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NCIS DEPLOYS SPECIAL AGENTS ABOARD GUIDED-MISSILE DESTROYERS PATROLLING SOUTHERN BORDER

SAN DIEGO - The Navy deployed two Arleigh Burke-class guided missile destroyers recently to conduct border security objectives in support of the U.S. Northern Command southern border mission: USS *Gravely* to the Gulf of America and the Caribbean, and USS *Stockdale* to the Pacific Ocean. Earlier this summer, USS *Cole* relieved *Gravely* after 83 days of service to the mission.

Among the crew on board these ships have been NCIS



NCIS special agents have been conducting afloat operations aboard U.S. Navy ships since the early 1970s.
U.S. Navy photo

special agents who provide law enforcement and counterintelligence capabilities related to counternarcotics and combating transnational organized crime.

These special agents collaborate with law enforcement and intelligence community partners to synthesize data that enhances Navy leadership's understanding of the operational environment and increases the probability

of successful counternarcotics interdictions.

Such counternarcotics interdictions have included, among others, the seizure of over 6,000 pounds of cocaine by USS *Gravely* in May. A subsequent seizure netted over 11,000 pounds of cocaine and 7,200 pounds of marijuana. USS *Cole*, partnering with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, seized 1.5 million pounds of cocaine in the Caribbean Sea. **see NCIS, page 6**

Modernized GPS operating system closer to operational integration

from Space Operations
Command Public Affairs

PETERSON SPACE FORCE BASE, Colo. - The U.S. Space Force's Space Operations Command accepted a modernized operating system for Global Positioning System, which is designed to maintain resiliency of the constellation and improve positioning, navigation and timing services to meet user demand now and in the future.

The GPS Next Generation Operational Control System upgrade is one of several current Space Systems Command acquisition programs, which, in aggregate, will deliver numerous modernized GPS III enterprise capabilities. The other programs include the GPS III/IIIF satellite vehicles and Military GPS User Equipment.

These modernized enhancements will enable improved signal access in electronically impeded environments; improved ability to detect failures; improved position and time transfer accuracy; and improved capability ensuring integrity and uninterrupted availability of the military code.

"One of our missions is to deliver sustained, reliable GPS capabilities to America's warfighters, our allies and civilian users. The current enterprise modernization efforts underway gives users confidence that GPS will continue to provide world-



On July 14, the Space Force's Space Operations Command accepted a modernized operating system for Global Positioning System, which is designed to maintain resiliency of the constellation and improve positioning, navigation and timing services to meet user demand now and in the future. U.S. Space Force photo illustration by John Ayre

wide premier PNT service," said Cordell DeLaPena from the Space Systems Command program.

The Guardians in Mission Delta 31 partnered with SSC to develop a methodical process of transition exercises, transition rehearsals and constellation transfer trials to ensure the integrity and capability of the system prior to complete transfer, said Space Force Col. Stephen Hobbs, MD 31 commander. "Additionally, there are

risk reduction activities designed to demonstrate OCS's ability to integrate using residual, on-orbit GPS satellites."

OCX delivery was initiated by contractor Raytheon to the U.S. Government via the submission of the Department of Defense Form 250 on July 1, 2025. Upon acceptance of the system, MD 31 will continue integrated systems testing, Operational Readiness Exercises and preparation activities for the GPS constellation transfer.

72nd Korean Armistice anniversary

This year marks the 72nd anniversary of the Korean Armistice Agreement which was signed on July 27, 1953. The art work at the top of the page is part of a graphic illustration commemorating the end of fighting in the Korean War, honoring those who served, created by U.S. Marine Corps LCpl. Brandon Eisma.

The Korean Armistice Agreement stopped the active fighting between North and South Korea, but a formal peace treaty was never signed. The Armistice is still in effect today, and the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) remains a symbol of the ongoing division.

According to *history.com*,
"The Korean War was relatively short but exceptionally bloody. Nearly 5 million people died. More than half of these—about 10 percent of Korea's prewar population—were civilians. (This rate of civilian casualties was higher than World War II's and the Vietnam War's.) Almost 40,000 Americans died in action in Korea, and more than 100,000 were wounded. Today, they are remembered at the Korean War Veterans Memorial near the Lincoln Memorial on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., a series of 19 steel statues of servicemen, and the Korean War memorial in Fullerton, California, the first on the West Coast to include the names of the more than 30,000 Americans who died in the war."

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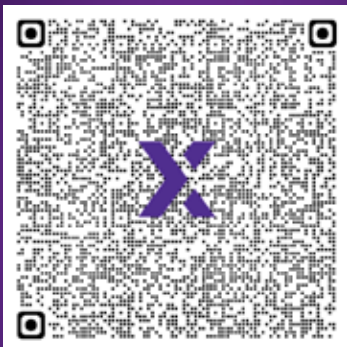
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Retired FBI agent touts benefits of military service

by David Vergun, DOD News
Idaho native O. Paul Mortensen had ambitions to join the FBI as a special agent. With a bachelor's degree in law enforcement in hand in 1973, he visited the FBI's Salt Lake City division office in Utah to learn what the bureau required.



