

# ARMED FORCES DISPATCH



San Diego Navy/Marine Corps Dispatch

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JANUARY 8, 2025



**WELDING FOCUS** Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Tigar Oneil prepares to fix a crack in an x-beam aboard USS *Nimitz* in the Pacific Ocean, late last year. U.S. Navy photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Caylen McCutcheon

## After receiving Medals of Honor at White House, 7 Soldiers inducted into Pentagon Hall of Heroes

by C. Todd Lopez, DOD News

Following a recent ceremony at the White House where seven Soldiers received the Medal of Honor, those same Soldiers were inducted into the Pentagon's Hall of Heroes during an off-site ceremony at Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall in Arlington, Va.

On Jan. 3, President Joe Biden presented the Medal of Honor to Pvt. Bruno R. Orig, Pfc. Wataru Nakamura, Cpl. Fred B. McGee, Pfc. Charles R. Johnson and Gen. Richard E. Cavazos. All served in the Korean War and were posthumously presented the medal. Family members accepted the decoration on their behalf.

From the Vietnam War, both Capt. Hugh R. Nelson Jr. and Pfc. Kenneth J. David were decorated. Nelson received the medal posthumously, while David, the only living recipient, accepted the medal in person.

At JMB-HH, Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III, Secretary of the Army Christine Wormuth and Chief of Staff of the Army Gen. Randy A. George inducted the Soldiers into the Hall of Heroes, where the names of all service members who receive the Medal of Honor are enshrined.

"It's incredibly powerful to hear these seven stories of sheer bravery and sacrifice," said Austin, who himself served in the Army for more than 40 years. "The Soldiers whom we honor today came from different walks of life, from different communities and from different parts of our country."

Austin said some of the Soldiers honored could trace their roots in the United States back for generations. Some, he said, were children of immigrants. Others were descendants of slaves.

"Some of these heroes were commissioned officers in the Army, and some of them fought in the enlisted ranks," Austin said. "Yet when each of these men faced terrible danger in battle, every one of them made the same choice: to put the mission first, to never quit, to never accept defeat and to never leave a fallen comrade."

"These heroes risked everything for their country, and often made the ultimate sacrifice," Austin said. "Their stories should be more than just a source of pride. They should be a source of inspiration. And they should be a spur to action."

### SECNAV names destroyer after carrier Intrepid

Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro named the sea service's newest Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Intrepid (DDG-145), the latest to carry that name in the fleet, according to a recent Navy announcement. The destroyer will be the fifth vessel to carry the name, Del Toro said while aboard museum ship Intrepid, a former aircraft carrier now resting in New York's waters. The ship will "honor of her past namesakes and the courageous service of all our sailors globally from the South China Sea to the Red Sea," Del Toro said. The aircraft carrier was the fourth to carry the Intrepid name through World War II in the Pacific and Vietnam until final decommissioning in 1974.

### Security tightened at military bases following New Orleans, Las Vegas attacks

U.S. military bases across North America initiated heightened security measures, including suspending the Trusted Traveler Program, following violent attacks this week in New Orleans and Las Vegas. The order from U.S. Northern Command, which multiple installations announced on Jan. 3, directs bases to initiate a full identification check at all entry points onto bases. Anyone 18 years and older must present their IDs to security at gates. The military's Trusted Traveler Program is suspended until further notice, per the bases.

## THE PEARL HARBOR MOVIE SCENE THAT ACCIDENTALLY FILMED A REAL PLANE CRASH

by Joshua Skovlund

Task & Purpose

Welcome to That One Scene, a semi-regular series in which Task & Purpose staffers wax nostalgic about "that one scene" from a beloved movie.

*Tora!* chronicles the attack on Pearl Harbor and billed itself as featuring some of the most realistic combat footage in Hollywood history - a claim more true than even the makers originally intended.

attack, filmmakers captured an on-set mishap in which a full-size World War II fighter plane actually crashed as the cameras rolled, and caroomed across a flightline filled with actors and stuntmen - who had to sprint for their actual lives - just steps ahead of the fiery crash.

combat scenes featured replica planes that matched American and Japanese aircraft from the 1941 raid.

The movie was full of real explosions, timed by the crew to go off as planes flew by, simulating dropped bombs. There's also plenty of footage of American sailors - played by stuntmen - fighting back and being caught in the explosions of the Japanese bombs.

Charlie Piecerni was a novice stuntman in the film. He detailed his experience during a phone interview with Historynet.com in 2021. He recalled being set on fire and launched 70 feet into the air off a burning ship into burning water.

"We were on this ship, firing machine guns, cursing and

see **Movie**, page 2

The crash footage is included in the movie, and you can watch one stuntman, in particular, evade almost certain death by just an instant, sprinting and then crawling away as the plane's flaming hulk tumbles directly over where he had been standing moments before.

"Tora! Tora! Tora!" was a massive production, filled with major Hollywood stars of the time, that depicted both the American and Japanese sides of the Pearl Harbor attacks of Dec. 7, 1941. Long before the age of computer animation, its

The 1970 movie "Tora! Tora! Tora!"

During the movie's central



The movie *Tora! Tora! Tora!* captured a true moment of life and death for the stuntmen on set when a remote controlled plane careened towards a crowd during filming. Screen shot from *Tora! Tora! Tora!*

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# U.S. recognizes child soldiering as human trafficking

DOD News|

When Charles was 12, the Revolutionary United Front rebel forces came through his home, the Kono District of Sierra Leone. They were marching for Freetown, the capital of Sierra Leone, and building an army by forcing citizens to join them. They were particularly interested in children and, during the 11-year civil war, 40-50 percent of the RUF forces and 20 percent of the government forces were children ages 9-18.

Charles remembers: “You’d see them in groups, take a girl and go into the room and they come back out, three men, all sweating, and you heard the girl crying and shouting. Sometimes you just hear a gunshot, like bam. Part of their method for getting children to do what they wanted to do was to force us to take drugs. Those few of us who pretended we didn’t understand guns and how to use them they used as laborers, but the others had to do terrible things: the rebels instructed children to kill, burn houses, loot and cause many other mayhems. You can never unsee these atrocities.”

The U.S. Government recognizes child soldiering as a form of human trafficking. Child soldiering occurs when a governmental armed group (including police or other security forces), paramilitary organization, rebel group, or other non-state armed group unlawfully recruits or uses children — through force, fraud, or coercion — as combatants or



Combating trafficking graphic. DOD video still

in support roles. Such support roles include children serving as cooks, porters, guards, messengers, medics, servants or spies.

Children are also used as sex slaves, which occurs when armed groups force or coerce children to “marry” or be raped by commanders or combatants. Both male and female children are often sexually abused or exploited by members of armed groups and suffer the same types of devastating physical and psychological consequences associated with sex trafficking.

In 2014, Boko Haram, an extremist Islamic sect in Nigeria, kidnapped over 200 girls from a school in Chibok.

One survivor, named Habiba, tells of being captured at age 15, locked in a cage for four months, and forced to marry a soldier. She escaped, two months pregnant, and was found on the streets a year later, caring for her baby and two orphans who were boys kidnapped by Boko Haram to be used as child soldiers. Other survivors also told stories of torture, rape and sexual slavery. One survivor described three girls who attempted to flee but were caught, flogged and thrown into a hole. “They told us whosoever cries or begs for them not to be slaughtered will be slaughtered along with them,” she said.

Each year, as required by the Child Soldiers Prevention Act, the U.S. Department of State compiles a list of foreign governments identified during the previous year as having government armed forces, police, or other security forces, or government-supported armed groups that recruit or use child soldiers.

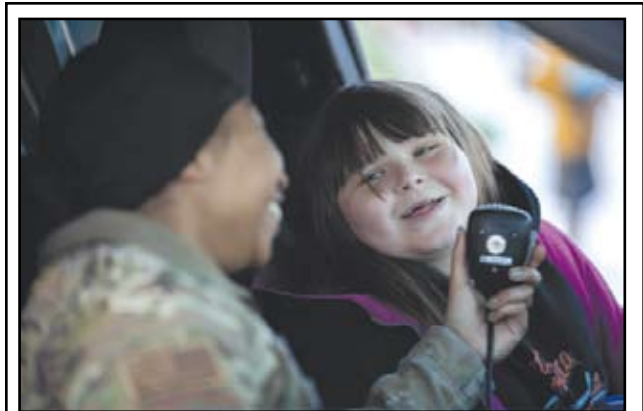
A wide range of sources is used to create the list, including firsthand observation by U.S. government personnel, research and credible reporting from various United Nations entities, international organizations,

local and international non-governmental organizations, and international and domestic media outlets.

The 2024 Trafficking In Persons Report lists the following 17 countries: Afghanistan, Burma, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iran, Libya, Mali, Russia, Rwanda, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, Turkiye, Venezuela and Yemen.

