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Richard Capewell, software engineer at Naval Information Warfare Center Pacific, gives a demonstration of the Boston Dynamics Spot to industry partners during WEST Conference 2025. U.S. Navy photo by Ramon Go

Pentagon prioritizes homeland defense, warfighting, slashing wasteful spending

by David Vergun, DoD News

During a media interview Feb. 9, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth said efforts at the Defense Department include modernizing the nuclear triad and building an iron dome for the U.S., referring to the iron dome that defends Israel against aerial threats.

These and other homeland priorities will be reflected in the fiscal year 2026 defense budget and future defense budgets, he added. The secretary also addressed defense spending. He said DOD is committed to passing a clean audit across the department, as the Marine Corps has done for the last two years.

“American taxpayers deserve to know exactly how and where their money is spent,” he said. “We need to know when we spend dollars; we need to know where they’re going and why.” He said the department welcomes Elon Musk’s Department of Government Efficiency, which will help identify ways to streamline this process, fast-track acquisitions and cut waste.

The secretary will be traveling to Brussels, Belgium, this week to attend the NATO ministerial meeting. He also will be traveling to Poland and Germany to meet with his counterparts and U.S. service members stationed there.

Hegseth said he especially looks forward to meeting the troops and hopes to do some physical training with them. “I want to make sure our troops understand how focused we are on their warfighting capabilities,” he said.

But the focus is not just on Europe. It’s also the Indo-Pacific region, he said, mentioning recent phone calls and meetings he’s had with leaders in Australia, South Korea, the Philippines and Japan.

He said the focus there is maintaining a strategic advantage over China. “We want the future of the world to be free. We’re confronting threats in real time, restoring the warrior ethos, rebuilding the military, reestablishing deterrence,” he said.

“I’m proud to come alongside the 1.3 million uniformed members of the department who execute America’s national security approach and do so with fidelity only to the Constitution and the rule of law, and that’s all you can ask for,” he said.

NAVY ‘SNOW TEAM’ SCULPT F-35C STEALTH FIGHTER FOR JAPAN’S ICONIC SNOW FESTIVAL

by Jonathan Snyder
 Stars and Stripes

U.S. Navy Sailors carved a replica of an F-35C Lightning II for their entry in the 75th annual Sapporo Snow Festival on Japan’s northernmost main island.

The C-model is the Navy’s carrier-capable variant and the fifth-generation fighter. Strike Fighter Squadron 147, the Argonauts, arrived last year at Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, near Hiroshima, as part of Carrier Air Wing 5.

The eight-member sculpting team included Sailors from Navy Air Facility Misawa, just across the Tsugaru Strait from Hokkaido, and from Yokosuka Naval Base, south of Tokyo.

“People up here are super friendly to the U.S. Navy,” lead designer and sculptor Petty Officer 1st Class Caroline Lui, of Arcadia, Calif., told *Stars and Stripes* by phone.

“Everybody who stopped by the sculpture has been really enthusiastic,” she said. “They’ve been pointing their fingers at the sculpture and be like ‘sugoi’ and, like, some of them even know what it is without reading the sign.” In Japanese, “sugoi” can mean “amazing” or “excellent.”

Festival visitors are invited to wear the yellow coat and headgear of carrier “shooters” — the

Sailors who signal fighter pilots before catapult launches — for photos with the sculpture, said Lt. Cmdr. Seth Koenig, spokesman for Task Force 70.

“Some of them even get into sort of the shooter pose, kind of signaling the F-35 taking off,” he said by phone. “So that’s been one of the interactive elements that we’ve brought up here for the snow festival this year.”

The team used a miniature clay model of an F-35C as a reference while sculpting over five days, contending with accumulating snow and warming temperatures, Lui said.

“I’ve been sculpting for 15 years, like on my own time, and being able to do it for the Navy was one of the most amazing things I’ve been able to do in

see **Sculpt**, page 2



Chief Enrico Dagsindal holds a small model of an F-35C Lightning II while Petty Officer 1st Class Caroline Lui works on the snow sculpture for the 75th Annual Sapporo Snow Festival. U.S. Navy photo by Matthew Fischer

Coast Guard interdicts 12 aliens near Point Loma

U.S. Coast Guard District Eleven

SAN DIEGO - Coast Guard members interdicted 12 aliens aboard a 25-foot sail vessel approximately 12 miles west of Point Loma Feb. 9. At approximately 10:19 a.m., a Customs and Border Protection patrol aircraft and a Coast Guard MH-60 Jayhawk helicopter sighted the sail vessel. Coast Guard Cutter Petrel was notified and diverted and at approximately 11:48 a.m. launched their small boat team members for the interdiction. All 12 aliens were taken into custody: 11 adult males and one adult female claiming Mexican nationality. The aliens and the vessel are en route to transfer to the Imperial Beach Border Patrol.

U.S., Japan launch first bilateral space effort

TANEGASHIMA SPACE CENTER, Kagoshima, Japan - A U.S. space domain awareness payload hosted on Japan’s Quasi-Zenith Satellite 6 successfully launched on a Japanese H-3 launch vehicle from the Yoshinobu Launch Complex at the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency here on Feb. 2. This is the first bilateral U.S.-Japan cooperative space effort focused on national security, and the first of two launches as part of the JAXA Quasi-Zenith Satellite System Hosted Payload program. The satellite will be operated by Space Operations Command’s Mission Delta 2, which conducts Space Domain Awareness operations to identify, characterize, and exploit opportunities and mitigate vulnerabilities in the national security space terrain.

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Welcome home
USS O’Kane



Women discharged from military due to motherhood eligible for compensation under new bill

by Svetlana Shkolnikova
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON - For 25 years, between 1951 and 1976, women service members were involuntarily separated from the military due to motherhood, leaving without separation benefits, counseling or assistance.

In 2023, Congress recognized the injustice in its annual defense policy bill, acknowledging the harm it caused to women troops. Now, Rep. Julia Brownley, D-Calif., is leading legislation that aims to make financial and symbolic amends.

The Women Involuntary Separated Earnings Remittance Act seeks to establish a process to upgrade military records and discharges for women who were



Female aircrew members from the 92nd Air Refueling Wing recreate WWII Women's Airforce Service Pilot photos in honor of women's history month, March 2017. Photo by Katherine Miranda/92nd Air Refueling Wing

wrongfully separated, provide a one-time payment of \$25,000 to affected veterans and expand Department of Veterans Affairs

health care eligibility to those veterans.

"The unfair practice of discharging women from the military because they became pregnant or became a mother was not only wrong, but it perpetuated a harmful cycle of gender prejudice," said Brownley. "This bill corrects this wrong."

It's unknown how many women were affected by Executive Order 10240, which President Harry Truman signed three years after Congress passed a law granting women the right to serve in the military in 1948. The executive order called for the discharge of women service members who became pregnant, adopted a child, gained custody of a child or lived with a step-

child for more than 30 days per year.

In 1976, a court declared the order unconstitutional, and the policy was rescinded. However, the affected women were never offered recompense. Brownley's bill directs the secretaries of the VA and the Defense Department to establish a program that would dole out compensation to eligible veterans and upgrade their discharge status.

Eligible veterans include women who gave birth, obtained legal or physical custody of a child or adopted a child during a 10-month period beginning after the date the veteran was separated from active service. Women who experienced

an incomplete pregnancy due to an abortion or miscarriage during such a 10-month period are also eligible.

The program covers women who served between April 27, 1951, and Feb. 23, 1976, as well as their surviving spouses. Brownley said the legislation will restore justice and provide redress for an often-overlooked attack on women service members.

"This bill is a critical step forward in not only rectifying the impact of this discriminatory practice and restoring fairness for these women veterans, but it [also] brings true equity closer to the two million women who have served our nation in uniform," she said.

