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SIXTY-SIXTH YEAR NO. 4
JULY 8, 2026

HOME OF THE BRAVE **U.S. Marines, Sailors, and Soldiers wave American Flags during a naturalization ceremony aboard the USS Midway Museum in San Diego, July 2, 2026. Fifty new American citizens from 23 countries were sworn in during the ceremony. U.S. Navy photo by MC2 Charles J. Scudella III**

Cahill assumes command of Naval Surface Forces

by Lt.j.g. Kristina Aown

Vice Adm. Joe Cahill relieved Vice Adm. Brendan McLane as commander, Naval Surface Forces and commander, Naval Surface Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet (CNSP), during a change of command ceremony at Naval Amphibious Base, Coronado on July 3.

During his tenure, McLane released "The Competitive Edge 2.0", an improved surface force strategy for sustained development, fleet alignment, and increased production of ships to the fleet. McLane oversaw a continued push for fleet readiness exemplified by the re-establishment of Shore Intermediate Maintenance Activity (SIMA) commands. SIMA is designed to increase Navy self-sufficiency by giving Sailors intermediate-level technical expertise during their shore tour to increase knowledge and reduce the need for maintenance by contractors.

Adm. Steve Koehler, commander, Pacific Fleet, center, receives the report of turnover of command from Vice Adm. Joe Cahill, right, and Vice Adm. Brendan McLane at the Naval Surface Forces change of command. U.S. Navy photo by MC1 Claire M. Alfaro

McLane also championed leadership development as a Surface Force mission. He developed proficient warfighters to operate in today's environment, increased technical training, and expanded educational opportunities for both Sailors and leaders.

"Combat revealed where we needed to adjust. We learned faster than our adversaries. We built a Surface Force that is more ready than it was three years ago because we committed to always getting better," McLane said. "As I leave this command, I do so with great confidence because I know the Surface Force is in capable hands."

McLane will now retire from the Navy.

Cahill, with more than three decades of service afloat and ashore, assumes his new role following his tour as the 61st commander of Naval Surface Force, Atlantic. He previously commanded coastal patrol ship USS *Monsoon* and guided-missile destroyer USS *Preble*. In major command, he led cruiser USS *Bunker Hill* as the Integrated Air and Missile Warfare Defense Commander for Carrier Strike Group 9. His shore assignments include tours with the Joint Staff, U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, the Chief of Naval Operations' staff, the Surface and Mine Warfighting Development Center, the Naval War College, and Carrier Strike Group 15.

USS BONHOMME RICHARD FIRE, SIX YEARS AGO

It was six years ago on July 12, 1220, when it appeared the pier at Naval base San Diego was on fire. The fire aboard USS Bonhomme Richard lasted four days and led to the decommissing of the warship.

The Navy released two reports on Oct. 20, 2021, related to the fire: a report summing up the results of the Pacific Fleet Command Investigation and a Major Fires Review commissioned by the Vice CNO that examined all major fires in the Navy over the last 12 years.

The Navy convened the command investigation to specifically examine all causal and contributing factors to the fire that resulted in the total loss of the ship.

There were four categories of causal factors that allowed for the accumulation of significant risk and led to an ineffective fire response: the material condition of the ship, the training and readiness of the ship's crew, the integration between the ship and supporting shore-based firefighting organizations, and the oversight by commanders across multiple organizations. The command investigation also concluded "a lack of familiarity with requirements and procedural noncompliance at multiple levels of command" contributed to the loss of ship.

Photo depicting the damaged interior of the amphibious assault ship Bonhomme Richard, which burned for more than four days on July 12. 1220. Authorized photo

"The loss of this ship was completely preventable," said VCNO Adm. Bill Lescher. "The Navy is executing a deliberative process that includes taking appropriate accountability actions with respect to personnel assigned to Bonhomme Richard and the shore commands designed to support the ship while moored at Naval Base San Diego."

The report recognized the "bravery, ingenuity, and resourcefulness in the actions of Sailors across the San Diego waterfront and others who had a role in the response," and identified 10 meritorious performance recommendations for actions taken during the firefighting efforts.

In an *Associated Press* report on Sept. 30, 2022, a military judge acquitted a Sailor of arson in a fire that destroyed Bonhomme Richard, a blow to the Navy as it faced allegations of improper training and maintenance of the $1.2 billion amphibious assault ship.

Ryan Sawyer Mays, 21, deeply exhaled when the verdict was read, put both hands on the defense table, broke into sobs and hugged supporters in the audience at Naval Base San Diego.

Sailor's fatal fall exposed drug ring aboard aircraft carrier *Ronald Reagan*

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan - *Stars and Stripes* newspaper reported June 26 that a Sailor's fatal fall in 2023 sparked a Navy probe that uncovered a drug distribution network aboard aircraft carrier USS *Ronald Reagan* and led to punishment for 58 sailors, according to service officials and heavily redacted court records. The investigation resulted in six courts-martial, 24 administrative separations and 28 cases of nonjudicial punishment, Navy officials said. Court records describe a network that used the U.S. Postal Service to ship hundreds of LSD tablets to Japan that were then distributed to Sailors. Continue reading at *https://www.stripes.com/branches/navy/2026-06-25/uss-ronald-reagan-lsd-yokosuka-navy-22082696.html.*

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U.S. Navy ships support disaster relief operations in Venezuela

by Lt.j.g. Paul Archer

LA GUAIRA, Venezuela – At the direction of U.S. Southern Command and Department of War, assigned U.S. military forces are actively supporting Department of State-led disaster assistance to the people of Venezuela following the devastating earthquakes on June 24. Amphibious transport dock USS *Fort Lauderdale* (LPD 28) and littoral combat ship USS *Billings* (LCS 15) have arrived in the region to provide rapid, life-saving humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations.

Marking the first visit by a U.S. Navy vessel to Venezuela in decades, *Fort Lauderdale* arrived pierside in La Guaira on June 28. The historic port call was preceded by U.S. Sailors and Marines delivering critically needed disaster relief supplies to the port via landing craft.

"Being directed at a moment's notice to transit into Venezuela presented a vast number of unknowns, but the one absolute certainty was the unmatched professionalism and work ethic of the Fort Lauderdale team," said Capt. Jiwan Mack, commander of *Fort Lauderdale*. "We were able to safely arrive pierside and deliver immediate assistance to the Venezuelan people because of the incredible dedication of our crew."

The presence of embarked Sailors and Marines is strictly humanitarian. As a highly capable and self-sustaining platform designed for extended expeditionary operations, *Fort Lauderdale* requires minimal local security, logistical support or port resources while pierside. This minimal footprint ensures that all local Venezuelan assets can remain entirely focused on domestic recovery efforts.

Beyond cargo transport, *Fort Lauderdale* brings advanced on board medical facilities, heavy-lift capabilities and robust command-and-control infrastructure. Functioning as a primary coordination hub, the ship recently hosted the Venezuelan chargé d'affaires and serves as a vital communications node. This enables SOUTHCOM to work seamlessly with the State Department, interagency partners and interim Venezuelan authorities to direct rapid relief operations across the affected areas.

In support of the ongoing relief efforts, Navy aviation assets are executing critical operations across the region, with a significant emphasis on the vital contributions of Billings. Operating in Venezuelan territorial waters, *Billings* has delivered essential search and rescue support utilizing its embarked helicopters from Helicopter Maritime Strike Squadron 48. Concurrently, *Fort Lauderdale* has bolstered these aviation capabilities; while operating in the Caribbean Sea on June 27, embarked Marines provided crucial flight support by signaling a Venom helicopter assigned to Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron 365 (Reinforced).

