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SIXTY-THIRD YEAR NO. 26
 NOVEMBER 23, 2023



READY TO SOAR U.S. Air Force Academy cadets participate in the Soaring Program, the world's largest glider operation, in Colorado Springs, Colo., Nov. 16, 2023. The program is focused on forming the foundation of cadet exposure to military aviation, building character and helping motivate cadets toward a career in the Air Force. U.S. Air Force photo by Rayna Grace

Navy gives \$1 million to start historic hangar fire clean-up

by Gary Warner, Stars and Stripes

The Navy has sent \$1 million to the city of Tustin, Calif., to jump-start clean-up of the fire that destroyed a World War II blimp hangar on a former military air station.

"Demolition is the plan, but it's not scheduled yet. We have to find out the best way to get this done," said Christopher Dunne, spokesman for the Naval Facilities Engineering Command in Washington, D.C.

A fire broke out Nov. 7 at Hangar 1, one of a pair of 17-story tall wooden hangars on the former Marine Corps Air Station Tustin, which closed in 1999.



Built at the outbreak of World War II, the hangars housed blimps that patrolled the coast looking for Japanese submarines. They remained on the base as it transitioned over the decades to a helicopter air station of the 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing.

A historic blimp hangar burns in Tustin, Calif., Tuesday, Nov. 7, 2023. Photo courtesy of U.S. Marine Corps

When the base closed, the Navy conveyed 1,300 acres to local governments for housing, businesses and a large public park.

The Navy retained 225 acres that included the hangars until an agreement could be reached on their future use. Nearly three decades later, no plan has won approval from federal and local governments.

Hangar 1 had been unused since a 2013 windstorm damaged its roof. The cause of the fire is still under investigation.

The Orange County Fire Authority fought the blaze for several hours, including calling in air drops of fire retardant by leased CH-47 Chinook helicopters.

The fire continued to burn for over a week before rains doused the final hot spots.

Smoke from the fire released large amounts of asbestos, arsenic, lead, nickel and benzene into the air across a heavily urbanized portion of the county of more than 3.2 million people.

A state of emergency was declared, closing nearby schools, businesses and public parks. Residents were advised to stay inside their homes with windows sealed.

Residents said it was often impossible to avoid the mix of wood particles and toxic materials in ash that spread for miles beyond the hangar.

"I still woke up in the morning with ash on my eyelids," said Karen Kelso, a resident of nearby North Tustin.

Local leaders in Tustin and Orange County have been calling for the immediate demolition of the wrecked hangar.

Orange County Third District Supervisor Don Wagner said Tuesday that he expected the demolition to begin shortly. Tustin Mayor Austin Lumbard also said on Tuesday that the demolition would likely begin "later this week."

But the property is under Navy control. An agreement signed Nov. 10 between the Navy and local officials sent the \$1 million to begin clean-up. The funds came from the Navy's budget for implementing the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) actions that shuttered dozens of bases at the end of the Cold War in the 1990s.

VA ANNOUNCES CHANGES MEANT TO STOP FORECLOSURES ON VETERANS USING VA-BACKED LOANS

by Rose L. Thayer
 Stars and Stripes

The Department of Veterans Affairs is extending a pandemic-era program that helped financially-strapped veterans keep their homes after criticism that it wasn't doing enough to

prevent those with VA-backed loans from foreclosure.

The VA also called on mortgage servicers to pause foreclosures of VA-guaranteed loans through May 31, to allow the VA to present workable home

retention solutions, VA Press Secretary Terrence Hayes said Friday.

"By pausing foreclosures and extending the COVID-19 Refund Modification program, we can continue assisting veterans with their loans while we launch our newest home retention option, the VA Servicing Purchase (VASP) program," he said.

Through VASP, the VA will purchase defaulted VA loans from mortgage servicers, modify the loans, and then place them in the VA-owned portfolio as direct loans.

"This will empower us to work with veterans experiencing severe financial hardship

to adjust their loans – and their monthly payments – so they can keep their homes," Hayes said.

The announcement followed a letter sent Wednesday to VA Secretary Denis McDonough from four Democratic senators asking him to protect veterans from foreclosure even as the pandemic-era program for mortgage forbearance ended one year ago.

"During the pandemic, the Department of Veterans Affairs helped thousands of veterans and servicemembers stay in their homes. But part of the program that helped them get back on track with their payments expired last year, leaving many

see VA, page 11



Chula Vista VA Clinic. Photo courtesy of Veterans Affairs

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Veterans News

VA research program enrolls historic one millionth veteran, paving way for life-saving, groundbreaking research

See page 11

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Navy warship shoots down drone launched from Yemen

by Matthew Adams, Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON - Guided-missile destroyer *USS Thomas Hudner* shot down a drone launched from Yemen over the Red Sea Nov. 15, according to two defense officials.

"While transiting the international waters of the Red Sea, the crew of *USS Thomas Hudner* engaged a drone that originated from Yemen and was heading in the direction of the ship. There were no U.S. casualties or any damage to the ship," a defense official said in a statement on the condition of anonymity.

It wasn't clear on Nov. 15 who is responsible for launching the drone. Earlier in the week, the Iranian-backed Houthis in Yemen threatened to attack ships in the Red Sea.

This is the second intercept by a U.S. Navy vessel since Hamas militants attacked Israel on Oct. 7. Last month, *USS Carney* shot down several drones and missiles fired by Houthi forces in the direction of Israel.

The latest incident comes after the Houthis shot down a U.S. MQ-9 Reaper drone over the Red Sea.