DOD support to the southern border in photos



Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth meets with troops assigned to the Arrival/Departure Airfield Control Group at Fort Bliss, Texas, Feb. 3, 2025. DoD photo by Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Alexander Kubitza

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth traveled to the southern border to see operations firsthand and interact with service members. U.S. Northern Command is the Defense Department's operational lead for the employment of U.S. military forces carrying out President Donald J. Trump's executive orders on protecting the territorial integrity of the United States.



U.S. Soldiers participate in a supply drop in McAllen, Texas, Feb. 2, 2025. U.S. Northern Command is working together with the Department of Homeland Security to augment U.S. Customs and Border Protection along the southern border with additional military forces. This initial deployment of more than 1,600 active-duty personnel brings the total military Title 10 forces along the border to nearly 4,000 personnel. U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Keaton Habeck



Sailors assigned to littoral combat ship USS St. Louis (LCS 19) and Coast Guardsmen assigned to Coast Guard District 7 erect expeditionary shelter tents. U.S. Navy photo by MC2 Raphael Dorne



Army South Soldiers and civilians with the 502nd Air Base Wing pack a pallet of equipment in preparation for the a deployment for the USARSOUTH contingency command post at Kelly Air Base, San Antonio, Texas, Jan. 31, 2025. U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Joshua Tackens

DOD support to the southern border in photos, Feb. 10, 2025

Sculpt

continued from page 1

my Navy career so far," she said. "It's my first time sculpting snow, and it's also my first time up in Sapporo."

This marks the 40th year the Navy has participated in the world-renowned festival. Last year's team sculpted USS Gerald R. Ford, the first of its class and the world's largest aircraft carrier.

"The Japan Ground Self-Defense Force had a group up here in force that did a really impres-

sive sculpture of a historical mansion," Koenig said.

The Sapporo Snow Festival began in 1950 and attracts sculptors from around the world to Hokkaido. The works will remain on display until the festival concludes.

"I've also learned a lot of techniques about snow sculpture now that I would like to bring back," Lui said. "But if not, I still came away with a lot of great experiences and hopefully we left a great impression on people up here."

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House investigates secret Navy study of potential brain injuries among TOPGUN pilots

by Alison Bath
Stars and Stripes

A powerful congressional committee is probing a secret Navy program studying potential traumatic brain injuries suffered by the service's aviators, which may have led to the recent suicides of at least three Super Hornet pilots.

On Feb. 6, Rep. James Comer, chairman of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, sent a letter to acting Secretary of the Navy Terence Emmert requesting information and documents related to Project Odin's Eye, an internal service review of traumatic brain injuries potentially sustained by pilots with the Strike Fighter Tactics Instructor program, popularly known as TOPGUN.

The secret project, "initiated without formal approval from Navy Medical and Air Commands, raises additional questions about the Navy's knowledge of potential issues and whether it is acting to mitigate these issues in a comprehensive and effective manner," said Comer, a Republican from Kentucky.

Comer noted that while the service's efforts to better understand the impacts of high-speed flight on the human brain are understandable,



Flight operations aboard USS Abraham Lincoln. Official Navy photo

"it is concerning that Navy command may not be fully aware of (the program's) existence."

He also informed the Navy that the committee was investigating the service's efforts "to mitigate possible physiological and psychological effects inflicted on certain naval aviators and flight officers."

The letter was first reported and posted Thursday by The New York Times.

At issue is the impact on the brain of catapults and arresting gear typically used on aircraft carriers to rapidly accelerate or decelerate aircraft.

Catapults help F/A-18 Super Hornet fighter jets go from zero

to at least 190 mph in seconds as they launch from the runway of an aircraft carrier. Arresting gear brings an aircraft traveling at about 150 miles per hour to a complete stop within 320 feet, also within seconds.

Other fixed-wing aircraft that take off from or land on

Navy carriers include the E-2 Hawkeye, EA-18G Growler, F-35C Lightning II and C-2 Greyhound.

It's not clear how the gravitational forces experienced in repeated launches and landings affect the brain. The impact of G-force also is experienced by Navy aviators during missions and in combat.

The Navy has publicly denied the risk of TBI for pilots. But some aviators have reported sudden and unexplained mental health problems, including insomnia, anxiety, depression and PTSD-like symptoms, all of which can be a result of repeated subconcussive brain injuries, according to the Times report.

Three former Super Hornet pilots, all in their 40s, died by suicide within months of one

another in 2023 and 2024. Their families said the pilots had symptoms consistent with brain injuries, the newspaper reported separately in December.

Project Odin's Eye was created in 2024 to look for brain injuries in Navy SEALs and expanded in November to include TOPGUN aviators, the newspaper said.

In the letter, Comer requests that the Navy schedule a briefing with committee staff no later than Feb. 13 to better understand the extent the service has evaluated and addressed physiological and psychological injuries for naval aviators and flight officers.

He also demands that the service submit all documents, communications and drafts of Project Odin's Eye, along with research protocols, funding information and the names of all Defense Department officials overseeing the project.

The Navy also must submit all command and safety investigations from the past 10 years related to TBIs of all naval aviators and flight officers, among other requested documents and information to be handed over to the committee by Feb. 20.

<https://www.stripes.com/branches/navy/2025-02-07/brain-injury-navy-pilots-16753078.html>



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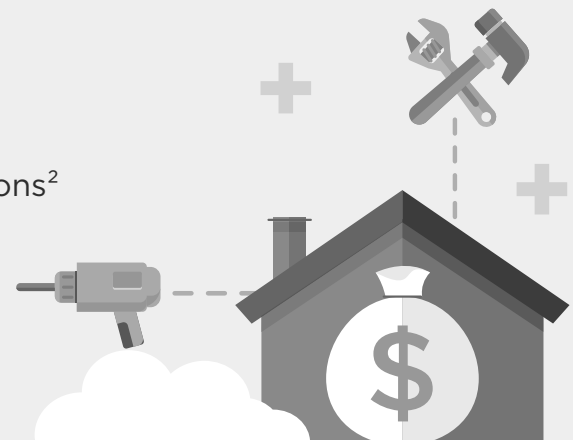
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 * Fort Riley lifts lockdown after investigation of gunshot report finds no evidence of shooting, Army says
 * Blast pressure injuries may affect more than the brain of troops, new data shows
 * Army police officer sentenced to 3 years in child porn case in Hawaii

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 * Navy League urges rapid expansion of battle fleet for future wars
 * Navy Sailors sculpt F-35C stealth fighter for Japan's iconic snow festival
 * Navy awards several contracts aimed at advancing key mine countermeasures capabilities
 * Carrier USS *Harry S. Truman* back in Mediterranean
 * Navy develops highly persistent undersea hydrophone system powered by ocean temperatures
 * Shipbuilders, Navy want deal on 2 Virginia attack boats 'as soon as possible'

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 * 'We learned a lot': Marines, Sailors reflect on deployments chock-full of equipment challenges

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 * Special operations memorial at MacDill Air Force base vandalized with spray paint
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 * Japan puts new Space Force capability into orbit

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 * Coast Guard suspends search for crew member missing in Eastern Pacific

BATTLE OF MANILA FORESHADOWED FUTURE URBAN WARFARE, PROVIDED LESSONS LEARNED

by David Vergun
 DOD News

The Battle of Manila in the Philippines, which took place 80 years ago, from Feb. 3, 1945, to March 3, 1945, is widely considered to be one of the most destructive urban battles ever fought in terms of lives lost, with near-total destruction of the capital.

Some have referred to the Battle of Manila as "the Stalingrad of Asia," Stalingrad being a large city in the Soviet Union that was the site of protracted fighting between the Red Army and troops of Nazi Germany earlier in World War II.

The day after the Dec. 7, 1941, attack on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, the Japanese attacked the Philippines, which was a U.S. territory.

