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SIXTY-SIXTH YEAR NO. 2

JUNE 23, 2026

Freedom Fest 2026

Bayfront Fun and Fireworks! Celebrate the Spirit of Freedom and pay tribute to those who have served our nation! FEATURING *Family Fun Zone, *Kids' Activities, *Reserved Seating, *VIP Experience, *Food and Beverages For Purchase, *Bags Tournament (registration at 3 p.m., games commence at 4 p.m.), *Doubles Pickleball Tournament (registration at 3 p.m., games commence at 4 p.m.), *Live Concert, *Fireworks.

Freedom Fest is open to authorized patrons and their guests. Base protocols and regulations will be in effect, and all attendees should be prepared for a security inspection upon entry. All guests are required to present a valid form of identification.

Access is subject to security screening and installation approval.

For any questions regarding Foreign National access, call: (619) 553-0938.

Thank you for your cooperation and understanding as we work to ensure a safe and welcoming event for everyone!

NATIONAL MINORITY MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH

FEDERAL DRUG ADMINISTRATION - July is National Minority Mental Health Awareness Month. It is a time to bring awareness to the unique challenges that racial and ethnic minorities in the U.S. face when it comes to mental illness.

In 2020, fewer than one in every two African American adults got care for mental health. In 2018, Asian Americans were 60 percent less likely to receive mental health treatment than non-Hispanic Whites. Ob-

stacles for many include a lack of health insurance, less access to treatment, and stigma.

Mental illness can affect women of all races and ethnicities. Show your support this month and beyond by learning more about mental health. You can also use and share resources to help spread awareness about



mental health in your communities and families.

Mental health includes emotional, mental, and social well-being. Mental health impacts how a person thinks and feels. It also affects how you act, manage stress, and make choices. When you take care of your mental health, you are better able to cope with stress or challenges.

Sometimes it can be hard to manage your mental health. If you have noticed a change in thoughts, behaviors, or moods that disrupts your life, talk to your health care provider. You can also contact a mental health specialist or a trusted loved one for help if you have noticed these changes in yourself or in a loved one.

There is no single cause for mental illness. Multiple mental illnesses can occur at the same time and at random. They can also last for a short or long period of time.

Your mental health can change at any point. Some risk factors that can play a role in developing mental illness include:

- Use of alcohol or drugs
- Feeling lonely or isolated
- Biological factors or chemical imbalances in the brain
- Adverse childhood experiences, like child abuse or sexual assault

<https://www.fda.gov/consumers/knowledge-and-news-women-owh-blog/national-minority-mental-health-awareness-month>

'Don't melt your wallet!'

From beach trips, vacations and backyard barbecues to family adventures, and school-free days – all activities lead to the place you want to be – relaxed and enjoying a laid-back vibe. Recharging your battery shouldn't require you to break the bank.

News reports indicate that spending usually spikes between June and August each year. Beyond vacations and travel plans, summer also generates other unique costs like seasonal childcare, camps, home and yard upgrades, and all those tempting flashing seasonal sales. While these activities seem manageable in the moment, leaning on high-interest credit cards for convenience can quickly turn into a financial hangover later.

The widely known 21st Century financial technology motto sums it up: "Buy now, pay later." You will indeed pay later – with interest.

It is incredibly easy to swipe a credit card for everything, but the danger lies in carrying a balance from month-to-month that can get expensive fast. Recent data shows the average family vacation now tops about \$3,940 per family, averaging \$325 a day -- up 11 percent from 2025. When you combine travel costs with seasonal splurges, you risk setting yourself up for a stressful financial fall.

Remember too that your credit score impacts your ability to rent an apartment, get insurance, buy a home, or even land a new job. To protect your score, always pay on time and strive to keep your balance low.

To keep your spending in check, consider adopting a few strategic habits:

1. Consider setting up a summer budget

* Calculate all expected summer expenses including travel, childcare and other social events. * Allocate a specific dollar limit to each category to eliminate surprises. * Plan early to keep your finances predictable and stress-free.

2. Prioritize your fun

* Consider free local entertainment activities like outdoor concerts, hiking, local museums or a picnic. Fun doesn't have to be expensive. * Plan a "staycation" to eliminate overnight lodging costs entirely. * Stash your cash in a dedicated travel fund such as a high-yield savings account or short-term certificate of deposit; something liquid that is easily accessible. * Divide your fund into bite-size categories: accommodation, transit, food, knick-knacks and activities.

3. Shift to cash or debit

* Determine what you can afford to spend first. * Cap your spending; stick to a limit. Use cash or your debit card when possible. * Prevent compounding interest that comes with credit card usage.

4. Watch for sales traps

* Pay attention to your purchases and avoid buying things you don't need. * Consider enforcing the 24- to 28-hour "cooling off rule." Pause, think about the purchase, and evaluate if it is a good deal before making nonessential purchases. * Travel during "shoulder seasons" like June, September or October for cheaper flights and hotels. Traveling during the off-season can save you oodles.

5. Monitor what you are spending

* Set reminders to check your credit usage and bank account balances. * Track your spending by keeping receipts to ensure you are not gradually draining your savings without realizing it. * Catch problems sooner than later so you can adjust your habits.

Commercial vessels flow through open Strait of Hormuz

USCENTCOM

TAMPA, Fla. - Commercial ship traffic in the Strait of Hormuz increased June 20 as U.S. forces continued operating in the general area to support freedom of navigation.

Safe passage through the international waterway remained intact today as 55 merchant ships transited, moving large amounts of cargo and more than 17 million barrels of oil to global markets.

The Joint Maritime Information Center issued an advisory this week affirming safe passage for all vessels along a designated route that is free of arbitrary requirement claims or impediments. Details for the safe passage can be found here: <https://www.ukmto.org/-/media/ukmto/products/jmic-advisory-note-00926-soh-open.pdf?rev=d9dee19edfac4470a1ed29de91288ccd>.

U.S. forces remain present and vigilant to ensure all aspects of the agreement with Iran are adhered to, obeyed, and in full force and effect.

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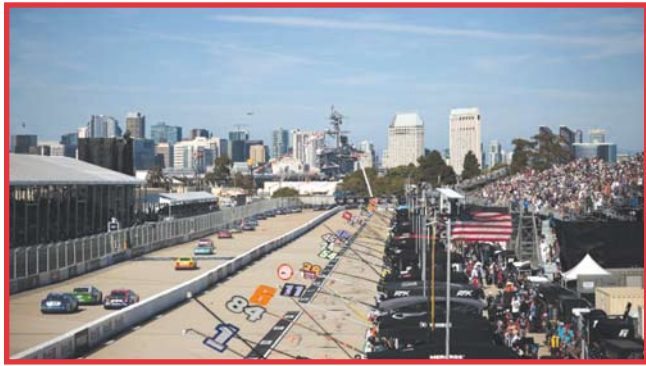
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RECAP: NASCAR RACE WEEKEND



CORONADO (June 21, h2026) - Corey Heim won his first professional race. NASCAR fans here witnessed their first professional race on a military base. It was a win-win for all.

In the Anduril 250 at NAS North Island, Heim reached the finish line 10.365 seconds ahead of Bubba Wallace.

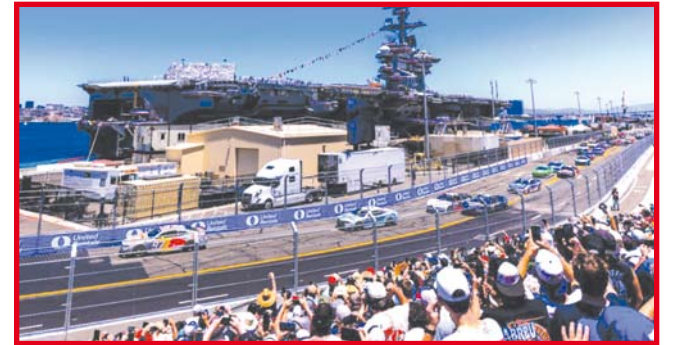
"I'm speechless," Heim said after completing an extended celebratory burnout. "I mean, we started the race, I think we started 13th. We fell straight back to 20th. Then put on our scuffs from qualifying, struggled just as bad."