Marine Corps 2nd Lt. O. Paul Mortensen at The Basic School at Marine Corps Base Quantico, Va., April 1975. Photo courtesy of O. Paul Mortensen

An FBI special agent applicant coordinator informed Mortensen that he'd need a minimum of three years of full-time work experience in a supervisory capacity, in addition to having his bachelor's degree, before being eligible to apply and test for acceptance into the FBI Academy.

Having watched the 1949 John Wayne movie "Sands of Iwo Jima" as a young farm boy, about Marines fighting that World War II battle, he was inspired to satisfy the bureau's work requirement as a Marine Corps officer.

After rigorous training at Marine Corps Base Quantico, Va., he was commissioned a second lieutenant in 1974. His two military occupational specialties were air support control officer and air traffic control officer.

It took Mortensen longer than three years for the FBI to hire him, so for nearly nine years, he served in many stateside and

overseas locations in the Marine Corps.

He returned to Quantico for training in 1983, where the FBI Academy is located. That training was also very rigorous, he said, but the Marine Corps' can-do attitude inspired him to graduate successfully.

During his 22 years of FBI service, Mortensen served as a street agent in three of the bureau's then-57 divisions or field offices. He also served two years in Denver, 12 years in Baltimore and eight years in Salt Lake City, as well as at resident agencies in Casper, Wy., and Coeur d'Alene, Idaho.

He recounted many harrowing experiences while serving on the FBI's first Safe Streets Violent Crime Task Force in the Baltimore division, "working with brave task force partners to dismantle violent inner-city drug organizations and taking illicit drugs and guns off those dangerous streets."

Mortensen also served on squads investigating various matters, including foreign counterintelligence, organized crime, white-collar crime, bank fraud, bank robbery, health care fraud and felonies on Native American reservations.

In 2005, Mortensen retired from the FBI in Idaho after a career spent working the streets.

One of the benefits of federal service is the ability to combine time served in the military with civilian federal service for increased retirement benefits, he said, noting he combined his nine years with those worked in the FBI.

Looking back on his career, Mortensen said that he'd highly recommend anyone considering a career in law enforcement or any other vocation to first get some military experience.



Marine Corps Capt. O. Paul Mortensen and his wife Stephanie attend the Marine Corps Birthday Ball at Camp Pendleton Nov. 10, 1979. Photo courtesy of O. Paul Mortensen

A lot of organizations, not just law enforcement, hire veterans because of their professionalism, leadership skills and work ethic, he said, adding that another advantage to military service are the education benefits, such as tuition assistance and the GI Bill, the latter of which he used to earn a master's degree in criminal justice.

A personal benefit of service, Mortensen said, was meeting

the woman who would become his wife, Stephanie. The couple met while he was stationed at MCAS El Toro in 1978, and they recently celebrated their 47th wedding anniversary.

The Marine Corps motto is Semper Fidelis, which is Latin for always faithful. The FBI's motto of fidelity, bravery, integrity is also powerful, Mortensen said, adding that both mottos have guided his entire life.



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EARLY BIRD BRIEF

- Top 5**
- Hegseth calls for extensive reforms to Pentagon drone-buying practices
 - Pentagon office that designed bombs for Iran strikes can't say if they reached the needed depth
 - Toxic water on base made her family sick. Then her command tried to silence her.
 - Families of those killed in Black Hawk collision with jet want more 'openness, compassion' from Army
 - Air Force updates uniform standards including new rules for boots

- Army**
- Tim Kennedy, Green Beret and Army hype man, under investigation for lying about combat valor
 - UK cadets learning ropes at Army site in Bavaria to prep for faceoff with West Point
 - Army moves forward with October merger of Futures Command and TRADOC
 - Carpenter brings history of training Ukrainians to bear on multifaceted HQ in Wiesbaden


- Navy**
- USS Michael Monsoor arrives in Japan for port visit
 - U.S. to construct Philippine fast boat base near South China Sea flashpoints

- Marine Corps**
- Lejeune Marines run first live munition drop from fielded drone
- Air Force**
- 'Costly and strategic blunder': Retired Air Force generals blast service plan to cut F-35s, scrap new surveillance plane
 - Air Force shifts enhanced F-16s from Japan to South Korea in force realignment


- Space Force**
- STARCOM 'on a good path' to build up new training environment
 - Space Force developing new cloud-based digital environment for training
- Coast Guard**
- Coast Guard drops numbered districts, adopts geographical names for operating areas

- National Guard**
- Sergeant's quick action results in receiving Soldier's Medal

- Veterans**
- Veterans face access, payment and records delays when seeking medical care at military bases, watchdog finds
 - Legislation would allow VA doctors to talk to veteran patients about medicinal cannabis
 - Advocacy group warns new work requirements and eligibility rules for Medicaid could create hardships for veterans



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Career & Education

AIR FORCE, SPACE FORCE EXCEED ANNUAL RECRUITING GOALS, DEMONSTRATING AMERICANS' DESIRE TO SERVE



A formation of Air Force military training instructors as part of basic military training graduation parade at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland, Texas, June 5. The ceremony signifies the transition from trainee to Airman and Guardian. U.S. Air Force photo by Brian Boisvert

JOINT BASE SAN ANTONIO-RANDOLPH, Texas- The Department of the Air Force achieved 100 percent of its annual recruitment goal three months ahead of schedule, a testament to the enduring appeal of service and the effectiveness of modernized recruiting strategies.

