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SIXTY-THIRD YEAR NO. 33
JANUARY 16-31, 2024



NAVAL HOSPITAL CAMP PENDLETON (Jan. 1, 2024) Camp Pendleton welcomes the first baby born at the hospital in 2024. Alanna Isara Diaz-Calderon was born at 12:37 a.m. New Year's Day. She weighed 6.12 pounds at birth. She is the daughter of Kay Diaz-Calderon and Cpl. Alexis Calderon from 1st Intelligence Battalion, I MEF Information Group, I Marine Expeditionary Force. Official Marine Corps photo

Sexual assault now tried outside military chain of command

DOD News

The decision to prosecute sexual assault and several other serious crimes has moved from an accused service member's chain of command to new Offices of Special Trial Counsel, which have general or flag officer leaders who report directly to the secretaries of the military departments.

This military justice reform is an important step in restoring faith that the system is fair, just and equitable, said senior Defense Department and military officials, who emphasized that the offices will be staffed by specially trained, independent military attorneys uniquely qualified to address complex cases. The OSTCs will handle cases professionally, applying the best practices and procedures of civilian prosecution offices, a senior DOD official said.

The covered offenses that fall under the authority of the new OSTCs include: murder, manslaughter, kidnapping, domestic violence, stalking, child pornography and most sexual assault and sexual misconduct.

Sexual harassment will become a covered offense on Jan. 1, 2025, for crimes committed after that date where a formal complaint is made and substantiated.

In the case of sexual assault, the reform applies to unrestricted reports. A service member making an unrestricted report has decided to participate in a criminal investigation and support actions taken to hold the alleged offender appropriately accountable. Individualized, confidential help is available to understand these changes from special victims' counsel in the Army; victims' counsel in the Department of the Air Force; and victims' legal counsel in the Navy and Marine Corps. Sexual assault response coordinators can assist in contacting the attorneys and other assistance services.

<https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/3627107/News>



NAVAL MEDICAL CENTER SAN DIEGO (Jan. 1, 2024) - This year's first baby here is Milan Macias, born 12:40 a.m., New Year's Day, to parents GM2 Michelle Menconi, Afloat Training Group San Diego, and IT1 Hamilton Macias, USS Stockdale. Photo courtesy of NMCSD's Facebook page



MISS AMERICA FIELD FEATURES AIR FORCE OFFICER WHO CHAMPIONS CANCER RESEARCH

by Jennifer H. Svan
Stars and Stripes

Madison Marsh was shooting for the stars four years ago

when she entered the Air Force Academy, as a cadet with a pilot's license and the dream of becoming an astronaut.

These days, Marsh is a second lieutenant pursuing graduate studies in public policy at the Harvard Kennedy School through a special Air Force partnership program. Oh, and she's also a Miss America contestant.

After being named Miss Colorado in May on her third try, she became the first active-duty officer to vie for the Miss America crown, an Air Force Academy spokesman said. The competition will be held Jan. 6-14 at Walt Disney World in Orlando, Fla.

said. "I'm very excited. "We've never had a member of the armed forces win before. I just think it's a tremendous opportunity."

As Miss Colorado, Marsh, 22, enjoys talking with young girls about military service and being a pilot, she said. It was during her first year of undergraduate school that Marsh followed in her cousin's footsteps and decided to compete in pageants.

Cadets struggle to find their identity in a new and challenging environment, she said, and she saw it as a chance to pursue an extracurricular activity that

"I feel it's good nerves," she

see **Marsh, page 2**



Air Force 2nd Lt. Madison Marsh prepares for her familiarization flight at Nellis Air Force Base, Nev., Dec. 19, 2023. U.S. Air Force photo by William R. Lewis

Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin continues recovery from medical condition

Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III has resumed the full duties of his office and remains in contact with senior advisors as he continues to recover after experiencing complications from a recent elective medical procedure, Pentagon Press Secretary Air Force Maj. Gen. Pat Ryder said Jan. 8. Austin remains hospitalized at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, Bethesda, Md., where Ryder said he is recovering and is in good spirits. "Since resuming duties on Friday evening, the secretary has received operational updates and has provided necessary guidance," Ryder said.

SECNAV names future medical ship USNS Bethesda, honors medical legacy

Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro honored the history and community of healthcare professionals of Naval Support Activity Bethesda, by naming future Bethesda-class Expeditionary Medical Ship USNS Bethesda (EMS 1) during a ceremony at the Walter Reed Medical Center Jan. 8. Future USNS Bethesda is the lead ship of the new EMS class, which Del Toro formally named during Mental Health Awareness month in May 2023. The name selection follows the tradition of naming expeditionary medical ships after U.S. military hospitals. "This ship, as well as all the Bethesda-class of expeditionary medical ships, is designed to provide hospital-level care in austere environments, and will serve not just our Sailors and Marines, but offer assistance and comfort to our allies and partners around the globe in times of need," said Del Toro.

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S. D. County supports federal initiative to protect immigrant military families

by Cassie N. Saunders
County of San Diego
Communications Office
The County's Office of Military and Veterans Affairs is promoting a federal immigration program that supports immigrant families of U.S. service members. The Military Parole in Place program provides some members of U.S. military families temporary permission to remain in the country while seeking permanent residency.



Photo courtesy of County of San Diego

The temporary immigration status allows spouses, widow(er)s, parents and children of U.S. service members to stay, work and travel freely in the United States. The Board of Supervisors previously approved promoting the program to reaffirm the County's support for service members and their families.

"Families can be divided when a loved one serves in the U.S. armed forces," said Rick

Wanne, Director of County Self Sufficiency Services. "This program allows them to be reunited in our country and recognizes our military men and women for their honorable and selfless service."

People may be eligible for the program if the service member in their family is active duty in the U.S. armed forces, in the Selected Reserve of the Ready Reserve or has previously served as active duty or in the Selected

Reserve and was not dishonorably discharged. Eligibility is available in single year increments.

Those who apply for the MPIP program submit specific documents to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services Office where they live. These include:

- ✓Completed Form I-131, Application for Travel Document (without fee). Applicants must hand write "Military PIP" in Part

2 instead of checking a box.

- ✓Evidence of the family relationship, such as:

- ✓Marriage certificate
- Documentation of termination of previous marriage

- ✓Son or daughter's birth certificate

- ✓Current or former service member's birth certificate with parent's name; or

- ✓Proof of enrollment in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS)

see **County, page 3**

Marsh

continued from page 1

emphasized community service and public speaking.

Through the process, she became equally comfortable in a flight suit or a glittery gown.

While juggling her coursework in physics and astronomy, Marsh prepared for competition by practicing mock interviews and honing her pageant walk and "talent."

She can't sing or dance, but a new option allows contestants to do a monologue.

Marsh created one about her first solo flight, at age 16. For 90 seconds, she goes through what it's like in the cockpit, from making radio calls to landing the plane, and talks about how the experience strengthened her leadership skills.

"I really try to captivate the audience by making them feel like they are in the cockpit with me," she said.

Pageant contestants also must use their platform to promote a community service project. Marsh is advocating for an issue that hits home: pancreatic cancer research and education.

On Nov. 1, 2018, a day after Marsh found out she would attend the academy, her mother, Whitney, died of the disease at the age of 41, just 10 months after her diagnosis.

A high school senior in Fort Smith, Ark., at the time, Marsh didn't feel like doing much of anything in the weeks following her mother's death.

"I think I was sitting in the sauna when I started to have this idea: I need to use this bad energy and experience and try to turn it into something positive or I'm going to go crazy," she said. "And so I ended up doing a run."

Whitney Marsh was an avid runner. Even during chemotherapy, she would run 10 miles daily, her daughter said.

