

ARMED FORCES DISPATCH



San Diego Navy/Marine Corps Dispatch

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SIXTY-FOURTH YEAR NO. 33

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DECEMBER 1-15, 2024



PARKING LIGHTS A team of Defense Department drone operators and experts test the technical capabilities of various uncrewed aerial systems during a Defense Innovation Unit prize challenge at Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center, Twentynine Palms, Calif., Nov. 6, 2024. The tests ensure the drones are safe, cybersecure and meet DOD requirements. Photo by Devon Bistarkey/Defense Innovation Unit

USS Boxer: Sailors, Marines return home from deployment

SAN DIEGO - Sailors assigned to amphibious assault ship USS *Boxer* and embarked elements of the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit returned to homeport in San Diego and Camp Pendleton after a recent deployment to the 7th and 3rd Fleet areas of operations.

As part of the *Boxer* Amphibious Ready Group and the 15th, more than 2,500 Sailors and Marines participated in a wide range of joint and combined exercises and provided foreign disaster support, showcasing the ready and responsive combined-arms team of the Navy and Marine Corps.

“The tactical expertise, professionalism, and stealth of the Sailors and Marines who make up our amphibious force team is unmatched, and that was proven time and time again throughout our deployment to the 7th Fleet area of operations,” said U.S. Navy Capt. Tate Robinson, commodore of Amphibious Squadron (PHIBRON) 5. “From exercising and training alongside our allies and partners to supporting foreign disaster response missions, our Navy and Marine Corps team demonstrated the true flexibility and maneuverability of the ARG-MEU construct, and I could not be more honored to serve alongside each and every member of this team.”

During deployment, *Boxer* and 15th MEU participated in exercise Ssang Yong. The exercise strengthened the Republic of Korea-U.S. alliance through bilateral, joint training, contributing toward combined amphibious capability in defense of the Korean Peninsula.

In September, *Boxer* also sailed alongside and participated in a personnel exchange with the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force Kongo-class guided-missile destroyer JS Kongo (DDG 173) and conducted three replenishments-at-sea with the Royal New Zealand Navy’s Polar-class sustainment vessel HMNZS Aotearoa (A11) before returning to the Republic of Korea to participate in the Republic of Korea Armed Forces Day celebration. As part of the celebration, *Boxer* and the 15th MEU welcomed more than 245 visitors to the ship for tours, giving the Sailors and Marines an opportunity to showcase their equipment, expertise, and professionalism while building relationships with the local community. [see photos on page 2](#). For a complete deployment wrap up, see <https://www.dvidshub.net/news/486025/uss-boxer-and-15th-marine-expeditionary-unit-return-home-after-indo-pacific-deployment>.

AIRCRAFT CARRIER CARL VINSON DEPLOYS FOR PACIFIC TOUR

by Caitlyn Burchett

Stars and Stripes

Aircraft carrier USS *Carl Vinson* has departed from San Diego without fanfare for a scheduled deployment to the Indo-Pacific region, a Navy spokesperson confirmed Nov. 19.

Ship spotters saw the aircraft carrier Nov. 18 leaving its homeport of Naval Air Station North Island, with Sailors wearing dress blues manning the rails.

A spokesperson for the Navy confirmed the warship’s move-

ment, and that it’s headed to the Indo-Pacific region. The deployment was “always planned for around this time this year,” the spokesperson said.

USS *George Washington* is also currently in the region as it transits to its new homeport of Japan.

Meanwhile, San Diego-based carrier *Abraham Lincoln* is leaving the Middle East, the U.S. Naval Institute fleet tracker reported.

Lincoln’s departure follows nearly three months in the Red Sea fending off Iran-backed Houthi rebels attacking maritime merchant shipping. The West Coast-based carrier and its strike group deployed in July for what was expected to be a Pacific deployment but were directed to the Middle East in late August.

USS *Wasp*, embarked with the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit, was also spotted heading west through the Strait of Gibraltar, towards the Atlantic, according to the U.S. Naval Institute fleet tracker. The amphibious group deployed in June from Virginia.

Lincoln and *Wasp* making their exits from the Middle East leaves independent destroyers to defend the region, which have played a key role in defending merchant shippers and Israel in recent weeks. USS *Bulkeley* and USS *Cole* joined Israeli air defense units in firing about a dozen interceptors to shoot down inbound Iranian missiles, the Pentagon said in October.

In September, USS *Georgia* — an Ohio-class, ballistic-missile submarine 154 Tomahawk cruise missiles along with Mk48 see **Vinson, page 2**



Sailors aboard aircraft carrier USS *Carl Vinson* man the rails on the flight deck as the ship gets underway in the 3rd Fleet area of operations. U.S. Navy photo by MC2 Elizabeth Grubbs

Coast Guard interdicts 37 migrants off coast of Point Loma

from Coast Guard District Eleven

SAN DIEGO - The crew of Coast Guard Cutter *Sea Otter* interdicted 37 migrants from a 33-foot vessel, approximately seven nautical miles off Point Loma Nov. 23. While on patrol, crewmembers aboard *Sea Otter* spotted a vessel operating without navigation lights. *Sea Otter*’s boarding team, along with members of U.S. Customs and Border Protection, boarded the vessel and discovered the 37 migrants aboard. Of the 37 migrants taken into custody, 30 were determined to be of Mexican nationality, two were identified as Salvadoran nationality, three of Guatemalan nationality, one of Colombian nationality, and one U.S. citizen, who was reported to be the operator of the vessel. The 37 individuals were taken to Ballast Point and transferred to CBP.

NMCS D receives Leapfrog’s highest safety grade

The Defense Health Agency announced 15 military hospitals got an “A” rating in the Leapfrog Hospital Safety Grade Fall 2024 assessment. This grade reflects the DHA’s ongoing dedication to transparency and to providing high-quality, safe care to service members and their families. Joining the list is Naval Medical Center San Diego. Leapfrog evaluates hospital safety measures such as errors, injuries and infections. Their grading system uses more than 30 national performance indicators.

