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K-9 SKILLS Master-at-Arms 2nd Class Katzumy Rodriguez and military working dog, Ttyke, assigned to NAS Pensacola, Fla., navigate over an obstacle during a K-9 skills competition May 16 at Eglin Air Force Base. Rodriguez and Ttyke won top honors over Air Force, Army, Navy and local law enforcement teams at the Air Force 96th Security Force Squadron K-9 Skills Competition. U.S. Navy photo by Samuel King Jr.

NAVWAR named Navy's best place to work in 2023 rankings

by Lily Chen, Naval Information Warfare Systems Command

Naval Information Warfare Systems Command (NAVWAR) was named as the top Navy organization in the 2023 Best Places to Work in the Federal Government rankings, listed first out of 17 Department of Navy (DON) agency subcomponent organizations.

The annual report, published by the Partnership for Public Service and Boston Consulting Group, offers the most comprehensive assessment of how federal public servants view their jobs and workplaces, providing employee perspectives on leadership, work-life balance, pay, professional development among other issues.

"NAVWAR is committed to doing everything we can to cultivate a world-class workforce. Our leadership has not only stated that our workforce is the priority, but they have also invested in programs that empower a culture of excellence, focus on continuous learning and career development opportunities, and inspire a mission mindset," said Francesca Ramos, director of civilian human resources at NAVWAR. "These are all things that get our workforce highly engaged and motivated to do their best work in support of the fleet and warfighter."

The results are calculated using a proprietary weighted formula that looks at responses received from the workforce relative to the three following questions from the U.S. Office of Personnel Management's Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS):

- I recommend my organization as a good place to work.
- Considering everything, how satisfied are you with your job
- Considering everything, how satisfied are you with your organization

NAVWAR received a score of 79.7, a marked improvement over last year's result of 74.9. As the highest score in command history, it is well above the average 2023 score of 65.7. Out of 459 agency subcomponent agencies across the entire federal government, NAVWAR remains in the top 33 percent.

<https://www.dvidshub.net/news/472730/navwar-named-navys-best-place-work-2023-rankings>

MILITARY CHILDREN GRADUATE WITH HONORS

by Eric Butler

Fort Hunter Liggett P.A.O.

As the school year draws to a close, San Antonio Elementary School is abuzz with the excitement of graduation ceremonies. This year, the 8th-grade class stands out for a remarkable

achievement: the valedictorian and salutatorians are all children from the Fort Hunter Liggett. The valedictorian, Hailey Adair, is a military contractor's child. The salutatorians, Logan Butler, Zeke Brown, and Taylor Engel are all children of career Sol-

diers. These students epitomize the Army moto – Be All You Can Be!

"Being salutatorian means that I'm appreciated for my hard work; that I'm supported and respected by my peers," said Taylor Engel. "I feel immense pride in myself for what I have done, and it's helped me feel prepared for whatever is thrown my way."

"The Fort Hunter Liggett community takes great pride in these graduates," said the FHL Commander Col. Stephen Trotter. "Their achievements are a testament to the strength and support of the military community, which provides a stable foundation even in the most transient of lifestyles."

These young scholars exem-

plify the resilience and adaptability that are the hallmarks of military children. Their journey through elementary school were marked by the unique challenges and opportunities that come with being part of a military family. They have navigated frequent relocations, adapted to new schools, and built new friendships, all while maintaining academic excellence.

"Being a Salutatorian is a testament to Taylor's commitment to learning, her ability to excel, and her resilience in the face of challenges," said Engel's parents. "We couldn't be prouder of her accomplishments, and we see this honor as a reflection of her character and determination."

"I am extremely proud of see **Honors**, page 2



Fort Hunter Liggett military children (L-R): Salutatorians Zeke Brown and Logan Butler, Valedictorian Hailey Adair and Salutatorian Taylor Engel. Photo by Eric Butler

Former vice chief of naval operations arrested for bribery scheme

WASHINGTON - In a report in *Stars and Stripes*, a former vice chief of naval operations faces up to 30 years in prison after being arrested May 31 along with two business executives on criminal charges involving a U.S. government contract bribery scheme, the Justice Department announced. Retired Adm. Robert Burke, 62, of Coconut Creek, Fla., is accused of having been involved in the scheme from 2020 to 2022, according to an indictment unsealed Friday. Business executives Yongchul "Charlie" Kim and Meghan Messenger of New York were also arrested.

<https://www.stripes.com/theaters/us/2024-05-31/navy-admiral-bribery-scheme-14041943.html>

Court finds Coast Guard illegally forced retirement on hundreds of enlisted members

STARS AND STRIPES - Nearly 250 Coast Guard members who were unlawfully forced into retirement under the guise of a force reduction could be entitled to millions of dollars in back pay and benefits, according to a federal court decision. The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit in March upheld a lower court's 2021 decision that the Coast Guard's use of what it called performance-based panels to thin the upper enlisted ranks violated federal law and the due-process afforded troops when separated from the service. The Coast Guard had until May 30 to appeal to the Supreme Court but did not, said Nathan Mammen, the attorney who filed the suit in 2018.

https://www.stripes.com/branches/coast_guard/2024-05-31/coast-guard-lawsuit-retirees-backpay-14040606.html

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Army

- Soldier convicted of child sex abuse now faces murder charge
- 31 pistols went missing from Fort Moore, Georgia — the Army is offering \$5,000 for information
- Family of slain 101st Airborne Soldier offers \$55k reward for answers
- Rite of spring: Army base on Okinawa sees season's first green sea turtle

Navy

- Navy's aims for Middle East drone fleet altered after big miss on target number
- Amphib Boxer soon to be sidelined again for 18 months of maintenance
- Lava reaches wall around U.S. military site in Iceland, but defenses expected to hold
- May Red Sea recap: Navy maintains fight against Houthi attacks

Marine Corps

- Trucker in deadly Jarheads crash denied license reinstatement
- Police search for 'foreigner' suspected of stabbing Marine outside Okinawa restaurant
- His grandfather was a 'Beirut Marine.' Now he's graduating from Parris Island.
- Marines prep for multinational live-fire drills near Australia's northeastern coast

Air Force

- Nearly 1,000 cadets graduate from Air Force Academy at Falcon Stadium
- Air Force mission capable rates fall in 2023, led by declines for F-15C and B-1
- No injuries after landing gear retracts on KC-135 Stratotanker parked in Kansas
- Feds allege school district barred reservist from resuming his job
- F-16 Fighting Falcon drops fuel tanks during takeoff emergency over Alaska

Honors

continued from page 1

Logan's hard work and perseverance," said Logan Butler's mother. "He is a very well-rounded young man, who is already working toward a bright future."