"Our naval forces are organized, equipped and trained for rapid response to any global situation, making us uniquely capable of executing foreign humanitarian assistance and disaster relief on short notice," said Rear Adm. Carlos Sardiello, commander, U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command/U.S. 4th Fleet. "These crucial, immediate relief efforts underscore our enduring commitment to being good neighbors, proving that even in times of severe crisis, we are dedicated to the safety, security and prosperity of our citizens, interests, allies and regional partners."

Planning for additional U.S. military support is ongoing in close coordination with the State Department, the Venezuelan government, and other international partners and allies contributing to the relief effort. Further support measures will be announced once confirmed.

Former soldier-turned-contractor found guilty of stealing over $1 million of MREs in El Paso

from U.S. Attorney's Office,
Western District of Texas

EL PASO, Texas (June 30, 2026) - A federal jury convicted a former U.S. Army civilian contractor in El Paso for stealing more than 200 pallets of Meals-Ready-to-Eat (MREs) valued at approximately $1,120,000, announced U.S. Attorney for the Western District of Texas, Justin R. Simmons. The case is being prosecuted in support of the Trump Administration's Task Force to Eliminate Fraud.

According to court documents and evidence presented at trial, Joseph Lavar Davis, 47, was named along with three other co-defendants in a two-count indictment on Feb. 12, 2025, for conspiracy to commit theft of government property and a substantive count of theft of government property between Feb. 24, 2020, and Aug. 12, 2020.

On Aug. 12, 2020, FBI and Department of the Army Criminal Investigation Division agents executed a search warrant at a civilian warehouse in El Paso, where they found about 100 pallets of MREs. The investigation revealed that the owner of the company using the warehouse was purchasing the MREs from individuals who had stolen them from Ft. Bliss.

Each of the indicted individuals played a role in the scheme, which involved a civilian contractor who knew how to

request and pick up the MREs, a soldier to assist in picking up and transporting the MREs, an intermediary between the buyer of the MREs and these two individuals, and the civilian who sold the MREs online.

The investigation showed a scheme involving false paperwork to obtain MREs from Ft. Bliss, truck rentals to transport the MREs, coordination among the co-conspirators to pick up and deliver the MREs, communications and financial transactions between the co-conspirators.

While in the Army, Davis held a position in food service supply where he gained knowledge of the process to obtain MREs. Upon retirement, he was hired into a similar position as a civilian contractor and used that position to exploit the process and steal MREs from Ft. Bliss.

Davis created false requests, rented trucks to transport the MRE pallets, and picked up or arranged for others to pick up the MREs from Ft. Bliss. Davis also coordinated various individuals involved to obtain, deliver, and receive payment for the MREs. Davis both negotiated the sales price and received payment for the MREs.

"Joseph Davis betrayed the very country he once swore to protect in an effort to satisfy his own selfish ambition and a jury of his peers held him accountable for it," said U.S. Attorney Justin R. Simmons.

"Rooting out fraud that undermines our government and our military readiness is a priority of this administration. I want to thank our Assistant U.S. Attorneys, Lori Hughes and Mallory Rasmussen, as well as our support staff and law enforcement partners, for their excellent work in bringing this fraudster to justice. Their dedication resulted in a win for the Western District of Texas, a win for Justice, and a win for the American people."

"This conviction should send a clear message the FBI and our law enforcement partners at the Department of the Army Criminal Investigation Division make it a priority to bring to justice those who resort to theft of government property for ill-gotten gain," said Jarod Brown, Special Agent in Charge of the FBI El Paso Field Office. "We are stronger when we work together to seek justice and will continue to combat these issues through strong partnerships."

The FBI investigated the case with assistance from the Department of the Army Criminal Investigation Division.

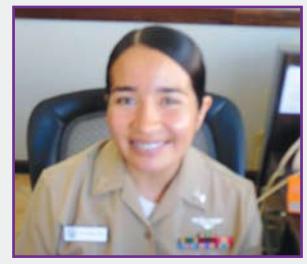
Assistant U.S. Attorneys Lori Hughes and Mallory Rasmussen are prosecuting the case.

On April 7, the Department of Justice announced the creation of the National Fraud Enforcement Division ('Fraud Division'). The Fraud Division is laser-focused on investigating and prosecuting those who commit fraud against the American people.

The Department's work to combat fraud supports President Trump's Task Force to Eliminate Fraud, a whole-of-government effort chaired by Vice President J.D. Vance to eliminate fraud, waste, and abuse within Federal benefit programs.

man on the street

How do you like your potato?



"Fried. Greasy and crunchy."
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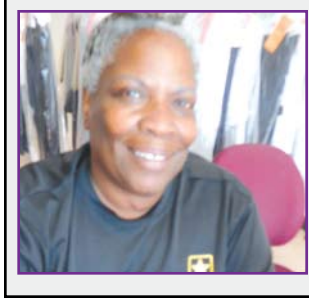
NAS North Island

"Mashed potatoes and gravy."
AD2 Dylan Cervantes
NAS North Island

"Baked and loaded with cheese, sour cream and bacon."
Steve Howington
PepBoys, NB San Diego

"Cooked with chicken, soy sauce, sauteed onion and ginger."
Jenny Malicdan
NB San Diego MWR



"Baked, covered with chili, cheese and green onions."
Cheryl Owolabi
NB San Diego (Wetside)

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Build Freedom Initiative launches with big contract to skilled trades champion

by C. Todd Lopez
Pentagon News

Michael Duffey, undersecretary of war for acquisition and sustainment, and Michael Cadenazzi, assistant secretary of war for industrial base policy, presented television host Mike Rowe with a $10 million check June 2 at the Pentagon to formally launch the Build Freedom Initiative.

Rowe is the CEO of mikeroweWORKS Foundation, which will use funds from the War Department to help young Americans prepare for work in skilled trades such as welding, plumbing and electrical work through scholarships.

That funding comes as part of a contract with the War Department's Industrial Base Analysis and Sustainment program in conjunction with the Build Freedom workforce development initiative.

The department, through the Build Freedom Initiative and Secretary of War Pete Hegseth's arsenal of freedom effort, aims to achieve goals similar to those of mikeroweWORKS: strengthen the nation by getting more Americans into the skilled trade workforce.

For the War Department, that means rebuilding the defense industrial base, which includes getting more young Americans trained to help build and repair ships, aircraft and munitions.

"[Today] we're launching Build Freedom, which is already scaled to 70-plus programs, hundreds of millions of dollars of additional spending and incredible visibility across the country," Cadenazzi said. "We're not just building careers for today. ... We're talking about building careers for the future: [artificial intelligence]-proof, six-figure jobs, the ability to work across the country, and to really meet a demand for the future that is at the heart of everything we're trying to do with reindustrializing the country and scaling the industrial base for the future."

The challenge to rebuild the defense industrial base through programs like Build Freedom and mikeroweWORKS comes directly from the top, Duffey said.

"President [Donald J.] Trump and Secretary Hegseth recognize the need for us to not only maintain peace through strength, but peace through industrial strength, and so they've charged us with the mission of reinvigorating the industrial base, rebuilding the military and reindustrializing our manufacturing base," he said.

"Build Freedom ... will inspire the next generation to take that career path to build that skill set that's essential to ensuring that we maintain that decisive battlefield advantage."

Rowe is the host of the television show "Dirty Jobs," which aired for 10 seasons and chronicled workers who did undesirable, sometimes disgusting, but important jobs, such as farming pigs, collecting roadkill or cleaning storm drains. He's been an advocate of filling gaps in the skilled trade workforce for more than a decade.