In 2019, the family started the Whitney Marsh Foundation to raise money and awareness, with



AIR FORCE 2ND LT. MADISON MARSH IS ONE OF 51 CONTESTANTS WHO WILL VIE FOR THE MISS AMERICA CROWN IN JANUARY. MARSH IS BELIEVED TO BE THE FIRST AIR FORCE CADET TO WIN A STATE PAGEANT IN THE COMPETITION, A TITLE SHE EARNED DAYS BEFORE GRADUATING FROM THE ACADEMY LAST SPRING. THE ARKANSAS NATIVE IS WORKING TOWARDS A MASTER'S DEGREE IN PUBLIC POLICY AT HARVARD. PHOTO COURTESY OF MADISON MARSH

the ultimate goal of finding a cure. The foundation also seeks to provide opportunities for early detection and screening for the disease, which was misdiagnosed for two years in Whitney Marsh's case.

The foundation hosts an annual 5K and 10K race in Marsh's hometown and has raised more than \$250,000 to date.

The work also changed her career plans. After eight years of thinking she would get a doctorate in astrophysics with the goal of being an astronaut, Marsh switched gears.

She hopes the master's program in public policy will help teach her to advocate for better federal cancer legislation. She's also working with the Dana Farber Cancer Institute on research into early detection of pancreatic cancer.

"There's just so many thanks to give, whether or not I win, to kind of spread that message in the time that I have left in the organization," she said.

JANUARY MONTHLY OBSERVANCES MENTORING, HOT TEA, MENUDO

From sources across the web
Nat'l Stalking Awareness
Nat'l Train Your Dog
Bath Safety Month
Nat'l Glaucoma Awareness
Adopt A Rescued Bird
Bath Safety Month
Be Kind to Food Servers
Birth Defects Month
Black Diamond Month
Book Blitz Month
California Dried Plum
Digestive Month
Carnival Season: Jan. 6- March 1
Celebration of Life
Cervical Health Awareness
Children Impacted By
Parent's Cancer Month

Clap 4 Health Month
Financial Wellness
Get A Balanced Life
Get Organized
Int'l Brain Teaser Month
Int'l Change Your Stars
Int'l Child-Centered
Divorce Month
Int'l Creativity Month
Int'l New Years
Resolutions Month for
Businesses
Int'l Quality of Life
Int'l Wayfinding Month
Int'l Wealth Mentality
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Menudo Month
Nat'l Be On-Purpose
Nat'l Braille Literacy

Nat'l Cheesy Sock Month
Nat'l Clean Up Your
Computer Month
Nat'l Codependency
Awareness Month
Nat'l Conscience Month
Nat'l Glaucoma Awareness
Nat'l Hot Tea Month
Nat'l Mail Order Gardening
Nat'l Mentoring Month
Nat'l Opticians Month
Nat'l Personal
Self-Defense Awareness
Nat'l Personal Trainer
Awareness Month
Nat'l Polka Music Month
Nat'l Poverty in America
Awareness Month
Nat'l Radon Action Month

Nat'l Skating Month
Nat'l Soup Month
Nat'l Slavery and Human
Trafficking Prevention
Nat'l Stalking Awareness
Nat'l Sunday Supper
Nat'l Volunteer Blood
Donor Month
Oatmeal Month
Self-help Group Awareness
Self-Love Month
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Train Your Dog Month
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Self-defense strike in Iraq kills terrorist leader

by C. Todd Lopez
DOD News

U.S. forces in Iraq conducted a self-defense strike Jan. 4 which killed Mushtaq Jawad Kazim al-Jawari, a leader of the Iran-backed Harakat al-Nujaba terrorist group that is operating both in Iraq and Syria, said the Pentagon press secretary.

Al-Jawari, also known as Abu Taqwa, was actively involved in planning and carrying out attacks against American personnel. Abu Taqwa, along with another member of Harakat al-Nujaba, were both killed in a strike that took place around noon, Jan. 4, in Iraq, said Air Force Maj. Gen. Pat Ryder dur-

ing a briefing Jan. 4.

"It's important to note that the strike was taken in self-defense, that no civilians were harmed, and that no infrastructure or facilities were struck," Ryder said.

The U.S. currently has a military presence in Iraq as part of Combined Joint Task Force Operation Inherent Resolve. The CJTF-OIR mission is to advise, assist and enable partnered forces in the defeat of ISIS within designated areas of Iraq and Syria. Inside Iraq, the U.S. works in partnership with both the Iraqi Security Forces and the Kurdish Security Forces to carry out that mission.

"U.S. forces are in Iraq at the invitation of the government of Iraq," Ryder said. "They're there for one reason, which is to support the defeat-ISIS mission. We'll continue to work very closely with our Iraqi partners when it comes to the safety and security of our forces. When those forces are threatened, just like we would anywhere else in the world, we will maintain the inherent right of self-defense to protect our forces."

The mission to defeat ISIS in Iraq and Syria has been ongoing for nearly a decade, and Ryder

said the successes of CJTF-OIR are worth maintaining.

"It was 10 years ago this coming summer that ISIS was approximately 24 kilometers outside of Baghdad, when we kicked off the counter-ISIS mission after they had subsumed large swaths of Syria and Iraq," Ryder said. "No one wants to see a return of ISIS ... our focus is going to continue to remain on the defeat-ISIS mission. But again, we're not going to hesitate to protect our forces if they're threatened."

Icy Stare



Coast Guardsmen watch Adélie penguins in McMurdo Sound, Antarctica, Dec. 29, 2023. Cutter Polar Star is en route to Antarctica in support of Operation Deep Freeze. U.S. Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 3rd Class Ryan Graves

Army

- Soldier recovering after Christmas drone attack in Iraq
- Army moves to court-martial ex-JBLM battalion commander over sexual harassment allegations



EARLY BIRD BRIEF

- Army's former top enlisted leader takes helm at nonprofit aimed at helping Soldiers in need
 - Telemaintenance and stockpiles: Army Materiel Command takes its own lessons from Ukraine
 - Minnesota governor orders flags to fly at half-staff to honor Army sergeant killed in Mediterranean crash
- ### Navy
- Fat Leonard back in court in San Diego after escape
 - USS Ralph Johnson Sailor dies following shooting incident
- ### Marine Corps
- Marine veteran sues Justice Department for denying victim's funds
 - Marines test radars, networks for expeditionary base operations
 - Marines dodged fog, ash and typhoons in volcano response mission
 - Military mail delayed during probe into deadly Japanese airliner collision
 - Marine Corps using exercises to mature new Information Command
 - Huntington Beach teen went from homeless to hometown hero in the Marines
- ### Air Force
- Air Force declines to name Wright-Patterson lab after late Army officer, engineer
 - Bass announces departure date as CMSAF, reveals advice for her successor
 - 445th Airlift Wing members return to joyful families, colleagues at Wright-Patterson
 - Winter riding opens for Air Force motorcyclists in northern Japan

County

continued from page 2

✓ Evidence that the family member is a current or former member of the U.S. armed forces, such as a photocopy of the front and back of the service member's military identification card or DD Form 214.

✓ For parents of current and former service members of the U.S. armed forces, evidence the current or former service member supports the application for parole in place.

✓ Two identical, color passport-style photographs; and

✓ Evidence of any additional favorable discretionary factors that that an applicant would like to have considered.

For more information on support in San Diego for military members and their families, go to https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/sdc/hhsa/programs/ssp/veterans_services.html.



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U.S., partners committed to defensive operations in Red Sea

by Joseph Clark, DOD News

The U.S. remains committed to providing a persistent defensive presence in the Red Sea alongside allies and partners, the commander of Naval Forces Central Command said last week.

Vice Adm. Brad Cooper said about 1,500 merchant ships have safely transited the Red Sea since mid-December when the U.S. launched Operation Prosperity Guardian. The operation is a multinational, maritime security initiative responding to the recent escalation in Houthi attacks originating from Yemen.

"We are certainly mindful of the continued threat and expect the Houthi attacks may continue," he said. "I think really importantly, though, our actions in this defensive operation are not just through words, but through deeds."

Since mid-November, Houthi rebels have launched 25 attacks against merchant vessels operating in the Red Sea. Those include the detonation of an unmanned surface vessel in international shipping lanes recently.