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USS BOXER HOMECOMING



1



2



3

- (1) Marines and Sailors assigned to Bravo Company, Battalion Landing Team 1/5, 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit, sit in a landing craft, utility attached to Assault Craft Unit 1 before departing USS Boxer in the Pacific Ocean Nov. 23, 2024. U.S. Marine Corps photo by Cpl. Joseph Helms**
- (2) Gunnery Sgt. Dyllan Manning, an avionics technician assigned to Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron (VMM) 165 (Reinforced), 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit, embraces his daughters aboard MCAS Camp Pendleton Nov. 22, 2024. U.S. Marine Corps photo by Cpl. Peyton Kahle**
- (3) Capt. Eli Owre, executive officer, USS Boxer, and his family members watch an air power demonstration during Boxer's 2024 Tiger Cruise Nov. 16, 2024. U.S. Navy photo by MCSN Tyler Miles**

From Afghanistan to becoming a United States Marine

by Lance Cpl. Jacob Hutchinson

Marine Corps Recruit Depot, San Diego

It's rare to find a Marine Corps recruit that has combat experience prior to commencing recruit training, but for one new Marine, war was a reality long before stepping on the yellow footprints to embark on a new journey of becoming a U.S. Marine.

Sayeed Montazeri was born and raised in Logar Province, Afghanistan, where he spent the first eight years of his life before he and his family relocated to Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan. Growing up in Logar Province, he experienced the realities of conflict firsthand, seeing his father and brother serve alongside U.S. Special Forces whilst he stayed back to defend his village against the Taliban.

New U.S. Marine Pfc. Sayeed Montazeri with India Company, 3rd Recruit Training Battalion, graduated from Marine Corps recruit training at Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego, California, Oct. 25, 2024.

"There were times during my

childhood when I had to defend my village by any means necessary, engaging enemy forces with small arms and mortars to ensure the safety of those around me," Montazeri said.

Growing up surrounded by war, seeing violence and carnage at a very young age, and having to do things children shouldn't

"I chose to join the military to secure a better future for myself and to equip myself with the skills to assist communities in hardship, much like the support my town received from the military," Montazeri said.

When Sayeed Montazeri was 11 years old, he and his family immigrated to the United States,

ditionally, he joined the Marine Corps Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps program at his school where he developed a lot of the character traits he will keep with him along his journey. U.S. Marine Corps Staff Sgt. Joshua Mitrano, a senior drill instructor with India Company, 3rd Battalion also attributed to these qualities.

"He was an exceptional recruit from the start, demonstrating consistent improvement throughout his time. His maturity set him apart, allowing him to navigate challenges with a level of composure that belied his experience," Mitrano said.

After graduation, he will continue his training at The School of Infantry West, for Marine Corps combat training before attending follow-on training for his military occupation specialty, 6000 Aviation Mechanic. Upon completing training as an aviation mechanic, he hopes to be stationed back in California to be close to his family.

"I have to take care of my mom and dad, because when I was a kid, they took care of me," Montazeri said.



Pfc. Sayeed Montazeri, in formation before a Battalion Commander's Inspection at Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego Oct. 23. U.S. Marine Corps photo by Lance Cpl. Jacob B. Hutchinson

have to do, Montazeri still saw the positive impact the Marines had in his village and knew he wanted to be a part of something like that.

where he started to go to school and learn English. Adapting to the cultural shock, he gravitated toward athletics, playing a variety of different sports. Ad-

PEARL HARBOR REMEMBRANCE: FORGING AHEAD

December 7, 2024

Each year, thousands gather to remember the event at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, reflecting on the lasting impact of that "Day of Infamy" and honoring the members of the Greatest Generation for their sacrifice, courage, and indomitable perseverance. The 83rd anniversary of Pearl Harbor invites us to focus on the theme of "Forging Ahead," emphasizing not only the historical significance but also the vital role of the younger generation in preserving and honoring this legacy.

The attack on Pearl Harbor marked a pivotal moment in history, awakening America to a new reality of hardship and the specter of protracted war. The American people, both on the battlefields and the home front, rose to this challenge with resilience and

determination. The adversity faced by those who served not only forged stronger individuals but also united the nation with a collective resolve. This anniversary is a tribute to their unyielding spirit and the powerful sense of duty that propelled them to face and overcome insurmountable odds.

As we commemorate this day, we must also look to the future and the role of the younger generation in carrying forward the legacy of the Greatest Generation. It is essential for today's youth to understand and appreciate the sacrifices made during World War II, particularly in the Pacific theater, which began with the attack on Pearl Harbor. By doing so, they can draw inspiration from the courage and determination of those who came before them, understanding that the pursuit of peace requires the same

resolute spirit that was needed to fight and win the war.

Pearl Harbor Remembrance ceremonies serve not only as a moment of reflection and gratitude but also as a call to action for the younger generation. It is a reminder to build on

the solid foundation left by the Greatest Generation, adapting to new challenges with the same fortitude and commitment. As we honor the past, we forge ahead, ensuring that the lessons of history continue to guide us in creating a future that upholds the values of courage, resilience, and peace.

LOCAL NEWS: General officer announcement: Hoyle

Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III announced Nov. 19 that the president has nominated Marine Corps Col. Ryan M. Hoyle for appointment to brigadier general. Hoyle is serving as assistant chief of staff, G-3, I Marine Expeditionary Force, Camp Pendleton.

Vinson

continued from page 1

torpedoes — arrived in the Middle East. The Navy's Office of Information declined Nov. 19 to confirm if the submarine was still in the region. USS *Harry S. Truman*, homeported at Naval Station Norfolk, Va., is enroute to the Mediterranean and is expected to take the *Lincoln's* place in the Red Sea. Until *Truman* and its supporting destroyers arrive, the region is left without a carrier strike group.

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DOD adjusts nuclear deterrence strategy as nuclear peer adversaries escalate

by David Vergun
DOD News

Multiple nuclear peer adversaries challenge the U.S. and its allies' and partners' security, according to the Defense Department.

"We are now in a world where we're facing multiple nuclear competitors, multiple states that are growing, diversifying and modernizing their nuclear arsenals and also, unfortunately, prioritizing the role that nuclear weapons play in their national security strategies," said Richard C. Johnson.

