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SEE STORY, PAGE 6

SAN DIEGO Ship's crew members of USS *John L. Canley* (ESB 6) man the ship during the ship's Feb. 17, 2024 commissioning ceremony at Naval Air Station North Island, Calif. U.S. Navy photo by Sarah Cannon/Military Sealift Command Pacific

DOD releases strategy to build resilient, healthy environments for service members and families

by Joseph Clark, DOD News

The Defense Department released a new strategy recently aimed at ensuring the U.S. military installations throughout the world support the quality-of-life needs of service members, military families and the civilian workforce well into the future.

The DOD Strategy for Resilient and Healthy Defense Communities sets forth the department's commitment to fulfilling what defense leaders say is a national security imperative and moral obligation to provide the total force with healthy, safe, functional and resilient environments in which to live and work.

Brendan Owens, assistant secretary of defense for energy, installations and environment, said the key to enhancing military readiness is putting the quality of life of those who serve front and center.

"People are our most important asset. When you look at what the strategy is after, what's at its core is making sure our readiness is enhanced by the infrastructure on our installations," Owens said during a briefing on the strategy at the Pentagon today.

The strategy puts forward an end state focused on quality of life and readiness for the total force where:

- ◆ People living and working on DOD installations thrive as part of happy, healthy, productive and resilient communities.
- ◆ The built and natural environment around them meets operational needs and improves their quality of life.
- ◆ Installation managers and senior DOD leadership have a common operating picture of the quality of infrastructure to guide timely decisions and resource allocations.
- ◆ Installations are integrated with surrounding communities, providing public services and lifestyle-oriented features that build the readiness and resiliency of the Total Force.

Owens, who also serves as DoD's chief sustainability officer, said the blueprint represents a whole-of-department approach for making future investments in installations that put people and mission first.

<https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/3679385/>

MEMORIAL HONORS FALLEN MARINES OF HMH-361

by 1st Lt. Andrew Baez
 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing

MCAS MIRAMAR - Five Marines of Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron (HMH) 361, Marine Aircraft Group 16, 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing, were honored during a memorial ceremony on the afternoon of Feb. 16, 2024.

More than 550 Marines, family and friends gathered to pay tribute to the five Marines who lost their lives as the result of a CH-53E mishap on Feb. 6, 2024, in Pine Valley, Calif.:

Lance Cpl. Donovan Davis, 21, of Olathe, Kan., a CH-53E

helicopter crew chief.

Sgt. Alec Langen, 23, of Chandler, Arizona, a CH-53E helicopter crew chief.

Capt. Benjamin Moulton, 27, of Emmett, Idaho, a CH-53E helicopter pilot.

Capt. Jack Casey, 26, of Dover, N.H., a CH-53E helicopter pilot.

Capt. Miguel Nava, 28, of Traverse City, Mich., a CH-53E helicopter pilot.

The ceremony took place in hangar 4, home of the HMH-361 "Flying Tigers."

The national anthem played, followed by the presentation of the battlefield crosses—five in total, one representing each Marine. Flight helmets, flight gear and boots rested on Marine

Corps service rifles, in front of each Marine's portrait.

A friend and fellow squadron member of each Marine provided remarks, recounting anecdotes of shared experiences and highlighting the lasting impact each fallen Marine had on their lives.

Lance Cpl. Owen Preble, a CH-53E helicopter crew chief with HMH 361, spoke on behalf of Davis, reflecting on their time together in training and at the squadron.

"This was a tragic event for all of us," said Preble. "The squadron has received love and support, and everyone has come together."

Following the eulogies and a poem reading, the commanding officer of HMH-361, Lt. Col.

see **Memorial**, page 7



Five battlefield crosses are displayed in honor of five Marines of Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 361 during a memorial ceremony at Miramar. U.S. Marine Corps photo by Staff Sgt. Antonio De La Fuente

Submarine *Santa Fe* welcomes new CO

SAN DIEGO - Los Angeles-class submarine USS *Santa Fe* welcomed Cmdr. Eric Knepper as its newest leader Feb. 16 at Naval Base Point Loma. Knepper relieved Capt. Matt Pianetta in front of friends, family members, the crew and personnel assigned to Commander, Submarine Squadron (CSS) 11. Pianetta took command of *Santa Fe* in December 2020. "It was a very challenging assignment," said Pianetta. "The number of different environments, different expectations, differing experience levels and multiple mission sets created a series of high consequence transitions that I am very proud to say the crew handled fantastically."

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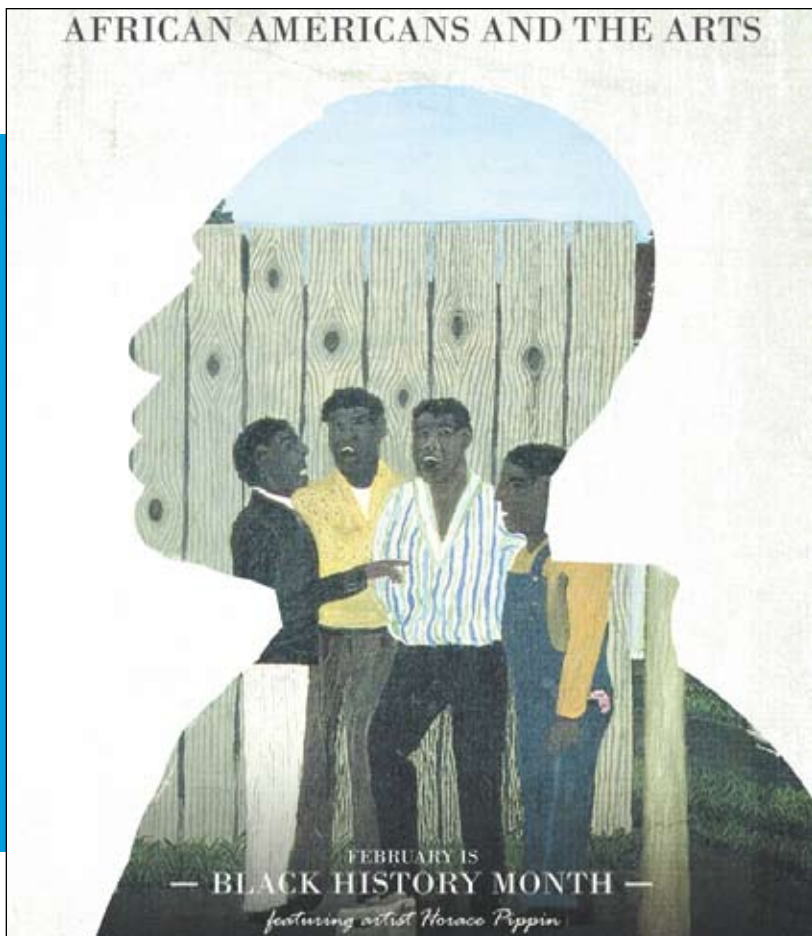
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The theme for the 2024 Department of Defense observance of Black History Month is African Americans and the Arts, in recognition of African American arts and artisans. African American art is infused with African, Caribbean, and Black American influences. It has widespread and enduring contributions in the fields of visual and performing arts, literature, fashion, folklore, language, film, music, architecture, culinary, and other forms of cultural expression. African American artists have used art to preserve history and community memory as well as for empowerment. Americans of African descent have led artistic and cultural movements, such as New Negro, Black Arts, Black Renaissance, hip-hop, and Afrofuturism, and been at the forefront of popular trends around the world. In celebrating the history of African Americans and their contributions to the arts, DoD recognizes and celebrates the richness of the past and present with an eye toward what the rest of the 21st century will bring.

CENTCOM intercepts Iranian weapons shipment intended for Houthis

TAMPA, Fla. - A U.S. Coast Guard cutter, forward deployed to the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility, seized advanced conventional weapons

the vessel and boarded it in the Arabian Sea. The boarding team discovered over 200 packages that contained medium-range ballistic missile components,

violates U.N. Security Council Resolution 2216.