While no ships were hit in the most recent attack, Cooper said that the persistent threat from the Iran-backed Houthi rebels in an international shipping lane is a vital concern.

"Our assessment is that 55 nations have direct connections to the ships who've been attacked, whether through the flagging state, where the goods were produced or destined, or the nationalities of the innocent mariners aboard each vessel," Cooper said.

"The impacts of these attacks stretch across the globe," he said. "This is an international problem that requires an international solution."

Last Wednesday, the governments of the U.S., Australia, Bahrain, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, New Zealand and the United Kingdom issued a joint statement condemning the attacks and warning the rebel group against further escalation.

"Ongoing Houthi attacks in the Red Sea are illegal, unacceptable, and profoundly destabilizing," the statement read in part. "There is no lawful justification for intentionally targeting civilian shipping and naval vessels."

The group of nations warned that the Houthis "will bear the responsibility of the consequences should they continue to threaten lives, the global economy and [the] free flow of commerce in the region's critical waterways."

<https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/3631623/>

U.S., Polish troops get set for live fire of Warsaw's prize new Abrams tanks

by John Vandiver, Stars and Stripes

The Polish army's push to incorporate American-made Abrams tanks into its fighting formation will take a step forward this month, when a Polish crew for the first time takes aim at targets in a landmark gunnery that will test the unit's combat fitness.

In recent weeks, soldiers from the Fort Bliss, Texas-based 1st Battalion, 35th Armored Regiment along with Polish counterparts were preparing for the live fire with a set of tabletop drills aimed at proficiency on the M1A2 Abrams, the Army said in a statement last week.

U.S. soldiers at a Polish base in Nowa Deba are working with a platoon that was among the first in Poland to operate the U.S. tank, first the M1A1 and now the more advanced M1A2.

The training and upcoming gunnery will "build a model for them to use in the Polish army for the Abrams platform," Sgt. 1st Class Casey Laing, a platoon sergeant assigned to the battalion, said in the statement.

For the past several years, Warsaw has been on a weapons-buying spree to modernize the Polish armed forces. Those efforts have only intensified since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

For the Polish army, the Abrams tank serves as the centerpiece of those modernization efforts. Poland began receiving the first of its tanks last year and will incorporate 366 of them into its arsenal in the coming years.

The fleet will be a mix of the M1A1 and the more state-of-the-art M1A2 version. In June, Polish officials also announced that a center for maintaining and servicing the tanks will be created in Poznan, which is home to the U.S. Army's first permanent base in the country.

At the unit level, Soldiers are focused on what it takes to get the most out of the Abrams' firepower. Troops in Nowa Deba studied the mechanics of the tank, ranging from weapons disassembly and assembly to gunnery-related skills, the Army said.

Second Lt. Pawel Bartel, a Polish tank commander, said that the work is paying dividends and that occasional language barriers were being managed.

The U.S. tankers are "specialists when it comes to this equipment, and we can learn from you and exchange our experiences," he said.

<https://www.stripes.com/branches/army/2024-01-02/poland-army-abrams-tanks-12531849.html>

Air Force announces requirements for pet owners to receive PCS travel reimbursement

by Kyle Alvarez, Stars and Stripes

Airmen and guardians seeking reimbursement for bringing pets with them to a new military duty assignment now have a list of the documentation needed to make that happen.

An Air Force statement Jan. 4 lays out how personnel can receive compensation for those expenses, which are covered up to \$550 for permanent changes of station within the continental U.S. and up to \$2,000 for moves outside the continental U.S.

Pet transfer costs eligible for reimbursement include mandatory microchipping, boarding fees, hotel service charges, licensing fees at the new installation and air travel.

To receive repayment for such expenses, service members must be on PCS orders. The eligibility period started Jan. 1.

In addition, itemized receipts are required indicating that they are for one pet. The pet's name should be included if possible, particularly if the expense is for individualized care such as vaccinations.

Pets that travel in cargo because they're heavier than the government limit must have their weight listed on the receipt.

If service members choose to buy their own airline ticket at a place where Patriot Express service is available, they need to get a "non-availability letter" and have specific notes on their travel orders authorizing them to fly with a commercial carrier.

In the absence of these items, airmen and guardians will be reimbursed only up to the amount it would have taken to send their pet through Patriot Express.

Costs for shipping pets on the government-contracted Patriot Express are based on a sliding scale according to the animal's weight. Commercial options tend to be more expensive, and costs can vary greatly.

Service members who fly their pet on a commercial carrier must also include all the paperwork they used to get the non-availability letter when they submit their travel claim after moving to a new station.

Compensation for the expenses of taking pets along for a PCS was granted in last year's National Defense Authorization Act. The policy covers one household pet, either a cat or a dog.

Although the law authorized up to \$4,000 per pet for transportation to and from overseas, the Defense Department set the maximum at \$2,000.

In announcing the new reimbursement policy last year, the Pentagon did not say why it had set the limit at half the allowable amount.

https://www.stripes.com/branches/air_force/2024-01-05/daf-establish-requirements-for-pet-reimbursement-12564114.html

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Once-homeless Marine veteran home for the holidays and beyond

by Jeff Jardine

Veteran James Mumma spent more than a half decade sleeping in an abandoned car in the northern Los Angeles County community of Littlerock.

“To get out of the elements,” said the 59-year-old who relied upon the survival skills he learned in the U.S. Marine Corps to exist and resourcefulness to subsist. He took on odd jobs to earn money for food and gas, and some nights found his dinner in trash bins behind stores and restaurants.

“It was very degrading,” Mumma said. Yet, despite a series of unfortunate experiences that sent him into an emotional and economic spiral, he never gave up on himself.

“I pulled myself up by my bootstraps,” Mumma said.

Because he did, Mumma awoke on Christmas morning in a place that just a few years ago would have seemed unimaginable.

A home, and not just any home. His home—brand-spanking new, built in part upon his

own sweat equity—amid other veterans and their families in the California Department of Veterans Affairs’ Residential Enriched Neighborhood (REN) in Palmdale.

Mumma is a veteran who epitomizes the “hand up” rather than “hand out” mantra that is fundamental to the success of the CalVet REN program. It represents another tool available to Governor Gavin Newsom in his commitment to ending veteran homelessness by helping them stabilize and improve their lives. Veterans in the REN program help to build their homes; but, in many cases, are rebuilding themselves as well.

Mumma’s story runs the gamut from the pride of serving his country to humiliation he encountered while doing so. It involves years of trying to shut out horrific memories that resurfaced when he became homeless. It is a comeback story in progress: he now works for an agency serving other veterans in Southern California.

He joined the Marine Corps in 1985, beginning a 13-year military career that took him



James Mumma with the keys to his new home.

to places all around the world: Okinawa, Japan, the Philippines, Australia, and Hong Kong, among them. However, he said that during an equator-crossing ritual in 1987, he became the victim of military sexual assault that he never reported, as so many victims do not. It sent him into a dark place mentally, and has affected him ever since.

“From that point on, I’ve had issues, problems,” Mumma said. “I was married three times and divorced three times. I’ve had nightmares. I seem to have difficulty navigating public venues and events. In fact, it was dif-

ficult to do the key ceremony (the REN presentation event in Palmdale on December 2).”

He remained in the Marine Corps by focusing on two things: becoming an expert marksman and suppressing everything else.

“I didn’t tell anyone,” he said. “I buried it so deep in my mind that I forgot about it.”

After separating from the military in 1998, he became an area leader for a pizza chain in Connecticut for several years until moving back to his native

Palmdale in 2015. He began a delivery service that went south when his truck was stolen and destroyed. He lost most of his personal belongings that were in the vehicle at time.

“I went down a rabbit hole,” Mumma said. “I couldn’t pay the rent and lost my house. I became homeless, and that’s when lots of things came back into my mind. I was dealing with post-traumatic stress disorder as well as military sexual trauma and it all just spiraled downward.”

