# ARMED FORCES



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SIXTY-FIRST YEAR NO. 39 THURSDAY, JANUARY 20, 2022

#### PENTAGON AGREES TO SPEND \$52M ON BLIMPS

FLYING SURVEILLANCE MISSIONS AT THE U.S.-MEXICO BORDER

by Rose L. Thayer Stars and Stripes

The Defense Department has agreed to spend about \$52.5 million to operate and maintain observation blimps at the U.S. border with Mexico as part of an ongoing mission in the region.

The original request to support the blimps called for about 1,500 additional troops to deploy to the border mission that supports the Department of Homeland Security and began in 2018, according to Rep. Henry Cuellar, D-Texas

About 2,400 troops are now deployed along the southern border, but up to 3,000 are authorized to deploy through the end of September, based on an agreement signed by Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin.

The service members are a mix of National Guard and active-duty personnel who work alongside Border Patrol agents in a variety of support roles that allow those federal agents to conduct direct border security.

But the DHS request approved Dec. 21 by Deputy Secretary of Defense Kathleen Hicks only calls for the operation and maintenance of large blimps, known as aerostats or persistent threat detection systems, "for assistance in



The Department of Homeland Security has requested the Defense Department help operate blimps to patrol along the U.S. border with Mexico. The blimps can provide surveillance from up to 10,000 feet in the air. Photo courtesy of U.S. Customs and Border Protection

detecting and monitoring drug-smuggling operations," said Lt. Col. Chris Mitchell, a Pentagon spokesman.

The Army will provide the support by contracting the work on six Border Patrolowned 17-meter aerostats and up to 12 Defense Departmentowned 22-meter aerostats, he said.

The \$52.5 million includes \$22.5 million for the Border Patrol's six aerostats and \$30 million for those owned by the military.

Homeland Security had previously funded contracts for the aerostats, but the deals had gotten too expensive, Cuellar told reporters during a call in November. The department cut the blimps from its recent budget, but the south Texas congressman said he wanted to see their use brought back in some way.

The Pentagon's approval to support six Border Patrolowned aerostats was eligible to begin in January, with the additional Defense Department aerostats available starting in April, Mitchell said. Support for both types is slated to end in September, or at the end of fiscal year 2022.

The military used observation blimps in Afghanistan, and they can be outfitted with a variety of equipment to help observe ground, air and water traffic from up to 200 miles away, according to U.S. Customs and Border Protection. Others can offer real-time imagery to agents on the ground.



# Last of new class of Navy warship departs shipyard

BATH, Maine - The last of a new class of warship departed a Maine shipyard on Jan. 12.

USS Lyndon B. Johnson was constructed at Bath Iron Works and is the last in a class of three ships the U.S. Navy has described as the largest and most technologically sophisticated destroyers in its history.

The stealth destroyer is also the last of the three Zumwalt-class ships to be built at the Bath shipyard.

The ship left for sea trials in late August. That was the first time it made it to the Atlantic Ocean.

The ship left for the trials 113 years to the day after Johnson was born. It was christened in 2019.

# NAWCWD researchers break ground in magnetic molecules

by Kimberly Brown

CHINA LAKE - Dr. Randall McClain and Dr. Ben Harvey, research chemists working for Naval Air Warfare Center Weapons Division, published groundbreaking research in the field of single molecule magnets in the Jan. 14 edition of *Science* magazine, the flagship journal of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

"Science is one of the most prestigious U.S.-based scientific journals," Harvey said. "The articles need to describe ground-breaking work that is of interest to all scientists, and most scientists never get this opportunity."

NAWCWD researchers began studying single molecule magnets in late 2017. McClain synthesized and characterized the SMMs while Harvey served as the principal investigator.

Conventional magnets, like those on your refrigerator or the powerful rare earth-based magnets used in computer hard drives, are composed of a network of inorganic structures with aligned electron spins. In contrast, SMMs are magnetic molecules that possess an energy barrier to re-orientation of their molecular spin. These molecules produce localized magnetic fields and are the smallest possible magnets. These materials could greatly increase the magnetic storage density of hard drives or to induce magnetic fields with incredible precision, potentially enabling the development of novel components useful for quantum computers.

#### MARINE CORPS FIRST SERVICE TO APPROVE COVID RELIGIOUS EXEMPTIONS

by Caitlin Doornbos Stars and Stripes

Two Marines are the first service members to receive waivers to the Defense Department's coronavirus vaccine mandate for religious reasons, the Marine Corps announced Jan. 13.

The Marine Corps has received 3,350 requests for religious exemptions to the vaccine,

the service said in a statement. The service declined to comment on the nature of the requests or why the two were granted after 3,212 were denied, citing privacy considerations. The remaining 138 requests have yet to be adjudicated.

"At every step, each accommodation request is given full

consideration with respect to the facts and circumstances submitted in the request," the Marine Corps said in its statement. "In each case, every reviewer weighs the compelling government interest against the individual's request and the circumstances of their situation."

The lack of religious exemptions across the services

has drawn scrutiny in recent weeks. On Jan. 3, a U.S. District Court judge in Texas granted a temporary injunction stopping the Navy from applying its vaccine mandate on 35 Navy special operators, citing the First Amendment.

"The Navy servicemembers in this case seek to vindicate

the very freedoms they have sacrificed so much to protect," Judge Reed O'Connor wrote in his ruling. "The [coronavirus] pandemic provides the government no license to abrogate those freedoms."

Chief Pentagon spokesman John Kirby has not said how the Pentagon plans to respond to the injunction, but defense officials are working with the Department of Justice to discuss legal options moving forward.

The Defense Department allows all troops to apply for waivers to the mandate for medical, religious or other administrative reasons, but no service branch had approved any religious waivers until Thursday.

#### **Career and Education**

eNavFit announced for the active component of the Fleet ... Interpersonal Edge column.

See page 6

#### **AutoMatters & More**

INDY Autonomous Challenge at the Consumer Electronics Show, Las Vegas.

See page 9

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## Russia trying to develop pretext for Ukraine invasion, DOD official says

by Jim Garamone/DoD News

Russia has deployed "a group of operatives" into Ukraine to foment a pretext for another invasion of that country, Pentagon Press Secretary John F. Kirby said during a news conference Jan 14.

Kirby hastened to say that the U.S. government still believes there is room to solve the problem of the Russian build-up on Ukraine's border diplomatically. "No one wants to see another invasion and incursion of Ukraine," he said. "We still believe that there's time and space for diplomacy."

Still, if Russia does invade its neighbor, the United States "will continue to provide security assistance to Ukraine to help them better defend themselves," Kirby said.

Kirby said the Russian operatives are a part of Russia's playbook that was used in 2014 when Russia invaded Crimea and later illegally annexed the area. Kirby could not give many details, but said the

United States does "have information that indicates that Russia is already working actively to create a pretext for a potential invasion, for a move on Ukraine."

The Russian operatives are pre-positioned in Ukraine to conduct "what we call a false flag operation, an operation designed to look like an attack on Russian speaking people in Ukraine, again, as an excuse to go in."

The United States also has information that Russia is fabricating Ukrainian provocations in state and social media as some sort of pretext for invasion, he said. "We've seen this kind of thing before out of Russia," he said. "When there isn't an actual crisis to suit their needs; they'll make one up. So we're watching for them."

There were also cyberattacks on Ukrainian government websites. Kirby said it is too early to attribute those attacks on Russia, but noted that it is also in the Russian playbook.

Kirby wouldn't go into much detail on the operatives themselves, but noted that Russia often "hybridizes" their personnel drawing them from their intelligence communities, their security services or their military.

There are American forces in Ukraine working to advise and assist the Ukrainian military. There are less than 200 Florida National Guardsmen assigned to the mission.

Kirby said the United States believes Russian President Vladimir Putin has not decided on invasion yet. But if there is an incursion, force protection for American personnel remains paramount. "We will make all the appropriate and proper decisions to make sure that our people are safe in any event," Kirby said.

In Brussels, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg also said there is room for diplomacy to work. He had met with Russian officials as part of the NATO-Russia Council at the alliance headquarters. "We had a very serious and direct exchange on the situation in and around Ukraine and the implications for European security," he said. "There are significant differences between NATO allies and Russia on these issues. Our differences will not be easy to bridge. But it is a positive sign that all NATO allies and Russia sat down around the same table, and engaged on substantive topics."

One Russian demand is that Ukraine not become a member of NATO. "Ukraine is a sovereign nation," Stoltenberg said. "Ukraine has the right to self-defense. Ukraine is not a threat to Russia. Russia has the biggest land power in Europe."



