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MARCH 2-13
<https://pendleton.usmc-mccs.org/news/2026-usmc-sleep-challenge-march-2-13-2026>

SIXTY-FIFTH YEAR NO. 37
FEBRUARY 23, 2026



MUSCLE STRAIN Marine Corps Staff Sgt. Trebien Leonard, a supply chief assigned to 1st Air Naval Gunfire Liaison Company, I Marine Expeditionary Force Information Group, competes in a powerlifting competition during the I MIG HMMR Bowl at Camp Pendleton, Feb. 6, 2026. U.S. Marine Corps photo by Sgt. Sean Potter

A new process to ease recruits' journey to basic

by Matthew Olay, Pentagon News

When the day to leave for boot camp finally arrives, military recruits often have a lot of anxious thoughts racing through their minds.

“How long will I have to stay awake during the first couple of days? When will I get to talk to my family again? Is it true they make you mow the lawns with fingernail clippers?”

With all those concerns and many others to mull over, having to pony up just south of \$50 to be given the privilege of boarding an airplane that’s about to shuttle you off to some of the most stressful and demanding seven to 13 weeks of your life — depending on which branch you join — might seem like a slap in the face.

And yet, having to pay to get processed through airport security was the potential reality that thousands of recruits nationwide were facing as of Feb. 1, when the Transportation Security Administration rolled out its ConfirmID program.

Under ConfirmID, airport travelers must either present a REAL ID to security or pay \$45 to proceed using a standard ID.

Fortunately, though, the War Department’s Office of Personnel and Readiness got ahead of this early by partnering with TSA to ensure recruits who don’t possess a REAL ID won’t have to dig into their pocketbooks to pass through security.

Even better, recruits are now receiving “white glove treatment” from TSA when processing through airport security en route to basic training.

White glove treatment makes getting through security much quicker and more convenient than standard screening, and it’s similar to that afforded to our nation’s veterans through the Honor Flight program.

Good enough for our nation’s current heroes, good enough for our nation’s future heroes.

And here’s the really good news: the program is working.

U.S. Military Entrance Processing Command recently conducted a site visit to Chicago’s O’Hare International Airport, where they observed recruits shipping out from Chicago MEPS and having no trouble getting through screening.

And this included applicants without REAL-ID-compliant identification.

“Putting our recruits first is a priority. These young men and women are the future of our nation.”
 see **Recruits, page 5**

ADVANCING FUTURE OF NUCLEAR POWER, MILITARY BASE ENERGY SECURITY

by C. Todd Lopez
 Pentagon News

At March Air Reserve Base, Calif., Feb. 15, a next-generation nuclear reactor was loaded aboard a C-17 Globemaster III aircraft for transport to Hill Air

Force Base, Utah. The reactor will eventually head to the Utah San Rafael Energy Lab for testing and evaluation.

The Ward 250 is a 5 megawatt nuclear reactor that fits into the

back of a C-17 aircraft could theoretically power about 5,000 homes.

For military use, such a reactor could provide energy security on a military base ensuring the mission there need not depend on the civilian power grid, and in military operations overseas, such reactors would mean U.S. forces could operate without concern that an enemy might cut fuel supplies.

A reactor such as the Ward 250 also means greater energy security for the entire United States. It is firmly in line with President Donald J. Trump’s executive orders to reshape and modernize America’s nuclear energy landscape.

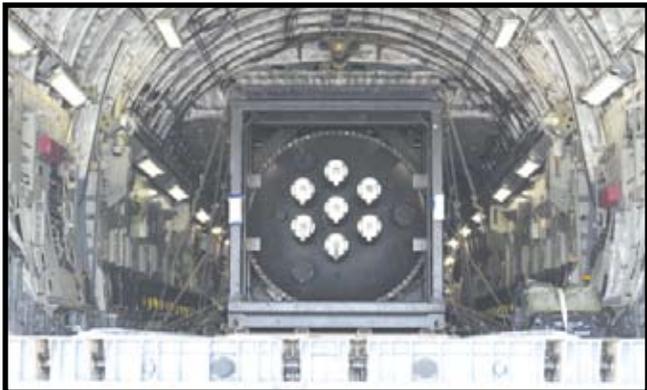
The president signed four executive orders designed to advance America’s nuclear energy

posture, May 23, 2025. Those include “Reinvigorating the Nuclear Industrial Base,” “Reforming Nuclear Reactor Testing at the Department of Energy,” “Ordering the Reform of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission,” and “Deploying Advanced Nuclear Reactor Technologies for National Security.”

Michael P. Duffey, the undersecretary of war for acquisition and sustainment, said the partnership between the War and Energy Departments is critical to advancing the president’s nuclear energy initiatives.

“It’s clear to me that advancing President Trump’s priority on nuclear energy depends on close coordination between the Department of Energy and the Department of War,” Duffey said. “This partnership ensures

see **Power, page 8**



A small nuclear reactor is loaded into the back of a C-17 Globemaster III aircraft, Feb. 15, 2026, at March Air Reserve Base. U.S. Navy photo by Petty Officer 1st Class Eric Brann

Navy fires commander of destroyer USS *Mason*

The Navy reported Feb. 13 that the commander of the destroyer USS *Mason* was relieved of duty, without providing specific details about the decision. Capt. Chavius G. Lewis, who had commanded the ship since November 2024, was fired by Rear Adm. Alexis T. Walker, the commander of Carrier Strike Group 10, “due to a loss of confidence in Lewis’ ability to command,” according to a Navy news release. The Navy - like the Pentagon’s other military services - often cites “a loss of confidence” when relieving leaders of responsibilities without providing a specific explanation. Lewis has been temporarily reassigned to Naval Surface Group Southeast. Capt. Kevin Hoffman has been named the *Mason*’s commanding officer, according to the service.

Destroyer *Truxtun*, oiler *Supply* collide in SOUTHCOM

USNI News reported Feb. 12 that Navy destroyer USS *Truxtun* and fast oiler *Supply* collided during an underway replenishment on Feb. 11, according to a U.S. Southern Command statement. “Two personnel reported minor injuries and are in stable condition. Both ships have reported sailing safely. The incident is currently under investigation,” reads a statement provided to USNI News. A spokesperson from SOUTHCOM confirmed to USNI News the injured personnel were Sailors. *Truxtun* left Naval Station Norfolk, Va., earlier this month as an independent deployer. *Supply* is also based in Norfolk.

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Georgia National Guard Soldiers reunite lost puppy with owner during D.C. patrol

by Army Spc. **Sherald McAulay**

Joint Task Force District of Columbia

What began as a routine patrol at the Anacostia Metro station quickly turned into a heart-warming reunion when soldiers assigned to the 170th Military Police Battalion, Georgia Army National Guard, helped return a lost puppy to its grateful owner, Feb. 9.

Army 1st Lt. David Okonofua, a military police officer supporting the D.C. Safe and Beautiful mission, was patrolling the station alongside Army Sgt. Michael Waller, Army Staff Sgt. Cesar Serrano and Army Staff Sgt. Martinez when a mother and child approached the team.

"It was one of those moments where everything feels normal, which made the situation stand out when we were flagged

down," Okonofua said.

Holding a small white puppy, the woman explained that the dog's owner had left the puppy on a transit bus and they were searching for help.

"They were ... actively seeking assistance," Okonofua said. "Their urgency and body language made it clear that something wasn't right."