At the time, Army Gen. Douglas MacArthur was the commander of U.S. Army Forces in the Far East. MacArthur and his forces in the Philippines were defeated, and in March 1942, he escaped to Australia, promising to return

to the Philippines.

The Battle of Manila and other battles in the Philippines fulfilled



U.S. troops walk amongst the rubble of war-torn Manila, the capital city of the Philippines, Feb. 27, 1945. Courtesy of Army

MacArthur's promise, albeit at the cost of 1,010 U.S. soldiers and countless Filipino civilians who were killed in the Battle of Manila alone.

The Battle of Manila provided valuable tactical lessons for future urban warfare, such as the battles of Seoul, Hue City, Baghdad and Fallujah.

The Japanese defense of the city included turning buildings into fortresses and integrating obstacles to disrupt and channel U.S. forces into kill zones. The monthlong battle demonstrated what a determined, well-prepared and well-entrenched enemy force can accomplish in an urban environment despite being outnumbered more than two to one.

The U.S. strategy took advantage of combined arms warfare, whereby tanks and

artillery used direct fire at close range to breach structures. Sappers carrying explosives and infantrymen armed with flamethrowers, grenades, bazookas and other small arms assisted in the advance.

U.S. soldiers quickly learned to limit their exposure in open areas, moving from building to building rather than down the streets. Upon entering buildings, flamethrowers and small-arms fire were employed to clear the structure.

In such close quarters of fighting, fratricide quickly became a concern for U.S. forces operating in chaos, as there was no well-defined forward edge of the battle area, as there would have been in non-urban combat areas.

The battle also highlighted the danger to civilians caught in the path of the fighting. It is estimated that over 100,000 Filipino civilians were killed during the battle.

The following year, on July 4, the Philippines gained their independence. Today, the Philippines and Japan are close U.S. allies.

February's monthly observances: Heart, strawberry, fasting

Adopt A Rescued Rabbit
 African-American Cultural Heritage Month
 AFRMA Fancy Rat and Mouse Month
 AMD/Low Vision Awareness
 American Heart Month
 An Affair To Remember
 Bake for Family Fun Month
 Barley Month
 Beat The Heat Month
 Declutter For A Cause Month
 Dog Training Education
 Fasting February
 Strawberry Month
 Feline Fix By Five Month
 Free and Open Source

Software Month
 From Africa to Virginia
 Give Kids A Smile Month
 Great American Pies Month
 Int'l Boost Self-Esteem
 Int'l Expect Success
 Int'l Hoof-care
 Int'l Month of Black Women in The Arts
 Int'l Prenatal Infection Prevention
 Jobs in Golf Month
 Library Lovers Month
 Love The Bus Month
 Marfan Syndrome Awareness Month
 Nat'l African American

History Month
 Nat'l Bird Feeding Month
 Nat'l Black History Month
 Nat'l Care About Your Indoor Air Month
 Nat'l Cherry Month
 Nat'l Condom Month
 Nat'l Children's Dental Health Month
 Nat'l Embroidery Month
 Nat'l Enrolled Agents Month
 Nat'l Goat Yoga Month
 Nat'l Haiku Writing Month
 Nat'l Hot Breakfast Month
 Nat'l Mend A Broken Heart
 Nat'l Parent Leadership
 Nat'l Pet Dental Health

National Prevent A Litter
 Nat'l Self Check Month
 Nat'l Snack Food Month
 Nat'l Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month
 Nat'l Therapeutic Recreation
 Nat'l Time Management
 Nat'l Weddings Month
 Nat'l Women Inventors
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 Pull Your Sofa Off The Wall
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Career and Education

Heritage lays foundation for Air Force BMT

by Angelina Casarez

37th Training Wing Public Affairs

JOINT BASE SAN ANTONIO-LACKLAND, Texas - During the first week of training called Zero Week, Air Force basic military training introduces trainees to "Airmindedness," a fundamental lesson showcasing the rich heritage and achievements that have shaped today's Air Force.

The lesson establishes historical context for new trainees, fostering the spirit and mindset that continues to drive air power's key role in the joint fight and its persistently innovative application in the battle space.

The Airmindedness training encompasses various historical elements, highlighting significant achievements and milestones in Air Force history, including the stories of the Tuskegee Airmen and Women Air Service Pilots.

These watershed moments in military aviation history are presented as part of the broader historical education that every Airman receives during training.

The Tuskegee Airmen, America's first black military aviators,

demonstrated exceptional skill and courage during World War II, protecting bomber aircraft on missions over Europe and North Africa.

The Tuskegee Airmen's achievements contributed to the Allied victory during World War II and played a pivotal role in the desegregation of the U.S. armed forces.

The WASP program marked another significant chapter in military aviation history.

These civilian women pilots flew nearly every type of military aircraft, conducting acceptance flights, test flights and ferry flights to deliver new aircraft from the factory to overseas operating areas.

Their service proved vital to the war effort and paved the way for future generations of military aviators.

Through historical videos and guided instruction, trainees learn about Air Force heritage and heroic actions by the Tuskegee Airmen, WASPs, Doolittle Raiders, The Flying Tigers and more.

This material is reinforced throughout basic training and subsequent courses, ensuring

Airmen develop a comprehensive understanding of their service's history.

The curriculum's historical content:

- Establishes foundational knowledge of Air Force heritage

- Demonstrates the evolution of air power capabilities

- Illustrates the importance of innovation and adaptation

- Showcases significant achievements that shaped today's Air Force

- Illuminates characteristics, ethos and values necessary for high mission effectiveness

"The Air Force maintains its commitment to preserving and teaching its history, ensuring each new generation of Airmen understands the legacy they inherit," said Col. Will Cooper, 37th Training Wing commander.

Executing training curriculum



Air Force basic military trainees from the 323rd Training Squadron, listen to a guided lesson about Airmindedness during Zero Week, at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland, Texas. U.S. Air Force photo by 2nd Lt. Kate Anderson

with a historical focus ensures all trainees understand foundational elements of Air Force history, ultimately preparing them to carry forward traditions of excellence.

"Understanding this history serves as a foundation for developing a warrior mindset for the next generation of warfighters who will continue advancing Air Force capabilities and the mission," Cooper said.

DAF releases memorandum Updated Telework Agreements to Comply with Presidential Memorandum, Return to In-Person Work

ARLINGTON, Va. (AFNS) - On Feb. 10, the Department of the Air Force released the memorandum Updated Telework Agreements to Comply with Presidential Memorandum, Return to In-Person Work, providing guidance on the use of telework and remote work. The full memorandum can be read at https://www.af.mil/Portals/1/documents/2025SAF/Updated_Telework_Agreements_to_Comply_with_Presidential_Memorandum_Return_to_In_Person_Work.pdf.

Navy pauses sexual assault prevention and response training

by Audrey Decker

Defense One

The Navy has paused sexual assault prevention and response training until further notice as the military scrambles to make sure it's following recent executive orders, according to multiple sources familiar with the move.

The SAPR program as a whole is still functioning, and victims are still encouraged to report crimes and seek assistance. But annual sexual assault prevention training for Navy troops and civilians, as well as the effort to train people in commands to become SAPR advocates - the people who listen to victims and guides them through Navy programs for treatment and legal guidance - was halted recently with no timeline for resuming.

The Navy is "working to fully execute and implement all directives outlined in the Executive Orders issued by the President, ensuring that they are carried out with utmost professionalism, efficiency, and in alignment with national security objectives," a service spokesperson said. They declined to comment directly on the pause in SAPR training.

After President Donald Trump enacted a slew of executive orders to weed out diversity, equity, and inclusion and take out the word "gender" and replace it with "sex," military services have been reviewing all of their training, policies, and websites to make sure that they

are in accordance with the new orders—but a lack of clear guidance has led to uneven implementation across commands.