Pentagon Press Secretary John F. Kirby briefs speaks during a press briefing, the Pentagon Jan. 14. DoD photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Zachary Wheeler



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#### **National Military**

# **Nation observes anniversary of Operation Desert Storm**

by David Vergun DoD News

Operation Desert Storm began 31 years ago, on Jan. 16, 1991. five months after Iraqi forces invaded and annexed Kuwait.

That operation to oust the Iraqis is also known as the Gulf War; it came about after Iraqi President Saddam Hussein refused to withdraw his forces from Kuwait.

In response, the United States and partner nations began a buildup of arms and forces in Saudi Arabia. That phase. leading up to Operation Desert Storm, was known as Operation Desert Shield.

"Black Hawk Down" troops

Fort Riley spouse

Winter Olympics

Flight III destroyer

**Marine Corps** 

**Air Force** 

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woman in Thailand

this year

<u>Navy</u>

2021

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BEWS

HEADLINES

Early on Jan. 16, 1991, the air campaign began with U.S.

Then, fixed-wing aircraft from the Air Force, Navy, Marine Corps and coalition forces, augmented by cruise missiles, pounded Iraqi positions and supply lines for the next 42 days.

Iraqi forces were not idle On Jan. 29, 1991, they attacked and occupied the city of Khafji, Saudi Arabia. Two days later. they were driven out of Saudi Arabia by U.S. Marines, Saudi and Oatari forces.

On Feb. 24, 1991, the ground war began with U.S. and allied forces penetrating deep into

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•Ingalls hits important milestone in construction of first

•Navy: more than 8,000 active and reserve Sailors are

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•Plan to revamp enlisted airmen's development unveiled

•Airman, wife admit to submitting fake COVID-19 loan

•Is the Space Force doing what it's supposed to?

ment, says Pentagon nominee for space policy

•Civil agency should take over space traffic manage-

•Green Beret allowed to retire after sexually assaulting



An ammunition specialist carries a 105mm armorpiercing, discarding sabot round, to be used in an M-1 Abrams main battle tank, during Operation Desert Shield. Photo by Army Sgt. Brian Cumper

Kuwait and Iraq before the end of the day. The advance was so swift that masses of Iraqi troops began surrendering within hours

By Feb. 28, 1991, U.S. and

During air and ground operations, U.S. and allied forces destroved over 3,000 tanks, 1,400 armored personnel carriers. 2,200 artillery pieces, and countless other vehicles. Ninety-six service members were killed in action: an estimated 30,000 Iraqi troops were killed.

The war illustrated the importance of the 35 allies and partners

•Medal of Honor for 5 Soldiers authorized, upgrades for •Army CID offers \$25,000 reward in case of murdered

> allied ground forces in Iraq and Kuwait decisively defeated a battle-hardened army - the fourth largest in the world - and liberated Kuwait.

#### U.S., Korea complete underwater repair exercise

by Lt.Cmdr. Rory OBovle

Divers from the Navy's Underwater Construction Team Two, and Mobile Diving and Salvage Unit One, as well as the Republic of Korea Navy UCT and Sea Salvage Rescue Unit, recently completed

the first-ever Multinational Underwater Repair Exercise in Apra Harbor, Guam. MUREX is designed to develop interoperability in underwater construction operations, build diving expertise, and foster comradery between the USN and ROKN. Participants completed surface supplied diving, underwater hydraulic tool use,



underwater cutting and welding, self-contained breathing apparatus diving, and more. Specific projects included installing zinc anodes on a harbor quay wall, conducting topside and underwater waterfront facilities inspections, cutting and removal of harbor obstacles, and completing hydrographic surveys. The ROKN UCT provided a translator to ensure safe diving operations, facilitate classroom training, and foster interpersonal conversations. Despite the language barrier, the team quickly came together upon arrival, with military diving operations as a common language and both countries having a long-standing close relationship. While this was not the first exercise between the ROKN UCT and UCT-2, it marked the first time the ROKN UCT traveled to a U.S. territory to complete training. All total, 32 personnel participated in MUREX 2021, with 11 from the ROKN ÚCT, six from the ROKN SSU, 10 from UCT-2, and five from MDSU-1. Throughout the exercise, the team recorded 16 dives with a total bottom time of 757 minutes (12.6 hours).

that comprised the coalition to liberate Kuwait, which included several Arab nations.

The war also included some notable firsts:

It was the first war in which TV news broadcasts were aired live from the frontlines.

It featured the largest tank battle in U.S. history.

The Patriot missile system was used in combat for the first time: it was used to intercept Iraqi Scud missiles.

It was the first time GPS and precision-guided munitions were used on a massive scale.

#### **Guardsmen assist at New Hampshire state prison**

by Staff Sgt. Victoria Nelson

A detachment of New Hampshire guardsmen returned to the state prison recently.

For the next two months, 25 Soldiers and Airmen will assist corrections workers in Concord with safety and security operations, the same mission they supported a year ago at the height of the state's pandemic relief efforts.

Activated as part of Operation Winter Surge, they will fill staffing gaps caused by a spike in cases of COVID-19.

'We're just stepping in to help relieve some of that stress," said Staff Sgt. Michael Lagare, the teams' noncommissioned officer in charge.

The troops are from the 157th Security Forces Squadron, 941st Military Police Battalion and 237th Military Police Company. To prepare for the next 60 days, they conducted more than 40 hours of specialized training led by Capt. Scott Towers, commandant of the NH Department of

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"The training has been very thorough," said Airman 1st Class Joshua Pincince of the 157th SFS. "It has been a lot of classroom, going over policies and what to expect, as well as a good amount of combatives."

For some guardsmen, this will be their first time working on the other side of the prison wall. Others were activated for the first call-up.

"It's going to be a big change for me," said Pvt. Andrew Lang of the 237th MPs. "I never thought I would do something like this. It will give me a good idea of what it is actually like for people in there."

Despite everyone's willingness to help, the mission will force some to establish new work-life balances

"In the last year I've been on eight or nine different COVID support missions," Pincince said. "It makes going to school very hard. But anything I can do to help the state is worth

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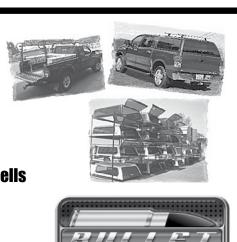
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INE

by Jim Garamone DoD News

The Defense Department's chief technology officer is emphasizing people and teamwork as the avenue to keep America's technological edge.

Heidi Shyu's, the undersecretary of defense for research and engineering, priority goal is to become more mission focused, she told the Defense Writers Group Jan. 13.

"I want to leverage the incredible amount of technology innovation that's across our nation to be able to solve difficult operational challenges," she said.

To do this, Shyu wants to build a foundation to get the right people to work on these cutting edge projects. "We've got to attract talent - (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) talent to build a future technical workforce," she said. It is more than simply hiring people, it also means building the laboratories, test areas, facilities and infrastructure needed to enable their work.

Finally, the "piece that's critically important for us to shape the future is teamwork," she said.

This is more than simply teamwork within the department, although that is important. Shyu wants to leverage the larger "innovation ecosystem." This includes defense contractors, university affiliated research centers, federally funded research centers, "and, of course, our allies and partners. I am a firm believer that by working together, we can solve the toughest challenges," she said.

Shyu is the latest DOD technology chief that wants to bridge the department's "valley of death." This refers to the time between development of a capability and its inclusion in a

program. Too often, promising technologies get dropped in this period. Shyu said the valley of death is still a problem. Outreach is one way she hopes to bridge the valley or fill it in.

"I have been engaging with small companies because they're the guys that are suffering the valley of death," she said. "I've held small company roundtables ... to talk about what are the biggest impediments that they see in terms of working with the DOD."

Shyu has devised a strategy she is presenting to Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III on "how to pave over this valley of death, or at least build a bridge."

She said different payment strategies may be part of this strategy. "I'm going to figure out a mechanism to leverage the venture capital fund and be a lot closer tied to them at the DOD evel " she said

Communication alone is a way forward. She said that at the end of her meetings "they actually made a request: Namely, to stay engaged with me, to make sure we have these monthly dialogues."

Shyu has also met with allies and partners on technology and capabilities needed. "I've engaged with quite a few allies and partners to date, and at each one of our meetings, we talk about what are the areas of interests that they have, and versus our interests," she said. "If there's an intersection in terms of interest areas, and then we basically go down to the next layer of the folks working for me, they then form a working group to literally hammer out the details of the exchange of information."