In 2020, he met another veteran who explained the process of applying for his earned veteran benefits and, in essence, put him back on an upward trajectory. He visited the Sepulveda VA Medical Center. When Mumma told his case manager he was homeless, the manager called a social worker who offered a HUD-VASH program voucher that would help him get into an apartment. He also qualified for nearly \$575 in other monthly benefits.

Even so, 11 more months passed before they found a place where he could live. He moved into a studio apartment in Lancaster in May 2021.

“I still slept on the floor of my apartment,” Mumma said. “It took me awhile to get used to a bed again.”

A year later, he went to work for Los Angeles County’s Veteran Peer Outreach Network as an outreach coordinator helping homeless veterans.

“I’ve found homes for more than 50 veterans,” Mumma said. “Six months ago, I was promoted to supervisor of outreach. Now, I put on events to go out and find homeless veterans.”

Along the way, he learned about the CalVet REN program and CalVet’s partner agency, Homes4Families. Homes4Families works with local jurisdictions to create the REN developments. CalVet’s Home Loans Division is among the agencies that finance the homes.

During an online event in 2022, Mumma met Brad Pedersen, CalVet Home Loans Division’s program representative who conducted the event.

“I introduced myself to Brad and told him I was interested in one of those homes,” Mumma said. “He said, ‘Why isn’t your paperwork on my desk?’”

Pedersen helped get Mumma started on the process, and in May 2022, Homes4Families informed Mumma he would, indeed, become a homeowner. When escrow opened in May, Pedersen called to congratulate him.

REN developments are built in phases—completing one group of homes and then moving on to the next. Mumma was so excited that he put in his required 400 hours of sweat equity on Palmdale’s Phase II in just three months, and then worked 150 hours more on his own home in Phase III.

“I’ve thrown a lot of nails,” he said.

He ran into Pedersen at an event in Los Angeles several weeks ago.

“He (Mumma) walked up to me and said, ‘There’s the guy who got me my home!’” Pedersen said. “But they’ve earned their homes. I’m just there to steer them to what they need to do. I’m the cheerleader.”

Mumma moved into his new home on December 21, 2023. His grown son and daughter joined him for the holiday.

“It meant that I (could) have my kids home for Christmas,” he said.

And not just any home. His home.

Career and Education

Military boosts service members’ family separation pay for first time in 2 decades

by Kelly Agee
Stars and Stripes

Troops who live apart from their family members will see a \$150 increase in their separation pay this year due to changes in the National Defense Authorization Act.

The NDAA for fiscal year 2024, signed on Dec. 22 by President Joe Biden, includes an increase from \$250 a month to \$400 a month for the Family Separation Allowance.

Rep. Tony Gonzales, R-Texas, was among the congressional sponsors of an amendment to increase the allowance.

“#Results: Proud to have secured an increase in the Family Separation Allowance (FSA) this year,” he wrote Dec. 28 on X, formerly known as Twitter. “This is the first time the FSA has been raised in two decades — I’ll always stand with our military families.”

Petty Officer 2nd Class Dean Cates, a radio and video production supervisor for American Forces Network at Yokota Air Base in western Tokyo, has received \$250 a month in separation pay for two years, he told *Stars and Stripes* on Jan. 3 via Facebook Messenger.

“I think the pay bump would give just a little more breathing room, but still not enough to be comfortable,” said the San Francisco native. “As it stands, a majority of my paychecks go toward supporting my family, often leaving me to essentially live like a broke college student.”

Cates’ wife, Petty Officer

2nd Class Aimee Ford, is stationed with Naval Air Force Atlantic in Norfolk, Va., and cares for their son, Lucas, who is almost a year old.

“Some positives about receiving separation pay is that it helps to supplement mortgage payments, childcare costs, an emergency fund and college

fund,” Cates said.

“As a dual military marriage and as a geo-bachelor I’m not entitled to basic housing allowance, just overseas housing allowance, if I had elected to live off base,” he said. “However, in terms of financial responsibility, going that route, living off base, I feel would not have

been financially responsible, especially with the removal of Overseas Cost-of-Living Allowance for service members in our area.”

To receive the Family Separation Allowance, service members must complete a DD Form 1561, Statement to Substantiate Payment of Family Separation Allowance, according to the Department of Defense official website.

Eligible service members are those involuntarily separated from their dependents, which includes troops whose dependents do not live at or near the member’s permanent duty station.

Other eligible service members include those aboard a ship away from its homeport, or who are under orders to remain aboard the ship at the homeport for more than 30 continuous days.

Service members on temporary duty away from their permanent duty stations for more than 30 continuous days, whose dependents do not live at or near the temporary duty station, are also eligible.

FLEET AND FAMILY SUPPORT PROGRAMS FFSC Career Class Schedule

If you’re interested in attending one of these classes, call the Centralized Scheduling Center at 866-923-6478. (This is a partial list).

Legend: (V) Virtual (IP) In Person (NBSD) Naval Base San Diego (NBPL) Naval Base Point Loma (NBC) Naval Base Coronado (KMB) Kearny Mesa Branch (GVB) Gateway Village Branch (VSM) Village at Serra Mesa Branch (BVH) Bayview Hills Branch

Finding Federal Employment

Get the latest information and resources to navigate the federal employment process.

Wednesday, January 24 | 1-3 p.m. | NBPL (IP)

Wednesday, February 7 | 9-11 a.m. | NBSD (IP)

Capstone

Do you need assistance completing your TAP Capstone and are looking for a warm handoff for resources and information?

Friday, January 19 | 8-11:30 a.m. | KMB (IP)

Insights to Starting a Home-Based Business

Get time-tested resources, information, advice and proven techniques for starting your home-based business directly from organizations and agencies focused on your success.

Wednesday, January 17 | 12-3:30 p.m. | KMB (IP)

Job Search Strategies

Are you a military family member new to San Diego and looking to get back into the job market?

Tuesday, January 16 | 9-11 a.m. | VSM (IP)

Wednesday, January 17 | 9-10:30 a.m. | NBSD (IP)

NAVY SELECTS POTENTIAL MASTER DEVELOPER FOR 70.3-ACRE NAVY OLD TOWN CAMPUS



“
This is an exciting milestone for the Navy and San Diego. We look forward to continuing progress on the potential revitalization of OTC.
 ”
Rear Adm. Brad Rosen, CNRSW

Photo courtesy of Naval Information Warfare Systems Command

SAN DIEGO – The Navy announced Jan. 8 the selection of Manchester Financial Group/Edgemoor Infrastructure & Real Estate (Manchester/Edgemoor) as the potential master developer for the 70.3-acre Naval Base Point Loma Old Town Campus (OTC).

The Navy and Manchester/Edgemoor entered into a period of exclusive negotiations for the potential revitalization of OTC, home to Naval Information Warfare Systems Command (NAVWAR). From August 2023 to December 2023, the Navy evaluated proposals received from potential master developers. The Navy selected Manchester/Edgemoor after completion of a comprehensive source selection evaluation process.

“This is an exciting milestone for the Navy and San Diego. We look forward to continuing progress on the potential revitalization of OTC,” said Rear Admiral Brad Rosen, commander of Navy Region Southwest. “While the Navy’s goal is new mission-capable facilities for NAVWAR and other tenant commands, the Navy recognizes that any project that is good for the Navy should also provide positive impacts to the community. We have every faith that the Manchester/Edgemoor team will be respectful and collaborative partners in this effort.”

Edgemoor is a pioneer in the development of public-private partnerships (P3s) and has completed every project on time and on budget. With over \$4.6 billion in projects completed or under development, Edgemoor emphasizes delivering projects that meaningfully impact our communities. Manchester has developed over six million square feet locally, including the very successful new Navy administration building downtown, and re-envisioned and re-imagined the waterfront of San Diego.

<https://www.dvidshub.net/news/461522/>

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Carl Vinson Carrier Strike Group arrives in the Philippines

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by Ensign

Valentine Mulango
MANILA, Philippines - Aircraft carrier USS *Carl Vinson* and the rest of the deployed strike group arrived here for a scheduled port visit Jan. 5.