WHAT THEY SAID

Driver Jimmie Johnson, El Cajon native: "There's nothing like going home. I didn't make it all the way back to see my childhood home but to be in the area to drive around and see everything, the memories just come flooding back."

Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth, honorary race starter: "Pay very close attention to that name on the windshield of every single driver, the name of an American who paid the full price so that not just them, but their spouses and their kids and their families... could live free."

"You can turn my runway into a speedway. The first-ever NASCAR race on an active-duty military base. Fighter jets overhead. Happy 250th, America."



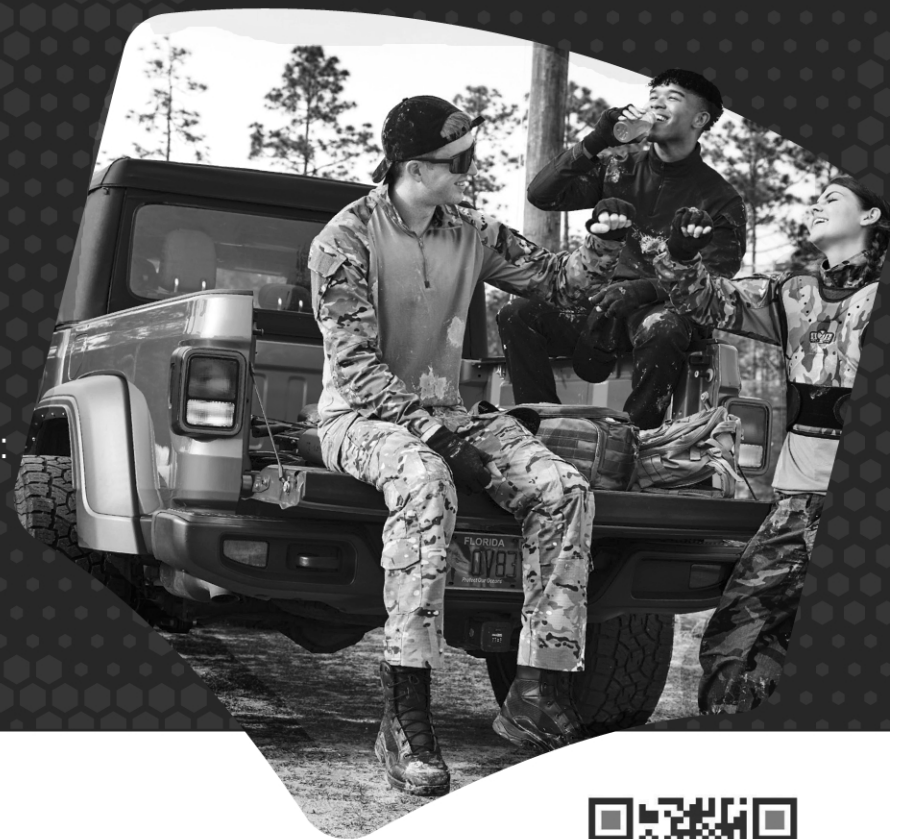
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Ceremony brings new name, transformation to 7th Infantry Division

by Sgt. 1st Class Monik Phan

JOINT BASE LEWIS MC-CHORD, Wash. - Soldiers from the 7th Infantry Division and 1st Multi-Domain Task Force held a redesignation ceremony June 18 here to case the 1st MDTF Headquarters and 7th ID Headquarters Support Company colors and uncased the 7th Infantry Division (Multi-Domain Command-Pacific) Headquarters and Headquarters Battalion colors, marking a major organizational shift.

The redesignation honors the Bayonet Division's legacy while establishing the 7th Infantry Division (Multi-Domain Command-Pacific) as the Army's newest theater-enabling command, built to integrate maneuver, fires, air defense, cyber, space, electronic warfare, intelligence, unmanned systems, sustainment and command and control in support of the joint force across the Pacific.

"We are merging the operational endurance, flexibility, and protection of our proven Stryker formations with the long-range sensing and precision fires of our multi-domain task force," said Maj. Gen. Bernard J. Harrington, commanding general of 7th ID (MDC-PAC).

7th ID (MDC-PAC) is an operational-level formation designed to operate forward, develop situations, disrupt enemy systems and complicate adversary planning.

It supports the Army's trans-

formation initiative by unifying 7th ID's maneuver assets and 1st MDTF's multi-domain capabilities under one command, streamlining mission command across complex operations.

Central to 7th ID (MDC-PAC) is the cross-domain contact layer, a system that integrates intelligence collection, electronic warfare effects and artificial intelligence to support rapid command decisions within a continuous operational framework. The CDCL allows forces to disperse over large areas to maintain pressure on adversaries both in close and deep areas.

"Through our emerging cross domain contact layer concept, our division will employ capabilities such as unmanned surface vessels; long-range, one-way attack drones; and launched effects to penetrate the adversary's anti-access/area-denial network," Harrington said. "Every radar that emits, every node that transmits, every headquarters that commands, we aim to hold continuously at risk alongside our joint partners and allies."

Harrington now leads the Army's newest multi-domain headquarters, which will refine the CDCL model during upcoming combined, joint and multinational exercises.

The CDCL organizes modern battlefield capabilities into four components: sensors that capture information across land, air, sea, space and cyberspace; precision

weapons paired with affordable unmanned drones; digital networks and software that help leaders make faster decisions; and robust military units able to operate even when disrupted by enemy action.

Harrington stressed that alongside partners and allies, the division aims to prevent conflict, and the common thread connecting all efforts is the Soldiers.

"Technology does not win wars," he said, "our people do."

The ceremony also reflects the Army's push to distribute sensing, fires, electronic warfare, space and cyber capabilities across maneuver formations to increase effectiveness in contested environments.

"Our hourglass patch went to France in World War I and helped defeat the Germans in the largest battle in American history," Harrington said, noting the division's long tradition of adaptation. "Later, it trained as a motorized infantry battalion, then amphibious assault, then light infantry. The Bayonets went ashore in the frozen Aleutians in 1943. They fought in the

jungles of Laite. In Korea, they landed and fought at Incheon at the Chosin Reservoir, and by



A crowd watches the 7th Infantry Division (Multi-Domain Command - Pacific) redesignation ceremony June 18. U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Taylor Zacherl

the end of that war, had served a staggering 850 days in continuous combat."

Gen. Ronald P. Clark, commanding general of U.S. Army Pacific, emphasized the division's commitment to future training and Indo-Pacific readiness.

Clark outlined U.S. Army Pacific's focus: delivering combat-ready forces, strengthening partnerships and alliances, and advancing innovation to maintain a competitive edge in the Pacific.

"With this transformation, the 7th Infantry Division is poised to plan and execute complex multi-domain operations across this region," Clark added. "Bringing the full strength and resources of a division in support of the joint force."