Waller and the other soldiers immediately stepped in.

The patrol team took custody of the puppy, ensuring it was safe and cared for while they worked to locate the owner. The soldiers provided food and water and carried the puppy with them as they coordinated with the station manager and contacted local animal rescue resources.

Community members also

joined the effort.

"Pedestrians shared dog treats and food," Waller added. "The community helping out and being diligent really helped us care for the lost animal. I have dogs at home, so we know how to treat dogs."

"We're dog people," Serrano said laughing.

"It was a nice, cute little puppy, very sweet," Waller added. "Didn't bite, very friendly with everybody that walked past."

About an hour later, a woman arrived at the station asking if anyone had seen a small white dog. After verifying details, the soldiers reunited the owner with her pet.

"She was very relieved," Okonofua said. "The dog was also very happy to be reunited

with its owner. She thanked us, and we shared a few words before she left with her puppy."

Okonofua emphasized that this moment exemplified the broader purpose of the mission.

"Our mission goes beyond just security," he said. "It's about protecting people, property and even animals. Helping reunite someone with their pet builds trust and shows that we care about the community we serve."

For Waller, the experience was a reminder of one of the many reasons soldiers put on the uniform.

"It's not every day you get to put on a uniform and be a hero, making a difference," he said. "When you're actually doing it, it does feel good."



Army Staff Sgt. Cesar Serrano, Georgia National Guard, cares for a lost dog at the Anacostia Metro station in Washington, Feb. 9, before it was safely returned to its owner. Approximately 2,700 National Guard members are supporting the D.C. Safe and Beautiful mission. U.S. Army photo by 1st Lt. David Okonofua



NIGHT INSERTION Army Maj. Gen. John P. Cobill, 11th Airborne Division commanding general, and Sgt. Maj. David P. Hanson, 11th Airborne Division senior enlisted advisor, observe Soldiers assigned to the 2nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team conducting lowlight airborne insertion during an Arctic-focused training exercise at Yukon Training Area, Alaska, Feb. 11, 2026. U.S. Army photo by Spc. Brandon Vasquez

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Senior enlisted advisor to chairman testifies on quality of life

by David Vergun

Warfighters are the foundation of War Department lethality, said Senior Enlisted Advisor to the Chairman David L. Isom, who testified before the Senate Armed Services Committee's personnel subcommittee on service member and family quality of life, Feb. 11.

The love and support from their families make their service possible, he added.

As the joint force works tirelessly to ensure the safety and security of the nation, DOW and the nation must also work tirelessly to ensure service members have full support and that they have what they need to fight and win when called upon, the SEAC said.

"Humans are more important than hardware, because the true strength of our military isn't just in our ships and our tanks or our aircraft. It's the unwavering spirit and the trusted hands of our people, our total joint force," Isom said.

Isom told the subcommittee that he and Air Force Gen. Dan Caine, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, have three priorities:

* First, the joint force must be properly armed — the right capabilities and capacity when needed to fight and win.

* Second, the joint force must be globally integrated across all domains — with interagency, industry and with allies and partners.

* Third, DOW must build a ready joint force. Being ready is about repetitions, tough training and building muscle memory. This also includes being clear-



Senior Enlisted Advisor to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff David L. Isom (left, front row) and senior leaders testify during a Senate Armed Services Committee Personnel hearing on Capitol Hill, Washington, Feb. 11. U.S. Air Force photo by Chad Trujillo

eyed about the future and being candid with the force and its families.

"Underpinning these priorities is our most important asset, and that's our people," Isom

said. "We recruit America's best, and we must retain this talent by taking care of them and taking care of their families."

Senior enlisted leaders from all the service branches also testified.

Project Dynamis accelerates development of next generation battle management command, control

FORT CARSON, Colo. - Project Dynamis, a bold Marine Corps plan to accelerate the delivery of AI-powered decision advantage to the tactical edge, has kicked off its "Dynamis Series," a months-long campaign of iterative agile software development sprints referred to as "Serials."

This series, developed in col-

laboration with the Navy's Project Overmatch and the Defense Innovation Unit, focuses on the rapid integration and iteration of mature, dual-use commercial solutions for battle management and command and control.

The goal is to utilize operationally realistic, joint warfighting environments to facilitate agile software development

and rapidly scale an integrated, AI-powered joint C2 capability optimized for contested environments that connects sensors, systems, and data across multiple domains to enable a resilient joint mesh network.

Dynamis Serial 003 took place from Jan. 26-Feb. 6 in conjunction with the Army's Next Generation Command and Control

Ivy Sting IV event led by the Army's 4th Infantry Division here. The Navy/Marine Corps Dynamis team integrated battle management C2 nodes from four locations across the Joint Force and connected decentralized networking capabilities for the first time.

"It was truly impressive to witness a Division-level war-

fighting formation collaborating side-by-side with world-class software engineers, rapidly iterating on next-generation battle management command and control capabilities at the speed of relevance," said Col. Arlon Smith, the Director of Project Dynamis.

<https://www.marines.mil/News/News-Display/Article/4403396/>

Protecting U.S. farmland

by Matthew Olay
Pentagon News

On Feb. 11, Secretary of War Pete Hegseth signed a memorandum of understanding with Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins, cementing the relationship between the two agencies under the National Farm Security Action Plan, and explaining how they will collaborate when agriculture and national defense intersect.

"We're going to promote agricultural and economic prosperity, defend the foundations of agriculture and food ... and strengthen domestic and agricultural productivity," Hegseth said.

He added that together, DOW and the Agriculture Department are elevating the protection of U.S. agriculture into America's national security framework by ensuring systems remain protected against major disasters, emergencies and potential terror attacks, with the full support of the national security enterprise.

"Under the leadership of President [Donald J.] Trump and collaboration with Secretary Rollins, we're ensuring that American agriculture remains resilient, productive and a cornerstone of our nation's strength," Wilson said.

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COLORADO Air Force 2nd Lt. Michelle McCarty, a Space Base Delta 2 public affairs officer, presents a Valentine's Day card to a veteran at the Rocky Mountain Regional VA Medical Center, Aurora, Colorado, Feb. 10, 2026. The cards were shared as a small token of appreciation during the annual National Salute to Veteran Patients Week. U.S. Space Force photo by Paul Ortiz



AUSTRALIA U.S. Marines with "The Commandant's Own" United States Marine Drum & Bugle Corps, play music during a dress rehearsal for upcoming performances with the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo at Suncorp Stadium in Brisbane, Queensland, Australia on Feb. 11, 2026. During this tour, the Drum & Bugle Corps will be traveling to Brisbane, Australia, and Auckland, New Zealand, in support of the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo. U.S. Marine Corps photo by Cpl. Christopher Prella



Photos <https://www.war.gov/Multimedia/Photos/>

Marines bring amphibious vehicles back to life with one simple, critical component

Story and photo by
by Marine Corps Sgt.
Rafael Brambila-Pelayo

When a shortage of critical single-use consumable suspension washers resulted in multiple amphibious combat vehicles being taken out of service, Marines assigned to the Fabrication Platoon, 2nd Maintenance Battalion, at Camp Lejeune, N.C., stepped in, turning a potentially yearlong delay into a one-hour fix.

The initial problem was identified at the 2nd Assault Amphibian Battalion, 2nd Marine Division, where ACVs were being taken out of service due to the lack of a specific suspension locking washer. The part, a mandatory replacement item for the vehicle's suspension system, was unavailable through the standard supply system due to a backlog, hindering unit readiness.

