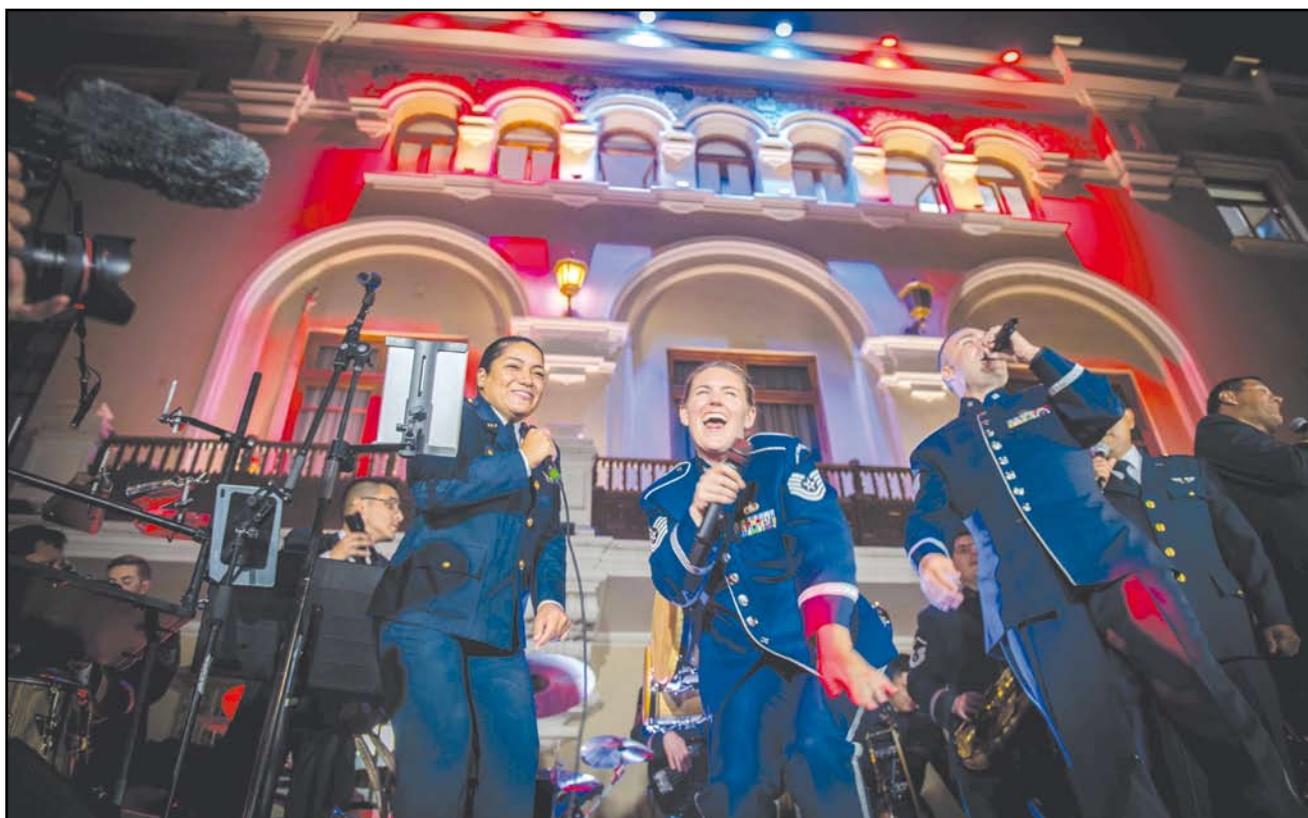


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JULY 1-15, 2024



FEEL THE BEAT Max Impact, the premier rock band of the Air Force, and the Peruvian Air Force Band perform a concert during exercise Resolute Sentinel 2024 in Lima Peru, June 12, 2024. While RS24 focuses on interoperability, readiness and regional security, the interoperability component of the exercise is a critical aspect, demonstrating the U.S. commitment to being a partner in both defense and development. U.S. Air Force Photo by Senior Airman Courtney Sebastianelli

Aircraft carrier arrives in South Korea as a show of force against nuclear-armed North Korea

STARS AND STRIPES - A nuclear-powered U.S. aircraft carrier arrived June 22 in South Korea for a three-way exercise involving Japan as they step up military training to cope with North Korean threats, which have escalated following a security pact with Russia.

The arrival of San Diego-based *Theodore Roosevelt* aircraft carrier trike group in Busan came a day after South Korea summoned the Russian ambassador to protest a major deal between Russian President Vladimir Putin and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un this week.

The agreement pledges mutual defense assistance in the event of war. South Korea says the deal poses a threat to its security and warned that it could consider sending arms to Ukraine to help fight off the Russian invasion as a response — a move that would surely ruin its relations with Moscow.

Following a meeting between their defense chiefs in Singapore earlier in June, the United States, South Korea and Japan announced the Freedom Edge drills.

Roosevelt strike group will participate in the exercise that is expected to start within June. South Korea's military didn't immediately confirm specific details of the training.

Rear Admiral. Christopher Alexander, commander of Carrier Strike Group Nine, said the exercise is aimed at sharpening tactical proficiency of ships and improving interoperability between the countries' navies "to ensure we are ready to respond to any crisis and contingency."

<https://www.stripes.com/branches/navy/2024-06-22/roosevelt-aircraft-carrier-south-korea-14263203.html>

PACIFIC FLEET BOSS AWARDS SAILOR FOR MONEY-SAVING INITIATIVE

by Lt. Zachary Anderson
 USS *Boxer* (LHD 4)
 SAN DIEGO - While visiting USS *Boxer* earlier this month, Adm. Stephen T. Koehler, commander, Pacific Fleet, presented Aviation Electronics Technician

2nd Class Jim GarciaAcevedo with a Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal for the additive manufacturing, commonly known as 3D printing, of 300 sound-powered phone caps, saving the Navy \$12,000

in production costs.

In June 2022, Pacific Fleet leadership directed commanders at every echelon to optimize pride, performance and operational readiness through the Shipshape and Seaworthy initiative.

"Upgrading one of our communication systems was a cross-sectional effort involving multiple departments and rates - reinforcing that seamless integration of specialties is what makes the Surface Force great," said *Boxer* Commanding Officer Capt. Brian Holmes. "I see firsthand how hard this crew works day in and day out, so it is immensely gratifying for the highest levels of Navy leadership to recognize our Sailors' efforts."