To date, the Air Force and Space Force have sent nearly 25,000 of the 30,000 contracted recruits to basic military training, while the remaining recruits are scheduled to begin training by Sept. 30.

This year's achievement is particularly noteworthy as the Air Force Recruiting Service has built its strongest Delayed Entry Program in the last decade, with a pool of over 14,000

recruits. This includes a record 750 Special Warfare Candidates, representing a historic number of individuals who have signed up for these challenging-to-fill career fields.

The Air Force Accessions Center located at Joint Base San Antonio-Randolph, is responsible for the AFRS mission.

"I am excited that both the Air Force and the Space Force have met their fiscal year 2025 recruiting goals three months early," said Secretary of the Air Force Troy Meink. "The fact that we have even exceeded this goal and currently have a DEP at its largest level in 10 years speaks to the vast number of volunteers interested in serving their country today. Congratulations to the recruiting service on

ensuring we have the best talent ready to join the Department of the Air Force and defend this great nation."

The Air Force attributes its success to a modernized recruiting approach, expanded community outreach, and a focus on highlighting career development. This generation is particularly motivated by careers that contribute to something larger than themselves and provide a sense of purpose and security.

"When you have a winning team, people want to join!" said Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. David Allvin. "This is shown through the Air Force's record recruitment, and I'm proud we've hit 100 percent of our fiscal year 2025 goal three months early. The Air Force invests in

our Airmen and patriotic Americans ready to serve have noticed and are lining up and signing up. That's evident with the largest number of Special Warfare candidates awaiting training on record and the throngs of recruits motivated to start basic military training. We're thrilled to welcome these warriors into our Air Force!"

The Space Force also exceeded its FY25 recruiting goal and has met its goals every year since inception. The service continues to attract highly skilled and educated candidates, with more than one in five new Guardian recruits holding a college degree.

Continue reading this at <https://www.af.mil/News/Article-Display/Article/4230414/>.

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For Family Advocacy Program Reporting call, 619-556-8809

For Sexual Assault: If Life Threatening, call 9-1-1.
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NB San Diego Sexual Assault Reporting: 24/7 Hotline: 619-279-2904
Duty Civilian Victim Advocate: 619-985-8157
Duty SARC On-Call: 619-261-3991

NB Coronado Sexual Assault Reporting: 24/7 Hotline: 619-279-2914
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Duty SARC On-Call: 619-587-2419

NB Point Loma Sexual Assault Reporting: 24/7 Hotline: 619-279-2933
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Duty SARC On-Call: 619-587-2446

Army updates facial hair policy to reinforce grooming standards

from U.S. Army Public Affairs

The Army updated its facial hair grooming policy in an Army Directive that resulted from a force-wide review of military standards. The update reinforces the Army's long-standing policy that all Soldiers must be clean-shaven when in uniform or civilian clothes while on duty, with temporary exemptions for medical reasons and permanent exemptions for religious accommodations.

The new policy requires exemptions for non-religious reasons to be supported by a temporary medical profile (DA Form 3349-SG) and an exception-to-policy (ETP) memo granted by an O-5 officer in the chain of command. The change, which will be effective the day the directive is signed, will ensure that leaders are actively involved in the process.

Soldiers requiring exceptions must also maintain presentable copies of their required documents when in uniform or civilian clothes while on duty. Similarly, religious exemptions will require religious accommodation documentation.

"This update reinforces our culture that fosters discipline – and discipline equals readiness," said Sgt. Maj. of the Army Michael R. Weimer. "Through a phased implementation we are working with providers through commanders to effectively address grooming standards to ensure we maintain a professional force."

The directive also provides guidance on pseudo-folliculitis barbae or PFB, which is commonly known as razor bumps. It emphasizes the roles of healthcare providers and commanders in motivating and supporting Soldiers with PFB to manage their condition and to adhere to grooming standards within a reasonable timeframe.

Army healthcare providers, commanders, and leaders will assist Soldiers by providing education and treatment plans while monitoring Soldiers' progress toward adhering to the grooming standards. Soldiers who cannot comply with grooming standards within a reasonable time may be administratively separated.

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VIRTUAL SINGLE SAILOR PROGRAM

USS Omaha returns to homeport: 'The crew has a lot to be proud of'



by Petty Officer 2nd Class **Kassandra Alanis** and
Lt.j.g. **Tahj Clements**

SAN DIEGO - Independence-variant littoral combat ship **USS Omaha** (LCS 12) arrived at its San Diego homeport July 11, following a 10-month rotational deployment to the U.S. 7th Fleet area of operations.

Cmdr. Ryan Doyle, skipper of littoral combat ship USS Omaha, speaks to families as the ship is moored pierside at its homeport of Naval Base San Diego, July 11. U.S. Navy photo by MC3 Kassandra Alanis

"I'm excited to welcome home the crew of this mighty warship, who showed incredible dedication and leadership during their deployment," said Capt. Jose Roman, commodore, Littoral Combat Ship Squadron 1. "From multiple exercises with our partners to ensuring maritime security and freedom of navigation in critical waterways throughout the Indo-Pacific, Omaha has a great deal to be proud of."