The countries include Australia, the United Kingdom, Singapore, Germany, Israel and many others.

PHOTO GALLERY



CAMP ARIFJAN, Kuwait (Jan. 19, 2022) - Staff Sgt. Ingrid K. Brown, a Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention professional assigned to the 3rd Infantry Division Sustainment Brigade, 1st Theater Sustainment Command Operational Command Post, interacts with a Soldier during a SHARP ambassador program training session here. The course provides junior Soldiers with the education and skills necessary to promote a culture change within the Army. Courtesy photo



LOWESTOFT, England (Jan. 7, 2022) - An Air Force direct support operator helps an Airman board a life raft during a Survival, Evasion, Resistance and Escape water survival training coursehere. SERE personnel from Royal Air Force Lakenheath and Royal Air Force Mildenhall gave Airmen the chance to train in realistic scenarios where flight staff must work together in order to survive should their aircraft crash in the ocean. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Koby I. Saunders

RAF LAKENHEATH (Jan. 5, 2022
- A member of the 48th Aircraft
Maintenance performs routine
maintenance underneath an F15E Strike Eagle as it is readied
for takeoff here. The 48th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron
keeps the 48th Fighter Wing's
Strike Eagle fleet airworthy. Air
Force photo by Senior Airman
John Ennis



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Kilby, Kathleen	C3T2, 1T1	Costella, Bryan	64T1
Younger, Huey	F1T3	Kissel, Kathy	A2T4
Williams Lamarcus	D7T2		

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#### Medal of Honor Spotlight: Army Spc. 5th Class Clarence Sasser

by Katie Lange, DoD News

Army Spc. 5th Class Clarence Sasser was a part-time college student when he was drafted into the Army as a medic. He was sent to Vietnam at the height of the war and did his job so fearlessly during battle that he earned the Medal of Honor.

Sasser was born Sept. 12, 1947, and grew up in the small town of Rosharon, Texas, near Houston. He had a brother, a sister and four step-siblings who all lived on a farm with Sasser's mother and his stepfather, a church deacon who

Sasser went to Marshall High School and was in one of the school's last segregated classes. He played football and did well academically, graduating in 1965 near the top of

Sasser enrolled at the University of Houston to study chemistry. He eventually switched to part-time so he could work to pay for classes, causing him to become eligible for the draft. So, when his number came up, instead of trying to gain college deferment, he joined the Army in

Sasser trained as a medical aidman and knew pretty quickly that he would be going to Vietnam. He arrived in the country in late September 1967 when he was barely 20 years old.

Sasser hadn't been in Vietnam for more than four months when he was put to the ultimate test as a medic with the 3rd Battalion, 60th Infantry, 9th Infantry Division.

On Jan. 10, 1968, then-Private 1st Class Sasser was with Company A on a reconnaissance mission to the Mekong River Delta to investigate reports of enemy activity. That morning, as about a dozen company helicopters were landing, they suddenly started taking heavy fire from three sides of the landing zone. A well-entrenched enemy using rockets, machine guns and small arms managed to take down 30 American fighters in the first few minutes of the attack

"I got grazed getting off the helicopter, in the leg," Sasser said during a Library of Congress Veterans History Project interview in 2001. "[There was] fire all around us. With

**Medal of Honor recipient** Clarence E. Sasser places his hand over his heart during a ceremony honoring him at Texas A&M

the helicopter down, there wasn't any choice. We had to go in."

University, Nov. 7, 2013.

Photo by Stuart Villanue-

va/MyAggieNation.com

Through a hail of gunfire, Sasser ran across an open rice paddy to help his injured comrades. As he helped one soldier to safety, he was wounded again, this time in the left shoulder by fragments of an exploding rocket.

"Shell fragments are something. I'll never forget how they feel,' Sasser recalled. "The pain sets in later. The initial shock is what you experience, and the searing â€" shell

Sasser ignored his injuries and ran through a barrage of rocket and automatic weapons fire to help two more men before moving on to search for others who were wounded. After suffering two more injuries that immobilized his legs. Sasser dragged himself through the mud to continue his work

"The best way to get around that day was just simply grabbing the rice sprouts and sliding yourself along. You could move better like that. If you stood up, you were dead," Sasser said. "The snipers would get you."

After crawling roughly 100 meters. Sasser treated another soldier before encouraging more men to crawl 200 meters to relative safety. Once there, he treated them over the course of the night. Sasser said if it wasn't for Air Force close air support dropping bombs to keep the enemy off them, they likely all would

"We laid there that night. All you could hear was guys moaning, calling for their mama," he remembered.

#### Fleet Reserve Ass'n: CFPB warning letters

The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) and Department of Justice (DOJ) issued two joint letters regarding important legal housing protections for military families.

One letter was sent to landlords regarding protections for military tenants. A second letter was sent to mortgage servicers regarding military borrowers who have already exited or will be exiting COVID-19 mortgage forbearance programs in the coming weeks and months.

The letter to landlords and other housing providers reminds property owners of the important housing protections in place for military tenants. While military families enjoy the same legal protections and privileges afforded to all other homeowners

and tenants, they also have additional housing protections under the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (SCRA), which is enforceable by the DOJ and service members themselves.

It was the toughest thing I've ever

Sasser said evacuation helicopters finally came for them around 4 a.m. or 5 a.m. the next day.

"It was a relief. We were out of there, and I was still alive. I was hurting, but I wasn't in mortal danger,' Sasser said of his feelings at that moment. "I had made it."

Sasser was treated at a hospital before being evacuated to Japan for further recovery. During his rehabilitation, he helped out at the hospital's dispensary, and a doctor he'd befriended was able to get him reassigned there instead of returning to Vietnam. "To this day I thank him," Sasser said.

It was during that assignment in the latter half of 1968 that he learned that he had earned the Medal of Honor.

"I don't think what I did was above and beyond. I never have, and for a long time I had a problem with that." Sasser said. "But finally … a friend helped me reconcile it to the point that it meant, 'Hey, you did your job.'"

After transferring back to the states,, the nation's highest honor was presented to him by President Richard M. Nixon during a White House ceremony on March 7, 1969. Two other soldiers, Army Staff Sgt. Joe Hooper and Army Sgt. 1st Class Fred Zabitosky, also received the Medal of Honor that day.

"Probably the greatest thing to me was to be in a room with [Army Maj.] Audie Murphy, [Marine Corps Col. Gregory] Pappy Boyington and [Army Gen.] Jimmy Doolittle," Sasser said of the ceremony. "These guys I had read about â€" guys that I'm now in their situation or I'm in their society or their group. That, to me, was something.'

Sasser was discharged from the Army in June of 1969 and returned to his chemistry studies, this time with a scholarship to Texas A&M University. Before finishing, though, he married Ethel Morant and took a job at a petro-chemical refinery near Houston. He worked there for five years before beginning a long-time career with the Department of Veterans Affairs in Houston. He and Ethel had three boys, Ross, Benjamin and Billy.

Over the years, Sasser has given talks to schools and veterans organizations about his experiences. In 2013, he was inducted into Texas A&M's Medal of Honor Hall of

#### VA Disability Claim Denied?

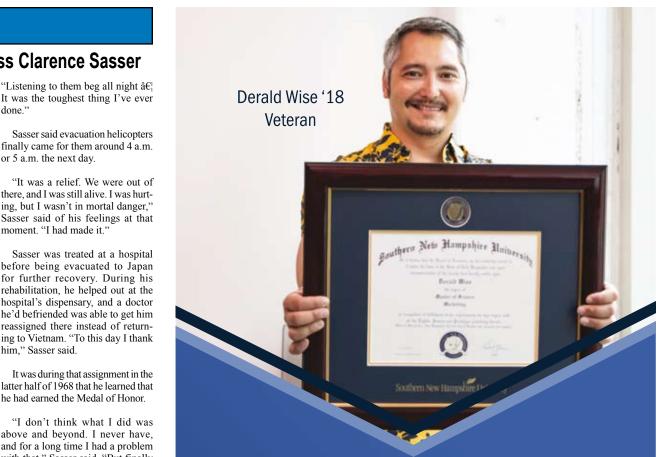
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#### **Dress for success?**

by Dr. Daneen Skube,

Tribune Content Agency

Q: I'm still working remotely and wondering how informal I can be when dressing for work these days. Everyone in my office has gotten pretty casual but for important meetings what do you recommend for your clients?

A: I recommend my clients dress for the position they want not the position they have. Even in remote meetings you want the clothes on your upper body, hair, make up, or jewelry to convey a professional image.