The solution came when Marine Corps CWO2 Anthony Juedes, a ground ordnance vehicle maintenance officer with the assault battalion, approached the II Marine Expeditionary Force Innovation Campus with the problem.

Each suspension lock washer has square teeth that bend when torqued into place and when suspension components are taken apart or put back together. Due to this, the washers cannot be reused and become damaged once removed from an ACV's suspension system.

Juedes presented a damaged washer to Marine Corps Chief Warrant Officer 3 Matthew Pine, the campus's officer in charge, who tasked his 2nd Maintenance Battalion team with finding a solution. They immediately went to work. By using aluminum sheets and a water jet, they reverse engineered the part and produced a working prototype, showcasing the immense value of advanced manufacturing.

"It took less than 30 minutes to create it, and in less than an hour, we had a working prototype,"



Washers made with a water jet cutter for amphibious combat vehicles, which brings off-line ACV's back in the fight.

Pine said. "The part itself took less than a minute and a half to cut."

With a potential solution in hand, the next step was validation. Contractors were used to strengthen the reverse engineering process, help lower risk, ensure quality control and create a more thorough part-review for the fabrication process.

After a successful test, Lt. Col. Matthew Ludlow, the 2nd Assault Amphibian Battalion commander, decided to formally assume the risk of using the non-standard part to get his vehicles back in the fight. By signing an official assumption-of-risk letter, he authorized the use of the fabricated washers to restore his unit's operational capability.

Once approved, 10 ACVs were brought back into service in a single morning, showcasing how this capability can be used not only on base, but also while forward deployed.

The impact was immediately noticed. As of December 2025, the 2nd Maintenance Battalion has produced more than 80 washers, bringing 15 nonoperational ACVs back into service. For a part that costs less than \$2 to make, the effort bypassed a supply shortage that could have sidelined the fleet indefinitely, saving the Marine Corps countless days of lost training and readiness.

This success, however, highlights a different issue: the lack



Top 5

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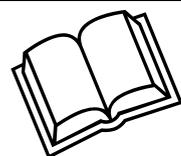
of access to technical data for parts. According to Pine, without the manufacturer's original blueprints, his Marines must reverse engineer components, a process that involves determining exact dimensions, material composition and strength requirements. This process can become especially problematic for load-bearing components.

The problem, said Pine, is that the battalion doesn't have the testing parameters for the parts.

To mitigate this, the 2nd Maintenance Battalion now creates

its own technical data packages from its reverse-engineered parts, a process validated by civilian engineers and machinists to ensure quality.

By demonstrating their capability to produce reliable parts under controlled processes, the maintenance battalion proves that even with contested supply lines, Marine ingenuity can provide a mission-focused solution. Their work builds a robust case for the organic capabilities that Marine innovation can bring to units, both on base and overseas.



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PACIFIC AIR FORCE DEBUTS MISSION READY AIRMAN PROGRAM

by Senior Airman Hunter Hites

Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson
Public Affairs

JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska - Thirty-four noncommissioned officers participated in Security Forces-focused Mission Ready Airman training Feb. 6, a first-of-its-kind program in the Pacific Air Forces that aims at increasing lethality and readiness across the force.

The training, conducted at the 673rd Security Forces Squadron warehouse, was integrated into the NCO Foundations 500 course and led primarily by Security Forces instructors. The initiative is a PACAF-level first and is currently unique to Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson.

“Our training was Mission Ready Airmen,” said Staff Sgt. Taylor Davis, 673rd SFS counter-small unmanned aerial system noncommissioned officer in charge. “It brought together a couple of topics from security forces, like use-of-force, combatives, land navigation, communications with land mobile radios and also some c-sUAS awareness and active shooter training.”

“The MRA training gives the framework for these key leaders, our NCO corps, to think strategically and then apply that at a tactical level,” Davis continued. “And that flows directly into lethality because it’s not just [security forces] that carry weapons systems that need to be able to support the fight.”

The training placed Airmen in scenarios that typically fall outside the normal scope of their primary career fields, exposing them to warfighting skills they may not routinely practice in day-to-day duties. By reinforcing foundational combat, communication and decision-making



Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson Airmen practice striking during a combatives class in the Mission Ready Airman training portion of the Professional Development Center’s Noncommissioned Officer Foundation Course 500 at JBER, Alaska, Feb. 6. The MRA training marks the first in Pacific Air Forces, giving foundation course students hands-on refreshers of core warfighting skills. U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Hunter Hites

skills across diverse specialties, the program ensures Airmen can operate effectively in hostile environments.

Participants said the training reinforced the importance of shared responsibility across the force. Tech. Sgt. Vincent Ruiz, 673rd Logistics Readiness NCOIC of heavy equipment,

“I THINK IT’S GREAT TO COME BACK TOGETHER AND REALIZE WE’RE ONE FIGHTING FORCE AND HOW THAT PLAYS A HUGE FACTOR WHEN YOU GO INTO A THEATER [OF OPERATIONS]. THE TRAINING SHARPENED SKILLS NOT OFTEN PRACTICED IN DAILY DUTIES. I THINK WE’LL BE MUCH MORE LETHAL AFTER THIS TRAINING AND MORE TRAININGS LIKE IT.”

said the experience helped break down career field barriers.

“I think it’s great to come back together and realize we’re one fighting force and how that plays a huge factor when you go into a theater [of operations],” Ruiz said. “The training sharpened skills not often practiced in daily duties. I think we’ll be much more lethal after this training and more trainings like it.”

Master Sgt. Brandi Jordan, the Professional Development Center superintendent, said the program bridges the gap between professional military education

and operational execution.

“The MRA training directly enhances the lethality and readiness of the force by translating classroom concepts into tactical proficiency,” Jordan said. She emphasized that offering the same training across enlisted tiers strengthens the force. “Whether it’s a first-time introduction for a junior member or a refresher for a senior leader, this continuous cycle of training ensures the entire team can operate effectively.”

Mission Ready Airman training is now embedded in all Professional Development Center Foundations courses at JBER, including Junior Enlisted Foundations 300, NCO Foundations 500 and Senior NCO Foundations 700, reinforcing the installation’s focus on Ready Airmen, Ready Base and a lethal, prepared force.

“I do hope to see other bases take this on,” Jordan said. “I’m sure with more resources and ideas we can all come up with a better way forward for future classes.”

STAY INFORMED

Mental armor: How a calm mind builds a stronger heart

February is American Heart Month, a time to focus on a critical component of your readiness: your cardiovascular health. You already know that nutrition and PT are key, but there’s another powerful weapon in your arsenal that is often overlooked: mindfulness.



Image courtesy of <https://pendleton.usmc-mccs.org/>.

The mind-heart connection

The demands of a military career can lead to chronic stress, which takes a physical toll. Constant pressure can increase blood pressure, heighten inflammation, and contribute to heart disease over time. Mindfulness—the practice of being fully present and aware—is a powerful countermeasure.

Practicing mindfulness may help:

- * Lower stress hormones such as cortisol.
- * Reduce blood pressure.
- * Improve heart rate variability (a sign of a healthy heart).
- * Strengthen your overall mental resilience.

One of the most significant operational benefits of mindfulness is better sleep. Quality sleep supports heart function, assists the body in recovery, and helps regulate blood pressure. By calming the mind before bed, you create the conditions for deep, restorative rest that prepares you for the next day’s mission.