This visit marks an additional demonstration of the U.S.-Philippine alliance, and broader commitment to the Indo-Pacific region. It also serves to fortify relationships with local leaders and communities, reaffirming the seven-decade-old Alliance between the U.S. and the Philippines.

Port calls are part of the Navy's routine operations, and the Carrier Strike Group 1 team is committed to maintaining that tradition to support operational readiness and regional partnerships.

"It's a pleasure for the Carrier Strike Group to visit the Republic of Philippines. The U.S. and the Philippines are steadfast friends, partners in prosperity, and iron-clad allies," said Rear Adm. Carlos Sardiello, commander,

CSG-1. "Our two countries share democratic values, close cultural ties and our alliance has stood strong for over 72 years. As our oldest treaty ally in East Asia, the Philippines has shown their unwavering commitment in helping secure a free, open, peaceful, and prosperous Indo-Pacific region."

During their stay in Manila, sailors from the carrier strike group 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.

"By understanding and appreciating other cultural backgrounds, we can build stronger relationships, collaborate effectively and find common ground," said Capt. Matthew Thomas, commanding officer, USS *Carl Vinson*. "All of these are critical when it comes to supporting our allies and partners in the region."

Additionally, the port call provides an opportunity for CSG-1 sailors and civilians to rejuvenate while experiencing the rich culture of the Philippines.

"Port visits like this one allow our crew time to relax and reset after the demands of daily life at sea," said Capt. Victor Sheldon, commanding officer,



USS *Vinson* arriving to Manila. Navy photo

USS *Princeton*. "They are vital to providing mental and physical recovery needed for concentration and productivity when we return to sea."

Preceding their arrival, CSG-1 conducted trilateral maritime exercises with the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force and Republic of Korea Navy. The exercises provided an opportunity for the three maritime forces to sail together and conduct enhanced planning and advanced maritime communication operations.

Carrier Strike Group 1 - *Vinson*, cruiser *Princeton* (CG 59), and destroyers *Kidd* (DDG 100) and *Sterett* (DDG 104) - departed San Diego on deployment to the Western Pacific, Oct. 12, 2023. Since entering the U.S. 7th Fleet area of operations, the group participated in the Multi-

Large Deck Event and Annual Exercise 2023 in the Philippine Sea. These exercises provided opportunities to collaborate with allied forces such as the Royal Australian Navy, Royal Canadian Navy, and Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force, further strengthen regional cooperative efforts.

CSG-1 is a multiplatform team of ships and aircraft, capable of carrying out a wide variety of missions around the globe from combat missions to humanitarian assistance and disaster relief response. CSG-1 is currently deployed to U.S. 7th Fleet area of operations in support of a free and open Indo-Pacific.

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.

<http://www.dvidshub.net/unit/CSG1>

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West Coast-based Naval Special Warfare (NSW) operators prepare to clear an underground space while conducting direct action raid training at Fort Irwin. Naval Special Warfare is the nation's elite maritime special operations force, uniquely positioned to extend the Fleet's reach and gain and maintain access for the Joint Force in competition and conflict. U.S. Navy photo

Navy SEALs, Joint Force Conclude Training

FORT IRWIN, Calif. - West Coast-based Naval Special Warfare (NSW) operators recently concluded a joint training exercise focused on enhancing operational capabilities and partnerships late last month.

The joint training included forces from 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment, 1st Operations Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, 137th Special Operations Wing, 527th Space Aggressor Squadron (SAS), and 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit.

"Our nation's strategic advantage is bolstered by our collective ability to operate effectively in the joint environment," said Navy Capt. Blake Chaney, commander, Naval Special Warfare Group 1. "NSW's capability to augment the joint force offers our nation's leaders unparalleled and distinctive options."

During the exercise, the forces conducted numerous interoperability and training iterations, demonstrating the tactics and skills required for complex missions. The training encompassed direct action raid iterations, close-quarters combat techniques, maritime boat operations, aviation insertions, and combat medical tactics.

"The 15th MEU's ability to integrate and partner with Naval Special Warfare enhances our capabilities as a crisis response force," said U.S. Marine Corps Col. Sean Dynan, commanding officer of 15th MEU. "Premier training like this allows us to complement each other to support Combatant Commanders and the Joint Force."

The joint training exercise allowed each force to leverage its unique capabilities and share best practices. The exchange of knowledge and experiences among the units contributed to continuously improving tactics and strategies for future employment.

"The service members of the 527th and the 26th SAS provide the best sparring partner possible to our joint force partners by knowing, teaching, and replicating adversary electromagnetic warfare and cyber threats," said U.S. Space Force Lt. Col. C. Gene Adams, commander of 527th Space Aggressor Squadron. "Training like this is essential to maintain U.S. advantage in great power competition."

Naval Special Warfare is the nation's elite maritime special operations force, uniquely positioned to extend the Fleet's reach and gain and maintain access for the Joint Force in competition and conflict.



Naval Medical Center San Diego (NMCS) hosted Congressman Scott Peters (CA-50) for a command tour. Capt. Cory Gaconnet (L), Bioskills & Simulation Training Center department head, briefs Peters (R) on the capabilities of the department to provide quality medical training resources and simulation. The mission of NMCS 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 employs more than 6,000 active-duty military personnel, civilians and contractors in southern California to provide patients with world-class care anytime, anywhere. U.S. Navy photo

Congressman visits NMCS, learns about MTF capabilities

NAVAL MEDICAL CENTER SAN DIEGO - NMCS hosted Congressman Scott Peters (CA-50) for a command tour Jan. 3.

The visit started with a command overview brief by Capt. Elizabeth Adriano, NMCS director, who offered broader context on the current composition of the command and its mission; and, how it relates to the Defense Health Agency (DHA) construct.

The tour commenced with a stop by the Simulation and Bio Skills department where Peters was introduced to the medical training capabilities of the department and its ability to ensure key Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities (KSAs) are not only sustained, but further refined.

Next for the Peters was a visit to the Comprehensive Combat and Complex Casualty Care (C-5) department where the command's ability to care and heal our seriously wounded service members was displayed. Discussion revolved around NMCS's prioritization and commitment to leverage the latest technological advancements available on the market, particularly within the prosthetics realm of care.

NMCS values the opportunity to host elected officials such as Peters to help ensure our representatives are presented with a current and accurate reflection of the command and how it fits not only within the National Defense Strategy, but also within the local footprint of the San Diego metropolitan area and its outlying communities.

The mission of NMCS 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 employs more than 6,000 active-duty military personnel, civilians and contractors in southern California to provide patients with world-class care anytime, anywhere.



ABOARD USS HARPERS FERRY (Jan. 3, 2024) Sailors haul in line on the forecastle aboard amphibious dock landing ship Harpers Ferry, as the ship prepares to get underway from Naval Base San Diego. U.S. Navy photo by MC2 Sang Kim



KOROR, Palau (Jan. 3, 2024) Hospital Corpsman 3rd Class Braden Beavers, Cmdr. Kimberly Thompson, and Lt. Cmdr. Benjamin Havko perform a vascular arm surgery on a local Palauan resident at the Belau National Hospital here. Pacific Partnership, now in its 19th iteration, is the largest multinational humanitarian assistance and disaster relief preparedness mission conducted in the Indo-Pacific and works to enhance regional interoperability and disaster response capabilities, increase security stability in the region, and foster new and enduring friendships. U.S. Navy photo by MC2 Jacob Woitzel



MANILA, PHILIPPINES (Jan. 5, 2024) Cryptologic Technician (Collection) 3rd Class Ryan Regis uses the bridge wing binoculars to track forward contacts during a sea-and-anchor detail aboard destroyer USS Sterett while in-transit to Manila. U.S. Navy photo by MC1 Charles J. Scudella III



CAMP PENDLETON (Dec. 18, 2023) Marines with 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit begin a night security patrol during a simulated amphibious assault here. During the amphibious assault, Bravo Company conducted a ship-to-shore movement to reinforce security at a beach support area which served as an expeditionary advanced base to project missions throughout Camp Pendleton. U.S. Marine Corps photo by Cpl. Joseph Helms

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AWARDS PROGRAM

RECOGNIZES MARINE CORPS ART, FROM POETRY TO COMBAT PHOTOGRAPHY

by Jennessa Davey
Stars and Stripes

Writers, poets, photographers - or anyone with a story to tell or image to share about the Marine Corps - have until Jan. 15 to submit an entry for the Marine Corps Heritage Foundation's annual awards program.