As military children, these students have developed a unique set of skills. They are quick to adjust to ever-changing environments, they show empathy towards others, and they possess a global awareness that enriches their perspectives. These traits have not only propelled them to academic success but have also prepared them for the challenges of high school and beyond.

"It's evident these students' accomplishments exude the Army values of loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service honor, integrity, and personal courage," said FHL Deputy to the Garrison Commander Michelle McLaughlin. "In addition, they should take

pride in their military connection as a military BRAT, which stands for Bravery, Resilience, Adaptability and Toughness."

The close-knit FHL community has played a pivotal role in nurturing these young minds, instilling in them the values of hard work, integrity, and service. FHL has many programs to support military children such as summer jobs and a Teen Center that provides a safe environment with many activities to keep them engaged.

As we celebrate the accomplishments of these remarkable 8th graders, we are reminded of the potential within each child to overcome obstacles and thrive. The valedictorian and salutorians from the FHL are not just graduates; they are beacons of hope, symbolizing the bright future that lies ahead for all children who face life's challenges with resilience and adaptability. Congratulations to the class of 2024!

NATIONAL GUARD READY FOR POTENTIAL RECORD-BREAKING WILDFIRE, HURRICANE SEASON

With 2024 projected as one of the hottest years on record, climate scientists have noted a heightened risk of hurricanes and wildfires, but National Guard officials said the Guard is more prepared than ever to respond to these challenges. "Our saying in Florida is that you're either in hurricane season or you're preparing for hurricane season," said Army Lt. Col. Blake Heidelberg, director of military support with the Florida National Guard, during a media roundtable discussion on the topic May 28. Also discussed was preparing for wildfires, which have increased in severity and frequency in California. The National Interagency Fire Center predicts that trend to continue with rising temperatures and prolonged drought conditions in the state.



SQUARED AWAY Recruits stand in formation before their pass-in-review ceremony inside Midway Ceremonial Drill Hall at Navy Recruit Training Command's Pass in Review in Great Lakes, Ill., May 24, 2024. More than 40,000 recruits train annually at the Navy's only boot camp U.S. Navy photo by MC2 Christopher M. O'Grady



GAME Army Command Sgt. Maj. Brian Hester jumps to greet a fan at the United Football League's San Antonio Brahmas vs. the Birmingham Stallions game in San Antonio, May 25, 2024. U.S. Army photo by Austin Thomas

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"Congratulations to my fellow dragon swimmers at NAS North Island Aquatics!"

Navy's aim for Middle East drone fleet altered after big miss on target number



A MARTAC T-38 Devil Ray unmanned surface vehicle operates in the Arabian Gulf, Oct. 26, 2023. According to a military official, the Navy has changed the focus of its Middle East drone boat effort after not reaching its goal of assembling a fleet of 100 unmanned surface vessels. U.S. Navy photo by Jacob Vernier

by J.P. Lawrence
Stars and Stripes

The Navy's much-touted goal of a regional fleet of 100 unmanned surface vessels in the Middle East fell so short of expectations that the service has scrapped the notion of a numerical target for the program, according to a military official.

The focus was switched "from a firm number to an operational capability," the official, who has knowledge of the program, said Wednesday on condition of anonymity in order to speak on sensitive matters.

By the end of last summer, the Navy said it had about 50 such vessels that it considered part of the regional fleet, of which the U.S. contributed about 20. But since last fall, naval officials have been loath to speak about the issue.

The aim was to have the 100 drone boats patrolling Middle Eastern waters by the end of the summer of 2023, U.S. military officials said last year. The unmanned craft would have been provided primarily by regional allies.

They would have collected information to be shared among

the U.S. and its allies in the Middle East, following the example of the Navy's tech unit Task Force 59, which since 2021 has tested and operated unmanned surface ships in the region.

But the Navy was overly keen to announce a fleet with an eye-catching number of unmanned surface vessels and didn't factor in their Persian Gulf allies' concerns, according to analysts.

"The countries are interested in maybe pursuing these as individual efforts, but they're not necessarily looking to do it as part of that cooperative activity that the Task Force 59 guys were leading," said Bryan Clark, a senior fellow at the Washington-based Hudson Institute.

COUNTRIES SUCH AS SAUDI ARABIA AND THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES HAVE EXPRESSED A WILLINGNESS TO INVEST IN NAVAL SURVEILLANCE DRONES AND HAVE THE RESOURCES TO DO SO, EXPERTS SAID.

But these nations are sometimes competitors and have

been hesitant to join an effort involving the sharing of sensitive information, said Clark, an analyst on naval operations and autonomous systems who spoke to Gulf and 5th Fleet officials.

Arab leaders in the Gulf questioned the regional fleet idea last year and have been reluctant to share radar data with each other this year as part of a U.S.-backed initiative to cooperate on air defense, regional news site Al-Monitor reported last week.

In a November interview, Capt. Colin Corridan, head of Task Force 59, cited difficulties in persuading other navies to make a "cultural leap" toward unmanned naval vessels.

"It's not going to happen immediately," Corridan said, adding that he was not keeping track of the numbers.

After saying in September that the project was on a "trajectory toward meeting" the goal, U.S. 5th Fleet spokesman Cmdr. Rick Chernitzer responded to an update request in February by saying there was "nothing new to share ... on the regional fleet."

This week, Chernitzer de-

clined to answer questions on the status of the initiative and could not specify a country that had joined, citing sensitivities of the nations involved. He issued a statement saying that 5th Fleet is focused on "delivering new capabilities."

The failure to meet the expectation of having a 100-drone Middle East fleet is an example of the Navy's hype about unmanned systems outpacing its abilities, experts said.

"The problem there is if you don't hit that mark, you lose credibility," said Joe Buccino, a

former U.S. Central Command spokesman. The numerical target "was always a bit of an aspiration," added Buccino, who as CENTCOM's chief spokesman until 2023 spearheaded much of the initial messaging about the initiative.

And the goalposts have been shifting on the program since its inception, Buccino said, noting that the deadline set by the Navy changed at least three times.

<https://www.stripes.com/branches/navy/2024-05-30/navy-drone-middle-east-14024734.html>

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Service to country now more important than ever, general says

by David Vergun
DOD News

Air Force Lt. Gen. Marc H. Sasseville, vice chief of the National Guard Bureau, is probably most remembered for his 9/11 flight in an F-16 to intercept hijacked Flight 93, which was heading toward Washington, D.C.

