

ARMED FORCES DISPATCH

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 Serving active duty and retired military personnel, veterans and civil service employees



SIXTY-FIFTH YEAR NO. 39
 MARCH 8, 2026



POST-FLIGHT CHECK Marines assigned to Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron 163, 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit, and Sailors assigned to USS Boxer amphibious assault ship conduct post-flight checks on an AH-1Z Viper on the ship's flight deck in the U.S. 3rd Fleet area of responsibility, Feb. 24, 2026. U.S. Navy photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Normand Basque

Sheriff's office, NCIS operation ends with 10 arrests

On Feb. 24, the San Diego County Sheriff's Office and Naval Criminal Investigative Service (NCIS) conducted a joint operation and arrested 10 suspects wanted in connection with a violent assault that took place in Jamul in 2025, according to a release by the sheriff's office.

On May 3, 2025, deputies from the Rancho San Diego Sheriff's Station responded to a report of an assault at a house party on Proctor Valley Road. While deputies were responding to this incident, the Sheriff's Communications Center received further information stating the suspects were carrying firearms and that one of the assault victims was seeking medical assistance at a nearby fire station.

Deputies responded to the fire station and contacted the victim, who was bleeding profusely from their head and face. The victim told deputies they were assaulted by a group of people and pistol whipped with a gun. The victim was taken to a hospital with major injuries.

During the ensuing investigation, it was determined nine of the 10 suspects involved in the 2025 assault were enlisted in the Navy. Many of these suspects were also associated with criminal street gangs.

Sheriff's Detectives contacted NCIS, which worked with the Sheriff's Office throughout the investigation.

During the February 24 joint operation with NCIS, detectives from the sheriff's office, as well as members of the East County Gang Task Force, San Diego Fugitive Task Force and Sheriff's Special Enforcement Detail made arrests at NAS North Island, Naval Base San Diego, Naval Medical Center San Diego, Naval Weapons Station Seal Beach and a home within the city of San Diego.

Five firearms and \$20,000 in cash were also recovered during the operation.

The 10 suspects were arrested on several felony charges related to the assault and weapons possession. They were all booked into the San Diego Central Jail. They are Ksahno Isles, Demario Ricks, Isaiah Pearson, Answer Adams, Lawrence Hodge, Jaharai Wiggins, Robert Green, Gary Cannon, Eric Frierson, and Timothy Blair.

<https://www.sdsheriff.gov/Home/Components/News/News/4031/514>

Navy chief turns artist, exhibit at Liberty Station

Joseph Pisano, a Navy chief petty officer, is currently presenting an exhibit at Liberty Station, called "The Art of Immortalizing Heroes." This memorial was inspired by 94 veterans returning from a trip to Washington, D.C., to visit the war memorials in their respective honor. Upon receiving these veterans in the San Diego airport along with hundreds of San Diegans, Pisano felt moved to create a memorial for those veterans who couldn't make a trip to D.C. Pisano is a San Diego-based artist who enlisted in the Navy Reserves in September 1999. He served over 22 years supporting The Global War on Terrorism. Refer to <https://libertystation.com/events/centennial/>.

Task Force Ashland, USS Ashland arrive in Thailand for Exercise Cobra Gold 2026

CHUK SAMET, Thailand - Task Force Ashland, a forward-deployed force of U.S. Marines and Sailors aboard dock landing ship USS Ashland, recently arrived here to join approximately 8,000 service members from 30 nations for the 45th iteration of Exercise Cobra Gold. Co-sponsored by the Royal Thai Armed Forces and U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, Cobra Gold is the largest joint military exercise in mainland Asia. It brings together a robust multinational force to enhance interoperability and strengthen relationships in support of a free and open Indo-Pacific.

HEGSETH SAYS 'EPIC FURY' GOALS IN IRAN ARE 'LASER-FOCUSED'

by C. Todd Lopez, Pentagon News
 Since early morning Feb. 28, American forces in the U.S. Central Command area of operations have been involved in an intense bombing campaign against Iran that has already resulted in the death of Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

and military airfields.

Secretary of War Pete Hegseth said that while there is no timeline for the military operation, there are clearly defined goals for what the United States hopes to achieve.

"The mission of Operation Epic Fury is laser-focused,"

press briefing at the Pentagon. "Destroy Iranian offensive missiles, destroy Iranian missile production, destroy their navy and other security infrastructure, and they will never have nuclear weapons."

For decades, Iran has been in pursuit of a nuclear weapons capability, through both enrichment of weapons-grade nuclear material and development of missiles that can carry a nuclear warhead.

In June 2025, during Operation Midnight Hammer, the United States struck Iran's Fordow Fuel Enrichment Plant using 30,000-pound GBU-57 "massive ordnance penetrator" bombs. That operation, Hegseth said, obliterated Iran's nuclear program.

Nevertheless, Hegseth said, the Iranians have persisted in

pursuing a nuclear capability and in building conventional capabilities to protect their nuclear ambitions.

"Iran was building powerful missiles and drones to create a conventional shield for their nuclear blackmail ambitions," he said. "Our bases, our people, our allies, all in their crosshairs — Iran had a conventional gun to our head as they tried to lie their way to a nuclear bomb."

The secretary said the clear goals for Epic Fury mean it will be unlike past American conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan.

"Our ambitions are not utopian; they are realistic, scoped to our interests and the defense of our people and our allies," he said. "This is not Iraq. This is not endless. ... This is the opposite. This operation [has] a

see **Epic Fury**, page 4

As part of Operation Epic

Fury, American forces have already targeted the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps command and control facilities, Iranian air defense capabilities, missile and drone launch sites



Destroyer USS Spruance fires a Tomahawk missile in support of Operation Epic Fury. U.S. Navy photo

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IN BRIEF: U.S. CENTRAL COMMAND'S TIMELINE LEADING UP TO THE ATTACK ON IRAN

In a compilation of news releases from U.S. Central Command since January 2026, the following is a timeline of actions leading up to the Feb. 28 air attacks against the Iranian regime by the United States and Israel.

January 21: U.S. Forces launch mission in Syria to transfer ISIS detainees to Iraq, to help ensure the terrorists remain in secure detention facilities.

February 4: Central Command conducted five strikes against multiple ISIS targets across Syria as partner forces continue to apply military pressure to ensure the enduring defeat of the terrorist network

February 7: The commander of CENTCOM visited USS *Abraham Lincoln* (CVN 72), as it transited the Arabian Sea during a scheduled deployment. Adm. Brad Cooper visited crew members aboard the nuclear-powered aircraft carrier with U.S. Special Envoy for Peace Missions Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner. Cooper expressed his gratitude for their service.

February 12: CENTCOM completed the orderly departure of U.S. forces from al-Tanf Garrison in Syria on

Feb. 11 as part of a deliberate and conditions-based transition by Combined Joint Task Force – Operation Inherent Resolve (CJTF-OIR).

February 13: U.S. forces completes mission in north-eastern Syria to transfer ISIS detainees to Iraq to help ensure ISIS detainees remain secure in detention facilities.

February 14: CENTCOM forces conducted 10 strikes against more than 30 ISIS targets in Syria Feb. 3 – 12 to sustain relentless military pressure on remnants from the terrorist network. U.S. forces struck ISIS infrastructure and weapons storage targets with precision munitions delivered by fixed-wing, rotary-wing, and unmanned aircraft.

February 28: U.S. forces commenced Operation Epic Fury at the direction of the President of the United States. U.S. and partner forces began striking targets at 10:15 p.m. PT to dismantle the Iranian regime's security apparatus, prioritizing locations that posed an imminent threat. Targets included Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps command and control facilities, Iranian air defense capabilities, missile and drone launch sites, and military airfields.

March 1: At 8:03 p.m. PT, three U.S. F-15E Strike Eagles flying in support of Operation Epic Fury went down over Kuwait due to an apparent friendly fire incident. During

Trump cites Iran's 'intolerable threat' and lays out attack's objectives

President Trump said March 2 that Iran's growth of its ballistic missile program, plus its resumption of trying to build a nuclear weapon, warranted the U.S. and Israeli attacks that began Saturday and took out the nation's supreme leader.

active combat—that included attacks from Iranian aircraft, ballistic missiles, and drones — the U.S. Air Force fighter jets were mistakenly shot down by Kuwaiti air defenses. All six

“An Iranian regime armed with long-range missiles and nuclear weapons would be an intolerable threat to the Middle East, but also to the American people,” he said at the start of a Medal of Honor event at the White House.