Tactical mindfulness drills

Incorporate these simple drills into your nightly routine to decompress and prepare for quality sleep.

Body scan relaxation

* Spend five to 10 minutes scanning your body from head to toe, gently noticing areas of tension. This helps release stress and prepares the body for rest.

‘Physiological sigh’ breathing

* Take one deep inhale through your nose, followed by a second shorter inhale. Then exhale slowly through your mouth. This technique helps calm the nervous system.

End-of-day debrief

* Write down or mentally note three things that went well or that you are thankful for. This simple reflection can reduce stress and shift your mindset before sleep.

Small adjustments, meaningful impact

* Mindfulness isn’t about emptying your mind or achiev-

ing perfection. It’s about building small, consistent habits that give you an edge. Over time, these simple practices will help you manage stress, sleep better, and protect your heart, ensuring you stay in the fight for the long haul.

For tools, classes, and guidance on mindfulness and sleep, contact your local WARR-Semper Fit team.

Recruits

continued from page 1

women have volunteered to serve our nation. When they are shipping out to basic training, we want them focused on the fight, not worried about what type of ID they have or whether they will need to pay a fee to make it there,” Undersecretary of War for Personnel and Readiness Anthony J. Tata recently said of the joint DOW-TSA partnership.

Tata said that it is the War Department’s duty to take care of the young men and women who volunteer to serve their country from the moment they sign up to protect the nation, and that the new security screening initiative is a great example of innovation and cross-government collaboration.

“The department identified a challenge and partnered with TSA to put in place a solution, bolting over the bureaucracy to provide thousands of new recruits with the white glove treatment they deserve,” Tata added.

One senior TSA official — who served 10 years in the Marine Corps and noted that

one in five TSA employees are veterans — concurred that easing young recruits’ journey to boot camp should be a top priority.

“TSA is honored to be a part of the journeys young men and women take to reach initial military training and begin their service in America’s armed forces. ... We are committed to ensuring recruits can stay focused on what lies at the end of their travels, serving America, instead of worrying about how they’ll get there,” explained Mike Turner, TSA’s assistant administrator for domestic aviation operations.

“By leveraging the pre-vetting processes [that] we already have in place, TSA will assist America’s newest service members reach their training safely and smoothly,” he added.

With airport security crossed off their list of worries, the men and women who raised their right hands and swore an oath in anticipation of embarking on one of the most exciting and honorable adventures they’ll ever go on are ready, with or without nail clippers.



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

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

Armed Forces Dispatch

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FRCSW: A brand-new maintenance program for the Navy's F-16 Viper

by Michael A Furlano
Fleet Readiness Center Southwest

Fleet Readiness Center Southwest (FRCSW), in conjunction with Program Management Activity 226 (PMA-226), has successfully established a brand-new maintenance program for the U.S. Navy's F-16 Viper aircraft, demonstrating the unparalleled dedication, skill, and collaborative spirit of FRCSW's workforce and its partners.

The new maintenance effort, designed to deliver vital Programmed Sustainment and Structural Repairs (PSSR) to the aircraft, was launched in

an unprecedented 18-month timeline, an achievement that set a new standard for depot line activation.

The origins of the F-16 maintenance evolution at the command began when PMA-226, the Program Office for the F-16 aircraft, approached FRCSW with a pressing need. With other facilities unable to take on the workload at the time, FRCSW stepped forward to assume responsibility.

The commands willingness to rise to the challenge was not just about fulfilling an operational need, but also about supporting



Fleet Readiness Center Southwest's new maintenance center for the Navy's F-16 Viper aircraft. Photo by Michael A Furlano

the Navy's mission to maintain readiness for the men and women who fight for the nation's security.

FRCSW is now the primary depot location for F-16 repairs, specifically focusing on PSSR, a vital component of maintenance on the aircraft. PSSR is similar to the Navy's F/A-18 High Flight Hour Inspection and is critical to ensuring the F-16 remains ready to perform its mission as an adversary for Navy pilot training exercises.

This kind of effort cannot be

made alone. The partnership between FRCSW and PMA-226 has been nothing short of a triumph.

"The strategic collaboration between FRCSW and PMA-226 to establish F-16 Depot Maintenance capabilities for U.S. Navy Aggressor F-16s has delivered accelerated readiness for the warfighter," said PMA-226's Program Manager, Capt. Jason Pettit.

"In just 18 months, both teams worked tirelessly to procure, train, and install the necessary

equipment to stand up the F-16 Programmed Sustainment and Structural Repair (PSSR) capability, an unprecedented pace for depot line activation. Congratulations to all team members for this successful achievement on delivering the first Navy F-16C Viper out of FRCSW."

The effort required the procurement of new equipment, the design and installation of specialized tools, and the development of training programs. One of the standout achievements was the rapid adaptation of legacy F/A-18 equipment for F-16 use, notably the wing removal and installation stands, a process that was key to ensuring the aircraft's maintenance stayed on track.

Using legacy F/A-18 inner wing stands, the team was able to adapt these tools to the F-16, working with engineers to ensure safety and structural integrity. The result was a new process that allowed for a more efficient, cost-effective means of servicing the aircraft.

Additionally, when the team was unable to source critical bolts through the Navy's supply system, they identified a way to refurbish old bolts and

worked with engineers to approve these for continued usage in the maintenance process. This flexibility and resourcefulness are hallmarks of the FRCSW workforce.

The success of the first aircraft to go through the new F-16 program has been the result of countless hours of effort, ingenuity, and problem-solving. In conjunction with the PMA-226 engineering team, Jake Weintraub, FRCSW's lead engineer for the F-16 program, worked the effort to approve changes and engineering modifications designed to enhance the aircraft, including the introduction of the first LES (Local Engineering Specification) document for the Navy on this aircraft.

An LES is a document that provides detailed, specific technical requirements for maintenance, repair, and engineering support at a local level, such as within the Naval Air Station North Island or FRCSW.

The collaboration didn't stop with FRCSW and PMA-226. The Depot also partnered with personnel from Hill Air Force Base (AFB), who provided valuable training on F-16 systems.



VIEW FROM ABOVE
Navy Petty Officer 2nd Class Justin Baker observes as USS Rafael Peralta receives fuel from USS Tripoli during a replenishment in the Philippine Sea, Feb. 10, 2026. U.S. Navy photo by Petty Officer 1st Class Ryre Arciaga

CHAIN REACTION
Navy Sailors conduct maintenance on the anchor chain of aircraft carrier Theodore Roosevelt, Feb. 12, 2026, at NAS North Island. U.S. Navy photo by MC2 Ikia Walker



READY, AIM A Marine with Combat Logistics Battalion 24 posts security during a re-supply hike as part of Mountain Training Exercise 1-26 at Marine Corps Mountain Warfare Training Center in Bridgeport, Calif., Feb. 4, 2026. U.S. Marine Corps photo by Lance Cpl. Isabelle Veillette

USS Pinckney departs Singapore after ship repair and maintenance exercise

by Lt.j.g. Camillia Nguyen
Command Destroyer Squadron
Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer *Pinckney* recently departed Singapore after a port visit in support of a ship repair and maintenance exercise.



