened professional education programs to provide opportunities to facilitate normalization and

build upon it, by encouraging relationship-building between Israel and Arab militaries' cooperation to counter the threat of attack unmanned aerial vehicles versus drones.

"Given the shared regional threat of the Iran-supported UAV network across the region, we can use security cooperation programs to advance shared regional defense burden sharing, while the [United States] seeks to remain the security partner of choice in the Middle East," Stroul said.

## Stronger together with Strong Bonds

by Staff Sgt.  
Javier Alvarez

MARCH AIR RESERVE BASE, Ca. - The divorce rate in the United States has hovered at 50 percent for the past 40 years, according to the National Center for Health Statistics. While trends have seen the rate drop in recent years, stressors that lead couples to go their separate ways are prevalent among the military population.

Enter the Strong Bonds program at the 163d Attack Wing here.

During the past nine years, the 163d ATKW chaplain corps have hosted strong bonds events for individual, couples, and family units, said Air Force Maj. Shannon Dong, 163d ATKW chaplain. On average 25 couples or 40 single Airmen participate in a weekend retreat designed to strengthen relationships, inspire hope and rekindle marriages.

"People are go, go, go," said Dong. "Between school, work and drill, the time you really get to think about the important relationships in your life is when you're navigating from point A to point B. Having this opportunity, I think is really amazing because self-reflection time is key to reestablishing where you want to be."

Strong Bonds was originally designed by the Army, who in 1997 saw the need for a family support programs among their ranks. About 90 couples participated during the programs premier year. Interest and program

"Improved integrated regional security among partners is key as the United States right-sizes its posture in the region," she said.

As for strategic competition in the Middle East, building the capacity of partners is critical to reducing their vulnerabilities to aggression and coercion, and improving their ability to defend their sovereignty, their interests and a free and open international order, Stroul noted. A critical tool [in] encountering U.S. competitors like China and Russia is to provide superior training

and equipment to meet partners' needs, she said.

Congressional consultation and oversight is critical, she said, adding, "Thank you for Congressional bipartisan support for security cooperation authorities, programs and funding for the Middle East, and in exercising robust and necessary oversight and monitoring to ensure that security cooperation resources remain aligned with U.S. objectives, and continue to be in the interest of the American people."

success ballooned those numbers to hundreds of thousands of servicemembers and their families participating annually across all services.

"We got married at the schoolhouse at Wichita Falls," said Staff Sgt. Samuel Aguilar, 163d Maintenance Operation Center maintenance aircraft production controller. "We talked about getting married and we did. At the time she was in California and I was in Texas. So off the bat there were challenges."

Twice a year, between April and June, participants can be found at premier tourist destinations in Southern California participating in one of the four strong bonds curricula.

"It's taught me what I need to realign [so I can be there] for her," said Aguilar. "[Strong Bonds] puts tools in your toolbox. It helps you learn that perspective is everything. Initially in my marriage, I felt like I was doing things the wrong way. But that was the mindset I was in. I had to step back and look at situations

from a different point of view, her point of view. It's about being intentional."

The Strong Bonds program is hosted by the chaplain corps with funding by the National Guard Bureau, said Dong. The event isn't faith based and all members of the 163d ATKW are encouraged to participate.

Word of mouth, and posted flyers is typically how the program events are advertised, but people can contact the 163d ATKW chaplain office for more information.

"[My favorite thing about strong bonds is] seeing the couples reconnect," said Dong. "Sometimes couples do come in and they're not sure what to expect from the weekend but by the end because they had a chance to talk to each other and connect with each other you begin to see them sit closer to each other out their arms around each other. I'm sure maybe they probably would have done that prior but just to see how they grow more comfortable being in that setting."

**Total Navy Battle Force: 296**  
**Ships underway**  
 Deployed ships underway: 57  
 Non-deployed ships underway: 25  
 Total ships underway: 82  
**Ships deployed by fleet**

Fleet Forces: 1	3rd Fleet: 10
4th Fleet: 2	5th Fleet: 21
6th Fleet: 14	7th Fleet: 55
<b>Total: 103</b>	

**Where are our ships at sea**

These are approximate positions of the Navy's deployed carrier strike groups & amphibious ready groups throughout the world as of Aug 2, 2021, based on Navy and public data. You can access this and other information through the U.S. Naval Institute's portal at <https://news.usni.org/topstories>.

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# Biden to approve Austin's request to make COVID-19 vaccine mandatory for service members

“THESE VACCINES WILL SAVE LIVES. PERIOD. THEY ARE SAFE. THEY ARE EFFECTIVE. OVER 350 MILLION SHOTS HAVE BEEN GIVEN IN THE UNITED STATES ALONE,” SAID PRESIDENT JOE BIDEN

by Jim Garamone,  
DOD News

By mid-September, Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III will request a waiver from President Joe Biden to make the COVID-19 vaccine mandatory for service members, Pentagon Press Secretary John F. Kirby said Aug. 9.

Austin released a message to the troops saying that after consultations with senior civilian and military officials, making vaccinations mandatory is the best way forward. More than 73 percent of active duty personnel have received at least one shot of the vaccines to date.

President Biden replied almost immediately.

“I strongly support Secretary Austin’s message to the force today on the Department of Defense’s plan to add the COVID-19 vaccine to the list of required vaccinations for our service members not later than mid-September,” Biden said in a message released by the White House. “Secretary Austin and I share an unshakable commitment to making sure our troops have every tool they need to do their jobs as safely as possible.

“These vaccines will save lives. Period. They are safe. They are effective. Over 350 million shots have been given in the United States alone. Being vaccinated will enable our service members to stay healthy, to better protect their families, and to ensure that

our force is ready to operate anywhere in the world.”

The Food and Drug Administration is expected to give full approval to the vaccines, possibly by the end of the month, Kirby said. If that happens, Austin will immediately add the vaccines to the mandatory

## U.S. will continue to operate in South China Sea to ensure prosperity for all

by C. Todd Lopez,  
DOD News

There’s a variety of concerns that keep Indo-Pacom on its toes - many centered around the activities of China, which quite often don’t match up with the words that come out of Beijing, its commander said.