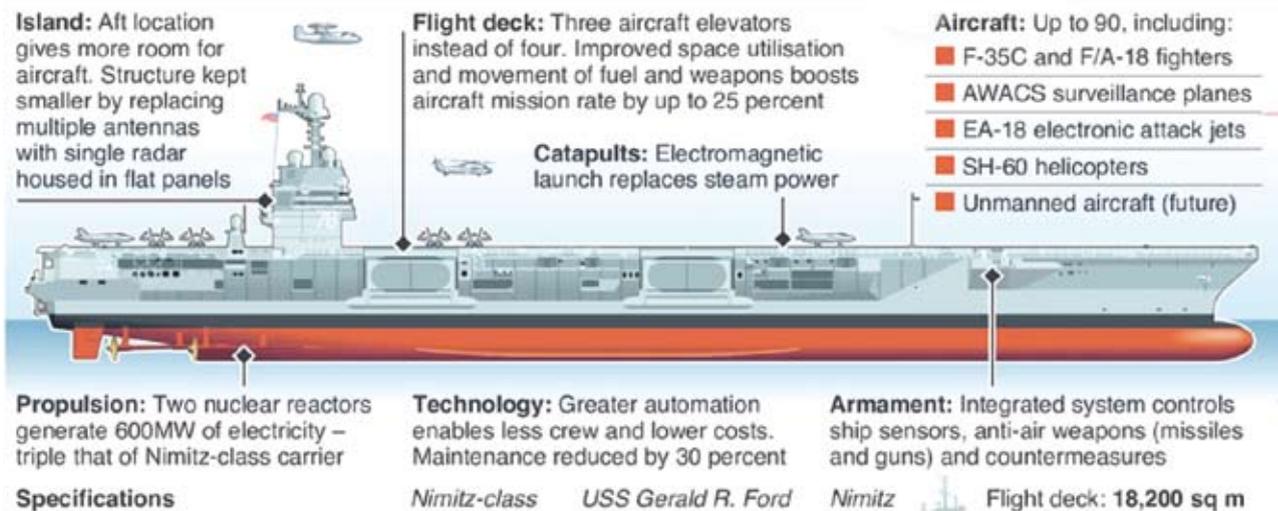
aircrew ejected safely, have been safely recovered, and are in stable condition. Kuwait has acknowledged this incident, and we are grateful for the efforts of the Kuwaiti defense

He laid out the objectives, including eliminating Iran's missile capability, “annihilating” its navy, ensuring Iran would not get a nuclear weapon and “that the Iranian regime cannot continue to arm, fund and direct terrorist armies outside of their borders.”

forces and their support in this ongoing operation. The cause of the incident is under investigation. Additional information will be released as it becomes available.

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth and Joint Chiefs Chair Gen. Dan Caine briefed reporters early on March 2 on the operation, which has now claimed the lives of six U.S. service members and injured more than a dozen.

ANATOMY OF AN AIRCRAFT CARRIER



The Pentagon deployed USS *Gerald R. Ford* to the Middle East Feb. 20, creating a rare two-carrier presence in the region. *Ford* reinforced USS *Abraham Lincoln* already operating in the theater, significantly expanding American airpower at a moment of heightened regional uncertainty.

***Did you know:** ♦ Aircraft carriers serve four meals a day to accommodate 24-hour, round-the-clock operations for their 5,000+ crew members. The galley provides breakfast, lunch, and dinner, plus a crucial fourth meal called Midrats (midnight rations) for Sailors and, in some cases, Marines working night shifts. Overall, the crew prepares roughly 17,000 to 18,000 meals daily. ♦ Modern nuclear-powered aircraft carriers (such as *Nimitz* and *Gerald R. Ford* classes) can produce approximately 400,000 gallons (million liters) of fresh water daily. This massive output, achieved via on board desalination plants using nuclear energy, supports the crew's daily drinking, cooking, and sanitation needs. ♦ A modern, nuclear-powered aircraft carrier (such as *Nimitz*-class) can complete a 180-degree turn in approximately 3 to 5 minutes during tactical or emergency situations. While normal, comfortable maneuvers for the crew might take up to 10 minutes to avoid excessive tilting (heeling), the ship is highly maneuverable and can execute tight, rapid turns even at high speeds. ♦ Aircraft carriers typically accommodate 3,000 to over 5,000 personnel, with junior enlisted Sailors and Marines assigned to cramped berthing compartments holding 40 to 180+ people - males and females, separate spaces - in triple or quadruple-stacked bunks. These, often called racks, are situated deep inside the ship, are crowded, and often operate on a rotational basis.

*Sources: Navy Fact File and numerous online references

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Inside Air Force's response to emerging threats in the homeland

by Thomas Brading

USAF Office of Special Investigations

QUANTICO, Va. (AFNS) - On paper, it was a minor case involving a man accused of taking photographs outside of Whiteman Air Force Base, Missouri, but inside the Air Force Office of Special Investigations, the encounter reflects how potential warning signs are emerging, not overseas, but at home.

"For our special agents, this isn't about a single case," said Col. David Bethel, commander of AFOSI Region 8. "It's about recognizing the operating environment has changed. Our investigators and analysts are adjusting how they engage so we can stay ahead of emerging threats and hold our adversaries accountable."

Bethel said for much of the past two decades, the most urgent threats were across the world, in deployed environments where threats were usually unmistakable.

"The question we have to ask is what does the adversary value most, what are they trying to learn and access?" he said.

For AFOSI leaders, those

questions are not abstract. They have surfaced stateside, including one in early Dec. 2025 at Whiteman AFB.

The fence line

Whiteman AFB is the only operational home of the B-2 Spirit, an aircraft designed to be difficult to detect, and it's where late last year, Qilin Wu, a Chinese national was in a minivan with Massachusetts license plates and spotted lingering near the base perimeter with his camera.

That's where Defenders from the 509th Security Forces Squadron warned him not to take photographs. However, he returned the next day, and when AFOSI Det. 811 got involved and discovered Wu had taken images and videos of the base.

"What made this different was the pattern of behavior," said a senior AFOSI official involved in the investigation. "He wasn't photographing the perimeter and infrastructure, and he returned after being warned."

They added the most difficult work began after the initial encounter.

"The challenge isn't identifying suspicious activity," they said. "It's often the legal work required to bring a case forward responsibly."

Later, Wu admitted he photographed aircraft and installations at other U.S. bases in previous months, including in Florida and Virginia. Court records add he entered the United States illegally in 2023 and was awaiting immigration proceedings when the Whiteman AFB encounter occurred.

Wu was charged under a federal statute with unlawfully photographing a vital military installation. He is presumed innocent, and if convicted, he could face up to one year in prison.

"This wasn't isolated," said a special agent involved in the investigation. "We've seen

multiple situations like this near installations over a short period. Each case has sharpened how we



document, how we coordinate and how we approach these situations."

Officials said applying decades-old authorities to modern national security threats has required investigators to strike a careful balance.

"There's a real gray zone between an aviation enthusiast and someone deliberately collecting information," they added. "Our responsibility is to sort that out carefully and avoid overreach while still protecting the mission."

'The Raider Triad'

Interestingly Det. 811's response wasn't limited to Whiteman AFB.

Det. 811 is part of what has been dubbed "The Raider Triad," which is a close working relationship among AFOSI detachments at Whiteman AFB, Dyess Air Force Base, Texas, and Ellsworth Air Force Base, South Dakota -- the three installations scheduled to anchor the new B-21 Raider bomber enterprise.

Major infrastructure projects are underway at all three bases, with Ellsworth AFB slated to be the first to receive operational B-21 aircraft. The B-21, a next-generation stealth bomber designed to carry both conventional and nuclear weapons, is expected to form the backbone of the Department of the Air Force's future bomber force.

Within that environment, incidents like the one at Whiteman AFB are treated less as isolated events and more as case studies of an accelerating trend, officials said, not because the details are identical, but because the pattern is instructive.

"We really prioritize early, direct communication between

detachments," said a senior official from AFOSI Det. 816 at Ellsworth AFB. "That's how Region 8 operates, and it's how I stay closely connected with my counterparts."

Region 8, led by Bethel, includes several states in the central U.S., including Missouri, Texas and South Dakota, where AFOSI detachments support major DAF missions and information moves quickly between the region's detachments.

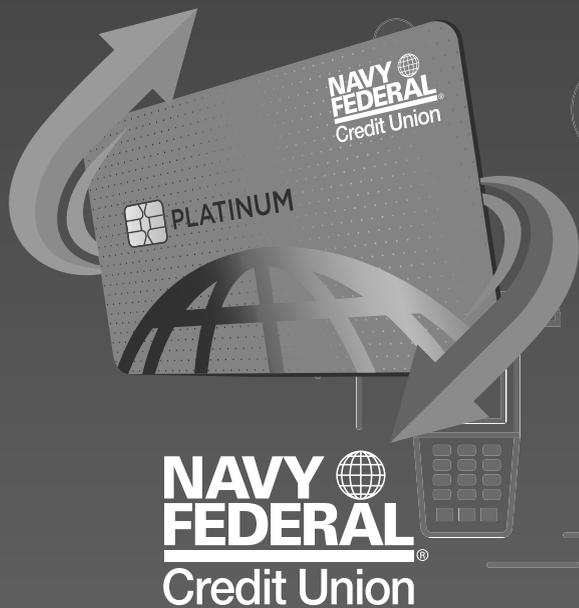
"I got the information early, and I knew what to ask and what to look for," one Special Agent said. "We didn't wait for formal channels. We shared it immediately."

New kinds of threat

Wu's case did not unfold overseas or on a distant battlefield. It did not happen inside a classified facility, either. It unfolded along a fence line beside a rural highway in the American Midwest, and that geography, Bethel said, is part of the bigger picture.

"This isn't the model many of us grew up in professionally," he said. "For a long time, we assumed distance gave us
see **Air Force**, page 4

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Epic Fury
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clear, devastating, decisive mission: destroy the missile threat, destroy the navy, no nukes.”

Hegseth said Epic Fury doesn't include nation-building or democracy building goals.

Air Force Gen. Dan Caine, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said planning for an operation such as Epic Fury has been underway for a significant amount of time.

“This marked the culmination of months, and in some cases, years, of deliberate planning and refinement against this particular target set,” Caine said. “From precision strikes against key military infrastructure to persistent intelligence and targeting integration to the close coordination of the components across vast distances, this operation again demonstrated America's reach, readiness and professionalism, and that of our joint united force.”

Over the last 30 days, at the direction of the secretary, Caine said, the joint force repositioned forces around the region in order to provide President Donald J. Trump with options, if he intended to act.

“These movements ensured that U.S. forces remained postured, protected and ready to respond decisively [to] any emerging threat,” he said.