However, resistance from passengers aboard Flight 93 eventually thwarted the hijackers' plans, and ultimately, the plane crashed into a field near Shanksville, Penn.

He's retiring from the Guard soon, capping a career that spans about four decades and includes more than 3,300 flight hours in various aircraft.

Sasseville said since the nation's 9/11 experience, America needs to be prepared for the next round of challenges and potential attacks. He added that there may already be signs of those challenges when considering the number of cyberattacks, drug flow coming into the United States, threats in space and artificial intelligence.



"I don't want to paint myself as paranoid, but I know that the bad guys are not letting up," he said.

"It's easy to forget that there are still people out there who are competing with us, don't value our systems like we do, don't value the international order that we think has served us so well," Sasseville said.

There's a need for service to nation, whether in uniform or as civilians, he said. "If it's not our youth, then who's going to do it?"

It's up to us to reach out to today's youth. We can do that by also reaching out to influences like parents, teachers, school counselors, as well as various organizations that attract youth, he said.

Lt. Gen. Marc Sasseville gives a thumbs-up signal as he prepares to ride in an F-16 Fighting Falcon piloted by Lt. Col. Todd Gibson, 113th Wing, D.C. National Guard, at Joint Base Andrews, Md., May 15, 2024, marking the final flight of Sasseville's career. U.S. Army photo by Sgt. 1st Class Zach Sheely



WE DID IT Cadets celebrate after receiving their diploma during the Air Force Academy Class of 2024 Graduation Ceremony at Falcon Stadium in Colorado Springs, Colo., May 30, 2024. Nine-hundred-seventy-four cadets crossed the stage to become the Air Force/Space Force's newest second lieutenants. U.S. Air Force photo by Trevor Cokley

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USS Tripoli's un-bee-lievable find

by Petty Officer 2nd Class
Malcolm Kelley
USS Tripoli (LHA 7)

PACIFIC OCEAN - During a short period at sea aboard amphibious assault carrier USS Tripoli (LHA 7) Lt. j. g Kaylee Newcomb fell in alongside her fellow Sailors for a foreign object debris (FOD) walkdown, their eyes focused on finding any debris that could cause damage to aircraft.

It was late in the day and it was one of the last tasks left to be accomplished. As the group walked the windy flight deck, Newcomb's eye caught a spot of yellow against the flat grey of the ship. But it was no piece of debris. It was a lone honey bee, somehow separated from its hive and far away from its natural habitat.

Struck with curiosity, Newcomb put the bee in her sleeve to keep it warm, resolving to find a temporary enclosure with sugar water to keep it alive. Not overly alarmed, Newcomb resumed the FOD walkdown with her new passenger. Then she found the second bee. One bee this far out at sea was strange enough. Two was an unbelievable coincidence.

The thought bugged her throughout the night until the next morning. She heard rumors of even more bees near the aircraft crane, affectionately called 'Tilly' by the crew, and she decided to investigate.

After carefully examining the

underside of Tilly, Newcomb's suspicions were confirmed. The inside of the massive crane was crawling with bees. Tripoli was now host to thousands of unexpected ship riders, and Newcomb took it upon herself to find them a new home. As a beekeeper with her own hive, Newcomb was the only Sailor on board with any sort of experience to safely get the bees to a new home port.

As the cyber officer, keeping unwanted bugs out of Tripoli's critical information systems was nothing new to Newcomb.

"I'm tasked with the security of our computer networks aboard Tripoli," Newcomb said. "I ensure they're functional and not being compromised."

Keeping bugs out may have been a matter of routine, but getting this massive swarm into a new home was another matter entirely. Newcomb had an interesting theory for how the bees may have found their way inside Tilly. Newcomb suggested that because it was May, the middle of swarming season, the bees had made the unfortunate decision of using Tilly for shelter, right before the ship got underway for a three-day period.

"Over time, an established hive will become too big, it'll just keep growing and growing. During swarming season, they get so big that they need to split," Newcomb explained. "They'll create a second queen, and half will fly away, while half will stay with the first



Lt. j.g. Kaylee Newcomb, cyber officer aboard amphibious assault carrier Tripoli, relocates bees into a portable bee hive on the flight deck in San Diego, May 17, 2024. U.S. Navy photo by MCSR Eliora Sims

queen. It appears that these bees were looking for a new home. They weren't nesting, they were temporarily staying there. They were in a hotel while looking for a permanent place to live."

Newcomb had only recently taken up beekeeping in April of 2024, but she had prepared herself by reading books, researching videos and taking local courses before acquiring her own hive at home. Even with her relatively limited experience, she knew that removing these wild bees would pose a complicated challenge.

"Normally swarms are pretty gentle, but these girls were hungry, cold, scared, and annoyed that they couldn't find a permanent home," Newcomb said. "They weren't in the mood to be put in a box. They just wanted to huddle back together."

After pulling back into port,

the bees remained inside Tilly. Newcomb gave them time to move on naturally, but they remained embarked. She went home to fetch her beekeeper suit, smoker, and bee vacuum, or 'bee-vac', and with some help from her partner Zach, she donned her beekeeper ensemble and set about helping Tripoli's small yellow stowaways finish their permanent change of station.

As she combed through the
see **Bees**, page 7

USS Greenville arrives at new homeport of Point Loma

NAVAL BASE POINT LOMA - Los Angeles-class fast-attack submarine USS Greenville (SSN 772) and its crew of approximately 155 Sailors arrived at its new homeport here May 20. Greenville is conducting a homeport shift to San Diego following the completion of a 30 month engineered overhaul at Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in Kittery, Maine. Prior to beginning its EOH, Greenville was homeported at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii. "It's a wonderful feeling to be here in San Diego," said Cmdr. Chad Tella, Greenville's commanding officer. "This crew has worked incredibly hard over the course of the last 30 months while Greenville was in the shipyard. Over the past month of operations, the crew has demonstrated their professionalism and resilience in safely bringing Greenville to our new home. I'm happy to join the warfighters of Submarine Squadron 11."

NEWS
IN BRIEF

Navy announces commissioning date for future USS Richard M. McCool, Jr. (LPD 29)

The Navy approved the commissioning date for future USS Richard M. McCool, Jr. (LPD 29). The Navy will commission the amphibious transport dock on Sept. 7, 2024, at NAS Pensacola, FL. The naming of LPD 29 honors Navy Capt. Richard M. McCool, Jr., who was awarded the Medal of Honor in 1945 for the heroism he displayed after his ship was attacked by kamikaze aircraft in the Battle of Okinawa. Despite suffering from shrapnel wounds and painful burns, he led efforts to battle a blazing fire on his ship and rescue injured sailors. LPD 29 will be the first of its name. Richard M. McCool, Jr., will be the Navy's 13th San Antonio-class amphibious transport dock ship. Amphibious transport docks transport and land Marines, their equipment, and supplies by embarked Landing Craft Air Cushion or conventional landing craft and amphibious assault vehicles augmented by helicopters or vertical take-off and landing aircraft. These ships support amphibious assault, special operations, or expeditionary warfare missions and serve as secondary aviation platforms for amphibious operations.



