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ON OUR WAY Sailors assigned to *USS Makin Island* approach the well deck in a rigid hull inflatable boat during an air-cushioned landing craft emergency training exercise while underway in the 3rd Fleet area of operations, Sept. 11, 2025. U.S. Navy photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Minh-Thy Chu

IN THE COCKPIT: DOCUSERIES CAPTURES INTENSITIES OF ELITE FIGHTER PILOT TRAINING

by Katie Lange, DoW News

While movies like “Top Gun” and “Top Gun: Maverick” show people a glamorized version of military fighter pilot life, most people really have no idea what it takes to become an elite aviator, until now.

A new National Geographic docuseries called “Top Guns: The Next Generation,” follows a handful of Navy and Marine Corps officers as they go through advanced strike fighter training - the last, hardest and most unforgiving phase of fighter pilot qualification training.

The show’s producers chose to film that phase because of its intensity, but it’s also what audiences are most familiar with. The show skips past the classroom training and highlights when students go beyond being “just a pilot” to what it takes to become a fighter pilot.



Navy Sailors and civilians take selfies in front of a TV show backdrop ahead of a screening of “Top Guns: The Next Generation,” in Washington, Sept. 4. U.S. Navy photo by Kristoffer Tripplaar

“It’s the most crucial point of their training. It’s really the point in which they can fail, and their dreams of becoming a fighter pilot are over,” said Karen Edwards, the series’ showrunner. “They spent years getting to this point, and now it’s all on the line.”

When choosing candidates for the show, Edwards said they met with about 30 trainees assigned to Training Wing One, based at Naval Air Station Meridian, Miss., where most of the series was shot for more than a year. They selected a variety of students with different backgrounds, experience levels and skills.

“One of the participants used to be a yoga teacher and is now a Marine,” Edwards said. “Another guy talked about how he was adopted at birth and how that has impacted him and his religion. For others, it’s in the family blood.”

Marine Corps Capt. Micah Nissly was the adoptee Edwards mentioned. He said his dad, a pastor, impressed upon him the importance of public service and giving back, so he enlisted in the Marines. After eight years of service, he went to officer candidate school before starting aviation training.

“I think it’s important for individuals to know that, regardless of their upbringing and how they came into this, they have this opportunity,” Nissly said. “Naval flight training is truly the great equalizer: you give it all. You make it or you don’t. And I think your background matters so little ... what matters is your performance.”

To read the entire story, refer to <https://www.war.gov/News/Feature-Stories/Story/Article/4311462/>.

What to expect in the next iteration of MREs

by Katie Lange, Pentagon News

The old saying “variety is the spice of life” is especially true when it comes to food. While service members in combat will eat whatever they’re given, having good meals that match what they might eat at home is important for morale and readiness.

Every year, food scientists at the Army Combat Capabilities Development Command Soldier Center’s Combat Feeding Division in Natick, Massachusetts, work to develop new components for meals ready-to-eat. They’re based on warfighter feedback received by each service to add variety or replace unpopular items. Researchers also look at trends in the commercial sector to see what might play well on newer menus.

The next iteration of MREs is MRE 46, which is expected to come out in 2026. The menu’s developers said that in MRE 46, they plan to replace the beef taco filling, pork sausage patty and jalapeno pepper jack beef patty — all of which were not rated high among surveyed service members — with a Cuban-style beef picadillo with vegetables, buffalo-style chicken, and a Thai-style red curry with chicken and rice.

“Buffalo chicken is something that [soldiers] have requested. It’s a popular item ... so we’re hoping that this item will be longstanding,” explained Julie Edwards, a Combat Feeding Division senior technologist and registered dietitian.

More protein-filled snacks will round out the MREs, including new s’mores recovery bars and freeze-dried chocolate peanut butter bites. Another big focus of the newest iteration is more caffeinated products.

“What we’ve noticed is caffeine is one of the least consumed items in the MRE,” Edwards said. “Previous generations were big coffee drinkers, but the newer generation of soldiers are not.”