USS Thomas Hudner, an Arleigh Burke-class guided missile destroyer, fires during training March 30, 2023, in the Atlantic Ocean. U.S. Navy photo by Tyler Thompson



Top 5

- Pentagon finally issues policy allowing cadets, midshipmen who have kids to stay at service academies
- Navy warship wasn't targeted by drone it shot down, Pentagon says
- Navy ends high-year tenure policy
- Lawmakers demand answers on unpaid National Guard bonuses
- Veteran suicides rose in 2021 despite increased prevention efforts

Army

- In war for talent, Army's new direct commissions an admin 'disaster'
- Soldiers practice island hopping, advanced tactics in Hawaii exercise
- Commission seeks Army reservist's records in Maine shooting probe

Navy

- When will the *USS Gerald R. Ford* carrier strike group come home?
- Navy seeks to raise allowed number of accidental whale collisions
- Navy still evaluating effectiveness of quality of life improvements

Marine Corps

- Marine recruit who first held a rifle at boot camp ties shooting record
- Marine Corps abandons plan to replace physical training uniform

Air Force

- Humvee mishaps kill 2 Airmen in 2 months, prompting investigations
- Military revokes planned contract for nuclear plant at Eielson AFB
- JSTARS flies west: USAF retires its last E-8C
- Electric aircraft starts flight testing at USAF base with its own version of 'hot pitting'

The U.S. has sent an additional 1,200 troops to the Middle East in recent weeks along with two aircraft carrier strike groups and more aircraft

to support Israel in its fight against Hamas and deter an escalation of the conflict in the region.

The United States has

also carried out three air-strikes in Syria at sites tied to Iran-backed militants. Most recently, two strikes occurred in Syria on Sunday. Defense Secretary

Lloyd Austin said the strikes targeted a training facility near the city of Albu Kamal and a safe house near the city of Mayadeen. The previous strikes occurred Oct. 26 and Nov. 8.

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MILITARY PRE-TAX CHILD CARE

by Jennifer H. Svan

Stars and Stripes

Military families have until Dec. 11 to enroll in a new program that helps offset child care costs and other dependent care through tax savings.

Service members must set up a Dependent Care Flexible Spending Account during the federal benefits open season, which began Monday.

The account allows households to set aside up to \$5,000 in pretax income for dependent care. A service member in the 22 percent tax bracket could save up to \$1,100 a year with a deduction of \$192.31 per pay period.

The Defense Department announced in March that the

flexible spending account would be expanded to military personnel no later than Jan. 1. While the U.S. military subsidizes on-base child care, most base child care centers have waiting lists, forcing families to seek care elsewhere.

The U.S. Office of Personnel Management manages the program, which is already available to federal civilian employees.

The program is open to active-duty service members and Active Guard Reserve members on Title 10 orders who pay child care costs for kids under 13, and those who care for a spouse or relative of any age unable to look after themselves. Service members and spouses must require the care to work, look for work

or attend school full-time.

The IRS determines which expenses can be reimbursed. The list includes after-school programs, an au pair, babysitting by a relative not claimed as a dependent, before or after school programs, child care, day camp and adult day care.

After enrollment, funds are withdrawn automatically from each paycheck for deposit into the flexible spending account. The balance may be used to pay for eligible expenses through direct deposit or through reimbursement. Funds cannot be carried over to the next year and will be lost if not spent during the benefit period.

To enroll, go to: <https://www.fsaeds.com>.

COUNTERING UNMANNED SYSTEMS



(From left) A Marine with 2nd Marine Division launches an RQ-11B Raven drone during unmanned aerial system training at Camp Lejeune, N.C., Oct. 10, 2018. Official U. S. Marine Corps photo; Aerosonde Unmanned Aerial Surveillance vehicle, Buck G, awaits launch aboard Expeditionary Sea-Base Hershel "Woody" Williams in the Atlantic Ocean, Sept. 25, 2020. Official U.S. Navy photo; and Marines assigned to Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron 165 (Reinforced), walk an FIM-92 Stinger man-portable air-defense system to a firing point aboard Boxer while supporting a counter unmanned aerial system exercise in the Pacific Ocean, Nov. 4, 2023. Official U.S. Navy photo

by David Vergun
DOD News

The Joint Counter-Unmanned Aircraft Systems Office is working on countermeasures, training and doctrine to establish solutions to address defense against unmanned aerial system attacks.

Army Maj. Gen. Sean A. Gainey, director, of that office spoke Nov. 14 at a Center for Strategic and International Studies event, "Countering Small Uncrewed Aerial Systems."

Each of the military services, in partnership with industry, is conducting experiments and doing field testing with a variety of ways to defeat UAS attacks, he said.

One very promising area,

Gainey said, is the use of high-powered microwaves to take out UAS. These microwaves, which range from 10 to 50 kilowatts, cost less per shot than traditional munitions such as missiles. Demonstrations have already shown some success.

However, use of microwaves is not an end-all solution, Gainey said, meaning that other defensive measures could be more appropriate given conditions on the battlefield and in the environment, including atmospheric conditions. "There isn't a silver bullet solution out there."

Other aspects of defense include development of advanced radar and command and control, such as the integrated battle command system, he said. The radar would detect incoming

and the command and control would connect shooters and sensors to targets.

The importance of defense against UAS attacks can be seen by what is happening in Ukraine, he said. In the future, every service member will most likely also need to be capable of being an air defender as these attacks will shape the future battlefield.

There's still a lot of work to be done in developing and fielding UAS attack countermeasures, along with training and doctrine, Gainey said, but the effort is well underway and is already producing results.

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Navy reconnaissance plane lands in Hawaii bay after overshooting runway

by Wyatt Olson
Stars and Stripes

FORT SHAFTER, Hawaii — A U.S. Navy reconnaissance plane landing Nov. 20 at a Marine Corps base in Hawaii overshot the runway and ended up in the shallow waters of an adjoining bay, a Marine Corps spokesman said Monday.

None of the nine crew members sustained serious injuries, Gunnery Sgt. Orlando Perez said in a phone interview. Their precise medical condition was not available, he said.

The P-8A Poseidon was attempting to land at Marine Corps Air Station Kaneohe

Bay, which lies on the windward coast of Oahu, about 10 miles northeast of Honolulu. It is part of Marine Corps Base Hawaii.

Local television news video showed the plane sitting in Kaneohe Bay with water touching the bottom of its wings.

The Poseidon belongs to the Navy's Patrol Squadron 4, based at Naval Air Station Whidbey Island, Wash.