"When 'Dirty Jobs' was at its zenith [2008-2009], and our country was slipping into a recession, the unemployment rate in this country was creeping up to around 12 percent," Rowe said. "On 'Dirty Jobs,' everywhere we went, we saw help wanted signs. It was one of the most extraordinary disconnects that I'd ever seen. How could there be 2.5 million open positions in this country that didn't require a four-year degree — but training — where 12 million men and women weren't working? It seemed like somebody ought to be talking about the skills gap, or maybe the will gap."

Now, Rowe said, mikeroweWORKS focuses on reinvigorating involvement in the skilled trades.

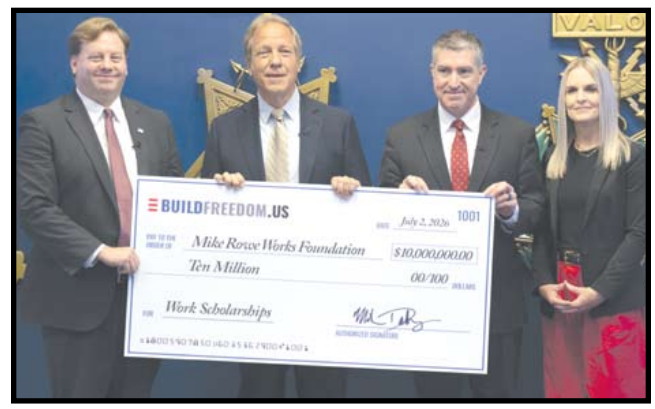
"Not a day goes by where [we don't] get a call from some leader of some consequential industry in our country who is freaking out," he said. "They've done the math; they know that for every five tradespeople that retire, [only] two come in. It's been that way for nearly 12 years. The math is not on our side."

Rowe said that for decades now, young Americans have been discouraged from doing things other than pursuing a four-year degree — to shy away from work that doesn't involve college.

"[These] stigma, stereotypes, myths and misperceptions that we deal with every day, those can be confronted, those can be changed," he said. "This campaign is an attempt to do that. ... We're going to make a persuasive case; we're going to make a patriotic case, but we're also going to make a personal case.

"We're going to show people that they can support a family and revel in the joy of meaningful work by building freedom."

The $10 million the War Department gave to Rowe's foundation will provide scholarships to help young Americans get the training they need to enter the skilled trade workforce and fill gaps there.



Mike Rowe (second from left), television host and CEO of the mikeroweWORKS Foundation, is shown with DOW executives at an event at the Pentagon, July 2, where a check for $10 million was presented to Rowe's foundation. U.S. Navy photo by Petty Officer 1st Class Eric Brann

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EQUAL HOUSING LENDER

Steering the Fleet: Inside SWSC's intensive Surface Navigation course

by Petty Officer 1st Class Jacob Allison
Surface Warfare Schools Command

NEWPORT, R.I. — Standing on the roof of Surface Warfare Schools Command, a group of junior officers and senior enlisted peer through their sextants to take a solar noon reading, just as Sailors have done for hundreds of years.

These traditional analog baselines form the bedrock of the Surface Navigator course, the Navy's primary pipeline for training prospective surface ship Navigators and Assistant Navigators.

The program trains the fleet's most capable Officers of the Deck and Quartermasters of the Watch, delivering the advanced foundations needed to execute the massive responsibilities of a surface ship navigation team.

"The navigators are in charge of all the voyage planning, making sure all the charts are set up, ready to go to get us from Point A to Point B," said Lt. Anthony Kennedy, a SURFNAV course lead instructor.

Beyond plotting tracks, the role of the Navigator is deeply rooted in leadership and fleet standardization. These officers and Quartermasters are directly responsible for training bridge officers, mentoring junior watchstanders, and maintaining absolute operational continuity across rotating bridge teams to prevent any dip in performance at sea, said Kennedy.

Managing those diverse responsibilities requires a bedrock foundation in surface navigation skills, which Walter O'Donnell, the SURFNAV course supervisor and an instructor with nine years of experience, defines simply as finding where a ship is and figuring out where it needs to go.

To build that deep proficiency, SWSC expanded its original curriculum from a five-week course in 2025 to a seven-week pipeline that balances traditional analog fundamentals with advanced modern systems like the Voyage Management System (VMS). The training model forces watchstanders away from blindly trusting computer displays and turns them into confident decision makers.

"We believe that competence equals confidence," O'Donnell said. "Once you start with analog and move to the systems, you start to feel like you understand what the systems are doing so that when you're on a ship and you look at VMS you can say, 'that doesn't look right.' And then you start to do some troubleshooting rather than just blindly trusting what the system is showing you."

To supplement classroom theory and build real-world proficiency, the course incorporates hands-on celestial navigation training. This training featured a trip to the Treworgy Planetarium at the Mystic Seaport Museum in Mystic, Connecticut, where students learned to identify seasonal constellations and study the real-time celestial mechanics required to cross oceans without modern technology.

Fleet Navigator's skills in celestial and analog navigation are already being tested. Ships are routinely deployed to areas where GPS could be denied or spoofed. When electronic displays lose satellite feeds, bridge teams must seamlessly to keep the ship on mission. Furthermore, Naval Surface Forces mandated that all ships conducting open-ocean transits shall practice celestial navigation during those periods.

https://www.dvidshub.net/news/569491/steering-fleet-inside-swscs-intensive-surface-navigation-course.

Largest advanced manufacturing demonstration in DOW history set for RIMPAC 2026

Courtesy Story, Naval Postgraduate School

The Naval Postgraduate School's (NPS) Consortium for Advanced Manufacturing Research and Education (CAMRE) is preparing to support Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) 2026 with what organizers describe as the largest advanced manufacturing demonstration ever conducted by the U.S. Department of War, bringing together military, government, academic, commercial and coalition partners to operationalize advanced manufacturing for the Navy and joint force.

RIMPAC 2026 brings together 35 nations, approximately 40 surface ships, five submarines, more than 140 aircraft and 25,000 personnel operating throughout the Hawaiian Islands.

Throughout the exercise, NPS students, faculty and partners will deploy advanced manufacturing systems aboard ships and at locations across Hawaii to produce replacement parts, support distributed logistics, and evaluate new technologies designed to improve fleet readiness. Rather than demonstrating individual technologies in isolation, CAMRE's focus is on operationalizing advanced manufacturing by proving that digital manufacturing networks can rapidly deliver critical capabilities wherever they are needed.

RIMPAC 2026 also marks the first time CAMRE has integrated advanced manufacturing, artificial intelligence and unmanned systems into a single operational demonstration. Underpinning much of this effort is FLEETWERX, NPS' Partnership Intermediary Agreement (PIA), which serves as a bridge between government, academia and industry. By connecting researchers, military organizations and commercial technology developers, FLEETWERX accelerates the transition of emerging capabilities from research and development into operational use while creating opportunities for faculty and student collaboration on real-world defense challenges.

"Rather than focusing on a single manufacturing technology, the demonstration will execute the complete workflow of expeditionary manufacturing, from receiving a digital request and identifying available production capacity to manufacturing through distributed nodes, transporting and delivering parts in support of operational forces," notes Chris Curran, program manager for CAMRE. "The objective is to demonstrate how advanced manufacturing complements an integrated logistics network in contested environments."

Instead of waiting days or weeks for parts to move through traditional supply chains, commanders could submit a digital request, identify the nearest qualified manufacturer, produce the part near the operational area, and deliver it directly to forces in the field.

"The globally-distributed manufacturing model gives commanders and program offices resiliency in their supply chains," said Marine Corps Lt. Col. Michael Radigan, CAMRE advanced manufacturing and repair operations subject matter expert. "Enabling service members to train to the highest standards for producing the most critical of parts, ensures operating forces have valid options across the globe to maintain readiness and lethality."