The competition is open to work across 18 categories from civilians and service members in any branch. Prizes include a \$2,000 prize, commemorative plaque and an invitation to the foundation's annual black-tie dinner.

Categories include autobiography, biography, non-fiction, poetry, reporting and features, along with various photography and videography classifications.

For example, the Robert A. Gannon Award, named after the noted poet, is given for a volume of original verse by a Marine poet dealing with Marine Corps life. The James Webb Award, named for the U.S. senator, author and Navy Cross recipient, honors distinguished fiction related to the service.

The foundation added a new category this year for digital media. The Corporal Jan Bender Award was created in tribute to the "generation of Marines who fought in the Global War on Terror in Afghanistan, Iraq and elsewhere around the world," the foundation said in a Nov. 15 news release.

Bender, as a combat correspondent, captured some of the first digital coverage of the war,



Members of the 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit fire mortars during training at Camp Buehring, Kuwait, July 28, 2019. U.S. Marine Corps photo by Dalton Swanbeck

including scenes from Operation Al Fajr, the Second Battle of Fal-lujah, Iraq, in 2004.

Established in 1979, the Marine Corps Heritage Foundation is dedicated to preserving the Corps' narrative of sacrifice and triumphs, according to its official website.

Retired Marine Maj. Gen. James Lukeman, the foundation's president and CEO, said the awards recognize work that may otherwise go unnoticed.

"Someone who's written poetry about the Marine Corps, you might never hear about them, but they're able to submit their work and we recognize it, and it gets more well known," he said in the release.

Cpl. Dalton Swanbeck took home the Sergeant Major Bradley Kasal Award in 2020. It recognizes a distinguished example of a single still photograph by an individual, in black and white or color, that captures the character of the individual Marine or the core values of the Marine Corps.

Swanbeck, during a 2019 deployment to Kuwait, photographed Marines firing mortars at night.

"I never expected to win an award for doing my job, but honestly it made me proud of what I was doing and getting recognized for it," he recently told Stars and Stripes by email.

Another new category allows

artists to submit work that might not fit into the other categories. Examples include digital art or multimedia art forms that tell the Marine Corps story.

"Having such an array of award categories that offer recognition and a real-time portrayal of the Marine Corps story is unparalleled," longtime military reporter Hope Seck told Stars and Stripes during a recent phone interview.

Seck has won three awards through the program for her journalism.

In 2015 and 2017, she took home The Colonel Robert D. Heintz Jr. Award, which is given for the best article pertinent to Marine Corps history published in a newspaper, magazine, journal or other periodical during the preceding year.

Seck's April 2014 story for the Marine Corps Times, "Left behind: Without security, without citizenship, interpreters are exposed to death squads," earned her the honor in 2015.

In 2019, Seck won the Major Megan McClung Award for her reporting on Marines in Iraq and Afghanistan. The award is given for a distinguished example of reporting by an individual covering United States Marines abroad.

The submission window closes Jan. 15. Details and submission forms are accessible at the foundation's official website at marineheritage.org.

The Meat & Potatoes of Life



by
Lisa
Smith
Molinari

"Less is more," they say.

Whoever "they" are, I wish they'd speak up. Please convince me, once and for all, that less is best. I've always wanted to live according to minimalist doctrine, but somehow, the concept has always eluded me.

All my life, I've said too much, eaten too much, and spent too much. I'm an over thinker, I pack too much for trips, and I try too hard to make people laugh. I collect a lot of useless crap, I cook enough to feed an army, and I talk too loudly. I keep too many clothes and shoes, I have too many hobbies, and I watch too much reality TV. I write too many lists, I plan more than I can achieve, and I expect too much of myself.

Countless nights I've gone to bed regretting things I've said, wondering if I'll ever learn to keep my big mouth shut. I've dreamt of becoming someone that doesn't seek attention, someone that eats serving sizes, someone with a subtle sense of style, someone with quiet dignity, someone that drives the speed limit, someone that isn't the last one to leave every party.

In our modern world with so many pressures, it should be easy to give up more for less, right? However, after years of overin-

Less is more ... more or less

dulging in everything from gossip magazines to guilt to guacamole, I've become addicted to excess.

After much (too much, of course) soul-searching, I decided that my New Year's resolution should be "Less is more in 2024." Proud of this witty rhyme, I also penned a clever ditty to sing when the urge to overdo hit me: "Eat less, pay less, sit less, say less." I wholeheartedly believed this new mantra would finally help me lose weight, stop spending, exercise and keep my trap shut.

In essence, I'd finally become what I've always wanted to be — LESS of myself.

However, within days of implementing my New Year's resolution, I reached a roadblock.

When our freezer drawer wouldn't shut due to numerous unidentifiable frost-coated packages of God-knows-what crammed inside, I proclaimed that I would not buy food because there was already plenty to eat in our house. In the days that followed, I mined our overstuffed freezer, refrigerator and pantry, pairing items that might make a decent meal.

A brick of mystery meat? A shriveling onion? A rib of rubbery celery? A limp carrot? A dusty can of condensed soup? A bit of stale bread? A box of hardening raisins? A half a bag of stiff marshmallows? A jar of capers from the Bush administration? Voila! Dinner is served!

Like a good military spouse

preparing for a PCS move, I dug deep into the dark corners of our kitchen and began concocting strange casseroles to feed my family. Ironically, by the end of that week, our refrigerator was packed again, not only with unwanted leftover casseroles, but also with containers of the take-out food my family had ordered in desperation. My plan to "eat less" had failed miserably.

One morning while digging through my pack-rat wardrobe for an outfit that would accommodate my menopause-enhanced girth, I had the sudden urge to buy new clothes. Resisting my old ways, I remembered the saying, "Use it up, wear it out, make do, or do without." I selected a trusty pair of pants that I'd had for years, proud of myself for adhering to my "pay less" goal. However, by mid-afternoon, the waistline of those pants were so tight, I thought I might lose circulation to my legs. Fearing amputation, I made a beeline for TJ Maxx.

Striving to "sit less," I signed up for a Boot Camp fitness class, believing that exercise would encourage a trimmed-down lifestyle. However, after the first class, a group of women invited me to coffee, where naturally I became overly excited about making new friends and blathered my life story in excruciating detail, in direct violation of the "say less" principle.

Although I haven't given up on the notion that "less is more," I realize that becoming less of myself in 2024 will take more time, more energy, and more willpower. A lot more.

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Visit www.USOVolunteer.org. Once you navigate to the webpage, click on "Volunteer at a USO Center," then click "Continental United States." Next select "California" and then the USO San Diego center nearest to you!

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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. All requests must be submitted within 30 days and although we try our best, not all requests can be granted.

<https://sandiego.uso.org>

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

Lowry Theater - NASNI
 619-545-8479
 Bldg. 650

Outside food and beverage are NOT permitted. Debit/credit cards only.