The uncertainty has led to websites being taken down and confusion around which programs are still alive. On Jan. 24, *Military.com* reported that the Army briefly removed its sexual harassment and assault prevention policy from its website during the rush to wipe anything DEI-related, though the policy was restored several hours later.

The DOD's SAPR program was established in 2005 at the direction of Congress and then-Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld. The program office later established training and certification programs for Sexual Assault Response Coordinators and SAPR victims advocates.

"Reports that the Navy's sexual assault prevention and response training has been paused is extremely alarming. For years, there has been bipartisan consensus around the need to address sexual assault in our ranks, ultimately culminating in historic reforms to our military justice system. Any pause in these efforts is unacceptable and I've reached out to the Navy for an explanation," Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand, D-N.Y., said in a statement. <https://www.defenseone.com/policy/2025/02/navy-pauses-sexual-assault-prevention-and-response-training/402829/>

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Local Military

Marine from California among the 4 dead in contractor plane crash in Philippines

by Gary Warner, Stars and Stripes

A Camp Pendleton-based Marine sergeant was among the four Americans killed Feb. 6 when a plane contracted by the Defense Department crashed last week in the southern Philippines.

Sgt. Jacob M. Durham, 22, of Long Beach, was an electronic warfare analyst, the Marine Corps confirmed Feb. 8. He and three contractors were aboard the UC-12W Beechcraft King Air 350 that went down Feb. 6 in Maguindanao del Sur on the southern Philippine island of Mindanao. The three contractors have not been identified.

The crash occurred during a “routine mission in support of U.S.-Philippine security cooperation activities,” according to a report from the Indo-Pacific Command. “The aircraft was providing intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance support at the request of our Philippine allies,” the command said.



The official Marine Corps photo of Sgt. Jacob Durham. U.S. Marine Corps photo

Durham was assigned to the 1st Radio Battalion, I Marine Expeditionary Force Information Group, I Marine Expeditionary Force. I MEF is headquartered at Camp Pendleton. “We mourn the loss of Sgt. Jacob Durham, who made the ultimate sacrifice for our country,” Lt. Col. Mabel B. Annunziata, commanding officer of 1st Radio Battalion, said in the Marine Corps’ statement.

“Sgt. Durham embodied the highest traditions of the Marine Corps — exemplifying composure, intelligence and selfless leadership. He was deeply respected and loved by his fellow Marines. Our thoughts and prayers are with his family, friends and his fellow Marines during this profoundly difficult time.” Durham joined the Marines in 2021 and was promoted to sergeant five days before he died in the crash, the Marines reported.

A commitment to excellence, a legacy of impact

by Sgt. Gabrielle Zagorski
I Marine Expeditionary Force

CARLSBAD – The Marine Corps was built on a foundation of leadership, the intangible quality that inspires and motivates Marines to become better each day. Leadership requires qualities like judgment, integrity, honesty, decisiveness, and a commitment to excellence in all endeavors. While every Marine strives for excellence, only a select few stand out and earn recognition.

Marine Corps 1st Lt. Troy J. Garza, a communication strategy and operations officer at I Marine Expeditionary Force, and native of Harlingen, Texas, received the Marine Corps Association 1st Lt. Shaun M. Blue Trophy at the 2025 MCA West Coast Dinner, Jan. 30. Lt. Gen. Michael S. Cederholm, commanding general of I MEF, alongside Sgt. Maj. Peter Siaw, senior enlisted advisor of I MEF, and MCA leadership, presented Garza the “Heisman Size” trophy in the likeness of Blue.

The leadership trophy is an annual award honoring Blue, who exemplified qualities of leader-

ship, patriotism and selflessness in his service. He was killed in action on April 16, 2007 while leading his Marines in Anbar Province, Iraq and posthumously received the Bronze Star for his heroic actions.

“1st Lt. Shaun Blue’s legacy to me represents unwavering determination, and integrity,” said Garza. “The fact that the award reflects a lieutenant’s commitment to embodying the highest standards of Marine Corps leadership means the world to me and will remind me of the leader I strive to be.”

Established in late 2021 by the MCA in collaboration with The Basic School, the award honors a lieutenant who best represents the Marine Corps core values of honor, courage and commitment. Each year, students at The Basic School nominate the peer whom they would most want to go to combat with to receive the award.

As a commissioned officer, Garza draws on leadership fundamentals from his 13 years of enlisted service. Having served as a squad and unit leader across three deployments, he lived each day focused on developing his Marines into a highly skilled, combat-ready team. He seized every opportunity to understand his Marines—learning where they came from, their families, and their priorities. Above all, he mentored and developed his Marines into better individuals.

Garza understood that the right to wear the Eagle, Globe and Anchor requires continual growth in character and abilities. Inspired by great commis-



Marine Corps 1st Lt. Troy J. Garza, a communication strategy and operations officer with I Marine Expeditionary Force, poses for a photo as the recipient of the 1st Lt. Shaun M. Blue Leadership Trophy during the 2025 Marine Corps Association West Coast Dinner at Cape Ray Carlsbad Resort in Carlsbad, California, Jan. 30, 2025. The annual MCA West Coast Dinner connects service members, veterans and friends of the West Coast Corps communities. This year, the MCA awarded their annual 1st Lt. Shaun M. Blue Leadership Trophy at the dinner to honor a lieutenant who embodies patriotic and selfless service, traits exemplified by Blue. U.S. Marine Corps photo by Lance Cpl. Erica S. Padgett

sioned officers, including his first platoon commander, 1st Lt. Donnelly who was killed in action on his first deployment, his second platoon commander, 1st Lt. Broun, and his battalion commander, Lt. Col. Morris, he sought greater influence and responsibility in shaping Marines, along with more accountability for mission success. Ready for the next challenge, Garza followed in the footsteps of the great leaders before him and earned a commission as a second lieutenant.

Upon reporting to The Basic School, Garza sustained the transformation by demonstrating exemplary professionalism, strong leadership, selflessness and a steadfast work ethic. His superior character earned him the 1st Lt. Shaun M. Blue Award

for Alpha Company, Basic Officer Course 1-23, distinguishing himself among 284 peers and finishing in the top 5 percent of his class. Garza’s motivation and dedication to duty reflected great credit on himself and upheld the highest traditions of the Marine Corps and the United States Naval Service.

“Receiving the Shaun M. Blue Leadership Trophy gives me a sense of pride and honor,” states Garza. “This award not only honors the memory of Blue, but I hope it also inspires the Marines around me to continue leading with selflessness and upholding the traditions of the Marine Corps.”

Blue’s legacy bears witness to the onus every Marine carries to enhance the legacy of the Corps with their deeds. Garza, like the thousands of Marines that came before him and thousands that will come after, carries this onus every day in his willingness to be a leader for his unit, his family, and the American people he serves.

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Employee Spotlight

Enhancing postal operations with experience, perseverance

by Beverly A. Footman

PORT HUENEME - Great leadership can improve a good operation, and Nick Tolosa, postal lead at Naval Base Ventura County's Consolidated Postal Facility, exemplifies this principle. With a focus on continuous improvement, efficiency, and teamwork, Tolosa elevates the Ventura CPF to new levels of excellence to support the Navy's readiness.

Under his guidance, the post office here has significantly improved. The facility processed nearly 2,400 pieces of outgoing mail using an advanced mail processing system, generating over \$40K in postage revenue. This system has made postage management smoother, boosting the team's ability to meet deadlines while handling nearly 83 tons of outgoing mail with precision and care.

Tolosa's focus on operational



Nick Tolosa, sorting incoming mail. Tolosa provides postal support to over 60 tenant customers Photo by Beverly Footman

efficiency has also delivered real results. By carefully evaluating and selecting the most cost-effective carriers - including USPS, FedEx, and UPS - the CPF saved almost \$2,500 in postage costs. The team also processed nearly 50K pieces of incoming mail, ensuring that 67 tenant commands across NBVC received reliable and timely service.