As part of *Boxer's* team-wide effort to improve internal com-

munications, personnel sought out phone boxes - critical elements to passing information at sea - for improvement. Each phone box has two phone cap assemblies, available for purchase at \$41 each. GarciaAcevedo was able to lower the in-house cost by almost 97 percent through 3D printing the materials.

"You have to reverse engineer the part, measure every angle of the unit and create a design out of that," said GarciaAcevedo, assigned to the ship's Aircraft Intermediate Maintenance Department (AIMD). "So far, I've made 300 of them with more than 100 staying permanently on board. It was an honor to be given a medal by Pacific Fleet in front of my command."

AIMD worked with personnel from Deck, Engineering and Command, Control, Com-

see **Boxer**, page 8



Aviation Electronics Technician 2nd Class Jim GarciaAcevedo explains the process of 3D printing sound-powered phone caps to Adm. Stephen Koehler, commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet, in a repair shop aboard USS *Boxer*, June 6. U.S. Navy photo by MCSN Tyler Miles

Allvin adds details, articulates his 'nonstop' commitment to 'reoptimize'

Adding detail and context to an ambitious effort for "reoptimizing" the Air Force, Chief of Staff Gen. David W. Allvin said in separate appearances recently that changing the way the Total Force trains, plans, modernizes, and is equipped must succeed for the Air Force to meet emerging challenges from China and other competitors. He said the Air Force has made real and tangible progress instituting elements of a broad strategy announced in February to evolve how the Air Force develops people, generates readiness, projects power, and develops integrated capabilities. Allvin pointed out, for example, progress in reinstating warrant officers to help fill and keep personnel with in-demand skills such as cyber and information technology. That effort, he said, is well underway, with the warrant officer selection board scheduled to convene this month and the announcement of selects tentatively scheduled for late July.

Marine Band San Diego Summer Concert in Little Italy on July 13

The Marine Band's full 40-member group and renowned local ensemble "Sound Strike" will take over the Piazza della Famiglia, bringing with them the vibrant sounds and lively energy for the Marine Band San Diego Summer Concert July 13. Hosted by the Little Italy Association of San Diego, the community is invited to revel in the high spirits and incredible performances taking place in the heart of the Little Italy neighborhood on Saturday, July 13 at 7 p.m. Throughout the evening, the public will have a chance to enjoy beloved anthems and irresistible tunes suitable for all ages. So, prepare for a delightful summer outing with friends, family and the community.

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U.S. Naval Aircrewmembers first on scene to render first aid to motorcycle accident victim

by MC1 Sara Eshleman
HSC 3

SAN DIEGO – Two Sailors stationed at Naval Station North Island assisted a motorcycle accident victim involved in a vehicle collision on June 1 in Alpine.

Naval Aircrewman (Helicopter) 2nd Class Jarett Ollier from Temecula, assigned to the “Merlins” of Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron (HSC) 3, and Aircrewman (Helicopter) 2nd Class Coleman Krallis, a Sandy, Utah native and Survival, Evasion, Resistance and Escape instructor assigned to the Center for Security Forces Detachment here were off-duty driving through the mountains of Alpine when they arrived upon a stopped car in the middle of the road.

As they approached and pulled around the car, they noticed an overturned motorcycle and someone lying on the ground. They immediately pulled over to assess the situation.

“I was definitely caught off guard,” said Ollier. “When we drove past before ultimately pulling over, I saw someone on the ground. I didn’t expect her injuries to be anywhere near the degree that they were. After briefly absorbing the initial shock of what I was seeing for the first time, my training that has been drilled into me through-

out the years kicked in, and I just started going step by step.”

The pair approached the scene, and Krallis asked the small gathering of onlookers that had just begun to form if emergency services had been called while Ollier assessed the survivor. When he discovered that no emergency calls had been made, Krallis called 911 and relayed the situation to the operator, who connected him to the paramedics.

“It was intense to say the least,” said Krallis. “I didn’t feel nervous, but more of an adrenaline rush feeling. I felt prepared as in I knew what to do, but unprepared when it came to the equipment that we had on us. During our actual job, we have a fully equipped med bag with everything we would have needed for something like this.”

While Krallis spoke with paramedics, providing them with real-time updates on the injured rider’s condition, Ollier immediately began to render first aid to the injured rider.

“Throughout our whole training pipeline,” said Ollier, referring to the medical training he received specifically for his job as an aircrewman, “whether it’s in the water, in the aircraft or for any kind of scenario that care is necessary, there’s the medical capabilities you are supposed



Jarett Ollier, left, and Coleman Krallis are shown here in front of the flight line at Naval Air Station, North Island. U.S. Navy photo by MC1 Sara Eshleman

to have. However, in some scenarios, if you don’t have those capabilities, you have to utilize what you can and just think outside the box and get it done.”

In order to stop the rider’s bleeding, Ollier improvised a tourniquet by using the patient’s belt. The pair were careful to keep the patient lying flat and still, keeping the helmet on to prevent further injury to the head and neck. Once Krallis completed the 911 call, he joined Ollier with the patient.

“One of the lessons we teach at SERE is improvised remote medicine,” said Krallis. “This is being able to actually provide medical attention when you don’t have all the necessary

medical equipment ready. You’re not always going to have a Hospital Corpsman with you, you’re not always going to have a giant level “A” med kit that’s the size of a backpack strapped to your back. One of my favorites sayings is ‘necessity is the mother of all invention,’ so once you find out that you need something, it’s just a matter of utilizing your imagination to adapt what you have to that situation.”

The pair fashioned a splint out of wooden stakes and elastic wrap found on the scene and applied it to the patient’s fractures when a Sheriff arrived. Once the splints were secure, they continued to treat for shock, and shortly after, they heard the Fire-EMT’s arriving. After receiving

and placing a tourniquet from the responders to properly address the patient’s bleeding, Krallis and Ollier passed on control of the scene to the EMTs, successfully placing the patient into the necessary higher level of care.

“It definitely gives you some pride,” said Krallis. “I was able to utilize my training in this in order to ultimately help somebody. It’s a different mentality you have, out in the civilian world. Whenever you go into the aircraft, you know, ‘hey, there’s a potential we could have a risk.’ We brief everything that we’re

going to do, we brief on how we’re going to do it, but that kind of mentality...you’re just out there for a Sunday drive and then everything just switches and rotates into ‘okay, this is a mission now, we’ve got to help this person.’”

“We are constantly reminded in our community that our best day is someone else’s worst day,” echoed Ollier. “So with that in mind, I feel like everybody as a community will go into this kind of situation with the mindset that we just need to get it done.”