Top 5

- U.S. military lifts Navy blockade in Strait of Hormuz after two months
- Senate committee proposes 3.6 percent military pay raise, rejecting White House request for more
- Hegseth announces review of U.S. troops in Europe, scorns some allies
- Vietnam War hero of Dong Ha Bridge to be awarded the Medal of Honor
- U.S. Air Force awards first CCA production contracts to General Atomics, Anduril

Army

- U.S. Army fugitive arrested in Spain after decades on the run

Marine Corps

- Highway patrol: U.S. Marine F-35s conduct flight operations on Finnish roads

Coast Guard

- U.S. Coast Guard has seized over 225,000 pounds of cocaine in eastern Pacific

Air Force

- Remains of 8 individuals who died in B-52 crash to receive post-mortem care at Delaware base
- Air Force unit's new ammo-linking machine saves \$4 million a year
- More than 160 troops contract flu at Texas base after Hegseth lifts vaccine order

National Guard

- Texas National Guard Soldiers carry on cavalry tradition, earn silver spurs

Veterans

- VA eliminates gender-identity initiatives, reclassifies LGBTQ+ care coordinators

Defense Industry

- OpenAI hires former Trump AI official Dean Ball
- Before SpaceX IPO, investors in China secretly acquired stakes

Veterans

- Secret Service agent who shielded Kennedy laid to rest at Arlington in 'full circle' moment

International

- NATO plans to modernize nuclear assets and improve planning
- Germany moves two ships to Djibouti, eyeing multinational Hormuz mission this summer

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Anchored in love
Navy Seaman Donae Adams shares a group hug with her family after a graduation ceremony at Navy Recruit Training Command, Naval Station Great Lakes, Ill., June 11, 2026. More than 40,000 recruits train annually for nine weeks at the Navy's only boot camp. U.S. Navy photo by Petty Officer 1st Class John Suits



Testing the water
U.S. Marines with 1st Marine Division swim during a visit, board, search and seizure (VBSS) water competency screening at Camp Hansen, Okinawa, Japan, June 12, 2026. U.S. Marine Corps photo by Sgt. Jackson Ricker

Fierce dive
Army Staff Sgt. Chelsey Scott reaches for a pass during a wheelchair rugby match at the 2026 Warrior Games in San Antonio, Texas, June 17, 2026. U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Pomare Te'o Jr.



Drone Dominance Program receives first order, Gauntlet II concludes

by Defense Innovation Unit Public Affairs

Drone Dominance Program Gauntlet Phase II qualifiers recently concluded at Camp Grayling, Michigan. This high-stakes test pitted 49 companies and 79 unique unmanned aerial systems against rigorous mission scenarios, including long-range strikes and close-quarters tactical assaults. Each company brought 20 drones to take on the challenge.

The qualifier event was a critical test for a battlefield that is evolving at an unprecedented pace and showcased how the War Department is answering the call with radical innovation.

The Drone Dominance Program is a \$1.1 billion, two-year effort to execute President Donald J. Trump's Executive Order 14307, which articulated the urgent need for the department to procure, integrate and train with low-cost, high-performing drones manufactured in the U.S.

The goal of the program is to rapidly arm combat units with a massive, scalable fleet of low-cost, expendable one-way attack drones. The effort is also expected to increase the flow of private capital into the U.S. industrial base, while simultaneously driving down costs.

Sponsored by the Office of the Secretary of War and jointly administered by the Defense Innovation Unit and Test Resource Management Center, the Drone Dominance Program is at the forefront of the department's pivot to a challenge-based acquisition approach. It also means shifting from slow, multiyear cycles to agile, six-month sprints.

The program is putting technology to the test in a series of four gauntlet phases — demanding, realistic challenges designed to identify the most resilient and effective drone platforms.

At the conclusion of each phase, selected drone technologies are fast-tracked for

large-scale production, ensuring warfighters are equipped with a decisive advantage on the modern battlefield.

"This is an urgent matter," said Owen West, DIU director. "Our adversaries are scaling their UAS technology, tactics and industries at an alarming rate. Following Secretary of War [Pete] Hegseth's orders, we are acting decisively to develop new defensive and offensive capabilities to match these threats."

West noted that the department is already seeing results.

The first batch of drones was accepted, with nearly 2,000 additional units shipped to the services and thousands more ramping up for fulfillment.

Following a highly successful Phase I, which saw the purchase of 30,000 drones, the department is gearing up for the next major milestone.

"As directed by President Trump and Secretary Hegseth, we have begun to equip our warfighters with the best drones in the world," said Travis Metz, DIU deputy director. "We have ordered 30,000, which are being delivered now and will be ordering 60,000 more in September, all based on competitive events and moving supply chains to the United States as we progress."

By fostering fierce commercial competition via a public leaderboard, the department aims to scale production from 30,000 to 150,000 units per phase, ultimately dropping the



target unit cost from \$5,000 to approximately \$3,000. By 2027, the Drone Dominance Program intends to field more than 200,000 lethal, artificial intelligence-enabled drones, ensuring the U.S. military executes a technological leapfrog to secure an enduring edge over our adversaries.

Gauntlet II will kick off later this summer, during which en-

A Soldier practices with a first-person view drone system during Gauntlet I of the War Department's Drone Dominance Program at Fort Benning, Ga. Courtesy photo

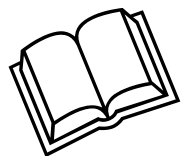
trants must bring 120 drones as the competition expands into night operations and more complex urban and confined environments.

DOW releases list of Chinese military companies in accordance with NDAA for Fiscal Year 2021

On June 8, the Department of War released an update to the names of "Chinese military companies" operating directly or indirectly in the United States in accordance with the statutory requirement of Section 1260H of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021, which is available on the Public Inspection Issue of the Federal Register. After the Department conducted its due diligence, it identified 188 entities that meet the statutory requirements for inclusion on the most recent 1260H List.

The Department will update the list with additional entities as appropriate. The U.S. government reserves the right to take additional actions on these entities under authorities other than Section 1260H. The list is available at <https://media.defense.gov/2026/Jun/08/2003945537/-1/-1/1/entities-identified-as-chinese-military-companies-operating-in-the-united-states-in-accordance-with-section-1260h.pdf>.

The Assistant Secretary of War for Industrial Base Policy works with domestic and international partners to forge and sustain a robust, secure, and resilient industrial base enabling the warfighter, now and in the future.



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Air Force advances future of air superiority with CCA contracts

by Secretary of the Air Force
Public Affairs

ARLINGTON, Va. (AFNS) -The Department of the Air Force awarded several contracts for the Collaborative Combat Aircraft program, including Increment 1 air vehicles as well as mission autonomy software, in a push to rapidly field advanced combat capabilities.

These distinct efforts validate acquisition transformation principles to secure a critical operational advantage: decoupling hardware from software. By treating mission autonomy as “software sold separately,” the Air Force ensures that the warfighter receives state-of-the-art physical platforms alongside agile, easily updatable software, effectively breaking traditional procurement molds.

Building upon decades of responsible, semi-autonomous flight development, CCA represent the next critical evolution of airpower. CCA are designed to seamlessly integrate with crewed fighters to extend reach, awareness and survivability in contested environments. This human-machine teaming will serve as a powerful deterrent, signaling to adversaries the futility of challenging U.S. airpower.

“Collaborative Combat Aircraft change how we project power and generate mass in highly contested environments,” said Air Force



A Collaborative Combat Aircraft takes off during flight testing at a California test location. The aircraft was developed in partnership with General Atomics as part of the Air Force's effort to accelerate delivery of affordable, semi-autonomous aircraft. Courtesy photo

Chief of Staff Gen. Ken Wilsbach. “Delivering this capability to our warfighters faster ensures our forces maintain the tactical edge required to deter and, if necessary, defeat any adversary.”

The Air Force awarded engineering and manufacturing development and production contracts to General Atomics, FQ-42, and Anduril, FQ-44, for CCA Increment 1.

Awarded four months ahead of schedule, these contracts signify that the FQ-42 and FQ-44 meet rigorous mission requirements and are ready for full-scale manufacturing. The decision follows

a competitive source selection process, identifying the systems as the most capable and cost-effective solutions to maintain air superiority in an increasingly complex and contested global threat environment.