Pursuant to CSPA, governments identified on the list are subject to restrictions on some kinds of security assistance, such as Foreign Military Financing, International Military Education and Training, and commercial licensing of military equipment.

These restrictions commence in the fiscal year following the government being listed in the TIP Report. Beginning Oct. 1, 2024, and effective throughout Fiscal Year 2025, these restrictions will apply to the previously listed countries, absent a presidential waiver, applicable exception, or reinstatement of assistance pursuant to the terms of the CSPA.



ANCHORAGE, ALASKA Alaska Air National Guard Staff Sgt. Latavia Despojo interacts with a Klatt Elementary School student during Red Ribbon Week last month. Red Ribbon Week is a nationwide campaign focused on promoting a healthy and drug-free lifestyle amongst the nation’s youth by delivering prevention information at school assemblies .cross Anchorage and the Matanuska-Susitna Borough. Alaska National Guard photo

## Movie

continued from page 1

screaming,” Picerni told Historynet.com. “If you worked on this movie, you thought you were in World War II. This was real. There was no faking, no bullshit.”

He was also at the fateful plane crash scene, filmed in Oahu, Hawaii.

The scene was meant to show one of the American fighter planes that managed to take off the morning of the attack. For filming, the plane was a radio-controlled Curtiss P-40E Warhawk, loaded with gasoline and explosives. It was set to explode seconds after leaving the runway.

But with cameras rolling, a sheered prop sent the plane spinning out of control on the runway, directly toward a hangar, where a line of fake planes, formed from paper mache, were lined up. Along the line, 15 stuntmen were scattered around the hangar to resemble American service members.

As the stunt goes wrong, the stuntmen run for their lives, most sprinting for the hangar, while several are caught in the open tarmac as the flaming hulk tumbles toward them.

“We were running for our lives, and the men that were running from the airplanes had the desire to dive on the tarmac and dig themselves

in — [while] shrapnel was flying everywhere through the sequence. You couldn’t duplicate it today,” said stuntman Phil Adams during a Hollywood FX Masters interview. “Ironically, it was used in the film and it was probably some of the best footage that we shot that day. And we’ll go on to make other films, but you look back on that and thank your lucky stars and thank god that you didn’t have that run up your backside.”

One stuntman, Joe Finnegan, comes just an eyelash for on-screen death. He sprints full speed from the crash, but the tumbling, flaming plane closes in on him. You can see how close Finnegan was to the flames by watching a red standing fire extinguisher. As he runs, Finnegan dives just a few yards past the extinguisher. Seconds later the plane strikes the extinguisher, rolling over it before coming to a halt. Finnegan then bear-crawls to safety behind a car nearby with a second cast member.

Finnegan was credited for developing the air ram for Tora! Tora! Tora!’s production, a great advancement for realistic depictions of people getting thrown through the air.

The film garnered numerous Oscar nominations, most notable of them all: Best Effects, Special Visual Effects in 1971.



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## Army testing drone that gives big-picture view of ground combat action

by John Vandiver  
Stars and Stripes

The Army has a surveillance drone prototype that when fielded will give brigade commanders a clearer picture of the battlefield terrain where Soldiers are maneuvering, the service said last month.

The unmanned aircraft was delivered to the Army after two years of development and testing. A training phase is expected to be completed by the end of January.

The Army then will evaluate production proposals for its Future Tactical Uncrewed Aircraft Systems, with awards anticipated by the end of 2025, the service said in a Dec. 20 statement.

The program “will provide brigade combat teams with an organic capability for reconnaissance and surveillance operations, enabling them to collect, develop, and report actionable intelligence,” the Army statement said.

The system could be fielded as soon as 2026.

Incorporating an array of drones into combat formations

has been a focal point for the Army in recent years as it looks for ways to give its ground forces an advantage on modern battlefields.

While sophisticated drones have been part of the U.S. military’s arsenal for decades, the Russia-Ukraine war has highlighted how relatively simple unmanned systems can be put to effective use by junior soldiers in small units.

At Army training centers, soldiers have been busy working with both hand-held drones and more advanced systems.

For example, U.S. troops training in Romania in November were the first to try out a pair of drone systems designed for infantry and scout platoons on dismounted patrols. Those drones give ground troops a better view of the immediate area.

The prototype delivered to the Army in December is focused on the bigger picture, enabling commanders to “maintain dominance during multi-domain operations,” the Army said.

The system is known as the MK 4.8 HQ Aerosonde and was developed by Textron Systems. It has a variety of features



The Army has taken delivery of the Textron Systems MK 4.8 HQ Aerosonde drone prototype. U.S. Army photo

sought by the Army, including vertical take-off and landing capabilities.

The Textron Systems proto-

type is competing with a similar model developed by Griffon Aerospace, with the Army set to make a final decision on which model it wants in 2025.

### UNMANNED AIRCRAFT SYSTEMS DoD Purpose and Operational Use

**The primary purpose of the Department of Defense domestic aviation operations are to support Homeland Defense (HD) and Defense Support of Civilian Authorities (DSCA) operations, and military training and exercises. While manned aircraft primarily support these missions, the operational use of DoD unmanned aircraft systems (UAS), in lieu of manned aircraft may be appropriate for some domestic mission sets, when sustained endurance efforts are required; unmanned aircraft provide superior capabilities; or physical infrastructure limitations prohibit the use of manned rotary or fixed-winged aircraft.**



#### Army

- New Trump term brings renewed concerns in Bavaria about U.S. Army regiment’s future
- Soldier’s bomb in Tesla outside Trump Hotel could have been more lethal
- New Orleans attack suspect identified as Army vet ‘inspired by ISIS’

#### Navy

- The Navy’s new USS Iowa is almost ready for service
- Top stories 2024: The battle between the Houthis and commercial shipping

#### Marine Corps

- Okinawa motorcyclist dead after collision with Marine on New Year’s Day, police say

#### Air Force

- Air Force Academy mourns death of cadet set to graduate this year
- Air Force sent more A-10s to the boneyard in 2024, but it continues to use the aircraft overseas
- How stealthy F-22 Raptors learned to take on elusive Iranian threats in the Middle East

#### Coast Guard

- Drifting divers spend day and night at sea before Pacific rescue

#### Your Military

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- How many items can a Soldier fit into a winter rucksack?
- What is the nature of courage?
- Celebrating 250 years of service in the Army, the Navy, the Marine Corps, and across the United States

#### Veterans

- Women like me struggle to see ourselves as veterans. Why?
- Lawmakers urge VA to halt ‘mega’ tech projects and focus on small updates that work



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## Navy awards \$3.5B contract to develop successor to E-6B Mercury aircraft

NAVAL AIR STATION PATUXENT RIVER, Md. -- The Navy announced Jan. 7 that it has awarded Northrop Grumman Corp. a \$3.5 billion contract to conduct the mission-systems integration for the E-130J, which will be the successor to the E-6B Mercury for the Take Charge and Move Out (TACAMO) mission.

Under the contract, Northrop Grumman of Melbourne, Fla., will serve as the prime contractor to integrate TACAMO mission systems, including the Collins Aerospace Very Low Frequency system, into government-furnished C-130J-30 air vehicles built by Lockheed Martin Corp. The contract is for three Engineering Development Models and options for up to three System Demonstration Test Articles and up to six aircraft in the first lot of production. Collins Aerospace and Lockheed Martin are directed subcontractors to support the integration and airworthiness.

"Our TACAMO mission is foundational to our nation's nuclear Triad," said Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro. "The E-130J will carry on the proud legacy of Navy TACAMO aircraft and keep our nation safe."

The acquisition effort is being led by the Navy's Airborne Strategic Command, Control and Communications Program Office within the Program Executive Office for Air Anti-Submarine Warfare, Assault and Special Mission Programs.

"Today is a tremendous day for the future of naval aviation's contribution to our nation's nuclear deterrence mission," said Capt. Adam Scott, PMA-271 program manager. "With the selection of Northrop Grumman as the prime contractor for the TACAMO Recapitalization Program, we are ready to move out with developing this critical asset. In carrying on the legacy of the E-6B Mercury, the E-130J will ensure our nation's leadership is always connected to its nuclear forces for decades to come."

Work developing this asset in conjunction with the prime contractor began Jan. 7.

The contract award is the result of a competitive source selection that included significant engagement with industry. PMA-271 released the request for proposals on sam.gov on Sept. 21, 2023, with proposals due by April 22, 2024.

The Navy selected the winner based on the proposal that offered the best value to the government, considering the offeror's technical approach and cost. The total contract value is \$3,459,276,000.