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STRENGTHENING BONDS: EMIRATI SOLDIERS WORK WITH U.S. MARINES DURING BILATERAL TRAINING

by Sgt. Alexandra Munoz
1st Marine Division

U.S. Marines and Sailors with 3rd Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division, and United Arab Emirates – Presidential Guard soldiers recently conducted bilateral training as part of Unit Enhancement Training 24-1 at Camp Pendleton, which ended May 31.

The exercise was the latest training iteration in a longstanding relationship between the two military forces, designed to increase the capabilities and build rapport between the participating units.

“It proves how prevalent the Marine Corps is around the world,” said U.S. Marine 2nd Lt. Nicholas Ghosn, a platoon commander with Kilo Company, 3rd Bn. “We have people from all over coming to train with us and integrate with us. It shows how dominant of a force we have overseas.”

The training encompassed a wide range of activities, including land navigation, integration of joint terminal attack controller capabilities within long range reconnaissance groups, as well as day and night infiltrations. The training was structured using a building block approach, where each week the skills and



U.S. Marine Cpl. Ender Wichlacz, left, hikes alongside members of the United Arab Emirates Presidential Guard during a bilateral training exercise at Camp Pendleton last month. U.S. Marine Corps photo by Lance Cpl. Alexis Ballin

intensity built upon the previous week. The exercise started with individual skills training and built up to team skills, ending with a final exercise encompassing all phases of urban reconnaissance and surveillance.

“It’s pretty awesome to see some of the capabilities the Emiratis have,” said Ghosn. “It was interesting to learn more about their technology and some of the procedures they use back home that we aren’t super familiar with here. All in all, we were trying to figure out how to best integrate with each other.”

The continuous bilateral military relationship between the U.S. Marines and the Emiratis dates to a foreign military sales case that approved Marine Corps trainers to embed with the Presidential guard in 2011. Since then, Marines attached to the Presidential Guard have been instrumental in developing the Presidential Guard’s capabilities.

The continuous bilateral mili-

“The UAE is a regional power in the Middle East,” said U.S. Marine Maj. Daniel McCoy, the reconnaissance brigade team deputy with Marine Corps Training Mission, United Arab Emirates Presidential Guard. “They are a stabilizing presence that’s committed to peace in the region and our opportunity to train with them is going to deepen

that commitment to stabilizing the region.”

that commitment to stabilizing the region.”

This deepening commitment is not only crucial for regional stability but also offers invaluable experience for the participating Marines. This relationship allows for the sharing of advanced military tactics and technology and fosters mutual understanding and respect between the two forces.

“The experience has been fundamental in realizing what it is like working with a foreign military in an operational environment,” added Sgt. Joseph Boothby, a platoon sergeant with Kilo Co., 3rd Bn. “Understanding how to bridge tactical, cultural, and language barriers is important.”

Both sides learned valuable lessons about each other’s operational methods and cultural differences, which are crucial for effective collaboration in real-world scenarios and ensuring overall mission effectiveness.

“The only way we could fight shoulder to shoulder effectively, is if we talk about it, rehearse it, and practice it like in the infantry immersion trainer,” said Ghosn. “We’re showing nations around the world that we’re going to be a great friend and we’re going to be a terrible foe.”



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Volunteers are our greatest asset and the backbone of the USO. Whether helping a Sailor or Marine with a connecting flight, distributing a Care Package, serving snacks with a smile, providing local information, or “welcoming home” ships and troops from deployment, volunteers are vital to the success of the USO’s mission.

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

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PHOTO GALLERY



NEW BOSS Capt. Kenneth Douglas, left, commander, Submarine Squadron (CSS) 11, congratulates Cmdr. Grant Wanier on his assignment as skipper of fast-attack submarine *Hampton* during a change of command at Naval Base Point Loma, May 30, 2024. U.S. Navy photo by MC2 Aaron T. Smith



QUAL IS ALL Sailors fire M18 pistols during a gun shoot aboard amphibious assault carrier *Tripoli* in the Pacific Ocean, May 27, 2024. U.S. Navy photo by MC2 Olivia Rucker



LINCOLN WALK Sailors move ordnance on the flight deck of *Abraham Lincoln* aircraft carrier in the Pacific Ocean, May 28, 2024. *Abraham Lincoln*, is underway to bolster strike group readiness and capability. U.S. Navy photo by MCSN Nathaly Cruz

Bees

continued from page 5

colony in her hot pink beekeeping outfit, Newcomb did not find any honeycombs within the Tilly, as the bees had been too preoccupied with keeping each other warm to build any structures inside the crane.

“When swarming, they’ll be in a big clump trying to be safe and maintain heat,” Newcomb said.

Using this to her advantage, Newcomb exposed the bees to smoke to make them even more docile. According to Newcomb, the leading theory as to why smoke calms bees is that it puts

them in a sort of communications blackout.

“Bees communicate either by dancing or by releasing pheromones,” Newcomb said. “They have panic pheromones that tells them something is going on and it’s time to freak out, so when I smoke a hive, it prevents that pheromone from spreading.”

Once smoked, Newcomb was able to reach far into the underside of the “Tilly” and scoop out as many bees as she could with her hand. She then used a special bee vacuum to remove the rest and secure them into a wire mesh cage. She then took the bees home and sprayed them with some sugar water that night

so they had something to snack on, and relocated them into a brand-new hive the next morning, allowing them a chance to rest and recover from their involuntary voyage.

Newcomb was happy that her swarm-removal skills were up to the task despite little prior experience.

“I just got into bees, I’m definitely not a bee expert,” Newcomb said. “I was very grateful I was given the opportunity to remove the bees. People get a little intimidated by bees, but honeybees generally are gentle, they’re not out to sting you. I’m glad that the command was supportive of me removing the bees

and giving them a new home. It was fun.”