MARINE CORPS MOUNTAIN WARFARE TRAINING CENTER, BRIDGEPORT, Calif. (June 20, 2024) Marine Corps Cpl. Joseph Paredes Sanchez prepares to load equipment onto a pack mule during Mountain Training Exercise 4-24 here. Marines participate in MTX to focus on mission essential tasks such as assault climbing, animal packing and small unit movements, to strengthen expeditionary high-altitude warfare tactics in a mountainous environment. U.S. Marine Corps photo by Staff Sgt. Jestin Costa



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2 www.armedforcesdispatch.com JULY 1-15, 2024

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'No military training value' National Guard chief criticizes deployment of troops to U.S.-Mexico border

by Svetlana Shkolnikova
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON - The chief of the National Guard Bureau said June 18 that stationing Guard members on the U.S.-Mexico border detracts from their military mission and underutilizes troops.

About 2,500 members of the National Guard are assisting U.S. Customs and Border Protection agents in monitoring border crossings.

Gen. Daniel Hokanson, the chief of the force, said their time and effort would be better spent elsewhere.

"There's no military training value for what we do," he told the Senate Appropriations Committee during a hearing on the National Guard's budget. "That time, I think, would be better utilized building readiness to deter our adversaries."

U.S. troops have supported the Department of Homeland Security's work at the southwest border since 2018, when former President Donald Trump deployed units to "stop the flow of deadly drugs and other contraband, gang members and other criminals, and illegal aliens."

President Joe Biden has kept troops in place since taking

office in 2021, and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin last year extended the mission through September.

The Guard members are serving under U.S. Northern Command, which is responsible for defending the continental U.S. and Alaska. There are additional Guard members who were deployed to the border by governors and are under state control.

Hokanson said he knows the National Guard is helping border patrol fill manpower gaps, allowing agents to focus on detention and processing, but the deployments are personally frustrating for many troops.

"They might as well be deployed to Kuwait or somewhere overseas because they're away from their families," he said. "They're there doing mission sets that are not directly applicable to their military skill set."

Active-duty Guard members sent to the border by the federal government are not allowed to participate in civilian law enforcement activities and are largely relegated to administrative and logistical duties, including warehousing, detection and monitoring support.

Security at the border has



Army Gen. Daniel Hokanson, chief of the National Guard Bureau, testifies June 18 before the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee. U.S. Army National Guard photo by Zach Sheely

dominated lawmaker conversations on Capitol Hill in recent months and has emerged as a top issue ahead of the presidential election in November. Sen. Jon Tester of Montana, the Democratic chairman of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense, criticized the Biden administration on June 18 for its "failed" immigration policies and questioned the impact of continuously stationing National Guard troops at the border. Others have also cast doubt about the practicality of the policy.

Air Force Gen. Glen VanHerck, the former commander

of NORTHCOM, has said the deployment of troops should be temporary.

"I think, long term, this is not an enduring mission of the Department of Defense," VanHerck told lawmakers in 2022. "We need to fully fund and resource [the Department of Homeland Security] to do their mission, and the [Defense Department] should be used in extremis times for the support on the border mission."

Read more at: <https://www.stripes.com/theaters/us/2024-06-18/national-guard-mexico-border-senate-14224099.html>.

Total Battle Force	Deployed	Underway
296 (USS 235, USNS 61)	103 (USS 71, USNS 32)	82 (56 Deployed, 26 Local)



Army

- West Point colonel arraigned for alleged misconduct with tennis team
- One of the Army's top nuclear teams trained with Rangers and Green Berets
- King takes over Army's air and missile defense command in Europe
- Crews on Fort Carson aim for August start to new home builds amid flurry of construction

Navy

- Navy slows procurement of key vessel for Marine littoral maneuvers
- Acquitted of rape, midshipman may face assault charge after July hearing

Marine Corps

- Marines cut time for career transition program, citing readiness
- Japanese government moving ahead with landfill work for Marine Corps runway on Okinawa
- Marine scout snipers look to immortalize their legacy and history through a new memorial

Air Force

- Watchdog: Air Force plan to divest old F-22s has too many holes
- Departing Air Force wing commander's Super Hercules gets a check-up in Tokyo
- Historic USAF court-martial hits snag as too many generals struck from jury duty

National Guard

- Louisiana National Guard finishes 3rd deployment at Texas border
- Brig. Gen. Mitchell Johnson named adjutant general of ND National Guard

Veterans

- Army vet still paying the price for bad paper discharge for being gay
- A veteran died in a nursing home, alone — hundreds came to say goodbye
- 'Access DOJ' initiative aims to help veterans, citizens obtain justice
- Remains of Pearl Harbor Sailor to be buried next week at Arlington National Cemetery

Military Culture & History

- Military athletes race for spots on USA team for Paris Olympics

Defense Industry

- European ammo firms tell EU to 'hurry up' with 155mm shell aid top-up
- Rheinmetall announces 155mm ammunition mega order from Germany

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Navy relaxes career-ending mandate for Sailors who fail two consecutive fitness tests

by Caitlyn Burchett
Stars and Stripes

The Navy will no longer automatically end the careers of Sailors who fail two consecutive fitness tests, according to a service policy released last week.

Previously, Sailors who failed one physical fitness assessment would be placed in their command's mandatory fitness program. They also would be restricted from advancing until they passed the next fitness test. A second consecutive failure would prohibit Sailors from advancing or reenlisting, according to a prior policy.

The new policy, which became effective June 18, relaxes the career-ending mandate, instead leaving the decision to a Sailor's commanding officer.

"Commanding officers are able to evaluate a Sailor's physical readiness progress or lack of progress in performance evaluations, giving them the ability to manage risk, recognize earnest effort, and best take care of their people," Vice Adm. Rick Cheeseman, chief of naval personnel, said in the administrative message.

While Sailors will still be ineligible for advancement if they fail a fitness assessment, the failure will no longer be noted on annual evaluations.

Additionally, Sailors who fail a second consecutive fitness assessment will not automatically receive the lowest possible score in the "Military Bearing/Professionalism" category of their annual evaluations.

Instead, the policy encourages



Sailors assigned to aircraft carrier USS Carl Vinson participate in a physical readiness test in August 2022 at Naval Air Station North Island. U.S. Navy photo by Leon Vonguyen

commanding officers to document a Sailor's progress and initiative in meeting physical fitness standards.