## Flying the Jayhawk into the sunset

by Staff Sgt. Nicholas Larsen, 47th Flying Training Wing Public Affairs  
LAUGHLIN AIR FORCE BASE, Texas - Late last month, the last T-1A Jayhawk in the 86th Flying Training Squadron made its final departure from Laughlin Air Force Base's Team XL.

Thirty-one years ago, on Nov. 19, 1993, the first T-1A landed at Laughlin AFB. The 86th FTS received its final Jayhawk on Jan. 15, 1995, completing the 86th FTS fleet of training aircraft.

Used as a trainer for large aircraft such as the C-17 Globemaster III, the C-5 Galaxy, and the KC-135 Stratotanker, two-thirds of Air Force pilots trained on the T-1A and the three decades of service flown in the T-1A will be remembered fondly by those who flew it at the 86th FTS.

"The T-1A is an excellent plane, it prepared pilots for the next plane they would be moving on to," said Capt. Nickolas Johnson, 86th FTS chief of operations. "It gives pilots the opportunity to train on crew resource management, which is what they will do on the heavier aircraft."

In its last full year of service, the T-1A flew over 15,000 hours at Laughlin AFB, ensuring pilots proficiency in long range navigation.

Laughlin AFB held multiple sendoff events for aviators and Laughlin AFB personnel to commemorate the memories and legacy of the aircraft.

For the celebration, the 86th FTS invited retired Col. James Muniz, a former 86th FTS instructor pilot to be the guest speaker. Muniz started his career at Laughlin in 1999 and returned from 2005 to 2008 as an IP and chief of training.

"The T-1A is a great training platform," Muniz said. "However, it is only that, a tool used by professionals to teach and pass on their trade and knowledge. For 30 years, the mission was accomplished professionally and safely. I think that is a testament to all our support folks, from maintenance to HARM [host aviation resource management] and SARM [squadron aviation resource management] to life support professionals doing their part, so IPs and students could do theirs."

Airmen participated in flight simulators, where civilian instructors facilitated simulated flying of the T-1A, and signed their names on the exterior of the jet before its final takeoff.

As a final goodbye, the last T-1A to leave Laughlin AFB participated in a five-plane flyover consisting of two T-6A Texan IIs, two T-38C Talons, and the final T-1A, tail number 346, the First Assignment Instructor Pilot heritage tail.

## Army provides financial programs to Soldiers, families

by Shannon Collins, Army News Service

WASHINGTON – As the new year begins, Soldiers and their Families have a fresh opportunity to take charge of their financial well-being. With a variety of free programs offering education and counseling services, the Army is equipping families with the tools they need to achieve financial readiness and support mission success throughout the year.

### FINANCIAL FRONTLINE

Financial Frontline is a service that provides Soldiers and their families with comprehensive support, including access to financial education and free counseling services.

Through their services, Soldiers can find specific information based on milestones such as pre- and post-deployment, PCS, divorce and marriage, promotions, new child, continuation pay and disabling sickness or condition pay. They can also see the policies for blended retirement, the transition assistance program, the financial readiness program, pre-separation counseling and more. There are also links to the military spouse money mission with advice for how Army families can share money advice with their children and to the Army survivor outreach services program.

### FINANCIAL READINESS PROGRAM

The Financial Readiness Program offers information, finance calculators, online training and other tools on this site run through Army MWR. The site also has fact sheets and links to federal, state and territory benefits as well as a resource locator to find locations where benefits services are provided in each state and territory.

The Financial Readiness Program is available at every installation through Army Community Services. They offer Soldiers classroom training and individual counseling sessions on several topics.

### MILSPOUSE MONEY MISSION

The goal of this site is to educate and empower military spouses to help them make financial choices. The team provides certified financial planner professionals. They provide free financial education and resources through blogs, financial tips, videos and more. Taxes are just one of the many items financial readiness counselors can help Soldiers and their families with on installations

### MILITARY ONE SOURCE

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# Career and Education

## Air Force looks for more recruits by expanding waiver list

by John Vandiver  
Stars and Stripes

...The Air Force has added several medical conditions to its waiver program, a move that is expected to open career opportunities to hundreds of new recruits each year, the service said recently.

...The new policy allows waivers to be granted in certain cases for asthma, hearing loss and food allergies, the Air Force said in a statement in late December. The Air Force Accessions Center said about 600 applicants are expected to benefit annually.

“We are constantly evaluating how we can bring in the best talent while ensuring our members can serve effectively and safely,” AFAC commander Brig. Gen. Christopher Amrhein said in the statement. “By expanding waiver criteria for manageable health conditions, we can access a wider pool of qualified applicants without compromising

mission readiness.”

The decision comes amid a difficult recruiting environment for the armed services, which have struggled in recent years to attract new members. The Air Force, after missing its new recruit goal in 2023 for the first time since 1999, bounced back in 2024.

Relaxed tattoo rules and increased bonuses are among the factors that helped the Air Force reach its recruiting mission goals in 2024, service officials have said.

Air Force officials say the recently implemented new waiver policy is a significant change from the previous standard, which disqualified all individuals with a positive asthma diagnosis and did not consider the severity of their condition.

Waivers are now possible for those with clinically diagnosed asthma, provided they do not require daily preventive medi-



Recruits take the Oath of Enlistment in Nampa, Idaho, on March 29, 2024. U.S. Air Force photo by Becky Vanshur

cation, “and their rescue inhaler use is kept to a minimum,” the Air Force said. Also, applicants with hearing loss in one ear that has been diagnosed as moderate hearing impairment can now be considered for a waiver if the opposite ear meets the standards of mild hearing impairment, the Air Force said.

Meanwhile, people with a

documented history of food allergies can now qualify for a waiver, provided there have been no instances of severe life-threatening reactions.

All three of the expanded waiver considerations come with limitations to career fields that could put them at increased risk or worsen their medical condition, the Air Force said.

## The making of a Mineman: Seaman Fye’s Navy journey

by Austen McClain

For Mineman Seaman Isaiah Fye, assigned to USS *Dextrous* (MCM 13), joining the Navy offered more than just a job, it was a lifeline to a better future.

Working two jobs with little personal impact, Fye dreamed of something bigger. Inspired by his brothers who had joined the Army, he took a leap of faith and enlisted into the Navy last January.

“My first visit with the Navy recruiter sold me,” said Fye. “The chance to see the world, do something meaningful and be part of something bigger than myself, it was an opportunity I couldn’t pass up.”

The combination of hands-on learning and world-class instruction helped Fye overcome initial hurdles and develop the technical skills he needed to excel.

Through perseverance and hard work, Fye graduated at the top of his Mineman “A” School class,

earning the highest GPA and a meritorious advancement in rank through the commanding officer’s recognition program.

**“Being recognized as the top of my class was one of the proudest moments of my life,” Fye says. “It proved to me that hard work pays off and that the Navy values your effort and commitment.”**

Fye is now set to report to *Dextrous* in Bahrain, where he will apply his training as a Mineman, specializing in detecting and neutralizing naval mines. The role comes with unique challenges and opportunities that Fye is eager to embrace.

“This is the most stable and rewarding job I have ever had,” Fye says. “The Navy not only gives you the chance to travel and see the world, but also to do things most people will never experience. It’s a career that sets you up for success.”

With future goals of advanc-

ing in rank and using the GI Bill to further his education, Fye is determined to make the most of the opportunities the Navy provides.

Reflecting on his journey, Fye encourages others to consider the Navy as a path to personal and professional growth.

“This is a chance to change your life,” he says. “Your hard work will be recognized, and you will get to do things you never thought possible. If you are looking for stability, adventure and a way to better yourself, the Navy is it.”

Isaiah Fye’s story highlights the transformative power of the Naval Education and Training Com-



Seaman Isaiah Fye, assigned to the Mine Warfare Training Center (MWTC), poses for a portrait on board the Naval Base Point Loma Annex. U.S. Navy photo by Austen McClain

mand’s training programs. From SCSTC’s MWTC to advanced technical training programs like ATT, NETC provides Sailors with the skills and confidence to succeed in the fleet.

“The Navy has helped me grow into a more disciplined, accountable and mature person,” Fye reflects. “It is not just about learning a job; it is about becoming the best version of yourself.”

## VA expands education benefits by a year for qualifying veterans with multiple enlistments

by Linda F. Hersey, Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON - More than 1 million veterans who served through multiple enlistments are now eligible for an additional 12 months of education assistance through their GI Bill benefits, the Department of Veterans Affairs announced Jan. 3.

The VA’s expansion of benefits is the result of a 2024 Supreme Court decision that effectively ended a 36-month cap on education benefits for veterans who had at least two qualifying periods of military service, the VA said.

Veterans are now eligible for a total of 48 months, or four years, of tuition assistance, according to the VA.

To qualify, veterans must have at least two periods of service — one that qualified them for the Montgomery GI Bill and a second that qualified them for the Post-9/11 GI Bill, the VA said.