The distributed manufacturing network connects military units, government organizations, industry, academic institutions and coalition partners while cataloging manufacturing equipment, technical expertise and production capacity across the enterprise. When a critical requirement emerges, the network identifies the people, machines and materials capable of producing a solution as quickly as possible.

https://www.dvidshub.net/news/569299/largest-advanced-manufacturing-demonstration-department-war-history-set-rim-pac-2026

EARLY BIRD BRIEF

Top 5
•Air Force major arrested on Capitol steps during protest calling for Trump impeachment
•Russia bombards Kyiv in one of war's biggest strikes, at least 21 people killed
•Air Force medical commander removed from post at Virginia base
•Gen. Christopher Donahue relinquishes command of U.S. Army Europe and Africa
•Castro says Air Force confirmed death from flu outbreak at Texas base

Navy
•Navy hits 45,000 recruits three months ahead of schedule (*see story, next page*)
• Navy suspends search for missing aviator in Arabian Sea
•Two retired warships to be sunk during Rim of the Pacific exercise

Marine Corps
•Marines deploy Iron Dome air defense systems to the Western Pacific

National Guard
•Tennessee National Guard Soldiers on patrol shoot, kill civilian during armed pursuit
•The family of a man shot by the Tennessee National Guard demands release of video

Veterans
•Proposed 'Honor and Remember' flag resembles communist imagery, Vietnam veterans argue
•VFW defends First Amendment rights amid blowback over political cartoon

Cyber, Space & Unmanned
•Guardians, Airmen use AI in experiment to supercharge battle management

Defense Industry
•Navy withholds Northrop payments over tardy missile, GAO says
•Navy seeks to boost production of new anti-radar missile
•Defense startups raid auto and fracking sectors for parts to speed weapons output
•Pentagon awards $500M contract for counter-drone tech to AeroVironment
•Germany readies $12 billion contract for warships from TKMS
•Tank maker KNDS delays stock listing, citing defense-market volatility
•In 'red hot' counter-drone market, Echodyne CEO sees radar demand boom
•UK ratchets up nuclear spending, with new warhead and delivery planes in the works
•Lithuania moves to end nuclear weapon ban as 'situation getting worse'
•Polish military ends air operation, reports no airspace violations, armed forces say

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NAVY CELEBRATES MILESTONE OF RECRUITING 45,000 SAILORS

As of June 2, the U.S. Navy has contracted 45,000 future Sailors, achieving its Fiscal Year 2026 recruiting objective and ensuring the Navy remains on track to meet its annual shipping requirement.

This milestone reflects the sustained efforts of recruiters, support personnel, and leaders across Recruiting Nation to identify, inspire, and prepare the next generation of Sailors who will strengthen the Fleet and defend the nation.

"Today's Navy is stronger because tens of thousands of Americans chose to answer the call to serve," said Rear Adm. Jim Waters, Commander, Navy Recruiting Command. "Reaching this milestone is not simply about achieving a recruiting objective – it's about delivering the talented Sailors our Fleet needs to maintain readiness in an increasingly complex security environment."

Over the past three years, Navy Recruiting Command has transformed its recruiting enterprise by modernizing processes, accelerating applicant timelines, leveraging data-informed decision making, and equipping recruiters with new tools to better connect with prospective Sailors. Those efforts have resulted in sustained recruiting success, while reinforcing the Navy's high standards for service.

"Our recruiters never lost sight of what matters most – people," Waters added. "Every contract represents someone who chose to serve something greater than themselves. Behind every accession is a recruiter who set the foundation for success and a future Sailor preparing to stand the watch, support the Fleet, and contribute to our nation's security."

While reaching 45,000 contracts marks a significant milestone, Navy Recruiting Command continues processing applicants and filling future training seats to support fleet manning requirements and strengthen the Delayed Entry Program for FY27.

"Our work doesn't stop because we've reached a number," added Waters. "Every day, recruiters across the country continue building the force that will operate our ships, fly our aircraft, defend our networks, and preserve our maritime advantage for years to come."

As the Navy continues building the force required to meet evolving global challenges, recruiting remains foundational to maintaining a ready, capable, and lethal maritime force. The achievement of this year's recruiting milestone reflects not only the dedication of Navy recruiters nationwide, but also the continuing willingness of Americans to answer the call to serve.

Air Force Secretary sees ongoing modernization at Minot AFB

MINOT AIR FORCE BASE, N.D. - Secretary of the Air Force Troy Meink visited Minot Air Force Base to see the dual missions of the 5th Bomb Wing and 91st Missile Wing, June 29.

During his visit, Meink saw firsthand the many ongoing readiness and modernization efforts and heard from teams across the base carrying it out.

"There is no base quite like Minot, hosting two thirds of the nuclear triad that provides the combat capability underwrite our National Defense Strategy," Meink said.

Meink met with Warbird Airmen from the 5 BW, who briefed him on the capabilities of the B-52H Stratofortress. Like the Minuteman III missile system, the B-52H Stratofortress is a legacy system that is undergoing modernization to ensure an enduring competitive edge in the nation's strategic deterrence efforts. Among other advances, the B-52H will be upgraded with new engines that will improve their performance and change their designation to B-52J.

"'The venerable B-52 with its ability to carry the widest assortment of armaments in the department provides combatant commanders the flexibility and long-range strike capability required to deter and, if necessary, win a potential future conflict," said Meink.

Meink also met with missileers, maintainers and security forces Airmen from the 91 MW to better understand the operational considerations and conditions of the North Dakota missile fields where the Sentinel modernization effort is already taking place. Briefers showcased the intricacies of the payload transporter, transporter erector and Joint Light Tactical Vehicles that are used daily throughout the missile field complex.

"Airmen have been operating in this missile field complex since 1962," Meink said. "Since that first alert to the present day, missileers have stood the watch, maintainers have sustained the weapons systems and defenders have secured the field, 24/7, 365."

Meink has spoken about the necessity of modernizing the nation's nuclear strategic deterrence capabilities. The modernization of Minot AFB's legacy Minuteman III infrastructure remains a priority for the department. Minot AFB is responsible for 15 missile alert facilities and 150 Minuteman III missiles located across roughly 8,000 square miles. The Sentinel intercontinental ballistic missile system will replace the Minuteman III, with improved range, accuracy, flexibility and payload capacity.

Marine Corps adds new scout MOS to infantry unit

According to the *Military Times*, the Marine Corps will roll out a new infantry specialty later this year to provide infantry and light armored reconnaissance battalions with dedicated reconnaissance and surveillance support. On July 1, the service announced in an administrative message the creation of the new primary military occupational specialty 0315 Scout. Lt. Gen. Jay Bargeron, deputy commandant for Plans, Policies, and Operations, called the new MOS "a critical step in the modernization of our infantry battalions." "These Scouts will be our eyes and ears, extending our sensing capabilities and enabling commanders to make faster, more effective decisions to win our nation's battles," he said in a press release. The service said the specialized MOS was born out of "extensive live-force experimentation" — or combat simulations — that highlighted the need for a dedicated battalion-level formation to collect timely and accurate information on the enemy and operating environment.

Seeking help could be easier under new legislation

by Scott Sutherland
staff writer

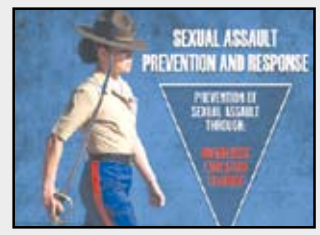
Under proposed Congressional legislation, victims of military sexual assault may be able to seek justice and accountability against the person who committed the assault.

Called the Military Sexual Trauma Accountability Act, it would allow active-duty service members and veterans to bring civil claims against the U.S. government for negligence that contributed to military sexual trauma over the course of their service. It would discontinue the Feres doctrine, a 1950 Supreme Court ruling preventing the military from suing the federal government.