Newcomb named the new hive the “Seabees,” after the United States Naval Construction Battalion, who specialize in providing rapid construction support to Navy and Marine Corps operations worldwide. The Seabee logo is a large, menacing bee, armed with construction tools and a machine gun. Despite the tough legacy of the Seabees and the fighting spirit of the *Tripoli*’s storied predecessors, Newcomb’s gentler approach gave the fledgling colony the opportunity they needed to begin constructing a new home for themselves, one new comb at

O’Mara IV takes command of Coast Guard Cutter *Munro*

Coast Guard Cutter *Munro* (WMSL 755) held a change of command May 30 in San Diego. Vice Adm. Andrew J. Tiongson, commander, Coast Guard Pacific Area, presided over the ceremony in which Capt. James O’Mara IV relieved Capt. Rula Deisher as *Munro*’s commanding officer. Deisher served as *Munro*’s commanding officer from May 2022 to May 2024, sailing over 73,000 nautical miles to 17 ports. While patrolling the Bering Sea, *Munro* conducted 24 fisheries boardings and two search-and-rescue cases, including the medical evacuation of a critical patient from Dutch Harbor, Alaska, to Anchorage, Alaska. During the cutter’s WestPac patrol, the hosted multiple engagements with foreign partners, including a discussion about the SAPPHERE agreement with Japanese Coast Guard officers. Deisher’s next assignment is to serve as the Seventeenth District’s Response Division chief. O’Mara, the incoming skipper, reports aboard *Munro* from the Coast Guard’s Eleventh District as the enforcement branch chief. O’Mara oversaw assets across 1,000 miles of shoreline from the California-Oregon state line to the Mexico border and 73 federal waterways.

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D-Day at 80: Enthusiastic welcome for U.S. veterans as they arrive in France for D-Day remembrance

by Robert H. Reid
Stars and Stripes

PARIS - After a roaring send-off from enthusiastic well-wishers, World War II veterans flew to Paris June 1 to pay homage to the thousands of fellow Americans who perished in the fight to liberate Europe from Nazism.

"By serving your country you have liberated ours," France's former ambassador to the U.S., Philippe Etienne, told the nearly 70 "Greatest Generation" veterans in a small but enthusiastic reception at Charles de Gaulle airport. "The flame of remembrance must never be extinguished."

Cadets from the U.S. service academies as well as American Airlines employees and Americans living in the Paris area cheered and waved small American and French flags as the veterans, most in wheelchairs, appeared in the arrival hall.

The veterans, whose ages average slightly over 100, smiled and waved in return despite coming off a nine-hour flight

from Dallas-Fort Worth airport. For the flight, the cabin of the American Airlines Boeing 787 "Dreamliner" was festooned with small American flags and red, white and blue decorations.

Soon into the flight, a member of the support team advised the

The U.S. ambassador to France, Denise Campbell Bauer, greeted them with "welcome back." French-born Florent Groberg, who was awarded the Medal of Honor for heroism in Afghanistan in 2012, delivered remarks in French and English thanking the veterans. A choir

age to American war dead during a wreath-laying ceremony at the Suresnes American Cemetery in Paris where 1,583 Americans are buried. Most of those buried there died in World War I. An honor guard from the 173rd Airborne Brigade, based in Vicenza, Italy, fired a 21-gun salute.

The pilgrimage was organized by American Airlines and volunteer groups that support veterans. Delta Airlines is also sponsoring another group of veterans attending the D-Day commemoration.

Despite enthusiasm at Charles de Gaulle, the welcoming ceremony was smaller than the large crowd at Dallas-Fort Worth which saw them off. Hundreds of travelers at the crowded airport cheered as volunteers wheeled the veterans down Departure Hall D just before they boarded the flight. Travelers crowded around the 66 elderly men and two women, representing "Rosie the Riveters" who took defense industry jobs so men could go fight. The crowd cheered, took smartphone photos and approached the veterans to thank them for their service and sacrifice.



veterans' escorts to have their prescription medicines close at hand and to make sure their veterans shift their weight to avoid clots which can threaten such elderly passengers.

from Marymount International School in a Paris suburb sang national anthems of France and the United States.

On June 2 the group paid hom-

VA adds options for commemorative plaques and urns

Beginning June 10, families of deceased and cremated veterans can apply to receive commemorative plaques or urns from the Department of Veterans Affairs if they don't want to inter their loved ones in a VA National Cemetery or receive a government-furnished headstone, marker, or medallion for placement in any cemetery.

Commemorative urns are used to hold the remains of a deceased cremated veteran, and commemorative plaques are designed to hang on a wall. Both the urns and the plaques honor a veteran's service and serve as a lasting tribute to the individual's status as a veteran. Eligible family members can request one or the other, but not both.

It's important to note that if a family chooses a plaque or urn to commemorate a veteran, VA is prohibited by law from interring that veteran's remains in a VA national cemetery or from providing a headstone, marker, or medallion for placement in any cemetery.

Families should be certain when choosing to receive a plaque or urn to commemorate their vet, because once this decision is made, it cannot be undone. The law doesn't provide a method to restore these benefits.

This new memorial option is being created as a part of the "Johnny Isakson and David P. Roe, M.D. Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act of 2020." To be eligible, the veteran must have been discharged under conditions other than dishonorable on or after April 6, 1917, and the veteran's remains must be cremated - with no portion of the remains interred at any location. Eligibility also includes any servicemember who died on active duty.

More information about the VA's National Cemetery Administration memorial options can be found at <https://www.cem.va.gov/find-cemetery/>. More details, including an application for commemorative plaques and urns, will be available on June 10. Information about VA burial and memorial benefits is available at VA national cemeteries or by calling toll-free at 1-800-827-1000. To make burial arrangements at any VA national cemetery at the time of need, call the National Cemetery Scheduling Office at 1-800-535-1117.

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by Lisa Smith Molinari

The summer I tried smoking

time I graduated from college. In the meantime, I was more interested in who was going to see "The Goonies" that summer.

The five-hour drive to Ocean City was actually enjoyable from the seat of the air conditioned Mazda 626 company car. But once I arrived, the pressure was on to sell something. Reluctantly, I visited several potential clients as instructed by my Dad, but failed to make a single sale that day.

Exhausted and defeated, I searched for a hotel, but

An hour later, I was back in my company car, headed to Washington, D.C. Facing another stressful day as an unskilled teenage traveling saleswoman I wondered, "How will I ever survive this summer job without being disowned by my father?"

Stopping for gas at a 7-11 in Crofton, Maryland, I spied an advertisement for menthol cigarettes behind the counter. "Buy two packs and get shades for free!" it promised. I wasn't a smoker, but I'd seen other drivers looking so relaxed in their cars, one hand dangling casually out the window, a cigarette clamped between two fingers. "Maybe there's something to it," I thought, and put my cash on the counter.