There's an old saying that clothes make the man (or woman). Even though we've become casual during the pandemic this saying is true. Physical appearance is a powerful part of our nonverbal communication. If we slouch during a meeting we communicate indifference. If we wear an old T-shirt and look disheveled we convey a lack of respect for our work.

Imagine you're going on a date with someone you're excited about. You would put your best physical foot forward and pay attention to your appearance. You don't need to compete with a gorgeous news anchor but you would put energy into your appearance.

There are many good books on how clothes or styles communicate professionalism in different careers. Generally the more conservative your industry the more conservatively you dress. In finance, insurance, and

#### Interpersonal Edge



Dr. Daneen Skube

top positions you'll still benefit from short hair (men), trimmed facial hair (men), suits (both genders), pearls (women), and tasteful make up (women).

The color of your clothing also expresses emotion. Blue conveys truth, black seriousness, brown grounded, green soothing, or yellow welcoming. You can imagine how a pink multicolored outfit with colorful tattoos showing might influence an interview in finance.

To readers that say, "I gotta be me!" I'd advise expressing your unique personality during off hours. I have a brilliant male client with a ponytail that's

#### eNavFit announced for the active component of the Fleet

by MC2 Chad Swysgood

The Chief of Naval Personnel released NAVADMIN 004/22 today announcing eNavFit for the active component of the Fleet starting in February.

With eNavFit'ss release to both the active and reserve force, the Navy's Talent Management Task Force has delivered the first in a series of Performance Evaluation Transformation and Talent Management (PET-TM) programs designed to better develop, assess and retain top talent in the Navy.

Upon release, active component Sailors can access eNavFit through BUPERS Online within Navy Personnel Command Document Services. eNavFit enables Sailors to draft, edit,

working hard to climb a banking ladder. He has repeatedly not received promotions. You may think your hair should not influence your promotions but it often does

You may believe you don't want to succeed in a world that judges your book by your cover. Unfortunately you cannot avoid this problem. People do not have enough time or telepathy to see your soul. Others will scan the cover you present and

electronically route, and digitally sign performance evaluations with electronic submission to the Sailor's Official Military Personnel File in a matter of days. eNavFit was designed to operate in both traditional office and disconnected environments. The functionality of eNavFit will improve report accuracy, timeliness, and quality as well as reduce evaluation processing, submission errors, and routing delays. NAVFIT98A is scheduled to sunset in late fiscal year 2022.

"Currently, Sailors have to wait up to two weeks after the report reaches PERS-32 to see their evaluations appear in their official records," said Cmdr. Beau Bennett, eNavFit team lead. "NavFit is poised to reduce

indeed judge your book by your appearance.

Dressing for success does not mean competing with the men or women on television. These personalities have fitness trainers, cosmetic surgeons, personal chefs, and makeup artists. A television career requires these people run their lives around beauty. Yes prettier people have an easier time at work but trying to compete with television

that time down to a matter of days. And because it has robust policy validation built into the interface, we should see a dramatic decrease in the number of rejected reports."

In addition to being a technological improvement, eNavFit is also a critical bridge to future improvements. "eNavFit is an important step toward modernizing the Navy's performance management system overall," said Capt. Ben Baran, PET-TM coordinator. "We are also working hard on steadily improving our performance management system into one that truly incentivizes, develops, and assesses the behaviors needed throughout the Navy to outthink and outfight any adversary while cultivating a culture of warfighting excellence

personalities will make you neurotic

In 2022 examine photos of people you admire that are successful in your industry. Evaluate how they present themselves. Clothes are the costume you wear to signal where you want to go in your career. Be willing to let your clothes signal all green lights on the road for your success

rooted in our core values.'

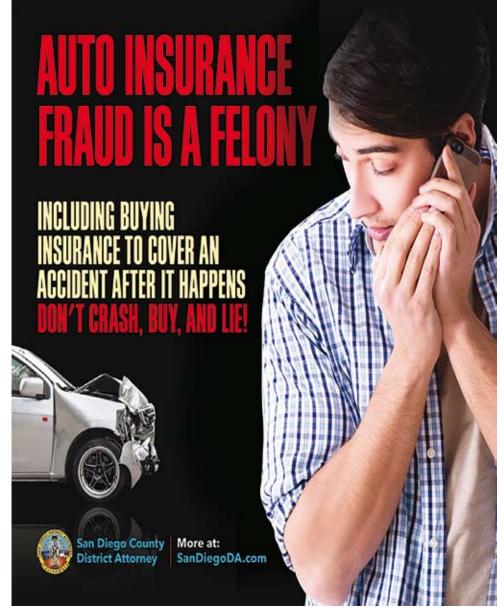
Led by Rear Adm. Michael Schwerin, deputy commander, Navy Personnel Command, the TMTF is working several key talent management initiatives focused on improving the Navy's performance evaluation system and re-invigorating our culture for Sailor development through timely, honest, and actionable performance feedback and developmental conversations. The end state of the TMTF is to ensure effective Sailor development that retains the best and fully qualified Sailors, in the right assignments, to maximize the warfighting effectiveness of the Navy.

Performance evaluation training materials including an eNav-Fit user guide, video tutorials, and quick reference cards can be found via the MyNavy HR website at https://www.mynavvhr.navv.mil/Career-Management/Performance-Evaluation/ eNAVFIT/

For more information. the full NAVADMIN can be found here: https://www. mynavyhr.navy.mil/Portals/55/Messages/NAVAD-MIN/NAV2022/NAV22004.txt?ver = VHggr8Z2gf5 - 0*iI2Vo1dg%3d%3d*.



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#### Navy cancels destroyer's Hokkaido port call as coronavirus cases surge across Japan

by Seth Robson and Hana Kusumoto Stars and Stripes

The Navy has canceled plans for a port call by one of its warships on Japan's northernmost island amid a nationwide spike in coronavirus cases.

Destroyer USS *Stockdale* and its crew of 240 were scheduled to visit Otaru, Hokkaido, Feb. 6-11, according to the city's website.

Stockdale deployed in August from San Diego with the Carl Vinson Carrier Strike Group and stopped in Guam on Dec. 23, according to a U.S. Pacific Fleet statement that day.

However, officials from the Navy and Otaru said last Thursday that next month's port call had been canceled. The U.S. 7th Fleet confirmed the cancellation but declined to provide *Stars and Stripes* with more information.

"As a matter of policy and to safeguard operational security, we do not comment on the specifics of ship schedules," 7th Fleet spokesman Lt. Mark Langford said in an email Thursday.

The Japan Coast Guard told Otaru officials about the cancellation Tuesday but did not provide a reason why the warship wouldn't come, Tomoyuki Seki, an official with the city's general affairs department, told Stars and Stripes by phone Thursday.

Otaru, along with Sapporo city and the Hokkaido Government Office, had planned to ask the Navy to reconsider the visit due to the pandemic surge and the difficulty of conducting



Destroyer *Stockdale* transits the Pacific Ocean. Stockdale is conducting routine operations underway in the 3rd Fleet area of operations. Navy photo by Ensign Alex Kraft

friendship activities under those conditions. Seki said.

the visit before they made the request, he said.

However, the Navy canceled

"We are relieved of the result

when we think of the current infection situation," Otaru Mayor Toshiya Hazama said Jan. 12, according to Seki.

The move coincides with surging coronavirus cases in Japan. On Jan. 12 the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare reported 13,052 cases, the most in four months.

The U.S. military population in Japan, which includes more than 50,000 service members, was ordered Jan. 10 to stay on their bases or in their off-base homes until Jan. 24 to help curb the spread of COVID-19, the

coronavirus respiratory disease.

The order arose after the Japanese government drew U.S. authorities' attention to the spread of cases in communities surrounding U.S. bases on Okinawa and near Hiroshima starting in mid-December.

U.S. ships have made regular port calls at Otaru, but *Stock-dale*'s visit was to have been the first in two years, Seki said.

The Navy's last stop there was made in 2019 by USS *Blue Ridge*, the 7th Fleet's flagship, according to the city's website.

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#### NMFP Sailor selected MSC's IT Senior Officer of the Year

NAVAL BASE SAN DIEGO - The Director of Navy Medical Service Corps (MSC) selected a Naval Medical Forces Pacific Sailor, from nominations across the Navy Medicine enterprise, for a senior information technology officer-of-the-year award recently

Lt. Cmdr. Hunter R. Coates, regional information systems officer, NMFP, was named the Information Technology Senior Officer of the Year for 2021.