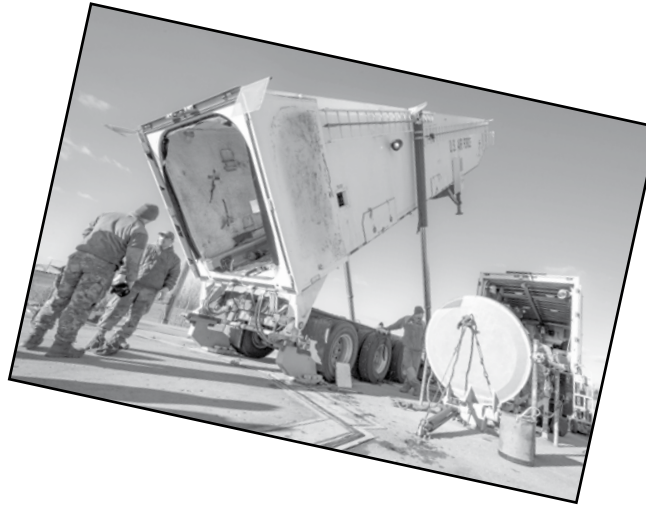
The Boeing-made Poseidon is a multi-mission aircraft used for patrolling, reconnaissance, anti-submarine warfare and anti-surface warfare.



Poseidon Courtesy photo



MCB QUANTICO, Va. (Nov. 18, 2023) Marine Corps Col. Michael L. Brooks, base commander, Marine Corps Base Quantico, right, congratulates participants of the 2023 Marine Corps Marathon Turkey Trot Mile. The MCM Turkey Trot 10K and one mile run offers a final opportunity for families to squeeze in a few extra miles before the holidays. U.S. Marine Corps photo by Lance Cpl. Joaquin Dela Torre



MINOT AIR FORCE BASE, N.D. (Nov. 16, 2023) Air Force Staff Sgt. Ethan Bowman, 91st Missile Maintenance Squadron missile handling team chief, observes his team retracting a Transporter Erector during a training exercise. The Transporter Erector transports, stores, removes and emplaces the Minuteman III Missile. U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Alexander Nottingham



FORT LIBERTY, N.C. (Nov. 17 2023) The 82nd Airborne Division colors are presented as Maj. Gen. Christopher C. LaNeve, the outgoing commander, relinquished command to Brig. Gen. J. Patrick Work, the incoming commander, during the division change of command ceremony. U.S. Army photo by Spc. Casey Brumbach

--- COMBINED FEDERAL CAMPAIGN ---

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Todd Bofinger from the VA Office of Construction and Facilities speaks to attending ribbon cutting ceremony. VA photo by Brooks Hubbard IV

Corps joins VA San Diego Healthcare System leaders to celebrate completion of new parking structure

by Brooks Hubbard IV

SAN DIEGO - Representatives with the Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District joined leaders from the Department of Veterans Affairs San Diego Health Care System, VA Office of Construction and Facilities Management, and contractors earlier

this month to cut the ribbon for a new parking structure at the San Diego Veterans Affairs Medical Center campus.

The seven-level parking structure was completed by Archer Western Federal Joint Venture of San Diego in September and will accommodate about 900 vehicles. This is the first of a four-phase construc-

tion contract completed at the campus.

"This is one of three parking garage structures that has been

"This is a very simple structure to have been completed but a very important one that allows veterans to get the crucial and specialized care that is offered here."

-- Col. Andrew Baker

constructed here at the VA campus and also the largest, with more than 900 parking stalls," said Cynthia Avair, associate medical center director, VA San Diego Health Care System.

Avair said the project began about a year ago but has been in the planning and design phases for several years.

Col. Andrew Baker, commander of the Corps' Los Angeles District; Frank Pearson, chief executive officer and executive director of the VA San Diego Health Care System; and Todd Bofinger, director, facilities operations, VA Office of Construction and Facilities Management, joined the construction team to cut the ribbon on the new facility.

"I'm pleased to be here today to be part of the opening of this new parking structure to serve our veterans, warfighters and their families," Baker said.

"This is a very simple structure to have been completed, but a very important one that

allows veterans to get the crucial and specialized care that is offered here."

The remaining phases of the project are the new Spinal Cord Injury/Community Living Center, which is replacing the current building at the San Diego VA Medical Center, and will be a 197,000-square-foot, four-story standalone structure.

The current center is one of 25 spinal cord injury facilities at VA centers throughout the U.S. Each center has teams of experienced medical professionals trained to deal with the unique challenges that affect those with spinal cord injuries.

Follow-on projects will facilitate conversion of multi-patient rooms to single beds and enable the existing Spinal Cord Injury unit to support ambulatory care.

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Navy works with UC Riverside to advance major computing breakthrough

EDITOR'S NOTE: You can read this story in its entirety at <https://www.dvidshub.net/news/457895/navy-works-with-uc-riverside-advance-major-computing-breakthrough>.

by Brianna Alexander

The Naval Engineering Education Consortium (NEEC), teamed with the University of California, Riverside, is helping further technological advancements by studying quantum computing.

UCR professors and students are using predictive quantum simulations to control electrons and qubits (the basic unit of memory) for quantum computers. In contrast to classical computers, quantum computers rely on quantum states to store data and perform some computations that classical computers cannot handle.

By studying interactions between electrons to control qubits, researchers will be able to solve significant mathematical problems and tasks that are currently difficult and/or impossible for existing computers and humans, according to NSWC Corona scientists Dr. Benny Cheng and Aaron Fogel.

“Quantum control algorithms enable us to control how a quantum computer operates,” said Dr. Bryan Wong, UCR professor, lead principal investigator, and supervisor of the graduate students in the study.

By studying the use of quantum optimal control algorithms, researchers could possibly answer difficult problems in a much faster manner, he said.

“This project supports the scientific training of graduate students in areas of interest to the Navy, while also gaining a deeper scientific understanding on controlling quantum systems that can enable next-generation computing,” said Wong.

Yuan Chen and Simon Sandhofer are the two graduate students UCR selected to set up algorithms to manipulate quantum systems for the project.

“We are approaching the limits of classical computers,” Chen said. “To advance further, we really need to understand and consider quantum effects.”