The VA is launching a campaign to make veterans aware of the expansion. Expiration dates for using the education benefits are being extended for qualifying veterans who submit applications by Oct. 1, 2030.

“This policy will not only help veterans who apply for GI bill benefits in the future — it will also allow VA to provide additional benefits to many veterans who used GI bill benefits in the past,” said Joshua Jacobs, the VA undersecretary for benefits.

The Supreme Court determined in April 2024 that the VA wrongfully denied Army veteran Jim Rudisill certain college benefits for his military service before and after Sept. 11, 2001. Rudisill had served two separate enlistments.

The court ruled service members who qualify for the Montgomery and Post-9/11 GI bills due to multiple enlistments can use the benefits in any order for up to 48 months, or four years. However, the benefits cannot be used simultaneously.

Rudisill’s case was over the rules for administering two GI bills with overlapping service periods, according to the Supreme Court.

The Montgomery GI Bill Act of 1984 covers military service between 1985 and 2030. The Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008 covers service on or after Sept. 11, 2001.

Prior to the court ruling, veterans could not use both programs for benefits. They were required to forgo one to gain access to the other.

The VA has set up a special webpage with information for veterans seeking education assistance under the expansion. <https://benefits.va.gov/GIBILL/rudisill.asp>.



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## Navy assets used for critical support in Antarctic mission

“THE NSF’S ANTARCTIC MISSION DEPENDS ON SEAMLESS COORDINATION OF MATERIALS FROM SAN DIEGO’S OVER-THE-HORIZON SITE IN VENTURA COUNTY.”

ROBERT MEDINA, DEPUTY SITE DIRECTOR

by Frank Valdez  
NAVSUP FLC San Diego

NAVAL BASE VENTURA COUNTY, Calif. - For the third consecutive year, the NAVSUP Fleet Logistics Center San Diego Port Hueneme Packing Section here recently played a pivotal role in supporting the National Science Foundation’s McMurdo Station project.

The team, consisting of Ronald Ford, Joseph Olachea, Gregory Herrera, Luis Galvan, and contractors from Tanaq Government Services, played a critical role in packing, blocking, bracing, and loading, ensuring the cargo’s readiness for its journey to Antarctica.

The team processed an impressive 2,688 shipments comprising 138,609 pieces. Faced with an unexpected surge in cargo volume, the team’s quick



Luis Galvan receives precise stacking directions from Gregory Herrera while handling 40-foot containers, showcasing teamwork in action U.S. Navy photo by Arthur Hill

adaptation by coordinating a second vessel and additional air shipments was a testament to their resilience and ability to handle unforeseen challenges. This achievement reflects a year-over-year growth of 23 percent

from 2022 and 17 percent from 2023, underscoring NAVSUP’s ability to scale operations under demanding circumstances.

Preparations for this mission began in July, with the team



National Science Foundation’s McMurdo Station, situated on the volcanic rock of Hut Point Peninsula, Ross Island, and located 25 miles from Mount Erebus, the world’s southernmost active volcano. Courtes photo

dedicating themselves to preparing materials for a Vehicle Operations Center, lodging, and scientific research equipment. Six months of unwavering dedication culminated in successfully loading two vessels, each completed within ten days. These shipments provide the supplies needed to sustain NSF operations at McMurdo Station.

reflects the high standards of the FLCSD NBVC team, said Capt. Josh Hill, NAVSUP FLCSD commanding officer. “Through teamwork, precision, and reliability, they play a vital role in our success and in supporting a global mission, and we are proud to recognize their invaluable contributions.”


NAVSUP’s involvement is a key component of Operation Deep Freeze, a joint-service mission supporting the NSF’s United States Antarctic Program. Since the mission returned to the Navy in December 2022, NAVSUP FLCSD has consistently demonstrated its commitment to operational excellence and mission readiness in one of the world’s most challenging environments.

“The NSF’s Antarctic mission depends on the seamless coordination of materials from San Diego’s over-the-horizon site in Ventura County,” said Robert Medina, deputy site director. “This effort would not be possible without the outstanding contributions of our team members.”

“The success of this mission

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## Carl Vinson Carrier Strike Group visits Port Klang, Malaysia

PORT KLANG, Malaysia – The *Carl Vinson* Carrier Strike Group arrived in Malaysia for a scheduled port visit in time for the new year.

This visit marks the second U.S. Navy aircraft carrier visit to Malaysia in just over a month since 2012. The U.S. established diplomatic relations with Malaysia in 1957 following Malaysia's independence from the United Kingdom, elevating the bilateral relationship to a Comprehensive Partnership in April 2014.

"Malaysia is a key partner for us in the Indo-Pacific. Our visit reinforces the importance of this partnership to the United States," said Rear Adm. Michael Wosje, commander, Carrier Strike Group ONE (CSG-1). "Visiting Port Klang provides us with an important and unique opportunity to collaborate with our Royal Malaysian Navy counterparts, continuing to build upon our strategic and mutually beneficial partnership, while also providing our Sailors well-deserved downtime to explore the area and build connections within the community."

The U.S. and Malaysia cooperate closely on security matters, including counter-terrorism, maritime domain awareness, and regional stability, and participate frequently in bilateral and multilateral training, exercises and visits.

"The back-to-back visits of the *Carl Vinson* Carrier Strike Group and the USS Abraham Lincoln to Malaysia underscore the depth and strength of our security ties—an enduring cornerstone of the U.S.-Malaysia Comprehensive Partnership," said U.S. Ambassador to Malaysia Edgard D. Kagan. "Building on decades of close collaboration, we continue to bolster our security partnership and remain committed to working with Malaysia to advance our shared vision of a free, secure, and prosperous Indo-Pacific region."

During their stay in Malaysia, the nearly 7,500 Sailors from CSG-1 will participate in cultural exchanges, community relations events, and Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR)-sponsored tours to enhance cultural understanding and cooperation between the two countries.

"On behalf of America's Favorite Aircraft Carrier, I would like to express my sincerest gratitude to the people of Port Klang and Kuala Lumpur for welcoming the Sailors of USS *Carl Vinson* with such enthusiasm and warm hospitality," said Capt. Matthew Thomas, commanding officer, USS *Carl Vinson*. "We are delighted to welcome Malaysian Navy and government officials aboard *Vinson*, and we are grateful for the opportunity to immerse ourselves in the rich history and culture of Malaysia."

The *Carl Vinson* Carrier Strike Group consists of *Carl Vinson*, embarked staffs of Carrier Strike Group (CSG) ONE and Destroyer Squadron (DESRON) one, Carrier Air Wing (CVW) Two, Ticonderoga-class guided-missile cruiser USS *Princeton* (CG 59) and Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyers USS *Sterett* (DDG 104) and USS *William P. Lawrence* (DDG 110).

CVW-2 is composed of nine squadrons flying the F-35C Lightning II, F/A-18E/F Super Hornets, EA-18G Growler, E-2D Advanced Hawkeye, CMV-22 Osprey and MH-60R/S Seahawks.

The *Carl Vinson* Carrier Strike Group is operating in the U.S. 7th Fleet area of operations. U.S. 7th Fleet is the U.S. Navy's largest forward-deployed numbered fleet, and routinely interacts and operates with allies and partners in preserving a free and open Indo-Pacific region. - see photo, next page

For more news from CSG-1 and *Carl Vinson* visit: <https://www.dvidshub.net/unit/CSG1>, <https://www.dvidshub.net/unit/CVN70>.