Throughout deployment, *Omaha* participated in several multi-national events including the Oceania Maritime Security Initiative, Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training Brunei, the Republic of Palau 30th Independence Anniversary, a joint sail with the Royal Australian Navy, Exercise Noble Wolverine, Exercise Cobra Gold 2025, and Exercise Noble Dingo.

In August 2024, *Omaha* participated in OMSI, a Secretary of Defense program aimed at diminishing transnational illegal activity on the high seas in the Pacific Island nations of Oceania's Exclusive Economic Zones, as well as increasing interoperability with partner nations.

Omaha's range and capabilities

allowed the embarked U.S. Coast Guard law enforcement detachment the ability to access the remote U.S. and Pacific Island nations' EEZs.

Omaha participated in CAR-AT Brunei 2024 alongside the Royal Brunei Armed Forces and other U.S. military assets. During the exercise, a variety of subject matter expert exchange

events were conducted. They focused on topics such as cyber security, emission control, force protection, international maritime law, maritime domain awareness, and public affairs for humanitarian assistance and disaster response.



USS Omaha. U.S. Navy photo by MC2 Kassandra Alanis

Omaha participated in several events which celebrated the 30th anniversary of the independence of the Republic of Palau, marking the Republic of Palau's independence from the United Nations trusteeship administered by the U.S.

In the early months of 2025, the ship participated in Exercise Noble Wolverine, Exercise Cobra Gold 2025, and Exercise Noble Dingo. Noble Wolverine was a joint U.S. and Canadian

exercise. During Cobra Gold 2025, *Omaha*, alongside Republic of Korea, Republic of Singapore, and Kingdom of Thailand navies conducted division tactics and crew exchanges.

Read more at <https://www.navy.mil/Press-Office/News-Stories/display-news/Article/4243469/>.

NCIS

continued from page 1

dian Navy, was involved in the seizure of over 540 pounds of cocaine in June.

The ships operate with an embarked Coast Guard Law Enforcement Detachment (LDET) that, combined with NCIS Special Agents enhance maritime security and support interagency collaboration in the region through presence operations.

These deployments are unique in scope and dura-

tion compared to the traditional special agent afloat deployments that NCIS has been conducting aboard U.S. Navy ships since the early 1970s. The special agent afloat program deploys agents for year-long deployments aboard aircraft carriers, hospital ships, and amphibious assault ships. NCIS law enforcement and counterintelligence support to these ships enables the Navy to operate with optimal readiness and lethality to protect the U.S. and advance its interests globally.



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CAMP PENDLETON

Navy Medicine Readiness and Training Command changed command on July 11. Capt. Jenny S. Burkett was relieved by Capt. Virginia H. Damin as both commander of NMRTC Camp Pendleton and as NHCP director. The presiding officer for the event was Rear Adm. Guido F. Valdes, commander, Naval Medical Forces Pacific, and Director of Defense Health Network Pacific Rim. "Holding the position of command is perhaps the most rewarding milestone and position to achieve in the Navy," Valdes said. "A commanding officer's leadership directly affects the well-being and readiness of those who serve our nation, a trust we hold sacred." Burkett will transfer to the Office of the Deputy Navy Surgeon General in Falls Church, Va. Damin comes to NMRTC Camp Pendleton after serving as executive officer of NMRTC Guam and deputy director of Naval Hospital Guam.

THE NEW BOSS

MCAS MIRAMAR

Marine Aircraft Group 11 has continued to uphold and push beyond the expectations set by those who came before. Since assuming command in May of 2023, Col. William J. Mitchell actions have solidified the group's role at the forefront of Marine Corps aviation. Now, he entrusts that mantle to Col. Jarrod A. Devore, in the same spirit of continuity that has defined generations of Marines. This late June ceremonial transfer of command signifies not an end, but a steadfast continuation, that ensures that MAG-11 remains in the hands of proven, principled leadership committed to forging the next chapter of excellence.

VENTURA COUNTY

PORT HUENEME – Naval Construction Battalion (NCB) 22 held a change of command July 12 at the Navy Seabee Museum on board Port Hueneme. Cmdr. Jeffrey A. DePiazza relieved Cmdr. Donald J. Petersen as commander of NCB 22 in a ceremony that featured remarks from Capt. Douglas B. Whimpey, commander, Naval Construction Regiment One, the presiding officer. "We gather here today, not just in ceremony, but in recognition of leadership, legacy, and the enduring spirit of NCB 22," said Whimpey. "This moment marks a transition, but not a pause; the mission continues, the work remains, the standards are set high for the command." Petersen, a licensed architect and California native, assumed command of NCB 22 in March 2022.

S.D. military to receive new TSA precheck benefits



SAN DIEGO – In honor of the enduring sacrifice of our nation's military families, the Transportation Security Administration announced a new partnership with San Diego International Airport (SAN) to enhance the travel experience for members of the U.S. military community as part of a national campaign.

TSA is introducing expedited access at SAN's TSA PreCheck lanes for active-duty service members and their families. SAN will offer front-of-the-line privileges for military families. Additionally, on certain days when larger crowds are expected, SAN may open a dedicated screening lane for members of our military community.