In determining a Sailor's retention eligibility, commands should consider the Sailor's qualification for continued service based on the ability to perform the functions of their

rate without physical or medical limitation at sea, shore or isolated duty. They should also consider a Sailor's overall ability to contribute to Navy missions and a Sailor's likelihood of improvement in meeting fitness standards within 12 months.

The policy change is part of the Navy's "Culture of Ex-

cellence 2.0," a service-wide effort to improve leadership principles and standards, according to the administrative message.

"Building the bodies of great people is more than annual (or biannual) testing and includes ensuring healthy food, adequate sleep, opportunities to exercise (especially outside), and medical readiness," Cheeseman said in the message.

The latest change comes as the Navy struggles to meet its recruitment goal for the second year in a row, with service officials having predicted a shortfall of approximately 6,000 Sailors. But Navy officials have said the service surpassed its retention goal for 2024, retaining 16,967 active-duty Sailors, Task and Purpose reported.

The Navy made changes to its fitness test in 2015, altering its policy at the time from discharging Sailors who failed three fitness assessments in

four years to kicking out Sailors who failed two in three years, Stars and Stripes reported. The Navy abandoned that policy in 2017, replacing it with two consecutive fitness-assessment failures mandate. At the time, the Navy was seeking to recruit 4,000 members.

In February 2023, the service wiped the slate clean for active-duty and Reserve Sailors who failed fitness tests, resetting their records to zero, in a bid to retain members.

Between the two policy changes, in 2021, the Navy shifted to a single annual fitness testing cycle. Prior to the coronavirus pandemic, the service had two annual testing cycles. The new policy upholds the single annual fitness cycle through November 2025.



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NAVAL CAPTAIN CONVICTED BY FEDERAL JURY OF CYBERSTALKING, IDENTITY THEFT

SAN DIEGO – In a news release June 14 from the U.S. Attorney’s Office, Southern District of California, Navy Capt. Theodore E. Essensfeld was convicted by a San Diego federal jury of cyberstalking and stealing the identity of his former girlfriend.

During the four-day trial, the United States presented evidence that Essensfeld created imposter accounts with Facebook, LinkedIn, email, and cellular phone

accounts using the woman’s name, biographical information, and photographs without her knowledge or consent. Posing as the victim, Essensfeld posted erotic and sexually explicit content to the Facebook account, as well as graphic media files or “memes.”

In addition to the materials posted on the imposter Facebook account, the United States presented evidence that Essensfeld joined Facebook dating groups using the imposter account and

interacted with numerous other Facebook users while impersonating the victim, including “liking” other users’ posts, sending messages with kissy-face emojis, and sending group messages.

Essensfeld linked the imposter Facebook and LinkedIn accounts to the victim’s prospective employer by following and engaging with the prospective employer’s social media accounts. He also linked the fake accounts to other aspects of the victim’s life by “liking” posts

by her former co-workers, her university, the U.S. Navy, and fitness studios she previously attended.

Over 1,200 Facebook users ultimately became “friends” with the imposter account, including the victims’ former colleagues. The evidence showed that the victim reported the imposter account to Facebook over 400

“THE IMPACT OF CYBERSTALKING CAN BE AS CRUSHING AS A PHYSICAL BLOW. THANKS TO THE PERSISTENT COURAGE OF THIS VICTIM, THE JURY SAW THE DAMAGE MR. ESSENSFELD INFLICTED IN EVERY ASPECT OF HER LIFE – FROM HER WORKPLACE TO HER GYM – AND TODAY, THEY HELD HIM ACCOUNTABLE FOR HIS ACTS OF DECEIT AND DESTRUCTION.”

U.S. ATTORNEY TARA MCGRATH

times, but Facebook refused to take down the account because it appeared more authentic than the victim’s actual account due to the volume of images and level of Essensfeld’s engagement on the platform.

“The impact of cyberstalking can be as crushing as a physical blow,” said U.S. Attorney



Federal authorities have charged Navy Capt. Theodore Essensfeld with cyberstalking of an ex-girlfriend. He is shown here in 2017 while commanding dock landing ship Pearl Harbor. Official U.S. Navy photo

Tara McGrath. “Thanks to the persistent courage of this victim, the jury saw the damage Mr. Essensfeld inflicted in every aspect of her life – from her workplace to her gym – and today, they held him accountable for his acts of deceit and destruction.”

“Mr. Essensfeld deserves to be held to account for his cruel campaign to stalk, harass, and intimidate his victim,” said Special Agent in Charge Nicholas Carter of the NCIS Southwest Field Office. “NCIS and our law enforcement partners remain committed to protecting victims of cyberstalking and rooting

out criminality that threatens Department of the Navy readiness.”

Essensfeld served more than three decades in the Navy and is the former commanding officer of then-San Diego-based USS Pearl Harbor.

This case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Sabrina Feve and Michael A. Deshong.

Essensfeld’s sentencing is scheduled for Sept. 6, 2024, at 9 a.m. before U.S. District Judge Robert S. Huie.

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EMF 150 – Alpha changes command aboard MCB Camp Pendleton

by Curtis Hill

Naval Hospital Camp Pendleton

On Friday, June 21, 2024, Expeditionary Medical Facility 150 - Alpha conducted a change of command ceremony aboard Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton.

Navy Capt. Elizabeth Smith relinquished command to Capt. Kenneth Basford in an outdoor ceremony with the Pacific Ocean in the background.

The change of command ceremony is a time-honored naval tradition which formally passes the authority and responsibility of command from one officer to another.

Capt. Jenny Burkett, Commander, Navy Medicine Readiness and Training Command Camp Pendleton and Director, Naval Hospital Camp Pendleton, served as the presiding officer and presented Smith with the Legion of Merit medal in recognition of her exceptionally meritorious conduct in the performance of outstanding service during her nearly two years in command of EMF 150 Alpha.

During her remarks, Burkett spoke of the myriad of accomplishments achieved by Smith and her team.

“They developed structure, policies, and training programs, ensuring that all 450 staff mem-



Capt. Jenny Burkett (left) presents Capt. Elizabeth Smith with the Legion of Merit medal in recognition of her the performance during her nearly two years in command of EMF 150 Alpha. Smith relinquished command to Capt. Kenneth Basford during a change of command ceremony held June 21 aboard Camp Pendleton. U.S. Navy photo by Petty Officer 1st Class Alex Perlman

bers were ready clinically, as well as operationally, for whatever Navy Medicine needed them for,” she said. “She led the EMF through its first exercise, KEEN SWORD, representing the US Navy Medicine team with the Japanese Self Defense Force in Okinawa, Japan.”