"Lt. Cmdr. Coates has a proven record of superior leadership, demonstrated performance excellence and the innate ability to navigate this complex organization to ensure mission success," said Rear Adm. Timothy Weber, Commander, NMFP. "His talent is felt enterprise wide, and his contributions have positively impacted the Fleet and the Fleet Marine Force."

The award recognizes MSC officers whose leadership, professional knowledge and administrative/clinical/research expertise who have significantly contributed to enhancing warfighter performance, operational capabilities, readiness and Navy Medicine, according to submission guidelines.

Coates' work impacted healthcare delivery to about 650,000 beneficiaries and the readiness missions for 18,000 Navy-Medicine staff members supported by NMFP. - story by David Bennett, Navy Medical Service Corps Public Affairs

## **Vinson CSG, Essex ARG Wrap Up Operations in the South China Sea**

SOUTH CHINA SEA - Carl Vinson Carrier Strike Group and Essex Amphibious Ready Group completed joint expeditionary strike force training operations in the South China Sea, Jan. 16.

The training operations included integrated maritime strike missions, maritime interdiction operations, anti-submarine warfare, replenishment-at-sea and formation maneuvering/navigation operations. These operations are the latest events in strengthening naval readiness and interoperability in the Indo-Pacific region.

The *Essex* group brings a host of Marine Corps air support to the operations including the "White Knights" of Marine Medium Tilt Rotor Squadron 165 (Reinforced) and the "Black Sheep" of Marine Attack Squadron 214. The "White Knights" operate the MV-22B Osprey, UH-1Y Venom, AH-1Z Viper and the CH-53E Super Stallions while the "Black Sheep" operate the AV-8B Harrier.

"Our ability to quickly and effectively integrate with an amphibious ready group, such as ESX ARG, demonstrates a diverse level of naval lethality that is unlike any other naval force," said Rear Adm. Dan Martin, commander, CSG 1. "The long-range strike capability of the *Vinson* Strike Group combined with *Essex* ARG's potential to deliver a payload of Marines to any maritime region greatly contributes to the U.S. strategic ability to continue defending a free and open Indo-Pacific."

"Our opportunity to conduct integrated operations with *Carl Vinson* Carrier Strike Group this past week showcases the U.S. Navy's commitment to defending regional stability in the Indo-Pacific not only through our combined expertise and experience but through the differing capabilities of U.S. Navy big deck platforms," said Capt. Karrey Sanders, commodore of Amphibious Squadron 1.

The *Essex* Amphibious Ready group consists of ships operating alongside VINCSG in the South China Sea - landing helicopter dock ship *Essex* and amphibious dock landing ship *Pearl Harbor*:

Participating VINCSG units included carrier *Carl Vinson*, cruiser *Lake Champlain*, and destroyers *Michael Murphy*, *O'Kane* and *Chafee*.

### *Tripoli* recovers F-35Bs for the first time, certifies for fixed-wing operations

PACIFIC OCEAN - An F-35B Lighting II from Marine Strike Fighter Attack Squadron (VMFA) 122 touched down on the flight deck of amphibious assault ship *Tripoli* Jan. 11, marking the first time the ship has landed the new fifth generation fighter.

*Tripoli* has been steadily operating and training the crew in preparation for the underway flight operations with VMFA-122, which culminated in the fixed-wing certification for the ship.

"This is what *Tripoli* was built for," said Capt. Joel Lang, *Tripoli*'s commanding officer. "The crew and supporting organizations have worked incredibly hard to get us to the point where we can launch and recover aircraft, rising to every challenge the Navy has put before them since we commissioned. I am extremely proud of what we have accomplished."

Bringing the aircraft to the ship required a lot of coordination between *Tripoli* and the Marines who operate the fighter.

"It was an honor to support *Tripoli* in accomplishing such an important event," said Maj. Randy Brazile, the landing signal officer embarked from VMFA-225. "The Marines and pilots from VMFA-122 and (Marine Operational Test and Evaluation Squadron) VMX-1 are excited to see *Tripoli* achieve its fixedwing flight certification."

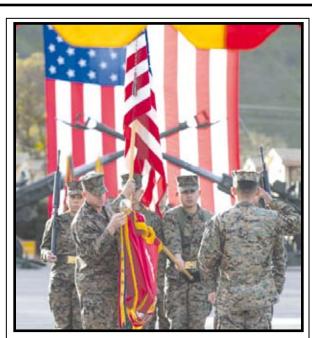
The Sailors who comprise the flight deck crew have trained their entire careers to run flight operations, and they worked efficiently and safely while accomplishing this milestone.

"Everything flowed perfectly," said Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Handling) 1st Class Paul Salame. "We did everything we practiced for. I got to launch the first jet ever from *Tripoli*; it was a good feeling. We're all very excited to do it again."

As crewmembers crowded vulture's row or viewed the flight operations on one of the ship's monitors, the excitement was palpable throughout the command.

"The crew has sacrificed time away from their families and friends to accomplish our mission," said Lang. "Days like today prove that the time those families have given us isn't wasted."

Tripoli is an America-class amphibious assault ship and commissioned in July 2020. The ship is homeported in San Diego and operates under commander, Expeditionary Strike Group 3. For more information about Tripoli, visit: www.surfpac.navy. mil/lha7. Follow Tripoli on Facebook at @OfficialUSSTripoli and on Instagram at @OfficialUSSTripoli.



CAMP PENDLETON (Jan. 12, 2022) - Marines with 11th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division, stand in formation prior to a battle colors cer-

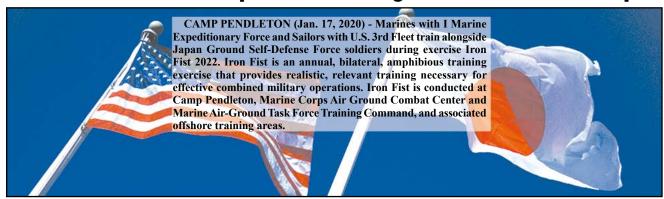
emony here. Veterans and active duty Marines and Sailors attended the annual ceremony to pay tribute to the Marines that have served with the regi-



ment. Marine Corps photo by Sgt. Hannah Hall



#### **Exercise Iron Fist: Cooperative training between U.S. and Japan**





Sgt. Wesley Vincent, a rifleman with 1st Platoon, Fox Company, 2nd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division, plots a shotgroup on a target during exercise Iron Fist. For almost two decades the U.S. Marine Corps, U.S. Navy, and Japan Ground Self-Defense Force have conducted exercise Iron Fist, training together in amphibious operations and affirming the U.S. commitment to our allies. Marine Corps photo by Cpl. Aidan Hekker







# Amphibious combat vehicles return to unrestricted operations

HEADQUARTERS MARINE CORPS (Jan. 6, 2020) - Marine Corps amphibious combat vehicles are set to return to unrestricted waterborne operations following the development of a new tow rope solution designed to address previous issues with the vehicle's towing mechanism.

In September 2021, the Marine Corps suspended ACV operations in unprotected waters while it worked to resolve the towing issues that were identified in several after action reports from the field.

"Amphibious operations, including the use of amphibious shipto-shore connectors, is a foundational aspect of Marine Corps operations and is critical to the future force and its ability to remain the Nation's premier expeditionary force in readiness," said Lt. Gen. David Furness, deputy commandant for Plans, Policies, and Operations.

Once equipped with and trained to employ the new tow rope solution, units are authorized to utilize the ACV to conduct unrestricted amphibious operations, including self-recovery operations in the open ocean and through the surf zone.

Prior to the receipt and installation of the new replacement tow ropes, ACV operation remains restricted to land mobility, gunnery operations, and amphibious operations in protected waters.

In addition to the new equipment and training requirements are the 18 tasks that units must complete, validate, and certify prior to the resumption of waterborne operations. These tasks stem from the comprehensive investigation into the facts and circumstances surrounding the July 2020 AAV tragedy.

The tasks cover a variety of requirements including: ensuring training and qualifications for crew and embarked personnel are properly equipped; vehicles have passed required inspections; and operations are conducted with safety boats, sea state assessments, and positive communication.

In a related story, news reports on Jan. 4 stated that a Marine Corps panel convened to decide if an officer should be charged in the sinking of an amphibious assault vehicle off the coast of San Clemente Island that killed nine service members.

The deadly training mishap in July 2020 occurred when the AAV started to take on water, trapping the nine-person crew inside. A Marine Corps investigation later found that inadequate training, shabby maintenance, and poor judgment by leaders led to the tragedy.