As the security environment evolves, adjustments to the 2022 Nuclear Posture Review may be required to sustain the ability to achieve nuclear deterrence, in light of enhanced nuclear capabilities of China and Russia and possible lack of nuclear arms control agreements after February, said Johnson, deputy assistant secretary of defense for nuclear and countering weapons of mass destruction policy, who spoke on a panel at the Center for Strategic and International Studies' Project on Nuclear Issues event, Nov. 20 in Washington, D.C.

The underlying logic of nuclear deterrence remains sound.

Also, the U.S. remains committed to a safe, secure and reliable nuclear deterrent, he said.

However, the nuclear modernization program of record, while necessary, may be insufficient moving forward, he added.

DOD, in partnership with the National Nuclear Security Administration, has already taken steps to field capabilities to enhance nuclear deterrence and flexibility and to reduce risk to the department's nuclear modernization program, Johnson said.

These include the B61-13 gravity bomb, delivered by aircraft, as well as the enhanced readiness of nuclear armed and powered Ohio-class submarines, he said.

The Department of Energy's National Nuclear Security Administration would produce the B61-13, which is a modern variant of the B61.

On Nov. 15, the department submitted the 791 Report to Congress describing the nuclear employment strategy of the U.S. It's called the 491 because it was submitted in accordance with U.S. Code, Title 10, Section 491.

The 491 report describes



An Air Force B-1B Lancer flies in the U.S. Central Command's area of operations from Al Udeid Air Base, Qatar, Oct. 25, 2019. U.S. Air Force photo by Master Sgt. Joshua L. DeMotts

changes that have been made from previous guidance and accounts for the new deterrence challenges that are posed by the growth, modernization and increasing diversity of potential adversaries' nuclear arsenals, Johnson said.

The report directs that the U.S.:

- Plans to deter multiple nuclear-armed adversaries simultaneously.

- Requires the integration of non-nuclear capabilities, where feasible, to support the nuclear deterrence mission.

- Stresses the importance of escalation management in U.S. planning for responding to limited nuclear attack or high-consequence, non-nuclear strategic attack.

- Enables deeper consultation, coordination and combined planning with allies and partners in order to strengthen U.S. extended deterrence commitments.

The report also recognizes that deterrence alone will not address strategic dangers. It recognizes that arms control and that risk reduction and nuclear nonproliferation play indispensable roles as well, Johnson said.

Grant Schneider, vice deputy director for strategic stability at the Joint Staff, who also spoke, said that another part of the report is the significant intellectual and analytical work required to identify the range of scenarios and strategic circumstances that the U.S. might face alongside its allies going into the 2030s.

"To be prepared for the 2030s, we have to modernize our nuclear forces, the nuclear command and control, and the associated infrastructure that will allow us to be flexible and adjust over time as new challenges arise, whether that's new threats or potential changes or delays in our modernization," Schneider said.

Continue reading this story at <https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/3975117/>.



EARLY BIRD BRIEF

Army

- Finland serves as field showcase for Army's upgraded rocket system
- 'Armor Major' swears his son into ROTC as family's third-generation
- Astronaut in Army Reserve awarded wings and space badge for trip to International Space Station
- Fort Carson unveils largest, first-of-its-kind chemical battery installed on a DOD site

Navy

- 'Fat Leonard' to appeal sentence, while retired Navy captain will seek a reduced charge
- Pros and cons of the Navy's controversial submarine-launched nuclear cruise missile

Marine Corps

- Pathologist disputes finding that Marine veteran's chokehold caused subway rider's death
- Marine killed in Okinawa motorcycle crash was a motor vehicle operator from Texas
- Shooting the war: A Marine combat photographer remembers Fallujah

Air Force

- How the Air Force flew a 1,000-mile open ocean rescue: Part 2

Space Force

- Space Force missions delayed by rocket woes may not launch this year

- One contractor is on the Space Force's naughty list

Coast Guard

- Coast Guard set to receive new icebreaker by year's end, bolstering U.S. presence in Arctic

Your Military

- Home invasion thefts in Vicenza spark calls for U.S. military personnel to take precautions

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Risky training ops for elite troops need to be studied more to help avoid deaths, injuries, GAO finds

by **Corey Dickstein**, Stars and Stripes

Special Operations Command should more closely study data on training incidents and spend more time observing high-risk, noncombat operations to better mitigate accidents involving its elite forces, a federal watchdog found in a study published Nov. 21.

The Government Accountability Office found recent efforts by SOCOM to implement increased safety scrutiny for high-risk training operations have been constrained by fiscal shortfalls and limited by the command's own definitions of high-risk training operations. GAO, in the new report, recommended SOCOM analyze safety data to reassess its most dangerous training operations and reevaluate how it assesses risky training.

The military has relied on special operations forces in recent decades — especially in the Global War on Terrorism campaign, where elite U.S. forces have fought near constantly in places such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and Somalia. Special operations officials have long said the tough, combat-like training conditions were the best way to build the elite troops needed to carry out the U.S. military's toughest — often secretive — operations around the globe.

The active-duty special operations community includes some 67,500 troops, including Army

Rangers and Green Berets, Navy SEALs, Air Force pararescue forces and combat controllers, and Marine Raiders, among others, according to the GAO.

Between 2012 and 2022, the GAO found more than 3,600 noncombat accidents involving special operators, with an average of 258 reported training accidents per year with at least minor injuries or more than \$20,000 of military equipment damage. Accident reports ranged from a low of 120 in 2020, when training was constrained by the coronavirus pandemic, to a high of 402 accidents in 2015, the GAO found.

Among all those incidents, there were about 86 major accidents among special operators — defined as having caused permanent, partial disabilities, inpatient care for three or more individuals, or more than \$500,000 of damage. There were 48 training deaths during that decade.

Their training could be safer, the GAO found in its latest report entitled, “Special



A military free-fall instructor from the Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School jumps from an aircraft at Yuma Proving Ground, Ariz., in 2019. U.S. Army photo by K. Kassens

Operations Forces: Additional Oversight Could Help Mitigate High-Risk Training Accidents.” The watchdog said the Defense Department agreed with the recommendations it made to improve high-risk training for special operators.