Smith addressed some of the challenges that came from being the first commanding officer.

“What was new about this was turning a platform into a command and then establishing a ‘command within a command’ and making it work,” said Smith.

“The complexity of doing that during the largest transition in military medicine is a huge undertaking that required some foresight, a vision, some tenacity, some drive, a team with the winning mindset, and the ability to push through any challenge that got in the way.”

She also thanked her partners across her command, the NMRTC, and other commands across southern California who provided assistance, guidance, and mentorship throughout her tenure.

“To those partners that helped make this possible ... we thank you for your willingness and generosity in sharing your expertise, your spaces, and your resources to allow this team to train and maneuver,” she added.

Smith closed by thanking her Sailors and her family for their support and patience.

Smith will transition to her new assignment within the 1st Marine Logistics Group.

Basford comes from Portsmouth, Va., where he served as

the executive officer of EMF 150 Juliet.

He thanked his family for their support and addressed the Sailors of EMF 150 Alpha.

“I am humbled and honored by the opportunity to be your commanding officer. My commitment to you all is to do my best every day to support you, eliminate obstacles and barriers so that as a team we can maximize medical readiness,” he said. “I look forward to the next couple of years and the great things we will accomplish together.”



NOT ‘KIDD’ING AROUND PACIFIC OCEAN (June 23, 2024) Destroyer USS Kidd (DDG 100) transits the Pacific Ocean. U.S. Navy photo by MCSN Kenneth Ostas)

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JULY 1-15, 2024 www.armedforcesdispatch.com 7

Boxer

continued from page 1

munication, Computer, Combat Systems and Information Departments to locate and upgrade the phone boxes. The interdepartmental efforts improved ship communication and material readiness, while employing money-saving measures through a spirit of ingenuity.

"I am hugely appreciative of this one innovation," said Koehler after he presented the award

during an all hands call on the mess decks. "I consider it an example of where this crew is going and where they see themselves. You're a shining example of it, and the tip of the iceberg."

Boxer is a Wasp-class amphibious assault ship homeported in San Diego. Commissioned February 11, 1995, *Boxer* is the sixth ship to bear the name. *Boxer's* crew is made up of approximately 1,200 officers and enlisted personnel and can accommodate up to 1,800 Marines.

Armed Forces DISPATCH



PACIFIC OCEAN (June 15, 2024) A CMV-22B Osprey, assigned to the 'Titans' of Fleet Logistics Multi-Mission Squadron (VRM) 30, lands on the flight deck of USS Carl Vinson aircraft carrier while underway in the 3rd Fleet area of operations. U.S. Navy photo by MC2 Derek Kelley

Shared vision: 1st Radio Battalion change of command

by 2nd Lt. Chase Brahaney

**1 MEF Information Group
CAMP PENDLETON** – A change of command ceremony for 1st Radio Battalion, I Marine Expeditionary Force Information Group, marked the passing of command from Marine Corps Lt. Col. Curtis A. Williamson to Lt. Col. Mabel B. Annunziata here June 24.

During the ceremony Williamson reflected on his two years as the commanding officer and highlighted Annunziata's extensive experience and their shared vision for

the battalion's future. Having previously served as the 1st Radio Battalion operations officer and most recently the I MIG executive officer, she has played a pivotal role in shaping the battalion's future and will continue to, now at the helm.

"Right now, the battalion has a clearer future than it has had in at least a decade, and a large part of that is because of a consistency in vision," said Williamson. "That is not my vision alone. It's built by a lot of people, and a huge part of that is Mabel Annunziata."

Annunziata, after taking command, reflects on her path from an enlisted Marine to commanding officer and the inspiration she took from her mother to achieve her goals.

"I am my mother's sacrifice," she said. "She taught me when I was little that you can do anything if you are willing to work for it."

Annunziata went on to acknowledge the value in the Marines' diverse backgrounds now under her charge and her confidence in the strength of

the battalion.

"It's never about the individual, but how we can do it together," said Annunziata. "We are all so different, and that is what makes us strong."

1st Radio Battalion, operates, and maintains the necessary Intelligence Information Architecture to enable and provide signals intelligence, electromagnetic warfare, and computer network exploitation capabilities to the Marine Air Ground Task Force commander and other supported commanders.



SAN DIEGO (June 11, 2024) A dolphin with the Marine Mammal Program performs a demonstration as part of Navy Employer Recognition Event. NERE is a professional recognition event for outstanding civilian employers of Navy Reserve Sailors who support for their citizen-Sailor employees. Navy photo by MC1 Jacob D. Bergh



SAN DIEGO (June 21, 2024) Ensign Harold Tran's wife, Naira, and their children, Hero and Harleen, pin ensign shoulder boards onto his uniform during Tran's commissioning ceremony at the Naval Medical Forces Pacific headquarters here. Tran earned his commission after serving as a chief petty officer. U.S. Navy photo by Arsenio R. Cortez, Jr.

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221st anniversary - Battle of San Diego Bay

information about the San Salvador, visit <https://sdmaritime.org/visit/the-ships/> at the San Diego Maritime Museum's website).

The Master of Ceremonies was Jesus B. Benayas, President of the House of Spain in San Diego. Live music for this event was provided by Navy Band Southwest. Distinguished guests included Colonel Francisco Martin Alonso — Spanish Air Force (Engineers Corps), Major Aurelio Hinarejos-Rojo — Spanish Army Corp Polytechnic Engineers and Lt. Cmdr. Pablo Montero Varela, C3F Chilean Liaison Officer.

The flags of 1803 were raised by the Honorable Juan-Carlos Sanchez-Alonzo - Consul General of Spain in Los Angeles, and Navy Capt. Jeff M. Yacker, commanding officer, Naval Base Point Loma.

In his welcome address, Captain Yacker reminded us that "Spain and the U.S. have a long history of warmth, mutual aid and support. It is precisely this relationship and friendship that we celebrate today with a particular emphasis on the culture, the traditions, the cuisine and the beauty of the great country of Spain."

Captain Yacker's welcome was followed by comments from the Honorable Rosaura Morrow Picasso, Honorary Consul of Spain in San Diego: "In this very location, in 1803, Spain had its most westerly outpost in North America and what was going to become California. Spain's enlightened culture is represented here some 6,000 miles from Spain. Why was the Spanish culture enlightened? Spain was the very first nation to abolish slavery over 500 years ago, in 1811. ... before Britain, before France, before Poland, before Portugal and over 60 years before the United

States' Emancipation Proclamation."