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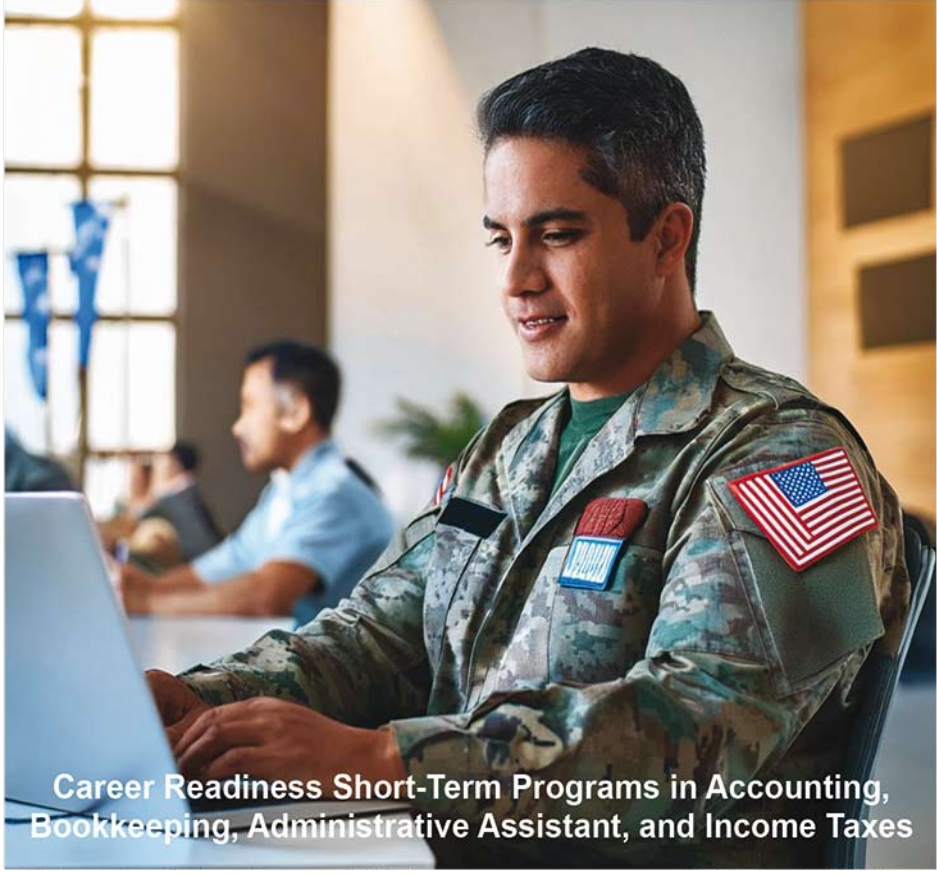
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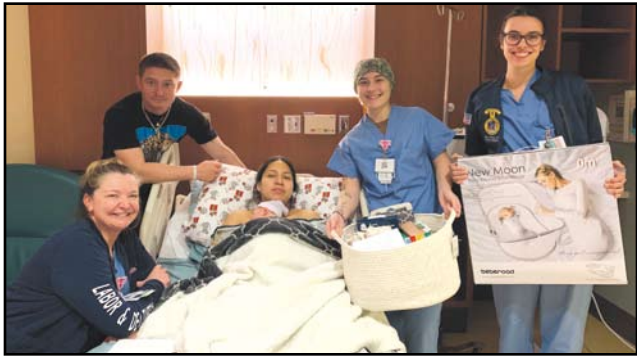


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(photo, at left) **CAMP PENDLETON** (New Years Day) Lance Cpl. Alondra Salazar and Lance Cpl. Deandre Rutherford pose with their newborn baby, Andreas E. Rutherford-Salazar, on Jan. 1, 2025, in the Maternal Infant Services Department of Naval Hospital Camp Pendleton. U.S. Marine Corps photo

(photo, at right) **TWENTYNINE PALMS** (Jan. 3, 2025) Staff Sgt. Tyson Goolsby cradles his newborn son, Elijah Goolsby, at Naval Hospital Twentynine Palms. Elijah, born Jan. 2 at 1:35 p.m., is the first baby delivered at the hospital in 2025. U.S. Navy photo by Christopher C. Jones



**OBSTACLE COURSE** Marines climb over an obstacle course during their final evaluation as part of a 7th Marine Regiment Infantry Rifle Squad Competition at Marine Corps Air-Ground Combat Center, Twentynine Palms Dec. 19, 2024. The competition assesses tactical proficiency and determines the Regiment's most capable squad under simulated combat conditions. U.S. Marine Corps photo by Lance Cpl. Richard PerezGarcia



**DOWN UNDER UP** From left, Australian Army Maj. Jack Jones, Australian Maj. Rhys Davies, and Australian Maj. George Lynn pose for a photo aboard amphibious assault ship USS Boxer (LHD 4) while underway in the Pacific Ocean Nov. 21, 2024. Jones, Davies, and Lynn served as foreign exchange officers with the 15th MEU through the Marine Corps Personnel Exchange Program, and recently completed a deployment with the 15th MEU to the Indo-Pacific region.



**WORK UNDERWAY SOUTH CHINA SEA** (Jan. 6, 2025) Aviation Ordnanceman 3rd Elijah Moorefloh, of San Diego, raises an F/A-18F Super Hornet, assigned to the "Bounty Hunters" of Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 2, in the hangar bay aboard aircraft carrier Carl Vinson (CVN 70), Jan. 6, 2025. Vinson, the flagship of Carrier Strike Group ONE, is underway conducting routine operations in the U.S. 7th Fleet area of operations. U.S. Navy photo by MCSN Kenneth Ostas

## Veterans News

# Medal of Honor spotlight: Navy Cmdr. George F. Davis

by Katie Lange  
DOD News

Navy Cmdr. George Fleming Davis worked his way up the ranks to become one of the youngest destroyer commanders in U.S. history. During World War II, his leadership and fearlessness during a Japanese kamikaze raid kept his ship from being destroyed, even though it cost him his life. For that sacrifice, Davis earned a posthumous Medal of Honor.

Davis was born on March 23, 1911, in the Philippine capital of Manila, where his father, John, worked as a civilian master shipfitter at Naval Base Subic Bay. After a few years, the family moved to Hawaii so his father could continue his work at Pearl Harbor.

Davis was privately educated at Punahou School before graduating from McKinley High School in Honolulu. In 1930, he received an appointment to attend the Naval Academy, where he excelled in several sports. Davis graduated in May 1934 and commissioned into the Navy, serving his first tour of duty on the heavy cruiser USS Tuscaloosa as an aircraft gunnery observer.

By mid-1941, Davis had worked his way up to the rank of lieutenant and was assigned

to battleship USS Oklahoma, which was sunk by the Japanese during the Pearl Harbor attacks on Dec. 7, 1941.

Davis survived the attack and was transferred to duty on light cruiser USS Honolulu. During his tenure on that ship, he took part in operations on the Aleutian Islands before being involved in hard-fought battles in Guadalcanal, the Central Solomon Islands and the campaign to recover Guam.

By the time Davis left USS Honolulu in mid-1944, he'd been promoted to commander. He spent a few months training in advanced surface warfare techniques before being put in command of the destroyer USS Walke in late November 1944. At 32, he was one of the youngest destroyer commanders in U.S. naval history.

At some point, Davis married a woman named Shelagh, and they had two boys, George Rupert and Patrick, who lived in Berkeley, Calif., during the war.

In mid-December 1944, Davis returned to the Philippines as USS Walke was stationed off Manila's shores. By early January, the destroyer got underway for Lingayen Gulf as part of the invasion of Luzon, joining several U.S. minesweepers to provide cover fire

and antiaircraft defense.

On Jan. 6, 1945, the Walke was operating without gun support from other surface ships when four Japanese suicide planes were spotted flying low overland, on a clear mission to attack. Preparing for an onslaught, Davis took his position on the bridge's exposed wing and directed the ship to open fire on the lead plane, which crashed into the water. The ship's guns then hit the second aircraft as it passed closely over the bridge, plunging it into the sea off the portside.

Davis stayed steadfast in his position even as the third aircraft quickly dove toward the ship, crashing into the after end of the bridge. The collision seriously wounded the commander and drenched him in gasoline as flames erupted. But Davis continued to direct the steering of the ship. According

to his Medal of Honor citation, Davis "rallied his command to heroic efforts; he exhorted his officers and men to save the ship and, still on his feet, saw the barrage from his guns destroy the



**Navy Cmdr. George Fleming Davis, Medal of Honor recipient. Navy file photo**

fourth suicide bomber."

Davis refused to accept medical attention below deck until the fires were under control and the 350 members of his crew were counted as safe. Sadly, Davis died hours later. According to a 1945 San Francisco Examiner

article, the Walke's surgeon said that the commander might have survived his burns had he not "overtaxed himself in saving the ship."

Davis's fearlessness and valor inspired the men around him to complete their vital mission. His bravery and self-sacrifice earned him the nation's highest honor for valor. Davis's widow received the Medal of Honor on his behalf on Nov. 16, 1945, during a ceremony in Washington, D.C.

Davis was buried at sea in the Philippines, not far from the place where he was born. His

name is listed on the Manila American Cemetery's Wall of the Missing.

USS Davis, a destroyer commissioned in 1957, was named in his honor and served with distinction during the Vietnam War. In the Naval Academy room where Davis once resided, a bronze plaque bears his citation for all future sailors to see.

This article is part of a weekly series called "Medal of Honor Monday" in which we highlight one of the more than 3,500 Medal of Honor recipients who have received the U.S. military's highest medal for valor.

## Veterans in the 119th Congress: Influencing military and veteran legislation

**FLEET RESERVE ASSOCIATION** - The 119th U.S. Congress convened on Jan. 3. Congress includes 100 military veterans - the largest number in eight years. With 20 in the Senate and 80 in the House, their collective experience promises to shape national security, defense policies, and veterans' affairs.