That effort included thousands of service members, hundreds of advanced fighter aircraft, refueling tankers, a sustained flow of munitions, fuel and supplies, and USS *Abraham Lincoln* and USS *Gerald R. Ford* carrier strike groups, along with their air wings. More capabilities continue to flow into the region, Caine said.

“This rapid buildup of forces demonstrated the joint force's ability to adapt and project

power at the time and place of our nation's choosing,” Caine said.

The final word that Epic Fury was going to happen, he added, came from the president, Feb. 27, in the afternoon.

“Operation Epic Fury approved. No aborts. Good luck,” Caine said, relaying the message from the president.

“In the region, every element of the joint force made their final preparations,” he said. “Air defense batteries readied themselves, checking their systems to



respond to Iranian attacks. Pilots and crews rehearsed their strike packages for the final time. Aircrews began loading their final weapons, and two carrier strike groups began to move towards their launching points across the globe.”

U.S. Cyber Command and U.S. Space Command, he said, initiated action with non-kinetic effects to disable Iran's communications ability. And then, at 10:15 a.m. PST, 9:45 a.m. Tehran time, Epic Fury kicked off.

“More than 100 aircraft launched from land and sea: fighters, tankers, airborne early warning, electronic attack, bombers from the states and unmanned platforms forming a single synchronized wave,” he said. “This was a daylight strike based on a trigger event conducted by the Israeli Defense Forces, enabled by the U.S. intelligence community.”

On the sea, the Navy launched Tomahawk missiles at Iran and attacked Iranian naval forces. While on the ground, he said, coordinated salvos of precision standoff weapons from across the re-

gion neutralized hundreds of preplanned targets.

“This was a massive, overwhelming attack across all domains of warfare, striking more than 1,000 targets in the first 24 hours,” Caine said. “We are now roughly 57 hours into the operation. In the initial phase, Centcom's focus was systematic, targeting of Iranian command and control, infrastructure, naval forces, ballistic missile sites and intelligence infrastructure — designed to daze and confuse them.”

As a result of strikes in Iran, Caine said the U.S. has established local air superiority, which enhances the ability to protect U.S. forces and allows them to continue operations there.

“Operation Epic Fury stands as a reminder of what the United States military uniquely delivers: the ability to project power on a global scale with speed, surprise, precision and overwhelming force, when and where our nation requires it,” Caine said. “What we've demonstrated over the past several days reflects years of investment in readiness, joint integration and professionalism of the joint force.”

During the briefing, Hegseth also directly addressed U.S. troops who are participating in Epic Fury, telling them that both he and the president have their backs.

“We will finish this on ‘America First’ conditions of President Trump's choosing — nobody else's — as it should be,” Hegseth said. “And know this above all, President Trump and I have your back, always. Through fire, through criticism, through fake news, through everything, we unleash you because you are the best, most powerful, most lethal fighting force the world has ever seen.”

<https://www.war.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/4418826/hegseth-says-epic-fury-goals-in-iran-are-laser-focused/>

Air Force
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protection. That assumption no longer holds.”

The mission hasn't changed, but the location has, he said. The homeland must now be understood as a space where adversaries try to operate in ways that are incremental, persistent and deliberate.

In other words, “the homeland

is not a sanctuary,” Bethel said. “The adversary is here and operating. That can take many forms. From testing how we respond, to probing where boundaries are or gathering information in subtle or even overt ways.

“When you step back” he said, “those individual incidents look less like one-offs and more like a pattern of adversary actions.

“When our teams share early,

when they're candid about what worked and what didn't, the whole enterprise gets stronger,” Bethel said. “Region 8 is building a culture that recognizes the environment as it is and prepares our people to operate effectively within it to counter our adversaries.”

Editor's note: Several AFOSI officials were not identified due to the sensitive nature of their investigative responsibilities.



Top 5

- VA to formally rescind controversial disability ratings rule
- What to know about Defense Protection Act and the Pentagon's Anthropropic ultimatum
- U.S. Soldiers earn French medal for 2023 Iraq rescue
- U.S. military assembles largest force of warships, aircraft in Middle East in decades
- Hill added \$34 billion in unrequested defense program funds

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- Army boots West Point cadet for extorting woman with AI-generated nude images
- 6 years after Fort Hood Soldier was found dead in a field, 2 men have been arrested and charged with murder

Navy

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- Marines remain the few, the proud, the skinny under new standards
- U.S. Marines storm Thai beach with allies in first major Cobra Gold drill

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- Former Air Force pilot charged with unauthorized Chinese military training

Space Force

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- China's growing armada of spy satellites is pushing Space Force to go on the offensive

Cyber, Space & Unmanned

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- SOCOM on the hunt for 'acoustic rainbow' tech for silencing drones

Defense Industry

- Army orders \$186 million in Switchblade kamikaze drones, tank killers
- Once-reluctant Germany goes big on one-way attack drones
- Leonardo to set up aerostructures joint venture by mid-year

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AIR FORCE MODERNIZES PHYSICAL FITNESS PROGRAM TO BOLSTER READINESS, LONG-TERM HEALTH

from Secretary of the Air Force
Public Affairs

ARLINGTON, Va. - The Air Force announced an update to its Physical Fitness Readiness Program (PFRP) in a Directive Type Memorandum introducing new standards and scoring models designed to better align with the demands of modern warfare and promote the long-term health of every Airman.

The modernized program is anchored in scientifically grounded health measures and a more rigorous assessment model. The goal is to enhance warfighter readiness by encouraging Airmen to build durable fitness habits that support sustained, career-long performance.

“Our new standards are designed to help Airmen build fitness habits that will serve them throughout their careers and hopefully a long life,” said Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Ken Wilsbach. “This update is not just about increasing the physical fitness test standards; it’s about ensuring our warfighters are fit, ready, and prioritizing their long-term health.”

In conjunction with the updated program, score charts have been updated with increased minimums for each scored component, as well as separate charts now available for Occupationally Specific Physical Fitness Assessments. These adjustments are intentional and directly align with the program’s renewed emphasis on long-term health, readiness, and overall warfighter effectiveness.

To ensure a smooth transition, the Air Force will implement a baseline window for Airmen to take diagnostic tests starting March 1, 2026. This period is designed to give Airmen time to understand the new standards, assess their current performance against the updated charts, and adjust their training focus before scoring becomes official on July 1, 2026. The baseline period will

also provide the data required to assess and refine score charts in advance of full implementation of the new standards. Airmen who complete the Physical Fitness Readiness Assessment (PFRA) during the baseline period may elect to record their diagnostic test score as an official fitness test score. This may be especially beneficial for Airmen in cold-weather locations who wish to align their next due-date to a time when weather is more conducive to outdoor testing in their region.

Airmen may reference the PFRA Due Date Matrix on MyFSS in the Knowledge Base application to learn more about testing timelines.

Body composition will return as a scored component assessed in the PFRA. Airmen may elect to take this component of the test up to five duty days before assessing the remaining PFRA components.

Airmen and commanders are encouraged to make full use of diagnostic testing during this baseline period. This phase will provide valuable data to ensure the updated PFRP is implemented in a manner that is fair, accurate, and effective across the force. To support the force through this transition, a robust set of resources will be available:

- *Master Fitness Leaders:* These trained experts will be available at installations to guide unit-level Peer Fitness Leaders and Airmen through safe and effective conditioning, reconditioning, and adaptive fitness programs.

- *The Warfighter Fitness Playbook:* This guide offers detailed guidance on workouts, recovery strategies, sleep optimization, and nutrition—all interconnected elements essential for sustained performance.

- *The Pregnancy & Postpartum Performance Training Guide:* To ensure comprehensive support for all Airmen, this guide provides tailored physical training and wellness

recommendations for pregnant and postpartum Airmen.

The certification of the 2-mile run tracks to ensure all Air Force tracks meet official standards is in progress. Final guidance on measurement specifications (e.g. meters, feet, yards, etc.) will be published in AFMAN 36-2905.

“Airmen are the heart of the Air Force, and their readiness is essential to mission success,” said Chief Master Sgt. of the Air Force David R. Wolfe. “Our new standards are designed to prepare them for the demands of today and the future fight. They give every one of our Airmen an opportunity to grow in an important part of their lives.”

Additionally, as previously announced, PFRA scores will become part of an Airman’s annual evaluation to incorporate a full picture of an individual’s performance and contributions. Official guidance in AFI 36-2406 released this



Air Force Airmen and special warfare recruits participate in physical training during Exercise Bolt and Dagger at Nellis AFB, Nevada, Dec. 16, 2025. The three-day exercise incorporates physical fitness as one of several foundational components that prepare Airmen for the demands of the Tactical Air Control Party mission and overall readiness. U.S. Air Force photo by William R. Lewis

week for implementation. This evolution of the fitness program represents a deliberate investment in the force, ensuring that Airmen are not only prepared for the challenges of today, but are also physically sustained for a long and healthy career.

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Armed Forces Dispatch

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Steel wings, enduring leadership: 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing welcomes new boss

by 1st Lt. Brandon Daniels
3rd Marine Aircraft Wing

MCAS MIRAMAR - "Today is not about a commander, it's certainly not about me... it's about honoring a legacy of the most powerful Marine Aircraft Wing on the planet, and the Marines and Sailors that carry that legacy forward everyday" said Maj. Gen. James B. Wellons during his last remarks as the commanding general of 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing.

Wellons relinquished command of 3rd MAW during a change of command ceremony here in late February, formally transferring responsibility of the Aviation Combat Element of I Marine Expeditionary Force to Brig. Gen. Robert B. Brodie.