"Some say history is written by victors. ... Well, we are here today to remember the Battle of San Diego Bay in 1803 — and there were no victors, no victors. It was pretty much a skirmish. No one won, no one lost and it wasn't a political fight, but simply a disagreement over trading posts. ... No injuries were recorded, no lives were lost."

The keynote speaker was Commander Eduardo Almázán-García Campos — Spanish Navy (Engineers Corps), NILE Project Management Office, NAVWAR — San Diego. Commander Almázán-García Campos is stationed in San Diego as Spain's National Representative at the NILE PMO, NAVWAR. He joined the Armada in 1999.

The House of Spain is one of Balboa Park's International Cottages. San Diego is considered by many to have the most active Spanish community in Southern California.

It would be remiss of me if I did not mention the House of Spain's delicious paella. As you may recall from my coverage of the annual "December Nights" park-wide open house event in Balboa Park, the House of Spain prepares and serves a marvelous paella there every year. For more information about the House of Spain, including a video about how they make their paellas, visit: <https://www.houseofspainsd.org>.

To explore a wide variety of content dating back to 2002, with the most photos and the latest text, visit "AutoMatters & More" at <https://automatters.net>. Search by title or topic in the Search Bar in the middle of the Home Page, or click on the blue 'years' boxes and browse. Copyright © 2024 by Jan Wagner — AutoMatters & More #844

On June 15, 2024, The House of Spain (Casa de España) in San Diego, through the courtesy of Naval Base Point Loma, commemorated the 221st Anniversary of the "Battle of San Diego."

We were told that: "On March 17, 1803, Captain William Shaler and Captain Richard Cleveland sailed into San Diego Bay on the American Brig Leila Byrd to buy sea otter pelts, although such trading was forbidden by Spain. On the morning of March 22nd, Spanish soldados captured members of the ship's crew on the beach. Captain Cleveland rowed ashore, released his sailors, and captured a few soldados. As the ship departed, the soldados were tied to the masts in plain view of the shore. Fort Guijarros' nine-pound cannons opened fire to prevent the Americans' escape. The Leila Byrd crew fired two broadsides at the fort with its six three-pound swivel guns. A hat was waved and both parties ceased firing, with no injuries except to pride and rigging. This is the only known ship-to-shore cannon battle to have occurred on the Pacific Coast between an American merchant ship and Spanish forts. The Fort Guijarros site was designated as California Registered Historical Landmark No. 69 in 1982."

Perhaps not coincidentally, an historic sailboat from the San Diego Maritime Museum sailed past Coronado, just as the ceremony was about to commence. I believe that the ship was the San Salvador, "the first European vessel to reach America's West Coast" (for historical

How to eat crabs without losing an eye

Obviously, human beings have evolved from their cave-dwelling, hunter-gathering days. Today's man walks upright when not sitting in lounge furniture, lights fires with starter logs, and procures Boar's Head meats from the commissary deli counter.

Thanks to the advent of modern-day farms, fisheries and meat packing plants, military families can fill their bellies with meat without even getting their cammies dirty. However, for military families who end up stationed on the US eastern seaboard, there is one circumstance in which they will voluntarily, willingly, and even eagerly maim, slaughter and gut pray with their bare hands.

As long as there are twist-top beverages available, modern humans enjoy the experience of butchering Chesapeake Bay blue crabs. But eating steamed crabs is not all ruthless savagery. There is a step-by-step method which has been passed down through generations.

First, one must cover the dinner table with newspapers to protect it from mallet blows, flying debris, and seeping bodily fluids. Next, pile the steamed crabs in the center of the paper-covered table, along with various accompaniments — lemon wedges and butter. Don't bother with napkins, just have a fire hose ready for clean up at the end.

Important! Before handing out wooden mallets and alcoholic beverages, it's highly recommended to have each participant to sign a release form absolving the host of liability for any resulting physical

injuries or mental trauma.

When everyone is seated at the table, tell each person to take a crab from the pile and place it on the table, abdomen facing up. Considering this critter is nothing more than a glorified spider, it's very important to heed the following steps to extract the edible bits of meat:

Place a thumb under the "pop tab"

The Meat & Potatoes of Life



by
Lisa
Smith
Molinari

on the white underbelly, and gently lift. Without revealing that this is actually the crab's genitals, snap off the shell tab to reveal a small opening. If breaking off the creature's reproductive organs was not savage enough, now place both thumbs in the opening and apply pressure until the upper red shell separates from the white abdomen shell.

Discarding the top shell, one is left with what appears to be a totally revolting carcass full of gills, intestines, membranes and multicolored goo. Take a deep breath and sip your beverage to ward off any gag reflex. Also, beware of wannabe crab connoisseurs who eat the goeey yellow and green "mustard" of the crab, claiming that it's some sort of delicacy. Don't be fooled—if it looks like crab guts, it's probably crab guts.

Holding either side, crack the rest

of the crab in half down the middle. If the guests haven't completely lost their appetite by now, explain that it's finally time to extract the meat. Pinching the paddle leg at the top joint, ease the lump of meat out of the carcass. Look at the morsel attached to the end of the leg. That's as good as it gets, folks. Dip it in butter, drizzle it with lemon, and enjoy it for the nanosecond it lasts. It's all pretty much downhill from there.

Take each of the other legs, and one by one, use the same pinching method to ease any attached meat out of the crab carcass. Then, if anyone hasn't already fainted from starvation, break each of the tiny picker legs in half and suck out the minuscule bits of meat and juice, reserving the claw for last.

In order to avoid common claw cracking injuries, goggles, helmets, Kevlar vests and steel-toed boots are advised. Using the provided wooden mallet, viciously pound the claw at the center joint to break open the shell. Be advised that fragments might fly across the table and hit other guests, or crab juice might squirt into someone's hair. As long as no one is injured, firing crab shrapnel at your dinner guests is an acquired skill and should be considered part of the fun.

Once the claw meat has been extracted and eaten, repeat the aforementioned steps until all of the crabs have been picked. But don't forget the last thing to be picked — which place you're going to order pizza from when everyone complains they're still hungry.

www.meatandpotatoesoflife.com

Veterans News

VA enhances claim status tool for improved veteran experience

Veterans can now easily view their VA claim status online with the upgraded Claim Status Tool

The Veteran's Administration's Claim Status Tool allows veterans to quickly view the status of their VA claim, decision review or appeal online through VA.gov.