“We certainly view with concern many of the actions that we’ve seen from Beijing,” Navy Adm. John C. Aquilino said during a presentation Aug. 4 at the Aspen Security Forum in Colorado. “I think what I view with most concern are certainly not the words, but the actions that we’ve seen.”

China’s actions in Hong Kong, for instance, reneging on promises of autonomy guaranteed there under agreement in 1997 with the British government, are of concern, Aquilino said.

“Those actions were completely disconnected from the words from Beijing to adhere to the agreement that was in place,” he said. “We see similar actions if you were to look at the border of India — we view

military list, Kirby said.

The services have time to plan how they will implement the program, and they have been working on how they will vaccinate the rest of the active and reserve component. Kirby said there is no shortage of vaccine and the department does not think this

that with concern. If you look at the actions associated with the Uyghurs in Xinjiang, and the violations of what we believe — the dignity and respect and human rights — that we view those actions with concern.”

Also of concern for Indo-Pacom are China’s claims on the South China Sea — which Aquilino said interfere with the wellbeing and prosperity of all nations in the region.

“We view with concern [China’s] unlawful claim to the entire South China Sea — directly and negatively impacting all of the countries in the region, from their livelihood, whether it be with fishing or access to natural resources,” Aquilino said. “Those are the things that lead me to believe that our execution of integrated deterrence has to occur now, and with a sense of urgency.”

Ten nations border the South China Sea, and many more nations depend on it for trade with all of those countries, Aquilino said. The prosperity of all depends on continued free access to the waters there.

will be a limiting factor.

A full third of Austin’s message to the force urged service members not to wait: To get the vaccine right away. “You can consider this memo, not just a warning order to the services, but to the troops themselves,” Kirby said. “We certainly hope that they

Roughly a third of liquid natural gas and a quarter of all global trade flows through the South China Sea, Aquilino said. Bordering nations also rely on the sea for resources as well, such as fishing.

“It’s critically important for all nations,” he said. “The unlawful claim to the entire South China Sea threatens all of that. When we talk about the South China Sea, understanding the importance is critical.”

The U.S., in part through Indo-Pacom, works with allies and partners in the region to reduce tensions there, he said.

“We spend a lot of time with our allies and partners to ensure that the international rules-based order is maintained and unlawful claims don’t go without challenge,” he said. “But the Chinese just recently unilaterally renamed 80 geo-

will take advantage of the opportunity to get the vaccines now that are available now to them on a voluntary basis. That’s obviously the potential effect that we’d like to see achieved as a result of the secretary’s message. But if they don’t, eventually we’re going to get to a mandatory sort of regimen and we’ll take care of it then.”

graphic features in the area, with an inherent claim that goes with. That’s just counter to what all of the nations in the region would expect, believe, and what they need to maintain their prosperity.”

The U.S. has been operating in the Pacific for more than 80 years now, said Aquilino, and will continue to do so, including in order to maintain the agreed-upon international rules-based orders that the U.S. and all Pacific nations depend on to ensure prosperity.

“This attempt to restate what a revisionist history view of claims is just counter to everything that those nations with common values believe,” he said. “We will operate here to ensure that freedom of navigation for all is maintained, and that we will preserve the stability and peace in the [region’s] shared prosperity.”

**Navy**

- EOD Maritime Insertion Training Enhances Ability to Support Joint Force
- Indo-Pacific Forces from 21 Partner Nations Kick Off SEACAT
- USS Gerald R. Ford Conducts Final Explosive Event, Completing Full Ship Shock Trials
- Exercise Cutlass Express 2021 Concludes
- New Deputy Chief of Naval Operations for Operations, Plans and Strategy
- USS America Expeditionary Strike Group Participates in Combined and Joint Battle Problem
- NAVWAR Addresses Readiness Today and Modernization for Tomorrow at Sea-Air-Space 2021
- Navy says suspected Iranian drone strike hit oil tanker off Oman, killing two

**DoD**

- Top Military Medical Doctor Predicts Coronavirus Longevity
- Pentagon ‘Safe, Secure’ Following Attack
- Space Command, Navy Share Commonalities in Keeping Open Lines of Communication
- Southcom Commander Nominee: U.S. Must Remain ‘Partner of Choice’ in Western Hemisphere
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## How to join the workplace betrayal recovery program

by Dr. Daneen Skube,  
Tribune Content Agency

*Q: I want to learn to stop obsessing about an important betrayal by a trusted colleague that I have experienced. I think about this betrayal about five times a day and can't stop feeling devastated. I feel stupid that I*

We often prolong our suffering after someone has treated us poorly by engaging in being angry at ourselves because we think we should see everything coming.

If we were all completely pre-cognitive life would get pretty boring since we would know

will probably also be your fate. You'll extend yourself less and give people more time to show you who they really are.

A last comforting thought is to know that someone that loves themselves is incapable of being cruel to another. If you've met someone that treated you badly they are only defining who they

are in the world and not who you are. Do not make the mistake of believing you deserved poor treatment just because some people are incapable of loyalty or empathy.

The last word(s)

*Q I don't understand why certain co-workers are refusing to get the vaccine? Is there a rea-*

*son people will make decisions that defy science, medicine, and logic?*

A Yes, fear is a more powerful motivator than any amount of rational data. When people are afraid they will do nothing rather than do something that they see as an unknown.

Daneen Skube is an execu-

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." (C)2021 Interpersonal Edge. Distributed by Tribune Content Agency, LLC.

### INTERPERSONAL EDGE:

*trusted this person. How can you heal from a betrayal by someone at work you trusted?*

A: You will heal from a devastating betrayal at work if you are willing to do two things; 1) Stop beating yourself up for trusting this person. You are only hurting yourself more after someone else has hurt you. 2) Take a deep look into how this betrayal happened and what you can learn from it to avoid this issue in the future.

Some people think that if they work with someone they will always maintain a safe emotional distance. However, when we study relationship attachment there are three things that promote emotional connection; 1) proximity 2) proximity and 3) proximity. Whoever we see regularly and daily are most likely to become our closest relationships.