Marines, Sailors, civilian professionals and guests gathered to witness the passing of the organizational colors that marked more than a transfer of authority, it reflected the continuity of leadership and the enduring

trust placed in each commanding general to lead Marines and Sailors in defense of the nation. Since assuming command in July 2024, Wellons led the wing under consistent emphasis on people, standards and readiness. That focus shaped not only how 3rd MAW operated, but how it prepared for the demands of an increasingly complex security environment.

Under his leadership, 3rd MAW sustained combat-ready aviation forces capable of global deployment while refining its ability to operate from sea-based and expeditionary locations alike. Fixed-wing, rotary-wing and tiltrotor platforms projected power across multiple theaters, supporting carrier strike group operations, multinational exercises and homeland defense missions without pause.

Among other events, the wing played a central role in the Marine Corps 250th Birthday Amphibious Capabilities Demonstration, integrating aviation into a large-scale display of Marine Air-Ground Task Force lethality

and amphibious integration.

"It has been an absolute masterclass in general officer-level operating force command," said Lt. Gen. Christian F. Wortman, commanding general of IMEF. "3rd MAW has delivered ready units where our nation needs them on time and time again, to meet the moment, to meet our most consequential responsibilities."

Brodie assumes command following his previous assignment as deputy commanding general, III Marine Expeditionary Force and as the commanding general, 3d Marine Expeditionary Brigade in Okinawa. He returns to lead 3rd MAW as it provides combat-ready, expeditionary aviation forces capable of deploying worldwide in support of Marine Corps, joint and allied operations.

"I promise you sir, that I will do everything I can do to carry on the legacy that you have set for all of these Marines," said Brodie.

see photo, next page

USS Santa Barbara uses LUCAS drone in combat in attack against Iran

An unmanned "suicide" drone that was initially tested by a San Diego warship in December was used in combat for the first time Feb. 28 during the U.S.-Israel attack on Iran, according to the *San Diego Union Tribune*.

In the story by Gary Robbins, littoral combat ship *Santa Barbara* test flew the Low Cost Unmanned Combat Attack System (LUCAS) one-way drone while on deployment in the Persian Gulf, where the vessel is still operating. Central Command did not say how many of the \$35,000 drones were used, or which ship or ships launched them. But it indicated that the drones were used to strike command and control facilities in Iran. The attack represented a moment of irony; the LUCAS drones were reversed engineered from Iran's Shahed-136 drones.

The assault also highlights the Navy's rapid push to develop a variety of unmanned systems, including the unmanned surface vessel ships it has begun to station in San Diego.



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HAPPY HUG Marine Corps Lance Cpl. Joaquin Rios with Echo Company, 2nd Recruit Training Battalion is greeted by a guest after a graduation ceremony at Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego, Feb. 27, 2026. This ceremony marked the end of a 13-week transformation that included training in drill, marksmanship, basic combat skills, and Marine Corps customs and traditions. U.S. Marine Corps photo by Lance Cpl. Kevin Alonso



VIEW FROM ABOVE Sailors prepare to stage ordnance on the flight deck of *Abraham Lincoln* aircraft carrier in support of Operation Epic Fury Feb. 28, 2026. U.S. Navy photo



HANGING OUT A service dog lays near its owner during the sitting volleyball competition of the 2026 Marine Corps Air Force Trials, hosted on Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Feb. 28, 2026. The Trials bring together wounded, ill, and injured Marines, Airmen, and Guardians, as well as international partners from the United Kingdom, and Ukraine, to compete in adaptive sports and strengthen community through performance-based recovery. U.S. Marine Corps photo by Cpl. Anthony C. Ramsey, Jr.

Navy establishes first West Coast information warfare squadron

CORONADO – Information Warfare Squadron (IWRON) Nine, the second squadron of its kind and the first on the West Coast, was established, Feb. 27.

This marks the continuation of a paradigm shift in how the Navy is operationalizing Information Warfare (IW) to provide a decisive advantage to carrier strike group commanders. The establishment of IWRON 9 follows the stand-up of the East Coast pilot squadron, IWRON Two, in December 2025.

“This is a pivotal moment in our journey to operationalize Information Warfare,” said Vice Adm. Mike Vernazza, commander, Naval Information Forces. “Why are we doing this? The answer is simple: the proliferation of technology and the global evolution of threats is not standing still. The pacing threats we face are increasingly complex, sophisticated, and integrated. They understand the power of information, and they are actively seeking to exploit our vulnerabilities from seabed to space. To maintain our warfighting edge, we must think, act, and operate differently. We must evolve.”

MCAS MIRAMAR (Feb. 27, 2026) Maj. Gen. James B. Wellons, right, the outgoing commanding general of 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing, passes the unit colors to Brig. Gen. Robert B. Brodie, the incoming commanding general, during a change of command ceremony here. The ceremony marked the transfer of command

from Wellons to Brodie. Under the command of Wellons, the Wing operated across five geographic combatant commands and logged nearly half of all active-duty flight hours while maintaining the lowest mishap rate among like formations. U.S. Marine Corps photo by Sgt. Renee Gray



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Seminar strengthens fleet food service readiness

by Frank Valdez

SAN DIEGO - Naval Supply Systems Command (NAVSUP) Fleet Logistics Center San Diego's (FLCSD) Navy Food Management Team recently hosted the SUPPO/FSO/Leading CS Seminar at Mercer Hall Galley, delivering focused training designed to strengthen food service execution as well as readiness across the Fleet.

The two-day seminar brought together Supply Officers, Food Service Officers, and Leading Culinary Specialists for a concentrated forum addressing the technical, procedural, and leadership challenges that directly shape food service outcomes afloat.

The event emphasized current guidance, inspection, and assessment expectations, operational best practices, and practical tools that translate standards into measurable performance aboard ships.

Food service plays a key role in Sailor health, morale, and mission readiness. The seminar reinforced this connection by aligning participants with the Navy Food Management Team's expectations and inspection criteria, clarifying evaluation processes, and supporting accountability at the deckplate level.

Attendees gained actionable insights to better prepare their commands for assessments while maintaining compliance through daily execution.

Operational best practices were a central focus, notably in areas that consistently drive results. Discussions reinforced sound Basic Allowance for Subsistence execution and menu planning practices that support healthier, higher-quality meals while preserving consistency and discipline. These fundamentals underline the importance of leadership involvement and attention to detail in sustaining



Jade Metz, NAVSUP FLC San Diego Food Service Management Analyst, presented to attendees at the SUPPO/FSO/Leading CS Seminar. Photo by Chief Warrant Officer 5 Rolando Abad, Jr.

strong galley operations.

The seminar also emphasized financial stewardship and inventory discipline as core elements of successful food service programs. Participants reviewed methods to strengthen controls, improve accountability, and responsibly manage resources, ensuring galleys remain resilient and able to support operational demands.

Collaboration appeared as another key theme. The seminar illustrated the value of strong relationships among shipboard teams, NAVSUP, Regional Operations Networks, and supporting stakeholders. Effective coordination and common understanding across these organizations enable consistent execution and timely problem-solving in dynamic environments.

The seminar's combined impact extended beyond technical proficiency. By investing in leader development and reinforcing expectations, the training directly supported improved Sailor experience and morale, with clear ramifications for readiness and endurance across the Fleet.

"Our objective was to deliver a training designed to empower

Food Service Officers and Culinary Specialists with practical tools, to sharpen their awareness of policy and procedural requirements, and to promote proven leadership practices across the fleet to effectively manage food service operations in complex operational environments," said Chief Warrant Officer 5 Rolando "Jojo" Abad, NAVSUP FLCSD Director, Navy Food Management Team. "We are confident this seminar accomplished those goals."

"Our culinary teams are on the front lines of sustaining our most critical asset, our Sailors," said Cmdr. Hisham Semaan, NAVSUP FLCSD's Director of Fleet Operations.

"This seminar provided an invaluable forum to arm our leaders with the tools to elevate everything from menu quality to financial discipline. The result is a direct, positive impact on Sailor morale, which is the bedrock of our Fleet's readiness and warfighting advantage."

Attendees returned to their commands prepared to elevate Sailor care, improve readiness, and sustain the Surface Force as the benchmark for world-class food service.

Three U.S. F-15s involved in friendly fire incident in Kuwait; Pilots safe

from USCENTCOM

TAMPA, Fla. — At 8:03 p.m. PST, March 1, three U.S. F-15E Strike Eagles flying in support of Operation Epic Fury went down over Kuwait due to an apparent friendly fire incident.

During active combat—that included attacks from Iranian aircraft, ballistic missiles, and drones — the U.S. Air Force fighter jets were mistakenly shot down by Kuwaiti air defenses.

All six aircrew ejected safely, have been safely recovered, and are in stable condition. Kuwait has acknowledged this incident, and we are grateful for the efforts of the Kuwaiti defense forces

and their support in this ongoing operation.

The cause of the incident is under investigation. Additional information will be released as it becomes available.

In related news, U.S. Central Command reports that two more U.S. service members have died as part of Operation Epic Fury against Iran, raising the toll to six as of March 2.

"U.S. forces recently recovered the remains of two previously unaccounted for service members from a facility that was struck during Iran's initial attacks in the region," CENTCOM

said in a post on X, according to *Stars and Stripes*.

The identities of the service members are being withheld until next of kin can be notified.

Also on March 2, CENTCOM said a fourth individual was seriously wounded during Iran's initial attacks later died from their injuries.

On March 1, CENTCOM announced that three U.S. service members were killed in action. A total of 18 service members had been seriously wounded during the operation as of March 2, CENTCOM spokesperson Capt. Tim Hawkins said.