“This is yet another example of Iran’s malign activity in the



The seizure came as the Iran-backed Houthi rebels in the Red Sea continued to target commercial shipping, prompting strikes from the U.S. and allies. U.S. Central Command photo

and other lethal aid originating in Iran and bound to Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen from a vessel in the Arabian Sea late last month.

Coast Guard fast-response cutter USCGC Clarence Sutphin Jr., assigned to U.S. Naval Forces Central Command, located

explosives, unmanned underwater/surface vehicle (UUV/USV) components, military-grade communication and network equipment, anti-tank guided missile launcher assemblies, and other military components.

The direct or indirect supply, sale or transfer of such aid

region,” said Gen. Michael Erik Kurilla, CENTCOM commander. “Their continued supply of advanced conventional weapons to the Houthis is in direct violation of international law and continues to undermine the safety of international shipping and the free flow of commerce.”

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Ratner describes strategy driven changes in Indo-Pacific

by Jim Garamone
DOD News

In only two years, U.S. officials have made many positive inroads with allies and partners throughout the Indo-Pacific.

Ely Ratner, the assistant secretary of defense for Indo-Pacific security affairs, shared his thoughts on the second anniversary of the Indo-Pacific strategy during a presentation at the U.S. Institute of Peace in Washington earlier this month. He spoke alongside representatives from the White House and State Department, illustrating the whole-of-government approach of the strategy.

The Indo-Pacific Strategy is an outgrowth of President Joe Biden's National Security Strategy, which spawned the National Defense Strategy. That strategy says China is America's pacing challenge and recognizes that China is the only nation with the will and, increasingly, the capabilities to overturn the rules-based international order that has kept peace between great powers since the end of World War II.

Ratner said the strategy is all about "a shared vision that we have with our allies and partners. I think the degree of strategic alignment between the United States and our major allies and partners ... throughout the Indo-Pacific is unprecedented."

In two short years, the Defense portion of the strategy has meant a more capable force, being more forward positioned and working more closely with allies and partners, Ratner said.

Ratner pointed to the Quad partnership among Australia, India, Japan and the United States as an example of the ways nations are working together. He specifically mentioned the Quad is delivering greater maritime domain awareness.

He also spoke of the growth

in partnership with India. Both nations have accelerated integration in the defense industrial sector. "We've been working very intensely with the Indian government on their efforts to deepen their indigenous, defense industrial base through some really exciting co-production, co-development opportunities in areas such as jet fighter engines and armored vehicles," he said.

Ratner also spoke of the Australia, United Kingdom and United States trilateral agreement, known as AUKUS, and what it will mean with Australia developing conventionally armed, nuclear-powered submarine capability. The agreement will also mean the three nations will work on other cutting-edge military capabilities.

On the practical side, the United States is bringing more capability and capacity to the region with our allies and partners, and American forces are positioned forward and are more mobile and distributed, Ratner said. "2023 stood as the most transformative year in our regional force posture in a generation," he said. "And there's more to come in the years ahead."

DOD officials are reaching out to allies and partners in the region, working to build capabilities, and conducting exercises with nations. This builds ties between like-minded nations.

More must be done, Ratner said. The most immediate is to secure Compact of Free Association funds from Congress. These are compacts between the United States and the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands and the Republic of Palau. State Department officials have negotiated an agreement with these nations that will go through 2043. Total U.S. funding for the agreements is \$7.1 billion. "Securing COFA funding is one of the most important things that the administration can do this year in terms



Royal New Zealand Air Force airmen conduct medical evacuation training aboard the hospital ship USNS Mercy anchored in the Solomon Islands, as part of Pacific Partnership 2024-1, Nov. 22, 2023. U.S. Navy photo by Seaman Justin Ontiveros

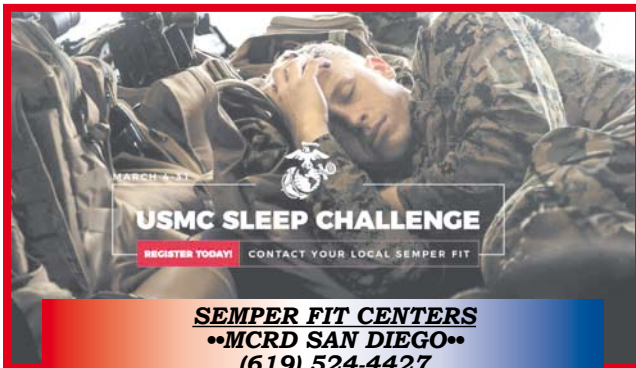
of our Indo-Pacific strategy," Ratner said.

The island states are strategic territory giving the U.S. "assured access" in the region, the assistant secretary said.

A large number of islanders serve in the U.S. military. "It's something where there is strong bipartisan support," he said. "This is an opportunity for Congress [and] the administration to

work together this year. And we just have to get it done."

The U.S. military in the region is working in many new ways with allies and partners, Ratner said. "We're going to have to deliver on AUKUS in 2024," he said. "We're going to have to keep delivering on the force posture front again. We've got lots of successes to talk about, but we've got to roll up our sleeves and keep at it this year."



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Top 5

- White House urges calm over Russian space weapon threat
- DOD looks to revamp housing, facilities on military installations
- Del Toro asks Navy contractors to consider taxpayers over shareholders
- Legendary Marine scout sniper Chuck Mawhinney dies at age 75
- U.S. conducted cyberattack on suspected Iranian spy ship

Army

- Savannah Soldier makes final journey home as community pays its respects
- Body camera footage shows arrest of Army reservist on AWOL charge
- Sex offenses for 3 senior Army officers end with plea deals and reprimands
- Two Fort Cavazos Soldiers face courts-martial in May on charges of murder, accessory to murder

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- Sailors' endurance tested amid 4 months of constant Red Sea threats
- U.S., Japan tightening military bond, Pacific Fleet admiral says
- More Navy ships get Overmatch networking following Carl Vinson tests
- 'Consequential command': Surface warfare officer takes over Navy's largest overseas fleet
- Navy leaders want more code-loving Sailors at sea
- Should Navy hospital ships be armed?
- Navy survey shows continued problems with stress, burnout among Sailors, but progress on culture

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- 5 Marines killed in CH-53E helicopter crash mourned as 'the very best'
- Former poolee files legal complaint against Marine Corps over recruiter's alleged sexual assault and abuse
- Marine task force expands recon role in European operations
- Marine base in Japan adds water-rescue drone to fire department's arsenal
- Munitions stockpile issue persists 2 years into Ukraine conflict: Marine Corps general
- Marine in Japan sentenced for punching 76-year-old woman in face

Air Force

- Tricky E-7 adaptations complicate US Air Force, Boeing negotiations
- Malmstrom AFB lockdown lifted after active shooter threat
- 'Profound bond': Hundreds gather at Tokyo air base to remember fallen Osprey aircrew
- MADC2: Air Force CJADC2 plans 'completely hamstrung' by budget impasse, general says
- USAF plans stealthy tankers for 'extreme threat areas'
- Air Force's first female enlisted leader broke the 'brass ceiling.' Here's her view on retirement.
- 'All-around beast': F-16 Fighting Falcon marks 50 years of flight, 43 in South Korea

Coast Guard

- U.S. Coast Guard seizes Iranian missile components bound for Houthis militants, CENTCOM says

Your Military

- Risk of brain cancer higher in troops with moderate to severe brain injuries, large study shows

Veterans

- More pharmacy problems endanger future of VA's health records system
- Former Obama chief of staff McDonough helms the VA: An exclusive

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Navy's new \$3.4 billion dry dock in Hawaii is most expensive project in service's history

by Wyatt Olson
Stars and Stripes

JOINT BASE PEARL HARBOR-HICKAM, Hawaii - The Navy has begun the most expensive building project in its history with construction of a \$3.4 billion submarine-repair dry dock in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.

The initial work of installing foundational piles into the harbor waters began this month, with project completion expected by early 2028. The new dry dock will replace the smallest of the four at the Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard and Intermediate Maintenance Facility at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam.