Wearing my new sunglasses, I decided to light up my first cigarette while I was in traffic on the Beltway. Taking a long drag of minty smoke, I felt a surge of calm. "Maybe I CAN make it through this summer job!"

With my smoking hand dangling outside the window, I flicked ashes like a pro. Finishing the first cigarette, I lit up another, embracing my new identity as "A Smoker." But three puffs in, a wave of nausea turned me as green as my pack of menthols.

Turns out, I wasn't good at smoking either.

That summer, my father realized I wasn't going to follow in his footsteps, and I realized that smoking, just like business, wasn't the business for me.



Relive your muscle car memories with The Complete Book of Dodge & Plymouth Muscle Cars

Starting way back in 1951 with the release of the V-8 Hemi engine, Chrysler (now Stellantis) has been building automotive high-performance cars for the motoring public.

A large part of that exciting history is captured in all its automotive glory, complete with 500 color and black & white photos, informative narrative and statistics, in the large format, 320-page hardcover book entitled *The Complete Book of Dodge & Plymouth Muscle Cars — Every Model from 1960 to Today*, by Mike Mueller and updated by Tom Glatch.

No doubt like for many of you, high-performance Chrysler cars played a very important role in my life as I was growing up. My dad drove them, and he instilled his love of high-performance cars in me. He put many thousands of miles on them in relatively unpopulated Western Canada, as he worked as a travelling clothing salesman, transporting his heavy clothing samples from town to town, and city to city. The one that I remember best was our silver, four-door, 1968 Chrysler 300 with hideaway headlights, powered by a 440 cu in big-block V-8 — and dad knew how to drive it!

Many decades later, I still can remember the sense of anticipation and excitement that I felt each year in the fall when Renfrew Chrysler-Plymouth (in Calgary, Alberta) used to invite dad to a private reveal of the new Chrysler and Plymouth models. Of course, I went too!

As I was growing up, Dad was out of town a lot, earning a living for us. My mother did not have a driver's license, so when we needed to travel from our home on the outskirts of Calgary to go shopping or to appointments, we took the bus. Back then we typically did our grocery shopping far



Very old photo of the author's 1970 Plymouth Duster 340

away in downtown Calgary, in the grocery department of the Hudson's Bay Company department store.

In the long, cold, snowy Calgary winters, our shopping trips were especially challenging. When I was very young, Calgary used electric trolley busses. Spring pressure connected the ends of a pair of long poles on the roof of the bus to overhead electric wires. In winter, with ice, snow and gravel covering the roads, these poles occasionally became disconnected from the overhead electric wires, requiring the driver to get out, go to the back of the bus and pull down on the spring-loaded cables to reconnect to the wires.

After our shopping trips we needed to walk, carrying our bags of groceries, up a long hill and then a few blocks further to our house. My mother once slipped on the icy sidewalk, while carrying those bags of groceries.

I was horrified when I saw what looked like blood start to cover the icy sidewalk — until I realized that a glass ketchup bottle had broken and was spilling its contents!

It would have been so much easier for us if only my mother had a driver's license. I was eager for the day when finally, years later, I would get my driver's license, because then dad was going to buy a second car so that I could take mom shopping, to get her hair done and everything else.

No doubt dad's love of high-performance Chrysler products was what motivated him to buy a bright red, 1970 Plymouth Duster 340, for the 16-year-old me. That car was practical, with a huge trunk that could carry lots of groceries. I was thrilled, and more than willing to drive my mother wherever she wanted to go! It was my first car, just like it was Tom Glatch's first car.

I wanted to see how fast my Duster 340 would go so one day I drove out of Calgary on the highway and floored it. At about 130 mph I remember that it seemed to be floating! I slowed back down to the speed limit and never, ever did that again.

Somehow, I survived learning how to drive in that powerful, ill-handling car, and I've driven mostly high-performance cars ever since.

The Complete Book of Dodge & Plymouth Muscle Cars will be released by Motorbooks on June 18 for \$55 (ISBN 9780760387283).

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 and potatoes of life

If you read last week's column, "The near death of a teenage saleswoman," you'll recall that many years ago, my father convinced me to take a summer job as a traveling saleswoman for his industrial chemical company, despite that fact that I had no interest in business, knew nothing about sales, and was only nineteen.

While the rest of my friends were laying out, playing Asteroids and going to the mall for Orange Juliuses, I was trying to grasp boring things like solvents, accounts receivable, surfactants, agitators, pallets and invoices. Two weeks into the job, I was still clueless, but my father sent me out on the road.

"No expense account, only commissions. The more you sell, the more you'll make," he told me in his characteristic School-of-Hard-Knocks way. I was assigned the region that included my home state, Pennsylvania, along with Delaware, Maryland, Northern Virginia and the District of Columbia.

My father instructed me to drive to the town of Ocean City, Maryland, and then make my way back to Pennsylvania, staying in hotels and selling products over the course of a week. Clearly, he was grooming me to take over his company one day, and I didn't have the heart to tell him that I'd prefer a hot poker in the eye. I felt like a disappointment, and hoped that I'd develop business sense by the

without an expense account, I couldn't afford the touristy accommodations in Ocean City. So, I drove ten miles off island, where I spotted a sign blinking, "\$69 a night," over a parking lot containing tractor trailers.

The manager hesitated when handing me the keys. "It's upstairs at the end of the hall," the weathered woman said. "You know the bathroom's shared, right?"

Too tired to get back in my car, I lied, "No problem." I found my room and the shared bathroom, both of which seemed clean enough. Once locked in my room, I fell face first onto the green bedspread and fast asleep.

At sunrise, I was awakened by the sound of diesel engines. I found the hallway empty and tiptoed to the bathroom. What had appeared clean the night before was now — after a fleet of truck drivers had blown through — a dank, dripping mess, marred by strange hairs and unmentionable bodily substances.