Disabling fire used to interdict aliens

SAN DIEGO – Coast Guard Station San Diego interdicted three aliens aboard a 16-foot motorboat approximately 10 miles off Imperial Beach earlier this month.

Station San Diego watch-standers received a report of a vessel displaying suspicious behavior and diverted a small-boat crew to investigate.

The Coast Guard crew pursued the vessel and engaged in disabling fire. A boarding team boarded the vessel and discovered three aliens and an operator, all claiming Mexican nationality.

The vessel and the 4 aliens were transferred to the custody of Imperial Beach Border Patrol at Ballast Point.

Sailor receives medal for heroism

Utilitiesman 1st Class Steven Schumacher was presented the Navy and Marine Corps Medal at the Silver Strand Training Complex in San Diego recently.

While returning to Naval Amphibious Base Coronado after conducting nighttime maritime training off the coast of Southern California, Schumacher and his team's vessel struck a submerged jetty, resulting in injuries among the crew, including one Sailor who was thrown into the water facedown, and unconscious.

Despite sustaining injuries himself, Schumacher dove into the water to retrieve his teammate and brought him back to the vessel, where he was able to receive care from trained medical Sailors.

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VIRTUAL GALA TO HELP KEEP FLAGS FLYING AT NATIONAL CEMETERY

SAN DIEGO – Miramar National Cemetery Support Foundation needs \$100,000 to keep the flags flying at Miramar National Cemetery.

The support foundation launched its virtual gala, lasting through July 30, to raise the funding needed for their Avenue of Flags. The 50 American Flags line the avenue and welcome visitors to Miramar National Cemetery.

The 50 flagpoles are 13 years old and are in critical need of major preventive maintenance to avoid catastrophic failure. The cost to overhaul all the flagpoles and replace the 50 American Flags at least twice in the next year is estimated to cost approximately \$100,000.

The flags fly 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year, and with 155 National Cemeteries across the nation, Miramar National Cemetery is the only one to have an Avenue of Flags.

“It was our honor to gift this Avenue of Flags to the Cemetery in 2012 and now, the need could not be more urgent to get the flagpoles fixed,” said Foundation President Charles Bailey. “The flags fly over our nation’s veterans and their families; it is our duty to keep them flying over the hallowed grounds.”

Previous galas supported the largest project the Support Foundation has undertaken to date - providing permanent guest seating and other upgrades to the Miramar National Cemetery Memorial Amphitheater. The amphitheater is a venue for veterans’ programs and ceremonies. The renovations are close to completion and the amphitheater will be rededicated later this year.



Community supporters can donate online or through mail. The Support Foundation is a nonprofit organization, and all donations are tax deductible. To donate to the Avenue of Flags, visit www.miramarcemetery.org.

Coast Guard assists 11 people aboard flooding catamaran off Dana Point



Coast Guard and partner agencies save 11 people aboard a charter catamaran taking on water approximately seven miles south of Dana Point Harbor, July 12. U.S. Coast Guard photo

from Coast Guard Sector Los Angeles/Long Beach
DANA POINT - U.S. Coast Guard and partner agencies assisted 11 people aboard a charter catamaran taking on water approximately seven miles south of Dana Point Harbor on June 12.

Coast Guard Sector Los Angeles/Long Beach watchstanders received a distress call at approximately 6:20 p.m. Saturday from the operator of the 50-foot catamaran Manute’a, reporting flooding while still making way toward Dana Point Harbor.

The Dana Point Harbor Patrol and Orange County Sheriff’s Department were monitoring Channel 16 and immediately responded to assist.



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FIRE DILL Sailors simulate firefighting during an aircraft crash and salvage drill on the flight deck of USS Theodore Roosevelt at Naval Air Station North Island, July 10, 2025. U.S. Navy photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Jadyn Beavers



SNAPDRAGON STADIUM (July 5, 2025) (from left) Marine Corps Cpl. Jesse Powers, on drums, Sgt. Kasie Wagner, vocals, and Lance Cpl. Jacob Leonard, on guitar, with Marine Band San Diego, MCRD San Diego, perform before a San Diego Football Club game here. Marines helped boost morale within the community for the Independence Day holiday weekend. U.S. Marine Corps photo by Lance Cpl. Genaro I. Valdez-Sepulveda

BEALE AFB, Calif. (July 15, 2025) Air Force Senior Airman Naomi Borrero carries Coza, a military working dog, after a simulated firefight during a multiagency exercise here. K-9 handlers are trained to provide tactical combat casualty care to their dogs in high-threat environments. U.S. Air Force photo by Tech. Sgt. Shaei Rodriguez



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Welcome back to movie review central! I'm just kidding, of course, but I certainly understand how someone could think that is what this website is about, if the many movie reviews that I've been doing here lately are any indication.

Beginning with "F1® THE MOVIE," this year has had a bumper crop of blockbuster summer movies that people are filling theaters to see. I count myself among those people. I have a ton of other stuff that has been ready and waiting for me to write about here, including car shows with lots of photos of cool cars, exciting new consumer electronics products here and ready for review, interviews with amazing people, and so much more, but with me covering San Diego Comic-Con for FIVE DAYS next week and a few days covering TIKI OASIS soon thereafter (I might even sneak in another movie or two), I don't know how I'm going to find the time to catch up anytime soon.