One key area in which Mr. Tolosa has made a lasting impact is refining the Continuity of Operations Plan and developing a Business Recovery Plan for NBVC postal operations. These plans strengthen

the facility's ability to maintain services during emergencies, ensuring critical postal operations continue without disruption. Additionally, Tolosa introduced new tracking measures to monitor mail flow, helping identify and address potential bottlenecks in real time.

As 2025 begins, Nick Tolosa's leadership remains a driving force behind the Ventura CPF's growth. His dedication to service, efficiency, and teamwork ensures the facility continues to support the Navy's mission.

NHCP graduates six nurses from Nurse Residency Program

by Curtis Hill

Naval Hospital Camp Pendleton

Naval Hospital Camp Pendleton graduated six nurses from the Nurse Residency Program during a graduation ceremony held recently in the hospital galley meeting room aboard Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton.

The residency program is administered by the Directorate of Nursing Services and is co-chaired by Lt. Cmdr. Samantha Knight and Lt. Mary Hinson.

The program runs quarterly throughout the year and covers several areas of the hospital.

"Our Nurse Residency Program is 12 weeks long with rotations and cross-training to several departments across the hospital including laboratory, post-anesthesia care unit, ambulatory procedure unit, intensive care unit, and the emergency department," said Knight, a clinical nurse specialist in the hospital's intensive care unit.

The nurse residents are be-

ginning their military nursing career here at NHCP.

"Many of the nurses assigned to Naval Hospital Camp Pendleton have recently graduated from their respective nursing programs and passed state licensure exams," said Navy Capt. Sara Naczas, director for nursing services. "They come to us directly from their initial officer training.

During the graduation and capstone event, officiated by Naczas, each graduating nurse presented a brief to the Nurse Executive Council and DNS leadership.

According to Knight, the briefs are "on a process improvement, quality improvement, or evidence-based practice initiative identified dur-

ing the four weeks on their assigned unit of the Nurse Residency Program. Their first unit assignment is typically on the mother-infant unit, multi-service ward, or emergency department."

Graduating from the program this quarter were Lt. jg. Princess Ekudi, Ensign Madison Harrison, Ensign Raquel Kauthen, Ensign Jimmy Manikhong, Ensign Izabela Marasco, and Ensign Luciana Poka.

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USS O'Kane returns home after seven-month deployment

by USS O'Kane
Public Affairs

NAVAL BASE SAN DIEGO – The Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS O'Kane (DDG 77), assigned to the USS Abraham Lincoln Carrier Strike Group (ABECSG), returned to their homeport, Naval Base San Diego, after a seven-month deployment to the U.S. 3rd, 7th and 5th Fleet area of operations, Feb. 7.

O'Kane departed San Diego with the ABECSG, July 17, 2024, and remained in U.S. 5th Fleet following the departure of ABECSG who returned to their homeport in December 2024.

"I am incredibly proud of the exemplary work this team has invested in themselves and their equipment over the past few months," said Cmdr. Rich Ray, commanding officer, O'Kane.

"We are proud of the work we accomplished this deployment, and we are looking forward to continuing that success into the next challenge."

Following the departure of the USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72) and the Arleigh Burke-class guided-class missile destroyers USS Frank E. Petersen, Jr. (DDG 121), USS Michael Murphy (DDG 112) and USS Spruance (DDG 111) from U.S. 5th Fleet, O'Kane and the USS Stockdale

(DDG 106) remained in the U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM) area of responsibility to support global maritime security operations.

O'Kane and Stockdale successfully escorted U.S. flagged and crewed merchant vessels in the Gulf of Aden. During the escort, the destroyers worked alongside other U.S. Central Command forces in successfully repelling multiple Iranian-backed Houthi attacks during transits of the Bab el-Mandeb strait.

During the transit, the destroyers were attacked by one-way attack un-crewed Aerial systems, anti-ship ballistic missiles and anti-ship cruise missiles which were successfully engaged and defeated.

The vessels were not damaged, and no personnel were hurt. The ships were well prepared, supported, and the well-trained Sailors successfully defended the ship.

Throughout deployment, O'Kane successfully completed 75 flight quarters, including 84 rotary-wing landings, 26 rotary-wing refueling evolutions, and nine vertical replenishments. In addition, O'Kane conducted 24 replenishments-at-sea, and 22 mooring evolutions.



Friends and family of O'Kane crew wait for the ship to pull into its homeport Feb. 7. U.S. Navy photo by Fire Controlman (Aegis) 1st Class Bryce Cothran

Additionally, O'Kane visited Karachi, Pakistan to promote the diplomatic relationship between the United States and Pakistan. Following the port visit, O'Kane conducted a maritime exercise to build interoperability with the Pakistan Navy.

ABECSG initially deployed to the Indo-Pacific region to support regional security and stability, and to reassure our allies and partners of the U.S. Navy's unwavering commitment, highlighted by the first-ever U.S.-Italy multi-large deck event with the Italian Navy's ITS Cavour Carrier Strike Group held in the Indo-Pacific on Aug. 9, 2024.

The strike group was ordered to the USCENTCOM area of responsibility to bolster U.S. military force posture in the Middle East, deter regional escalation, degrade Houthi capabilities, defend U.S. forces, and again sailed alongside our Italian allies and other partners to promote security, stability and prosperity.

Assigned destroyers of the ABECSG, to include O'Kane, were essential to providing a layer of defense to U.S. forces and ensure the safe passage of commercial vessels and partner nations transiting in international waterways like the Red Sea, Bab el-Mandeb Strait and

the Gulf of Aden.

As an integral part of U.S. Pacific Fleet, Commander, U.S. 3rd Fleet operates naval forces in the Indo-Pacific and provides the realistic and relevant training to ensure the readiness necessary to execute the U.S. Navy's timeless

role across the full spectrum of military operations.

U.S. 3rd Fleet works together with our allies and partners to advance freedom of navigation, the rule of law, and other principles that underpin security for the Indo-Pacific region.

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ALL SECURE Sailors secure a tending line to a fueling station aboard estroyer USS Wayne E. Meyer during a replenishment-at-sea with fleet replenishment oiler USNS Henry J. Kaiser in the Pacific Ocean Jan. 14, 2025. Wayne E. Meyer is underway conducting routine operations in the U.S. 3rd Fleet area of operations. U.S. Navy photo by MC1 Charles J. Scudella III



RED RAYS Marines fire M240B machine guns during platoon attack training at Marine Corps Air-Ground Combat Center Twentynine Palms, Calif., Jan. 25, 2025. The training is part of Integrated Training Exercise 1-25, which develops Marines' combat skills through realistic scenarios. U.S. Marine Corps photo by Lance Cpl. Micah Thompson



READY TO FLY Navy Lt. Maxwell Dopsch conducts preflight checks on an F/A-18F Super Hornet aboard USS Nimitz in the Pacific Ocean, Jan. 25, 2025. U.S. Navy photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Hannah Kantner

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Sibling squabbles, now and then

“Mom, Anna’s being mean!” my youngest daughter, Lilly, wailed, tattle-tailing on her older sister. Fights like this were once commonplace between the siblings in our family unit, occurring weekly if not daily. However, this particular fight just happened last week, and Lilly is 24 years old.

Lilly had called me from her own apartment where she lives as a working nursing student, after having a telephone argument with her 26-year-old sister, Anna, who is a fashion designer in New York City. The subject of their disagreement was rather innocuous, but the resulting verbal sparring cut them both to the quick and left them in tears.

It didn’t surprise me that Anna and Lilly still fight as adults, because I’m a sibling, too. And so is their dad.