During the roughly two-year study, GAO analysts scrutinized accident data for special operations forces from the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps during fiscal years 2012 through 2022, according to the report. The analysts also reviewed special operations training, risk management efforts and safety documents and interviewed defense officials associated with the special operations community.

The congressional watchdog found parachute and combat dive training to be the riskiest operations for special operators outside of a combat zone, with accidents during those two activities accounting for roughly 40 percent of training incidents

during the decade that they analyzed.

The GAO also found most accidents — some 86 percent — were the result of “human error,” primarily from “failure to adhere to training standards and complacency, overconfidence or indiscipline.” Equipment or material failure was cited in only about 3 percent of reported incidents, and environmental factors accounted for less than 3 percent of accidents, including none of the fatalities in special operations training from 2012 to 2022.

SOCOM included parachute and combat dive training among seven categories that it designated “high-risk” for training in a 2022 overhaul of its training safety measures, the GAO said. The other categories that SOCOM officials deemed high-risk for training were joint terminal

attack controller, mountain, sniper, urban combat and vertical lift operations.

Those high-risk training operations were designated to receive more oversight to ensure safety measures are followed, and SOCOM officials told the GAO that they were identified based on “common-sense interpretation” of training risk. But the GAO, in its report, questioned the designation for some of those categories.

“Some training areas designated by SOCOM as high-risk, such as sniper, had very few reported accidents while other training areas that SOCOM has not designated as high-risk, such as tactical vehicles training, had many more reported accidents,” the GAO analysts wrote.

<https://www.stripes.com/theaters/us/2024-11-22/special-operations-risky-training-15934707.html>

USS *Beloit* (LCS 29) commissions in Wisconsin

by **Lt. Ayifa Brooks**

The Navy commissioned its newest Freedom-variant littoral combat ship USS *Beloit* (LCS 29) Nov. 23 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

“I take great pride in representing Wisconsin’s manufacturing economy and the workers who power it,” said Sen. Tammy Baldwin of Wisconsin. “When it comes to our ship building in-

dustries our workers have helped sustain America’s security for our national defense for generations. We boast a successful history of building ships and the city of Beloit has long played an essential role in that.”

Adm. James Kilby, Vice Chief of Naval Operations; said, “*Beloit* will play a key role in implementing the Chief of Naval Operations’ strategy as a

platform with a crew ready with the right capabilities, weapons, sustainment, and training deterring our adversaries and ready to fight.”

Beloit completed 19 certifications in just seven weeks after moving on board and successfully passed each certification the first go round, scoring above the Navy’s standards for the LCS community.

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AIE's digital transformation yields real results

by Susan McGovern

FORT BELVOIR, Va. - The Army's journey to modernize recruiting business processes hit a key benchmark in November when Program Executive Office Enterprise's Accessions Information Environment (AIE) provided an initial software solution to early adopters at the Ohio National Guard Recruiting and Retention Battalion.

Leveraging a Salesforce software-as-a-service platform, AIE will enable recruiters to generate and manage leads in a mobile app, connect with potential recruits, streamline enlistment-process paperwork, replace trainees' paper check-ins with electronic check-ins and much more.

AIE developed a platform in November 2023 that consolidated several disparate systems Army recruiters currently use to enlist Soldiers. Built using a waterfall approach, the platform was saddled with customizations that created technical debt. Had the platform been deployed, it would have been costly to maintain and unable to integrate future commercial software upgrades.

Instead of fielding its initial solution, AIE changed direction and outlined a new roadmap in April 2024. The fresh start included a pivot to Agile software development, the maximization of Salesforce commercial-out-of-the-box capabilities and a modular contracting strategy.

Following the new roadmap, AIE developed working software in about six months. Under the waterfall method, it took two-and-a-half years to build the same capability.

Recent Army software acquisition reforms, including Army Directive 2024-02 championed by Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army (Acquisition, Logistics and Training) Young Bang and Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army (Data, Engineering and Software) Jennifer Swanson, empowered AIE to embrace modern software development practices.

"I have seen more software acquisition reform in the Army in the last 18 months than the past 18 years," said Col. Matthew Paul, project manager for Integrated Personnel and Pay System — Army (IPPS-



Recruiting experts from the Ohio National Guard Recruiting and Retention Battalion share feedback after seeing a preview of mobile-friendly recruiting software on June 26, 2024, in Crystal City, Virginia. Photo by Susan McGovern/IPPS-A Strategic Communications

A), which manages AIE. "It is truly an exciting time to be in this business."

"Teamwork has been key to our success," said Valarie Tran, AIE's product lead. "We develop software in a badgeless environment. Everyone, regardless of title, shares responsibility for solving problems."

Continuous user feedback is a critical component of the Agile methodology implemented

by the entire AIE team.

"Early adopters inside the Ohio National Guard understand the science and art of recruiting," said Master Sgt. Nicholas Vinson, a former recruiter and current AIE product owner at the U.S. Army Recruiting Command (USAREC). "Early adopters' insights help AIE's development teams identify and prioritize capabilities to make the initial product go from good to great."

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Essex Sailors perform safety, maintenance pre-basic phase ops

by Seaman Apprentice
Aaron Rolle
USS Essex (LHD 2)

SAN DIEGO - Sailors assigned to amphibious assault ship USS Essex (LHD 2) conducted safety and maintenance pre-basic phase operations as the ship currently undergoes a maintenance period in San Diego.

From boat reports and small boat operations to equipment maintenance, Sailors across all departments work diligently to ensure mission readiness for future deployments.

Deck department, which is in charge of life saving equipment and ship refueling, also handles preparations for small boat operations. Since Essex is currently in a maintenance phase, deck department does not conduct small boat operation exercises frequently. However, in order to ensure mission readiness, they complete daily boat reports.

"We have a list of items to inspect for the boat report in order to ensure that the equipment is operating properly", said Boatswain's Mate 2nd Class Serena Minor.