Oh, and as you'll realize if you look at the dates of my posts on the AutoMatters.net website, I am also WAY BEHIND posting new columns there because before doing that I am compelled to edit way more than the five photos that I send to the other publications with my columns each week. Of course, in addition to

Review of Superman the movie

all that, I also have a life to take care of, including a house that always seems to need work (often at the worst possible times), car maintenance and occasional rest. There is so much to see and do here in Southern California. I need eight-day weeks!

Can you believe this is column number 891?!!!! Where have all of the years gone? Help me, please!

In case you are in a hurry and have plenty of other things to do too, I'll save you some time and begin this review by getting right to my conclusion. If you are a fan of the Superman franchise, just go see Warner Bros. Pictures "Superman" the movie. You will most certainly enjoy it. That's an absolute no-brainer, and it is suitable for the whole family. It is upbeat, funny, fast paced and it has heart — unlike so many dark superhero movies in more recent years.

Remember this? It's from the 1940s: "Up in the sky! Look! It's a bird! It's a plane! It's Superman!" Thank you to Reddit for reminding me exactly how this phrase went. I have certainly heard it enough times in my life. This is that kind of superhero movie. It's fun. It reminds me of the "Adventures of Superman" TV series from the 1950s, starring George Reeves. Of course, special effects have come a very, very long way since then.

Without revealing too much of the plot, I'll share with you that the story is global in scope. Lex Luthor has, of course, evil plans in mind and he does his best to make sure that Superman cannot interfere with them.

Superman is helped in this conflict by the usual cast of characters: Lois Lane, Jimmy Olsen (no red hair!), Perry White, Ma and Pa Kent, automatons (who guard Superman's frozen Fortress of Solitude when he's away) and his super-hyperactive dog!

"Superman" is brilliantly directed, from his own screenplay, by James Gunn. In the title roles of "Superman" and Clark Kent is actor David Corenswet. Nicholas Hoult portrays evil genius Lex Luthor. Rachel Brosnahan is Lois Lane — Superman's love interest and investigative reporter for The Daily Planet newspaper.

I was thrilled to discover, as I watched his on-screen portrayals, that "Superman" also stars Alan Tudyk, one of my favorite actors. Alan provides the voice for Superman's loyal and endearing, animatronic, Robot No 4. During the production of "Superman" he was also spotted wearing a motion capture suit. You might recognize Alan Tudyk from his unforgettable roles as the quirky yet charming alien and occasionally human Harry Vanderspeigle on TV's "Resident Alien," K-2SO in "Rogue One: A Star Wars Story" and in the TV series "Andor."

To explore a wide variety of content dating back to 2002, with the most photos and the latest text, visit "AutoMatters & More" at <https://automatters.net>. Search by title or topic in the Search Bar in the middle of the Home Page, or click on the blue 'years' boxes and browse. Copyright © 2025 by Jan Wagner – AutoMatters & More #891

Milspouse is a mosquito magnet

During the summer months, I envision myself wearing a floral sundress and straw hat, my skin and hair kissed with the tawny tones of the sun, strolling lazily along a sandy shoreline, selecting ripened tomatoes and zucchini at a local farmer's market, and sipping wine in an Adirondack chair at an evening concert under the stars ...

But inevitably, these dreamy visions are thwarted by one minuscule yet evil creature who loves to spoil my summer fun — The dreaded mosquito.

I am undoubtedly a "mosquito magnet" — one of those unfortunate humans that always seems to get bit mercilessly when others are enjoying the great outdoors without a care in the world. When pesky mosquitoes strike, I slap and stomp, but almost always fail to squish them in the act. They fly off sniggering and glancing back at me with their compound eyes, knowing they haven't forgotten their manners. They leave me, their host, with a sinister gag gift — inflamed, itchy, red welts.

Thanks for the hostess gift mosquitoes, much appreciated.

I try to resist scratching the bites that rise on every exposed, and strangely sometimes unexposed, area of my skin. Mostly, I don't want to give the little bastards the satisfaction, but also, I want to prevent the bumps from becoming more inflamed. But, alas, I can't stop scratching. Before I know it, the bumps swell, ooze, and scab over, becoming chronically itchy wounds that last for weeks.

So much for that "tawny" summer skin I dream of.

All joking aside, mosquito-borne illnesses kill more than 1 million people annually and infect another 700 million more, making the mosquito the deadliest animal on Earth. To make this terrifying truth even scarier, there are over 3,500 species of mosquitoes in the world, and they exist on every continent except

Antarctica. Obviously, this includes every CONUS and OCONUS duty station around the globe.

Mosquitoes bite with the serrated end of long, pointed mouth parts called probosces, which pierce skin to find capillaries from which they can draw over three times their body weight in blood, all while pumping

The Meat & Potatoes of Life



by
Lisa
Smith
Molinari

analgesic saliva into their hosts. Mosquitoes can pass the deadly germs and parasites that cause malaria, yellow fever, encephalitis, West Nile virus, Zika, chikungunya and dengue to human hosts through its infected saliva. How horrifying!