The current dry dock is too small to handle the Navy's Virginia-class attack submarines, the service's nuclear-powered subs that are replacing the slightly smaller Los Angeles-class vessels. The Pearl Harbor project

eclipses the \$1.7 billion dry dock complex now being built at Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in Kittery, Maine.

All four of the Navy's public shipyards, which also include Norfolk Naval Shipyard in Virginia and Puget Sound Naval Shipyard and Intermediate Maintenance Facility in Washington, are in dire need of upgrading and modernization, according to a May 2023 report by the Government Accountability Office.

In 2018, the Navy undertook a \$21 billion infrastructure plan to upgrade dry docks, buildings and equipment at the shipyards, the report states. Complex, costly and rare The oldest dry dock at the Pearl Harbor shipyard was built in 1919, Capt. Richard Jones, commander of the shipyard, said during a media roundtable Feb. 16 on

the joint base.

The youngest dry dock was completed in 1943 during World War II, he said. "Dry Dock 3 is too small, too shallow, to accept the Virginia-class submarine," Jones said.

The new dry dock will be almost twice as deep as Dry Dock 3, he said. The construction of a dry dock is complex, costly and, thus, rare, Capt. Stephen Padhi, who is overseeing construction, said at the roundtable. Padhi is commander of Officer in Charge of Construction, Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard, a newly commissioned command by Naval

Facilities Engineering Systems Command.

"The amount of just material



Kahu Kordell Kekoa performs a traditional Hawaiian blessing in August 2023 as the Navy begins construction on a new dry dock at Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard and Intermediate Maintenance Facility. U.S. Navy photo Justice Vannatta

that goes into these projects alone is staggering," Padhi said. "We're talking about 250,000 cubic yards of concrete," he said. "If that were delivered by truck, we'd be talking about 25,000 trucks."

The project will require about 63,000 tons of steel.

"That's enough steel to build eight submarines," Padhi said. The length of utilities to be installed for the dry dock could "circumnavigate Oahu," he said. The price tag for the project reflects "what it takes to build something of this magnitude in Hawaii," he said.

Building the dry dock on a speck of an island in the Pacific costs roughly twice what it would on the mainland because of the cost and complexity of getting materials to Hawaii, he said. There are also costs for "a very robust degree of environmental protection and permit compliance, safety requirements."

Roy Morioka, a project manager for a pair of firms contracted for the build, said during

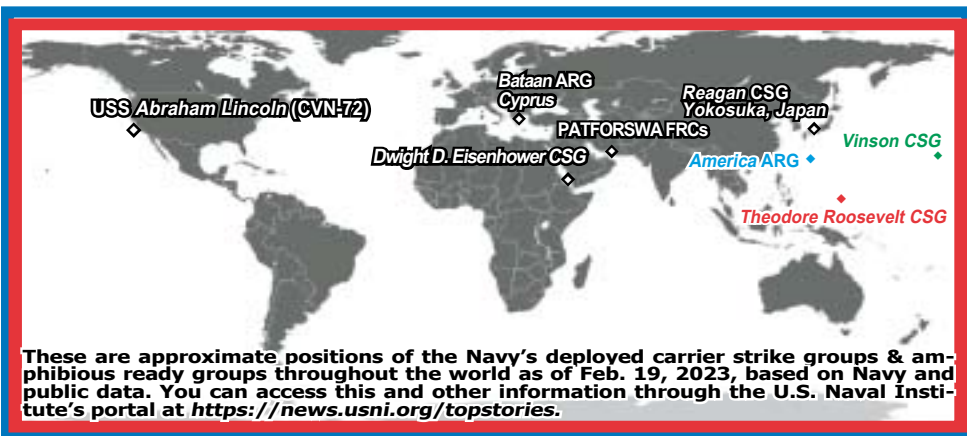
the roundtable that many of the concrete components needed for the dry dock construction are being made on a peninsula just across the harbor from the shipyard.

Temporary trestles are being built on both sides of the harbor to transport material to and from dockside, Morioka said. The "good news," Padhi said, is how long a dry dock can last, referring to the 105-year-old dry dock still being used at the shipyard.

"This dry dock has been designed with a 150-year service life target and could beat that," he said.

Over the next year, workers will be driving steel piles into the water to create what is essentially the footprint of the new dock, Padhi said. Once that's completed, the area inside can be dewatered. By 2027, all the "critical facilities" are expected to be in place so that shipyard personnel can begin certification and testing to make way for the first submarine in January 2028, he said.

The entire dry dock project is ultimately about giving the shipyard workforce "infrastructure they need to be successful." "And their success translates to the fleet's success and being able to have the critical, crucial, forward presence that our nation needs with the attack submarine force in the Indo-Pacific region," Padhi said.



These are approximate positions of the Navy's deployed carrier strike groups & amphibious ready groups throughout the world as of Feb. 19, 2023, based on Navy and public data. You can access this and other information through the U.S. Naval Institute's portal at <https://news.usni.org/topstories>.

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67 (39 Deployed, 28 Local)

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The USS Midway Museum is currently recruiting for docents, air craft restoration, ship restoration and safety volunteers. These assignments are a regular commitment of at least 6 months.

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Air Force to re-introduce warrant officer rank, other major changes

by C. Todd Lopez,
DOD News

AURORA, Colo. - To best optimize itself for Great Power Competition, the Air Force plans to, among other things, bring back warrant officers within the cyber and information technology professions, said Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. David W. Allvin during a presentation Feb. 12 at the Air Force Association's 2024 Warfare Symposium.

That change was among two dozen announced by senior Air Force officials. Each change is specifically designed to prepare the service for strategic power challenges from competitors like China and Russia.

"Both China and Russia are actively developing and fielding more advanced capabilities designed to defeat U.S. power projection," said Secretary of the Air Force Frank Kendall. "The need for modernization against capable, well-resourced strategic adversaries never stops. But modernization isn't the only thing we need to do to be competitive. Today we are announcing 24 key decisions we have made to improve both the readiness of the current force and our ability to stay competitive over

time, to continuously generate enduring competitiveness."

Those changes, Kendall said, focus on people, readiness, power projection and capability development and are implemented within the Department of the Air Force, the Air Force and the Space Force.

Spotlight: Science and Tech
Within the Air Force, Allvin explained, the service is looking to better attract and develop cutting-edge talent, specifically within information technology and cyber fields. The service plans to expand technical tracks for officers and create technical tracks for enlisted, and to also reintroduce the rank of warrant officer within the information technology and cyber fields as a way to maintain technical leadership with those skills.

"We know there are people who want to serve. They just want to code for their country. They would like to be network attack people and do that business," Allvin said. "But everybody needs to see themselves into the future beyond just this assignment or the next. So, developing that warrant officer track for this narrow career field, we anticipate will drive that tal-

ent in and help us to keep that talent. There's something specific about this career field, why it's attractive and it's a nice match for a warrant officer program. The pace of change of the cyber world, the coding world, the software world — it is so rapidly advancing, we need those airmen to be on the cutting edge and stay on the cutting edge."

The Air Force had warrant officers when it was created in

The Air Force had warrant officers when it was created in 1947, after being split off from the U.S. Army. But the service stopped appointing warrant officers in the late 1950s.

1947, after being split off from the U.S. Army. But the service stopped appointing warrant officers in the late 1950s.

Allvin also discussed changes in the way the Air Force will conduct exercises. The plan is for the service to implement large-scale exercises and mission-focused training which encompasses multiple operations plans to demonstrate and rehearse for complex, large-scale military operations, he said.

"We're going to reorient ourselves to more large-scale exercises rather than a smaller scale

that have been a product of the last two to three decades," Allvin said. "Large-scale means multiple weapons systems, multiple capabilities, coming together in a combat-simulated environment and showing our ability to execute the mission that's going to be expected of us in the high-end conflict."

Exercises in recent years, he said, have already been getting bigger. But those enhancements

have been driven at the local level, not from the top down. That will change.

"Our Air Force needs to institutionalize this," he said. "And we're going to do that."

He said the Air Force is looking at fiscal year 2025 for its first large-scale, multi-combatant command exercise targeted at Indo-Pacom.