If you are emotionally healthy the people you see regularly are people you will come to like, trust and confide in. You should be more worried about your mental health if despite regular exposure you never get close to anyone at work.

Beating yourself up because you trusted someone untrustworthy is just proof you are human not proof of being stupid.

everything before it happens. Sometimes we feel surprised by good situations and sometimes by bad but both test our adaptability. Whether our unexpected event was good or bad we can always learn lots from our experiences.

Look back at your relationship with this colleague and ask yourself the following questions:

1) How did she treat people that could do nothing for her?

2) What was her track record on loyalty and empathy with friends and at work?

3) What signs looking backward do you think you might have missed?

We may feel uncomfortable when we work to learn from our history. In hindsight many red flags we missed may seem obvious. The point of learning from history isn't to get upset you missed these flags. The point is you can apply your new awareness to future relationships.

When you feel betrayed it is easy to decide to trust no one and that's not effective or necessary. However, you may now put on a new set of glasses when you meet someone. You will ask yourself the three questions above. You'll realize that how this person has treated others

## Navy could return to using photos for promotions, personnel chief says

by Caitlin Doornbos,  
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON - The Navy could include service photos in promotion packages again after data suggested minorities are less likely to be selected blindly in some situations by promotion review boards, the service's chief of personnel said Aug. 3.

Diversity among leadership dropped after photos were removed last year from Navy promotion packages, Vice Adm. John Nowell said during a panel discussion on diversity and inclusion at the Navy League's Sea-Air-Space conference.

"I think we should consider reinstating photos in selection boards," he said. "We look at, for instance, the one-star board over the last five years, and we can show you where, as you look at diversity, it went down with photos removed."

Former Defense Secretary Mark Esper directed all services in July 2020 to eliminate photos from promotion and selection boards to support diversity in the ranks. But Nowell said adding them back could do more to build a more diverse leadership force.

"It's a meritocracy, we're only going to pick the best of the best, but we're very clear with our language to boards that we want them to consider diversity across all areas," he said. "Therefore ... I think having a clear picture just makes it easier."

The Marine Corps is "looking at reinstating the photos," Brig. Gen. A.T. Williamson, director of the service's manpower plans and policy division, said during the panel discussion.

"There are elements of the photo that are ... very helpful for us. I think that we may find that we may have disadvantaged individuals by removing those photos from the boards."

Williamson said there was an "assumption that there's bias in the boardroom," but a recent review of the Marine Corps' promotion board process by the Department of the Navy's office for diversity, equity and inclusion found that's likely untrue.

"We're doing a survey right now to see if there's bias inside the evaluation system," he said. "[If] we find out that there's disparities within the way we do business within a service, we



**Vice Adm. John Nowell, the Navy chief of personnel, said Aug. 3 that the service could include service photos in promotion packages again Navy photo by Diana Quinlan**

need to be intellectually curious enough to ask why and then figure out what we need to do."

The comments come as the Defense Department works to address extremism and promote diversity in the military. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin has spoken "very publicly that at the senior leaders' level, we are not as diverse as the rest of the force," Chief Pentagon spokesman John Kirby said Aug. 3.

Kirby said he "wouldn't speculate the degree to which the secretary might get involved in

something as specific as photographs" because the services run their own promotion system. However, he said Austin is open to new ideas to support diversity and inclusion.

"There's a lot of work to be done," Kirby told reporters at the Pentagon. "The secretary has reiterated numerous times to service leadership that he wants to be open-minded about additional solutions, additional ways to increase and to improve diversity inclusion throughout the force, and that he wants them to think creatively about that."



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# Local Military



Petty Officer 2nd Kristen Allen and Petty Officer 2nd Class Monique Gilbreath (inset) prepare to take part in a diving exercise at Coast Guard Sector San Diego, Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 3rd Class Alex Gray

## Less than one percent of military divers are women, the Coast Guard has two

by Petty Officer 3rd Class Alexander Gray

SAN DIEGO - The Coast Guard is the smallest of the military branches. Being a diver in the Coast Guard is rare and being a female diver, even more so. There are only two active female divers in the Coast Guard. It's a small club.

Diver is a unique job, or rating, in the Coast Guard. For the majority of ratings, you enter the Coast Guard as a seaman apprentice (E-2) or a seaman (E-3), and then you wait for the rating you have chosen to become available. As long as you physically qualify and pass the tests, you can have any rating you'd like.

Being a diver is slightly more complicated. You need to be at least a Petty Officer 2nd Class (E-5), or be in the process of becoming an E-5, to be eligible to apply for dive school. This means that before you become a diver you must have already served in another rating in the Coast Guard. Divers refer to their previous rating as their "legacy rate."

"The school process to become a

diver, they usually put a solicitation out at the beginning of the year," said Diver 2nd Class (DV2) Kristen Allen, the most recent female diving school graduate. "You put in your application, which includes a PT [physical fitness] test and medical.

"From the application you submit, they will usually pick 20 to 25 people to go into the week-long screening process in New Jersey, and from there they pick around five to 10 members to go to school."

The screening process is intense, but it also provides the hopeful divers with an idea of what to expect if they are selected. The screening is held a year before the selectees go to dive school, which gives them time to mentally and physically prepare themselves.

"The ocean doesn't care if you're a female," said Allen. "You have to get into this for the right reasons."

During the screening, applicants are expected to continuously perform physical fitness exercises to ensure they can survive the five months of dive school, said DV1 Monique Gilbreath.

Gilbreath graduated from dive school in 2017 and is considered a veteran diver at this stage in her military career. The best part of her job is underwater cutting, she said.

"There is just something special and rewarding about that job," said Gilbreath. "You go out there and you're playing with 10 thousand degrees Fahrenheit on the tip of your rod, and you're blasting through steel underwater. And it's challenging. It will keep you on your toes because you can have thousands of pounds of steel above your head and at any point this piling is going to come down, and you may not be able to see."

Being proficient at your work and aware of your surroundings is of the utmost importance when underwater cutting.

"You just don't know what's going to happen," said Gilbreath. "When you're down there, it's you and how you're going to react to the situation that you're given. So knowing that I am capable, but it's always a challenge, that is special."