“By moving fast from competitive selection into full-scale manufacturing, we position ourselves to field highly credible and combat-ready semi-autonomous systems to stay ahead of the pacing challenge,” said Secretary of the Air Force Troy Meink. “These contracts reaffirm our confidence in the strategic path forward for the program to procure over 150 combat capable CCA by the end

of the decade.”

Equally critical to the CCA ecosystem is the mission autonomy software. The Air Force awarded mission autonomy production contracts to a pool of six vendors, establishing a competitive marketplace for the program.

The baseline, six-year contract vehicle provides the framework for continuous competition and rapid software development. The following vendors have been selected for this baseline contract pool: Anduril, General Atomics, Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman, RTX Collins Aerospace and Shield AI.

Additionally, the Air Force has competitively awarded production options to Anduril, RTX Collins Aerospace, and Shield AI, to accelerate the delivery of critical mission autonomy software.

This targeted award, based on the vendors’ ability to meet aggressive schedule and affordability requirements, will fund the first of two six-month competitive phases designed to speed the fielding of operational software to the warfighter.

While the baseline contract establishes a continuous competi-

tive arena, the competitive awards are designed to deliver capability faster. Following the initial six-month period, the Air Force will evaluate the vendors’ progress and execute a second competitive award period.

This performance-based competition will culminate in the selection of a primary mission autonomy provider for CCA Increment 1, with award planned for selection by summer 2027.

<https://www.af.mil/News/Article-Display/Article/4520575/evolving-threats>.

Secretary of War flag officer announcement

Secretary of War Pete Hegseth announced in early June that the president nominated Rear Adm. **Marc J. Miguez** (at right) for appointment to vice admiral, with assignment as commander, Third Fleet, San Diego.

Miguez most recently served as Navy chief of Legislative Affairs, Pentagon, Washington, D.C.



Senate committee proposes 3.6% military pay raise, rejecting White House request for more

In a June 18 report by Karen Jowers of *Military Times*, lawmakers must soon hammer out the differences in their proposals for fiscal 2027 military pay raises, as the Senate has rejected the Trump administration’s request for higher, tiered pay raises - a proposal agreed to by a House committee. The Senate Armed Services Committee has proposed a flat 3.6 percent pay raise for all troops, instead of the administration’s request for raises between 5 to 7 percent, depending on pay grade, according to the report.

The proposal passed by the House Armed Services Committee aligned with the administration’s request. Under that measure, junior enlisted service members would receive larger percentages of raises. Those in pay grades E-5 and below would get a 7 percent raise in 2027; those in grades E-6 through O-3 would get a 6 percent raise; and those in grades O-4 and above would get 5 percent.

Male postpartum depression? Coping with new dad blues

from Marine Corps
Community Servcies

Becoming a father is an exciting time, but adjusting to fatherhood can be difficult. Marine dads get the baby blues, too.

Male or paternal postpartum depression is quite common but rarely discussed. Research shows that one in every 10 new dads experience postpartum depression. Initial feelings of sadness can develop into more serious mental health disorders if untreated.

Perinatal Mood & Anxiety Disorders (PMADs) are anxiety-based disorders new parents may experience. They usually begin a few days after childbirth and can last up to 12 months.

Male postpartum depression is treatable with early intervention. Medication and/or talk therapy can lead to recovery and help enjoy life with a new baby. Some risk factors for developing PMADs include a history of depression, relationship changes, single parenthood, birth trauma, to name a few..

Symptoms:
Anger and irritability
Sleep deprivation
Feeling overwhelmed
Self-isolation
Increased alcohol or drug use



Emotional detachment from the child
Decrease in pleasurable activities
Ongoing sadness
Thoughts of suicide

Coping strategies aligned through Marine Corps Total Fitness:
Getting proper sleep and rest.
Eating healthy and exercising.

Reducing and/or eliminating alcohol use. Mood and energy levels can improve with reduced Practicing gratitude, meditating, or journaling.

Asking for help. Sharing your feelings with loved ones lowers parental stress.

Seeking professional help. Speak with a therapist or physician for treatment options.

Contact the New Parent Support Program at <https://www.usmc-mccs.org/marine-family-support/child-and-youth/new-parent-support>.

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'FightnFITZ' returns to hugs 'n more

USS Fitzgerald served 3 months at sea

NAVAL BASE SAN DIEGO - Destroyer USS Fitzgerald (DDG 62) returned to its homeport here June 19 following a three-month underway to the U.S. 3rd Fleet and 7th Fleet areas of operations.

While underway, *Fitzgerald* conducted a wide range of maritime security, logistical, and multinational missions, demonstrating the U.S. Navy's long-term commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific. The ship participated in several major multinational exercises, enhancing interoperability and strengthening partnerships with key regional allies.

Fitzgerald participated in the Royal Australian Navy's (RAN) International Fleet Review in Sydney Harbour alongside 20 partner nations to celebrate the service's 125th Birthday. Immediately following the review, the destroyer took part in Exercise Kakadu 2026, executing integrated air and surface warfare serials, divisional tactics, and formation steaming across Darwin Bay and Jervis Bay.

Fitzgerald provided escort support to the *Boxer* Amphibious



Ready Group from Guam to the South China Sea. During these escort operations, the crew advanced naval aviation readiness, conducting deck landing qualifications with Marine and Navy aviation squadrons. As a lethal and agile force, the Sailors aboard *Fitzgerald* exemplified fleet readiness, which was further highlighted by leadership visits from the Chief of Naval Operations,

Gunner's Mate 2nd Class Dustin Tipton, assigned to destroyer *Fitzgerald*, is welcomed home as the ship returns to its homeport of Naval Base San Diego, June 19. U.S. Navy photo by MC1 Sara Eshleman

Adm. Daryl Caudle, and Commander, U.S. 7th Fleet, Vice Adm. Pat Hannifin.

"The grit and dedication demonstrated by this crew were on full display every single day," said Cmdr. Paul F. Richard-

son III, commanding officer of *Fitzgerald*.

"Whether working with our regional allies or executing critical support missions, our Sailors performed above and beyond. We are thrilled to be back home with our families and are grateful to those whose love and support kept us strong while we were away."



Navy Sailors assigned to duty at sea or on shore related to operations at the U.S.-Mexico border are now eligible for the Mexican Border Defense Medal. Navy photo by Seaman Martin Perez.

Sailors are now eligible for the Mexican Border Defense Medal

TASK AND PURPOSE - Sailors assigned to military operations at the southern U.S. border are now eligible for the new Mexican Border Defense Medal.

The move puts Sailors assigned to ships and ground units involved with border operations on the same footing for the award as thousands of Soldiers and, as of last month, Marines.

The service announced the eligibility in a Navy Administrative Message detailing new guidance for how commanders can approve Sailors for the relatively new award. The new rules say Sailors who are "assigned, attached or detailed to a unit" in support of Customs and Border Protection for a total of at least 30 days are eligible. The

deployment must be within 100 miles of the Mexican border in California, Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona, or in adjacent waters up to 24 nautical miles from shore.

Since January 2025, thousands of troops have deployed as part of the military mission to the U.S.-Mexico border, including numerous Sailors. More than 10,000 personnel have been sent to the border, according to U.S. Northern Command, to join roughly 2,500 who were already there prior to the start of 2025. Forces sent included Engineer Marines and Airborne Soldiers.

Since the start of the larger deployment, troops have set up "national defense areas" around American bases and trained with small drones and drone defenses, including lasers.

For the Navy, that has included several warships patrolling coast waters, including multiple littoral combat ships and even destroyers. When USS *Spruance* deployed last March, NORCOM said it was aiding in "combating maritime-related terrorism, weapons proliferation, transnational crime, piracy, environmental destruction, and illegal seaborne immigration." Navy personnel were also on land, conducting patrols with Marines and training on operations such as medical evacuations.