#### ■ Sexual Assault Prevention & Response

This program serves as the focal point for coordinating all sexual assault prevention and response actions on Camp Pendleton. The SAPR Program's mission is two-fold: to address the needs of military members and their dependents (18 years and older) that have been victims of sexual assault and to proactively provide relevant, interactive training on a regular, continuous basis to all Marines and sailors aboard MCB Camp Pendleton in an effort to eliminate sexual assault from within our ranks.

Every battalion/squadron-sized command has at least two Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Victim Advocates (SAPR VAs) appointed to support victims after a sexual assault. SAPR VAs have been trained and are able to offer victims assistance in three main areas: support, providing information about the different reporting options afforded them, and referrals to a multitude of different resources – both on base and in the local civilian community. Although SAPR VAs are not counselors, they do help victims navigate the system and can put the victims in touch with licensed, certified counselors and other professionals within the Behavioral Health Branch.

Sexual assault is a crime, and it will take the efforts of every Marine, Sailor and leader to purge it from the Marine Corps.

To make a confidential report of a sexual assault call

■24/7 Camp Pendleton Sexual Assault Support Line: (760) 500-1707

or ■DoD Safe Helpline: (877) 995-5247 | www.safehelpline.org



#### NMCB-5 concludes Indo-Pacific deployment, NMCB-3 assumes authority of NCF tasking in the Indo-Pacific

by Petty Officer 1st Class Stephane Belcher, NMCB-5

OKINAWA, Japan - Naval Mobile Construction Battalion (NMCB) 5 transferred authority of Naval Construction Force tasking in the Indo-Pacific region to NMCB-3 during a relief in place/ transfer of authority (RIP/TOA) ceremony on board Camp Shields in Okinawa Jan. 18

The Seabees with NMCB-5 executed missions from 13 detail sites across the Indo-Pacific and participated in several joint exercises, such as Exercise Amphitrite Galvanic and Exercise Neptune's

"We arrived here in Okinawa and throughout the Pacific with highly motivated and well-trained Sailors ready to accomplish

our mission by 'Succeeding Together," said Cmdr. Andrew Olsen, NMCB-5's commanding officer. "The men and women of [NMCB-5] continued to bridge the gap between sea and shore by supporting construction at the littorals for warfighter readiness. You have remained dedicated to being a paramount stand-in naval construction force for the Indo-Pacific region."

In the Marshall Islands, they built a police substation checkpoint to help the Marshallese support the Kwajalein Atoll Local Government - taking the opportunity to teach construction skills to recent high school graduates working at the Republic of Marshall Island's National Training Council.

THIS WEEK'S SNAPSHOTS

cal community by clearing land and leveling the Northern Marianas College Tinian Center area. The Seabees stood up a Detail in Papua New Guinea - at the request of the PNG Defence Force - to work with the PNG Defence Force and the Australian Defence Force on a new dental facility.

NMCB-5's Detail Tinian worked with the Marines to help the lo-

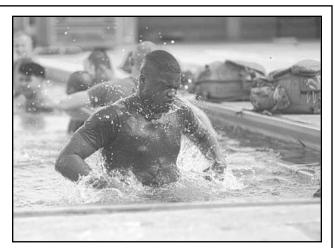
"Hoorah to my Sister Battalion, NMCB-5," said Cmdr. LaKeeva Gunderson, NMCB-3's commanding officer. "You all came here, took names, and delivered on what we, as the Naval Construction Force, promised. Your actions improved partner relationships in the Indo-Pacific Command area of operations"



CAMP PENDLETON (Jan. 13, 2022) - Japan Ground Self-Defense Force (JGSDF) soldiers with 2nd Amphibious Rapid Deployment Regiment conduct a site survey prior to waterborne operations with assault amphibious vehicles during exercise Iron Fist 2022 here. For almost two decades the U.S. Marine Corps, U.S. Navy, and Japan Ground JGSDF have conducted exercise Iron Fist, training together in amphibious operations and affirming the U.S. commitment to our allies. Marine Corps photo by Cpl. Sydney **Smith** 



PACIFIC OCEAN (Jan. 12, 2022) - Aviation Structural Mechanic 3rd Class Camran Williams, left, and Aviation Structural Mechanic 3rd Class Mark Eblamo, assigned to the "Tophatters" of Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 14, conduct maintenance in the hangar bay aboard carrier Abraham Lincoln. The Abraham Lincoln Carrier Strike Group is deployed support of global maritime security operations. Navy photo by MCSA Jett Morgan



CAMP PENDLETON (Jan. 10, 2022) - Marine Corps Lance Cpl. Deanthony Walker, a rifleman with Kilo Company, 3d Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division, conducts a 200-meter swim during the Brahma Challenge here. The two-day battalion competition consisted of a series of challenges including tactical combat casualty care, live-fire ranges, and combat conditioning to test individual combat effectiveness. Marine Corps photo by Lance Cpl. Brayden Daniel

#### The Meat & Potatoes



Lisa Smith Molinari

of Life

After 25 years of marriage, I know that relationships are tested.

Power struggles surface during unexpected moments. Every couple has their triggers, and ours include debates over which way the toilet paper roll should hang, who touched the thermostat last, and what constitutes junk mail.

For my husband Francis and I there is one event that launches us into a passive-aggressive battle of wills like no other. It happens infrequently, but when it does, it causes palpable tension that leaves us both leafing through the yellow pages for a good attorney, just in case.

That event is skiing.

A recreational sport intended to provide positive family memories and adrenaline-fueled euphoria, skiing actually sends us to the brink

Our mismatched perceptions of skiing started in our respective childhoods. Francis was forced to take ski lessons with his brothers one winter in the 1970s. The cold. scratchy wool, paralyzingly stiff boots and bafflingly complicated bindings caused irreparable childhood trauma from which Francis never recovered. His only salvation was the promised Styrofoam cup of hot cocoa he got to drink in the

#### **Snow plows and wedding vows**

station wagon ride home.

Conversely. I had countless fun experiences in high school Ski Club. when my best friend and I would sneak sips of peppermint schnapps from Bota bags and lie to cute boys on the chair lifts, telling them our names were "Brooke Townsend" and "Claire Taylor" and that we went to boarding school in Massachusetts.

Our family's ill-fated foray into skiing began after our move to Germany. In full denial that my family had no interest in skiing, I signed us up for Patch Barracks Ski Club, determined to drag my family through our European ski adventure.

The charade did not last long. On our first trip to the German Alps, our youngest barfed on the gondola, our son caused a pile up on the t-bar, our middle child was in tears, and Francis projected the bitter resentments of his traumatic childhood skiing experiences by encouraging the kids to treat me as the primary source of their discontent. The day ended abruptly when I lead everyone onto a long intermediate trail from which there was no escape. It spit us out onto a steep slope that sent Francis into a freefall not unlike the infamous "agony of defeat" footage on ABC's Wide World of Sports.

Two PCS moves later, friends invited our family to their ski place in New Hampshire. As soon as I accepted the invitation, a power struggle ensued. Francis was prepared to hate every minute of it - the cold, the inconvenience, the expense - and to hold me personally responsible for his annovance. And

without realizing it, I launched my own propaganda campaign to convince him that skiing is fun.

While Francis remained stubbornly skeptical, I was determined to sugarcoat our experience. However, I needed a PhD in economics to get the best deal on lift tickets, eight arms to rent the equipment, the patience of Job to keep everyone happy, a second mortgage on our house to pay for it, and acting lessons in how to grin and bear it.

Inevitably, there was no hiding the truth. By the time we arrived at the resort, the tension emanating from Francis was palpable. In the locker room. it took two of us bracing against the lockers to snap Francis boot buckles shut only to do it all over again when he claimed that a wrinkle in his sock was causing unbearable pain.

By some miracle of God, we all managed to put on our equipment and made it onto the chair lift. Sweaty and winded, I realized that Francis was right - skiing is an inconvenient sport. After a few runs. I conceded defeat and left Francis alone, fully expecting him to head straight for the lodge. Hours later, I ran into him on the slopes. He'd actually been skiing all afternoon, without hot cocoa. "You up for another run?" he asked from behind his balaclava.

"Heck yeah," I smiled, slotting into the lift line with him.

On the chairlift, I leaned in for a frosty kiss, realizing that our power struggle had peaked, and it was all downhill from there.