Gilbreath has done underwater cutting in the Florida Keys and in New Jersey. The jobs, as she describes, can be very different due to the different environments. While in the Florida Keys she worked on reef conservation. When she worked in New Jersey, she cut and pulled metal pilings from the water, making the water safer for boaters.

Rather than having a family crash into these bent-over steel pilings and capsizing, we work to remove them and prevent that, she said.

"For any female that wants to do anything, if it seems challenging, don't let that stop you," said Gilbreath. "When I saw the solicitation for diver school, I couldn't do a single pull up. But if you put in the work and you have the mental strength you can do whatever you want. So don't let the challenge scare you, let the challenge motivate you and go for it, earn it."

JS Makinami.

The Navy has been circumspect in revealing details about what scenarios and locations are in store for the rest of Large-Scale Exercise 2021.

"I've got to be careful, specifically, of the actual assets and where they are," Koehler said Monday. "But I would tell you that this exercise takes not only the live forces that are currently underway and currently deployed.

"There are 'synthetic forces' that are simulated in all of the scenarios that are combined - both with the live and the constructive forces - giving us a very robust scenario. All domains: above below and on the sea, space, cyber and information."

The Navy expects to hold similar worldwide exercises every three years, the 3rd Fleet news release said.

### Exercise

continued from page 1

ing integrated fighting power of multiple naval forces to share sensors, weapons and platforms across all domains," Rear Adm. Dan Martin, commander of the destroyer squadron, said Aug. 8 in a Navy news release.

"Contemporary naval doctrine demands a shift of focus from the individual carrier strike group to a fleet-centric approach," he said.

A preliminary, four-day drill wrapped up Sunday on the Coral Sea off Australia, during which the USS *America* Expeditionary Strike Group, along with the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit, trained beside the Royal Australian Navy's amphibious assault ship HMAS Canberra and frigate HMAS Ballarat, and Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force destroyer

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# Austal awarded maintenance, modernization contract for West Coast-based littoral combat ships

MOBILE, Ala. - The Navy awarded Austal USA a sustainment execution contract Aug. 4 for repair, maintenance and modernization of all littoral combat ships homeported in San Diego. This includes all Austal-built Independence-variant LCS as well as the west-coast based Freedom-variant LCS.

"I'm proud of the hard work our service team has done to make this award possible," Austal USA interim president Rusty Murdaugh said. "We're honored that this award puts us in a position to support the Sailors that deploy on these ships to protect and support our country and our allies."

The SEC West award builds on Austal USA's continued investment in the service business. This award will enable the company to further expand its current San Diego service center while offering a greater range and depth of support available to the Navy. Austal USA is also expanding its Singapore service center to effectively support the Navy's increased presence throughout the Pacific region.

In September 2020, the company expanded its Mobile service center to support both government and commercial customers by purchasing 15 acres of waterfront property along the Mobile River and es-

tablishing its Austal USA West Campus Ship Repair facility.

"Growing our service business to meet increasing cus-

**"We are particularly focused on expanding our capability in the Pacific region to meet the growing demand from our Navy, Coast Guard, and Military Sealift Command customers," said Austal USA interim president Rusty Murdaugh**

tomers demand continues to be a priority of ours," Murdaugh said. "Whether it's servicing government or commercial ships in our Alabama facility or supporting our military around the world, we're ready. As our ships continue to deploy, we want to make sure our customers continue receiving the

excellent customer service and expertise Austal USA is known for. We are particularly focused on expanding our capability in the Pacific region to meet the

growing demand from our Navy, Coast Guard, and Military Sealift Command customers."

The Independence-variant LCS program has recorded a number of successful deployments with more ships scheduled to deploy in the near future.

In May 2020, USS *Montgomery* conducted operations in the South China Sea. Later that same month, USS *Gabrielle Giffords* also conducted presence operations in the area. In December, *Giffords* moved to support U.S. Southern Command in the Caribbean and eastern Pacific Ocean with the ship interdicting \$100 million of illegal drugs. In June, USS *Tulsa* conducted operations in the Philippine Sea, while USS *Charleston* operated with the Sri Lankan navy in Malaysia.

This service execution contract win highlights a major milestone for the company that 20 years ago broke ground on its U.S. shipbuilding operations and

has now transformed into one of the most modern shipyards in the U.S. With the completion of its steel manufacturing line in April, the company is set to design, build and deliver both steel and aluminum hulled ships, while providing service and support in the U.S. and Western Pacific region.

Austal USA also supports the Navy's afloat medical operations and the service's autonomous fleet. The company is executing modifications to EPF 13 and 14 to enhance the medical capability on both ships, as well as incorporating autonomous operations capability on EPF 13.

## This week's snapshots



**SAN CLEMENTE ISLAND**  
Aug. 5, 2021

Yeoman 3rd Class Diego Silva-Estrella and Yeoman 1st Class Courtney Tyler assigned to Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 3, man a fighting position with a M240B machine gun and M4 rifle as the battalion conducts construction and support of Expeditionary Advanced Base and Advanced Naval Base Operations as part of Exercise Turning Point. Turning Point is a major combat operations readiness generation exercise for the Pacific Naval Construction Force designed to support and enable fleet maneuver and logistics. Photo by MC1 Michael Lopez



**USS CORONADO, at sea**  
July 28, 2021

Boatswain's Mate First Class Jeremy Hernandez signals an MH-60 Black Hawk assigned to the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (SOAR) during night-time deck landing qualifications aboard the Independence-variant littoral combat ship. Navy photo by MC2 Hector Carrera



**USS RAFAEL PERALTA**  
July 29, 2021

Navy Petty Officer 3rd Class Jordan Boucher uses a sextant to verify position during Talisman Saber in the Coral Sea. The month-long multidomain exercise strengthens allied partner capabilities to respond to the full range of Indo-Pacific security concerns. Photo by Petty Officer 3rd Class Dan Serrianni

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## Defense Department announces service cross reviews for African American and Native American war veterans

On Aug. 2, the Secretary of Defense directed the secretaries of the military departments to review Distinguished Service Cross, Navy Cross, and Air Force Cross Medals previously awarded to African American and Native American veterans for valorous actions performed during select conflicts to determine if such Veterans' actions warrant award of the Medal of Honor.