But let's not contract a case of hysteria over mosquito-borne malaria. According to science, we don't need to bathe in DEET, ensconce our bodies in shrink wrap, and hide indoors. The vast majority of mosquitoes don't cause diseases. They are just a nuisance. As for the more dangerous varieties of mosquitoes, a few simple precautions can prevent bites, even for magnets like me.

Of the thousands of species worldwide, only 6 percent bite humans. Of those, only half, the females, do all the biting. Of 200 species in the U.S., only about 12 cause any

serious trouble for humans. The 12 trouble-makers fall into three basic genera: Culex can cause West Nile virus, encephalitis and canine heart worm. Anopheles can cause malaria (rarely in the U.S.) and canine heart worm. Aedes can cause yellow fever, West Nile, Zika, chikungunya, encephalitis and dengue.

Although dangerous mosquitoes may be prevalent in some overseas duty stations, especially those in tropical and sub-tropical climates, the U.S. military has a long history of researching, developing and employing countermeasures for insect-borne illnesses. Currently, the U.S. military uses all available vaccines to prevent infections like chikungunya, Japanese encephalitis, and yellow fever overseas, and mandates the use of doxycycline to prevent malaria.

Prevention of bites isn't rocket science; however, it's key to preventing mosquito-borne illnesses no matter where you're stationed or deployed. The Centers for Disease Control recommend removing and/or treating standing water where mosquitoes lay eggs; keeping doors and windows screened or closed; using insect repellants (DEET, Picaridin, IR3535, lemon eucalyptus oil, para-menthane-diol, 2 undecanone); and wearing light-colored long sleeves, long pants and socks treated with insect repellants.

Looks like I won't be wearing any sundresses while flitting through fields of green this summer, but things could be worse. Truth be told, it's not so bad being a mosquito magnet. At least I know someone out there thinks I'm really sweet.

Veterans News

California signs historic military retirement tax exemption into law

SACRAMENTO - California veteran advocacy groups, retired veterans, and their surviving spouses are celebrating a significant achievement as Gov. Gavin Newsom officially signed the 2025-26 State Budget, providing a new benefit for this community.

The approved budget notably includes a groundbreaking first step in state income tax exemption for military retirement pay and surviving spouses, demonstrating California's commitment to honoring its veteran community.

This landmark legislation exempts up to \$20,000 annually in military retirement pay and Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) payments from state income taxes, offering crucial financial relief to thousands of retired veterans and surviving spouses across California.

Until now, California had been the sole state to fully tax military retirement benefits,



placing additional financial strain on military retirees residing in the state.

"Today marks a transformative step for California's retired veterans and their families," stated Seth Reeb of Reeb Government Relations. "The adoption of this tax exemption demonstrates our state's renewed commitment to supporting those who served our nation with dedication and valor."

Furthermore, the state budget allocates dedicated fund-

ing for deferred maintenance projects at veterans' homes across California, significantly enhancing living conditions and ensuring the continued safety and comfort of veterans residing in these facilities.

"The passage of the budget reflects a meaningful shift in California values to retain our veterans and surviving spouses into our workforce," said Fred Green, chairman of the California State Commanders Veterans Council (CSCVC). "We are grateful for the efforts

of Assemblymember James Ramos, Newsom, Assemblywoman Pilar Schiavo, Senator Bob Archuleta, and the California Legislature for prioritizing

VA: Temporary expansion of burial benefits

FLEET RESERVE ASSOCIATION The VA has announced a temporary expansion of burial benefits for certain veterans under the Senator Elizabeth Dole 21st Century Veterans Healthcare and Benefits Improvement Act.

From July 1, 2025, to October 1, 2026, veterans who pass away while receiving VA-authorized hospice care at home after being discharged from medical or nursing facilities will be eligible for full burial allowances.

Previously, these veterans were not always covered, leaving a gap in end-of-life support. The FRA praised the change, noting it honors veterans' wishes to spend their final days at home and eases the financial burden on families.

these critical veteran-focused investments as a step in the right direction".

The CSCVC and RGR ex-

tend sincere appreciation to Newsom, state legislative leadership, and all who supported and contributed to this historic achievement.

VA Secretary Doug Collins affirmed the department's commitment to the Act and to supporting veterans and families through compassionate care. The FRA encourages families

to contact their local VA office or call 800-827-1000 for more information. The association continues advocating for expanded and accessible benefits for all who served.

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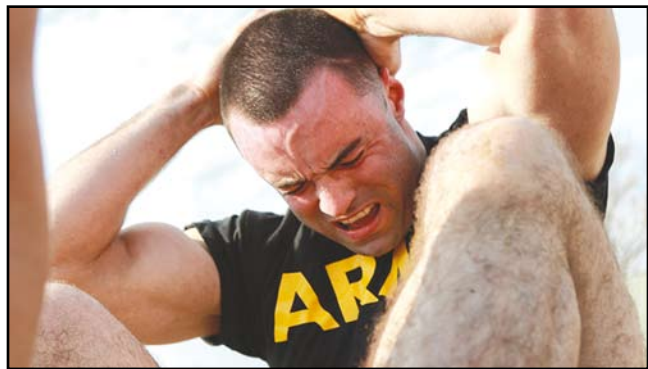
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Health and fitness key to lethal fighting force