#### **INDY** Autonomous Challenge at the Consumer **Electronics Show, Las Vegas**

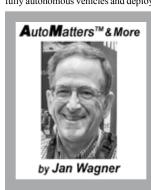
in innovative products and technologies, the Consumer Electronics Show (CES) in Las Vegas didn't disappoint, despite the impact of COVID-19 and its Omicron variant that precipitated cancellations by several major ex-

The Indy Autonomous Challenge (IAC) competition was held on the high-speed oval track at Las Vegas Motor Speedway, a long-time venue for IndvCar as well as NASCAR racing, where several days of practice culminated in head-to-head, fully autonomous racing on Jan. 7, the final day of CES 2022. Prior to the activities at LVMS, the press covering CES were introduced to the IAC at the traditional CES Unveiled press preview event and at a CES press conference.

According to the Indy Autonomous Challenge, IAC traces its origins back to over two years, when 41 university teams from 14 states and 11 countries representing top engineering and technology programs, signed up to compete. Their first challenge event was on Oct. 23, 2021, at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway, when cars competed one-at-a-time for a milliondollar grand prize (see AutoMatters & More #715 at https://automatters.net/ indy-autonomous-challenge-at-theindianapolis-motor-speedway/). Their first head-to-head competition was at LVMS during CES 2022.Competing for a \$150,000 grand prize, five teams from five countries raced modified Dallara Indy Lights cars. For the IAC, the Dallara AV-21 is outfitted with an array of technology, including "Lumi-nar Hydra LiDAR sensors to provide 360-degree long-range sensing," to enable the cars to compete at high speeds autonomously and safely.

The primary goal of this ambitious

lems by advancing technology that will speed the commercialization of fully autonomous vehicles and deploy-



ments of advanced driver-assistance systems. Pushing limits for the entire autonomous community and helping to increase safety and performance is of critical importance, not only in motorsports, but across all modes of commercial transportation.

According to Paul Mitchell, president and CEO of the non-profit Energy Systems Network, the organizer of the IAC: "We came to CES this week, the world's most influential technology innovation event, to showcase to the world how this competition is catapulting autonomous technologies forward ... We're harnessing the power of prize competitions to attract the best and the brightest minds from around the globe to further the state-of-the art technology in safety and performance of automated vehicles and the teams did just that today with another historic competition." This competition is "also about educating and inspiring innovators and entrepreneurs for generations

The format of the race was a pass-

ing competition. Pairs of cars were on the track at the same time. One was the defender and the other was the attacker. In order to pass, the attacker had to go faster than the defender, and blocking was not allowed. It was like a high-speed, high-stakes game of leapfrog. This continued until the attacker could not go fast enough to pass the defender.

The fastest pair were the teams from PoliMOVE (Politecnico di Milano of Italy and the University of Alabama) and TUM Autonomous Motorsport Technische Universität München (Germany) — the winner of the previous competition at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway. These two teams competed against each other in the

exciting final round.

For those who think this event was like watching light-weight, scale model cars circulating on an R/C track, it really was not. As these pairs of modi. really was not. As these pairs of modified Indy Lights cars leapfrogged each other, increasing their speeds lap after lap, soon they entered truly unknown territory. Especially given what the setbacks that had happened at the Indianapolis event (which I watched Indianapolis event (which I watched live-streamed), no one — including the race teams themselves — knew with confidence what to expect, and the consequences of hitting a wall would be far more consequential than an R/C car crash.The final, deciding lap, ended in dramatic fashion. The TUM Autonomous Motorsport car spun out and PoliMOVE won—celebrated with absolute euphoria by the team.

For a link to the official, four-hour live-stream of the event, visit https:// www.indyautonomouschallenge.com/ polimove-wins-the-autonomous-challenge-at-ces.

ge-at-ces.
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**Dream Big** at Pechanga Arena San Diego. www.disneyonice.com Jan 22-23: California Native Plant Sale, Sat, Jan 22, 9am-3pm. Mission Trails Regional Park, One Father Junípero Serra Trail, San Carlos, 92119 Two-day free, outdoor event, veteran gardeners and newcomers can purchase a wide selection of native plants and seeds, books, and merchandise, get tips from native plant experts Jan 26: SD Gulls vs. Colorado Eagles at Pechanga Arena San Diego, 7pm. sandiegogulls.com Jan 26-29: Farmers Insurance Open at Torrey Pines Golf Course www.pgatour.com

Jan 28-30: **San Diego Lunar New Year Festival**. Celebrate this new year in festive environment with dragon and lion dances, firecrackers, games, food. Officer J. Henwood Memorial Park. 4455 Wightman St,San Diego, 92105. Jan 28: **SD Sockers vs. Tacoma** 

Stars at Pechanga Arena San Diego, 7:35pm. sdsockers.com

31: Men's Basketball: SDSU vs. New Mexico at Viejas Arena, 7pm. goaztecs.com February: **SD Museum Month-**

28 Days of Museum Moments. Explore the fun with 50% off admission to 45+ SD County museums, historic sites, gardens, zoo/ aquariums and more. Pick up your pass at a San Diego Macy's store or one of 75 libraries throughout San Diego County. https://sandiegomuseumcouncil.org/specials/ museum-month/

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#### **Armed Forces Dispatch** (619) 280-2985

Published by Western States Weeklies, Inc. B-280 El Camino Real, Carlsbad, CA 92008 E-mail: editor@navydispatch.com

Publisher.....Sarah Hagerty

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#### **MOVIES AT THE BASES**

Movies & times subject to change. \* Indicates last showing Visit navydispatch.com/entertainment\_03movies.htm to find your base theatre information

Naval Base Theater - NBSD, 619-556-5568, Bldg. 71 3465 Senn Rd.

FREE entry to the first 300 custom ers (per showing), no outside food, concessions will be available. **Thursday, Jan 20** 6pm Spider-Man: No Way Home pg13

Friday, Jan 21 6pm The Matrix Resurrections r

Saturday, Jan 22 3:10pm Sing 2 pg 6pm The Matrix Resurrections r

Sunday, Jan 23 12:50pm Sing 2 pg 3:30pm Spider-Man: No Way Home

Thursday, Jan 27 5:50pm Sing 2 pg

**Friday, Jan 28** 5:30pm The Matrix Resurrections r Saturday, Jan 29

1:50pm Spider-Man: No Way Home 5:30pm American Underdog pg

**Pendleton Theater** and Training Center Bldg 1330 Mainside (Across

from Mainside Center) Saturday Jan 22 1:30pm Resident Evil: Welcome to Ra-

coon City (R) Saturday, Jan 29 1:30pmWest Side Story (PG 13) Saturday, Feb 5

1:30pm Spider-Man: No Way Home

**Bob Hope Theater** 577-4143 MCAS Miramar Bldg 2242

Friday, Jan 21

6pm Spider-Man: No Way Home pg13 9pm The Matrix Resurrections

Saturday, Jan 22 3pm Sing 2 pg

6pm Spider-Man: No Way Home pg13

Friday, Jan 28 6pm Sing 2 pg

9pm American Underdog pg

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Friday, Jan 21 6pmThe Matrix Resurrections (R) Saturday, Jan 22

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Sunday, Jan 23

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13 Sunburn-soothing balm

14 Earring holder

15 \_\_ God: earthquake, e.g. 17 \*Test of hand strength

19 Danger 20 "It's the I can do"

22 Take place

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28 Gave voice to 29 \*Ski resort purchase

31 Diagram for Web navigation

33 "Game of Thrones" channel

34 At some future point

35 It's given in the form of a question on

"Jeopardy!"
40 Soccer official

42 "Goosebumps" series author

43 \*Accidentally call without touching one's

cellphone 48 Contributes

49 Ohio border lake

50 Pungent flavor

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54 Patronized as a diner

56 Circle or polygon
57 Express lack of interest on Tinder ... or a

hint to the answers to starred clues

61 Downy duck 62 Compress, with "down"

63 Idris of "The Wire"

64 Fix, as socks 65 Salon selections Down
1 Maple-syrup-to-be

2 "Baby Cobra" comic Wong 3 Jaden, to Will Smith

4 Peacefully hidden, as a retreat 5 Lingerie brand 6 Bow down to, perhaps

7 Not very much

8 Sales agent 9 Daddy

10 Acid type found in vinegar 11 Found in abundance, as oil

12 Evening party 16 Group of ships

18 Billy Joel's "Tell About It"

21 NYC museum's fundraising gala 22 Bone, in Bologna

23 Biblical brothe

24 Make mention of

26 High math degree

29 Baby shower gift 30 Charged particles

32 Female in a stable

36 Takes by surprise

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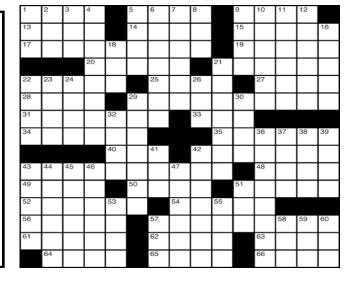
47 Sort of 51 Modern honey

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20,

IANUARY www.armedforcesdispatch.com THURSDAY,

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# Critically ill COVID patient delivers baby while on heart-lung bypass

**Brooke Army Medical Center Public Affairs** 

JOINT BASE SAN ANTO-NIO-FORT SAM HOUSTON Texas -- A Marine Corps spouse and mother of five was 28 weeks pregnant when she caught a "mild case" of COVID-19 in

Ashley Savidge Hernandez felt tired but wasn't too concerned until she began to have trouble catching her breath. Alarmed for their baby, retired U.S. Marine Corps Gunnery Sgt. Carlos Hernandez drove his wife to Brooke Army Medical Center's emergency room iust to be safe.