As replacements, researchers looked to develop new beverage options, as well as energy chews, energy gels, caffeinated gum and even caffeinated jelly beans.

see MREs, page 2

Navy issues instructions for reporting improper social media use


In a Sept. 22 *Navy Times* story by Riley Ceder, the Chief of Naval Operations released a Sept. 15 memo that provides guidance on how to report unprofessional social media use. The memo, which began circulating online and was confirmed as real by a spokesperson for the CNO, details a multi-step process for identifying and tracking reports of inappropriate online behavior. Navy Adm. Daryl Caudle, who was confirmed as the new CNO on Aug. 1, signed the document, which was addressed to Chief of Navy Personnel Vice Adm. Jeffrey Czerewko. “When reports of Service members’ unprofessional personal social media use are received at the Echelon 1 level, those reports will be forwarded to you for routing and tracking,” Caudle said in the memo. The CNO instructs Czerewko to: a. Identify the Service member’s chain of command; b. Forward the report to the Echelon II and Echelon III commander to delegate for review, inquiry and any action as appropriate; c. Direct the cognizant Echelon II and Echelon III commander to provide you with timely status reports; and d. Provide me [Caudle] with routine status updates. Complete story at <https://www.navytimes.com/news/your-navy/2025/09/22/navy-issues-instructions-for-reporting-improper-social-media-use/>.

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Air Force Staff Sgt. Hunter Torrey, left, of the Air National Guard, passes some candy from his MRE to Air Force Tech. Sgt. Brendan Davison in South Burlington, Vt., June 11, 2025. U.S. Air Force photo by Airman Raymond LaChance

MREs

continued from page 1

Edwards said service members also requested a larger, more durable towelette.

"Any new item that we get that can help bring variety and increase acceptability is important," Edwards said. "We know that eating an MRE isn't everyone's No. 1 thing, but we want to make it safe to eat — that's our No. 1 priority — and then to make it taste good as well."

Like with the new close combat assault ration, developers also focused on reducing the weight and volume of the new MREs without cutting calories or nutritional value.

All new items being considered for MREs must meet shelf-life requirements before they can be evaluated by warfighters, meaning they have to still be edible after spending six months in 100 degrees Fahrenheit and three years at 80 degrees Fahrenheit.

Edwards said a lot of commercial items that could be considered for MREs wouldn't pass muster. For example, she said it's been a challenge to find snacks — aside from nuts — that provide 10 grams or more of protein. Many of them have a chemical reaction over time that gives them an unappetizing appearance. She used beef jerky as an example.

"I know in the commercial sector, you see lots of beef jerky that's shelf stable. However, it has a very short commercial shelf life," Edwards said. "What happens to jerky over time is it gets dark in color and becomes unappealing. So, we had a challenge of finding jerkies that meet our shelf-life requirements."

MREs also have to meet specific nutritional requirements under the DOW-wide Army Regulation 40-25. Those requirements are different than nutritional needs for civilians and can often depend on environmental factors.

After shelf-life requirements are

met, operational testing can begin. Teams of researchers go out and work with warfighters in the field to determine what they like, then behavioral psychologists hold focus groups to elaborate on the data. Edwards said it's important they get honest feedback from everyone at every rank.

"We want you to give us this feedback because it does help. It does make a difference," she said. "Operational tests are very expensive and time-consuming. So, we want to make sure that we're being good stewards of investing money in the right areas."

From there, the feedback is analyzed and presented to service leaders who are part of the Joint Services Operational Rations Forum. Those folks decide which new items to implement.

"From start to finish, it's about a four-year process until the soldier actually sees [the new meals]," Edwards said.

Meanwhile, items for MRE 47, which is expected to come out sometime in 2027, are already in development. One service request was to include more plant-based items, Edwards said. For snacking, the Combat Feeding Division has developed plant-based animal crackers, a new recovery bar, a protein bar and fruit-flavored cereal. Edwards said the four vegetarian meals currently available to troops will be replaced with plant-based entrees.

There are kosher and halal meals available for service members, too, but they're managed by Defense Logistics Agency Troop Support, not the Combat Feeding Division. items



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Top 5

- 4 service members aboard helicopter that crashed in Washington state
- Senators question legality of strikes on alleged drug boats in Caribbean
- New quick reaction force will counter military base drone incursions
- Afghanistan rejects U.S. return to Bagram airbase
- Mass deportations ensnare immigrant service members, veterans

Navy

- Norfolk Sailor suspected of murder had long history of assault, prosecutors say
- Top Navy officer in Middle East picked for 4-star role heading Europe and Africa operations
- Navy determines planned ship inactivations for fiscal 2026