Sen. Jeanne Shaheen, a senior member of the U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee, is co-author of the legislation. She introduced it by saying that in recent years, Congress has taken meaningful steps to help "empower service members to report instances of sexual assault and harassment."

"But in order to build on that progress and root out the negligence that has allowed for sexual harassment and assault to thrive in our military, survivors must be able to pursue every possible avenue for legal recourse," she said.

"It makes no sense that civilians can seek justice from the government when the warriors who have sacrificed everything to protect our nation cannot. This landmark legislation would right this wrong by tearing down the barriers that prevent members of the military and veterans from engaging the justice system to demand accountability and finally begin to heal."



Graphic courtesy of Joint Base San Antonio

As part of a recent discussion panel at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, several survivors of sexual assault and harrassment shared their story with Army leaders, according to a report by the U.S. Army Combined Arms Center.

One of those was Maj. Katie Crumby, an Army MP, who said she just began to speak out in the past two years about her assault that occurred 20 years ago when she was a private. This event was the first public forum where she had shared her story.

"The Army training I've received and the training I've given at company level command positions has emboldened me to speak out," Crumby said. "Even more so, my informal conversations with peers about sexual assault has prepared me to do something like this panel.

"With how much the U.S. Army is emphasizing the prevention of sexual assault, it's made it a little easier for me personally because I know I have a story I can communicate to my peers having been a junior member of this service 20 years ago. I feel I have a unique perspective to share."

Pentagon data shows an ongoing crisis, with over 73,000 military sexual assault cases estimated system-wide. While reported assaults in the U.S. military have recently decreased by over 13 percent - largely driven by drops in the Army - incidents of sexual trauma against female service members continue to prompt major institutional, legal, and systemic reforms across the Department of Defense.

The Department of Veterans Affairs is proactive in helping former service members seek help and counseling for military sexual trauma. In a social media post, the VA affirmed that "we're here to support you in whatever way will help you best. We can help you learn more about how MST affects people. We can provide treatment that helps you cope with how the experience of MST is impacting your life."

The Fleet & Family Support Services San Diego encourages MST survivors to seek resources, both nationally and locally. If you think you were sexually assaulted, or if someone you supervise has been sexually assaulted, immediately contact the Safe Helpline at (877) 995-5247) or a local Sexual Assault & Response Program Coordinator (Naval Base San Diego SARC, (619) 261-3991), or Command Sexual Assault & Response Victim Advocate.

"It's never too late to speak up for yourself or someone else," said Maj. Katie Crumby. "Silence doesn't always make things better and time doesn't always make things go away."

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Flying Leatherneck Aviation Museum: A major milestone takes shape

by Scott Sutherland
staff writer

IRVINE, Calif. - A powerful milestone has been reached for the Flying Leatherneck Aviation Museum - the first truckload of structural steel for the new museum building was officially delivered recently, according to information from their website.

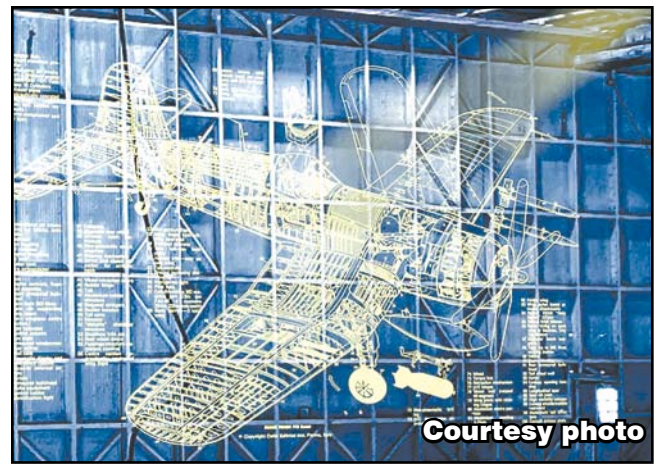
"After an extended delay, construction began June 15," said Brig. Gen (USMC-Ret.) M. J. Aguilar, president and CEO of the Flying Leatherneck Historical Foundation.

The Museum is undergoing a massive development milestone, constructing a 132,000-square-foot facility at the Orange County Great Park here. Set to open in first quarter 2028, the state-of-the-art site will house over 40 restored aircraft, immersive AR experiences, and a dedicated research library.

The arrival of the steel represents far more than materials arriving on site, according to the website. It marks the beginning of vertical construction and brings the museum one step closer to transforming a long-held vision into a lasting home for Marine Corps aviation history.

Each beam delivered is a symbol of progress, of the dedication, generosity, and belief from the community of supporters who have helped move this project forward. Soon, this steel will form the framework of a world-class facility that will preserve historic aircraft, share powerful stories, and inspire future generations through education and innovation.

Could the new location and structural changes draw more visitors to the area? "Absolutely," said Aguilar. "The museum is part of the Irvine City Great Park Framework which is transforming the former MCAS El Toro into one of the largest if not the largest community parks in the nation, even larger then New Yorks, Central Park."


Courtesy photo

"And, of course, the 'FLAM' will be the gem of the Park attracting tourists and aviation enthusiasts."

Key highlights of the ongoing project include an aircraft collection featuring more than 40 vintage and modern Marine Corps aircraft, and iteractive exhibits -a hands-on with Air Traffic Control & Flight Simulators as well as augmented reality features currently in development.

There will be Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts and Mathematics-focused programs for youth and college students. Eighty UC-Irvine engineering students are building an authentic full-scale replica of the World War I-era Jenny to hang in the museum's rotunda.

https://www.flyingleathernecks.org/.

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Imperial Beach wrestler captures state title in major upset

by Cmdr. Ryan Bareng

IMPERIAL BEACH - Ryder Bareng's path to a California state title was shaped long before he stepped onto the mat in Fresno.

A junior at Mar Vista High School and the son of a Navy family, Bareng has attended 10 different schools in his 17 years and endured five family deployments. His father is currently Naval Base Coronado Chaplain (Cmdr.) Ryan Bareng.

Ryder's life has taken him across the country and overseas; from Camp Pendleton and San Diego to Hawaii, Rhode Island, Virginia Beach, Stuttgart, Germany, and Imperial Beach - instilling in him a level of adaptability and resilience that was on full display at the California USA Wrestling State Championships in late May.

At Selland Arena, Bareng delivered a standout performance, claiming the Junior Division Greco-Roman title at 106 pounds in dramatic fashion. Entering as an underdog, he defeated both the #1 and #2 seeds, including the reigning state champion in freestyle and folkstyle. His run is already being described as one of the biggest upsets of the tournament.

"It feels really good to have the hard work pay off," Bareng said after his victory. "During the match I was just thinking about staying solid, capitalizing on mistakes, and trusting the training I've put in for moments like these."

Bareng's journey through constant relocation and change has helped forge the mental toughness that defines his wrestling style. Each move meant new schools, new teams, and new environments; but also new opportunities to grow. That experience now translates into composure under pressure and the ability to adapt quickly in high-stakes matches.

He currently serves as team captain of the Beach Boyz Wrestling Club here, a program known for its unconventional and demanding training methods. Practices take place on the sand, in outdoor gyms, inside Coach Adam Feckley's garage, and wherever mats can be rolled out.

"Our athletes earn everything they get; we're just here to guide them," said Feckley. "With Ryder, it's easy because he's completely committed to becoming the best version of himself. Training on the beach builds a different kind of toughness, and he represents that fully."

The Beach Boyz program is built on its core philosophy, DBAP; Discipline, Bravery, Accountability, and Perseverance; principles that mirror the lifestyle Bareng has lived growing up in a military family. That foundation is evident in both his work ethic and his performance.