Friday, January 12
 6:00 PM Wonka pg
Saturday - January 13
 12:50 PM Wonka pg
 3pm 'LAST SHOWING' Napoleon r
Sunday - January 14
 1:00 PM 'LAST SHOWING' Wish pg
 3:00 PM Wonka pg
Friday - January 19
 6pm Aquaman/Lost Kingdom pg13
Saturday - January 20
 1:00 PM Migration pg
 3:00 PM Anyone But You r
Sunday - January 21
 1:00 PM Migration pg
 3pm Aquaman/Lost Kingdom pg13

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

Friday, January 12
 6:00 PM Wonka pg
Saturday - January 13
 1:00 PM Wonka pg
 3:30 PM Wish pg
 6:00 PM Anyone But You r
Sunday - January 14
 1:00 PM Wonka pg
 3:30 PM Silent Night r
Thursday - January 18
 6:00 PM Anyone But You r
 8:10 PM Silent Night r
Friday - January 19
 6:00 PM Migration pg
 7:50pm Aquaman/Lost Kingdom pg13
Saturday - January 20
 1:30 PM Migration pg
 3:20 PM Wonka pg
 6pm Aquaman/Lost Kingdom pg13
Sunday - January 21
 1:00 PM Wonka pg
 3:20pm Aquaman/Lost Kingdom pg13
 Wednesday - January 24
 6:00 PM Migration pg
 7:50 PM Wonka pg
Thursday - January 25
 6pm Aquaman/Lost Kingdom pg13
 8:10 PM Anyone But You r

Bob Hope Theater 577-4143
 MCAS Miramar Bldg 2242

Friday, January 12
 6:00 PM - Wonka (PG)
Saturday, January 13
 3:00 PM - Wish (PG)
 6:30 PM - Wonka (PG)
Sunday, January 14
 12:00 PM - Wonka (PG)
 3:00 PM - Anyone But You (R)
Friday, January 19
 6:00 PM - Aquaman and the Lost Kingdom (PG-13)
Saturday, January 20
 3:00 PM - Migration (PG)
 6:30PM Aquaman/Lost Kingdom (PG-13)
Sunday, January 21
 12:00 PM - Migration (PG)
 3:00 PM - Wonka (PG)

Pendleton Theater and Training Center
 Bldg 1330 Mainside (Across from Mainside Center)
Saturday, January 13
 1:30pm Wish (PG)
 4:00pm Silent Night (R)
Saturday, January 20
 1:30pm Wonka (PG)
 4:30pm Anyone but You (R)
Saturday, January 27
 1:30pm Migration (PG)

SOCIAL SECURITY MATTERS

If my wife claims now, will it hurt my Social Security amount?

Dear Rusty: I am 69 years old, and my wife turned 70 early this year. I am still working full time. My wife is not working, but she got a letter from Social Security saying she should take her Social Security as soon as possible. My question is: since my wife has reached her full retirement age, can she take her SS without it affecting mine when I claim? I plan to work at least another year, depending on how the economy goes (I may have to work longer if it doesn't get better). I have IRAs and a 401k to pull from when I retire.

Signed: Anxious Husband

Dear Anxious: The reason your wife received a letter from Social Security (SS) suggesting she claims now is because her benefit reached maximum some time ago at age 70. Thus, there is no reason for her to wait beyond age 70 to claim. By delaying past age 70 your wife is losing money so she should apply as soon as possible. I suggest your wife call Social Security at 1.800.772.1213 (or your local office) right away to request an appointment to apply for her benefits and she should be sure to request six months of retroactive payments (SS will pay up to 6 months retroactively). If your wife has a "my Social Security" online account, she can also apply online at www.ssa.gov/apply, but she should be sure to request six months of retroactive benefits in the "Remarks" section of the online application. Because your wife is more than six months past age 70, getting 6 months retroactive benefits will not reduce her age 70 benefit amount. Nor will your wife claiming her benefits now negatively affect your Social Security when you later claim.

Even though you plan to continue working, likely beyond 70 years of age yourself, you should not wait beyond age 70 to claim for the same reason - your benefit will reach maximum when you are 70. You can apply for your benefits up to 4 months in advance, and specify you want benefits to start in the month you turn 70. If you haven't already done so, you may wish to create your own "my Social Security" online account now at www.ssa.gov/myaccount, which will make it easier for you to apply online at www.ssa.gov/apply when the time comes next year. Applying online is, by far, the most efficient way, but you need to have your online account set up first to do so.

Just so you know, there is no need to worry that you won't get credit for work income earned after you have applied for your benefits. Even after you are collecting benefits, Social Security will automatically review your earnings each year when that info is received from the IRS (after you file your income tax return). If your most recent earnings are higher than those in any of the 35 years of lifetime earnings used to calculate your benefit when you claim, Social Security will automatically increase your monthly payment amount. In other words, you shouldn't delay past age 70 to claim Social Security because you're working - you'll still get credit for those earnings, automatically.

So, I suggest that your wife take fast action to apply for her Social Security benefits to avoid losing any more money, and that you plan to apply for your benefits to start when you turn 70. There is no financial advantage to waiting beyond age 70 to claim, even if you continue working.

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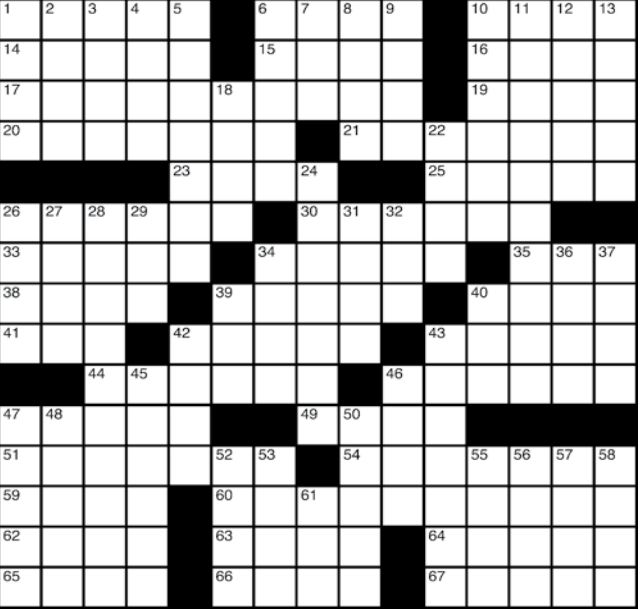
LA JOLLA-UTC-MIRAMAR - Vetted & employed female needs a room & bath. No pets, no kids, no issues. Good refs, stable emplmt. Prefer military/law enforcement. 760-271-3144.

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

Across
 1 Hand-dyeing method
 6 Alaskan malamute team's burden
 10 ___ Field: Mets' home
 14 Lose strength
 15 Attire for Caesar
 16 Closely related
 17 "Really!"
 19 Pinball flub
 20 Metal-shaping tool
 21 Defame verbally
 23 Fifth Avenue retailer
 25 Final word
 26 Even though
 30 Low-cost and inferior
 33 Early synthetic fiber
 34 Pinch, as piecrust
 35 D.C.'s nation
 38 Kilt-wearing family
 39 Hotel visitor
 40 Soon, to a bard
 41 Rogue computer in "2001"
 42 Uses a fireplace tool
 43 Sci-fi robot
 44 Really rich
 46 With dexterity
 47 Davis Jr. of the Rat Pack
 49 Pig's meal
 51 Source of maple syrup

Down
 1 Deep choir voice
 2 Share a boundary with
 3 "Gone With the Wind" estate
 4 Checklist detail
 5 Represses, as emotions
 6 Storied baby-bringing bird
 7 Gehrig in Cooperstown
 8 Dairy case dozen
 9 Roald who created Willy Wonka
 10 Bit of shuteye

11 "Really!"
 12 Scrabble pieces
 13 Emcee's lead-in
 18 In apple-pie order
 22 "Hurry!" on a memo
 24 Windbags' speeches
 26 One of two in McDonald's "M"
 27 In ___ land: spaced-out
 28 "Really!"
 29 A billion years, in geology
 31 Tire leak sound
 32 911 responder: Abbr.
 34 Pickled veggie
 36 Gardener's bagful
 37 Warhol of pop art
 39 Thor or Zeus
 40 Comics bark
 42 Forks over
 43 Kicks out of the country
 45 Brunch fare made with 8-Down
 46 Dimwit
 47 Stashes in a hold
 48 Assortment
 50 Shoe strings
 52 Not very many
 53 Skin opening
 55 Word on an octagonal sign



ROY'S SUDOKU

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Air Evac brings ‘em back!

by Senior Airman Juliana Todd
908th Airlift Wing Public Affairs

Montgomery, AL -- Being inside what is tantamount to an airborne ambulance can be overwhelming. From continuous radio headset communication to hand signals to the jarring effects of turbulence on an aircraft full of the injured and ill, it all might seem rather chaotic to the inexperienced. But within the chaos, there's peace to be found.