My husband and I have learned that no matter how close we are with our siblings, the same old conflicts can break out well into adulthood. Maybe not over who called the other “Stupid-butt,” or who burped in church, or who ate the last Oreo, but adult sibling fights are still sibling fights nonetheless.

Sibling battles are more volatile than conflicts between friends, parents, or coworkers. One minute, siblings are happily sharing a Tonka truck in the sandbox or a Barbie in the tub, and the next minute someone ends up with a scratched cornea. Arguably, this volatility springs from the natural competition ingrained in siblings from birth, as they scrape and claw for their parents’ attention and approval ... and that last Oreo.

Furthermore, siblings generally experience all the ups and downs of their formative years side-by-side, exposing every emotion and fear to each other. Simple argu-

The Meat & Potatoes of Life



by
Lisa
Smith
Molinari

ments can go from zero to 100 in a flash, because their vulnerabilities are just under the surface. Siblings know exactly how to push each other’s buttons.

When I was a squishy little kid, I had an older brother. When I wasn’t idolizing him (he was the smart, good-looking, athletic one), I was calling him a “big meanie” and telling on him to Mom and Dad.

Stories of our sibling battles abound, like the time he stole my baton and twirled it over my head while I whined and protested. The white rubber end of the baton flew off and broke a picture on the wall, but my brother somehow convinced me to take the blame. Like I said, he was the smart one.

Or, the time he snuck up on me à la Kato from “The Pink Panther”, and scared me so bad, I hit him with my hairbrush, bloodying his nose. Or, the time he gave me the Hawaiian nick-name “Lee Lae Lon,” which I hated, and led our entire school bus in a chant. “Gimme an L! Gimme an E!

Gimme another E!” and so on, all the way to East Pike Elementary.

Once, while my cousin and I were playing house in our grandfather’s shed, my brother trapped us inside by standing on the roof and swinging a wagon down through the door every time we tried to get out, maniacally laughing as we screamed.

The conflicts between my brother and I continued, with a small respite during our teen years when we suddenly found Mom to be hilarious. My brother and I turned our attention to relentlessly mocking my poor mother’s quirks and mannerisms, and she didn’t protest because we were finally laughing instead of fighting.

As adults, my brother and I have laughed, but we’ve also had our disagreements. Each time, that thin veil that covers our vulnerabilities has been scratched open, leaving wounds that often take time to heal. But nowadays, I can’t run off crying to Mom the way I did when I was a kid.

“Are you gonna let Anna get away with being mean?” Lilly cried on the phone last week. As a 58-year-old mother of three grown adults, my instincts told me I was too old to get involved. Instead, I remembered an edict I once overheard my Kentucky aunt tell my squabbling adult cousins, “If you’re gonna stir up \$#!t, don’t use me as a spoon.”

Calmly, I encouraged Anna and Lilly to work out their differences, and soon enough, they did.

AutoMatters™ & More by Jan Wagner



Having paint chips professionally repaired at a bodyshop is expensive and inconvenient. A much less expensive, quicker and easier option is to try to fix the damage yourself with touch up paint. Small containers of touch up paint, complete with a self-contained brush and matched to the color code of your vehicle’s paint, are available from auto dealerships. However, it has been my decades-long experience that this does not work very well. The paint does not dry quickly, carefully filling (but not overfilling) the chips is pretty much impossible and removing the dried, excess paint afterwards takes a lot of effort.

A popular alternative is the Dr. ColorChip Automotive Touch Up Paint System. I learned more about this at the Dr. ColorChip exhibit, while covering the automotive aftermarket’s 2024 SEMA Show in Las Vegas.

I asked Tony Pando, a senior representative of the company, to demonstrate how to repair paint chips with Dr. ColorChip so that I could record a video to share with you. He agreed, and a crowd quickly gathered to watch and learn from this expert. Watch that video here, on the “AutoMatters & More” YouTube channel: <https://youtu.be/VYRv-IBc2ww>.

Several different do-it-yourself kits, starting at \$49.95, are available

Easily fix paint chips with Dr. ColorChip - with video

from the Dr. ColorChip website: <https://drcolorchip.com>. Dr. ColorChip sent me two review samples of their “Squirt ‘n Squeegee™” kit. Each kit has a bottle of paint that matches one of my two vehicles.

That kit includes a one-ounce bottle of Dr. ColorChip paint, a four-ounce bottle of Sealact Blending Solution, one white blending cloth, one nitrile glove, one Ultra Paint Brush, two microbrushes and one Flex Clear™ Squeegee (that “makes repairs easy”). You can either enter your paint code on their website, if you know it, or look it up on their website by entering your vehicle’s year, make and model. This is special paint invented by Dr. ColorChip. It is very sticky, dries very quickly and produces a permanent repair. It sticks to metal, plastic, fiberglass and more. The paint should be good for about a year. Shake it occasionally.

To avoid getting dust and debris in the wet paint, work in a closed garage. First, clean in and around the chips with rubbing alcohol, to help the paint adhere. I used an alcohol wipe from a first aid kit.

After shaking the bottle of paint, generously dab some paint near the chips and then smear it with the rubber glove or flexible squeegee to fill the chips.

About three to four minutes after applying the paint, shake the bottle of Sealact™ Blending Solution and then pour a generous amount of that onto the blending cloth. The cloth should be quite wet — almost to where the solution drips off of the cloth.

This solution is chemically de-

signed to work together with the Dr. ColorChip paint. Do not aggressively try to rub off the excess paint. Instead, be gentle and take your time. Let the solution remove it chemically, gently removing the excess paint with an outstretched, flat hand or a squeegee. If the cloth starts to get dry, add more of the solution. Avoid pressing down with your fingers into the chips or you will remove paint from them. If you do, just repeat the process.

It is easiest to remove the excess paint from a flat surface, such as the hood or door panels. However, I used one of the kits to try to fill some rather deep chips in my driver’s-side door jamb, caused over the years whenever I accidentally tried closing the door when the seatbelt buckle had not fully retracted. The chips were on a 90-degree edge, so it was difficult to remove the excess paint without also removing paint from within several of the chips. I had to add more paint, wait a few minutes for it to dry and then apply more Sealact™ Blending Solution.

Finish by buffing with the microfiber towel. Wait at least three days to apply wax — longer before applying a ceramic coating.

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Veterans News

VA operations often hindered by employee misconduct, computer problems, program inefficiencies

by Linda F. Hersey
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON - Employee misconduct, malfunctioning computer systems, confusing policies and program inefficiencies hamper operations at the Department of Veterans Affairs, despite the hard work of most personnel, the VA’s acting inspector general told lawmakers Feb. 6.

In written and oral testimony, David Case testified at a House Veterans’ Affairs subcommittee on oversight and investigations hearing that problems often are identified but persist because of mismanagement, persistent staff vacancies and a lack of follow-through on disciplining employees.

“Shortages of qualified personnel in key positions have made it difficult for VA to carry out its goals and functions. Having the right people in the right positions committed to doing the right thing is essential to building workforce accountability, as is instilling that sense of responsibility in new hires,” Case said.

He fielded questions from

lawmakers about reports of VA leadership at medical centers failing to address performance problems with workers who do not carry out their responsibilities.

“Last Congress, this committee found countless instances where employees were not held accountable for their actions. Too many times bureaucracy is put first and veterans come in second,” committee chairwoman Rep. Jen Kiggans, R-Ill., said at the start of the hearing.

“Protecting bad employees from the consequences of failing the veterans they serve is unacceptable,” she said.

The Restore VA Accountability Act, re-introduced by Rep. Mike Bost, R-Ill., who is chairman of the House Veterans’ Affairs Committee, would impose tougher standards for holding leaders accountable, Kiggans said.