There is a big emphasis on being meticulous when handling the boat reports on a daily basis. Even though it might seem repetitive, the department requires their Sailors to take proper measures to ensure the safety and success of future small boat operations.

"Even if we go through these steps a million times, we'll go



Boatswain's Mate 2nd Class Jocelyn Newsom, right, assigned USS Essex, directs the operator for the slewing arm davit to lower a 7m rigid-hull inflatable boat (RHIB) during small boat operations aboard Essex. U.S. Navy photo by MCSA Aaron J. Rolle

through them again to make sure our department understands what is expected from us when doing the boat reports," said Minor. "We do not want to risk the safety of our fellow Sailors, nor the operation itself due to bad or faulty equipment."

Both deck and engineering departments conduct training exercises for small boat operations every month. Small boat manning is split into different positions amongst the departments. Deck department is responsible for manning line handling, crane

operating and team lead; while engineering is assigned to man the rigid-hull inflatable boat.

This hands-on training serves as an enjoyable learning moment for Essex Sailors to familiarize themselves with the different positions and teaches them what to expect from small boat operations.

"It's always fun for us when we go through these exercises," said Minor. "By conducting these exercises, it puts the crew in a real-life situation which will

give us a better understanding on how to conduct small boat operations."

Air department, which is in charge of handling flight deck operations and casualties, may have the toughest and most dangerous job on Essex.

"From launching and landing air crafts, to working long strenuous hours in different elements, to carrying out a flight operation in tough seas, a small mental lapse could be catastrophic," said Aviation Boatswain's Mate

(Handling) 2nd Class Martin Carvajal. "That's why I believe Sailors who work in the air department need to have thick skin to deal with the challenges and hazardous work environment."

To ensure Sailors are up to the task, they frequently work on qualifications for their job. Sailors in air department also conduct maintenance on safety equipment, such as, life preservers and flight deck helmets to ensure safety during flight ops. Each Sailor is in charge of performing maintenance on their personally assigned safety equipment.

"Doing maintenance on float coats seems straight forward, but it is actually very tedious," said Carvajal. "You want to make

sure you're very attentive to what you're doing for your safety."

When performing maintenance on the cranials, Sailors have to inspect the inner liner, as well as the lights and labels. If the items are properly maintained, it will be stowed away for future flight operations. "Sometimes you might get distracted and take a wrong step and the only thing keeping you safe is your cranial," said Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Handling) 1st Class Nohemi Cervantes Mendoza.

As the maintenance period comes to an end, and sea trials draw near, Essex Sailors will continue to conduct safety and maintenance pre-basic phase operations to ensure mission readiness for future deployments.



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Aircraft carrier *Abraham Lincoln* arrives at Port Klang, Malaysia for first U.S. carrier visit in 12 years

by Ensign Hallie Atengco
PORT KLANG, Malaysia
 Aircraft carrier USS *Abraham Lincoln* (CVN 72), arrived in Port Klang, Malaysia for the second scheduled port call on its 2024 deployment, Nov. 23.

Marking the first U.S. aircraft carrier visit to Malaysia since 2012, the visit demonstrates the continuation of a long-standing partnership between the two countries, rooted in close people-to-people, economic, and security ties.

"This historic visit reaffirms Malaysia's importance to the United States," said U.S. Ambassador to Malaysia Edgard D. Kagan. "It highlights our shared commitment to regional stability and Malaysian sovereignty, providing an invaluable opportunity for collaboration between our navies and key leaders."

Prior to pulling into Port Klang, *Abraham Lincoln* hosted Malaysia distinguished visitors including officials and media

who toured the ship, observed flight operations, and engaged with U.S. Navy Sailors. While in port, *Abraham Lincoln* will also host Malaysian leaders for exclusive tours, further strengthening bilateral ties.

"Our visit to Kuala Lumpur is important to the U.S. Navy. It is the first time an aircraft carrier has visited in 12 years," said Rear Adm. Adan Cruz, commander, Carrier Strike Group (CSG) 3. "I deeply value the opportunity to strengthen the U.S. and Malaysian partnership while providing an opportunity for our Sailors and Marines to experience the amazing city of Kuala Lumpur."

More than 4,200 Sailors and Marines stationed aboard *Abraham Lincoln*, will enjoy the culture and history of the country. During their time in Malaysia, *Abraham Lincoln* crewmembers will have the opportunity to tour the local area, through tours and conduct community relations (COMREL) projects where

Sailors will volunteer at local soup kitchens, senior citizen's and children's homes.

"On behalf of the *Abraham Lincoln* crew, I would like to extend our sincerest thanks to Port Klang and Kuala Lumpur for welcoming the *Abraham Lincoln* with such warmth and enthusiasm," said Capt. Pete Riebe, commanding officer, *Abraham Lincoln*. "We look forward to taking time in-port to explore the rich history and culture of Malaysia and engage with local community groups throughout our visit and conversely welcoming key Malaysian Navy and government officials aboard *Abraham Lincoln* while in Port Klang."

The *Abraham Lincoln* Carrier Strike Group consists of embarked staffs of Carrier Strike Group (CSG) Three and Destroyer Squadron (DESRON) 21, Carrier Air Wing (CVW) Nine, Burke-class guided missile destroyer USS *Frank E. Petersen Jr.* (DDG 121), and

Destroyer Squadron 21's USS *Spruance* (DDG 111) and USS *Michael Murphy* (DDG 112).

USS *Frank E. Petersen Jr.* conducted a port call to Singapore, while USS *Spruance* (DDG 111) and USS *Michael Murphy* (DDG 112) ported in Thailand, demonstrating the inherent flexibility of a carrier strike group.

Destroyers USS *O'Kane* (DDG 77) and USS *Stockdale* (DDG 106) remain deployed in the 5th Fleet area of operations supporting global maritime security operations.

CVW-9 is comprised of nine aircraft squadrons representing over 70 aircraft aboard *Abraham Lincoln*: two helicopter squadrons operating the MH-60R & MH-60S Seahawk; three F/A-18E/F Super Hornet squadrons; one EA-18G Growler squadron; one U.S. Marine Corps F-35C Lightning II squadron; E-2D advance Hawkeye airborne early warning squadron; and C-2 Greyhound for carrier logistics.