Chief of Space Operations Gen. Chance Saltzman said a change underway within the Space Force is to enhance readiness by implementing standards

that reflect operations under contested conditions rather than those of a benign environment.

"The legacy force that we had, our roots ... were built around efficiency, built around a benign environment," he said. "So, the standards for readiness that we kind of held our forces to was different. It wasn't built for the domains that we're facing, a contested domain."

Now, Saltzman said, the Space Force must rewrite its standards for readiness centered around a contested domain, rather than an uncontested domain.

That, he said, means in part having the right mix of officers, enlisted personnel and civilians in Space Force units. It also means training must be aimed at more than just procedural competency.

"As soon as you put a red force in the mix, as soon as you put a threat in the mix, it radically changes your training," he said. "You have to have advanced training, you have to have tactics training, you have to understand how you work together, in-comms, out of comms, with other units, in order to continue to achieve the kinds

of effects in a contested domain when an adversary, a capable adversary, is doing everything they can to stop you from being successful."

Space Force, he said, will build a training infrastructure and a test infrastructure to validate its tactics so operators will know more than just how to operate equipment — but will be successful against an adversary.

Kristyn Jones, who is currently performing the duties of the under secretary of the Air Force, also pointed to changes at Department of the Air Force level. There, she said, among those changes, the department expects to create an Air Force Integrated Capabilities Office to lead capability development and resource prioritization. The office is expected to drive Department of the Air Force modernization investments.

"We'll be looking at capabilities across our services, not in stovepipes," she said. "We're enabling end-to-end creation of effects. This organization will help us to prioritize our investments and will be responsible for working with us to determine the next iteration of operational imperatives."

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USS JOHN L. CANLEY COMMISSIONING RECOGNIZES LEGACY OF VIETNAM VET, MEDAL OF HONOR RECIPIENT

by Julie Ann Ripley
Naval Surface Force
Pacific Fleet

CORONADO - With several Medal of Honor recipients in attendance, Expeditionary Sea Base USS *John L. Canley* (ESB 6) commissioned at Naval Air Station North Island here Feb. 17.

The first of its name, ESB 6 honors Marine Corps Sgt. Maj. (Ret.) John L. Canley, who was awarded the Medal of Honor 50 years after his actions during the Battle of Hue City. Canley served as company gunnery sergeant, Company A, First Battalion, First Marines, First Marine Division (Alpha/1/1) in the Republic of Vietnam from Jan. 31 to Feb. 6, 1968. Canley passed away in Bend, Ore., on May 11, 2022.

During the ceremony, guest speaker, Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro, reflected on the importance of what matters to the future.

"As the world's problems grow increasingly more complex and stability more uncertain, we need to tap into America's most precious resource - its people - to solve the issues of the future," said Del Toro.

"Because better technology and more ships will go to waste without the courageous Americans who will answer the call to service to their country."

In office when Canley received the Medal of Honor, Gen. Joseph P. Dunford, Jr., 19th Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and 36th Commandant of the Marine Corps, began by honoring Marine Corps Medal of Honor recipients Col. (Ret.) Robert J. Modrzejewski and Col. (Ret.) Jay R. Vargas, seated in the front row.

"In our initial engagement, I was struck by Sgt. Maj. Canley's sincerity, and his humility. In time, I gained an appreciation for his commitment to service, and his character as well," said Dunford. "In addition to being understated, Sgt. Maj. Canley was uncomfortable in being singled out for his actions in Vietnam. He was also offended by the lack of recognition Vietnam veterans received when they returned home."

"In addition to recognizing Sgt. Maj. Canley's heroism, I'd like to recognize the broader legacy of John Canley and his fellow Vietnam veterans," said the former Commandant. "Our Vietnam veterans have left us a

very proud and rich legacy."

Sgt. Major Carlos Ruiz, Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps, focused on the totality of Canley's service, in and out of uniform, and what it means.

"Sgt. Maj. Canley earned this honor over seven days, but he had 15 years of building Marines," said Ruiz. "Of making warriors. Getting them ready for the fight. On the back end of the seven days, he spent another decade, plus, continuing to serve in uniform."

Ruiz relayed how Canley influenced Marines today. While those seven days helped to name the ship, it's the 30 years that brought this group together. "He showed us how to show courage. How to do the right thing. He would walk with such calmness to pull his Marines out of danger. Those who were wounded; to get them out."

"There's this generation that keeps building on each other," said Ruiz. "They do some of the very similar things that John Canley did. And that's care for each other. Not that long ago, you saw Marines being exactly like John Canley taught them to do. Standing on a wall looking through a sea of people, trying

to find anyone else that they could save."

Ship's sponsor and Canley's daughter, Patricia A. Sargent, said, "To be able to give the order to bring this ship to life, I need to give you some information in regards to my father. My father understood that greatness is not achieved by the individual; it is achieved by the courageous acts of the many.

"The Marines of Alpha Company 1/1 are an example of that in what they achieved in the Battle of Hue City. In that battle, my father earned their Medal of Honor, which now resides on USS *John L. Canley*."

"This ship will achieve greatness, but it will only do that by the courageous actions of the many," said Sargent. "It is in honor of my father, my family, members of the 1/1, and the great people of the United States that I give the command: Officers and

Crew of USS *John L. Canley*, man our ship and bring her to life!"

Capt. Thomas Mays, the commanding officer, thanked Alpha/1/1, Canley's unit at Hue City, for keeping the gunny's legacy alive, and working to see



The crew of USS *John L. Canley* mans the ship during its commissioning ceremony U.S. Navy photo by MC1 Claire M. DuBois

that he received the recognition this nation owed him. He also thanked Sargent and maid of honor, granddaughter, Viktoria Sargent for the esteem and care they have given the Sailors before having a "personal conversation" with the crews - gold, blue, and civilian mariners.

"Our vessel's footprint upon the seas is not the extent of her

reach, nor the measure of her impact upon this world," he said. "The length, breadth, and endurance of that impact rests solely with you and I, with how we back one another, with how we handle our charge to care for this vessel, and with how we approach our sacred duty to defend these United States.

"Her spirit lived upon this earth for 83 years before her first plank was laid, imbued with honor, courage, and selfless sacrifice by her namesake. But the lifeblood that pumps through her veins, that makes her move, that faces down the threats our nation is confronted by, that lifeblood is you."

Four of USS *John L. Canley*'s crewmembers later re-enlisted aboard the new warship.

David Carver, President of General Dynamics NASSCO reminded everyone of ESB 6's "remarkable capabilities that will allow our servicemen and women to carry out a wide variety of missions, including mine counter measures, counter piracy operations, maritime security operations, humanitarian aid, disaster relief missions, special operations, and Marine Corps crisis response."

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SMOKY SITUATION | Sailors engage a simulated casualty during a general quarters drill in the hangar bay of aircraft carrier **Abraham Lincoln** in the Pacific Ocean, Feb. 7, 2024. U.S. Navy photo by Navy Petty Officer 2nd Class Ian Thomas



RECRUIT SUCCESS | Marines stand at attention during a graduation ceremony at **Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego**, Feb. 9, 2024. The event took place at the completion of a 13-week transformation, which included training for drill, marksmanship, basic combat skills and Marine Corps customs and traditions. U.S. Marine Corps photo by Lance Cpl. Alexandra M. Earl



NASA REHEARSAL | A Sailor lowers from an MH-60S Seahawk to a life raft during maritime recovery training in **San Diego Bay**, Feb. 14, 2024. Sailors from amphibious transport dock ship **San Diego**, and others, trained alongside NASA ahead of Underway Recovery Test 11, in preparation for NASA's Artemis II crewed mission. U.S. Navy photo by MC2 Olivia Rucker

Deputy assistant secretary of the Navy visits Naval Medical Center San Diego

by Regena Kowitz

Navy Bureau of Medicine and Surgery
SAN DIEGO – Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Military Manpower and Personnel Lisa Truesdale visited Naval Medical Center San Diego earlier this month to meet with staff who manage and support the Integrated Disability Evaluation System (IDES) process at the medical center.

Truesdale is responsible for establishment and oversight of policies related to health care, including IDES, within the Navy and Marine Corps.