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Saturday - June 8
 1 PM Bad Boys: Ride or Die r
 3:30pm Kingdom-Planet of the Apes pg13
 6:20 PM Bad Boys: Ride or Die r
Sunday - June 9
 12:50 PM The Garfield Movie pg
 3pm Kingdom-Planet of the Apes pg13
 6:00 PM Bad Boys: Ride or Die r
Thursday - June 13
Friday - June 14
 5:00 PM IF pg
 7:10 PM The Strangers: Chapter 1 r
Saturday - June 15
 12:50 PM The Garfield Movie pg
 3:00 PM Kingdom of the Planet of the Apes 145 min
 6:00 PM Bad Boys: Ride or Die r
Sunday - June 16
 1:00 PM IF pg
 3:10 PM The Fall Guy pg13
Thursday - June 20
 6:00 PM Kingdom of the Planet of the Apes pg13

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 5:50pm Kingdom-Planet of the Apes pg13
Sunday, June 9
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 3:10pm Kingdom-Planet of the Apes pg13
Thursday, June 13
 6:00 PM Tarot pg13
 8:00 PM Bad Boys: Ride or Die r
Friday, June 14
 6:00 PM IF pg
Saturday, June 15
 1:00 PM IF pg
 3:20 PM The Garfield Movie pg
 6:00 PM The Strangers: Chapter 1 r
Sunday, June 16
 1:00 PM Kingdom of the Planet of the Apes pg13
 4:00 PM Bad Boys: Ride or Die r
Thursday, June 20
 6:00 PM IF pg
 8:10 PM Tarot pg13
 For updates check <https://sandiego.navylifsw.com/movies/>

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Sunday, June 9
 12:00 PM - The Garfield Movie (PG)
 3:00 PM - The Fall Guy (PG-13)
Friday, June 14
 6PM - The Strangers: Chapter 1 (R)
Saturday, June 15
 3:00 PM - If (PG)
 6:30 PM - The Fall Guy (PG-13)
Sunday, June 16
 12:00 PM - If (PG)
 3:00 PM - Kingdom of the Planet of the Apes (PG-13)



Pendleton Theater and Training Center ★
 Bldg 1330 Mainside (Across from Mainside Center)
Saturday, June 8 *SENSORY FRIENDLY
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 4:30pm Abigail (R)
Saturday, June 15
 1:30pm Unsung Hero (PG)
 4:30pm Challengers (R)

SOCIAL SECURITY MATTERS

Future retiree worried about Social Security's future

Dear Rusty: I keep reading that the SSA will only be able to pay out 75% of benefits come 2033. If congress were to do nothing and this reduction in benefits occurred, would seniors already collecting benefits in 2033 have their benefits reduced or would it only be those who have not begun to collect have their future benefits reduced? I will be collecting my benefits no later than 2027 but my wife will not reach full retirement age until 2033 and we are looking for information on whether we need to adjust savings now to account for mine or my wife's possible reduction in benefits. Signed: Worried Senior

Dear Worried Senior: If Congress does nothing to prevent Social Security's reserves from depletion, Social Security - by law - will only be able to pay out benefits equal to income, which is estimated to be about 23% to 25% short of what will be needed to pay full benefits starting in 2033. That would mean everyone who is already receiving monthly Social Security benefits would get a payment 23% to 25% less than they were previously receiving. And without reform, new beneficiaries would get benefits similarly reduced. The action needed to prevent those cuts from happening resides with Congress, and any program reform they enact would likely only affect those who are not yet collecting. Whether or how that would affect you and your wife as future SS beneficiaries depends on the scope of reform Congress will enact which, of course, is not yet known. That uncertainty, itself, is reason enough to bolster your savings for your future retirement.

The probability of Congress allowing the Trust Funds to be depleted, thus necessitating an across the board cut in everyone's benefit is, in my opinion, slim (it would be political suicide). Congress already knows how to fix Social Security's financial woes - they just currently lack the bipartisanship and political fortitude to do so. And it's doubtful any Social Security reform will happen this election year - rather, the opposing sides will likely just sling accusations at each other in 2024. But rest assured that both sides of Congress are acutely aware that reform of the Social Security program is needed soon, and we are already seeing signs that progress on reform may be forthcoming (but not until after the 2024 elections).

Congress is notorious for waiting until the last possible moment to act, and I don't suggest you alter your Social Security claiming strategy based on the unknown. But building a bigger nest egg for retirement is always a prudent goal. Also, calling your Congressional Representative to endorse needed Social Security reform which ensures your future benefits will not be cut would be a good move.

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Renew a love of reading with the San Diego Public Library's Summer Reading Program for all ages

SAN DIEGO - With activities, outdoor adventures and prizes, the annual Summer Reading Program is kicking off at the San Diego Public Library this weekend. The theme of this year's program is "Read, Renew, Repeat," encouraging readers of all ages to learn more about protecting, maintaining and restoring habitats, ecosystems, wildlife and natural resources.

This year's program is underway, and runs through Saturday, Aug. 31. Participants can earn prizes by completing 10 books or a combination of reading and activities. The activities include attending a Summer Reading event or storytime at the library, going on a nature walk, visiting a community garden and keeping a nature journal.

The Summer Reading program offers age categories for children (ages 0-5 and 6-11), youth (ages 12-17) and adults (ages 18 and up). Upon completion, readers will be eligible for prizes including books, museum passes, meal vouchers and a reusable utensil kit. Reading and activities can be tracked online or on paper logs available at any of the 36 San Diego Public Library locations. To register online, view a list of activities and recommended books and find a Summer Reading Program kickoff event near you, visit sandiego.gov/summerreading.

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.
 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
<http://www.veteranmuseum.org/>
 Hours: Call for current hours (619) 239-2300

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

Marine Corps Mechanized Museum Camp Pendleton. Managed under the auspices of Camp Pendleton's Museum Division Office, the collection of over 50 vehicles ranges from World War I to the first Gulf War. It includes Patton tanks, armored wheeled and tracked vehicles, trucks, jeeps and amphibious vehicles. When coming aboard Camp Pendleton, please ensure that you have a valid photo ID for every vehicle occupant along with current registration and proof of insurance. <https://www.themech.org/>
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USS Midway Museum. The USS Midway Museum is a maritime museum located in downtown San Diego at Navy Pier. The museum consists of the aircraft carrier Midway. The ship houses an extensive collection of aircraft, many of which were built in So Cal.
 FREE-Children 5 & under, Active Duty military including reservists (w/ valid ID). Adult \$34 (ages 13+). Youth \$24 (ages 4-12). Veterans (w/ID) \$24*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 daily 10am-5pm • Last admission at 4pm

DoD expands hearing protector fit testing to reduce hearing loss

by Janet A. Aker
MHS Communications

The Department of Defense is forging ahead to implement the expanded hearing protector fit testing requirement that now covers noise-exposed service members and civilian employees. An update to the Hearing Conservation Program instruction 6055.12view or download the PDF in a new window issued by DOD on Nov. 22, 2023, requires expanded testing.

Hearing protector fit testing measures the amount of noise reduction a person is getting from their hearing protection while it is being worn. It is a proven way to reduce noise-induced hearing loss that can happen if a person's hearing protection doesn't fit properly.