According to Fogel, the new

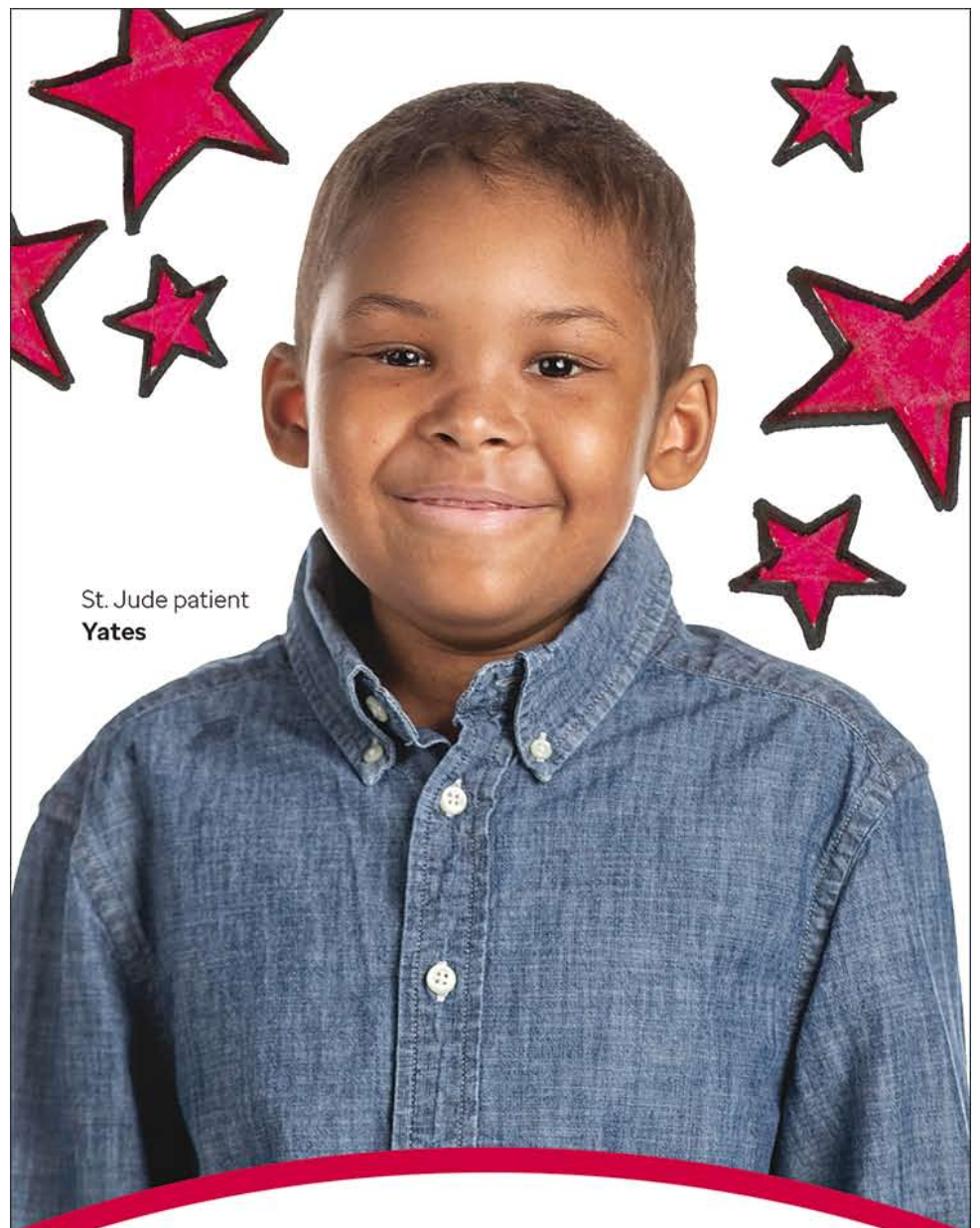
tool, with lots of unique paths to computing, can potentially help the Navy solve difficult problems and allow Navy technology to have a much stronger computing base.

“Development in computation capabilities is crucial for advancements in today’s modern world,” Sandhofer said.

He added that researching the advanced computers and qubits will have considerable implications for the world and for what is possible through advanced technology.

“Quantum control algorithms are important because they allow us to model and predict how a given quantum system will behave,” Sandhofer said. “This is an extremely important tool in designing quantum computers, because potential designs can be tested without having to go through the time-consuming, difficult, and expensive process of building them in the real world while maintaining the efficiency and accuracy of existing designs.”

Although the study is in the early stages, Sandhofer said he is already seeing great progress in the trials.

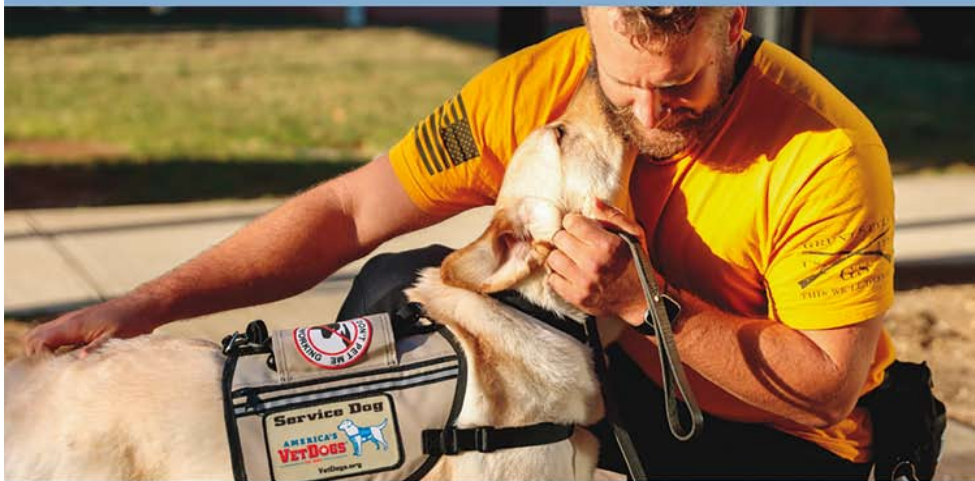


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Training days at Camp Pendleton

EMF 150 Alpha conducts training days

by Curtis Hill

Naval Hospital Camp Pendleton
 Sailors assigned to Expeditionary Medical Facility (EMF) 150 Alpha participated in EMF training days on Nov. 16-17 aboard Camp Pendleton.