Cryptologic Technician 3rd Class Daniel Golden performs maintenance on an electrical panel aboard Pinckney. U.S. Navy photo by MC2 Thomas Furnish

Ship repair and maintenance exercises are routinely conducted to maintain readiness and proficiency. These exercises demonstrate the ship's ability to conduct maintenance and repair while forward-deployed and away from homeport.

"Critical factors of operational excellence in the Indo-Pacific region rely on partnership and material readiness," said Capt. Matthew Scarlett, commodore, Destroyer Squadron (DESRON) 7. "We're extremely grateful for the opportunity to be here and continue building on the U.S.-Singapore partnership legacy that's been the foundation for peace and security across the Indo-Pacific for decades."

The ship repair and maintenance exercise consisted of three distinct, concurrent elements: expeditionary repair availability, damage assessment and repair table-top exercise, and continuous maintenance availability. Ship Repair Facilities detach-

ment Singapore, U.S. Pacific Fleet and DESRON 7 supported the exercise.

"The *Pinckney* crew has been challenged and tested during this iteration of ship repair and maintenance exercise," said Cmdr. Timothy Devall, commanding officer of *Pinckney*. "Only through the technical expertise of teams here – the staff, the contractors, and our partners – could we refine the skills needed to succeed independently forward."

As the U.S. Navy's forward-deployed DESRON in Southeast Asia, DESRON 7 serves as the primary tactical and operational commander of littoral combat ships deployed to the U.S. 7th Fleet area of operations.

U.S. 7th Fleet, the Navy's largest forward-deployed numbered fleet, routinely interacts and operates with allies and partners in supporting peace, stability, and prosperity and preserving a free and open Indo-Pacific region.

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PEO C4I launches new industry intake at WEST 2026

by Lt. Cmdr. Janice Leister

At the Armed Forces Communications & Electronics Association's WEST 2026, themed "Sustaining Maritime Dominance: Warfighting Readiness for the Future Fight," Program Executive Office Command, Control, Communications, Computers, and Intelligence (PEO C4I) reaffirmed its commitment to strengthening collaboration with industry to accelerate the delivery of decisive capability to the Navy and Marine Corps.

During PEO C4I's third annual industry engagement event, leadership from across all 11 program offices connected with more than 300 industry partners to discuss priorities, operational challenges, and opportunities to advance naval capabilities in a rapidly evolving maritime environment.

The event aligned with SECNAV priorities and the National Defense Strategy, underscoring the importance of innovation, disciplined acquisition, and

partnership in sustaining America's maritime dominance.

"Today's WEST event provided me the opportunity to share thoughts on my program office's activities as well as to hear directly from industry on potential solutions to the challenges we face," said Tony Vanaria, acting program manager for the Navy's Carrier and Air Integration Program Office.

"These types of government and industry engagements are invaluable in ensuring that our ultimate customer, the warfighter, is equipped with the latest technologies in the performance of their mission."

The discussions reinforced a central theme echoed throughout WEST: acquisition is a warfighting function. In order to maintain a competitive edge in a dynamic operational environment, the Navy must integrate emerging technologies, strengthen partnerships with the defense industrial base, and deliver enhanced lethality

and survivability to operational forces—faster.

Building on the momentum from WEST 2026, PEO C4I is formally launching a new Industry Intake Form, available at <https://www.peoc4i.navy.mil/Industry/>.

The form establishes a clear, structured pathway for companies to connect directly with the appropriate PEO C4I program offices, helping accelerate the evaluation of innovative solutions.

"We created this page to make it easier for companies with great solutions to rapidly connect to the program managers that need those solutions," said Navy Capt. David Gast, PEO C4I Innovation Lead. "If we are going to answer the call to field better capabilities faster, we need to remove as much of that friction as we can, and that's our goal with this page."

Aligned with Department of the Navy priorities to strengthen the maritime industrial base and integrate emerging technologies, the intake form supports responsible stewardship while enabling timely collaboration.

By creating a centralized intake mechanism, PEO C4I is improving transparency and ensuring submissions are routed efficiently to the right technical and acquisition teams.

<https://www.dvidshub.net/news/558082/>

Naval Air Forces' change of command, promotion ceremony

NAS NORTH ISLAND - Commander, Naval Air Forces held a change of command and promotion ceremony here recently.

Adm. Stephen Koehler, commander, Pacific Fleet, presided over the ceremony as Vice Adm. Douglas Verissimo assumed duties as commander Pacific Fleet. Verissimo was also promoted to vice admiral.

Verissimo relieved Vice Adm. Daniel Cheever, who assumed command of Naval Air Forces on Jan. 31, 2024. To ensure continuity of command, Koehler briefly transferred commander, Naval Air Forces responsibilities to Rear Adm. Richard T. Brophy and commander, NAF/Pacific Fleet responsibilities to Rear Adm. John D. Saccomando prior to Verissimo's assumption of command.

"These three things are my

initial focus areas: world-class maintainers, world-class aircrew, and the readiness of our equipment," said Verissimo. "Don't slip where we are good and keep getting real and getting better in areas where we must improve."

CNAF is dual-hatted as commander, Naval Air Forces, U.S. Pacific Fleet and is the lead type command for Naval Aviation.

Carrier Strike Group 1 welcomes Rear Adm. Jay Clark

SAN DIEGO - Carrier Strike Group (CSG) 1 held an assumption of command ceremony here earlier this month.

Rear Adm. Jay Clark assumed command of CSG-1 and succeeds Rear Adm. Amy Bauernschmidt, who served as CSG-1 commander from April to October 2025.

Bauernschmidt brought the strike group safely home from a nine-month underway, where

CSG-1 conducted operations in the U.S. 3rd, 5th and 7th Fleet areas of operations. Under her leadership, CSG-1 conducted strikes against Iran-backed Houthi targets in Yemen during Operation Rough Rider. These operations degraded Houthi capabilities and disrupted threats to commercial shipping in the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden and the Bab al-Mandeb Strait.

Bauernschmidt reported to

Commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet, in November 2025, where she now holds the position of director of maritime operations.

"It is a deep honor and privilege to assume command of such an exceptional team of warfighters," said Clark. "CSG-1 is well known for its discipline and legacy of success, and I am eager to work alongside this exceptional team."

Coast Guard interdicts 14 aliens near Point Loma

SAN DIEGO - The crew of Coast Guard Cutter *Forrest Rednour* interdicted 14 suspected aliens aboard a vessel 18 miles west of San Diego Feb. 13.

At 4:34 p.m., on Feb. 13, *Forrest Rednour's* crew detected a vessel and launched their boarding team to investigate. The cutter's boarding team intercepted the 14 aliens aboard the 20-foot cuddy cabin. All 14 aboard claimed Mexican nationality.

The boarding team transferred custody of the aliens to a boatcrew from Coast Guard Station San Diego. The aliens were then transported to Ballast Point and transferred to another DHS agency for investigation.

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Once you navigate to the web page, scroll down to and look at the right side of the page to find information about volunteering.

Camp Pendleton USO Programs Include:

USO Transitions: <https://www.uso.org/programs/uso-pathfinder-transition-program>

Want to be better prepared for future success before transitioning from the military? Are you a military spouse looking for new opportunities? The USO Pathfinder® Transition Program extends the USO experience to active duty, Reserve, National Guard and military spouses by offering professional development services throughout the duration of military service as well as in preparation for life post-military.

MilSpouse Connect: Monthly events bringing military spouses together to connect and thrive.