Ashley had no idea she and her baby were about to embark on a month-long battle for their

"It all seems surreal to me now," she said on a phone interview, her voice still raspy from the ventilator. "I had no idea at the time how dire the situation was for me and

#### **Rapid Decline**

Ashley had received the positive COVID-19 results on a Friday and by Monday, her condition had grown much worse.

"When I went in the room to check on her, I instantly knew something was wrong," her husband said. "Her breathing was labored, and she could hardly get a full sentence out because she seemed out of breath with each

Hernandez quickly loaded their five young children into the van and rushed Ashley to BAMC.

"I placed her in the wheelchair (and) took her into the ER, but I had to go get the kids and move the van, so I told her, 'I'll be right back," he said. "Those were the last words I said to her, and they haunted me for weeks because at several points I thought God might be calling her home.'

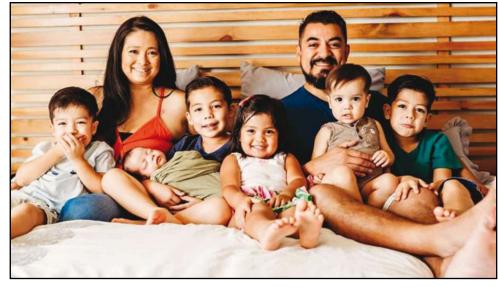
Ashley's oxygen levels began to quickly dip. Her health care team tried low-flow, then high-flow oxygen, but to no avail. In the intensive care unit. Ashlev was told she needed to be intubated. which is when a tube is placed in the throat to help air move in and out of the lungs.

"I remember asking them what that meant, but things got hazy after that," she said.

Ashley was in and out of consciousness, but vaguely recalls the tubes being removed and the loud hiss of the high-flow oxygen drowning out the concerned voices

U.S. Air Force Col. Phillip Mason was familiar with Ashlev's case, but thought she was improving until that point – until he got an urgent call.

"Ashley was deteriorating quickly," said Mason, medical



Retired U.S. Marine Corps Gunnery Sgt. Carlos Hernandez and his wife, Ashley, take a family portrait with their six children. Ashley is BAMC's first patient to give birth while on Extracorporeal Membrane Oxygenation. Courtesy photo

director, BAMC Adult Extracorporeal Membrane Oxygenation Program. "For some people, COV-ID-19 is a very rapidly progressing disease."

After consulting with her husband, Mason and his team made the difficult call to put Ashley, now 29-weeks pregnant, on ECMO. "Ashley was on the brink of cardiac arrest without intervention," Mason said. "We needed to stabilize her to allow for a better delivery and the best outcome for both patient and baby."

"It was really the last-ditch effort to try and save her life,' Hernandez said. Knowing that felt "like a freight train just smashed into my own chest."

#### **ECMO Explained**

Extracorporeal Membrane Oxygenation, more commonly known as ECMO, is a heart-lung bypass system used when other lifesaving interventions, such as oxygen therapy or a ventilator, have been exhausted. It removes blood from central vessels, oxygenates it, and delivers it back into the bloodstream. In essence, it replaces the natural functions of the heart and lungs while treatments and natural healing of the affected organs take

Established in 2012, BAMC has the only adult ECMO center in the Department of Defense and remains one of the few centers in the world with global air transport capability. In July 2013, the ECMO team completed the military's first trans-Atlantic movement of an adult on external lung support -- a 5,000 mile, nonstop flight from Germany to San Antonio.

"We have a tremendous and unique capability to deploy to a combat zone, initiate ECMO and transport the service member back to a medical center," Mason said.

While it's been used for severe cases of influenza and other pulmonary diseases, in more recent years, ECMO has proven lifesaving for some patients with COV-ID-19-related respiratory failure. COVID-19 patients on ECMO typically have a 50-60 percent survivability rate, Mason noted, which offers an avenue of hope for natients and their families

"In Ashley's case, we were running out of options, and were concerned for her baby," he said. "ECMO was the best course of action for her."

Ashley's husband vividly remembers the call from BAMC, asking for his consent to place her on ECMO.

"I asked if they could wait for one hour so I could get my kids settled with someone, get to the hospital before the procedure, and at least tell her I loved her before she was sedated, but they said there was just no time, they had to move forward, so I agreed," he said. "I knew what that acknowledgment could mean for her, the baby, and us as a family. It was in God's hands at that point."

#### The Delivery

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As a specialized team inserted the ECMO tubes, obstetric and neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) teams were poised to deliver and care for the baby as soon as the team gave the all clear. "Once we got Ashley on ECMO, things began to move very quickly,' Mason recalled.

After the cesarean section, the NICU team rushed the baby to the next room for treatment. Aside from needing a ventilator to aid his 29-week-old lungs, Ashley's newborn son was otherwise healthy. At the time, the staff didn't think about the historic nature of the moment, which marked BAMC's first patient to give birth while on

Ashley has no memory of her delivery and the days after were "extremely foggy," she said. It all "snapped back to reality" when her nurses came in with a poster with her son's updated height, weight, and hand and foot prints, and she became intent on getting well enough to hold her son.

Due to a 30-day isolation, Ashley was able to see her baby via

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(100 equals pure glucose), the index

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video chat but didn't meet him in person until weeks later. "It was heartbreaking," she said. "I wanted to be with him, to hold him and feed him."

On July 17, Ashley was finally able to visit with her son in the NICU. Still on ECMO and fighting exhaustion, she sat in a room, donned in a gown and mask, and held her baby for the first time. "He felt very heavy and very small," she said. "But I was so relieved to hold him.'

Ashley was on ECMO for 30 days, mostly while awake to help build her strength and stamina But like many ECMO patients, she felt "horrible anxiety" and leaned heavily on her health care team for comfort. She especially relied on her nurses, Roxann Naud and U.S. Army Capt. E.J. Rauch, she said.

"She felt very overwhelmed," Naud said. "She was very concerned about her baby in the NICU and her other children. We did our best to reassure her and let her know her feelings were very normal and okay; that she will get through this."

Fortified by seeing her baby, Ashley's condition began to improve. She was removed from ECMO on July 26 and cleared to return home a few weeks later. "I couldn't wait to get home to see my husband and children," she said.

#### Homecoming

Ashley's husband drove her home from the hospital. As she slowly walked into her house with an oxygen tank, her normally rambunctious children – ages 7, 6, 4, 3 and 1-- were surprisingly calm. "I sat down and they didn't leave my side for several days," she said.

A few weeks later, Ashley and her husband welcomed their new baby, Kyzon, home. Now 5 months old, "he's doing great - eating and sleeping and laughing," she said.

About a month ago, Ashley had a checkup and received a clean bill of health. "I'm very grateful that God saw fit that I needed to still be here for some reason," she said, holding Kyzon tightly on her lap. "I'm also extremely grateful to BAMC for the compassionate

"It was an experience unlike we have ever faced, together or apart, but truly a miracle," her husband added. "Only by God's grace and both the skill and care of the BAMC staff that my family is whole today."

While ECMO was key, Mason also credits Ashley's positive attitude and the hard-working team members who sat by her side, rubbing her temples and feet or brushing her hair when she felt

"We are absolutely thrilled to see Ashley doing so well," he said. "It's been a tough few years filled with heartbreaking loss and amazing survival stories. Ashley's outcome is energizing for all of

With COVID-19 transmission on the rise, Mason continues to encourage people to get the vaccine. "We have not had a fully vaccinated patient on ECMO or close to being on ECMO at BAMC," he said. "It's not too late; please get vaccinated."



sugar level, primarily by converting excess sugar to stored fat Higher number, faster rise GI for average portion of some foods Banana Oreo cookie 64 White bread 70 Baked potato Source: Harvard Health Publications, Nutrition Data Graphic: TNS

THURSDAY, JANUARY 20