The training days were split between three locations with a different focus at each.

The specific medical training was conducted as a skills fair at 1st Medical Battalion's Role 2 Deployment Development Center located in the base 22 Area.

The skill fair provided instructor-led realistic training in an expeditionary environment focusing on the different teams within the EMF.

"All participants received mental health, resiliency, litter bearer, and patient packaging training," said Lt. Cmdr. Maria Diaz, EMF 150 Alpha Training Officer. "Then the training audience broke off into teams and focused on training specific to their role within the EMF."

"There was scenario-based training for those members in



Sailors assigned to Expeditionary Medical Facility 150 Alpha participate in medical-specific training during EMF Training Days conducted aboard Camp Pendleton on Nov. 16. U.S. Navy photo by Curtis Hill/Naval Hospital Camp Pendleton

surgical and sterile supply teams; other patient care-related teams were trained on documentation, team dynamics, and medication kits; and ancillary services teams received training on walking blood bank, phlebotomy, basic medical terminology, and splinting," Diaz added.

The training was important for EMF personnel to remain in a high state of readiness.

"Training at 1st Medical

Battalion's Role 2 Deployment Development Center ensures we sustain a medical force ready for any challenges," said Navy Lt. Richard King, EMF 150 Alpha Medical Plans and Operations Officer.

Additionally, over the two-day training period, members of the EMF were fitted for Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear gear to include gas masks and Mission Oriented Protective Posturesuits.

"This week's fit testing, conducted by Naval Sea Systems Command, propels our unit towards readiness for theater hospitalization support in high-intensity combat," said King. "It's a testament to our preparedness for future peer warfighting scenarios."

The CBRN fitting was done in support of much more than preparation for training in a gas chamber.

see **EMF**, page 10

--- COMBINED FEDERAL CAMPAIGN ---



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LOCAL PHOTO GALLERY



PACIFIC OCEAN (Nov. 15, 2023) - Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Equipment) 3rd Class Robert Hill operates the jet blast deflector on the flight deck of aircraft carrier USS Theodore Roosevelt. U.S. Navy photo by MC2 Craig Z. Rodarte



ABANDON SHIP DRILL Hospital ship USNS Mercy's Medical Treatment Facility staff muster on the ship's flight deck for an abandon ship drill while underway in the Pacific Ocean during Pacific Partnership 2024-1 Nov. 15, 2023. Now in its 19th iteration, Pacific Partnership is the largest annual multinational humanitarian assistance and disaster relief preparedness mission conducted in the Indo-Pacific. U.S. Navy photo by MC2 Jacob Woitzel



PACIFIC OCEAN (Nov. 9, 2023) Sailors conduct a search and rescue training exercise from a Navy MH-60S Sea Hawk. U.S. Navy photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Leon Vonguyen

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MWR

EMF

continued from page 8

"As we align with Navy Medicine's Campaign Plan, we are dedicated to equipping our medical personnel for diverse environments," said King. "By arming them with the skills to operate in chemical and biological settings, we've empowered them to establish decontamination sites and treat casualties effectively."

Training evolutions for the Logistic Specialists and Culinary Specialists were conducted at Naval Expeditionary Medical Training Institute in the far north part of Camp Pendleton. Training for the CS Sailors focused on use of a Mobile Kitchen Trailer (MKT) to provide food for both patients and staff in a field operating environment.

Training for the LS Sailors included general supply forms that will be used for requisition requests, the Defense Medical Logistics Standard Support Customer Assistance Module, supply issue procedures, and other EMF requirements.

"This was a great training evolution that could not have been accomplished without the cooperation of the NMRTC leadership, hospital staff, and 1st Medical Battalion S-3 Training team as well as the 1st Medical Battalion Leadership in allowing



Lt. j.g. Amber Campaign prepares to draw blood from a blood donor while Navy Capt. Adolpho Granados provides instruction during EMF Training Days. U.S. Navy photo

us to utilize their facility," said Navy Capt. Elizabeth Smith, commanding officer of EMF 150 Alpha.

"Over the two-day period, we were able to train 224 personnel in mission-critical skills and fit 271 of our EMF Sailors with gas masks and MOPP gear."

EMF 150 Alpha conducts quarterly readiness days to maintain the highest level of readiness possible with other Navy and Marine Corps units to increase training opportunities while supporting the day-to-day operations of the Naval Hospital.

"EMF 150 Alpha takes advantage of every available opportunity to hone our skills and ensure our staff has the training and equipment familiarization for the Role 3 forward deployed environment," Smith added.

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Friday, Dec. 8 | 8-11:30 a.m. | Kearny Mesa Branch
JOB SEARCH STRATEGIES

Wednesday, Dec. 6 | 1-3 p.m. | NB Point Loma

RESUME WRITING

Wednesday, Dec. 13 | 1-3 p.m. | NB Point Loma

BOOTS-2-BUSINESS

Thursday - Friday, Dec. 14-15 | 7:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. | Kearny Mesa Branch

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VA research program enrolls historic one millionth veteran, paving way for life-saving, groundbreaking research

WASHINGTON - The Department of Veterans Affairs announced recently that the Million Veteran Program (MVP) welcomed the one millionth veteran into the program, making it the first research program in the world to include extensive health and genetic data for this many participants.

Launched in 2011, MVP allows researchers to better understand veteran health challenges and conduct groundbreaking, life-saving research. The program aims to improve the detection, prevention, and treatment of health conditions affecting veterans and, ultimately, all Americans. To date, MVP data has been used in more than 350 peer-reviewed research publications about a wide range of health conditions — including cancer, diabetes, PTSD, suicide prevention, Alzheimer’s disease, cardiovascular diseases, kidney disease, and more.

“Thanks to the veterans who signed up for this program, VA can better understand — and eventually treat — the health conditions that affect veterans of all eras and backgrounds,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Denis McDonough. “This will help us improve health care and ultimately save lives, for Veterans and non-veterans alike.”