Behind his success is a strong support network. Bareng trains closely with Coach Christian Hodges and works with nutrition coach Dan Moller to maintain peak performance. He sharpens his skills through consistent drilling with teammate Mikey Valadez and his father, whose influence has been central throughout his journey.

The program's emphasis on resilience and adaptability; running the shoreline, training outdoors, and competing in non-traditional settings; reflects the same qualities Bareng developed through years of moving and adjusting to new environments.

Bareng's state title is more than an athletic achievement. It represents the culmination of years of perseverance shaped by a military upbringing; learning to start over, stay grounded, and push forward regardless of circumstances.

With this championship, he has established himself as one of California's top wrestlers in his division and a rising name in the sport. For the Imperial Beach community and the Beach Boyz Wrestling Club, his victory stands as a powerful example of how discipline, resilience, and life experience can come together to produce something exceptional.

(from left) Ryder and Ryan Bareng share a moment.

California USA Wrestling State Champion Ryder Bareng atop the winner's podium. Photos courtesy of Navy Chaplain (Cmdr.) Ryan Bareng

FREEDOM FEST **Navy Band Southwest's pop music group The Destroyers performs at Naval Base Point Loma's Freedom Fest on July 4, 2026. This event brought together service members and their families to celebrate Independence Day and 250 years of American freedom. (inset) Musician 2nd Class Ashley Pollock, lead vocalist for The Destroyers, performs at Freedom Fest. U.S. Navy photos by Petty Officer 3rd Class Malaysia Billman**

250 MARCH **Members of the Escondido Mounted Posse march in the Coronado 4th of July Parade. The Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego Color Guard participated in the parade. U.S. Marine Corps photo by Cpl. Evelyn Doherty**

Theodore Roosevelt aircraft carrier hosts international helicopter exchange

by Commander, U.S. 3rd Fleet

Aircraft carrier USS *Theodore Roosevelt* hosted more than 45 international partners from eight countries during an international helicopter warfighter exchange at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii, June 27, as part of Exercise Rim of the Pacific.

During the visit, military pilots from the U.S., South Korea, Italy, Peru, Chile, New Zealand, Australia, Canada and Mexico compared procedures, discussed aviation challenges and strengthened relationships. The event was designed to build trust, improve communication and support cooperation among the different countries.

"We're privileged to host the international helicopter exchange aboard *Theodore Roosevelt,*" said Cmdr. Andrew Poulin, *Theodore Roosevelt*'s strike operations officer. "It's a great opportunity to showcase naval aviation and work with our partners from different countries."

Sailors assigned to *Roosevelt* highlighted flight deck procedures, launch and recovery operations and the coordination required to operate aircraft safely, while visiting sailors observed how U.S. embarked aviation units work in unison.

"It's been a great experience for helicopter pilots to exchange ideas, share flight experiences, learn about different cultures and get to know more people," said Peruvian Navy Cmdr. Antonio Gonzáles.

During the exchange, visiting sailors were taken to the hangar bay, flight deck and navigation spaces. The locations on the tour route all play a role in flight operations aboard *Theodore Roosevelt*. "We're grateful for the opportunity to participate in exercises like this, which allow us to improve our tactical skills and build relationships with other navies," said Mexican Navy Lt. j.g. Francisco Valencia.

Theodore Roosevelt is participating in Rimpac to enhance readiness, strengthen partnerships and support regional security across the Indo-Pacific region. Thirty nations, over 30 surface ships, five submarines, 15 national land forces, more than 206 aircraft and 30,000 personnel are participating in the exercise taking place in and around the Hawaiian Islands until July 31.

The world's largest international maritime exercise, Rimpac provides a unique training opportunity while fostering and sustaining cooperative relationships among participants critical to ensuring safety of sea lanes and security on the world's oceans.

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USS *Lake Erie* home from deployment

from U.S. 3rd Fleet
Public Affairs

SAN DIEGO - Cruiser USS *Lake Erie* (CG 70) returned to its homeport of Naval Base San Diego in late June, following 11-months of sustained operations at sea to the U.S. 4th Fleet area of operations.

Lake Erie conducted a wide range of command-and-control and maritime security missions in support of U.S. Southern Command-led Operation Southern Spear.

The ship served as the Integrated Air and Missile Defense Commander and the U.S. Air Force Southern Command's (AFSOUTH) Regional Air Defense Commander (RADC), supporting operations to counter illicit maritime activity that threatens the security and stability of the United States and our allies and partners.

These efforts resulted in the seizure or disruption of more than 2,900 pounds of narcotics and supported the enforcement of international sanctions against illicit oil smuggling, directly contributing to regional stability and homeland security.

While underway, the crew of *Lake Erie* with embarked U.S. Coast Guard Law Enforcement Detachment interdicted a stateless, sanctioned dark fleet motor tanker, M/T Sophia.

A"I am immensely proud of this crew and what they have accomplished over the past 11 months," said U.S. Navy Capt. Drew A. Borovies, commanding officer of *Lake Erie.* "Demonstrating exceptional readiness, they met every challenge, from leading complex operations to providing air and missile defense. Their resilience and professionalism are a true testament to their character. We are thrilled to be returning to our families, whose steadfast support and sacrifice on the home front made our successes possible."

'Military Days' at the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway

PALM SPRINGS - During July, all U.S. military personnel with valid military identification—active, former and retired—receive free admission to the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway, along with a special gift for "Military Days."

Spouses of deployed military members, as well as military widows and widowers, also qualify for the promotion. Military personnel are encouraged to bring friends and family, and receive 25 percent off regular Tram admission for up to four guests.

While visiting the Tramway, guests can enjoy:

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

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

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

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

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Fri., April 17, 5pm	Quad City Steamwheelers at San Diego Strike Force
Sun., April 26, 4:30pm	Tucson Sugar Skulls at San Diego Strike Force*
Sat., May 23, 7pm	NAZ Wranglers at San Diego Strike Force*
Fri., June 19, 7pm	Vegas Knight Hawks at San Diego Strike Force*
Mon., July 6, 6pm	Arizona Rattlers at San Diego Strike Force*
Sat., July 18, 8pm	New Mexico Chupacabras at San Diego Strike Force*
Fri., July 24, 6pm	Tucson Sugar Skulls at San Diego Strike Force*

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AutoMatters™ & More

by Jan Wagner

Minions & Monsters — a fun Minions adventure for the whole family

Just when you thought you had the Minions all figured out, they're back with a new movie — and a whole new tribe of Minions!

SPOILER ALERT: Just as you will see on the official website (https://www.illumination.com/movie/minions-monsters/) this review does contain spoilers, but they will not take away from the fun, I promise!

As always, Minions are always eager to find villains to serve. This tribe is no different, as they search far and wide to find one.

The heroes of this new tribe of Minions are named James and Henry. This time the Minions find themselves in 1920's Hollywood at the dawn of cinema. It is fitting, therefore, that their adventure there begins in black & white, in the silent film era, where they spectacularly crash a Hollywood film set.

Against all odds, they hilariously stumble their way on-camera, where they soon become movie stars, complete with all the perks — mansion and all. They are living the life,

Of course that cannot last. When the talkies arrive, everything changes. Minions do not talk like the rest of us. They speak Minionese. That gets them into hot water and soon they lose everything. They are cast out by the Hollywood establishment to fend for themselves. Destitute and aimless, the Minions roam the streets of Hollywood looking for a purpose, and a new evil master to serve.

With only a movie camera and their imagination, James and Henry start over. They love making movies and decide to make their own — a monster movie! Now all they need is a monster...

Will they succeed? What will surely get in their way? You'll have to see Minions and Monsters to find out! I will tell you that what follows is absolute Minions mayhem!