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Naval Base San Diego reopens historic theater following \$9.2 million renovation

by Petty Officer 2nd Class
Aja Campbell

Naval Base San Diego
NAVAL BASE SAN DIEGO — Naval Base San Diego (NBSD) officially reopened its Base Theater following a \$9.2 million renovation project designed to enhance quality of life, strengthen community engagement, and support waterfront readiness.

The renovated facility serves as more than an entertainment

venue. As a modernized multipurpose space, the theater will support command training, all-hands calls, leadership engagements, award ceremonies, briefings, and community events that directly contribute to mission readiness across the waterfront.

“This theater represents an investment in our Sailors, families, and workforce,” said Capt. Brian Bungay, commanding officer, NBSD. “Warfighting readiness



Capt. Brian Bungay, (center-right), commanding officer, Naval Base San Diego, Cmdr. William Burkland, executive officer NBSD, (left), and MWR staff cut a ceremonial cake during the Base Theater reopening, May 29. U.S. Navy photo by MC2 Aja Bleu Campbell

begins ashore, and our people deserve professional spaces that support both mission execution and opportunities to connect as a community.”

The project included upgraded audio-visual systems, enhanced acoustics, new seating for more than 600 patrons, HVAC and roof repairs, improved accessibility features, and modernized amenities throughout the facility. The improvements ensure the theater remains a valuable resource for the Navy community for years to come.

The reopening marks the culmination of months of collaboration between Naval Base San Diego, Morale, Welfare and Rec-

reation (MWR), Naval Facilities Engineering Systems Command (NAVFAC), project contractors, and numerous stakeholders who worked to transform the theater into a premier gathering space.

During the ceremony, Bungay thanked the teams whose dedication made the project possible and emphasized the theater’s role in strengthening the bonds that make the Navy team successful.

The Base Theater is now open and available to support command functions, special events, training opportunities, and entertainment programs that serve Sailors and their families throughout the region.



SEA HAWK Naval Aircrewman (Helicopter) 2nd Class Coy Manwill, assigned to Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron (HSC) 8, guides a Sea Hawk helicopter as it lands on aircraft carrier USS Theodore Roosevelt, June 22, 2026. TR, flagship of Carrier Strike Group (CSG) 9, is underway conducting exercises to bolster strike group readiness and capability in the 3rd Fleet area of operations. U.S. Navy photo by MC3 Aaron Haro Gonzalez



Patrons attend Naval Base San Diego Base Theater reopening ceremony, May 29. Established in 1922, NBSD is the largest West Coast naval installation, supporting more than 60 combatant and auxiliary surface ships. U.S. Navy photo by MC2 Aja Bleu Campbell

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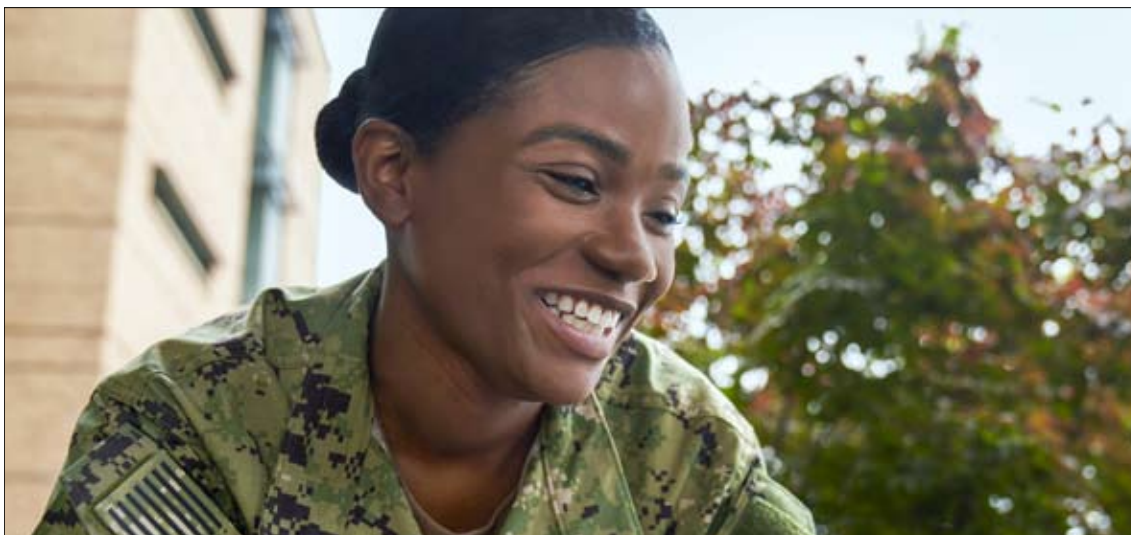
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FRCSW sets new standard in excellence

by Michael A Furlano

Fleet Readiness Center Southwest
The Fleet Readiness Center Southwest (FRCSW) Maintenance, Repair, and Overhaul for Logistics (MRO-L) team is being celebrated for a landmark achievement in operational excellence that culminated in a perfect 100 percent accountability rating during the most recent Ernst & Young (EY) audit.

A 100 percent rating is exceptionally difficult to achieve, especially for a large organization such as FRCSW. This kind of success signifies that the FRCSW team has shown strict adherence to the commands internal system of quality management. Every member of the audit team met specific internal quality and compliance metrics for a given period and there were zero regulatory infractions or missed compliance steps.

This is a first-time accomplishment for the command and the team's performance stands as a powerful example of professionalism and mission-focused execution. Alaleh Jenkin, Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Financial Manage-



Fleet Readiness Center Southwest's Maintenance, Repair, and Overhaul for Logistics (MRO-L) team. Photo by Michael A. Furlano

ment and Comptroller, praised the outcome.

"This represents far more than technical compliance, it validates the exceptional professionalism and collaborative problem-solving capabilities of our workforce," she said.

The team's vast responsibilities include managing over 3,800 Growth, Emergent and Recurring (GE&R) assets valued at approximately \$322 million as well as over 8,900 Individual Material Readiness List (IMRL) line items worth \$248 million with distribution throughout 132 unique shops. The team's meticulous efforts involve integrity inspections, tagging each asset, creating

electronic records with photos in the internal tracking system, and coordinating delivery to respective shops. The rigorous process includes administrative updates and an annual inventory conducted for every asset, which was fundamental to the team's audit success.

A recent major focus driving significant savings to the Navy was the disposition of excess equipment. The team completed

a combined IMRL and GE-R Defense Reutilization and Marketing Office (DRMO) disposition of 11,504 assets worth over \$89 million. This massive undertaking involved dispositioning 288 standalone assets, 106 pallets, and 273 storage bins between the two locations.

The team's stock room management (SR15) has become a model of fiscal efficiency for the Navy. Eliminating waste and ensuring critical parts are pre-positioned exactly where and when they are needed allows FRCSW to avoid expensive procurement delays and operational downtime saving the Navy and US taxpayer money.

<https://www.dvidshub.net/news/568393/fleet-readiness-center-southwest-sets-new-standard-excellence>



LIGHTNING LAUNCH Navy F-35C Lightning II, assigned to Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 86, launches off the flight deck of aircraft carrier USS Theodore Roosevelt June 16, 2026. U.S. Navy photo by MC3 Aaron Haro Gonzalez



VIPER SIGNAL A Sailor signals to an AH-1Z Viper attack helicopter aboard amphibious assault ship USS Boxer during flight operations in the South China Sea, June 13, 2026. U.S. Marine Corps photo by Lance Cpl. Nicole Stuart

'Military Days' at the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway

PALM SPRINGS - During July, all U.S. military personnel with valid military identification—active, former and retired—receive free admission

to the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway, along with a special gift for "Military Days." Spouses of deployed military members, as well as military widows and widowers, also qualify for the promotion. Military personnel are encouraged to bring friends and family, and receive 25 percent off regular Tram admission for up to four guests.