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by Jan Wagner

Seven Seas Food Festival, orcas & more at SeaWorld San Diego

Brazilian dancers and music at the Samba Stage. On the Parisian Stage, next to a large model of the Eiffel Tower, marvel at the Cirque-style acts. On the Seven Seas Show Stage, high-energy K-Pop tribute dancers perform to the music of a live DJ. Experience “Ohana” and exciting Fire Dancers in shows at the Polynesian Stage. On the SoCal Stage, kids can dance with their favorite SeaWorld characters.

Do not miss “Ports of Call: Wildlife of the World” on the World Explorer Stage. Kids and adults alike will be fascinated by this special live animal presentation, with a diversity of animals from around the world. Experts will share information about where they come from, how they live and what makes each one unique. I missed the beginning of their presentation but I arrived in time to see the presenters, one-at-a-time, carry onstage and introduce us to a crocodile, a kangaroo and a capybara — the world’s largest rodent, native to South America. This cute young one with a calm demeanor, weighed 80 pounds and looked like a gigantic guinea pig. After the presentation, everyone was invited to come on stage and pet it.

There are also, for the first time at the Seven Seas Food Festival, headliner concerts on the Bayside Amphitheater stage.

The next day (Monday) I returned to SeaWorld, plugged in my RAV4 for a free battery recharge and collected my annual passholder’s special souvenir, wooden cutting board — just one of several special presents that SeaWorld will give to annual passholder’s this year.

I did that and then proceeded directly to watch Orca Encounter. This presentation of the ocean’s most

powerful predators — killer whales — has evolved over the years, to focus on education and conservation. Trainers told us about orcas, introduced us to how the orcas are cared for at SeaWorld San Diego and described orca’s natural behaviors — including their ever-popular, thrilling, breaching behavior, demonstrated several times throughout the presentation. Many brave members of the audience sat in the splash zone, as orcas moved their powerful tail fin (their fluke), drenching the lower rows of the grandstands with waves of water.

SeaWorld’s captive breeding program ended several years ago. The current generation will live out their lives in SeaWorld’s care. The SeaWorld website tells us that, at 60 years old, Corky is the oldest whale and the largest female in the pod. The orcas are trained using positive reinforcement techniques, with a series of rewards that include fish and playtime. After the show, I walked down to the underwater viewing area.

The Seven Seas Food Festival takes place on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays from February 27 through April 26. To learn more about this special event, plus the Orca Encounter, Orca Underwater Viewing, animal conservation efforts, thrilling rides and more, visit <https://seaworld.com/san-diego/>.

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 © 2026 by Jan Wagner – AutoMatters & More #919

In addition to the wide variety of year-round entertainment, and things to see and do at SeaWorld San Diego — including presentations, rides and roller coasters, animals, dining and more, there are seasonal special events featuring entertainment, specialty food and drinks, merchandise and more.

Right now, SeaWorld San Diego is celebrating its annual Seven Seas Food Festival. While my one short visit was not nearly enough time to fully check out all that this special event has to offer, what I did see and experience made me want to return to experience even more. They really ought to change its name to something more all-encompassing, because it is much, much more.

Handpicked by SeaWorld’s Executive Chef Zuric, representing authentic international flavors, 14 special culinary foods are among food and drink items from Latin America, the Caribbean, France, Tuscany, Asia, Polynesia, the Mediterranean, Mexico, South America, and more — even Antarctica. The special event map shows 30 Seven Seas Food Festival locations, many of which serve Seven Seas Food Festival foods; as well as cocktails, mocktails and a multitude of craft beers at the Travelers Cafe. I cannot possibly describe them all here, so please visit the website to see for yourself: <https://seaworld.com/san-diego/events/seven-seas-food-festival/food-and-drink-menu/>.

In addition to the wide variety of foods, you’ll also find a wide variety of special live entertainment, on various stages throughout the park. Enjoy

Laryngitis for the long-winded

It began innocently enough, or so I thought. After debarking a delayed flight, I had to run to Terminal B to catch my connecting flight. Breathing hard, I felt a sudden tickle in my throat at the gate.

We’ve all experienced this before — an intense respiratory system twinge without warning, as if one has inhaled a speck of dust, a tiny gnat, or a clipping of hair. Instantaneously the lungs are triggered to expel the foreign irritant.

These coughing fits seem to happen at the most embarrassing times. Never when one is without witnesses; but rather, in public places with the maximum potential to make a disruptive, alarming, teary, snotty scene. In my youth, coughing fits happened in class or church, and nowadays, I embarrass myself during Zoom calls, military balls, and teacher conferences.

When I feel the tickle, I begin a dialogue with myself. “No, please don’t do this now! Quick, swallow! It’s not working! Here she blows!” I try to mask the coughing, but there’s no hiding it. I heave and honk, as others look on, horrified.

At my boarding gate, the coughing began. My body contorted with each spasm of my diaphragm, my eyes watered, and I emitted guttural, gravelly croaks in rapid succession. Unable to catch my breath between hacking coughs, tears streamed down my face, and my hands shook as they shielded my mouth, catching spatter, sputum, or whatever blasted forth from my lungs.

Boarding Groups A and B stared at me from their neat cues behind

the gate. A waiting flight attendant offered me a bottle of water. A passenger from another gate offered me a handful of cough drops. An alarmed passer-by asked, “Are you alright?”

I raised a finger up to signal, “Gimme a sec,” but was unable to croak words before the next cough seized my vocal cords. I partook

The Meat & Potatoes of Life



by Lisa Smith Molinari

in the remedies offered to me, and gestured my sincere thanks.

Ten minutes later, precariously under control, I boarded the plane and found my seat — the very last on the plane, row 27, window. In the middle seat sat an elderly woman who gave off that she was looking forward to getting to know me during the flight. I would normally welcome a friendly chat during a boring flight. However, the coughing fit had left me feeling like something wasn’t right. Deep in my lungs, I felt something viral brewing.

Before, during, and after take off the little old lady beside me chatted away softly to herself. “I’ll tighten this belt in case there’s turbulence. Oh, I don’t like turbulence. Looky here, a list of snacks and beverages. I’ll order the apple juice . . .” her mindless, but charming prattle went on.

I, too, have always been a talker. Countless thoughts are spawned in the fertile recesses of my mind, and are only given a few moments of incubation time before I give in to the irresistible impulse to birth them into the world in the form of unsolicited speech. The poor people who happen to be within earshot of me tend to get that glazed-over look in their eye, the tell-tale sign that they are bored, praying for the end of the story, trying to find a point, or just simply thinking, “She never shuts up.”

“Am I beholding my future?” I wondered as the old lady muttered away, and sincerely wanted to avoid that fate.

The next morning, I was offered a helping hand in the form of laryngitis. I awoke with an upper respiratory infection, and no voice. “[I]mmediately rest your voice by avoiding talking and whispering,” online medical resources advised.

“Easy enough,” I rasped to myself, immediately violating good advice. “Oops— damnit! No talking!”

I tried to control my natural loquaciousness to no avail. I learned that the same people who bust my chops for talking too much, rely on me to keep conversations going. When I did manage to keep my trap shut, it produced the most excruciatingly awkward silences begging me to fill them.

Despite it’s lack of rest, my voice box survived laryngitis. If that chatty traveler in 27B was my future self, I think I’m at peace with her — apple juice, turbulence, and all.

Veterans News

Medal of Honor spotlight: Navy Petty Officer 3rd Class Jack Williams

by Katie Lange, Pentagon News

As a hospital corpsman in World War II’s Pacific theater, Navy Petty Officer 3rd Class Jack Williams’ job was to save the lives of the Marines who fought around him. During the bloody Battle of Iwo Jima in 1945, Williams saved more than a dozen Marines and sacrificed his own life so they could live. His selflessness led him to receive a posthumous Medal of Honor.

Williams was born Oct. 18, 1924, in Harrison, Arkansas, to William and Dorothy Williams. He had a younger sister named Fern.

During high school, Williams worked at a local theater and was a member of the Future Farmers of America. As World War II raged during his senior year, he registered in the Selective Service System but didn’t wait to be drafted. As soon as he graduated in June 1943, he enlisted in the Naval Reserve.

Within a few months, Williams had completed training to become a hospital corpsman.

By May 1944, he’d reached the rank of pharmacist’s mate 3rd class and was assigned to the 3rd Battalion, 28th Marines, 5th Marine Division.

In late December 1944, the division deployed to Hawaii and began training for the invasion of Iwo Jima, a tiny island in the Pacific with strategic airfields that could better position the Allies for an assault on mainland Japan.

Williams’ unit arrived off the volcanic island’s coast in mid-February and was part of the first assault waves to land there. Over the next several days, the 28th Marines took part in efforts to isolate and secure Mount Suribachi, where the now-iconic photo of Marines raising a U.S. flag was taken.

On March 3, 1945, the unit had moved into rugged terrain to continue fighting an entrenched enemy. Williams had already given aid to more than a dozen wounded Marines, but when he saw his friend, Marine Corps Pfc. James Naughton, lying in no-man’s-land after being wounded in a fierce grenade



Navy Petty Officer 3rd Class Jack Williams was awarded a posthumous Medal of Honor for his actions on Iwo Jima during World War II. U.S. Navy photo

battle, he ran to him.

Williams dragged Naughton to a shallow depression and knelt to give him first aid, using his own body as a screen from the continued enemy fire, which hit Williams in the abdomen and groin three times.

Williams was momentarily

stunned, but he quickly recovered and finished aiding Naughton before applying bandages to his own wounds.