Have you noticed that movie theaters are increasingly taking a page from theme parks, where after you've ridden a ride, you exit through a gift shop? At movie theaters — at least the ones that I've been going to lately, a big part of the lobby has been turned into a gift shop filled with movie memorabilia.

Added to my growing collection of expensive popcorn buckets and figurines from "Project Hail Mary" (Rocky in his clear habitat bubble and Dr. Grace's helmet) and "Star Wars: The Mandalorian and Grogu" (an battery-operated AT-AT walker and a bust of the Mandalorian), this time I could not resist buying more of the same from "Monsters & Minions" (a metal popcorn bucket and a drink cup with one of a variety of toppers).

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

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The Meat & Potatoes of Life

by Lisa Smith Molinari

A little respect

"Anna, when r u free to talk about this weekend?" my text read. Our 28-year-old middle child was bringing her boyfriend and four other friends home from New York City for the July 4th weekend, and I needed to make plans for meals, beds, snacks, drinks and transportation. I was excited to have a houseful of fun young adults, and had no idea that a simple telephone conversation with my daughter was about to turn into an argument.

"I was thinking," I said to Anna who called while walking to the subway, "we can cook out on Saturday, depending on your plans, and I'll make a batch of chicken enchiladas, for Sunday, just in case." I scribbled excitedly on my notepad, "corn, burgers, bratwurst, watermelon …"

Now that all three of our kids are young, single adults with careers, my Navy-retired husband and I live for their visits home. And when they bring friends, we love every minute of hosting — the messy breakfasts; the noisy chatter; the beach towels on our porch rails; the pile of shoes inside the front door.

With this visit falling on the 250th anniversary celebrations, I was going all out. My "To Do" list was long, and included putting fresh sheets on every bed, vacuuming up tumbleweeds of dog hair, dragging out the corn hole set, and adorning our house with red-white-and-blue swags.

But when the sleeping arrangements came up, my buzz was instantly killed.

"If you didn't have this ridiculous rule that Conlon and I can't sleep in the same bed, we wouldn't have any problems fitting everyone in," Anna suddenly snipped.

When I met my husband Francis in 1992, I was Anna's age and Francis was a lieutenant jjunior grade in the Navy. We had a long-distance relationship, taking turns driving to each other on weekends, he in Northern Virginia, and I in Pittsburgh.

When we visited our parents together, we never considered requesting to sleep in the same bed. We knew sleeping together at our parents houses before marriage wasn't right, and we never asked why. Our parents were aware that we slept with each other in Virginia and Pittsburgh. That didn't matter. When we were at their houses, it would be disrespectful to hop in the sack together. It was an unspoken rule.

Three decades later, has everything changed? Is that unspoken rule now obsolete? Are Francis and I being "ridiculous" requiring our daughter and her boyfriend to sleep in separate rooms in our house?

If you ask Anna, the answer is a resounding yes, but her Gen Z opinion assumes that, 30 years ago, we lived by archaic morals, religious tenants and strict family values that are no longer necessary in our modern world. Logic dictates that two adults in a sexually active relationship should be permitted to sleep in one bed if they so wish, regardless of location.

As a lawyer, I admire logic. However, there are human emotions and behaviors that are difficult to explain logically. The idea of our adult daughter sleeping with her boyfriend in our house makes Francis and I uncomfortable. This discomfort is not born of religious ideals, old-fashioned morals or strict family values. It comes from something deeper in our psyches as human animals with an innate drive to protect our offspring. Paternal and maternal instincts are not archaic. They are ancient intuitions that have ensured the survival of the human race for 300,000 years.

Anna and Conlon have been dating for over three years and are planning to move in together. While we respect and encourage our children's independence, we'll always feel the need to protect them regardless of age. We expect that, one day, when Anna is either engaged or married, our parental instinct will ease up, because we'll know that she's found a mate willing to commit to protect her for life.

Until then, Conlon will sleep in our son's old room, alone.

In the end, we celebrated our nation's independence by letting freedom ring — just not in the bedrooms — with full hearts and newfound respect for the boundaries that unite both family and friends.

Veterans News

California Department of Veterans Affairs offers variety of programs, services

California is home to nearly 1.6 million veterans. They range in age from World War II veterans in their 90's to "Millennials" from the current conflicts. Each generation has a different need and interest and each has a different way to learn about those services and benefits, but the one common element for all of you (and your family) is you stood up, put on the uniform and served in the U.S. Military. You are a veteran and because of that distinction you have earned benefits and services that will help you transition back to civilian life, or help you when you are finished with your civilian career and are now looking at retirement.

CalVet offers a variety of services to honorably discharged veterans from residency in one of our state Veterans Homes to helping you purchase a home through our Home Loan program. This department also advocates for veterans, providing information and representation before the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. There are many services, benefits and preferences provided to you by the people of California as a way to honor your service…explore https://www.calvet.ca.gov/calvet-programs and find out what you may have been missing.

CSAAVE

Eligible service members, veterans and dependents can receive GI Bill® benefits when attending college education and job training programs approved and monitored by the California State Approving Agency for Veterans Education (CSAAVE).

CalVet Home Loans

If you are a veteran and want a great home loan, then you need a CalVet Home Loan. You'll find the CalVet Loan will save you money and provide protection for your home and investment.

CalVet Veteran Homes

The Veterans Homes of California range in size from 60 residents on 20+ acre campuses to over 1,000 residents on a 500 acre campus. Each home offers a unique environment, levels of care, and a range of social activities.

CalVet Veterans Services

The Division of Veterans Services is responsible for administering a number of special programs, benefits and services for California veterans and their families.

Calif. Transition Assistance Program (CalTAP)

California Transition Assistance Program (CalTAP) is a program designed to inform and connect veterans of all eras to their earned federal and state benefits as well as provide continued support and assistance as their needs change over time.

Calif. Veterans Registry

The California Veterans Registry is a permanent record of all California Veterans, past and present, who have served our nation since statehood was established in 1850. Each California veteran is entitled to the basic information.

Cemeteries and Burials

The Department of Veterans Affairs has adopted Sections 460 and 461 of Title 12 of the California Code of Regulations. These regulations establish the eligibility requirements for interment in a state veterans cemetery

Disabled Veteran Business Enterprise Program The Office of Small Business and DVBE assists small and disabled veteran businesses by providing certification assistance, participating in outreach events, and supporting businesses through advocacy.

Incarcerated Veterans

It is important justice-involved Veterans are familiar with what happens to VA benefits and benefits they are receiving, if they become incarcerated.

Jobs

State and federal employment assistance program, veterans preference programs, How-to-Get-a-State-Job tutorials, veteran-specific job sites, local job fairs and more.

LGBTQ Veterans

CalVet is committed to ensuring all Veterans have access to and receive the benefits they have earned without regard to sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sex, age, mental or physical disability.

ListServ

CalVet has divided California into eight regions each region is associated with its own email database. These databases are used to send out information pertaining to veteran events and programs in your local communities.

Minority Veterans

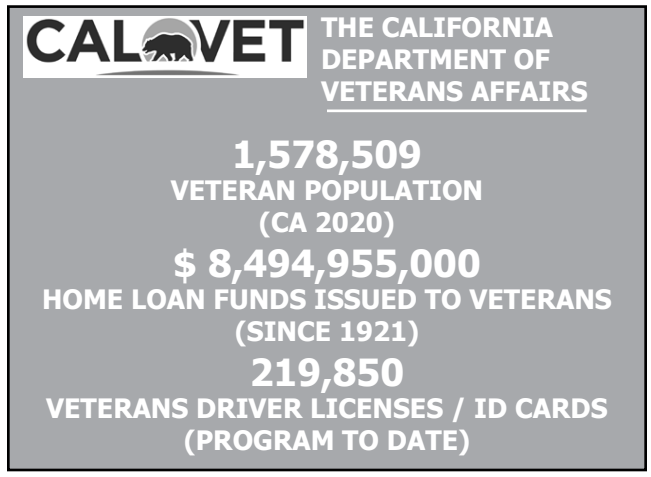
Minority Veterans Division promotes the use of VA benefits, programs, and services by minority and LGBT veterans. We advocate on behalf of minority and LGBT veterans by identifying gaps in services and making recommendations to improve services.