The *Abraham Lincoln* Carrier Strike Group is underway conducting routine operations in the U.S. 7th Fleet area of operations. U.S. 7th Fleet is the U.S. Navy's largest forward-deployed numbered fleet, and routinely interacts and operates with allies and partners in preserving a free and open Indo-Pacific region.



5K run aboard *Lincoln*.



USS *Abraham Lincoln* (CVN 72) prepares to pull into Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia for a port visit.

U.S. Navy photo by MC2 Cassandra Alanis

For more news from CSG-3, <http://www.dvidshub.net/unit/US-SAL-CVN72#>

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Beyond the classroom: HM1 Domenic Nasuta's role in Navy survival training

by Austen McClain

Naval Education and Training Command Hospital Corpsman 1st Class Domenic Nasuta, assigned to Center For Security Forces (CENSECFOR) Detachment North Island, has a passion for

the outdoors and a dedication to service that has defined his Navy career. From working as a hospital corpsman with the Marine Corps on deployment to his current role as a SERE (Survival, Evasion, Resistance,

and Escape) instructor, Nasuta's journey in the Navy reflects a commitment to supporting his fellow Sailors and Marines in some of the most demanding environments.

A Family Legacy of Service and a Path to the Navy: Growing up in New Jersey, Nasuta was influenced by a family history of military service. Both of his grandfathers served in the Army during World War II, with one supporting Operation Northern Torch in Africa and the other in the European campaign. His uncle also served as a combat camera in Vietnam. Inspired by this legacy, Nasuta enlisted in the Navy in 2011, choosing to join the medical field as a hospital corpsman to make a difference in others' lives.

"Service runs deep in my family, and I knew I wanted to contribute in my own way," Nasuta reflects. "Becoming a corpsman gave me the opportunity to help people in their most vulnerable moments, which has been one of the most rewarding parts of my life."

A Career of Challenge and Transformation: After completing Hospital Corpsman "A" School, Nasuta embarked on a journey that took him across the globe. His early assignments included serving as a labor and delivery corpsman at Naval Hospital Bremerton and later as a line corpsman with the 2nd Marine Division, where he deployed with the 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit. Throughout his career, he quickly advanced, earning multiple honors, including Bluejacket of the Year and Junior Sailor of the Year, for his exceptional service and leadership.

In 2021, after assignments in Sigonella, Italy, and with Marine Forces Special Operations Command (MARSOC), Nasuta found himself at a crossroads. After attending SERE training at the Eastern schoolhouse, he was interested in the survival techniques he learned and began considering a new path as a SERE instructor.



Navy Hospital Corpsman 1st Class Domenic Nasuta, a Survival, Evasion, Resistance, and Escape (SERE) instructor assigned to the Center for Security Forces, poses for a portrait at SERE West in Warner Springs, Calif. on Sept. 21, 2024. The Center for Security Forces provides Sailors with specialized training necessary for force protection, anti-terrorism, and security operations across the fleet, ensuring mission readiness and enhancing the Navy's combat effectiveness. U.S. Navy photo by Austen McClain

"I have always loved the outdoors, and the survival skills I learned resonated with me," Nasuta said. "I realized I could use my passion to teach and help enhance the survivability and lethality of the force."

Joining NETC as a SERE Instructor: In 2023, Nasuta began his transition from fleet service to instructor duty at SERE West, part of the Naval Education and Training Command (NETC), which oversees nearly all Navy training from basic to advanced technical schools. After a rigorous screening process and intensive training through the Naval Instructor Training Command and SERE Instructor Under Training (IUT) pipeline, Nasuta earned his qualification and joined the field department at SERE West on North Island, San Diego.

"The flexibility and passion of the instructors set NETC training apart," Nasuta said. "Everyone here truly cares about what they are teaching. It is evident in the way they adapt to different students' needs and ensure that standards are met, so students leave prepared for the challenges they will face in the field."

Mentoring Students and Sharing a Love for the Outdoors: In his role as a SERE

instructor, Nasuta finds immense fulfillment in guiding students through survival training, teaching them everything from land navigation with a compass to identifying edible plants. He recalls one student who struggled with land navigation but showed determination to improve. Over the weekend, with support from Nasuta and other students, the Sailor steadily built confidence and ended up mastering the skill.

"I always tell my students that if they meet me halfway, I'll get them where they need to go," Nasuta says. "It's incredibly rewarding when I see their motivation and watch them grow."

The Power of Transformation through Training: For Nasuta, the impact of NETC training goes beyond teaching survival tactics; it is about helping students face and overcome challenges that push them physically and mentally.

"Students come to SERE not fully aware of what they are capable of," he shares. "The training teaches them resilience and the importance of taking care of their bodies under pressure. By the end, they have learned not just survival skills but a lot about

themselves."

As an instructor, Nasuta is constantly learning, striving to bring new skills and knowledge to his students. "My students drive me to keep improving," he says. "Whether it is identifying wildlife or preparing edible plants, the outdoors is my passion, and it is amazing that I get to share it with others."

Future Aspirations and Personal Growth: Nasuta's journey through NETC training has not only advanced his career but has also prepared him for his future aspirations.

An aspiring wildlife biologist, he sees his role as a SERE instructor as an opportunity to align his love for the outdoors with his professional life. He encourages his students to keep an open mind and embrace every challenge as a learning opportunity.

Reflecting on his career, Nasuta notes the impact NETC has had on him personally. "Working as a corpsman and now as an instructor has allowed me to grow, not only as a service member but as a person," he says.

"The Navy has given me the chance to help people, learn from incredible mentors, and make a real difference."

Nasuta's story is one of transformation, resilience and the enduring power of mentorship. From his roots in New Jersey to his role as a SERE instructor at NETC's SERE West schoolhouse, Nasuta exemplifies the Navy's commitment to training Sailors who are prepared for any challenge.