The bill would authorize the VA to remove from civil service, demote or suspend VA supervisors or managers, according to language in the legislation.

The VA is working to strengthen accountability among personnel with a focus on improving day-to-day operations at VA hospitals and clinics, said Ted Radway, acting assistant secretary in the Office of Accountability and Whistleblower Protection.

“Accountability starts long before we propose disciplinary actions,” he said.

The agency is developing rules and policies that better outline expectations for behavior and performance and consequences for failing to meet expectations.

In fiscal 2024, the VA took 5,875 actions to remove, suspend or demote employees for performance problems, said

Doug Collins becomes new VA secretary

On Feb. 4, the U.S. Senate confirmed Doug Collins as the new Secretary of Veterans Affairs with a strong vote of 77-23. This is an important moment for veterans, as Collins is the first post-9/11 veteran to lead the VA. His background as a former Republican congressman from Georgia and an Air Force Reserve colonel gives him both military and government experience. He also served as a military chaplain, helping service members during difficult times. Collins has made several promises to improve the VA and ensure that veterans receive the care and benefits they deserve. Some of his top priorities include protecting veterans’ benefits, expanding healthcare access, and modernizing VA hospitals.

Tracey Therit, the VA’s chief human capital officer.

Employees are disciplined under Title 5 authorities that are legally defensible, she said. “We make sure the employee does not come back if we remove them, so we don’t reinstate bad actors,” she said.

Title 5 refers to a section of the U.S. Code that governs VA personnel and employment.

But Case suggested that ineffective policies and practices serve to undermine employee performance and the delivery of veterans benefits and services.

“OIG (Office of the Inspector General) leaders have testified before this subcommittee

and other congressional committees many times in the past about enhancing accountability at VA. There are several recurring themes and deficiencies that remain unchanged,” he said.

He outlined the need for clarity of roles and responsibilities, adequate and qualified staffing, updated computers and other business processes, quality assurance monitoring and leadership that fosters responsibility.

He said the OIG’s investigations of individual hospitals and clinics offer a roadmap for improvement for all VA’s hospitals and clinics.

Some Democratic lawmakers pushed back. They defended the VA and its employees and said political pressure from the Trump administration was making the VA a target.

Rep. Mark Takano, D-Calif., said VA employees are blamed for deficiencies as a strategy to terminate personnel and reduce the federal workforce. Rep. Delia Ramirez, D-Ill., accused the Trump administration of creating chaos within the VA.

Kiggans admonished the Democratic lawmakers for their comments. “Partisan games have no place when veterans’ lives are on the line,” she said.



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CROSSWORD PUZZLE

Across

- 1 Apple discard
- 5 Cash dispensers
- 9 Edinburgh resident
- 13 Highest point
- 14 Metal corrosion
- 15 Novelist Tokarczuk who won the 2018 Nobel Prize in Literature
- 16 Where to watch pillars and frames?
- 19 Professional org.
- 20 Big name in ridesharing
- 21 Observe
- 22 "Rugrats" dad
- 24 "Almost Famous" director Cameron
- 26 Low-scoring tie
- 29 Guzzles (down)
- 32 Serious hwy. crime
- 33 One-sixth of an inch, to a typesetter
- 35 Uncommon
- 36 Where to watch Stonehenge and Big Ben?
- 40 Bengay target
- 41 Smell
- 42 Ultrasound goop
- 43 "Onwards!"
- 46 Put a hex on
- 48 Play idly, as a guitar
- 50 Stitching target

- 51 "Frankly," in texts
- 53 Coup d'__ : sudden regime change
- 55 Modern creatures that are technically dinosaurs
- 59 Where to watch tracks and tunnels?
- 62 Facts and figs.
- 63 Egg on
- 64 Volcano on Sicily
- 65 "The Martian" actor Damon
- 66 Writes the wrong ZIP code, say
- 67 Filter (through)

Down

- 1 Spanish house
- 2 Magnum __: masterpiece
- 3 Gym sets, briefly
- 4 Tell-all news story
- 5 Flight update abbr.
- 6 Ballet skirt
- 7 "The Beat With Ari Melber" broadcaster
- 8 Has the wheel
- 9 Female pig
- 10 From a short distance, with "at"
- 11 Big, mean giant
- 12 Help oneself to
- 17 Ocean floor dwellers with many arms

- 18 Sci-fi film with light cycles
- 23 Aussie colleges
- 25 Wave a red flag at
- 26 Postal scale unit
- 27 Workforce during the week hours
- 28 Amazon gadget activated by saying "Alexa"
- 30 Set loose
- 31 Unload for cash
- 32 Start a card game
- 34 Rock band with the album "Powerage"
- 37 "___ we forget"
- 38 Length of many TV dramas
- 39 Joyful Spanish shout
- 44 Mushroomed
- 45 Power interruption
- 47 Treats with petty malice
- 49 City hall bigwig
- 51 Barbershop request
- 52 "Dirty John" actor Eric
- 54 Ruler of imperialist Russia
- 56 Solemn observance
- 57 "All finished!"
- 58 One of the Rice Krispies trio
- 60 "Thanks a ___!"
- 61 QB stats

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

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<https://www.sdhumane.org/programs/community-veterinary-program/>

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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: MCB CAMPEN_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

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About faces: The biology of face and head formation

There's a reason we can spot a friend in a crowd—humans are wired to focus on faces. We're incredibly skilled at recognizing small differences in a face, like a square jaw, arched brows, or high cheekbones. The uniqueness of faces inspires artists and poets. It also enables facial recognition technology. The distinct features of each face help to define who we are.

"There's a lot of information in a face," says Dr. Seth Weinberg, who studies genes that affect the face and head at the University of Pittsburgh. "It's how we connect with each other, understand emotions, and interpret social cues."

Despite its importance, the underlying biology that creates each face remains unclear. And scientists are not yet certain what goes wrong to cause birth defects of the head and face. These are called craniofacial disorders. They can make it hard to eat, hear, speak, see, and breathe. Craniofacial disorders can also harm the growing brain.

NIH-funded researchers are working to unravel the mysteries behind how the head and face develop. Their findings could not only help prevent or treat craniofacial disorders, like cleft lip and palate. They could shed light on the function and development of other body parts, since the head and face include many nerve cells, bones, immune cells, and more.

Molding the Face and Head

One way to decipher the underlying biology of the face and head is to gather data—lots of it. Scientists analyze genetic information, take images of people's faces, and collect other biological information from both humans and animals. And they share this data with other scientists to enable discoveries.

So far, researchers have linked over 300 areas of our DNA to facial features like nose height, eye width, and chin shape. In one study, Weinberg and colleagues analyzed images of the head from more than 6,000 children. This helped them uncover previously unknown sets of genes that can affect the shape of the human head. These findings, in turn, could shed light on genetic disorders that affect the skull.

But genes alone don't tell the whole story. Even identical twins with the same genes don't always look exactly alike.

"From our research, our genes only explain about 14% of the variation in facial features," Weinberg says. Our age, diet, environment, exposure to chemicals, and many other factors can mold the shapes of our faces before and after birth.

Tailoring Treatment

While scientists haven't yet pinpointed all the factors that affect our faces, they do know that



when craniofacial disorders arise, they generally begin before birth. These disorders occur when bones, nerves, and tissues in the face and head don't form properly as a baby is growing in the womb.

For example, cleft lip and palate is a birth defect that arises around the second or third month of pregnancy. It occurs when the right and left sides of the lip, the roof of the mouth (called the palate), or both don't join all the way. This creates a gap, or cleft.

"Cleft lip and palate is the most common craniofacial disorder. Instead of a continuous lip, there is a notch or there's a defect that extends up into the nose, so the lip is in two segments," explains NIH's Dr. Janice Lee, who specializes in surgery for the face, head, neck, and jaw. "Typically, we can identify it while the baby is growing in the womb or at birth." With 3D imaging techniques, doctors can now assess cleft disorders before birth and begin to plan repairs.