Despite needing urgent medical attention himself, Williams continued his work. He stayed in the perilous, fire-swept area to help yet another Marine he found there. Through his pain and profuse bleeding, Williams dressed that man’s wounds before trying to make his way to the rear of the fight to get aid for himself. Along the way, he was struck down by a Japanese sniper bullet.

Williams collapsed and later died, giving his life to help his fellow warfighters survive. For his sacrifice, he was awarded a posthumous Medal of Honor, presented to his mother at the family home March 8, 1946.

Williams is buried in Springfield National Cemetery in Springfield, Missouri.

In total, 27 Medals of Honor were awarded to men who fought on Iwo Jima, the most of any World War II battle. Aside from Williams, three other

pharmacist’s mates received the medal: Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Junior Pierce, Navy Petty Officer 2nd Class George Wahlen and Navy Petty Officer 1st Class John Willis.

To honor Williams, the Navy commissioned a guided missile frigate, USS Jack Williams, in 1981. The ship was in service until 1996, when it was sold to Bahrain’s navy. According to the Central Arkansas Library System’s Encyclopedia of Arkansas, the ship’s bell was removed after service and now resides in the

VA sets new record for customer satisfaction in memorial services

VA’s National Cemetery Administration (NCA) earned the highest customer satisfaction score ever achieved by any public or private organization measured by the American Customer Satisfaction Index, as part of the group’s 2025 report.

NCA’s 2025 score of 98 out of 100 is based on feedback from veterans and their families who have received NCA burial and memorialization services. This marks the eighth consecutive time NCA has ranked first nationwide in ACSI customer satisfaction. The average government score for 2025 is 70.4.

As part of the 2025 index, families gave NCA near-perfect ratings in cemetery services and customer service, and consistently cited staff compassion, professionalism and the honor shown to Veterans at national cemeteries.

“VA National Cemetery Administration employees keep the memories of America’s heroes alive,” said VA Secretary Doug Collins. “This achievement underscores their extraordinary dedication, commitment and professionalism.”

lobby of the county courthouse in Harrison.

Just a few years ago, Williams’ hometown also opened the Jack Williams Veterans Resource Center as a place to serve local veterans.

This article is part of a weekly series called “Medal of Honor Monday,” which highlights some of the more than 3,500 Medal of Honor recipients who have received the U.S. military’s highest medal for valor.

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VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY

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

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

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Visit our military museums

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

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2115 Park Blvd, San Diego (Balboa Park) • (619) 239-2300
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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.
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USS Midway Museum. The USS Midway Museum is a maritime museum located in downtown San Diego at Navy Pier. The museum consists of the aircraft carrier Midway. The ship houses an extensive collection of aircraft, many of which were built in So Cal.

FREE for children 3 & under and Active Duty military including reservists (w/valid ID). Adult \$39 (ages 13+). Youth \$26 (ages 4-12). Veterans (w/ID) \$26*Must show ID at entrance. Open daily 10-5, last admission 4pm. <https://www.midway.org/>

The Ranch House Complex at Camp Pendleton. Listed as the Santa Margarita Ranch House Nat'l Historic Site and as a California State Historical Landmark. Docent-led tours are available by appointment; masks required. Please email your request to: MCBCAMPEN_history@usmc.mil or phone (760)725-5758 The Camp Pendleton Historical Society is a 501(c)3 organization in support of the base's History and Museum's programs. Go to: www.camppendletonhistoricalsociety.org/ for information. Hours: Open daily 10am-5pm • Last admission at 4pm

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

<https://www.themech.org/> 24194 Vandegrift Blvd, Oceanside, CA 92058. (760) 725-5758. Mon-Thur 8am-4pm, Fri 8am-1pm, Closed Saturday & Sunday



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SOCIAL SECURITY MATTERS

I'm divorced; Can I get benefits from my ex?

Dear Rusty: After 16 years of marriage, we were divorced. I have never remarried, but he has. When he starts collecting Social Security (he is 64 now and still working), is it true that I can claim ex-spousal benefits or does that go to the current wife? How would I find this info? Signed: A Divorced Spouse

Dear Divorced Spouse: The fact that your ex-husband has remarried has no influence on your ability to collect benefits based on his record. If you are eligible for ex-spouse benefits (because you did not remarry), you can get those benefits regardless of whether his current wife collects benefits on his record. In other words, both you and his current wife can both collect spousal benefits from your ex-husband's earnings record.

Your eligibility for an ex-spouse benefit is determined by comparing your own SS retirement benefit amount at full retirement age (FRA) to his - if your own SS benefit at your FRA is less than 50% of your ex's FRA benefit entitlement, and you were married to your ex for more than 10 years, are not currently married and are at least 62 years old, then you can get a "spousal boost" (an amount added to your own Social Security retirement amount). In fact, if you have been divorced for over two years, you can get an ex-spouse benefit even though he is not yet receiving his own SS retirement benefit.

Be aware, however, if you claim any Social Security benefit (both your own SS retirement amount and your ex-spouse "spousal boost") before you reach your full retirement age, the monthly amount you get will be reduced according to how much before your full retirement age you claim. Spouse and ex-spouse benefits reach maximum at your full retirement age but are reduced if claimed earlier than your full retirement age. Claiming your benefits as an ex-spouse will also result in you receiving your own SS retirement benefit (reduced if you haven't yet reached FRA).

I suggest you contact Social Security at 1.800.772.1213 to make a telephone appointment to evaluate whether you are entitled benefits as an ex-spouse. If your own SS retirement benefit at your FRA is less than half of your ex's FRA entitlement, you will be. To apply for those benefits you will need a copy of your divorce decree (and perhaps your marriage certificate), and your ex-husband's Social Security number (if you do not have his SSN, you can provide his date and place of birth and his parents' names, and SSA will likely be able to locate your ex's SS record).

SSA will be able to tell you what your total monthly benefit as an ex-spouse will be when you meet with them, at which point you can decide whether to claim your benefits early or wait until your FRA to achieve your maximum amount as an ex-spouse.

About claiming early and investing it

Dear Rusty: I am a 63-year-old single lady, and I have questions regarding Social Security "early retirement," though I will still be working full time. I know there is a maximum allowable income limit and, if I exceed that, I will need to return probably 2/3 of my received Social Security benefit. I'm thinking about taking those early SS benefits (about \$1,400 per month) and putting them in my high yield savings or CD where I can gain the interest on it and have it stay "liquid" so I can return what I need to. My current interest rate is 3.65% on the savings, and over 4.25% on CD, with options for 3.69 mos. or longer- but I want to be able to access the money to pay Social Security back at the end of the year. Can you advise me on this? Signed: Still Working but Wondering

Dear Still Working: I commend you, for investigating your options before claiming early Social Security benefits while still working. FYI, the 2026 annual earnings limit for those collecting early SS benefits is \$24,480 (changes annually). If your 2026 work earnings exceed the annual limit, Social Security will take away \$1 in benefits for every \$2 you are over the limit. The annual earnings limit lasts until you reach your full retirement age (FRA), and the limit is about 2.5 times higher during the year you attain FRA.

FYI, when you apply for benefits, Social Security will ask if you are working and, if so, how much you make. Using that info, they will evaluate whether you can take benefits now and, if so, how many months they can actually pay your benefits. For example, if your projected 2026 earnings are, say, \$100,000, you would be about \$75,000 over the annual limit which means that half of that (\$37,500) would need to be paid back to SS. Since your monthly SS benefit at your current age would be about \$1,400 per month, Social Security will say that you are temporarily ineligible to collect early benefits because you cannot pay back within one year what you would owe for exceeding the limit. In other words, they won't pay your SS benefits just yet because your earnings are too high and they do not want to overpay benefits which you will only need to return.

For additional perspective, if your expected 2026 earnings are less (say about \$50,000) - that means you would be about \$25,000 over the limit - about half of that (about \$12,500) would need to be paid back to SS. In that event, SSA would tell you they will withhold 9 months of your SS payments in advance and pay your benefits for only 3 months. This because the overpayment, with your current benefit of about \$1,400, could be recovered by withholding your SS payments for 9 months. They do not want to intentionally overpay your SS benefits.

So, despite your best repayment intentions, Social Security will not favor intentionally overpaying your benefits. Historically, overpayment of benefits due to exceeding the annual earnings limit has been a notoriously difficult issue for the Social Security Administration. So, to get your early SS benefits while you are working full time, you would likely need to lie about your anticipated 2026 earnings on your application for SS benefits, which we strongly discourage. Keep in mind that this all changes when you reach your FRA (67), because the earning limit goes away entirely when you reach FRA (and the limit goes up by about 2.5 times in the year you attain full retirement age). So, depending on your earnings level, you may wish to either wait until your full retirement age, or until you stop working full time, to claim SS.

Now, as for the general idea of taking early benefits and investing them, many have said they wish to do that, and we understand that logic. Our caution is that it requires religious discipline to put the SS money into a higher yield investment vehicle to accomplish the goal of beating the SS increase realized when you wait to claim. Many who try it succumb to the temptation to use the invested funds for emergency needs (and sometimes non-emergency needs). I offer this only as something to be aware of, as some have shared that they failed in their investment objectives with their Social Security money.

MHS Genesis medical records: What they are, how to access and manage them

Medical records are an essential part of your healthcare to ensure everything that happens when you receive care, whether during a routine outpatient visit or a hospital stay, is documented accurately. Understanding what medical records are, what they include, and how you can access and manage them is key to taking control of your health.

The Basics of Medical Records

Medical records are detailed documents where healthcare professionals record all aspects of your care. They serve as a comprehensive history of your health and are used to ensure you receive the best possible treatment. These records include both personal and medical information.