“Our research is stronger when it includes all veterans — and we’re not stopping now

that we’ve enrolled one million participants,” said VA’s Under Secretary for Health Dr. Shereef Elnahal. “Because these veterans chose to join our mission, VA now has the largest global database of genomic information that is connected to health information — a critical tool that will improve the health of veterans for generations.”

“I look at [MVP] as a way to do my part and make sure the men and women that served alongside me, before me, and after me are all properly taken care of,” said Afghanistan veteran and MVP participant Benjamin Flynn. “It is my hope that research projects like the Million Veteran Program will provide information and open up new possibilities for providing absolute top-of-the-line treatment for veterans when they come back. I’m proud to be a member of MVP for the simple fact that I’m still helping — I’m still serving.”

“If there’s a way that whatever I can provide from a health perspective can benefit someone down the line — a future veteran, or my children, or my children’s children — then I’m happy to be a part of that effort,” said Iraq War veteran and MVP participant Zelpha Anderson. “I hope that [studying] my DNA will lead to more-precise medicine and more-precise care plans for people that are like me. So, as a Latina and a Black American, I think what I can provide to the program may have some benefit

to future veterans of color.”

MVP reflects the diversity of the veteran population: More than 250,000 minority veterans and 100,000 women veterans have joined the program, and MVP includes more people of African ancestry than any research program in the world. This allows researchers to learn more about — and ultimately treat — populations that have historically been underrepresented in research.

The program’s been used in the largest-ever genetic studies on anxiety, depression, blood pressure, heart disease,



non-alcoholic liver disease, and more: These studies have helped increase the understanding of genetic risk factors for these conditions, paving the way for future treatment and research. It helped lead to a breakthrough in understanding post-traumatic stress: A study of more than 165,000 MVP participants identified several

genes related to reexperiencing traumatic memories, the most distinctive symptom of PTSD. The study shed new light on the biology of PTSD.

It’s the world’s largest database on nutrition: When veterans enroll in MVP, they are asked to complete a lifestyle survey that gives VA important information about what foods they eat and at what quantities — which helps researchers make important discoveries for veterans and all Americans. For example, one recent MVP-driven study found that yogurt of any kind is good for heart health.

Veterans join MVP by voluntarily providing a blood sample, filling out surveys about their health and wellness, and granting researchers secure access to their health records. That data is secured, protected, and anonymized for patient privacy, then used to study the interactions between genes, lifestyle, military experiences, and exposures to learn more about how those factors impact health.

MVP is continuing to enroll veterans, and any Veteran can enroll in MVP. Veterans can join MVP at 65+ VA facilities across the nation, online at www.mvp.va.gov, or by calling 866-441-6075 for more information.

VA continued from page 1

veterans facing foreclosure,” said Sen. Tim Kaine of Virginia, who authored the letter alongside Sens. Sherrod Brown of Ohio, Jack Reed of Rhode Island and Jon Tester of Montana.

Those who took advantage of the program were told they would not have to repay all missed payments at once, but that scenario was happening to some homeowners, according to an investigation by National Public Radio. A secondary option to refinance didn’t help as it would mean higher interest rates and higher monthly payments.

These options left veterans worse off than borrowers with Federal Housing Administration loans or loans backed by Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, which allow borrowers to move missed payments to the end of their loan term, the senators wrote.

“Tens of thousands of veterans and servicemembers are left with no viable options to get back on track with payments and save their homes. Stories from across

the country show that this is already having severe consequences for veterans and their families,” the senators wrote.

With the extension of the mortgage forbearance program, the VA will allow veterans to obtain a zero-interest, deferred-payment loan from VA to cover missed payments and modify their existing VA-guaranteed loan to achieve affordable monthly payments for the duration of this extension, Hayes said.

The VA helped more than 145,000 veterans and their families retain their homes and avoid foreclosure during the past year, Hayes said. Foreclosure rates of VA-backed mortgages are among the lowest in the country, said.

“And at the same time, we know that there are still veterans struggling to make their payments,” Hayes said.

He urged any veteran struggling with making mortgage payments to connect with the VA at www.va.gov/housing-assistance or 877-827-3702.

New bill offers career flexibility to military spouses employed by federal government

by **Rose L. Thayer**
Stars and Stripes

Emmalee Gruesen considers herself a “a unicorn” among military spouses working for the federal government. She’s been able to keep steady employment as a program analyst with the Navy over the last eight years despite four moves with her husband, a naval officer.

Instead, many military spouses have been forced to resign their federal jobs because of their spouses’ transfers, losing out on benefits that accrue over years

of continuous service.

To help those not so lucky, Gruesen teamed up with Army spouse Maria Donnelly and found a bipartisan team in Congress to introduce legislation this week that will require federal agencies to use already existing policies around remote work and non-pay status to support military spouses who want to build a career in federal service.

The Resilient Employment and Authorization Determination to Increase National Employment of Serving Spouses

Act, or READINESS Act, is spearheaded by Reps. Jasmine Crockett, D-Texas, and Don Bacon, R-Neb. They’ve gained 10 cosponsors and expect to introduce the bill Tuesday, according to Crockett’s office.

“Right now, we are losing some of our best federal employees at an alarming rate,” said Crockett, a member of the House Oversight Committee. “We should be doing everything we can to retain these patriotic federal employees, not needlessly pushing them out the door.”

The bill allows for military spouses preparing to move with their service member to request individual determination about whether their job can be completed remotely on a temporary basis, be reassigned to the new duty station, or be transferred to a comparable job.

If none of these options fit, the bill allows the employee to go into non-pay status. The spouse would retain their nonfinancial benefits while their employer would get to fill the position.



A military spouse looks over current positions available under the Direct Hiring Authority program at a job fair held at Ramstein Air Base, March 3, 2023. U.S. Air Force photo by Jordan Lazaro

The measure would also apply to spouses of Foreign Service employees.

“This is a no-cost way to advance military spouse employment, because all it requires is policy direction,” Donnelly said. “It’s aligning everyone on the same set of rules.”