Craft & Coffee: USO Camp Pendleton provides creative outlets for adults and children to create fun, whimsical or serious works of art through a variety of mediums. Signs up happen online and are usually advertised through the USO Camp Pendleton Facebook page.

Command Support: USO is here to support! We often help support command events across Camp Pendleton such as Family days and Morale Days. Commands can request support in a number of different ways, from outdoor games, a kids craft, or even our mobile photo booth. We also can help provide small refreshments. To request support, please email our Center Operations and Programs Manager, Crystal Gates at cgates@uso.org. All requests must be submitted within 30 days and although we try our best, not all requests can be granted.

<https://california.uso.org/>

Power

continued from page 1

advanced nuclear technologies are developed, evaluated and deployed in ways that strengthen energy resilience and national security."

The future of warfare is energy-intensive, he said, and includes AI data centers, directed-energy weapons, and space and cyber infrastructure. The civilian power grid was not built for that, and so the War Department will need to build its own energy infrastructure.

"Powering next generation warfare will require us to move

faster than our adversaries, to build a system that doesn't just equip our warfighters to fight, but equips them to win at extraordinary speed," Duffey said. "Today is a monumental step toward building that system. By supporting the industrial base and its capacity to innovate, we accelerate the delivery of resilient power to where it's needed."

Secretary of Energy Chris Wright said that with small reactors like those transferred from March Air Reserve Base to Hill Air Force Base, the United States is aiming for a nuclear energy renaissance.

"The American nuclear renaissance is to get that ball moving again, fast, carefully, but with private capital, American innovation and determination," Wright said. "President Trump signed multiple executive orders that have unleashed tremendous reform of all the things that stopped the American nuclear industry from moving."

Part of that effort, he said, will mean that by July 4, the administration expects three small reactors will be critical — or running smoothly.

"That's speed, that's innovation, that's the start of a nuclear renaissance," Wright said.



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The Meat & Potatoes

of Life



by
Lisa
Smith
Molinari

“Whose idea was this anyway?” I grumbled after smacking my alarm clock. It was six AM, which on any given cold winter morning, may as well be the middle of the night as far as I was concerned. I had to be at my Rotary Club’s breakfast meeting in an hour, and I wasn’t happy.

“I don’t even eat breakfast!” I snapped, tossing a pillow at no one in particular.

After leaving the warm cocoon of my bed, I opened the door of Gilligan’s crate. He bounded out into the 60 degree air temp of our drafty old house, tail wagging, displaying his big goofy Labrador grin. “What are you so happy about?” I grouched, and he raced down the stairs to our front door.

While Gilligan was outside doing his business in our frozen yard, I peered out a cut glass panel in the oval window of our door and grimaced. The poor dog was trying to find a good spot on top of layers of crusty snow from recent blizzards that dropped nearly two feet on our town.

Each new snow was beautiful, at first. Watching chunks of flakes fall inspired us to hunker down, light fires in the fireplace, make soup, and feel cozy. The next day after each blizzard, when the sun

A gift during the doldrums of winter

shone from a brilliantly clear blue sky and the fresh blanket of snow sparkled like diamonds, I felt grateful that, after 28 years of active duty military life in different locales, we landed in the northeast, where I could experience the beauty of winter.

But that feeling was fleeting. Soon, the complaints began.

“Feels like negative four”? Are you kidding me?” my husband Francis said with a dramatic groan, listening to the weather report.

“The car is crusted over with salt again,” I griped. “I don’t know why we even bother to wash our vehicles. We should just let them rust.”

“Ouch! I’ve got one of those little cracks in my finger that I get every winter,” Francis moaned.

“Well, what about me?” I whined. “Every winter, all the skin on my body dries up and sloughs off,” I said, scratching my shin to show him the flakes that drifted to the floor.

Gilligan slipped and slid on the crusty snow, finally digging his nails in enough to assume the “kangaroo” position needed to make a clean deposit. When finished, he bounded back toward the door, ever excited for his first kibble scoop of the day.

It was then that I saw it. A tiny shaft of the rising sun had broached the horizon and made its way 92 million miles across outer space to our front door, where a four-inch piece of cut glass split the beam of light into a rainbow that appeared

on the floor of our foyer.

I stopped and stared for a moment, attracted by the impossibly saturated colors. Red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet glowed on a tiny patch of our hardwood floor. The vision was captivating, and somehow thought-provoking. “Nature is so complex, so wondrous,” I thought, the corners of my mouth turning upward into a grin.

Just then, Gilligan barked to come in.

Our laundry room was, by far, the coldest room in the house. I scooped kibble into Gilligan’s bowl, and he nearly knocked me over to get to it. Minnow, our black rescue cat, sat waiting for her daily wet food, her tail wrapped tightly around her front paws to keep them warm.

With the animals fed, I trudged upstairs to get ready for the God-forsaken breakfast meeting, my mood having soured again from the chill.

But nature is relentless. Upon entering my bedroom, my breath stopped. In the minutes since I’d let Gilligan in our front door, the Earth had rotated. The east-facing windows were now awash with blazing pinky orange light. It shone brightly through our blinds and onto my face, casting rectangles of pink onto the green wall above our bed.

It was impossible not to smile. Winter, in all its brutality, had bestowed upon me its uniquely beautiful gifts — icy gems, luminous hues and hushed silences. And I felt grateful, once again.

AutoMatters™ & More



by Jan Wagner

There once was once a time, hopefully long ago, where we threw our old, dead batteries into the trash. These included batteries for flashlights, toys, radios and more. These discarded batteries poisoned our landfills with toxic substances, and could spark intense fires that were very difficult to stop.

These days batteries are the primary source of power or backup power for an ever-increasing variety of electronics devices, which makes their safe and responsible disposal even more important. At this year’s CES (the Consumer Electronics Show) in Las Vegas, one of the many exhibits there was for BatterySafetyNow.org. In their custom “Skip the Bin! travel trailer, “Woody Owl” has been travelling across the U.S. to educate communities about safe battery disposal. “Woody Owl” reminds us that “everyone has an important part to play in keeping our homes, families, and communities safe.”

We were reminded that today, batteries power our laptops, smartphones, power tools, e-scooters, remote controls, smoke detectors, many children’s toys and even singing greeting cards.

Batteries can store an immense amount of energy in a very small space, but when a battery gets too hot or comes under too much pressure, it can trigger a scientific process called “thermal runaway.” Thermal runaway is a self-sustaining chain reaction

Battery safety

where a little bit of pressure or heat starts producing even more heat, leading to a rapid rise in temperature that can trigger deadly fires or explosions. When a battery overheats, it can jump from 212°F to 1,800°F in a second—and produce flames as hot as 2,000 °F (source: <https://news.clemson.edu/lithium-ion-battery-fires-are-a-growing-public-safety-concern-%E2%88%92-heres-how-to-reduce-the-risk/>).

Furthermore, as lithium battery fires burn, they release toxic gasses like hydrogen fluoride and carbon monoxide. If inhaled, these fumes can lead to trouble breathing, eye and skin irritation, and in some cases, even death.

Battery fires don’t just burn hotter—they burn longer, too. These fires are extremely difficult for firefighters to put out, and they can quickly reignite without a moment’s notice.

In our homes, if we throw batteries into the trash, they can overheat or get crushed, causing these fires. If batteries are placed in curbside recycling or trash bins, they can overheat or get crushed inside the collection trucks — often while these trucks are in motion. This creates a serious fire risk, endangering the lives of sanitation workers and threatening nearby homes, vehicles and our neighborhoods.