- \*Veterans in Congress represent various service branches:
- \*Army: 46 members
- \*Navy: 25 members
- \*Air Force: 16 members
- \*Marine Corps: 13 members

This diverse background ensures a comprehensive approach to defense and military readiness. Additionally, nine women veterans—the highest number ever—highlight progress in gender representation.

The veteran group consists of 28 Democrats and 72 Republicans. Historically, veterans have prioritized collaboration on national security and veterans' welfare, leading to successful legislation on healthcare access, mental health services, and family support.

Roughly one-third of these lawmakers began their military careers post-2000, bringing recent combat insights, while 21 served before 1980, offering historical perspectives. This generational mix enriches debates and ensures a balanced approach to military challenges.





by Jan Wagner

I'm excited! Are you? Today, after I finish this "AutoMatters & More" column, I will be sending it to the publications and then driving to Las Vegas, where I will be spending the next week and covering CES 2025.

CES is, without a doubt, one of my favorite events to cover for you each year — and yes, CES is its official name, although most people still know it as the Consumer Electronics Show.

Once a year in Las Vegas, CES is where people from around the world come to see the latest technologies and innovative consumer electronics products, before they make their way into the stores, your homes and wherever else electronics can be found — in other words, just about everywhere.

That includes vehicle technology (smart cars), robots, drones, smart homes and home electronics, smart cities, photography technology, game machines, healthcare technology, educational technology, entertainment technology (with massive exhibits of the latest in flat screen TVs), beauty and fashion technology, Augmented Reality (AR), Virtual Reality (VR), Extended Reality (XR), space technology, energy technology, micromobility technology, Artificial Intelligence (AI), media technology, sustainability, startups and more.

That is why they say that "CES is the only trade show that showcases the entire tech landscape at one event." It really is that big, encompassing not only the huge Las Vegas Convention Center, but also other convention centers and other meeting spaces, on streets and elsewhere throughout Las Vegas. There is way too much to see.

At CES we get up close and personal with some really cool tech.

For example, at the previous CES I was given a review sample of a handy, 3-in-1 combination iPhone, Apple Watch and AirPods travel charger, which I have used ever since — both at home and on trips. It has become indispensable — so much so that I wish that I had two of them. I had to not forget to take it off of my kitchen counter and pack it in my luggage, to take with me to use in my hotel during CES.

It is described as an Anker MagSafe compatible — for quick, cable-free connecting, 15W max, pocket-sized, 3-in-1 wireless charging station. The charger is foldable, extremely

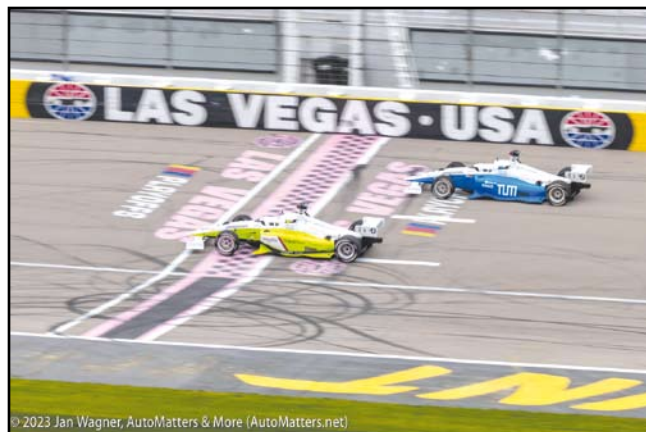
## Looking forward to CES 2025 - the Consumer Electronics Show

compact and includes a charger and USB-C cable. Having used it on a daily basis for several months, I assure you that it is rock-solid reliable and very convenient. If you have compatible Apple products, you really should get this.

According to Anker, they have sold over 200 million products

To find out more about the Indy Autonomous Challenge, visit <https://www.indyautonomous-challenge.com>.

This year, for the first time in their history, CES has a new logo. It is "a symbol that embodies the connection between technology and humanity." "The intersecting elements symbolize



worldwide, with 100 million global customers in 146 countries. To learn more about Anker mobile charging products and to take advantage of their special offers, visit the official website at: <https://www.anker.com>.

CES even includes a tech event held on the superspeedway at Las Vegas Motor Speedway — the Indy Autonomous Challenge, where "the world's fastest autonomous racecars" compete head-to-head! On their website, they explain that "the Indy Autonomous Challenge gathers university teams from around the world (to) compete in a series of challenges to advance technology that can speed the commercialization of fully autonomous vehicles and deployments of advanced driver-assistance systems (ADAS) to increase safety and performance.

The competitions are a platform for students to excel in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM)." I intend to cover this event again this year and will be bringing a long lens to capture the action close-up.

our industry's connections with society, creating a frame to envision a world where technology seamlessly integrates with our lives to make it a better place. The space between the intersecting elements symbolizes the profound, yet often invisible, relationship of technology and humanity — a bond that CTA and CES have championed for decades."

CES is not open to the general public, so to learn lots more about CES visit <https://www.ces.tech/about-ces/about-ces/>. As for me, as soon as I load my RAV4 I will be off to cover CES 2025 in Las Vegas!

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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**Welcome to the 38th Annual Navy Bay Bridge Run/Walk**  
Register today at <https://runsignup.com/Race/CA/SanDiego/NavysBayBridgeRun>. Participate the NAVY way... with HONOR, COURAGE & COMMITMENT. This event is hosted by the Navy Region Southwest Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) Program. The event raises funds to support Quality of Life Programs for Navy personnel. MWR Quality of Life programs support the 500,000+ members of our San Diego Military Family. MWR provides healthy and affordable fitness and recreation opportunities at each of the five Navy bases in San Diego County.

## The Meat & Potatoes of Life



by Lisa Smith Molinari

About two weeks into my diet, I realized I was starving, and no low-cal protein snack would stave off my hunger pangs. Although pork products sounded mouthwateringly delicious in my weakened state, I eventually determined that the diet was a bunch of baloney.

No matter how many times a rich television celebrity—who probably ate diet meals prepared by her personal chef and exercised with a trainer in her home gym—told me "the pounds just melt away," I doubted that any diet would work for me.

The first few days of my diet had seemed like fun. The same way raking leaves seemed fun for the first fifteen minutes until I realized it was going to take five hours and I'd have to do it every weekend. Or the way cooking dinner seemed like fun when I was first married, but then twenty years later, I'd have rather chewed my own arm off than prepare another meal. Or the way running seemed like fun until I came to the end of the second block and suddenly felt as if my heart might explode.

But by the second week of most diets, I want someone to hit me in the head with a frying pan—preferably one that has just fried up a dozen crisp slices of bacon—to put me out of my misery.

## Scaling the dieter's wall

I hit that dieter's wall recently while driving to the commissary. The satiating effect of the protein shake I'd guzzled that morning had worn off, and I was beginning to feel that familiar grumbling in the pit of my stomach. I was most definitely getting hungry.

I rushed from my car, across the blustery parking lot, and into the commissary. Everything was fine in produce, where I followed my grocery list to a tee, including the bagged Lite Caesar Salad Kit I decided would make a satisfying diet lunch.

The burning in my innards was tolerable at first, but it slowly built as I weaved through the grocery aisles. I made it through the canned goods, baking supplies and cereal without incident, but as my hunger mounted, things began to unravel in the snack food aisle. With each step, the burning in my gut seared deeper, until I was ready to grab a cheese ball out of the dairy case and eat it like an apple, cellophane and all. I resisted my urges, but soon, I felt as if I might implode like the collapsing core of a supernova, transforming the entire commissary into a giant black hole and destroying civilization as we know it.

That's when it happened. Lying there, on the shelf beside the display of Pringles, I saw it. Some coupon clipper had generously left me a lifeline. "One dollar off five cans," it read. It was such a fantastic deal, it seemed almost compulsory. Saliva dripped from my lower lip as I loaded the Prin-

gles into my cart.

By the time I approached the check-out area, I had grabbed Oreos, frozen pizza, apple turnovers, and a one-pound block of cheddar cheese. Blinded by desperation, I caught the tantalizing aroma of roasted chicken.

Two rotisserie chickens soon joined the mountain of forbidden foods heaped onto the cashier's conveyor belt. While the bagger loaded my groceries into the back of my car, I fantasized about sneaking food to the front seat for the drive home.


Not a new ploy, and not only fantasy. During past hunger-fueled commissary runs, I'd instructed unsuspecting baggers to "put the rotisserie chicken up in the front seat to keep it warm," knowing I planned to sneak a piece on the way home. I'd pull into my driveway, my face and steering wheel slick with grease, and a drumstick clenched between my teeth.

But on this particular day, the miracle of convenience foods helped me to stick to my diet. I managed to make it home from the commissary, where I frantically dug through the grocery bags in the trunk of my minivan to find that salad kit. I stumbled into the house without unloading my groceries, faint with hunger, and devoured the salad out of a Tupperware bowl while standing at the kitchen counter.