Aeromedical personnel bring order to the chaos by knowing how to respond to emergencies. These specially trained members can locate their supplies with precision, provide critical care, reassurance and comfort to patients, and ensure their safety.

This is the mission of the 908th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron. Certified medical technicians and flight nurses who operate in specialized aircraft equipped with medical configurations and deliver in-flight care to critically ill or injured service members while transporting them to medical treatment facilities worldwide.

“Our job is to bring our service members home,” said Tech. Sgt. Austin Coar, 908th AES noncommissioned officer in charge of ground training. “Our responsibility is to bring people in bad situations, potentially experiencing the

worst day of their life, and reunite them with their loved ones. We take great pride in ensuring the safe return of our service members.”

In preparation for missions like these, AES members undergo extensive training. They routinely engage in 3 to 5-day-long training missions at various locations across the country to stay prepared to answer the nation's call.

During a recent training mission spanning from December 8 to December 10, 2023, approximately 20 members from the 908th AES participated in a tandem training flight with members of the 446th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron, based at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Washington, from Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama, to St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands.

The synchronized training effectively leveraged government resources and enabled the two AE squadrons to train side by side on a C-17 Globemaster III. This approach allowed them to address their unit's individual training requirements, establish a partnership between the two units and contribute to mutual mission readiness.

“One of the really positive aspects of AE is its high level

of interoperability,” said Senior Airman Matthew Stivers, a 908th AES flight medical technician. “We can collaborate with different squadrons to provide assistance and fill in gaps when they have shortages, and reciprocally others come to our aid. There's a strong sense of cooperation within the AE community.”

The three-day training mission consisted of briefings, checklists, scenarios, evaluations, and inspections.

Each day began with an initial crew brief covering administrative duties, potential threats and errors that could impact a successful mission, aircraft emergencies and egress plans, and receiving patient information reports, records, and medications. Following this, they delved into the day's scenario, assigning specific equipment, supplies, configuration duties, and roles.

During the flight, certain members assumed special roles, such as a flight nurse taking on the role of the medical crew director or an aeromedical evacuation technician serving as the charge medical technician for the scenario. Additionally, members took turns swapping positions where some members played the role of the patients and others served as the medical technicians.

Each day presented a unique scenario accompanied by a different set of challenges. At times, the team was familiar with the issues at hand, while in other instances they were not. They navigated through varying environments, ranging from low to moderately regulated settings to simulated high-threat environments where they faced gunfire and bombings. Unexpected situations, such as a patient experiencing motion sickness, oxygen leaks, or a surprise chemical attack, occasionally arose without prior notice. Despite these challenges, the crew maintained composure, executing their roles effectively and efficiently.

“As a flight instructor this weekend, I worked with Airmen who were not current or deficient in their tasks and got them spun up on that,” said Coar. “The training that I provided the two students that I had this weekend was perfect. I think it met their needs, their training requirements and will be able to stay mission ready.”

After their initial scenarios were completed the crew either studied independently or separated for individualized instruction, delving deeper into topics such as a specific aircraft's configuration or egress training. The members were also evaluated in areas such as aircraft litter configuration, pain management, emergency landing procedures, and engines running on-load or off-load operations.

Once the plane landed, scenarios for the day concluded and the crew conducted their post-mission brief. They discussed the effec-



Capt. Chris Bennett, middle, a flight nurse with the 908th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron, prepares to demonstrate a medical procedure on a simulated patient last month, during a training flight from Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama, to St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands. The hands-on simulation enhances the team's preparedness for potential real-world situations. USAF photo Senior Airman Juliana Todd.

tiveness of the training, identified any discrepancies, and completed necessary paperwork.

“After our training this weekend, I feel well-prepared,” Stivers affirmed. “Our instructors really care about our growth and development, wanting us to succeed and be able to do the mission. I appreciated the challenges they threw at us, allowing us to fail and learn from our mistakes.”

It is crucial for these airmen to continuously hone their skills as the medical field is forever

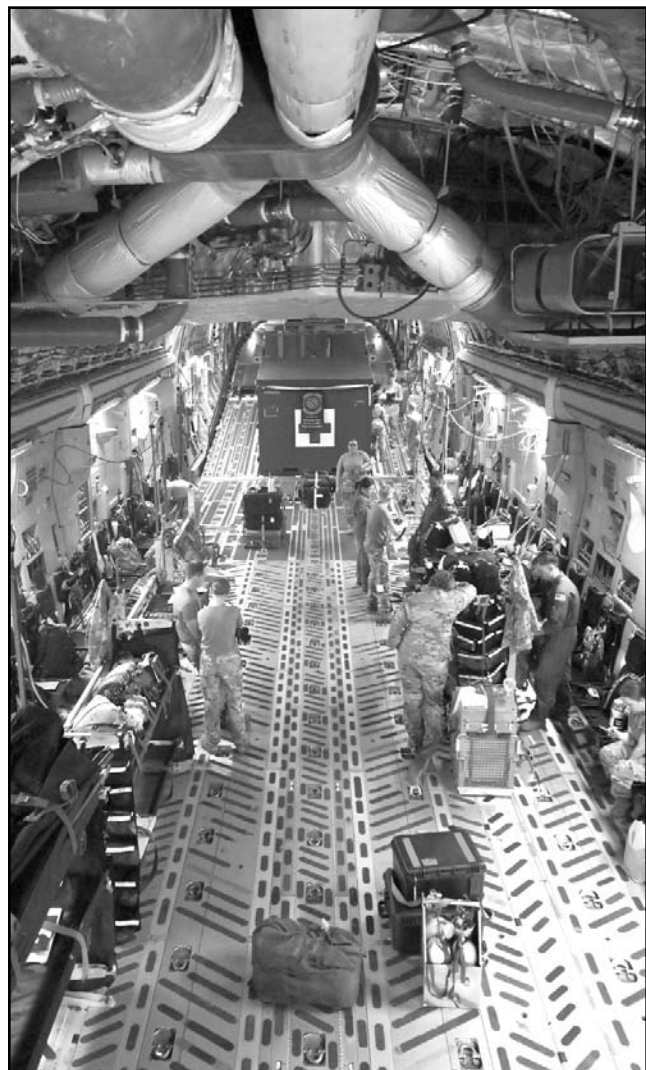
changing. Airmen in the AES must maintain flexibility, resilience, and a positive mindset to navigate the challenges they encounter.

“At The 908 AES, our mission and goal is to be the premier medi-

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cal component in the Air Force,” said Coar. “We are fortunate to have phenomenal members who stay mission-ready and at any moment are ready to go out and do whatever the Air Force needs of us.”

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Members with the 908th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron performed tandem training with members from the 446th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron, Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Washington, during a training flight Dec. 9, 2023, near St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands. The 446th EAS crew trained on the left side of the C-17 Globemaster III while the 908th AES crew trained on the right side. USAF photo Senior Airman Juliana Todd

THE ARMED SERVICES YMCA CAMP PENDLETON



OUR MISSION:

For the past 79 years, the Armed Services YMCA Camp Pendleton has enhanced the lives of military members and their families in spirit, mind, and body through programs relevant to the unique challenges of military life.

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PROGRAMS

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- Father Daughter and Mother Son Dances
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- Jelly
- Chicken Broth
- Soup



The Pendleton Pantry ensures military families have everything they need to make ends meet and have homes running smoothly.

Questions? Email Lisi Carranza at ecarranza@asymca.org



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