What Medical Records Contain

Medical records include two main types of information:

1. Personal Information:

- Name, date of birth, and contact details.
- Social Security number, driver's license, or other identification numbers.
- Insurance plan details and appointment history.

2. Medical Information:

- Notes from doctor visits, including the reason for the visit and findings from physical exams.
- Vital signs, such as blood pressure, heart rate, and temperature.
- Medications, lab results, and

imaging (e.g., X-rays, MRIs).

- Diagnoses, treatment plans, and follow-up instructions.
- Orders from doctors, such as prescriptions or referrals.

Who Contributes to Medical Records

Healthcare professionals contribute to your medical records based on their role on your healthcare team:

• **Administrative Staff:** Enter personal and administrative data, such as contact information and appointment details.

• **Nursing Staff and Medical Assistants:** Record vital signs, medications, and intake information, such as the reason for your visit and health screening questionnaires. For hospitalized patients, they also document nursing checks, administered medications, and other care provided.

• **Doctors and Providers:** Document clinical evaluations, including the reason for the visit or inpatient stay, history, physical exam findings, diagnoses, treatment plans, and medical decision-making. They also enter orders for medications, tests, or procedures.

Access to Medical Records and Safeguards

Access to medical records is strictly controlled to protect your privacy. Only authorized medical staff can access your records, and they must have a valid reason to do so as part of their duties related to your care.

- **HIPAA and Privacy Rule**

• **Training:** All personnel accessing medical records are trained in the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and Privacy Rule regulations. They can only view the parts of your record necessary to accomplish what is needed for their role in your care.

• **MHS Genesis Safeguards:** For patients in the Military Health System (MHS), the MHS Genesis system includes an additional safeguard. When a staff member accesses a record, a pop-up box requires them to select their relationship to the patient (e.g., covering provider, emergency access, peer review) before proceeding.

• **Technology:** Systems like MHS Genesis include features to track and monitor who accesses your records and why.

Your Rights as a Patient

As a patient, you have important rights regarding your medical records:

• **Access:** You have the right to view and obtain a copy of your medical records.

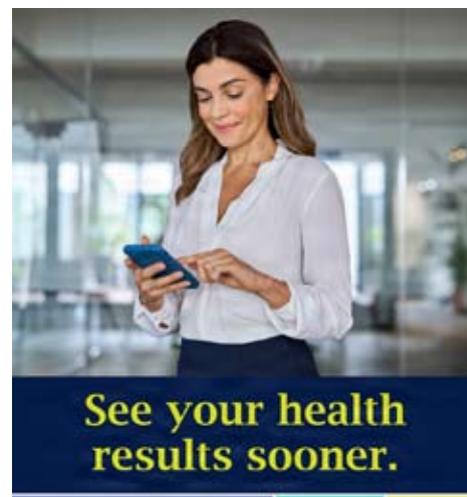
• **Accuracy:** You can request corrections if you find errors in your records.

• **Privacy:** Your records are protected by law, and only authorized individuals can access them.

What You Can See in Your Medical Records

Through the MHS Genesis Patient Portal or similar systems, you can access:

- Complete clinical notes from



your visits. • Vital signs, lab results, and imaging reports. • Medications and prescriptions.

• **Immediate Access to Results:** As part of a recent change in DHA policy, all clinical results, including lab tests and imaging reports, are now immediately released to the patient portal as soon as they are available. This means you may see your results before your doctor has had a chance to review and interpret them.

Interpreting Results in the Patient Portal

With the immediate release of clinical results, it is important to approach your records thoughtfully. Here are some tips to help you navigate this change:

- **Stay Calm:** Medical test re-

sults often include technical terms or numerical values that can be difficult to interpret without medical training. Seeing these results without context may cause confusion or unnecessary worry.

• **Wait for Your Doctor's Input:** Even if you see your results in the portal, your doctor will contact you to

discuss their interpretation and what the results mean for your health. Be patient and allow them time to review your case.

• **Take Notes:** Write down any questions you have about your results so you can discuss them with your doctor during your next appointment or follow-up.

• **Use Trusted Resources:** If you want to research your results, use reliable medical resources, such as those provided by the DHA or other reputable health organizations. Avoid jumping to conclusions based on unverified online sources.

Reviewing and Managing Your Medical Records

It's a good idea to review your medical records regularly to ensure they are accurate. Here's

how you can do it:

• **When to Review:** • At least once a month. • After every clinical visit or hospital stay. • Whenever new test results or imaging reports are released.

• **How to Review:** • Log in to your patient portal (e.g., MHS Genesis Patient Portal). • Review the clinical notes, test results, and other information. • If you find an error, submit a request to the medical records representative at your healthcare facility.

Final Thoughts

Your medical records are a powerful tool for managing your health. By understanding what they include, who can access them, and how to review them, you can take an active role in your healthcare.

The immediate release of clinical results to the patient portal is a step toward greater transparency, but it also requires patients to approach their results with caution and rely on their healthcare providers for interpretation and guidance.

Regularly checking your records ensures they are accurate and up to date, which helps you and your healthcare team make the best decisions for your care.

If you have questions about your medical records or need help accessing them, don't hesitate to reach out to your healthcare provider. They are there to support you every step of the way.

Access to new virtual urgent care for TRICARE Prime beneficiaries in the U.S.

By TRICARE Communications

FALLS CHURCH, Va. – Are you enrolled in a TRICARE Prime plan? If you see a primary care manager at a military hospital or clinic, you may now have a new way to get urgent care. The Defense Health Agency has expanded its virtual urgent care options in the U.S. This allows TRICARE Prime enrollees ages 12 and older to schedule virtual urgent care through the Military Health System Nurse Advice Line.

“Now, if your local military clinic is booked, you can call the MHS Nurse Advice Line. A nurse will assess if you can get a virtual urgent care appointment for the same or next day,” said U.S. Army Lt. Col. Ryan Shubat, chief, Primary Care and Mental Health Healthcare Optimization at the DHA. “This is part of the Defense Health Agency's effort to improve health care access.”

What conditions does virtual urgent care treat?

Virtual urgent care providers can work with you to treat these common urgent care issues:

- Sinus congestion/infections
- Cough
- Allergies
- Sore or hoarse throat
- Rashes
- Acne
- Muscle and joint pain
- Headaches

Where is virtual urgent care offered?

Currently, it's offered in the U.S. It isn't available overseas or in U.S. territories.

How to schedule an appointment

Getting virtual urgent care is simple. Call the MHS Nurse Advice Line at 800-TRICARE or visit MHS Nurse Advice Line

24/7.

A nurse will ask you about your symptoms and decide if your condition can be treated virtually. If virtual care works for you, the nurse will set up your virtual appointment with providers from the Virtually Integrated Patient Readiness and Remote care clinic.

Appointments are available from 6:30 a.m. to 11:30 p.m. ET. This extended availability makes it easier to get care when you need it most. You can expect to get an appointment the same day or the following day.

Quality care you can trust

All virtual urgent care providers meet high standards for patient care. Each provider has credentials and privileges at a DHA military hospital or clinic. Your virtual visit gets recorded in MHS GENESIS, keeping your health records complete and current.

Virtual urgent care providers can also write prescriptions and send them directly to your preferred pharmacy.

Benefits of virtual urgent care

This new virtual option improves your access to care and reduces wait times for urgent medical needs. Instead of waiting for routine appointments or visiting emergency rooms for nonemergency issues, you can receive quality care from home. Virtual care saves time and

helps you get treatment faster. This approach supports DHA's strategy to build a health care system that gives you more choices in managing your health.

Service member support

DHA continues to explore ways to expand virtual health care options for service members and their eligible family members. Virtual health care represents a key part of building a more modern and integrated health care delivery system.

More information

For more details about your TRICARE benefit and virtual care options, visit Virtual Health at <https://tricare.mil/Getting-Care/VirtualHealth> or call 800-TRICARE. The MHS Nurse Advice Line at <https://tricare.mil/PatientResources/ContactUs/CallUs/NAL> can help you determine if virtual care is right for your situation.

Would you like the latest TRICARE news sent to you by email? Visit TRICARE Subscriptions at https://t1.news.dha.mil/lp/DHA_TRICARE_NEWS_SUB to get benefit updates, news, and more.