The non-pay status is important, she said, because it can help an employee retain their security clearance, be hired into

a new role more quickly, and allow them to reach the threshold required to be vested into a retirement program. It also invests in building a career, not just finding a spouse a job, the women said.

Unemployment among military spouses is about 21%, according to the Defense Department. It’s hovered around that mark for more than a decade, despite millions of dollars spent to reduce the figure.

The White House estimated that about 16,000 military spouses work for the federal government, but Gruesen said the statistic isn’t well-tracked.

Federal service is a good starting point to tackle spousal unemployment because everywhere there’s a military base, there’s a federal job, she said.

Two-thirds of military spouses lose their job when they change duty stations, according to research by Blue Star Families.

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The Meat & Potatoes of Life



by
Lisa
Smith
Molinari

I'll admit, it was my own fault. I not only created the monster, I nurtured and enabled it, until it became an unruly beast, with razor sharp claws and gnashing teeth, hell-bent on turning my family against me and crushing my holiday spirit.

It all started long ago, when our family was young. Back then, I believed naively that being a good mom meant that I had to work hard to give my family magical holiday experiences. So, while my Navy husband, Francis, was busy with work, travel, and deployments, I was home with our kids, creating an elaborate schedule of family traditions for every holiday, complete with special foods, activities, crafts, music, experiences, and surprises.

When the kids were in elementary school, I ran our 101-house neighborhood's annual Halloween parade, pumpkin carving contest, and party. I also insisted on sewing our three kids' costumes, serving as home room mom, and reading only Halloween-themed books at bedtime. Pure idiocy!

During Thanksgivings, I cooked elaborate dinners while Francis cozied up with the kids to watch the Macy's parade. I considered cooking all day a labor of love and took pride in watching my family ooh and ahh as they took their seats around our candle-lit Thanksgiving feast. Never mind the fact that our kids mostly just ate the diner rolls. Oh, the stupidity!

Monstrous holiday expectations: A mother's cautionary tale

The Christmas season was the holiday that I really screwed up. I went overboard every year, creating the most cozy, cinnamon-spiked, wood-burning, pine-scented, twinkled atmosphere I could muster. I'd cart our family to bonfires, tree lightings, neighborhood caroling, and mall Santa visits, all while guzzling gallons of hot cocoa stirred with peppermint sticks. I'd break out Christmas themed books for bedtime, ramping up anticipation so that Christmas became an impossible, sugar-plum vision of present-heaped joy. What a fool I was!

As embarrassing as it is to admit these heinous mothering crimes now, it's my hope that other moms will learn from my mistakes. When I thought I was creating wonderful family traditions, I was really creating impossible family expectations that would come back to bite me in the holidays to come.

The first nip happened one Thanksgiving when the kids were teenagers. As usual, I got up at the crack of dawn to prep the turkey, chop onions, simmer the giblets, and begin the million other tasks required for the holiday.

Francis appeared mid-morning in search of coffee. By that time, I was ready for company, but he soon disappeared from the kitchen. An hour later, I saw him out the window, laughing with a neighbor. An hour before dinner, I found Francis and the kids in our living room, draped on the sofas, enjoying the Macy's Day parade television broadcast in their slippers.

"Food about done, Hon? I'm get-

ting hungry," Francis yawned, as I stared back at him, irritated. An hour after dinner, I found him asleep in his recliner, a crust of pie perched on his sweater.

This scene would repeat itself on December 24th, when I found myself alone in the kitchen, cooking the elaborate Christmas Eve meal my family had come to expect — bacon-wrapped beef tenderloin, sausage stuffed mushrooms, home-made macaroni and cheese, onion-Swiss bread, and steamed asparagus — while I seethed with resentment.

It took an unflattering holiday meltdown in front of my family for me to finally kill the monstrous expectations that I'd created so long ago. Not only did I have to come to terms with the fact that my beloved traditions were unsustainable, my family now understands that everyone has to pitch in to help on the holidays.

Last year, I started a wonderful new tradition of delegating holiday duties. Last week, I emailed a written "Thanksgiving Day Plan" to our three adult children, an invited boyfriend, and Francis. It began with the following warning, "Listen up! This is extremely important! The family will NOT spend the entire day lounging in the family room watching the Macy's parade while Mom cooks the whole Thanksgiving dinner in the kitchen all by herself."

I finally wised up and realized that good mothers avoid monstrous holiday expectations. And my family now understand that Happy Holidays happen when Mom gets to have fun, too.

Barbie - a surprisingly relevant movie you should see

When the PG "Barbie" movie was released, I was expecting it to be little more than a silly promotional piece, primarily purposed to generate Barbie doll sales for Mattel. That is why I initially gave it a hard pass, but "Barbie" keeps generating buzz. When Warner Bros. Discovery Home Entertainment offered to send me a Blu-ray Disc of "Barbie," I took them up on their offer.

I soon realized that this was not going to be the movie that I expected, but rather an important movie that audiences from teens to seniors would enjoy and should see.

What caught my initial attention was "Barbie's" opening scene, inspired by one from another great film: Stanley Kubrick's 1968 film "2001: A Space Odyssey." In "Barbie," a small group of young girls were playing with baby dolls, china tea sets and other late 1800s vintage items, set in a remote, barren landscape. The color palette is warm, earth-tones. The girls' attention was diverted by the dramatic, towering silhouette of a Barbie doll figure dressed in a black & white-striped, one-piece bathing suit like the one that the original Barbie wore in the 1950s. A sliver of bright sun shone directly above Barbie, much as the sun shone over the mysterious, black monolith slab in "2001: A Space Odyssey." Simultaneously, the theme song from "2001" began to build.

The Barbie doll transformed into a human Barbie (beautifully portrayed by Margot Robbie). After Barbie winks at her, we see one particularly adorable little girl

dramatically lift her doll, with both hands, high above her head and into the sky. Then, in slow motion, she forcefully smashed the doll's head into the china tea set and then, over and over again, into the porcelain heads of the other girls' dolls. It

AutoMatters™ & More
by Jan Wagner



was a scene adapted from the iconic scene in "2001" where, in slow motion, an ape smashes bones while at the foot of a black monolith. It, too, is in silhouette with the sun peeking above it.