During the first part of her visit, Truesdale met with IDES subject matter experts and both Rear Adm. Guido Valdes, commander, Naval Medical Forces Pacific, and Capt. Elizabeth Adriano, director of NMCSD.

Adriano led a group of senior medical staff to provide insight into the IDES process, while also addressing challenges and best practices. Among the best practices are “job fairs” that provide service members on limited duty and going through the IDES

process an opportunity to match their skills with areas around the medical center that could use the extra hands.

According to Adriano, when service members come to NMCSD on LIMDU, they’re “separated not only from their biological family, but also from their Navy family. They’re separated from their purpose, their job, their crew.”

While the main reason these service members are at the medical center is to get better and get back in the fight, by finding ways to keep them gainfully employed, the NMCSD team is giving them a purpose, which helps their morale and overall well-being, said Adriano.

The command is also working to make the IDES process as efficient as possible by leveraging electronic systems to help move things along and standardize the process across the entire command, said Adriano.

“This is such a huge system with so much variance,” said Valdes. “We have done some

good things and put in a lot of work, but there are so many steps in the process. To get our Sailors back to sea and our Marines back in the fight, we have to look at our process and understand where we can decrease the variances.”

Truesdale also visited the medical boards department where she thanked all the Physical Evaluation Board Liaison Officers, or PEBLO, for their dedication and all they do to guide service members through the IDES process.

“I feel very privileged to have such a good team,” said Cmdr. Nelly Rice, NMCSD’s director for Warrior Transition. “We have a lot of corporate knowledge here and they’re hard workers. I appreciate all they do.”

The next stop was to meet with staff at Wounded Warrior

Battalion - West, which has a detachment at the medical center. Truesdale learned more about how the battalion supports their Marines through the IDES process and how being co-located at NMCSD puts medical expertise within easy reach. The battalion is structured around a recovery care team that includes recovery care coordinators, nurse managers, athletic trainers and coaches, and leadership who all come together in support of their Marines.

At the end of the visit, Truesdale asked what the team wanted her to know.

“I’m going to host an IDES summit next week and it’s meant to purposefully figure out where we’re at, what we want to get after, what’s already going well, where we need to focus differently. We’re bringing a lot of people together to solve things.”

Memorial

continued from page 1

Nicholas Harvey, gave remarks. “There are no words that can express the pain that one feels when losing a loved one—a fellow Marine, a nephew, a brother, a son, a husband, a father,” said Harvey. “We can feel the presence of everyone in this hangar today, and that speaks volumes to the love, kinship, and brotherhood we share with our fallen Marines.”

The service moved toward its concluding events with the reading of “The Marines’ Prayer” and final roll call. Sergeant Maj. Damien Blaise, sergeant major of HMH-361, performed the final roll call, a military ritual which pays tribute to fallen members of a unit, signifying the very last time their name will be called in the Marine Corps.

A bugler with the 3rd MAW Band played “Taps,” a call to remember those who gave their lives in service to the nation. Retired U.S. Marine Corps Gunnery Sgt. Joel Daniel played “Lord Lovat’s Lament” on bagpipes, signaling the end of the ceremony.

The 3rd MAW deeply mourns the loss of our Marines and honors their sacrifice, knowing that their spirit and contributions live on within the squadron.



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Setting sail towards victory

by Petty Officer 3rd Class Faith McCollum, USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72)

PACIFIC OCEAN - Nimitz-Class aircraft carrier USS *Abraham Lincoln* concluded its Group Sail, with Carrier Strike Group (CSG) 3, Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 9 and Destroyer Squadron (DESRON) 21, in the Pacific Ocean, Feb. 16, marking a significant milestone for *Abraham Lincoln* Carrier Strike Group.

Group Sail offers a distinctive training experience that fosters collaboration within the strike group, allowing Sailors to tackle intricate challenges and refine their tactical skills in preparation for future deployments.

"Group Sail is a building block? one of the pillars needed for us to start integrating as a team, including our air wing, DESRON-21 and CSG-3 as we move through advanced phase and onto the integration phase," said Cmdr. Andrew Crouse, *Abraham Lincoln's* operations officer. "The training is mentored and assessed by Carrier Strike Group (CSG) 15 as we begin more advanced phase of training."

Crouse is responsible for overseeing the coordination, scheduling and execution of all training operations for *Abraham Lincoln* and facilitating the integration of air wing, DESRON-21 and CSG-3.

"We faced weather challenges most of the underway," said Crouse. "However, the team overcomes these challenges by having a solid plan, being adaptable, flexing to our backup plans, keeping a positive attitude, knowing that everyone is trying to do their

best to work towards a common goal and staying resilient."

Group Sail serves as a vital role in preparing the strike group for the advanced phase of training.

"Group Sail is the first opportunity for all individual units within the strike group to come together for integrated training," said Lt. Cmdr. Robert Hopkins, a Group Sail assessor aboard *Abraham Lincoln*. "The main goal is to improve planning processes across all warfare areas in preparation for more advanced operations."

As an assessor, Hopkins oversees the effective and safe functioning of the strike group while sticking to a dynamic schedule.

"We track if aircraft and ships are in position to start events on time," said Hopkins. "It is to the utmost importance that CSG-3 works together as a team."

As *Abraham Lincoln* wraps up Group Sail and moves to the next phase, it is important to note a few things. While grades will be assigned across all mission areas, the ultimate goal remains constant: to continue integrating and training

to build more advanced warfighting capability and tactical proficiency across all domains. Not only is it crucial for the ship to work well together, but also for each individual Sailor to perform their job effectively.

"I'm excited for each Sailor to focus on improving and getting better every day, both personally and professionally, no matter what your job is," said Crouse. "It's important to gain experience and build resiliency while grooming our systems and processes."

SPOTLIGHT

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

On March 2, 1945, Ruth C. Isaacs, Katherine Horton and Inez Patterson became the first African American Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service (WAVES) to enter the Hospital Corps School at the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, Md.

Sailors can finally put their hands in their pockets, as Navy unveils changes to uniform rules

by Matthew Adams, Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON - The Navy has lifted its ban on Sailors keeping their hands in their pockets along with other uniform changes announced Feb. 14 in an updated service policy.

"Sailors are authorized to have hands in their pockets [and] when doing so doesn't compromise safety nor prohibit the proper rendering of honors and courtesies," the service memo said. The policy changes take effect immediately, which resulted from feedback from Sailors and requests from commanders, the memo said.

The Navy is also bringing back the female combination cover, known as the bucket cover, which was eliminated in 2018. The female combination cover can be worn by Sailors of any rank with the service dress and dinner dress uniforms, as well as by chief petty officers and officers while in service khaki and summer white uniforms. The bucket cover can't be purchased at Navy Exchange Uniform Centers and must be "privately obtained if desired for wear."

The service is also allowing female Sailors to wear the tiara as an optional uniform component when wearing dinner dress blue and white jacket uniforms. Sailors can purchase the tiara from the Navy Exchange online as a "special order item." Women can now wear false eyelashes or eyelash extensions that "project a natural appearance and are no longer than 14 millimeters in length as measured from the eyelid to the tip of the eyelash."

Female Sailors are also allowed to wear T-shirts specifically designed for women if the shirts adhere to the Navy's requirements for color, fabric and neck configuration.

"The intent of this policy update is to address expressed dissatisfaction regarding the required wear of male or unisex T-shirts that are not designed to fit female bodies," the memo said.

All Sailors are now allowed to wear black or navy blue leggings or tights with the service's physical training shorts and wear "commercially procured coyote brown backpacks" while in the Navy working uniform.

Other uniform changes include allowing chaplains to wear their new insignia warfare pin, which the service announced in December, and the Navy's forthcoming drone pilots to wear their wings.



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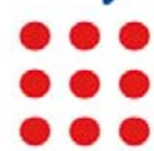
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by Jan Wagner

Reflecting on the decades-long evolution of 'AutoMatters & More'

"AutoMatters" knew this column by before. It would still contain the automotive content that they had enjoyed, and more.