If batteries end up at waste and non-battery recycling facilities, they pose a serious fire hazard to workers and equipment. Facilities across the U.S. report over 5,000 fires each year — many sparked by improperly disposed batteries. These incidents cause millions of dollars in damage, disrupt essential services and put lives at risk (source: <https://wasterecycling.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/RRS->

[Lithium-battery-one-pager-final.pdf](https://wasterecycling.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/RRS-Lithium-battery-one-pager-final.pdf)).

Here is what you can do. When it is time to dispose of your batteries, never throw them in the trash or in a recycling bin. Instead, turn them in safely to a drop-off location that will send them to a safe battery recycling center. Here is a link to where you can locate recycling centers for primary (single-use) batteries, E-bike batteries, cellphone batteries, high-energy batteries, damaged/defective batteries and rechargeable batteries: <https://locator.batterynetwork.org>.

To learn more about battery safety and what you can do, visit: batterysafetynow.org. There, in addition to the battery recycling center locator and a contact page where you can ask questions, you will find many resources, including a listing of upcoming events across the country — and a sign-up form if you are interested in hosting your own community’s battery take-back event with “Woody Owl,” and even a “Kids’ Corner,” with downloadable, printable kids’ activities and where there are reminders for kids to use only the charger that comes with their devices; to not throw or drop devices that contain batteries, since that can be dangerous; to stop using devices containing batteries and tell adults if those devices are swollen, cracked or leaking; to ask adults to help replace batteries; to learn how to prepare batteries for safe disposal (tape the ends) and find a drop-off location; and to NEVER, EVER throw batteries into the trash or a recycling bin.

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Veterans News

The ‘Purple Foxes’ legacy: A founding member’s memorable return to his Marine squadron

by Lance Cpl. Jonathan Sherchand
Camp Pendleton

CAMP PENDLETON - A round of applause roars through the room at here. There is barking. There are cheers. There is exuberant “rahs.” All are for one special Marine veteran.

Through tear-filled eyes and a radiant grin, Capt. Nelson J. Baker accepts an honorary, dashing Purple Foxes jacket from Lt. Col. Jamie W. Bunce, commanding officer of Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron (VMM) 364, Marine Aircraft Group 39, 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing.

The vibrant purple jacket was presented to Baker adorned with the squadron patch and flight suit patch bearing his rank and name to honor his service and legacy as an original member of VMM-364.

Baker served as one of the squadron’s first pilots when it was activated as Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron (HMM) 364 in 1961. An honor colloquially called “plank holder” in the military.



Lt. Col. Jamie W. Bunce, commanding officer of Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron (VMM) 364 and Marine Corps vet, Capt. Nelson J. Baker, pose for a photo at Camp Pendleton Jan. 30. Baker is a plank holder of VMM-364 and served as one of the squadron’s first pilots when it was commissioned as Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 364 in 1961. He visited to share the squadron’s legacy with the current generation of Marines who work with and fly the MV-22B Osprey. U.S. Marine Corps photo by Lance Cpl. Jonathan Sherchand

Baker visited VMM-364 on January 30, 2026, to celebrate his upcoming 90th birthday and share the squadron’s legacy with the current generation of Marines who work with and fly the MV-22B Osprey.

Born on May 3, 1936, Baker

commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in 1959 and was subsequently designated a Naval Aviator in November 1960. He was assigned to fly the Sikorsky H-34 with HMM-361. He would then go on to join the newly formed HMM-364 in 1962, where he deployed as part of

Operation “Dominic.” After the Soviet Union suddenly resumed atomic testing, the United States quickly launched Operation “Dominic” during a tense time of the Cold War. This was a series of tests to design, develop and analyze new nuclear weapons and understand the weapons’ power.

Baker served in support of the nuclear tests on the Johnston Atoll in the mid-Pacific while operating from the USS Iwo Jima. A piece of history that Baker holds in high regard.

“It was kind of a unique experience being part of the atomic testing,” Baker recounts to the Marines. “In fact, anyone who participated in the nuclear test is known as an atomic veteran. How about that?”

Bunce and the Marines of VMM-364 were honored to have Baker visit them.

“It’s a pleasure to have you here, an original Purple Fox,” Bunce told Baker. He said he was happy to report that all Purple Foxes who followed have maintained that same “dedica-

tion, devotion to duty, the loyalty, and the camaraderie.”

After sharing his stories with the Marines and being honored with a squadron jacket, Baker was treated to a tour of the VMM-364 hangar and an MV-22B Osprey. He could be seen with a sense of wonder and reminiscence as he boarded the Osprey. The Marines of VMM-364 were honored and excited to show him the operations and

maintenance of an Osprey.

Before departing, Baker took a moment to thank everyone for the honor and left them with a few final, heartfelt thoughts.

“I’m honored to be a guest of VMM-364 here today. It’s been a wonderful experience,” Baker reflects. “I really enjoyed being here to meet all of you wonderful people. Thank you very much.”

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SOCIAL SECURITY MATTERS

by Russell Gloor, National Social Security Advisor at the AMAC Foundation, the non-profit arm of the Association of Mature American Citizens

Why didn't my friend's wife get all her SS immediately?

Dear Rusty: A friend told me about what he believes is a strange thing in the Social Security system. His wife reached her full retirement age (FRA) of 66 several years ago. She delayed filing for Social Security past her FRA and claimed on her 68th birthday in June of that year, exactly 2 years after her FRA. When she filed, she was told she would receive approximately \$300/month, which, of course, was more than she would have received at her FRA. She was told however that she would only receive \$300/month as of January 1 of the following year. Between June of the year she turned 68 and filed for SS until the end of that year, she would receive an amount less than \$300. This lower amount was the amount she would have received if she had filed in December, the year she turned 67. She said she was told that was how SS works. She would never receive the difference in benefits she lost from June through December of the year she filed. If the above is true, can you explain?

Signed: Astounded Friend

Dear Astounded: What your friend described is, indeed, a unique methodology for how Social Security handles benefit payments for those who choose to wait beyond their full retirement age (FRA) to claim SS benefits. To understand it, let me first describe how Social Security retirement benefits are calculated.

At full retirement age, a person is entitled to 100% of the SS benefit they have earned from a lifetime of working. That FRA benefit amount is known as the person's "Primary Insurance Amount" (PIA) and is based upon the highest earning 35 years over the individual's lifetime. From those past years, average lifetime monthly earnings are computed, known as the person's "Average Indexed Monthly Earnings" (AIME). Their AIME is subjected to a formula which yields their Primary Insurance Amount – the benefit the person is entitled to in the month they attain their full retirement age – typically about 40% of the person's average monthly lifetime earnings. However, if the person chooses to do so, they can wait beyond their FRA to claim Social Security to get a monthly benefit even higher than their PIA, by earning Delayed Retirement Credits (DRCs).

DRCs are applied to the person's PIA when they claim Social Security. For each month after FRA the person claims, they will have .667% added to their PIA. That means that for each full year of delay, that person will get an extra 8% added to their PIA. For someone (like your friend's wife) who claimed 24 months after her FRA, she would receive a benefit 16% higher than her FRA amount. However, Social Security normally only applies DRCs in January of each year.