This free service allows veterans the flexibility to access and monitor their claim online or from their mobile device 24/7. Veterans can select the time of day that best suits their schedule.

To begin, simply create a secure, personal online account on VA.gov using the free Login.gov or ID.me services. You can also sign in your account with your existing Login.gov, ID.me, DS Logon, or MyHealthVet account.

Once online, you have instant access to view your claim, upload any required information and download available decision letters with-

out having to wait for a person to process your request.

Some new features include:

• **User-friendly interface:**



Photo courtesy of the VA.

Easier to navigate and find what you need.

• **Real-time notifications:** Get up-to-date information about your claim status instantly.

• **Mobile optimization:** Manage your claim on your phone or tablet, from anywhere.

• **Clearer information:** See your claim details presented more clearly, making it easier to understand the status and next steps.

This is one of several recent updates aimed to improve the digital self-service experience of the VA Claim Status Tool, making it easier to view and manage your VA claim and quickly locate the information you need online.

These updates are part of VA's commitment to provide Veterans with the best possible service and support.

Please visit the How to check your VA claim, appeal, or decision review status online page on VA.gov for step-by-step instructions on using the tool.

VA adds 3 new cancers to its PACT Act presumptive conditions list

The VA added three new cancer types to its list of service-connected disabilities presumed to be caused by military toxic exposure.

Presumptive service connection ensures VA automatically assumes a disease is service-connected, making the disability compensation claims process more seamless for vets. VA's move was done under the FRA-supported PACT Act, which created a framework that enables VA to further expand presumptive service connection benefits for toxic-exposed vets.

Before the PACT Act, VA's ability to establish presumptive conditions was slow, cumbersome, and often required Congressional action.

The cancers added to the list are male breast cancer, urethral cancer, and cancer of the paraurethral glands for eligible toxic-exposed Gulf War and Post-9/11 veterans deployed to Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, Djibouti, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Yemen, Uzbekistan, and the entire Southwest Asia theater of operations.

The PACT Act passed Congress

and was signed into law in 2022. This law provides health care for Post-9/11 combat veterans, expands VA's list of health conditions presumed to be caused by toxic exposures, opening the door to additional benefits for veterans, and improves resources to support claims processing.

Under this law, VA recently granted its one-millionth PACT Act disability claim. Toxic-exposed veterans and survivors can apply today for health care and benefits at VA.gov/PACT or by calling 1-800-MYVA411.

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R – Restricted under 17 requires accompanying parent or adult guardian.



SOCIAL SECURITY MATTERS

Minister wants to maximize Social Security benefit

Dear Rusty: I want to apply for Social Security, but I want to make sure I get all the benefits I have earned. I am a veteran with a 10% disability rating (not sure if that matters). I am 68 years old. I am a minister and have been exempt from Social Security taxes for most of my income since I was about 30, but I still have the 40 quarters needed. I have also worked off and on in the secular workplace and continued paying Social Security taxes.

One hears a great deal about those who want to “help” us apply for Social Security, but which turn out to be a scam or want a fee. How do I apply and maximize my benefits with my unique situation?

Signed: Seeking Answers

Dear Seeking: Don't worry about fees here at the AMAC Foundation – there is never a fee for the services we provide (we are non-profit). And I want to thank you for your military service - you may find the “For Veterans” section at our AMAC Foundation website interesting – www.amacfoundation.org.

To your question: Your VA disability rating does not affect your Social Security benefit. At 68 years old, your Social Security benefit payment has been earning Delayed Retirement Credits (DRCs) since you reached your full retirement age (FRA) of 66 years and 4 months in July 2022. That means that your benefit, if you claim now, will be about 13% more than it would have been had you claimed at your FRA. FYI, if you continue to delay, your SS benefit will continue to grow (by 8% per additional year you delay), up to the month you turn 70. At that time, your SS benefit will be 29% higher than it would have been at your FRA. Nevertheless, if you wish to claim a smaller amount now, you can do so in a couple of ways:

- You can call Social Security (at 1.800.772.1213, or your local SS office) to request an appointment to apply. They will most likely set a date/time to call you to take your application over the phone (they discourage office visits these days). Once you have applied, it typically takes a month or two to process your application, but they will pay your benefits effective with the month you say you want them to begin. Note, they will likely also offer you six months of retroactive benefits but be aware that if you accept that offer your monthly payment will be permanently reduced by 4%.

- You can apply for your SS retirement benefit online at www.ssa.gov/apply. Applying online is, by far, the most efficient method, as shown in this short video: www.ssa.gov/hlp/video/iclaim_r01.htm. However, to apply online you will need to first create your personal “my Social Security” online account at www.ssa.gov/myaccount. Once you have your personal online account set up, you will be able to see what your SS retirement benefit will be now, and at future ages should you plan to wait longer to claim. Your SS retirement benefit will be based on your lifetime record of earnings from which Social Security FICA taxes were withheld (or self-employment earnings on which SS payroll taxes were levied). In any case, your SS benefit will be based on your lifetime earnings record contributing to Social Security, as well as your age when you claim. You'll get your maximum benefit based on those factors.

Although your situation is somewhat uncommon, it is not exceptionally unique. Your VA disability rating does not affect your Social Security benefit and, because you are a member of the clergy, you are not subject to Social Security's Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) – a rule which reduces SS benefits for those with a pension earned while not contributing to Social Security. In other words, your SS benefit will be based entirely on your lifetime record of earnings from which Social Security payroll taxes were withheld, and your age when your benefit starts.

Visit our military museums

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

Active duty military, Museum Member, Children under 12: Free
Veterans/Seniors: \$4 • Adults: \$5 • Student ID: \$2
2115 Park Blvd, San Diego (Balboa Park) • (619) 239-2300
http://www.veteranmuseum.org/
Hours: Call for current hours (619) 239-2300

MCRD Command Museum & Historical Society. Museum focusing on Marine Corps history from the 19th century to today is also a research library. https://www.mcrdmuseum.org/
Free admission • The Pass and ID Center may issue day passes to visitors who wish to visit the museum and do not possess military ID-call (619) 524-4200 for information on base access.