The reviews directed are as follows:

**African American veterans:** Review service crosses awarded to such veterans for valorous actions performed during the Korean and Vietnam Wars. (Note: The Departments of the Army and Navy already performed reviews for said World War II veterans.)

**Native American veterans:** Review Service Crosses awarded to such veterans for valorous actions performed during World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War.

The Secretary of Defense directed the review to ensure African American and Native American Service Cross recipients are afforded the same opportunities to have their valorous actions reviewed for possible upgrade to the Medal of Honor as previously afforded to their Asian American, Native American Pacific Islander, Jewish American, and Hispanic American counterparts.

The service crosses awarded to Asian American, Native American Pacific Islander, Jewish American, and Hispanic American war veterans for valorous actions during World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War were reviewed for potential upgrade to the Medal of Honor pursuant to Public Laws 104-106, 107-107, and 114-328.

There was no requirement to show the Veteran was discriminated against to be included in the review.

Instead, the laws merely required that the Veteran be

long to the specified class or group.

The Secretary of Defense-directed Service Cross Reviews ensure equitable treatment of African American and Native American Service Cross recipients from a standpoint of having their valorous actions

## Marine leader whose troops planted famous flag on Iwo Jima dies at 102

by John Wilkens

Dave Severance, a retired Marine colonel whose troops famously planted an American flag on Iwo Jima during World War II, died Aug. 2 at his home in La Jolla. He was 102.

There were actually two flag raisings that February morning in 1945, the second of which was captured in one of warfare's most iconic photographs. Severance spent years quietly trying to set the record straight about who did what back then, and why.

He told The San Diego Union-Tribune in a 2012 interview that he cared about the flag story because it spoke to the courage and sacrifice he witnessed every day

reviewed for potential upgrade to the Medal of Honor.

There is no requirement to show that the qualifying Veteran was subject to discrimination in order to be included in the review, just as there was no such requirement for the previous Asian American,

for more than a month during the battle, one of the bloodiest of the war.

His company went ashore in the 10th wave of what eventually would be about 70,000 Marines invading the island, a strategic slab of dormant volcano about 660 miles south of Tokyo. They were met by some 20,000 Japanese entrenched in fortified caves and tunnels and determined to die rather than surrender.

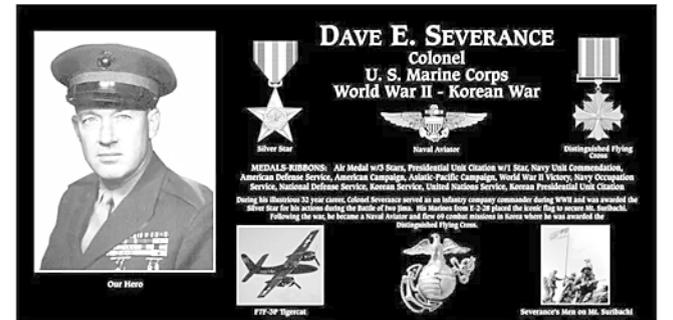
Severance's 240-man, six-officer unit out of Camp Pendleton (Company E, 2nd Battalion, 28th Regiment, 5th Division) spent 33 of the battle's 36 days on the front lines. About 75 percent

Native American Pacific Islander, Jewish American, and Hispanic American Service Cross reviews.

The reviews will be separately led by the Military Department Secretaries, and the results of the reviews are due to the Secretary of Defense by

August 2, 2026.

For more information please visit: <https://media.defense.gov/2021/Aug/06/2002824544/-1/-1/0/sd-memo-service-cross-reviews-for-african-american-and-native-american-war-veterans.pdf>.



of the company was killed or wounded.

He earned a Silver Star — "I tell people it's for surviving," he would later joke — and had several close calls, including a bullet that went between his legs and struck a lieutenant standing

behind him.

Severance, born Feb. 4, 1919, in Milwaukee, grew up in Colorado and joined the Marines in 1938 hoping to become a pilot. He went to San Diego for boot camp and wound up in the ground forces.

## The Meat & Potatoes of Life



by Lisa Smith Molinari

Fun fact: the phrase "the dog days of summer" actually refers to the weeks during late July and early August when the Sun is aligned with Sirius, otherwise known as the "Dog Star." However, to those of us who aren't astronomy geeks, this expression conjures visions of those hot, sticky, mosquito-ey days when you could fry and egg on the sidewalk and water the plants with your sweat mustache.

However, these days are also — DUN, DUN, DUN — the last days of summer break for most military families stationed across the globe.

As a kid, summer seemed to go on forever, because it was an endless loop of the same activities, week after week: running barefoot, jumping through sprinklers, slurping popsicles, sweaty afternoon naps, jumping off the high dive at the community pool, arguing in the neighbor's rumpus room over a game of Monopoly or Clue.

But today, summer flies by faster than your older brother on a back yard Slip 'n Slide, because modern families tend to be over scheduled year round with sports, lessons, camps and activities. Now, with only a week or two of summer left for most military families, it's time to have a last blast of fun before it's too late.

"But, but, but ... there's nothing to dooooo," you say in a whiney

## Grab dog days by the tail, before it's too late

voice. WRONG. Believe it or not, wherever you are in the world, there are LOTS of fun to be had before summer break ends. Don't waste these last precious days laying around watching "Practical Jokers" reruns under your air-conditioning vent, because before you know it, you'll be up at 7:00 am facing nine months of car pools, homework, sports practices, parent-teacher conferences, bus schedules, permission forms, band recitals, fundraisers and packed lunches.

Military installations may look olive drab and boring, but hidden among the utilitarian buildings are organizations that are great resources for recreation, travel, sports, activities and fun. Military Morale, Welfare and Recreation ("MWR") programs have roots in the American Revolution, when "sutlers" were appointed to provide for soldiers' personal needs. Later, "Canteen Associations" were organized as centers for social functions to promote esprit de corps.