Veterans Benefit Enhancement Program (VBE)

The Veterans Benefit Enhancement program educates, counsels, and assists qualified veterans receiving Medi-Cal on the benefits of United States Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) health care enrollment.

Women Veterans

California is home to 185,269 women veterans. With California's women leading the nation in military service, it is imperative to acknowledge and address the needs of this growing demographic.



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MOVIES AT THE BASES

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MCB CAMP PENDLETON
https://pendleton.usmc-mccs.org/dining-entertainment/theater

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Visit our military museums

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

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

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

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: MCBCAMPEN_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 Mondays 10am-2pm

Thanks for reading the Dispatch

SOCIAL SECURITY MATTERS

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

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

Signed: Needs More Social Security.

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

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

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

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

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 2.4 million member Association of Mature American Citizens [AMAC] www.amac.us is a vibrant, vital senior advocacy organization that takes its marching orders from its members. AMAC Action is a non-profit, non-partisan organization representing the membership in our nation's capital and in local Congressional Districts throughout the country. And the AMAC Foundation (www.AmacFoundation.org) is the Association's non-profit organization, dedicated to supporting and educating America's Seniors. Together, we act and speak on the Association members' behalf, protecting their interests and offering a practical insight on how to best solve the problems they face today. Live long and make a difference by joining us today at www.amac.us/join-amac.

Veterans Crisis Line
DIAL 988 then PRESS 1

County outlines steps to protect people, animals from New World screwworm

by Fernanda Lopez Halvorson, County of San Diego Communications Office

County public health officials are issuing new guidance to help protect people and animals from the New World screwworm after recent animal cases were confirmed in Texas and New Mexico. No cases have been detected in California or San Diego County.

The New World screwworm, eradicated in the United States in 1966, is a parasitic fly that lays its eggs on open wounds. After hatching, the larvae feed on living tissue, causing severe pain, infection, and sometimes death.

> "While the screwworm has not been detected in our region and the current risk is low, it's reappearance in the United States is a reminder to take steps to protect ourselves and the animals in our care," said Dr. Sayone Thihalilopavan, County public health officer.

County officials urge residents, animal owners and health care providers to stay alert and routinely check pets, livestock and wildlife for wounds or unusual behavior, such as head-shaking or irritation. Animals with open wounds or signs of infestation should be taken to a veterinarian immediately.

People may be at higher risk if they have open sores or recent surgical wounds, weakened immune systems, or reduced ability to notice or care for wounds. Others at increased risk include those who sleep outdoors (especially during the day when the parasitic flies are most active) and those who live or work near livestock or other warm-blooded animals.

Symptoms in people can include painful or unexplained wounds, bleeding or drainage, a noticeable odor or seeing or feeling maggots in a wound.

People can reduce their risk by keeping wounds clean and covered, wearing long sleeves and pants in areas where the pest may be present, using insect repellent, and sleeping indoors or in screened areas when traveling in regions where New World screwworm is found, including Mexico, Central and South America, or the Caribbean.

For more information and updates, visit the County's New World Screwworm webpage.

County Public Health Services and the Vector Control Program work year-round to protect the community from vector borne diseases and other public health threats. The programs conduct surveillance, provide community education, perform inspections, and respond rapidly to reduce risks to people and animals.

Military Crisis Line
Dial 988 then PRESS 1

Photo courtesty of CDC

Mosquitoes near San Carlos test positive for West Nile Virus, county urges prevention

by Donna Durckel, County of SD Communications Office

Mosquitoes collected during routine monitoring near San Carlos have tested positive for West Nile virus, the first detection of the virus in San Diego County mosquitoes this year.

For those spending time outdoors during the upcoming holiday, make sure to protect yourself against mosquito bites by following the County's "Prevent, Protect, Report" guidelines.

Preventing mosquito bites is essential year-round in San Diego County.

Prevent Mosquito Breeding

- Dump or remove items that hold water from rain or sprinklers, including plant saucers, buckets, garbage cans, toys, old tires and wheelbarrows.
- Request free mosquito-eating fish for backyard water features—such as unmaintained, green swimming pools, ponds, and fountains —by contacting the Vector Control Program.

Protect Yourself from Bites

- Wear long sleeves and pants or use insect repellent before going outdoors.
- Choose repellents containing DEET, picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus, para-menthane-diol, 2-undecanone or IR3535.
- Check window and door screens to ensure they are intact and secure to keep insects out.

Report Mosquito Issues and Dead Birds

- Report increased mosquito activity, unmaintained green swimming pools and other mosquito-breeding sources.
- Report dead crows, ravens, jays, hawks and owls to the County Vector Control Program by calling (858) 694-2888 or emailing vector@sdcounty.ca.gov.

To reduce mosquito activity in the San Carlos area, the County's Vector Control Program is inspecting and treating sites and conducting follow-up trapping. The County continues to provide mosquito inspections to residents and ongoing monitoring countywide.

West Nile virus spreads when certain mosquito species bite infected birds and then bite people. Some people who are infected may experience mild symptoms including headache, fever, nausea, fatigue, skin rash, or swollen glands. In rare cases, the virus can lead to severe illness or death.

Visit the County's "Fight the Bite" website for more information on preventing West Nile virus.

VA speeds up delivery of prosthetic limbs to veterans

VA expects a 42% drop in delivery times for thousands of Veterans

WASHINGTON — The Department of Veterans Affairs has streamlined the process of purchasing prosthetic limbs to more efficiently serve thousands of Veterans who receive prosthetics through the VA every year.

Under prior procurement rules, orders for all prosthetic limbs had to be approved by a contracting officer, which meant Veterans had to wait several additional weeks before delivery.

On April 22, 2026, VA Secretary Doug Collins exempted approximately 95% of prosthetic limb orders from contracting officer reviews and determined that only the most expensive prosthetic limbs would continue to be subject to these reviews. Secretary Collins also authorized local purchasing agents to source directly from local suppliers whenever prosthetic limb prices are set by Medicare, in which case there is no negotiation over price and no need for review by a contracting officer.

These commonsense changes have already reduced Veterans' wait times for prosthetic limbs by 10 days, and VA expects average wait times to fall more than 40 percent – from 94 days to 54 days – as facilities across the nation fully implement this new process.

"Every day counts for Veterans. By removing needless bureaucracy, VA is enabling clinicians and procurement teams to provide Veterans with high-quality prosthetic care, better and faster than before," said VA Secretary Doug Collins.

More than 45,000 Veterans rely on VA each year for major limb loss care. For more information, visit these sites:

- **VA Amputation Care Services** at https://www.rehab.va.gov/asoc/
- **VA Orthotic, Prosthetic & Pedorthic Clinical Services** at https://www.rehab.va.gov/oppcs/
- **VA Prosthetic & Sensory Aid Services** at https://www.rehab.va.gov/psas/

Among other improvements, VA has:
Enrolled more than 150,000 new Veterans in VA health care in 2026.
Opened 36 new VA health care facilities since Jan. 20, 2025, expanding health care access for Veterans around the country.
Reduced the backlog of Veterans waiting for VA benefits by 72% since Jan. 20, 2025, after it increased 24% during the last Administration.

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