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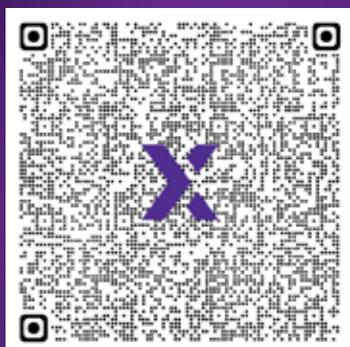
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June 18: That Arena Rock Show
June 19: Xscape
June 19: No Duh

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Sept 29: Sparks
Oct 16: John 5 and Richie Kotzen
Oct 19: Choir! Choir! Choir!
Oct 24: Black Jacket Symphony: AC/DC Back in Black

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May 23: The Sixties Show
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July 31: Mick Adams & the Stones
Aug 1: Uptown Motown Celebration
Aug 2: Leann Rimes
Oct 2: Anything for Salinas: A Tribute to Selena
Oct 3: 24k Magic: Bruno Mars Tribute
Oct 4: Pop 2000 Tour

North Island Credit Union Amphitheatre
May 22: Hardy and Koe Wetzel
May 24: Simple Minds, Soft Cell, Modern English
June 19: Dierks Bentley
June 21: Jorge Medina & Josi Cuén
July 19: Incubus and Manchester Orchestra
Aug 6: Creed and Mammoth WVH
Aug 24: Big Time Rush
Aug 27: Nelly and Ja Rule
Sept 5: Little Big Town
Sept 6: \$uicideboy\$
Sept 23: Billy Idol and Joan Jett & the Blackhearts
Oct 4: Luis R. Conriquez

Oct 18: Alice Cooper and Judas Priest

Old Poway Park
June 7: Sam Hinton Folk Heritage Festival

Open Air Theatre
May 30: James Arthur
June 4: The Black Keys
June 20: Barenaked Ladies and Guster
June 22: 90s Pop Tour
July 12: Brit Floyd and Alan Parsons
July 23: Father John Misty
July 24: Dispatch and John Butler
Aug 2: Primus and MonoNeon
Aug 10: Alabama Shakes
Aug 16: Michael Franti and Allen Stone
Aug 17: The Australian Pink Floyd Show
Aug 20: Japanese Breakfast
Aug 21: Lost 80s Live
Sept 3: The Flaming Lips and Modest Mouse
Sept 9: Lucy Dacus
Sept 13: Gregory Alan Isakov
Sept 18: Kidz Bop
Sept 23: Chevelle and Asking Alexandria
Sept 24: Air
Sept 26: Eladio Carrión
Oct 4: UB40
Nov 7: Miguel Bosé
Nov 10: Avatar: The Last Airbender In Concert
Nov 15: José María Napoleón

Pechanga Arena San Diego
June 14: Ivan Cornejo
June 21: Wu-Tang Clan
Aug 1: Phil Wickham & Brandon Lake
Aug 13: Heart and Todd Rundgren
Aug 24: Kali Uchis and Thee Sacred Souls
Sept 27: Benson Boone

Pechanga Resort & Casino
July 13: Oak Ridge Boys
Aug 22: Burton Cummings
Oct 30: Daryl Hall and Glenn Tilbrook

Petco Park
May 29: Hippie Sabotage and Two Feet
June 5: Brand New
June 7: Brad Paisley and Walker Hayes
June 13: Peach Pit and Briston Maroney
June 27: Purple Disco Machine
July 2: Summer of Loud Tour
July 16: The Driver Era: Obsession Tour
July 19: Billy Currington and Kip Moore
July 20: Iration and Inner Circle
July 31: Teddy Swims
Aug 6: Kevin Kaarl
Aug 7: Counting Crows
Aug 16: Blues Traveler and Gin Blossoms
Aug 27: Pixies
Aug 30: Holo Holo Music Festival
Aug 31: Holo Holo Music Festival
Sept 3: Ken Carson
Sept 4: Bomba Estéreo & Rawayana: Astropical
Sept 15: Coheed & Cambria and Taking Back Sunday
Sept 17: Chris Brown
Sept 19: Kolohe Kai
Sept 20: Kolohe Kai
Sept 29: The Head and the Heart
Oct 17: Rilo Kiley and Waxahatchee
Nov 8: Diplo's Run Club

The Rady Shell at Jacobs Park
May 29: Hauser
June 5: Ludacris
June 7: Trombone Shorty
June 10: Tash Sultana
June 14: Mariachi USA
July 6: Earth, Wind & Fire
July 12: Alison Krauss & Union Station
July 18: MAOLI
July 29: Beck & San Diego Symphony
Aug 1: Shaggy
Aug 9: The Beach Boys
Aug 10: The Gipsy Kings featuring Nicolas Reyes,
Aug 11: King Gizzard & The Lizard Wizard
Aug 17: Cynthia Erivo & San Diego Symphony
Aug 24: Boyz II Men
Aug 26: Mt. Joy
Aug 29: Weird Al Yankovic
Sept 10: Chicago
Sept 13: Tribal Seeds and The Movement
Sept 19: Jon Batiste
Sept 28: Big Thief
Oct 2: Above & Beyond
Oct 10: HAIM

Nov 23: John Legend

Snapdragon Stadium
June 26: Shakira

Sycuan Casino Resort
July 18: Queensrÿche
Aug 23: Cash After Dark

Viejas Arena
May 25: Chelo and Lorenzo de Monteclaro
July 5: TLC
Aug 10: Ghost
Sept 21: Alejandro Fernández
Sept 27: Ice Cube
Nov 16: Bryan Adams and Pat Benatar & Neil Giraldo
Viejas Casino
May 24: Cheap Trick

Waterfront Park
Aug 2: Chris Lake
June 20: 2 Chainz and Lil John
June 20: Jake Shimabukuro
June 21: Sammy Johnson
June 21: Matthew Phillips
June 22: Banda MS
June 22: The Evolution Of Pop
June 25: Chelsea Cutler and Quinn XCII
June 25: The Long Run
June 26: Yeah Yeah Yeahs
June 26: Jared Rogerson
June 27: Jon Pardi
June 27: The Expendables
June 28: Jessie Murph
June 28: Forever Ray
June 29: Banda El Recodo
June 29: Dead Man's Party
July 2: Third Eye Blind
July 2: Michael Minelli
July 3: The Como La Flor Band
July 5: Ziggy Marley
July 5: Long Beach Dub Allstars
July 6: Los Tucanes De Tijuana
July 6: Devotional

Del Mar Fairgrounds
June 11: Live and Collective Soul
June 11: Ozomatli
June 12: Foreigner
June 12: Strait Country
June 13: Maxwell
June 13: Jesse Royal
June 14: Zedd
June 14: 24K Magic
June 15: Los Tigres Del Norte
June 15: Sure Fire Soul Ensemble
June 18: Jordan Davis
June 18: That Arena Rock Show
June 19: Xscape
June 19: No Duh
June 20: 2 Chainz and Lil John
June 20: Jake Shimabukuro
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Your Local USO Wants You!

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

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

Ready to apply to be a USO San Diego volunteer?

Visit <https://volunteers.uso.org/>

- On the right side see “Interested in volunteering?”
- Click red “Register Here” button
- Navigate to your area
- Finally, select the USO San Diego center nearest to you!

Positions may be available around San Diego county at:

- Neil Ash Airport Center**
- Camp Pendleton USO Center**
- San Diego MEPS Center**
- Special Events**



San Diego Outreach
Neil Ash Airport Center
San Diego MEPS Center
Camp Pendleton



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Camp Pendleton USO Programs Include:

USO Transitions: <https://www.uso.org/programs/uso-pathfinder-transition-program>

Want to be better prepared for future success before transitioning from the military? Are you a military spouse looking for new opportunities? The USO Pathfinder® Transition Program extends the USO experience to active duty, Reserve, National Guard and military spouses by offering professional development services throughout the duration of military service as well as in preparation for life post-military.

MilSpouse Connect: Monthly events bringing military spouses together to connect and thrive.

Craft & Coffee: USO Camp Pendleton provides creative outlets for adults and children to create fun, whimsical or serious works of art through a variety of mediums. Signs up happen online and are usually advertised through the USO Camp Pendleton Facebook page.

Command Support: USO is here to support! We often help support command events across Camp Pendleton such as Family days and Morale Days. Commands can request support in a number of different ways, from outdoor games, a kids craft, or even our mobile photo booth. We also can help provide small refreshments. To request support, please email our Center Operations and Programs Manager, Crystal Gates at cgates@uso.org. All requests must be submitted within 30 days and although we try our best, not all requests can be granted.

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

Come Pitch With Us!

Southern California Horseshoe Pitchers Association (SCHPA), a charter of the National Horseshoe Pitchers Association (NHPA), has clubs all over the southern half of California. These clubs all have first class horseshoe courts built to official specifications.

- Organized tournaments most weekends year around
- All skill levels and ages welcome. When you enter a tournament, you will be seeded with other players with similar skill levels for fair, enjoyable and friendly competition.
- Local clubs located at Balboa Park, Carlsbad, Encinitas, Ramona
- For info visit <https://socalhorseshoes.weebly.com/>
- Join today and we'll see you at the pits!



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Difficult page to turn in Afghanistan

“...the greatest gift I have received from service are the bonds and friendships of those who have served alongside me.”

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CAREER READY: HELPING MARINE CORPS SPOUSES THRIVE

Military spouses are resourceful and vital to the Marine Corps mission, yet frequent moves, deployments, and unpredictable schedules can make maintaining a fulfilling career challenging.

The Marine Corps is committed to empowering spouses with the tools, resources, and mentorship needed to

thrive professionally, no matter where duty calls.

The importance of career readiness can't be overemphasized. Career readiness goes beyond finding a job—it builds confidence, purpose, and long-term stability. Meaningful employment supports financial security, personal fulfillment, and family resili-

ence, ultimately benefiting the entire Marine Corps community.

At the center of this effort is the Family Member Employment Assistance Program (FMEAP), available at Marine Corps installations worldwide.

FMEAP offers personalized career coaching, resume and interview support, and guidance navigating federal and civilian employment systems. Whether reentering the workforce, changing industries, or seeking remote work, FMEAP tailors support to each spouse's goals.

FMEAP provides critical career support to military spouses, to overcome relocation challenges. Testimonials highlight the program's effectiveness in securing em-

ployment and boosting confidence.

Mentorship is a key driver of career growth. FMEAP connects spouses with experienced professionals for guidance, encouragement, and networking.

Partnerships with local employers, educational institutions, and national organizations create pathways to internships, certifications, and career opportunities suited to military family life.

Three months into the new year, initiatives include expansion of remote work options, portable credentials, and mentorship networks across installations. Career-ready spouses are mission-ready partners, and through FMEAP, Marine Corps families can not only adapt to military life but thrive in it.



The Marine Corps is committed to empowering spouses with the tools, resources, and mentorship needed to thrive professionally, no matter where duty calls. Courtesy photo