Hail, Caesar.  
[www.themeatandpotatoesoflife.com](http://www.themeatandpotatoesoflife.com)

### San Diego Outreach

Neil Ash Airport Center  
San Diego MEPS Center  
Camp Pendleton



## Become a USO Volunteer

Volunteers are our greatest asset and the backbone of the USO. Whether helping a soldier with a connecting flight, distributing a Care Package, serving snacks with a smile, providing local information, or "welcoming home" 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.

**Ready to apply to be a USO San Diego volunteer?**  
Visit <https://volunteers.uso.org/>  
Once you navigate to the web page, scroll down to and look at the right side of the page to find information about volunteering.

### Camp Pendleton USO Programs Include:

- USO Transitions:** <https://www.uso.org/programs/uso-pathfinder-transition-program>  
Want to be better prepared for future success before transitioning from the military? Are you a military spouse looking for new opportunities? The USO Pathfinder® Transition Program extends the USO experience to active duty, Reserve, National Guard and military spouses by offering professional development services throughout the duration of military service as well as in preparation for life post-military.
- MilSpouse Connect:** Monthly events bringing military spouses together to connect and thrive.
- Craft & Coffee:** USO Camp Pendleton provides creative outlets for adults and children to create fun, whimsical or serious works of art through a variety of mediums. Signs up happen online and are usually advertised through the USO Camp Pendleton Facebook page.
- Command Support:** USO is here to support! We often help support command events across Camp Pendleton such as Family Days and Morale Days. Commands can request support in a number of different ways, from outdoor games, a kids craft, or even our mobile photo booth. We also can help provide small refreshments. To request support, please email our Center Operations and Programs Manager, Crystal Gates at [cgates@uso.org](mailto:cgates@uso.org). All requests must be submitted within 30 days and although we try our best, not all requests can be granted.

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

# CLASSIFIED ADS

## SOCIAL SECURITY MATTERS

### I Use only VA healthcare; Can I get back Medicare taxes paid?

Dear Rusty: I'm 72 years old with 20 years of military service. I am retired collecting Social Security, my military pension, and State retirement benefits. According to my SSA statement, over my working lifetime I paid \$14,302 into Medicare, but I never used that medical plan. I only bring in \$33,000 in annual income. Can I get those Medicare taxes back somehow? I've run into dead ends at SSA, Medicare and IRS websites. Signed: Veteran Seeking Answers

Dear Veteran Seeking Answers: First, I want to thank you for your military service to our country. You may find the "For Veterans" section of our [www.amacfoundation.org](http://www.amacfoundation.org) website of interest.

Regarding the contributions you have made over the years to federal Medicare, I'm afraid you cannot get any of those taxes back even though you have never used Medicare healthcare services. That's because Medicare, like Social Security, is a "pay as you go" program where all contributions received from workers are used to pay for benefits for current beneficiaries (contributions aren't put into a separate account to pay for your coverage). It's also important to know that your Medicare taxes were used only to fund Medicare Part A, which is coverage for inpatient hospitalization services. Those contributions (via payroll taxes) did not entitle you to outpatient healthcare services, as provided by Medicare Part B (for which there is a monthly premium).

FYI, you must be enrolled in Medicare Part A to collect Social Security benefits after age 65. Medicare Part B isn't mandatory to collect Social Security, but assuming that, as a retired military veteran, you now receive healthcare benefits under the military's TriCare-for-Life program for retired veterans, you must be enrolled in Medicare Part A and Part B to maintain your TriCare-for-Life coverage. Your military TriCare coverage coordinates with Medicare to pay for your healthcare costs. Thus, even though it may not be transparent to you, you may be benefiting from your current enrollment in Medicare.

Note that some non-career veterans can use VA healthcare services based on their service years, instead of TriCare-for-Life for retired military veterans. Non-career recipients of standard VA healthcare services are not required to be enrolled in Medicare but, in any case, cannot receive their past Medicare Part A contributions back if they choose to decline Medicare. You may have interest in this article I previously published on the topic of VA benefits versus Medicare: [www.socialsecurityreport.org/ask-rusty-i-have-va-coverage-should-i-get-medicare-part-b/](http://www.socialsecurityreport.org/ask-rusty-i-have-va-coverage-should-i-get-medicare-part-b/)

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#### About AMAC

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

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12/16

USS Midway Museum is recruiting volunteers for docents, air craft restoration, ship restoration and safety. [www.midway.org/give-join/volunteers/volunteer-opportunities/](http://www.midway.org/give-join/volunteers/volunteer-opportunities/)  
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#### VOLUNTEERS WANTED

USS Midway Museum is recruiting volunteers for docents, air craft restoration, ship restoration and safety <https://www.midway.org/give-join/volunteers/volunteer-opportunities/>



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## Visit our military museums

**The Veterans Museum at Balboa Park.** The Veterans Museum and Memorial Center is a museum located in historic Balboa Park of San Diego, California. Founded in 1989, it is dedicated to create, maintain, and operate an institution to honor and perpetuate the memories of all men and women who have served in the Armed Forces of the United States of America.

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

**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: [MCBCAM-PEN\\_history@usmc.mil](mailto:MCBCAM-PEN_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/](http://www.camppendletonhistoricalsociety.org/) for information. Hours: Open daily 10am-5pm • Last admission at 4pm

## MOVIES AT THE BASES

**MOVIE SCHEDULES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE SO PLEASE CHECK THE WEB SITE DAY-OF TO MAKE SURE THE TITLE AND TIME ARE STILL CORRECT...**

<https://sandiego.navylifefsw.com/> select movies at dropdown menu on left

<https://miramar.usmc-mccs.org/dining-entertainment/movies>

<https://pendleton.usmc-mccs.org/dining-entertainment/theater>

#### NBSD and Lowry Theater Policy

- Outside food and beverage are NOT permitted: Sales from the snack bar support the movie program.
- These Theaters are cashless facilities. Debit and credit cards accepted only.
- Premium Offerings
  - Audiovisual assistive equipment available to customers at the front counter.
  - Handicap seats and child booster seats are available.




#### Movie Rating System


- G – General audiences ALL ages admitted.
- PG – Parental guidance suggested some material may not be suitable for children.
- PG-13 – Parents strongly cautioned some material may be inappropriate for children under 13.
- R – Restricted under 17 requires accompanying parent or adult guardian.

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75°	94°	109°
80°	99°	114°
85°	104°	119°

**Veterans Crisis Line**



**Military Crisis Line**

Dial **988** then **PRESS 1**

## Safety lesson: Frozen on the slopes

Name withheld upon request  
USACRC

Several years ago, I was stationed in Colorado. I'd never snow skied, but after my first initiation-by-fire trip, I was feeling pretty comfortable and actually considered myself a somewhat fearless skier. I would go hard and fast until I hit something or just fell down. Ski equipment would scatter from where I fell to where I slid to a stop — meaning I spent a lot of my time crawling back up the mountain for my gear.

This skiing style was somewhat modeled after my good buddy, Jim. He was a Special Operations weapons sergeant and fearless in nearly everything, including skiing. We often went "tree bashing," where we turned off a cleared ski run and cut through the trees to the next run. The space between the runs was usually a few hundred yards wide, and skiing through the trees made for a limited view. Reaction time was minimal and if you didn't respond quickly enough, you bashed into a tree. The snow in the wooded areas wasn't packed like the normal runs, and the loose powder was sometimes deeper than I was tall. Trying to get back up on skis in that snow was a lot like

swimming.

One day, a group of us hit the slopes for some fun and spent all our time trying to outdo each other. The day started out pretty warm, but it was getting colder. I wore a ski bib and was hot all day. Jim wore polypropylene bottoms under his jeans and a jacket. He was probably more comfortable, but things were about to change.

It was getting late, so Jim and I went up for one last run. We looked at a map and picked which runs to take, including some that would be good for tree bashing. However, we made a wrong turn on the way down and went one run farther to the right than intended. We wound up about a half mile from our intended run. To make matters worse, once we turned into the trees, we got separated. Although we were still within voice range of each other, we should have come out of the trees sooner.

I then noticed that Jim — by far the better skier — was starting to fall behind. I yelled to see where he was, and he told me to go to the edge of the trees and wait for him there. I didn't make it far before I heard Jim say he was having a hard time skiing.

Jim is the type of guy who won't complain unless he's dying, so when he said he was having difficulty moving his legs, I was concerned.