While visiting the Tramway, guests can enjoy:

- ◆ Fine dining with breathtaking views at Peaks Restaurant, or casual, family-friendly fare at Pines Café.

- ◆ More than 50 miles of hiking trails within Mount San Jacinto State Park.

- ◆ Guided Nature Walks led by MSJSP volunteers every Sunday at 11 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. through Labor Day Weekend. For the latest information on park programs and events, follow @mountsanjacintos on Instagram. In addition, educational programs and instructor-led hikes are presented by the Mount San Jacinto Natural History Association. Learn more at www.msjnha.org/events.

The Tramway remains committed to honoring the service and dedication of active-duty military personnel, veterans and their families through this annual tradition. For additional information, visit www.pstramway.com/military-days-2026.



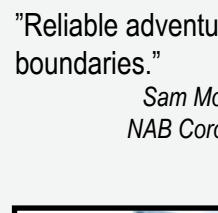
man on the street

In 2 or 3 words, how would your family describe you?



"A good person, and that's how I would describe myself."

Jose Arce
NAB Coronado



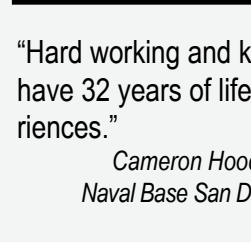
"Reliable adventurer. I push the boundaries."

Sam Money
NAB Coronado



"Caring and loving. I grew up taking care of my brothers and sisters."

YN1 Angelica Hernandez
Naval Base San Diego



"Hard working and kind. I have 32 years of life's experiences."

Cameron Hood
Naval Base San Diego



"A gentle soul."

Luka Galyen
Friend of the military





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<p>Mon., March 23, 6pm</p> <p>Fri., April 17, 5pm</p> <p>Sun., April 26, 4:30pm</p> <p>Sat., May 23, 7pm</p> <p>Fri., June 19, 7pm</p> <p>Mon., July 6, 6pm</p> <p>Sat., July 18, 8pm</p> <p>Fri., July 24, 6pm</p>	<p>NAZ Wranglers at San Diego Strike Force*</p> <p>Quad City Steamwheelers at San Diego Strike Force</p> <p>Tucson Sugar Skulls at San Diego Strike Force*</p> <p>NAZ Wranglers at San Diego Strike Force*</p> <p>Vegas Knight Hawks at San Diego Strike Force*</p> <p>Arizona Rattlers at San Diego Strike Force*</p> <p>New Mexico Chupacabras at San Diego Strike Force*</p> <p>Tucson Sugar Skulls at San Diego Strike Force*</p> <p style="text-align: right;">*Conference</p>
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The Meat & Potatoes of Life



by
Lisa
Smith
Molinari

The drive to Manhattan should've taken three hours. But I'd be lucky to get there in five. Sure enough, my GPS announced I was being routed through Queens to avoid an accident on I-95. I followed the torrent of vehicles coursing through endless urban sprawl, hoping this unfamiliar path would deliver me safely to my daughter's apartment in the East Village.

After negotiating dicey intersections in Queens, I noticed police directing traffic, and cars backed up along an exit. A deep base rhythm boomed and vibrations shook my car windows and rattled my chest. Alarmed, I concentrated on my GPS's instructions so I wouldn't get lost among the chaos and ear-splitting noise.

I merged onto I-495 and detected an opening in the sprawl. Just off the highway, performers stood on a massive outdoor stage flanked by gargantuan speakers, rapping to throngs of people with arms flailing in unison to the beat.

A tunnel under the East River spit me out onto FDR Drive, and I made it to Anna's apartment. We spent that night with her twenty-something friends, eating ice cream, drinking prosecco, and analyzing Anna's latest existential crisis.

"I need coffee," were my first words in the morning. Caffeine was in order. We had a busy day ahead,

Fear, loathing and love in New York City

setting up Anna's fashion design studio in a warehouse in Brooklyn. Anna walked me to a French bakery lined with flakey pastries, where the coffee was bitter and perfect.

"Oh no!" Anna blurted on our walk to the parking garage. "Warehouse management locked the freight elevator due to an event on the street today. We'll have to carry everything up four staircases to my studio."

Arriving at the warehouse, we saw why management had limited access to the building. As far as the eye could see were Comic Con fans in costumes. Super heroes, video game icons, cartoon characters, furrries, WWF wrestlers, and skimpy outfits of questionable intent.

I inched my SUV through the strange swarm, and parked illegally near the warehouse front door. Anna and I made multiple trips, lugging furniture and boxes through the hideous horde, and up four staircases to her studio.

Three hours later, the sweaty task was done. We bid adieu to the crazies, but two blocks into the drive, traffic stopped. "Again!?" I bellowed, having no idea what caused the back up. There in an industrial area of Brooklyn, a Canada goose waddled across the street, stopping to look back. A fuzzy gray gosling appeared behind her. We all patiently allowed the mother and baby to pass.

"How sweet," I commented as we stopped at the next light, where a heavy-set woman in iridescent butterfly wings strutted by.

That evening, we walked to St. Marks Street for dinner and a much-deserved drink. Lined with festive outdoor restaurants and bars, the

block was teeming with hip young adults. Slathering fresh baked pita with baba ganoush, Anna and I people-watched.

"What about that guy for your roommate?" I asked.

"Don't point, Mom," Anna scolded, explaining that white tennis shoes without socks were objectionable, even though it was what every guy on the street was wearing.

An hour later, a rush of cold wind came out of nowhere. "Strange" I said to Anna, wiping grit from my eye. Suddenly, trees bent over and umbrellas were sucked out of cafe tables. Swirling wind and pelting rain made a surprise attack. Dozens of white tennis shoes without socks began running. We ran, too.

With each block, rain came heavier. Thunder clapped. Trash whipped in circles. We ran with everyone, chattering excitedly about the crazy unexpected storm. Just before crossing the last street to Anna's apartment building, a crack of lightning boomed, and a powerful gust blew so hard, we huddled together with strangers.

"It's Armageddon!" I yelled, and the soaked strangers laughed as we darted together across the slick city street.

I've never considered myself a city person. But even in New York, where I'm often scared or revolted, I've been touched by small moments of solidarity with strangers, over shared experiences like music in the subway, the Nicks winning, extreme weather, and a mother and baby crossing the street. Sometimes, concentrations of humanity offer surprising opportunities for fellowship.

AutoMatters™ & More



by Jan Wagner

I happened to tune in to CNN recently, just in time to catch the end of the "Smerconish" TV talk show. I've watched Michael Smerconish's show before. He is well-informed and I find much of what he discusses interesting.

According to his website (<https://www.smerconish.com/about/>), Michael Smerconish is the host of a daily radio program heard nationwide on SiriusXM's POTUS channel. He is also the host of CNN's "Smerconish", which airs Saturdays at 6 a.m., PT. He was a longtime newspaper columnist for the *Philadelphia Daily News* and *Sunday Philadelphia Inquirer*, and his columns were routinely re-printed in newspapers all across the country. He the author of seven books, and donated all of the proceeds for four of them to charity. He is a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Lehigh University and the University of Pennsylvania Law School.

Sometimes Michael and I do not share the same opinions on matters, but often we do. This day I was intrigued to discover that he and his guest were talking about a subject near and dear to me. Their dads tended to embarrass their tablemates at restaurants by catching the attention of, and then initiating conversations with, total strangers enjoying their meals at

Socializing & making friends

the next table, while they were minding their own business. Does this social behavior of loved ones sound familiar to you?