Newborns with cleft lip or palate are often referred to a team of surgeons, dentists, geneticists, pediatricians, and speech therapists

for care. These experts may follow their patients from birth to adulthood, repairing the cleft and guiding recovery. Cleft lip and palate can affect a child's oral health and social well-being. The goal is to tailor care for each patient and lessen the disorder's impact on their lives. With treatment, most children with cleft lip or palate do well and lead a healthy life.

Finding New Options

Surgeries for the face and head can be complex and tough on the body. Even after surgery, some children may have trouble eating, breathing, and speaking. Scientists are continuing to develop new surgical techniques to help patients speak better and improve how their faces look. Others are creating computer programs and artificial intelligence tools to plan surgery for cleft lip or palate.

Researchers are also exploring ways to fix craniofacial disorders while reducing surgical procedures. Dr. Yang Chai at the University of Southern California aims to find ways to correct a craniofacial disorder called craniosynostosis.

Normally, a newborn's skull

Preventing birth defects

It's not always possible to prevent craniofacial disorders and other birth defects. But you can improve your chances for healthy outcomes by taking care of your own health before and during pregnancy:

- Talk with a health care provider. Be sure to discuss any family history of birth defects and medical conditions that might affect pregnancy, like diabetes or obesity.
- Avoid harmful substances. Using nicotine-containing products, drinking alcohol, or using illicit drugs can cause birth defects and other problems.
- Take care of your overall health. Prevent infections, take care of existing health conditions like diabetes, and try to keep a healthy weight.
- Get 400 micrograms of folic acid every day. Having enough folic acid in your body before and during pregnancy can help prevent birth defects of the brain and spine.

"If we can understand who's at greatest risk or which families are at risk, we can do things that could potentially prevent these conditions from occurring," Lee says.

bones are separated by flexible joints that make space for the brain to grow. But in babies with craniosynostosis, the joints close too soon. This can change a baby's head shape and brain growth.

"During my surgical training, I performed surgeries to fix these conditions but couldn't explain to parents why their kids had them," Chai says. "This became a strong drive for me to better understand the disease and find a better solution for these patients."

Chai and his colleagues are

testing ways to grow more tissue between the skull joints in young mice with craniosynostosis. The researchers are using stem cells to fix the skull shape and reverse learning and memory problems in mice.

Stem cells are special cells that can turn into many other types of cells, including bone, skin, and muscle. Their findings suggest that stem cell therapy may one day be a less invasive treatment for craniofacial disorders.

Predicting who might be more likely to have craniofacial disorders is another area that scientists are excited about. "If we can understand who's at greatest risk or which families are at risk, we can do things that could potentially prevent these conditions from occurring," Lee says. "We're not there yet. But prediction and early treatment is really something we're all working toward."

World War II veteran co-founds nurse practitioner program

by David Vergun, DOD News

A nationwide shortage of physicians in rural areas spurred a World War II nurse to work with a pediatrician and create the nurse practitioner program in 1965.

Loretta Ford, a native of the Bronx, New York City, earned her nursing diploma in 1941 and was working at Middlesex General Hospital in New Brunswick, New Jersey, when her fiancé was killed during World War II. His death inspired Ford to serve as a nurse in the Army Air Forces, which later became the Air Force in 1947 after it split from the Army.

During the war, she served at military base hospitals in Maine and Florida. Following the war, Ford used her G.I. Bill to attend the University of Colorado, where she earned a bachelor's degree in nursing in 1949.

Throughout the 1950s, Ford was a public health nurse for Boulder County, Colorado. It was a rural area with a lack of medical care availability, so she and other nurses set up temporary health clinics.

Those experiences influenced her thinking that nurses could fill in for medical doctors if given some extra training. In 1965, Ford worked with pediatrician Henry Silver to create the first nurse practitioner program in the United States at the University of Colorado. She earned a doctorate in education from the same university in 1961.

Ford, born Loretta Pfingstel Dec. 28, 1920, married William Ford in 1947. They had a daughter, Valerie Monrad, who now lives in Inverness, Florida.



Loretta Ford is pictured in 2019. Photo courtesy of the American Nursing Association.

At age 100, Ford received the Surgeon General's Medallion—the highest civilian honor given by the Public Health Service. She was also inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame at age 91.

Ford died Jan. 22, 2025, at her home in Wildwood, Florida, at age 104.

In 1971, Elliot Richardson, the secretary of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, made a formal recommendation for expanding the scope of nursing practice so that nurses could serve as primary care providers. HEW later became known as the Department of Health and Human Services.

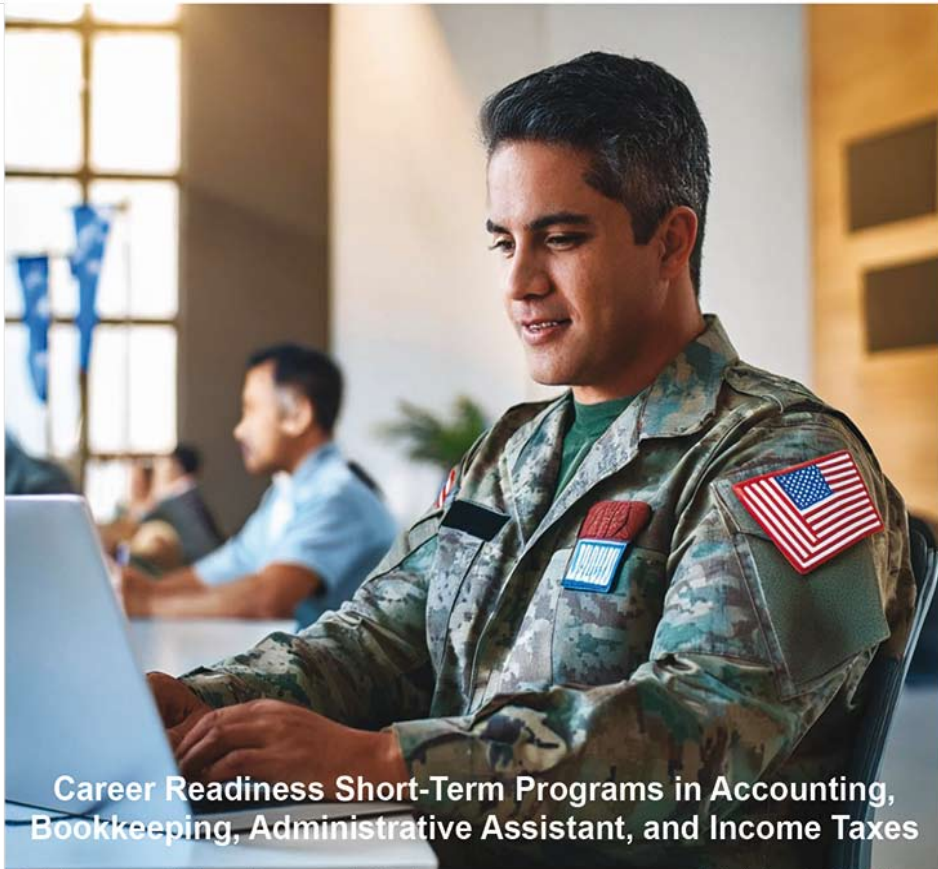
That recommendation has been enacted in most states, where nurse practitioners, acting as primary care providers, can perform many of the same tasks as medical doctors, including performing diagnostic procedures and evaluations, ordering lab work or blood tests and prescribing medications and treatment plans.

Nurse practitioners have since risen to many high-level positions.

Susan Orsega, a nurse practitioner and a rear admiral in the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps, served as the acting U.S. surgeon general, Jan. 20, 2021 to March 24, 2021.

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