So, even though your friend's wife claimed her SS benefits in June, 24 months after her FRA, she would initially only get the DRCs she had accumulated through the end of the previous year - in this case, about 18 months' worth of DRCs, or an SS payment about 12% higher than her PIA (her FRA amount). She would not get her remaining earned DRCs (another 4%) until January of the following year. So, in effect, the wife's initial benefit didn't reflect all her earned DRCs until her later January benefit payment. Thus, the wife essentially lost that extra benefit money for the period between June and December of the year she claimed Social Security. In other words, she wouldn't get the full 16% amount until SS applied the additional 4% DRCs to her benefit payment the following January. And that is why your friend's wife initially received a payment a bit less than the \$300 Social Security said she was entitled to by waiting 2 years after her FRA to claim.

This surprises many who choose to wait beyond their full retirement age to claim Social Security. But, curiously, this process doesn't apply to those who wait until age 70 to claim their SS benefits. For those who wait until age 70 to claim, Social Security will immediately apply all DRCs that they have accumulated and provide them with their maximum SS benefit immediately.

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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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/>
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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/>

The Ranch House Complex at Camp Pendleton. Listed as the Santa Margarita Ranch House Nat'l Historic Site and as a California State Historical Landmark. Docent-led tours are available by appointment; masks required. Please email your request to: MBCBAMPEN_history@usmc.mil or phone (760)725-5758 The Camp Pendleton Historical Society is a 501(c)3 organization in support of the base's History and Museum's programs. Go to: www.camppendletonhistoricalsociety.org/ for information. Hours: Open daily 10am-5pm • Last admission at 4pm

Marine Corps Mechanized Museum Camp Pendleton. Managed under the auspices of Camp Pendleton's Museum Division Office, the collection of over 50 vehicles ranges from World War I to the first Gulf War. It includes Patton tanks, armored wheeled and tracked vehicles, trucks, jeeps and amphibious vehicles. When coming aboard Camp Pendleton, please ensure that you have a valid photo ID for every vehicle occupant along with current registration and proof of insurance.

<https://www.themech.org/> 24194 Vandegrift Blvd, Oceanside, CA 92058. (760) 725-5758. Mon-Thur 8am-4pm, Fri 8am-1pm, Closed Saturday & Sunday



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'We are a combat support agency,' says new DHA director

Defense Health Agency Communications

FALLS CHURCH, Va. — Vice Adm. Darin K. Via assumed the role of director of the Defense Health Agency on in early February, setting a new, warfighter-focused course for the military's vast health enterprise. He most recently served as Navy Surgeon General and chief of the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery. Via is the fifth DHA Director since the agency was established in 2013.

"The Defense Health Agency, in its entirety, is a combat support agency. Everything we do, clinical care, education, training, logistics, research, information systems, enterprise management — exists for one reason and that is to support warfighter readiness," said Via to an all-hands gathering of the DHA workforce Feb. 6.

This new ethos, "Delivering for the Warfighter," pivots the entire organization — from the

clinic and the lab to the server room — towards a single purpose: to generate and sustain warfighter readiness and serve as a lethal force multiplier for the joint force.

Via also remarked on DHA's mission in his first message to the agency workforce, writing, "DHA delivers the full spectrum of health services in garrison and during combat operations to ensure warfighters are medically ready to deploy, fully supported throughout operations, and rapidly returned to duty. As the foundation of an integrated health enterprise, DHA provides joint medical capabilities across a mission-ready health system worthy of the Department of War, geographic combatant commands, the military services, their families, and all beneficiaries."

Via's strategy is built on four lines of effort: delivering medically ready warfighters; delivering medical warrior currency;

delivering joint warfighting capabilities; and delivering high-quality health care services to all beneficiaries. His framework is designed to forge a culture that delivers "predictable, lethal, world-class warfighting readiness every single day" to meet the challenges of a new era of global competition.

A native of Illinois, Via's distinguished career is built on a foundation of service that began when he enlisted in the U.S. Navy Reserve as a hospital corpsman in 1985. He earned his doctor of medicine from the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences and holds a master's of health care delivery science from Dartmouth College. His career includes extensive operational and leadership experience, including commanding the NATO Role 3 Multinational Medical Unit in Kandahar, Afghanistan, and serving as command surgeon for both U.S. Pacific Fleet and U.S. Central Command.



Vice Adm. Darin K. Via focuses the Defense Health Agency on warfighter medical readiness. Photo courtesy of Defense Health Agency Communications

New virtual urgent care option for TRICARE Prime beneficiaries in the US

By TRICARE Communications

FALLS CHURCH, Va. — Are you enrolled in a TRICARE Prime plan? If you see a primary care manager at a military hospital or clinic, you may now have a new way to get urgent care. The Defense Health Agency has expanded its virtual urgent care options in the U.S. This allows TRICARE Prime enrollees ages 12 and older to schedule virtual urgent care through the Military Health System Nurse Advice Line.

"Now, if your local military clinic is booked, you can call the MHS Nurse Advice Line. A nurse will assess if you can get a virtual urgent care appointment for the same or next day," said U.S. Army Lt. Col. Ryan Shubat, chief, Primary Care and Mental Health Healthcare Optimization at the DHA. "This is part of the Defense Health Agency's effort to improve health care access."

What conditions does virtual urgent care treat?

Virtual urgent care providers can work with you to treat these

common urgent care issues:

- Sinus congestion/infections
- Cough
- Allergies
- Sore or hoarse throat
- Rashes
- Acne
- Muscle and joint pain
- Headaches

Where is virtual urgent care offered?

Currently, it's offered in the U.S. It isn't available overseas or in U.S. territories.

How to schedule an appointment

Getting virtual urgent care is simple. Call the MHS Nurse

Advice Line at 800-TRICARE or visit MHS Nurse Advice Line 24/7.

A nurse will ask you about your symptoms and decide if your condition can be treated virtually. If virtual care works for you, the nurse will set up your virtual appointment with providers from the Virtually Integrated Patient Readiness and Remote care clinic.

Appointments are available from 6:30 a.m. to 11:30 p.m. ET. This extended availability makes it easier to get care when you need it most. You can expect to get an appointment the same day or the following day.

Quality care you can trust

All virtual urgent care providers meet high standards for patient care. Each provider has credentials and privileges at a DHA military hospital or clinic.

Your virtual visit gets recorded in MHS GENESIS, keeping your health records complete and current.

Virtual urgent care providers can also write prescriptions and send them directly to your preferred pharmacy.

Benefits of virtual urgent care

This new virtual option improves your access to care and reduces wait times for urgent medical needs. Instead of waiting for routine appointments or visiting emergency rooms for nonemergency issues, you can receive quality care from home.

Virtual care saves time and helps you get treatment faster. This approach supports DHA's strategy to build a health care system that gives you more choices in managing your health.

Supporting service mem-

bers

DHA continues to explore ways to expand virtual health care options for service members and their eligible family members. Virtual health care represents a key part of building a more modern and integrated health care delivery system.

More information

For more details about your TRICARE benefit and virtual care options, visit Virtual Health at <https://tricare.mil/Getting-Care/VirtualHealth> or call 800-TRICARE. The MHS Nurse Advice Line at <https://tricare.mil/PatientResources/ContactUs/CallUs/NAL> can help you determine if virtual care is right for your situation.

Would you like the latest TRICARE news sent to you by email? Visit TRICARE Subscriptions at https://t1.news.dha.mil/lp/DHA_TRICARE_NEWS_SUB to get benefit updates, news, and more.

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