U.S. Army National Guard service members attend the Ranger and Sapper Assessment Program (RSAP) at Fort Indiantown Gap, Pa. March 20-23, 2025. The purpose of RSAP is to identify service members that are physically and mentally fit to attend the U.S. Army's Ranger School or Sapper Leader Course. U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. 1st Class Shane Smith

by Janet A. Aker

Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth issued a directiveOpens to defense.gov on March 12, 2025, describing the start of a “rapid” cross-force review of changes in physical fitness and body composition standards since Jan. 1, 2015. The secretary followed up on this order on April 24, 2025, signing a memorandumOpens to defense.gov directing a 30-day review of medical conditions that disqualify individuals from joining the military—calling for applicants to “be physically and mentally able to perform their duties under the harshest of conditions without risk to themselves or others,” Hegseth said in a video posted on Department of Defense social media accounts.

As the DOD reviews these requirements, the focus on service member fitness is emerging at the forefront—and experts in the Military Health System offer advice on potential solutions.

“Each military service has different operational requirements, and it is important to understand those differences,” said Dr. Donald Shell, director of the Disease Prevention, Disease Management, and Population Health Policy and Oversight program in the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs.

“‘Overweight’ does not necessarily equal ‘overfat,’ particularly on the individual level. Two individuals that have the same weight and height may have different types of mass (for example, muscle vs. fat) and exhibit different levels of physical performance and different levels of health risks,” Shell said at a federal health symposium in spring 2025 where he discussed obesity in the military.

“It is important that standards are linked to substantiated health standards, common tasks, or military occupational specialty (MOS)-specific task criteria,” Shell said.

Fitness Policies are a ‘Frame’ to Build On

“Military service fitness tests,

at minimum, address the primary physical fitness components of cardiorespiratory endurance, muscular strength, muscular endurance, and body composition for all military service applications. For career fields, where it is deemed necessary to ensure adequate skill, performance, and safety, the military services promote physical fitness programs that incorporate occupationally specific physical fitness requirements,” Shell said.

“Physical readiness standards are based on scientific research and establish both health-based criteria and operational physical performance-based criteria for physical fitness. Physical fitness and body composition testing programs promote readiness by emphasizing necessary physical capabilities, minimizing injuries, and meeting military service-specific operational mission requirements,” he explained.

“It is important that DOD standards are linked to substantiated health standards, common tasks, or MOS-specific task criteria,” Shell said. “Standards exist to promote physical readiness and motivate healthy fitness behaviors. For instance, higher muscle mass and high performance is preferred over poor nutrition and unhealthy habits.”

Announced on April 25, 2025, the U.S. Army updated its fitnessOpens to army.mil test to strengthen readiness and lethality. Phased implementation of the Army Fitness Test began June 1, 2025, with new scoring standards for active duty soldiers in 21 combat military occupational specialties taking effect on January 1, 2026. The five-event test will be “sex-neutral and age-normed.”

Muscle and Bone Injuries Are Top Reason for Mission Absence

Musculoskeletal injuries, such as sprained knees or torn ligaments, affect military readiness, unit cohesion, rank progression, and other facets required of a deployment-ready force. “There is a consistent association in the literature between obesity and musculo-

skeletal injuries,” Shell noted. The military has documented that these injuries remain the No. 1 reason service members are held back from missions or suffer permanent disability. For example, active duty soldiers experienced more than 3.6 million musculoskeletal injuries over a 9-year period from 2008 to 2017.

The DOD Instruction 1308.03Opens to DOD Instruction 1308.03 on physical fitness and body composition added muscle and bone-related injury monitoring across the military in March 2022. This information gives the DOD the ability to measure and correlate injuries with failure and pass rates for body composition and physical fitness, Shell explained.

Obesity and the Military

Just as in the civilian world, increased muscle and bone-injury rates are tied to the epidemic of obesity, according to Shell. Estimates from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention indicate that obesity-related conditions cost the U.S. healthcare system nearly \$173 billion a year. For the DOD, the per-year average increase in cost for obesity is estimated at \$540 per person, which includes paying for diseases and conditions related to obesity, like heart diseases, high-blood pressure, and diabetes.

Shell said that in the March 2025 issue of “Lancet,” a leading weekly peer-reviewed medical journal, a special commission’s review of global obesity identified diagnostic criteria of clinical obesity in adults, adolescents, and children, which include recurrent or chronic severe knee pain, reduced range of motion, and limitations of mobility. This is not only a challenge for recruitment, but can significantly impact retention, readiness, and one’s ability to be worldwide deployable.

Recognizing that weight can change over time due to age or duty stations, all service branches have programs service members can use to lose weight and improve their fitness through lifestyle changes and diet and exercise. There are also initiatives aimed at helping potential recruits get in shape before they join, such as the U.S. Army’s Future Soldier Preparatory CourseOpens to an article on army.mil.

Nutrition and Exercise are ‘Foundation’ of Fitness

Physical fitness and optimum body weight composition should be based on a “foundation” of heart healthy exercise and nutrition, according to Dr. Marc Alaric Franzos, a cardiologist at the Uniformed Services University Uniformed Services University webpage in Bethesda, Maryland.

He emphasizes regular physical
See HEALTH page 10





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