I began skiing uphill in loose powder to find Jim. He was standing on a stump, stripping off his wet pants. I didn't realize that jeans, which aren't waterproof, would be useless in loose powder. That wasn't a problem earlier because he rarely fell. When he did, it was on packed snow that didn't stick to him. I got really concerned when I saw Jim was having a hard time balancing on the stump. He was shaking and his legs were turning blue. The sun was going down quickly, and it was significantly colder in the shade and getting worse by the minute. We didn't even know where we were. We just knew we had to keep going and get out of the trees before dark.

I stripped down and handed my ski bib to Jim. He gave me his wet pants, which had started to freeze and were also a couple sizes too big. As soon as Jim warmed a little, we made a break for the bottom. I was amazed how fast the wet pants cooled me off. It seemed like I was instantly cold and shaking all over. Ski-

ing was more difficult wearing the wet jeans too. I didn't have enough hands to negotiate the trees and keep the pants up at the same time, so I let them slide to my ankles. I now had an added incentive not to fall in the loose powder with just my polypropylene between my skin and the snow!

Luckily, we were only about 400 yards from the tree line. It wasn't long before we emerged and found our group, who'd been looking for us. They were already loaded and ready to go, but as time went by without sight of either Jim or me, they began to worry. We were thoroughly chastised before we got into the van, stripped off our wet clothes and finally warmed up.

Jim's legs were blue for half the trip back to Denver. He had minor burns down the outside of his thighs from the cold, but no serious injuries. I was fine after I warmed up. It was a memorable day that scared both Jim and me. Jim, true to his character, still skis in jeans. I, however, learned my lesson. I'll always ski in waterproof clothing. I learned from our close call that it's always better to prepare for the worst!

### Skiing and Snowboarding Tips from National Ski Areas Association <https://www.nsaa.org>

#### Before hitting the slopes

- Get in shape. Don't try to ski yourself into shape. You'll enjoy skiing more if you're physically fit.
- Obtain proper equipment. Be sure to have your ski or snowboard bindings adjusted correctly at a local ski shop. You can rent good ski or snowboarding equipment at resorts.
- When buying skiwear, look for fabric that is water and wind resistant. Look for wind flaps to shield zippers, snug cuffs at wrists and ankles, collars that can be snuggled up to the chin and drawstrings that can be adjusted for comfort and to keep wind out. Be sure to buy quality clothing and products.
- Dress in layers. Layering allows you to accommodate your body's constantly changing temperature. For example, dress in polypropylene underwear (top and bottoms), which feels good next to the skin, dries quickly, absorbs sweat and keeps you warm. Wear a turtleneck, sweater and jacket.
- Be prepared. Mother Nature has a mind of her own. Bring a headband or hat with you to the slopes, as 60 percent of heat loss is through the head. Wear gloves or mittens (mittens are usually better for those susceptible to cold hands).
- Wear sun protection. The sun reflects off the snow and is stronger than you think, even on cloudy days!
- Always wear eye protection. Have sunglasses and goggles with you. Skiing and snowboarding are a lot more fun when you can see.

#### While on the slopes

- Take a lesson. Like anything, you'll improve the most when you receive some guidance. The best way to become a good skier or snowboarder is to take a lesson from a qualified instructor.
- The key to successful skiing/snowboarding is control. To have it, you must be aware of your technique, the terrain and the skiers/snowboarders around you. Be aware of the snow conditions and how they can change. As conditions turn firm, the skiing gets hard and fast. Begin a run slowly.
- Skiing and snowboarding require a mental and physical presence.
- If you find yourself on a slope that exceeds your ability level, always leave your skis/snowboard on and sidestep down the slope.
- The all-important warm-up run prepares you mentally and physically for the day ahead.
- Drink plenty of water. Be careful not to become dehydrated.
- Curb alcohol consumption. Skiing and snowboarding do not mix well with alcohol or drugs.
- Know your limits. Learn to ski and snowboard smoothly and in control. Stop before you become fatigued and, most of all, have fun.
- If you're tired, stop skiing. In this day and age of multi-passenger gondolas and high-speed chairlifts, you can get a lot more time on the slopes compared to the past when guests were limited to fixed grip chairlifts.

#### Your responsibility code

Skiing can be enjoyed in many ways. At ski areas, you may see people using alpine, snowboard, telemark, cross-country and other specialized ski equipment, such as that used by disabled or other skiers. Regardless of how you decide to enjoy the slopes, always show courtesy to others and be aware that there are elements of risk in skiing that common sense and personal awareness can help reduce. Observe the code listed below and share with other skiers the responsibility for a great skiing experience.

#### Always stay in control.

- People ahead of you have the right of way.
- Stop in a safe place for you and others.
- Whenever starting downhill or merging, look uphill and yield.
- Use devices to help prevent runaway equipment.
- Observe signs and warnings and keep off closed trails.
- Know how to use the lifts safely.

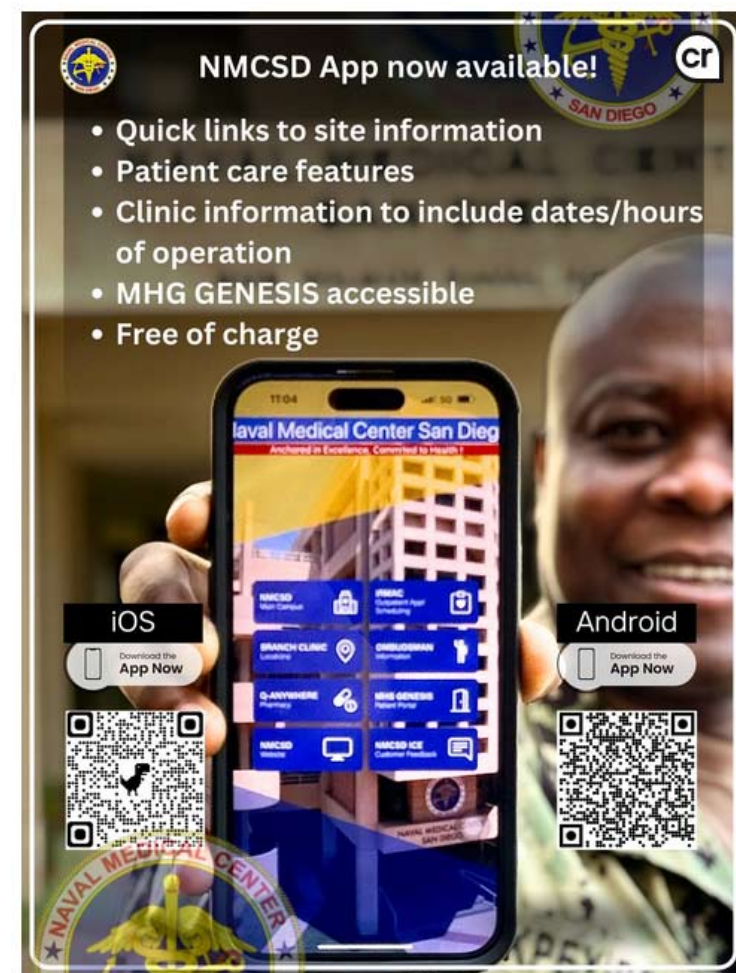
## NMCS D launches Android version of mobile app

Naval Medical Center San Diego (NMCS D) announced the launch of the Android version of its mobile application on Dec. 13, 2024, expanding accessibility for service members, veterans, and their families. This initiative bridges warfighter readiness with superior customer service by providing a streamlined digital tool for managing healthcare on the go.

The NMCS D app offers users convenient access to features such as appointment scheduling (MHS GENESIS), prescription refill requests, directions to the facility, and information on available services. Originally available only on iOS, the addition of an Android platform ensures the app's utility reaches a broader audience.

"NMCS D is committed to delivering world-class healthcare while meeting the demands of a technologically connected world," said Capt. Elizabeth Adriano, Director of NMCS D. "This mobile app is another step in ensuring our patients receive exceptional care, whether at home or in preparation for deployment."

In addition to offering a real-time experience, the app supports operational readiness by enabling service members to manage their medical needs effi-



ciently. This ensures they remain mission-ready, reducing disruptions to training and operational schedules.

"This app aligns with our need to provide superior customer service while fostering readiness," Adriano added. "It

demonstrates how innovation can directly enhance the lives of our patients and support the operational needs of the Navy."

With its user-friendly interface and robust functionality, the NMCS D mobile app exemplifies how modern technology can transform healthcare delivery in the military, creating a seamless experience for patients and staff alike.

The NMCS D mobile app is now available for download on both the Apple App Store and Google Play Store, both for free.

The mission of NMCS D is to prepare service members to deploy in support of operational forces, deliver high-quality health care services, and shape the future of military medicine through education, training, and research. NMCS D employs more than 5,000 active-duty military personnel, civilians, and contractors in southern California to provide patients with world-class care. Anchored in Excellence, Committed to Health!

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# Rate

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# Rate

## THE TAWY TEAM



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