1600 Hochmuth Ave, San Diego, 92140 • (619) 524-4426
Hours: Mon 8am-3pm, Tue-Fri 8-4; Family day 8-5:45; Sat 10:30-5, • Closed Sunday

Marine Corps Mechanized Museum Camp Pendleton. Managed under the auspices of Camp Pendleton's Museum Division Office, the collection of over 50 vehicles ranges from World War I to the first Gulf War. It includes Patton tanks, armored wheeled and tracked vehicles, trucks, jeeps and amphibious vehicles. When coming aboard Camp Pendleton, please ensure that you have a valid photo ID for every vehicle occupant along with current registration and proof of insurance. https://www.themecm.org/

24194 Vandegrift Blvd, Oceanside, CA 92058. (760) 725-5758
Mon-Thur 8am-4pm, Fri 8am-1pm, Closed Saturday & Sunday

USS Midway Museum. The USS Midway Museum is a maritime museum located in downtown San Diego at Navy Pier. The museum consists of the aircraft carrier Midway. The ship houses an extensive collection of aircraft, many of which were built in So Cal.

FREE-Children 5 & under, Active Duty military including reservists (w/ valid ID). Adult \$34 (ages 13+). Youth \$24 (ages 4-12). Veterans (w/ ID) \$24*Must show ID at entrance.
Open daily 10-5, last admission 4pm. https://www.midway.org/

The Ranch House Complex at Camp Pendleton. Listed as the Santa Margarita Ranch House Nat'l Historic Site and as a California State Historical Landmark. Docent-led tours are available by appointment; masks required. Please email your request to: MCBCCAMP-EN_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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Beyond basic blood tests: A window into your health

Blood courses through your body with every heartbeat. It carries life-giving oxygen to every organ. Blood also helps remove the waste products your body makes. Because it flows to and from every part of the body, blood can provide an important window into what's happening under the skin.

"So many biochemical compounds get absorbed from the tissues of the body into the blood. This makes the blood a really good place to look for hints of disease," says Dr. Lori Minasian, who helps oversee cancer prevention research at NIH.

Blood tests can help your health care provider diagnose diseases. They can also help them choose the best treatments for many health conditions. Commonly used blood tests look for compounds that signal an increased risk of heart disease. Other tests help diagnose diabetes, vitamin deficiencies, and many types of infections.

Blood tests have been helpful for preventing some common, dangerous health events, like heart attack and stroke. NIH-funded researchers are working to expand the number of health conditions that can be detected with a simple blood test. These include cancer, dementia, and other deadly diseases.

Tracking Cancer

Like normal cells in the body, cancer cells also come into regular contact with blood. This means that substances from tumors, like pieces of genes or even whole cancer cells, can get into the bloodstream.

Researchers have developed tests to look for such substances in the blood. These are called liquid biopsies. These tests are already used for some types of cancer to monitor whether a tumor comes back after treatment, Minasian says. Scientists are also looking at whether these tests can identify which tumors may need more aggressive treatment to prevent them from returning.

Blood tests might one day be used for cancer screening, too. Screening tests aim to catch cancer early—before symptoms develop. Cancers found early are often easier to treat. This can save lives.

Some cancer screening tests are already available through your doctor. These include mammograms for breast cancer and colonoscopy for colorectal cancer. But neither are as simple to do as a blood test.

Many types of cancer still don't have screening tests available. More than half of cancer deaths are from cancers that don't have screening tests yet. These include deadly cancers like ovarian cancer and pancreatic cancer.

"The idea that, with a single blood test, you could screen for many deadly cancer types, has huge potential," says Minasian.

The usefulness of blood tests for cancer screening is still in the early research stages. Right now, there's limited evidence for any benefits. Despite this, blood tests for cancer screening are marketed directly to consumers. People should be very careful about using these tests right now, Minasian cautions.

"There is not enough data to understand the full risks and benefits of using these blood tests for cancer screening," she says. "The results could lead to anxiety or may provide a sense of false

reassurance."

If you're concerned about your cancer risk, talk with a health care provider. They can help you stay up to date with proven screening tests.



Detecting Alzheimer's Disease

Like your body, your brain is full of blood vessels. So substances from injured brain cells can also enter your blood.

For decades, researchers have been trying to develop blood tests to help diagnose and better treat mental health conditions, explains Dr. John Hsiao, a psychiatrist at NIH. But, this has proven difficult.

Blood tests to determine whether someone is at risk for dementias are showing promise, Hsiao says. The proteins that damage brain cells in these conditions are now well understood. This means they can be measured.

The most common cause of dementia in older adults is Alzheimer's disease. Measuring Alzheimer's disease proteins currently requires a brain scan or collecting spinal fluid. These tests can be costly and aren't available in every community.

"But these abnormal proteins that build up in the brain also show up in the blood," says Dr. Reisa Sperling, a neurologist at Harvard Medical School. Blood tests for Alzheimer's have the potential to

be "cheap and easy," Hsiao adds.

Recent studies have shown that blood tests can detect early signs of Alzheimer's disease in the brain. So researchers are looking at whether they can use them to find and treat people with the disease early. They hope this could help prevent or slow the loss of brain cells.

"Studies so far suggest that our best chance at being able to delay the memory loss and other symptoms of Alzheimer's disease would be to treat very early," Sperling says. But she does not recommend people without symptoms get blood tests done outside of studies just yet.

Some blood tests that claim to detect Alzheimer's disease are being advertised to the public. But they are not yet FDA approved. Sperling warns that some of these tests may not be as accurate as those being used by researchers.

If you're concerned about your risk for dementia, Sperling recommends joining a clinical study. "There are great research trials for people to go into, and they will use the best blood tests available," she says. Learn more at Alzheimer's Disease Research

Centers or Alzheimer's Clinical Trials Consortium.

Hsiao says.

Stay Up To Date

It may be a while before a blood draw at your local clinic can find diseases like cancer or dementia. But keeping up with current blood tests can help you get early treatment for other potentially life-threatening problems. See the Ask Your Doctor box for more.

Ask Your Doctor

What blood tests do I need?



Depending on your age and other factors, your health care provider may order tests that measure:

- Blood glucose (sugar): To help diagnose diabetes or see whether you're at risk for diabetes.
- Blood lipids (fats): To assess your risk for heart disease and related conditions. These tests measure levels of lipids called cholesterol and triglycerides.
- Blood cell counts: To help diagnose many diseases, including infections, cancer, and bleeding disorders. These tests measure the types of cells that carry oxygen and fight diseases.
- Organ function: To make sure organs like your liver, kidneys, and heart are working properly.
- Specific blood-borne diseases: To look for diseases like HIV and hepatitis C, which may not cause symptoms until after they've started to damage the body.
- Vitamin deficiencies: To measure levels of vitamins in the body. These aren't usually recommended for healthy people. But if you have symptoms of some health conditions, your doctor may order tests to look for low levels of some vitamins.

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