My dad used to do that too, 50-some-odd years ago when I lived in Calgary, Alberta, and frankly anywhere else that we happened to be. He even became friends with employees of the restaurants, harmlessly chatting and kidding around with them. He was on a first-name basis with the waitress who served him on a regular basis at the restaurant in the Palliser Hotel in Calgary. Dad often took me there to have breakfast. I still remember her last name, even though I was just a kid at the time. Likewise, dad was on a first-name basis with the owner of our favorite Chinese restaurant (the Jade Palace) in downtown Calgary. I remember his name too, and one of my parents' favorite foods that they ordered — dried spareribs. These fond memories have stuck in my mind over the decades since then.

My dad worked in the clothing industry. He was a manufacturer's sales rep. for several men's clothing lines, and he co-owned a sweater manufacturing company in Calgary. His territory was all over Western Canada, where he visited stores and took their orders.

Sometimes dad would take me along with him on his sales calls. It never ceased to amaze me that wherever he and I walked into the men's clothing departments of one of these stores, not only did lots of people know him, but they would cheerfully greet him — by his (embarrassing to me) nickname: "Waggy!" Our family name is Wagner. Where "Waggy"

originated, I do not know.

Needless to say, Dad was not shy. I remember one particular time when we walked into a big retail chain department store that he sold men's clothing to (the Hudson's Bay Company, in downtown Calgary). He went there to buy me a watch as a present. After we identified the watch, he asked the salesclerk — a total stranger to both of us — and in a matter-of-fact way (making an "assumptive close" — an effective sales technique), for a DISCOUNT — and he got it! Imagine asking for a discount in a major department store! There seemed to be no limits to my dad's social skills. He was a genuine character and absolutely amazing. I miss him.

Over the years I seem to have incorporated that character trait into my social behavior too, even though at the time I was quite embarrassed by his behavior. Just this past week at the San Diego County Fair, I struck up conversations with a total stranger who was sitting beside me at the rooftop "speakeasy," overlooking the kids' Midway and the Toyota Summer Concert Series outdoor stage, where Chicago was performing; and earlier with another total stranger who was seated beside me to watch a drone soccer demonstration, in one of the exhibit buildings. They exchanged their contact information with me, and we may well become my friends. Such can be the very positive result of talking to strangers.

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Veterans News

Trump, Hegseth praise new Medal of Honor recipients

by Matthew Olay
Pentagon News

President Donald J. Trump and Secretary of War Pete Hegseth lauded the intrepid valor of three servicemen whom the commander in chief awarded the Medal of Honor to at a White House ceremony June 18

During formal observances in Washington and in Arlington, Va., Trump and Hegseth recounted the heroic actions of three awardees: Marine Corps

Maj. (Ret.) James Capers Jr., Marine Corps Col. John W. Ripley - both Vietnam War veterans, with Ripley receiving his medal posthumously — and Army Maj. (Ret.) Nicholas Dockery, a veteran of the war in Afghanistan.

"As we approach the 250th anniversary of our founding, we remember that we owe everything to heroes like those we celebrate today: men who went willingly into the darkest and most dangerous corners of Earth



Secretary of War Pete Hegseth hosts a Medal of Honor Induction Ceremony for Marine Corps Maj. (Ret.) James Capers and Marine Corps Col. John Ripley at the Pentagon June 19. DoW photo by Navy Petty Officer 2nd Class Carson Croom

to defeat evil, so we could live free," Trump said just prior to presenting the medals.

Following the awarding of the Medals of Honor, on June 19, all three men were inducted into the Hall of Heroes — a room in the Pentagon that lists the names of all 3,500-plus service members who have received the prestigious award since President Abraham Lincoln

signed legislation creating it in the early 1860s.

During both the awarding and the induction, Trump, Hegseth and others recounted the courageous acts that ultimately resulted in them receiving the highest military award for valor in action.

"James Capers Jr. and John Ripley proved that the breed of

patriots who stood [during the Battles of Lexington and Concord] and on the banks of the Delaware River did not die out, and those kinds of patriots still guard us today," Hegseth said.

Ripley, who was serving as a senior Marine advisor, destroyed a critical bridge to halt a North Vietnamese advance, April 2, 1972. Despite facing enemy fire and physical exhaustion, he successfully positioned and detonated explosives. His son, Tom, spoke on his late father's behalf.

"After the bridge was destroyed and the invasion halted, my father was asked to provide an update via radio a few days later. ... He captured the moment perfectly: 'Leatherneck, this is Leatherneck Delta. Report: powder dry, morale high, Semper Fi,'" the younger Ripley said.

Capers, 88, sustained multiple injuries while coordinating the evacuation of his men under heavy enemy fire in Vietnam, in 1967. Despite being wounded extensively, he refused to leave the battlefield until all of his fellow Marines were safely evacuated.

"Your applause reminds me of some dark days, of some brave men — so I'll speak for them," Capers said.

"This is the greatest country in the world. I fought for that flag. I believed in it. ... So, thank you all for being here today, and thank you all for coming here. This is very important to us, to keep our legacy going," he added.

Dockery received his medal for confronting a well-armed Taliban force that ambushed his platoon, leading to a lengthy fight.

Despite the difficult Afghanistan terrain, Dockery was able to continually engage the enemy, personally risking his life on numerous occasions to protect and evacuate three wounded members of his platoon.

"Our nation is filled with great moments of unity every day. There are moments of respect and compassion shared between one another. ... I love my country, and if we all remember this, the best of America is yet to come," Dockery said, following his induction.

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SOCIAL SECURITY MATTERS

Why don't we have a minimum Social Security benefit?

Dear Rusty: I think we should have a Social Security baseline of \$2,500 for each person. When I retire, my Social Security benefit will not be enough to survive. There are many of us who worked low paying jobs all our lives because we raised families and only started saving later in life. Considering all the money our government wastes on other countries and welfare programs for people who have not worked, it seems unfair that they will not reward those of us who contributed to society all our lives.

Signed: Needs More Social Security

Dear Needs More: For information, the concept of a "minimum" Social Security benefit is not new and, indeed, already exists - but it is one which few beneficiaries qualify for. The so-called "special minimum benefit" was meant to lift low-earning workers above the poverty line, but less than 32,000 SS beneficiaries (out of about 59 million retirees) currently qualify. That's because Social Security's benefit formula turns out to be more generous because it is based on lifetime earnings (wages), while the "special minimum benefit" program is based on consumer prices. That causes the SS benefit formula to provide a higher SS benefit than is provided by the "special minimum benefit" option. In other words, people get a higher benefit because their SS benefit is based upon their actual lifetime earnings vs. an artificially created special minimum benefit. In short, the existing SS benefit formula usually provides more than the established "special minimum benefit."

The SS benefit program is based on each person's average monthly income over their lifetime. However, it is very important to understand that the program is also designed to provide a higher monthly benefit to those with a lower lifetime income. Thus, the percentage of "replacement income" for those with lower lifetime earnings is more than it is for those with higher lifetime earnings. Typically, a lower-lifetime income person will get about 40% of their average pre-retirement monthly income as their Social Security benefit, whereas a higher-income person will get about 20% or less of their pre-retirement monthly average income. In this way, Social Security is already a "progressive" program. But it's important to understand also that Social Security, from its beginning, was never meant to provide 100% of a person's income needs in retirement. Thus, each beneficiary should plan to supplement their retirement income in other ways (such as retirement savings, investment income, working longer, working part-time, etc.).

Having said that, it is also important to know that Social Security is a completely self-sustaining program and not dependent on general public funding, which would make it more susceptible to political shenanigans (imagine giving re-election seeking politicians easy access to Social Security's separately held resources). While it is certainly true that the government spends freely on "welfare programs" for those who have not worked, Social Security is not a program which is dependent on government largesse. Rather, it is a benefit which is earned by working and contributing to the program, which provides retirement benefits based upon each person's average lifetime work income.

If you expect financial difficulties when you retire, I encourage you to visit this website sponsored by the National Council on Aging (www.benefitscheckup.org). Here you can enter your zip code and find many public programs which you might be eligible for where you live, including assistance with healthcare costs, housing, utilities, etc.