Today, MWR provides military personnel with not only social functions, but also trips, lessons, recreation, sports, concerts, activities, movies and more. Here are just a scant few of the fun you can find on your military installations' MWR websites before school is back in session:

In Japan, schedule a tee time at Taiyo MCCS Golf Course in Okinawa. See the Waterfalls of Saga through MWR Sasebo Travel & Tours. In Yokosuka, hike Mt. Fuji if you're feeling daring, or take the kids bowling if you're too hot and sweaty to be outside. At

Camp Zama, bring your blow-up unicorn and family to Flick and Float Movie Night at the pool.

In Germany, hop on a quick bus trip from Stuttgart to Paris, or hang from a cliff on a "hohengluksteig" (high ropes course) in Klettersteig. In Italy, have lunch on the Amalfi Coast, plan a family picnic at Gaeta Olde Mill Inn Park, try canyoning outside of Vicenza, go spelunking outside of Aviano, or go paddle boarding in Sicily.

Enter the Korea-wide Hiking and Cycling Challenge. Near Seoul, careen down the tracks at Belle Foret Extreme Luge and Ranch through Humphry's MWR Outdoor Recreation.

Go snorkeling in Pearl Bay through MWR Bahrain.

In Hawaii, go see the Preacher Lawson Comedy Show at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, register for the Kalepa Trail Hike at PMRF Barking Sands, or rent a pontoon boat at Kaneohe Bay.

Why not throw an end-of-summer party in Chievres, Belgium and rent a popcorn maker, a slushy machine, and a dunk tank? Or, get medieval in Lakenheath, England and rent a pig roaster and a blow up castle? Go caving in Wales, or make some cheese in Spain.

Spend a weekend at Alaska's Seward Military Resort and go ziplining, or take a sunset cruise from Pelican Pete's Marina at GTMO.

Book a room at one of MWR's Armed Forces Recreation Resorts in Hawaii, Florida, Germany, Korea or Japan.

Last call, folks — Grab the dog days by the tail and have some last-minute summer fun!

## Z Proto story in Nissan Z: 50 Years of Exhilarating Performance

So much has changed in the past year. When I reviewed Nissan Z: 50 Years of Exhilarating Performance by Pete Evanow one year ago (see AutoMatters & More #653: <https://automatters.net/review-nissan-z-50-years-of-exhilarating-performance/>), something extremely important was missing. There was a new Z on the horizon, but that story was not quite ready to be told.

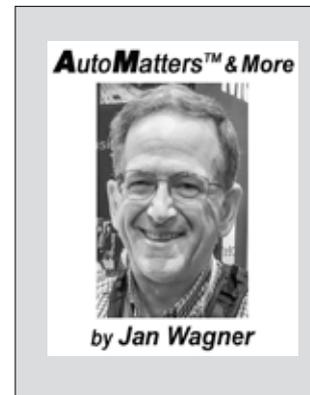
At that time, questions were raised amid heightened—some may even say frenzied—speculation:

"... what are ... those in-the-know saying about the Z's next 50 years? Enthusiasts and industry experts have commented on, predicted, and prayed for a future Z. Many have weighed in on a possible electric Z, a new engine upgrade that will earn the car a 400Z identity or another possible designation, including a mid-engine version. Given the mad rush to all things CUV- and SUV-based, at the expense of sedans in particular, could an extension of the Z brand develop into a sporty people- and package-hauler?"

"Will Nissan upgrade both the car's name and performance level for its next model? What will the powerplant choices become? Whatever the answer, it must follow the parameters of the heritage bestowed to the 370Z and its predecessors."

Now, almost exactly one year later — and with the new car to be revealed on Aug. 17—we get answers to those questions and more. The new book's press release says: "PERFECTLY TIMED to coincide with the August 17 launch of the new Nissan Z comes a revised and updated edition of the best-selling NISSAN Z: 50 YEARS OF EXHILARATING PERFORMANCE by Pete Evanow. This is the Nissan-official chronicle of Z history, from Datsun's planning for the new model in the late 1960s through the latest 50th anniversary Nissan 370Z and, now, the all-new Z-car."

"In addition to a complete history of the Z, this handsomely illustrated book examines the car's significant racing history with successes in IMSA and SCCA sports car racing, including extensive racing by Paul Newman for Bob Sharp and John Morton with



Brock Racing Enterprises. Special attention is devoted to the cult of Z-fans around the world who have supported Nissan's sports car through thick and thin and the early car's emergence as a rapidly appreciating collector car."

Given their similarities, do you need both of these volumes? Of course you do! They all but beg for a side-by-side comparison. In particular, take a close look at Chapter 10, the title of which changed from MOVING FORWARD AND BEYOND TO THE FUTURE OF Z-NESS.

Through words and behind-the-scenes photos, we are introduced to the Z Proto — under development since 2017. We learn that "it incorporates features and design cues from previous Zs, including the 240Z and the 300ZX, from which the Z Proto derives its rear appearance."

Alfonso Albaisa, Senior Vice President, Nissan Global Design, tells us: "Nissan's technology is all

about being lightweight and performance-driven. This started with the 240Z. Our predecessors in design recognized that the E-Type and 911 were very expensive, and so along came the Z that bore some similarities and offered very credible performance, and suddenly, it belonged to this group, but even better, it was accessible and affordable to so many other buyers. If you make things that people don't think they can own, and then realize they can, that transforms them. And the Z made a lot of drivers our customers." That includes me!

He went on to say: "More than a million and a half Zs are still on the road. The car has touched so many people - it is not purely about the progress of the Z but about the car's relationship with people. Designing the Z Proto is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity."

The new, Second Edition of Nissan Z: 50 Years of Exhilarating Performance is available now, from your favorite booksellers. Look for "INCLUDES NEW Z PROTO STORY" in the upper right-hand corner of the book's dust jacket.

The new Z Proto is "drop-dead gorgeous" and is a worthy spiritual successor to the iconic 240Z. If you hurry, there is still time for you witness live the rebirth of the all-new Nissan Z - on Aug. 17 at 5 p.m. Pacific Sign up to "be part of the legend" at: <https://www.nissanusa.com/live/zrevel>.