His passion for the outdoors and dedication to his students' success continue to inspire those around him, showcasing the career-changing potential of NETC training.

For more information on NETC's training programs and how they prepare Sailors for success in the fleet, visit <https://www.netc.navy.mil/>.



USS TRIPOLI, at sea (Nov. 17, 2024) Sailors guide a Bell AH-1Z Viper helicopter attached to Marine Light Attack Helicopter Squadron (HMLA) 169 to land on the flight deck aboard amphibious assault carrier Tripoli during flight operations. An America-class amphibious assault ship homeported in San Diego. Tripoli is underway in the U.S. 3rd Fleet area of operations conducting advanced tactical training that enhances warfighting capability and tactical proficiency. U.S. Navy photo by MC2 Austyn Riley



MARINE CORPS RECRUIT DEPOT, SAN DIEGO (Oct. 23, 2024) Marine Corps Capt. Nicholas Bright, a series commander with India Company, 3rd Recruit Training Battalion, inspects Marines uniforms during a battalion commander inspection here. The Battalion Commander's Inspection surveys new Marines for knowledge, bearing, and attention to detail as one of their last tests before graduating. U.S. Marine Corps photo by Cpl. Sarah M. Grawcock



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SOCIAL SECURITY MATTERS



by Russell Gloor

National Social Security Advisor

Ask Rusty -- Older veteran asks about special Social Security credit for military service

Dear Rusty: I served in the US Army from January 1958 to Feb 1961. What increase should I receive for those years and who do I call and at what phone number? Signed: Proud Veteran

Dear Proud Veteran: First, thank you for your military service! I expect you are referring to the "special extra credits for military service" which are available to some who served in the US Military in earlier years. It is important to note that these "extra credits" take the form of an adjustment to your military pay record while serving and are not an incremental amount added to your monthly Social Security benefit because you served.

Military pay has been subject to deductions for Social Security since 1957. Thus, while serving between 1958 and 1961 you paid SS tax on your military earnings. But, for purposes of determining your Social Security benefit, your military earnings record would be increased by \$300 for each quarter you served on active duty, up to a maximum of \$1,200 increase per year of service. That means for 1958 - 1960, when calculating your SS benefit, \$1,200 would be added to your military earnings record for each year you served.

FYI, for those who served after 1967, this adjustment was automatically made by Social

Credit for military service?

Security. But for service years prior to 1967 (as in your case) you would need to inform Social Security of your service when you claimed SS and provide a copy of your military form DD-214 (your discharge papers). SS would then make the appropriate adjustment to your military earnings record prior to calculating your benefit amount. And, for clarity, additional credits for military service are not available to those who served after 2001.

A key point to understand is that this adjustment to your military pay may – or may not – affect the amount of your Social Security benefit.

Social Security determines your benefit amount based on your highest earning 35 years over your entire lifetime (adjusted for inflation). If, after you served in the military, you had at least 35 years of civilian employment where you earned more than your military pay, it is probable that your military pay is not included when calculating your Social Security benefit. If that is the case, it is likely that the "special extra credits for military service" would have no effect on your Social Security payment. If, however, your military pay (including those special extra credits) for any year is more than you earned in civilian life, then you can contact Social Security (1.800.772.1213), provide them with a copy of your DD-214, and ask that they recalculate your Social Security benefit to include the extra credits for your years of military service.

Again, thank you for your service to our country, and please do not hesitate to contact us again if you have any further questions. FYI, you may also find the "For Veterans" section of our AMAC Foundation website interesting (www.amacfoundation.org).

This article is intended for information purposes only and does not represent legal or financial guidance. It presents the opinions and interpretations of

the AMAC Foundation's staff, trained and accredited by the National Social Security Association (NSSA). NSSA and the AMAC Foundation and its staff are not affiliated with or endorsed by the Social Security Administration or any other governmental entity.

To submit a question, visit our website (amacfoundation.org/programs/social-security-advisory) or email us at ssadvisor@amacfoundation.org.

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The Meat & Potatoes of Life



by Lisa Smith Molinari

For those of you stationed close to the equator in tropical climates — get your heads (or toes, as it were) out of the white, silky sand and take notice — the seasons are changing. While you bask in perpetual sunshine and warm breezes, eating papaya and sniffing hibiscus flowers, the rest of us are preparing ourselves for the annual Ice Age.

The geographically blessed believe that "Tis the Season" is a cheerful sentiment spoken by dapper merry-makers while holiday shopping on twinkle-light-bedecked streets. However, this well-worn phrase means something entirely different for folks residing north of the Horse Latitudes.

Loosely translated, this festive greeting actually means in Northern tongues, "You'd better get your keister indoors and bundle up, because we're about to freeze our bippies off up here!" While you lucky devils lollygag in equatorial paradise, the rest of us are preparing ye the way for temps to drop, for winds to bite, for vegetation to wither, for noses to drip, and for flesh to shrivel.

Truth be told, I actually enjoy the change of seasons. It's one of the reasons my husband and I decided to settle in New England after he retired from the Navy. I recall a military friend warning us when we received orders to Rhode Island, "The cold wind begins

North of paradise

to blow hard in November, and it won't stop until May." Despite his accurate testimonial, we were undeterred.

Perhaps my snowy Western Pennsylvania childhood brainwashed me into believing that I actually like being cold for seven months consecutively. I very nostalgic during this time of year. Like proverbial sugar plumbs, scenes of holiday bliss dance in my head during winter months, blinding me to the weather-related realities of living in New England.

I relish the opportunity to wear comfy oversized sweaters, which disguise the extra ten pounds I never seem to lose. I can't wait to cook hearty Crock Pot recipes that will deprive our family of fresh fruits and vegetables, leaving us constipated throughout the holidays. I envision Currier and Ives scenes of horse-drawn sleighs and steaming mugs of wassail, even when I'm stuck in salt-hazed traffic, watching my breath while I wait for the cars to warm up. In my deluded excitement, I see only Dickensian rosy cheeks, while my dehydrated skin sloughs in flakes and my chafed nose crusts over.