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Cajon Cruise Nights, Wednesdays, through July 22, 5-7:30pm, Main Street and Prescott Promenade. Live music, great food, and a welcoming community vibe. www.downtownelcagon.com/do/cajon-cruise
Encinitas Cruise Night Third Thursdays thru Sept, 5:30-7:30pm. Live music, hotrods, classics, woodies, Hwy 101. encinitas101.com

Veterans Crisis Line
Military Crisis Line
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Visit our military museums

The Veterans Museum at Balboa Park. The Veterans Museum and Memorial Center is a museum located in historic Balboa Park of San Diego, California. Founded in 1989, it is dedicated to create, maintain, and operate an institution to honor and perpetuate the memories of all men and women who have served in the Armed Forces of the United States of America. <http://www.veteranmuseum.org/>
Active duty military, Museum Member, Children under 12: Free
Veterans/Seniors: \$4 • Adults: \$5 • Student ID: \$2
2115 Park Blvd, San Diego (Balboa Park) • (619) 239-2300
Hours: Call for current hours (619) 239-2300

MCRD Command Museum & Historical Society. Museum focusing on Marine Corps history from the 19th century to today is also a research library. <https://www.mcrdmuseum.org/>
Free admission • The Pass and ID Center may issue day passes to visitors who wish to visit the museum and do not possess military ID—call (619) 524-4200 for information on base access.
1600 Hochmuth Ave, San Diego, 92140 • (619) 524-4426.
Hours: Mon 8am-3pm, Tue-Fri 8-4; Family day 8-5:45; Sat 10:30-5; • Closed Sunday

USS Midway Museum. The USS Midway Museum is a maritime museum located in downtown San Diego at Navy Pier. The museum consists of the aircraft carrier Midway. The ship houses an extensive collection of aircraft, many of which were built in So Cal. FREE for children 3 & under and Active Duty military including reservists (w/valid ID). Adult \$39 (ages 13+). Youth \$26 (ages 4-12). Veterans (w/ID) \$26*Must show ID at entrance. Open daily 10-5, last admission 4pm. <https://www.midway.org/>

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The world inside your mouth: How mouth microbes affect your health

There's much more to your mouth than your teeth, gums, and tongue. Your mouth also contains billions of tiny critters that can only be seen with a microscope. These are called microbes. Together, all the microbes living in your mouth are known as the oral microbiome.

Scientists believe the oral microbiome can contribute to diseases both in the mouth and elsewhere in the body. That means research into these microbes might lead to new ways to prevent and treat many illnesses.



Who's in There?

Your mouth makes a lovely neighborhood for microbes. And many different types can move in. Scientists believe roughly 700 species of microbes live in the human mouth. Some of these may contribute to diseases. Others help keep disease-causing microbes from taking over.

"It's a natural, normal part of life to have these microbes living in your mouth," says Dr. Christian Abnet, an oral cancer researcher at NIH. "Even people with good oral hygiene have a thriving microbiome in their mouth."

The set of microbes in a person's mouth usually doesn't change much over time, at least in adults. When it does change, it can be bad news.

"People tend to have certain microbes in specific proportions," says Dr. Akintunde Emiola, a researcher who studies the oral microbiome at NIH. "When that proportion changes, that can be linked to diseases."

But which specific microbes are linked to diseases isn't clear. Researchers are trying to figure out how microbe changes in the mouth play a role in disease.

Beyond the Mouth

One kind of microbe that can wreak havoc in the mouth is bacteria. Dentists are well-known for pointing out that sugar-loving

bacteria can harm your teeth and gums. These live in the plaque that dentists scrape off your teeth.

But the influence of these microbes is not confined to the mouth. Mouth microbes have been linked to a wide variety of diseases outside the mouth. These include cancer, heart disease, diabetes, allergies, asthma, and even Alzheimer's disease.

For example, studies have shown that poor oral health is linked to a higher risk for Alzheimer's disease. That may be because not taking proper care of your teeth makes your mouth a friendlier place for disease-causing bacteria.

"We think the type of bacteria that live in the mouth might secrete substances that can get into your bloodstream, go into the brain, and cause things to go awry," says Dr. Colin Combs, an expert in neurodegenerative diseases at the University of North Dakota.

Combs' team has found a substance linked to Alzheimer's disease inside our mouths. Beta-amyloid is a hallmark of Alzheimer's disease. In the brain, it clumps together into "plaques." But Combs' work recently showed that beta-amyloid is also in saliva.

His team is researching how beta-amyloid in saliva affects

mouth microbes, and vice versa. They're trying to figure out whether beta-amyloid in the mouth plays a role in Alzheimer's disease, too.

Cancer may also be influenced by the oral microbiome. Abnet's studies have linked certain mouth microbes to a higher risk for cancer in the lungs, colon, and esophagus.

Abnet explains that there are a few ways mouth microbes might promote cancer. One is that certain bacteria produce substances that cause cancer. These are called carcinogens.

The oral microbiome can also affect the defenses that protect you from germs. Those defenses are called the immune system. One of the ways it fights off germs is with a reaction called inflammation. Inflammation is linked to many diseases, including cancer and Alzheimer's disease.

Changes to the immune system might also explain how mouth microbes affect allergies. An allergy occurs when the immune system overreacts to something that's normally harmless. Take, for instance, peanut allergy in kids. One study showed that when kids have certain mouth bacteria, it takes a smaller amount of peanut to trigger a reaction.

Knowing how mouth microbes are linked to diseases might one

day help us create new treatments.

"Figuring out the mechanisms is really important if you want to design an intervention," Abnet says.

Managing Our Microbes

Getting rid of disease-causing microbes in our mouths is easier said than done. There are medications that kill microbes, called antibiotics. But current antibiotics kill off all kinds of microbes, not just harmful ones. That's why Emiola's team is working on more precise ways to destroy disease-causing microbes.

"When you kill all of the microbes, the problematic ones tend to repopulate faster," Emiola says. "But if you specifically target the bad microbes, that allows the good ones to repopulate the environment."

His lab is looking for viruses that only infect specific bacteria. These viruses are called bacteriophages. Using bacteriophages that prey only on specific bacteria in the mouth could be a way to get rid of disease-causing microbes.

Emiola's group is also trying to create medications that only harm certain bacteria. To do that, he's relying on treatments called prodrugs. "Prodrugs are compounds that are normally inactive," Emiola says.

But the prodrugs he is developing become active once inside specific bacteria. And when they're activated, they work like antibiotics.

In fact, his team has already created a promising prodrug that eliminates bacteria that cause severe gum infections. And he believes this approach could one day help treat diseases outside the mouth as well.

Meanwhile, many "probiotic" and "prebiotic" supplements can already be found in grocery stores. They're often promoted for their ability to make the microbiome healthier. A probiotic



Wise Choices

Be good to your microbes

- You can promote a healthier oral microbiome by:
- Taking good care of your teeth and gums. That includes daily brushing and flossing and regular dentist visits.
 - Eating a healthy diet, especially one that is low in added sugar.
 - Drinking less alcohol.
 - Avoiding tobacco products, including electronic cigarettes.

encourages the growth of certain microbes. A probiotic already contains those microbes. But researchers still don't truly know which microbes or combination of microbes are effective.

"There's really very little evidence [on specific supplements]... so that would not be anything that I would recommend," Abnet says.

Fortunately, there are many evidence-backed ways to have a healthier oral microbiome. The

habits that make for a healthy lifestyle also happen to be good for the oral microbiome. That includes good dental hygiene and a well-balanced diet.

"Maybe one day we'll have [microbiome-based treatments that are] beneficial to people," Abnet says. "But we're in the early days of that research right now."

See the Wise Choices box for more tips that are good for both you and your mouth microbes.



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