To see the most photos and most recent text, and to explore a wide variety of content dating back to 2002, visit AutoMatters & More at AutoMatters.net. On the Home Page, search by title or topic, or click on the blue 'years' boxes.

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USS Midway Museum is currently recruiting for docents, air craft restoration, ship restoration and safety volunteers. www.midway.org/give-join/volunteers/

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FEEL AND TODAY I AM  
CHOOSING HAPPINESS.

# DOD offers discounted rates for campgrounds nationwide

by David Vergun , DOD News

The Defense Department recently launched an online guide to U.S. joint-service campgrounds and facilities that can be accessed via computer or mobile devices.

"Best Kept Secrets" connects active-duty service members and their families, National Guard, Reserve, DOD civilians and retired military members with campground sites that offer lower rates as compared to non-DOD campground sites.

With a new look-up feature, users can search by state to easily locate the campground of their choice, contact information, details

on reservation policies, and a list of amenities and activities available at different locations.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidance states that outdoor activities, such as campground visits, are safer than indoor activities.

The campground guide was produced by DOD's Morale, Welfare and Recreation and Resale Policy Office. MWR provides the resources to help service members connect with recreational opportunities. Visit <https://www.militaryonesource.mil/recreation-travel-shopping/recreation/best-kept-secrets/>

## CROSSWORD PUZZLE

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### Across

- Capital of Morocco
- Green military symbol
- Energy one might run out of
- Humiliate
- Napoleon on St. Helena, e.g.
- Squeeze bunt stat
- Soda debut of 2002
- Consume
- Cadillac's answer to the Navigator
- Table input
- Useless, now
- "Ain't Misbehavin'" Tony/Emmy winner
- Froze, with "up"
- Foreign
- Harry Potter nemesis Malfoy
- Fishing spot
- Wane
- Feel bad
- Security guard Paul Blart, in a 2009 film title
- Anguish
- Holiday tuber
- Stratagem
- Mork's leader on Ork
- 1943 penny metal
- Fuss
- Judge's research aide
- West Point, briefly
- Way out
- "Her rZsumZ is clean and checks out"
- Off-road transp.
- Station identifiers, and a hint to each set of circles
- Historic start?
- Tatum of "Paper Moon"
- Send payment
- Road crew's supply
- Rolls to the runway
- "Golden Boy" author Clifford

### Down

- Cast-pleasing reviews
- Disconcert
- Place to save in Sevilla
- Like some elephants
- Relate
- Adorned with tiny spheres
- Get all A's
- Spain's Ebro, por ejemplo
- Lodge member
- Top with a slogan
- "That's wonderful to hear!"
- Wane
- Indian strings
- HOV

## MOVIES AT THE BASES

Movies & times subject to change. \* Indicates last showing  
Visit [navydispatch.com/entertainment\\_03movies.htm](http://navydispatch.com/entertainment_03movies.htm) to find your base theatre information

**Naval Base Theater - NBSD,**  
619-556-5568, Bldg. 71  
3465 Senn Rd.

FREE entry to the first 375 customers (per showing), no outside food, concessions will be available.

**Friday, Aug 13**  
6pm Space Jam: A New Legacy (PG)

**Saturday, Aug 14**  
2:50pm Space Jam: New Legacy (PG)  
6pm Black Widow (PG-13)

**Sunday, Aug 15**  
12:50pm Escape Room: Tournament of Champions (PG-13)  
3:20pm Space Jam: New Legacy (PG)



**Pendleton Theater and Training Center**

Bldg 1330 Mainside (Across from Mainside Center)

**Saturday, Aug 14**  
1:30pm F9: The Fast Saga (PG-13)

**Lowry Theater - NASNI,**  
619-545-8479  
Bldg. 650

Outside food and beverage are NOT permitted: Sales from the snack bar support the movie program.

Lowry Theater is a cashless facility. Debit and credit cards accepted only

**Friday, Aug 13**  
6pm Space Jam: New Legacy (PG)

**Saturday, Aug 14**  
2:50pm F9: The Fast Saga (PG-13)  
6pm Escape Room: Tournament of Champions (PG-13)

**Sunday, Sunday, Aug 15**  
1pm Space Jam: New Legacy (PG)

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

**Friday, Aug 13**  
6pm Black Widow (PG-13)

9pm Escape Room: Tournament of Champions (PG-13)

**Saturday, Aug 14**  
3pm F9: The Fast Saga (PG-13)  
6pm Space Jam: New Legacy (PG)

## Roy's sudoku

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## Join the fest with the zest at the 24th Annual Lemon Festival on Saturday, August 14

Squeeze the day at the 24th annual Lemon Festival presented by Third Avenue Village Association in Chula Vista's original neighborhood on Saturday, August 14.

Sweet sour summer fun will fill Third Avenue Village from 10am-6pm at no cost to the community to celebrate Chula Vista's historic reign as the lemon capital of the world. Village business members will host specials along the tree lined sidewalks for eager attendees sporting bright yellow outfits and rejoicing in this juicy jubilee.

Partnering with Arts in the Park, the Third Avenue Village Lemon Festival will be sure to keep the sour out of your smile.

Enjoy lemon-infused activities, live bands, sour contests with prizes provided by MyPoint Credit Union, lemony beverages, lemon infused treats, art walk, costume parade, kid's activities, face painting, a performance that includes Fern Street Circus, comedians, musicians and more. More juicy details will be available at [www.thirdavenuevillage.com](http://www.thirdavenuevillage.com).

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## Your body's bugs: Nurturing a healthy microbe population

Microscopic bugs called microbes can be found in your eyes, mouth, gut, skin, and everywhere else. But don't be alarmed. Most of your microbes are useful. They help you digest food. They prevent dangerous infections in your organs. And so much more. They're vital for your health.

This collection of microbes in your body includes bacteria, fungi, and viruses. Together, it's called the human microbiome.

"The microbiome is just as important as the brain, liver, kidney, or heart," says Dr. Eugene Chang, who studies gut microbes at the University of Chicago.