Though my seasonal derangement begins well before the Thanksgiving turkey carcass has been tossed in the trash, there are many weeks of waiting before my frosty fantasies come to fruition. After all, winter doesn't actually begin until the Sun dips lowest in the Northern Hemisphere. The shortest day marks the Winter Solstice (December 21st in 2024) that heralds the long, dark spell when the Sun betrays us, turning her rays southward.

Also, thanks to phenomena such

as Global Warming and El Niño, New England hovers in miserable ambiguity for weeks, when it's too cold, but not cold enough. We may wish for crystalline blankets of snow, sparkling icicles, and frolicking children in woolen mittens. But Mother Nature is a harsh parent, allowing only rain — drop after dreary drop — as precipitation's punishment for impatience.

The wait seems forever, but the North (and perhaps Hell) eventually freezes over, and when it does, we ooh and ahh at the fresh fallen snow, feeling fortunate to live in a winter wonderland. That's about the time that Mother Nature sicks El Niños spiteful sister, La Niña, on us. As the brutal winter weeks wile away, meteorologists plod through the alphabet naming each incoming blizzard — Anya, Blair, Cora, Demi — while we shovel, slip, slide, snuffle, scrape, shiver and barely survive.

Come April, our chestnut nibbling nostalgia has given way to desperate longings for tropical vacations. Finally, we admit it, we are fed up.

My false fantasies about the coming winter may seem foolhardy to you purveyors of paradise. You may be right, but there isn't room for everyone in Shangri-La. My delusions serve me well, as a natural defense mechanism to keep me from fleeing to avoid winters annual pain and suffering.

Call me crazy, but I know this for certain: As sure as the Sun will rise, Winter is on its way — and I for one can't wait.

Armed Forces Dispatch

published by Western States Weeklies, Inc.
2604 B-280 El Camino Real, Carlsbad, CA 92008
619-280-2985 • E-mail: editor@navydispatch.com
Editor.....Scott Sutherland

The Dispatch is published online weekly on Thursdays, and in print on the 1st & 16th of each month by Western States Weeklies, Inc., as a commercial, free-enterprise newspaper. The editorial objective of the Dispatch is to promote support for a strong military presence. Contents of the Armed Forces Dispatch are not necessarily the official views of, or endorsed by, the U.S. Government, the Department of Defense, the U.S. Navy or U.S. Marine Corps. The opinions and views of writers whose materials appear herein are those of the writers and not the publishers. Appearance of advertising does not constitute endorsement by the Department of Defense or any other DOD component, this newspaper, or Western States Weeklies, Inc. Subscription cost is \$75/year.

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Health & Fitness



Capt. Elizabeth Adriano, NMCS's Director, presented the Commander's Cup award for the fourth quarter of fiscal year 2024 to the hospital's Laboratory department, Nov. 20. They were awarded the Commander's Cup for exhibiting outstanding performance in their duties and for providing excellent customer service. During the ceremony, Capt. Adriano shared Interactive Customer Evaluation surveys submitted by patients mentioning the astute care when drawing blood in once instance, and scheduling appointments to accommodate the patient with maximum flexibility in the other instance. The positive ICE comments are a testament to the pride and care this team exhibits to be 'Anchored in Excellence, Committed to Health!'



More than 100 proud Sailors from Naval Medical Readiness and Training Command San Diego had the privilege of marching in the 2024 San Diego Veterans Day Parade, Nov. 11. Their participation underscores the deep honor and commitment of our Sailors to support and celebrate our veterans and active-duty military within the San Diego area.



Sailors from aboard Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton donate blood during an Armed Services Blood Program – Camp Pendleton blood drive coordinated by the Navy Medicine Readiness and Training Command Camp Pendleton Junior Enlisted Association on Nov. 18, 2024, in the Naval Hospital Camp Pendleton Galley Meeting Room. Photo by PO3 Meranda Onouye

NMRTC Camp Pendleton JEA hosts AFBP Blood Drive

by Curtis Hill and PO3 Meranda Onouye

Navy Medicine Readiness and Training Command Camp Pendleton's Junior Enlisted Association hosted the Armed Forces Blood Program – Camp Pendleton for a blood drive on Nov. 18, 2024, in the Naval Hospital Camp Pendleton galley meeting room.

Led by Petty Officer 2nd Class Daniel Kim, a laboratory technician corpsman from Naval Medical Center San Diego, the team of ten staff members from the AFBP-CP smoothly ushered through the dozens who showed up to donate blood.

"We're out here collecting blood to support not just the warfighters, but this blood is also used for patients in our hospitals," said Kim who hails from Chicago. "What we're doing here truly changes lives and plays a critical role in healthcare."

Lt. Linnea Leonard, an operating room nurse and a member of EMF 150 Alpha, was the first in line to donate.

"I just want to save lives and help people," said Leonard, a native of Mendota, Ill. "Whenever I see a blood drive I try to donate."

Next to get in line was Chief Petty Officer Richard Anderson, Expeditionary Medical Facility 150 Alpha's operations chief.

"There is a great need for blood and I'm glad to do my part to help out," said Anderson, a native of Burbank, Calif. "I've met several service members over the last 20 years whose lives were saved by blood. Donating is such an important, yet easy thing to do."

Petty Officer 3rd Class Devin Velasco, an aerospace medical technician in NHCP's Occupational Medicine Department,

coordinated the blood drive on behalf of the JEA.

When asked why he worked so hard on the drive, Velasco, a native of Guam, said, "Because there are other people who definitely are going to be needing blood because there's a shortage and hurricane Helene just hit the East Coast and they have a severe blood shortage right now."

Some Sailors traveled from across the base to participate in the drive.

"I feel like it's important to give back to the community that needs help when I have ample blood," said Petty Officer 3rd Class Gavin Simmons, a corpsman from the 13 Area Dental Clinic and a native of Evanston, Wyo.

To learn more about the Armed Forces Blood Program, visit <https://health.mil/Military-Health-Topics/Health-Readiness/ASBP>.



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While the duties of a volunteer may vary, the goal is always the same – to improve the quality of life of service members, boost their morale, and serve as the link between service members and the American people.

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