A major theme of "Barbie" is the empowerment of women — the absolute importance of which to not only women but also to men is brilliantly conveyed in this highly impassioned, emotional soliloquy by Gloria (actress America Ferrera):

"It is literally impossible to be a woman. You are so beautiful and so smart, and it kills me that you don't think you're good enough — like we always have to be extraordinary, but somehow we're always doing it wrong. You have to be thin but not too thin, and you can never say you want to be thin. You have to say you want to be healthy, but also you have to be thin. You have to have money, but you can't ask for money because that's crass. You have to be a boss, but you can't be mean. You have to lead but you can't squash

other people's ideas. You're supposed to love being a mother but don't talk about your kids all the damn time. You have to be a career woman but also always be looking out for other people. You have to answer for men's bad behavior, which is insane, but if you point that out you're accused of complaining. You're supposed to stay pretty for men but not so pretty that you tempt them too much or that you threaten other women, because you're supposed to be a part of the sisterhood, but always stand out and always be grateful. But never forget that the system is rigged, so find a way to also acknowledge that, but always be grateful. You have to never get old, never be rude; you never show off, never be selfish, never fall down, never fail, never show fear, never get out of line. It's too hard, it's too contradictory, and nobody gives you a medal or says thank you, and it never turns out in fact that not only are you doing everything wrong but also everything is your fault. I'm just so tired of watching myself and every single other woman tie herself into knots so that people will like us."

To see official Warner Brothers Barbie videos and more, visit: <https://www.warnerbros.com/movies/barbie#videos>.

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 © 2023 by Jan Wagner – AutoMatters & More #816



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Saturday, November 25
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 6pm ADVANCED SCREENING Wish pg
Sunday, November 26
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Sunday, November 26
 1pm Five Nights at Freddy's pg13
 3:30pm Killers of the Flower Moon r
 Friday, December 1
 6pm Priscilla r
Saturday, December 2
 1pm Journey to Bethlehem pg
 3:30pm Five Nights at Freddy's pg13
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Saturday, November 26
 3pm Five Nights at Freddy's PG-13
 6:30pm Killers of the Flower Moon R
Sunday, November 27
 12pm NO MOVIE
 3pm FREE MOVIE: Wish PG
Friday, December 1
 6pm Priscilla R
Saturday, December 2
 3pm Journey to Bethlehem PG
 6:30pm Priscilla (R)
Sunday, December 3
 12pm Journey to Bethlehem PG
 3pm Five Nights at Freddy's PG-13



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

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RENTALS APARTMENTS

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Veterans Crisis Line
 Dial 988 then PRESS 1

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14 NOVEMBER 2023 10:30 AM - 11:30 AM

Who's a good boy?

2023 American Humane Hero Dog Award was awarded to a 150-lb Great Dane named Maverick for his inspiring work supporting the U.S. military as a United Service Organizations (USO) therapy dog.

Maverick's lifesaving work at the Fort Leonard Wood USO post in Missouri includes staying with service members on suicide watch, escorting children to military funerals for their parents, and helping men and women cope with trauma, injuries, and stress.

When not uplifting our troops, the Great Dane—who is a canine cancer survivor—offers snuggles and strength to his owner, USO center manager Kelly Brownfield, in her own ongoing battle with cancer.

Maverick St. Robert, MO

Maverick came into this world with a clear purpose: to uplift the spirits of our American troops and their loved ones through his incredible work with the USO. As a six-year-old, 150-pound Great Dane, he carries the weight of our nation's heroes' traumas, emotions, and injuries, offering solace and comfort.

Maverick possesses a remarkable ability to bring comfort to others with simple touch of his paw. On a daily basis, you can find him welcoming our troops at the USO, providing them with a taste of home that they yearn for. His exceptional intuition



2023 American Humane Hero Dog Award winner Maverick

allows him to empathize with their emotions, and he actively works with the military in suicide watch, demonstrating the true essence of unconditional love and guiding them towards healing.

When Maverick is not supporting our troops, he dedicates himself to the most courageous individuals of all—our military children. He accompanies them during the burial ceremonies of their fallen family members, serving as a steadfast source of strength during these challenging times. Within schools, he has become a beloved presence, lighting up the faces of children who eagerly shout his name with excitement when they spot him in the corridors. Maverick cherishes spending time with children, offering support as they practice their reading skills and providing a compassionate ear to help them navigate difficult situations such as deployments, loss, illness, and more.

Whether it's the darkest hours or the happiest moments, Maverick is there for our troops and families.

Sickle cell disease affects 100,000+ people in the U.S.

Sickle cell disease is a group of inherited red blood cell disorders that affect hemoglobin, the protein that carries oxygen through the body. Normally, red blood cells are disc-shaped and flexible enough to move easily through the blood vessels. In sickle cell disease, red blood cells become crescent- or "sickle"-shaped due to a genetic mutation. These sickled red blood cells do not bend or move easily and can block blood flow to the rest of the body.

The blocked blood flow through the body can lead to serious problems, including stroke, eye problems, infections, and episodes of pain called pain crises.

Sickle cell disease is a lifelong illness. A bone marrow transplant is currently the only cure for sickle cell disease. Gene therapy is also being explored as another potential cure, but there are other effective treatments that can reduce symptoms and prolong life. If you have sickle cell disease, your healthcare team will work with you on a treatment plan to reduce your symptoms and manage the condition.

The condition affects more than 100,000 people in the United States and 20 million people worldwide. In the United



States, most people who have sickle cell disease are of African ancestry or identify themselves as Black.

- About 1 in 13 Black or African American babies are born with sickle cell trait.
- About 1 in every 365 Black

In the United States, most people who have sickle cell disease are of African ancestry or identify themselves as Black.

or African American babies are born with sickle cell disease.

Many people who come from Hispanic, Southern European, Middle Eastern, or Asian Indian backgrounds also have sickle cell disease.

NHLBI is leading and supporting research and clinical trials to find a cure for sickle cell disease.

WARRIOR CARE MONTH

NOVEMBER 2023



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