When asked what it is about, I tend to tell people that "AutoMatters & More" is about almost anything and everything — except the two very polarizing topics of religion and politics, to avoid alienating a large portion of my audience. If I had any doubt about my decision to avoid such controversial topics, my struggle a few years ago to write a politically neutral column about what was presented as a non-partisan political event called Politicon made me realize that it is extremely difficult to provide inoffensive, balanced political coverage — although I do believe that eventually I was successful at doing that, albeit with watered-down text that was unlikely to offend anyone. I never even tried once to cover religion.

I'd like to assure you that I have absolutely no intention of moving away from sharing a wide variety of automotive content with you. For example, for many years I've been covering NASCAR stock car racing in Southern California. For the past three years, that coverage has included the "Busch Light CLASH at The Coliseum." Unfortunately, the recent 2024 event was the last of a three-year contract with the LA Coliseum, and there is a strong likelihood that contract might not be renewed — especially since attendance was so low at the 2024 event, due to the realized prediction of catastrophic flooding in the Los Angeles area that was caused by torrential rainfall in a very short period of time. The dire forecasts for that

rain prompted NASCAR to make the unprecedented decision, with only a few hours notice, to upend the schedule of the 2024 event by holding its two feature races (the "Busch Light CLASH at The Coliseum" and the NASCAR Mexico Series race) on Saturday instead of Sunday, in the hope of beating the rain (they did, but barely). The preliminary races that were supposed to run on Saturday and the live musical performances were cancelled.

Since this event might not be held there again anytime soon, together with the uncertainty of when — or if — the much talked-about short track replacement for the demolished Auto Club Speedway in Southern California will be built, I decided to share with you a large number of my (individually edited) photos of this NASCAR event. I hope to upload those photos this weekend to the "AutoMatters & More" website, along with the accompanying text of column 826, entitled: "Unprecedented deluge of rain in LA upends NASCAR CLASH."

I encourage you to visit the "AutoMatters & More" website at <https://automatters.net>, to explore a wide variety of content dating back to 2002. There you will find bonus photos to accompany the text of the columns that you enjoy in the other publications that also bring you "AutoMatters & More." Sometimes it takes me a while to edit and upload these additional photos, but I do intend to do so. 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.

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– AutoMatters & More #827

The Meat & Potatoes of Life



by
Lisa
Smith
Molinari

It came in the mail the other day. Believing the envelope contained another bill, I opened it hastily, not suspecting that the contents would rock my world. The letter inside was a simple referral from my military health insurance carrier, but the type-written words on that paper may as well have said, "You're officially nuts. Get therapy now."

My new doctor at the Naval Health clinic had recently discovered that I had high blood pressure for the first time in my life. Following his guidance, I'd lost ten pounds, exercised more, drastically improved my diet, and began taking a low-dose of blood pressure medication.

I felt terrific. However, when I sat on the window seat beside my bed to take my blood pressure each day, the little machine told another story. My doc doubled my meds, but my numbers were still high.

"Are you under any stress?" he finally asked. I spilled the beans.

The year 2020 was supposed to be a good one for me. My book was to be published in May, and the military charity that I cofounded and managed was beginning its first year of operations. After all those years of handling our family life as a military spouse, I was finally accomplishing my own goals!

However, a pesky little bug came

Avoidance coping: Why crocheting is bad for my health

along and thrust the world into a global pandemic. My book events were cancelled, and libraries and bookstores closed. Our nonprofit had to raise funds during an economic crisis. As a hard-working graduate of the Gen X school of hard knocks, I thought I could handle anything. I powered through, using hobbies as an escape when I felt overwhelmed.

During and after the pandemic, I amassed a seemingly endless repertoire of distracting hobbies to whisk me away from my troubles, including stock investing, weaving pot holders, shell collecting, true crime bingeing, sudoku puzzling, crochet, cooking, vegetable gardening, refinishing furniture, golf, listening to audio books, collecting vintage glassware, propagating succulents, sailing, candle making, painting, beading, and more.

I now have so many hobbies to distract me from stress, I'm stressed because I don't have enough time for all my hobbies.

The Navy clinic doctor told me that stress, or anxiety, is a common cause of high blood pressure. I assured him that I'd be fine, because I had plenty of hobbies to take my mind off all that stress. Turns out, my hobbies may be causing my health problem.

People can form habits to cope with stress that actually intensify anxiety, I learned. Even if a person has not been diagnosed with an anxiety disorder, he or she can develop behavior patterns intended to avoid stress, that paradoxically increase his or her anxiety levels. Chronic

procrastination, drug and alcohol abuse, binge eating, and hoarding are obvious dysfunctional coping mechanisms, but other, more subtle behaviors can also create a cycle of avoidance, guilt and stress.

"Avoidance coping" is a maladaptive (unhealthy) way of avoiding stress rather than directly managing it. Stressors, such as household clutter, personal conflict, work demands, etc., can snowball when ignored. So avoiding tasks or situations that may seem stressful or overwhelming can only make matters worse.

There is a fine line between hobbies that we use to refresh, relax and recharge, and those that we turn to for avoidance. When assessing habits and hobbies, it's important to ask, "Do I feel worse afterward? Am I seeking escape when I'm overwhelmed? Are my relationships, career, hygiene, or household suffering as a result of my pursuits?"

When the Navy clinic doctor suggested "A therapist could help you find things in your past that pre-dispose you to anxiety, and could also help you develop healthier coping strategies," all I heard was, "Hey lady, you're wackadoodle." The idea of me needing therapy to deal with silly old stress seemed ridiculous, and made me want to binge-watch a limited-series crime documentary or garden for three hours while listening to an audiobook. But I reluctantly agreed to follow his advice, realizing that I needed to make my health a priority, whatever it takes.

I haven't scheduled the appointment with my new therapist yet. I'll do it right after I finish my latest sudoku puzzle.

Veterans News

House lawmaker criticizes plan by VA to offer low-interest rates to vets facing foreclosure

by Linda F. Hersey
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON—A plan by the Department of Veterans Affairs to introduce a low-interest refinancing option for veterans with VA-backed loans facing foreclosure drew ire of a House lawmaker who complained some homeowners might choose to default for lower monthly payments.

Rep. Merrick Van Orden, R-Wis., chairman of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs subpanel on economic opportunity, recently questioned whether the new VA Servicing Purchase program - also known as VASP - will cause some homeowners to forgo paying back home loans to qualify for VA refinancing at the lower rate of 2.5 percent offered by the program. The average interest rate now for a 30-year fixed mortgage is 7.24 percent, according to Bankrate, a consumer financial services company that surveys major lenders weekly.

"It's essential that we support the dream of home ownership for veterans who served our country," said Van Orden, a Navy veteran who used a traditional VA home loan to buy his house. "I have used this program myself, and it is awesome." But he also said he

has "grave reservations" that the new VASP program would result in unintended consequences that could destroy the VA home loan program.

The refinancing option is expected to be rolled out in spring, according to the VA. Under the program, the VA would purchase the loan from the servicer to hold it in its own portfolio. Qualifying veterans would be allowed to refinance their mortgages under the VASP rate of 2.5 percent after falling behind on at least two mortgage payments.

"I'm concerned that this program poses a moral hazard and will encourage veterans to become delinquent on their loans to let VA take over the servicing of their payments," Van Orden said at a House hearing about the home loan program.

He said if the VA then experienced high delinquency rates under the VASP program, it could end up being responsible for thousands of home loans it serviced. Van Orden questioned whether the VA should be in the business of servicing loans and expressed concern that the VA would force veterans out of their homes if they failed to pay down their mortgages. Given that veterans are 50

percent more likely to be homeless than others, Van Orden said he could not imagine "the VA would go so far as to be kicking people out of their homes — default or no default."

Under those circumstances, Van Orden speculated the federal government would end up owning mortgage-delinquent properties and letting the veterans stay in their homes.

"IT'S NO LONGER PRIVATE PROPERTY. IT IS PUBLIC PROPERTY WITH PRIVATE CITIZENS LIVING IN PUBLIC PROPERTY. THAT WAS TRIED IN THE SOVIET UNION. I'M NOT SIGNING UP FOR THAT."