Noise is the most prevalent hazardous exposure for service members, regardless of occupation or specialty. DOD seeks to reduce noise-induced hearing loss through the consistent use of properly fitted hearing protection devices, or HPD, both on and off duty. The science of hearing protection is evolving, and audiologists and hearing technicians across the military are still learning how best to meet the expanded requirement for hearing protector fit testingview or download the PDF in a new window, otherwise known as HPFT. HPFT allows noise-exposed service members and civilian workers to find the right hearing protector device and experience the right fit for their particular HPD.

The Defense Health Agency Public Healthopens Health.mil in Aberdeen, Maryland, and its strategic partners are conducting studies at military installations to determine how to best integrate hearing protection fit testing into existing DOD hearing conservation programsopens Health.mil article, said Nancy Vause, who holds a doctorate in psychoacoustics and auditory perception and is an audiologist and hearing conservation consultant.

"We are developing best practice recommendations for installations to implement fit testing and training in numerous ways," Vause said. Additionally, DHA Public Health is "actively seeking funding to purchase the required fit-testing equipment and train technicians to implement fit testing across the DOD."

One of the goals of the expanded requirement is to teach soldiers "what right feels like" so they can individually identify a poor-fitting HPD, Vause noted.

That means involving the service members directly in the fitting process when inserting and wearing their HPDs and taking into consideration "their communication needs, hearing ability, convenience, compatibility with other personal protective equipment, and the environment in which they operate or work," Vause said.

"The most important factor ... is that fit testing will help us find the

most comfortable hearing protector that service members will wear correctly 100% of the time they are exposed to impulse (e.g., weapon) or steady state (e.g., generator) noise," Vause emphasized.

U.S. Army Fort Huachuca's Lessons Learned

Because military hospitals and clinics are at different stages in their HPFT expansion, U.S. Army Fort Huachuca's experience offers some valuable lessons learned so far.

"Hearing protection appointments now take longer at Huachuca," explained Kari Pink, a doctor of audiology and chief of audiology at Huachuca's Raymond W. Bliss Army Health Centeropens TRI-CARE.mil. "We used to have appointments every 30 minutes to get people's annual hearing tests done. With the added fit testing and giving our technicians time to document on each patient, we have increased the appointment time to one hour."

"The great value of HPFT is to find those who have inadequate protection and solve that problem," Pink said. "The issue could be a poor fit, the wrong size hearing protector, or the wrong type of hearing protector."

Fit testing measures the personal attenuation rating (PAR) specific to each individual ear and hearing protector. The PAR is a real-world measurement of the overall noise reduction the hearing protector provides for individual's ears.

The PAR tells each service member if their HPD fits correctly and "can protect them from hearing injuries when exposed to their typical military noise hazards (weapons, vehicles, grenades, even smoke generators)," said Vause.

"I think the soldiers are actually liking that we are able to measure the actual attenuation as well. A lot of people don't know it's normal to have two different-size ear canals, so they might need two different-size ear plugs," according to Pink.

Poor Fit a Common Issue

"Inadequate fit is a common reason for not getting enough protection from hearing protectors," Pink explained.

However, "one of the biggest lessons learned at Fort Huachuca is that

most of the hearing protection we have stocked in the clinic is providing a good PAR for most soldiers, which is great news," she said.

On the other hand, "we have had a handful that have really low PAR with the different types/sizes that we have in stock, so we have to recommend they use foam ear plugs and/or over-the-ear muffs," she said.

"Ear plugsopens HCE are better for high noise and longer noise exposures," while ear muffs are good for intermittent noise and for use with ear plugs as double protection from very high noise levels," Pink explained, noting "there are several other types of hearing protectors that have electronics and other features incorporated into the device." Some service members may require double hearing protection. Additionally, noise-attenuating helmetsopens HCE are available to service members depending on their duties.

'Culture Change' and Impact on Readiness

There's been a significant "culture change" in attitudes about hearing safety in the last two decades, with "more emphasis on protecting and preserving hearing" over rehabilitating hearing loss, according to Vause.

Service members and their leaders "are very intelligent and motivated to 'stay alert and stay alive,'" she said. They expect to "wear all types of personal protection equipment ... and no longer think they are tough to suffer auditory injuries or noise-induced hearing loss."

"Wearing hearing protection is now required, encouraged, and enforced. Fit testing just ensures the HPD is fit correctly and is doing its job," Vause said.

"When we share the negative impact of hearing loss on operational performance, involve service members in the fitting process to create muscle memory, and provide positive feedback on the proper fit of their own HPD, service members not only learn 'what right feels like,' but they will be more likely to have a positive attitude about protecting their hearing," said Vause.

As a result, "they are more likely to follow through on using their HPD correctly and consistently,



A U.S. Marine Corps position safety officer wears earmuffs to dampen the explosive noise while observing two U.S. Marine Corps engineers fire a rocket from the M3A1 Multi-Role Anti-Armor Anti-Personnel Weapons System during training at Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, in August 2023. U.S. Navy photo by Brianna Biel.

both on and off the job," she said. Service members "become more motivated once we share this operational performance information during our targeted hearing health training. Once they understand how hearing loss degrades operational performance and readiness, service members get it."

Another Takeaway

Pink had this advice for her military colleagues leading HPFT at other facilities:

"Stay strong. People will push back about not wanting to have another test done ... it's important to fully understand why we are doing the fit testing and be able to share that with the service members," she said.

On the positive side, "We have gotten many comments about the fit testing and it being 'cool' that we can measure how much attenuation they are getting. We always emphasize why it is important for the individuals, and they usually understand and end up appreciating it."

Resources

The Hearing Center of Excellence offers fit-testing informationopens HCE, extensive educational contentopens HCE, and HPD fitting tools and videos for everyone who must be careful with their hearing.

HCE is spearheading initiatives that focus on the total population of

U.S. service members, regardless of their daily job-related noise exposure, including the Comprehensive Hearing Health Programopens HCE. The CHHP is a three-pronged approach to enhancing hearing health care. To be effective, it requires education, monitoring, and protection elements.

These three components work together to create positive changes in behavior that can prevent hearing loss. The CHHP milBookopens HCE CAC-enabledopens HCE site contains educational materials that satisfy the annual hearing conserva-

tion training requirement. DHA Public Health-Aberdeen has developed a Blackboard Hearing Readiness Officer Course that is open to any HRO at <https://amedd.llc.army.mil/opens Army.mil> or <https://learn.llc.army.mil/opens Army.mil>.

The center developed HPD fitting videos for the U.S. Army Hearing Program. Search "Army Hearing Program" on YouTube to find 11 short videos watch the videos on YouTube demonstrating how to properly fit and wear various HPDs.



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