Scientists have cataloged the types of microbes that live in the human body. They've found that changes in your body's bugs are linked with many health problems. These include diabetes, obesity, inflammatory bowel diseases (IBD), and cancer. They can also cause skin disorders and tooth decay.

Certain things can harm the helpful microbes in your body. These include using antibiotics inappropriately or eating an unhealthy diet. Now, studies are starting to uncover ways to use microbes to improve your health.

### Restoring Balance

One of the big jobs for our helpful microbes is to take up space. They live in places in the body that might otherwise be filled by harmful microbes that can cause disease, says Dr. Yasmine Belkaid, an immune system expert at NIH. "This is one way your microbiome prevents infection," she says.

Your immune system normally attacks microbes that get into the body. But people grow up with their microbiome, Belkaid says. Many microbes are acquired from your mother at birth. So your immune system recognizes them as friendly and doesn't attack them.

If these helpful microbes aren't thriving, harmful ones can move in. But studies have shown that



helpful microbes can be restored.

For example, people with a skin condition called eczema often have changes in their skin microbes. NIH researchers tested spraying a type of bacteria onto the skin of people with eczema. They found that it improved symptoms, including itching and rashes.

Your gut hosts lots of microbes. These can be thrown out of balance by many things, including antibiotics and diet. That can make room for harmful ones to grow.

One especially dangerous microbe is a type of bacteria that can grow in the intestines called *Clostridioides difficile*. *C. difficile* can cause fatal diarrhea, especially in older adults. It's often resistant to treatment.

Researchers have developed a type of treatment for *C. difficile* infection called fecal microbial transplant. A patient is given microbes from the large intestine of a healthy person. This is done by transferring stool (poop) via tubes or pills.

Researchers don't yet know exactly which of the microbes are needed for a healthy gut microbiome. So for now, they transfer the entire microbiome.

"Fecal transplants are a full-

spectrum treatment. We're just trying to change things wholesale," says Dr. Gary Wu, a gut-health expert at the University of Pennsylvania.

Wu is part of a nationwide team that's tracking the use of fecal transplants for *C. difficile*. In a nationwide study, they found that about nine out of 10 people who received fecal transplants were cured of *C. difficile*. "It works marvelously well for treating this infection," Wu says.

The team continues to track people who have had fecal transplants. They want to learn more about its long-term safety.

Researchers are also testing this treatment for other conditions. These include IBD and other conditions that cause gut inflammation.

Wu says scientists are working on more targeted treatments to repair or replace a damaged gut microbiome. Different collections of microbes grown in the lab may eventually be tailored to treat different gut diseases. "That's going to be the next generation of treatments," he says.

### Microbes and Obesity

Microbes in the gut do much more than just take up space, says Chang. "Gut microbes help regulate our metabolism—the digestion, absorption, and use of

nutrients," he explains.

His research team and others study proteins that gut bacteria release into the bloodstream. "These tell us how much we eat, when to eat, and what to eat," he says.

This communication between our cells and our microbes seems to play a role in obesity. Chang and others have shown this in mice. They transplanted gut microbes from mice fed a high-fat diet into lean mice without any microbes. The lean mice then processed dietary fat differently and gained weight.

It's not yet understood exactly how microbes help control metabolism. "But if we figure out how, that could be a game changer in preventing diet-induced obesity," Chang says.

### Keep Your Microbes Healthy

Researchers have started testing whether altering microbes can impact other areas of health.

Belkaid and her team found that changing the gut microbiome may improve how well a certain cancer treatment works. They're also doing studies in mice to see if changing a female's microbiome during pregnancy can boost her offspring's immune system.

For now, what can you do daily to keep your helpful microbes healthy? "Diet is the major driver that shapes a person's microbiome," Chang says. Fortunately, your microbes respond quickly to changes in diet.

The dietary fiber found in plants is especially good for your gut bugs, says Belkaid. "One of the best things we can do for our microbes is to eat a healthy and diverse diet, and make sure it's rich in fiber," she explains.

Some types of foods may harm our microbiome, Belkaid adds. "These include foods high in carbohydrates, rich in sugar, or with too many artificial components," she explains. "These can enrich

### Wise choices: Protect your microbes

- Take antibiotics exactly as prescribed. Antibiotics are life-saving medicines. But they can also disrupt the healthy balance of microbes in your body.
- Eat a diet high in fiber. Fiber is found in plants, including fruits, vegetables, and whole grains.
- Limit foods that can hurt your gut microbes. These include sugar and fatty or highly processed foods.
- Wash your hands when preparing food, before eating, or after handling pets or garbage.
- Use hand sanitizer when you can't use soap and water. Be sure it contains at least 60% alcohol. But washing with soap and water cleans more effectively.
- Avoid antibacterial soaps and other products. These have little or no health benefit. But they can harm the protective microbes on your skin.
- Be wary of "probiotics." These products can be food or supplements. They may claim to restore a healthy microbe mix, but many have not been properly studied.

for microbes that are bad for your health."

"The microbiome is an extraordinary ally. It's a healthy

partner in helping the body function," Belkaid says. See the Wise Choices box for other tips to help keep this partner healthy.

### USS Abraham Lincoln performs first successful CASEVAC exercise utilizing a CMV-22B Osprey

by Seaman Lake Fultz

Sailors aboard the aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72) performed a casualty evacuation (CASEVAC) exercise, July 19, successfully transferring two patients to Naval Medical Readiness and Training Center Camp Pendleton while conducting operations at sea.

A CMV-22B Osprey assigned to the "Titans" of Fleet Logistics Multi-Mission Squadron (VRM 30) conducted the CASEVAC leading to the aircraft's first successful ship to a shore-based hospital evacuation.

"The use of the Osprey for CASEVACs on aircraft carriers is the future," said Lt. Cmdr. Lindsay McCammond, officer-in-charge of VRM 30 aboard Lincoln. "They don't need to be shot off the flight deck and they can take off when needed."

The exercise demonstrated the unique CASEVAC capabilities of the Osprey including the ability to travel faster and farther than traditional transportation in helicopters or CODs. The Osprey traveled 118 miles in 18 minutes while keeping the simulated patient in stable condition.

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