— REP. MERRICK VAN ORDEN

Van Orden said the House subcommittee has received little information on how the VASP program will operate, its costs and its overall effect on the mortgage markets. "All of this is a cause for concern," he said. "We need answers on VASP."

The VA announced the VASP program in November 2023 in the Federal Register that stated "VA is initiating an expanded program using existing refund provisions. Under this program, VA will exercise its statutory op-

tion to purchase the loan from the servicer and VA will hold the loan in VA's own loan portfolio."

VA-guaranteed loans comprise more than 10 percent of the mortgage market, according to the VA. The VA worked to assist thousands of veterans during the coronavirus pandemic who fell behind on mortgage payments, said Rep. Mike Levin of California, the top Democrat on the subcommittee. He said many financial relief measures implemented during the

pandemic have ended.

Levin said the VA in December 2023 paused foreclosures on VA home loans through May 31. The measure allows veterans who have defaulted on their loans to stay in their homes. Under the foreclosure pause, the VA extended its coronavirus refund modification program that allowed the VA to purchase past due payments and give veterans a second mortgage with no interest.

Lenders meanwhile are encouraged by the VA to work with delinquent homeowners to modify payments with plans that are more affordable. Last year, the VA helped more than 145,000 veterans and their families stay in their homes through various programs, the agency said.

<https://www.stripes.com/veterans/2024-02-16/veterans-home-loans-foreclosures-house-lawmakers-13028451.html>

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Friday, February 23
6:00 PM The Beekeeper (2024) r
Saturday - February 24
6:00 PM The Beekeeper (2024) r
Saturday - February 24
1:00 PM Madame Web pg13
3:30 PM Mean Girls (2024) pg13
6:00 PM The Beekeeper (2024) r
Sunday - February 25
1:00 PM Madame Web pg13
3:30 PM American Fiction r
Friday - March 1
6:00 PM Argyle pg13
Saturday - March 2
1:00 PM The Beekeeper (2024) r
3:30 PM Mean Girls (2024) pg13
6:00 PM Argyle pg13
Sunday - March 3
1:00 PM Madame Web pg13
3:30 PM The Beekeeper (2024) r

Naval Base Theater - NBSD

619-556-5568, Bldg. 71
3465 Senn Rd.

Friday - February 23
6:00 PM The Beekeeper (2024) r
Saturday - February 24
3:10 PM Madame Web pg13
6:00 PM The Beekeeper (2024) r
Sunday - February 25
1:00 PM Mean Girls (2024) pg13
3:50 PM Madame Web pg13
Thursday - February 29
6:00 PM The Beekeeper (2024) r
8:10 PM American Fiction r
Friday - March 1
6:00 PM Argyle pg13
Saturday - March 2
3:10 PM Madame Web pg13
6:00 PM Argyle pg13
Sunday - March 3
1:00 PM Madame Web pg13
3:40 PM The Beekeeper (2024) r

Bob Hope Theater 577-4143

MCAS Miramar Bldg 2242

Friday, February 23
6:00 PM The Beekeeper - 2024 (R)
Saturday, February 24
3:00 PM - Madame Web (PG-13)
6:30 PM - The Beekeeper - 2024 (R)
Sunday, February 25
12:00 PM - Mean Girls - 2024 (PG-13)
3:00 PM - American Fiction (R)

SOCIAL SECURITY MATTERS

How is my Social Security benefit calculated?

by Russell Gloor, National Social Security Advisor at the AMAC Foundation, the non-profit arm of the Association of Mature American Citizens

Dear Rusty: I appreciate your recent article dispelling the myth that politicians have stolen Social Security money. As a CPA, I dispel this myth repeatedly to clients who falsely claim SS funds have been raided. But another thing I deal with often is how SS benefits are calculated. I know the formula for determining each person's benefit amount is complex, but I have had to explain numerous times that those who put the most into Social Security get the lowest rate of return and those who put the least in get the highest return based on the way the benefit formula is structured. I get tired of people complaining that monthly Social Security payments are higher for retired doctors and other highly paid individuals. Can you please explain how Social Security is weighted in favor of lower income workers?
Signed: Tired of the Misunderstandings

Dear Tired: Please don't be frustrated. Because of the program's complexity, Social Security is prone to misunderstanding, and educating the misinformed is an important professional duty we share. Here's how each person's SS benefit is determined: The first thing to know is that each person's SS retirement benefit is not based on their financial contributions to the program. Social Security's purpose is to provide a benefit which replaces a portion of the person's pre-retirement income, so the SS benefit is based on actual lifetime earnings, not on the payroll taxes withheld from those earnings.

Social Security has your lifetime earnings record (obtained annually from the IRS) and that record determines your "primary insurance amount" or "PIA." Your "PIA" is initially determined in your eligibility year (usually age 62) and is the amount you will get if you claim for benefits to start exactly at your full retirement age (FRA).

To develop your PIA, Social Security first adjusts (indexes) each year of your lifetime earnings (up to the annual payroll tax cap) to account for inflation. They then select the 35 inflation-adjusted years in which you earned the most, from which they compute your average monthly earnings over your lifetime (this is called your Average Indexed Monthly Earnings, or "AIME"). They then break your AIME into three segments, the first of which includes a majority of - and possibly all of - your AIME. They then take a percentage of each segment and total those three amounts to determine your PIA. The first segment is the largest and 90% of that first segment contributes most of your PIA. Smaller percentages of the other two segments (32% and 15% respectively if your AIME is higher), are then added to the first computation to arrive at your full PIA - the amount you get if you start benefits in the month you reach your FRA. Note that since most of the PIA comes from the first large segment of each person's AIME, lower income workers get a higher percentage of their lifetime average monthly amount.

Since benefits are based on earnings, those with lower lifetime earnings do, indeed, get a smaller benefit than those with higher average lifetime earnings, but the percentage of pre-retirement replacement income lower income workers receive is higher than for those with higher monthly average lifetime earnings. The Social Security benefit for lower income workers is typically about 40% of their pre-retirement average monthly income, while those with higher lifetime average earnings may get a benefit as little as 20% of their average monthly pre-retirement earnings. In that sense, the Social Security benefit formula is progressive and weighted in favor of lower income workers. Nevertheless, albeit a smaller replacement percentage, higher income workers receive a higher monthly SS benefit because of their higher lifetime earnings. Even so, those higher earners did, indeed, contribute more payroll taxes from their higher earnings.

Each person's SS retirement benefit amount is a percentage of their pre-retirement income. Those with higher pre-retirement income also contributed more to the Social Security program than did those with lower earnings. But their higher SS benefit amount is based on their higher pre-retirement earnings, not on payroll taxes paid from those higher earnings.

Toyota Summer Concert Series line-up for San Diego County Fair announced

The Toyota Summer Concert Series at the 2024 San Diego County Fair will feature comedy legends, hip-hop and R&B icons, Latin favorites, Country and Southern Rock stars, and a top reggae group.

Tickets will go on sale to the public at 10 a.m. Friday, March 8 online at sdfair.com. Fair insiders can grab the best seats in the house with pre-sale tickets available from 10 a.m. Wednesday, March 6 through 11:59 p.m. Thursday, March 7 by using the promo code GROOVY2024 online at sdfair.com.

Tickets to the Toyota Summer Concert Series include same-day admission to the San Diego County Fair, the largest community celebration in the region. The Fair this year will run June 12-July 7 with closures on Mondays and Tuesdays.

Shows begin at 7:30 p.m. unless otherwise noted. Here are the estimated price ranges for the tickets, which include same-day Fair admission:

Wednesday, June 12: Kolohe Kai; \$55-\$95
Thursday, June 13: Old Dominion; \$65-\$125
Friday, June 14: TLC; \$45-\$75
Sunday, June 16: Pepe Aguilar; \$60-\$125
Wednesday, June 19: Whiskey Myers; \$55-\$100
Friday, June 21: Kings of Late Night: Jay Leno, Craig Ferguson and Arsenio Hall; \$50-\$75
Thursday, June 27: Little Big Town; \$55-\$80
Friday, June 28: Ludacris; \$40-\$70
Sunday, June 30: Los Tucanes de Tijuana; \$45-\$80
Wednesday, July 3: Yung Gravy with Taylor Holder; \$40-\$70
Thursday, July 4: Fireworks Spectacular; \$20-\$25
Sunday, July 7: Hombres G; \$50-\$85

The San Diego County Fair is the largest annual event in the county with an attendance of nearly 1 million. The theme for the 2024 Fair is "Let's Go Retro," a nostalgic voyage back in time from the '50s through the start of the new millennium. The 20-day Fair season will run June 12 through July 7, with closures on Mondays and Tuesdays. For more information, visit sdfair.com.

Closing the clinical trials disparity gap

by Jay Furst

Getting sufficient representation of racial and ethnic minority populations in clinical trials remains a pervasive challenge, despite concerted efforts by researchers and mandates set by funding sources and regulatory agencies. A lack of diversity in research results in continued disparities and poorer health outcomes in underrepresented communities.

An article in the January edition of Mayo Clinic Proceedings proposes a wide range of strategies to help researchers improve community engagement with underrepresented racial and ethnic populations and reduce the “clinical trials disparity gap.”

“Through careful deliberation and involvement with community partners, researchers can develop tailored blueprints for clinical trials that can ensure that our science reflects the needs of all populations,” says Folakemi Odedina, Ph.D., first author of the article, titled “Community Engagement Strategies for Underrepresented Racial and Ethnic Populations.”

The article is the latest in a series of thematic reviews in Mayo Clinic Proceedings about the digital transformation of clinical trials to improve healthcare and address health inequities through innovations in research design.

Racial and ethnic minority populations remain underrepresented in clinical trials despite decades of mandates, commitments and good intentions, Dr. Odedina says. “This inequity produces clinical trial demographics that are not representative and thus perpetuate health disparities in marginalized racial and ethnic communities,” she says.

Among the strategies discussed in the article:

- Making community engagement a key element of clinical trials design to achieve representative demographics and findings. “Community-engaged research is foundational to incorporating community voice and priorities into clinical and translational research,” the authors say.

- Using best practices for community-engaged trials, including defining the community, identifying community partners, determining the level of community engagement and sustaining engagement over time to deepen relationships.

- Remaining open at the research level to changes that allow shared power with the community and include opportunities for input and feedback from the community for continuous improvement.

A demographically representative and inclusive trial design is essential for optimal diagnosis, treatment and prevention decisions to be made, especially for underserved and marginalized populations, the authors say.

Service members to be surveyed about health behaviors

by Gia Oney,
MHS Communications

The Department of Defense is fielding the 2024 Health Related Behaviors Survey to nearly 250,000 randomly selected active duty service members. This year’s survey includes questions mental and physical health, substance use, and other health topics related to service member readiness.

Service members selected to complete the survey will find a link in the inbox for their military email address as it is recorded in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System, or DEERS. The survey is sent to a randomly selected group of active duty members across all military branches, pay grades, race/ethnicities, and ages.

Since 1980, the DOD has partnered with third party survey assessors to gauge health-related trends within the force. Typically offered every two or three years, the survey has evolved from focusing strictly on substance use and abuse to a broader look at overall service member health and well-being.

The HRBS is the Department of Defense flagship survey for understanding health, health-related behaviors, and well-being of service members, allowing leaders to better understand the readiness of the force,” said U.S. Navy Capt. Kenneth Richter, director of psychological health for the Office of the Undersecretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness. “Increased participation by

service members help develop conclusions that better represent the overall population of the DOD.”

Survey answers are confidential, and a participant’s responses are not shared with the Department of Defense or service branches in a way that can identify them.

Echoing Richter’s sentiments on survey participation, Dr. Daniel Evatt, the chief of the research execution section or the Defense Health Agency’s Psychological Health Center of Excellence, emphasized the importance of the survey in understanding the health of the force.

“If members of a particular occupation or demographic group don’t have a high rate of response, then we may not have a very good understanding of the needs of that group,” Evatt said. “If you are invited to respond, then your answers will help make sure that we understand experiences of service members like you.”

Outcomes

“Some of the major findings from the 2018 survey showed an increase from the 2015 survey in reports of health-related behaviors that are associated with



16th Sustainment Brigade’s Team A conducts physical training around the Baumholder military community in Baumholder, Germany. All active duty and Reserve service members are eligible to receive the 2024 Health Related Behaviors Survey. U.S. Army photo by Sgt. 1st Class Anthony King.

poor outcomes. However, service members’ self-reported behaviors appeared or above general population benchmarks set by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services for physical health and functioning, including rates of obesity, frequency of exercise, and high-risk group HIV testing,” Richter said.

“The final results [of the survey] are read and used by policy makers, program managers, and researchers, and they can help us Click to closeDirect CareDirect care refers to military hospitals and clinics, also known as “military treatment facilities” and “MTFs.”direct care

where it is needed most,” Evatt said. “Sometimes the findings tell us that a behavior issue is more or less common than previously thought.”

The survey window extends from February to April.

The DOD has partnered with the RAND Corporation, a private research and analysis company, to conduct the survey. Recipients will receive an email from 2024hrbs.com with a survey control number and a link to the welcome page. For more information and an extensive FAQ on the purpose of the survey, recipients are encouraged to visit health.mil/HRBS

ARMED SERVICES YMCA CAMP PENDLETON

STRENGTHENING OUR MILITARY FAMILY™

WHO WE ARE

The mission of the Armed Services YMCA Camp Pendleton is to enhance the lives of military members and their families in spirit, mind, and body through programs relevant to unique challenges of military life. For the past 81 years, our goal has been to strengthen military families who work or reside on Camp Pendleton.

OUR IMPACT

<div style="display: flex; align-items: center; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <div> <p>QUALITY, ACCESSIBLE, AFFORDABLE CHILD CARE</p> <p>Helped combat high rates of military spouse unemployment by providing military families with 50k+ hours of childcare in 2023.</p> </div> </div>	<div style="display: flex; align-items: center; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <div> <p>ACADEMIC AND SOCIAL SUPPORT PROGRAMS</p> <p>Ensured 4k+ military children received academic and social-emotional support to overcome the unique challenges of their parent’s military service.</p> </div> </div>
<div style="display: flex; align-items: center; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <div> <p>FOOD, DIAPER, AND FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE</p> <p>Distributed 90k+ lbs of food to 14.8K military families in 2023; supported 3.4k+ individuals with commissary cards and gifts during the Holidays.</p> </div> </div>	<div style="display: flex; align-items: center; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <div> <p>SINGLE MARINE SUPPORT</p> <p>Supported 13.2k School of Infantry Marines with recreation and respite on the weekends.</p> </div> </div>

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<p>FISHER CHILDREN’S CENTER</p> <p>Offers accessible, accredited, quality and affordable childcare for young children to help prepare them for future success.</p>	<p>OPERATION LITTLE LEARNERS</p> <p>An interactive parent and child education program that offers parents and their preschoolers an opportunity to learn and grow.</p>	<p>OPERATION HERO</p> <p>A no-cost after school program designed to help military kids who may be struggling with change get back on track at home and in school.</p>
<p>CAMP HERO</p> <p>Encourages healthy living and provides outdoor activities and social bonding opportunities for military children.</p>	<p>OPERATION KID COMFORT</p> <p>Custom, hand-made quilts to help children cope with the separation of a parent’s deployment.</p>	<p>SERVICE EVENTS</p> <p>Support military families through dances, giveaways, and community events.</p>
<p>HOLIDAY SUPPORT</p> <p>Toy giveaways and financial assistance for active duty service members and their families during the holidays.</p>	<p>SOI RECREATION CENTER</p> <p>Open on the weekends, this recreation space provides a place for School of Infantry students to relax and recharge.</p>	<p>FOOD DISTRIBUTION & FINANCIAL SUPPORT</p> <p>Assistance with food, diapers, gas, and other necessities through monthly distributions, a food pantry, and emergency commissary and gas cards.</p>

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