Marine Corps

- Marines are fighting over who gets to rebuild Tun Tavern
- How the Marine Corps is moving to upskill its workforce on AI
- Guam drone operator sentenced for flying over Marine Corps base

Air Force

- Rare 'naked' E-4B 'Doomsday Plane' spotted flying in Texas
- AFSOC exercise brings concept created for great-power conflict to the Caribbean
- 24-hour access to fitness facilities and healthier dining options part of Air Force fitness initiative

War Department continues nuclear modernization

by David Vergun, Pentagon News

In light of the changing global security landscape, the War Department is considering how to approach modern-era deterrence differently, said Air Force Maj. Gen. Brandon D. Parker, director of global operations at Strategic Command.

Parker spoke Sept. 22 about modernizing the nuclear triad, at the Air Space Cyber Conference at National Harbor, Maryland.

"We see a lot of promise, both in the programs of record, but also in the legacy systems that we have existing today," he said.

"So, while we go through that modernization process, it's equally important that we sustain the capabilities that we have today so that we can continue to deter and, if necessary, respond."

The programs of record

include the LGM-35A Sentinel intercontinental ballistic missile, the B-21 Raider stealth bomber, Columbia-class submarines and nuclear command, control and communications upgrades.

The legacy systems include the Minuteman III ICBM, the B-52H Stratofortress bomber, the B-2 Spirit bomber and the NC3 that links space-based capabilities.

Modernization of NC3, Parker said, will include incorporating cybersecurity, designing it to integrate with existing and future systems, and incorporating data analytic tools, automation, machine learning and artificial intelligence to aid the operators.

"The nuclear triad is the bedrock of our national defense. There's no element of U.S. military power that can replace the unique deterrence characteristics of nuclear forces," he said.

The triad provides a wide



Air Force Maj. Gen. Brandon D. Parker, director of global operations at Strategic Command, speaks about modernizing the nuclear triad at the Air Space Cyber Conference at the National Harbor, Md., Sept. 22. Department of War screenshot

range of options to the president, Parker added. effective, nuclear force posture, which includes all three legs of the triad, he said, referring to submarines, bombers and land-based missiles that can deliver nuclear weapons.



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At War Department, shaving waivers out, clean-shaven faces in

by C. Todd Lopez
Pentagon News
Secretary of War Pete Hegseth signed a memorandum in August directing the military services to stringently enforce facial hair grooming standards across the force.

“The grooming standard set

by the U.S. military is to be clean-shaven and neat in presentation for a proper military appearance,” said Hegseth in a memorandum dated Aug. 20, 2025.

Service members with certain medical conditions, such as pseudofolliculitis barbae or

eczema, for instance, are eligible to apply for medical waivers that allow them to abstain from shaving. Those medical conditions might have made daily shaving challenging for those service members.

Some of those medical waivers were issued on a long-term

basis, meaning that some service members could go for years without having to meet the standard of being clean-shaven.

That is no longer the case. Now, service members who have medical waivers for shaving will have one year to address the underlying medical issues that keep them from meeting the standard.

According to direction by Hegseth, when needed, medical officers will provide written recommendations concerning shaving waivers to a service member’s commander; service members with approved waivers will participate in a medical treatment plan; and commanders will initiate separation of those who still require a shaving waiver after more than one year of undergoing medical treatment.

Service members are not alone in seeking out medical treatments for conditions that prevent them from meeting department-wide grooming standards.

“There are various medical treatment plans that a provider can recommend to a service member that can allow them to get off a permanent shaving profile,” said a Pentagon official, on background. “Each one of those treatment plans will be individualized.”

A shaving waiver for medical reasons, the official said, is just like any other medical condition that requires a temporary waiver from meeting standards.

“Just like any type of injury or something else, which results in a service member being on a profile, service members are provided through their medical provider or military treatment facility ... options to get back



A Soldier assigned to the 3rd Infantry Division uses a single-blade razor to shave his face during a shaving clinic at Fort Stewart, Ga., May 22, 2017. U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Caitlyn Smoyer

within standards,” the official said.

Whether it be a broken leg, an illness, a condition that prevents shaving, or any other medical condition, the official said, there are treatment options available within the military medical community.

“We have a very robust medical system that is constantly working with service members, regardless of what the specific limitation is, to get them back to medical readiness,” the official said.

The secretary’s memorandum on grooming standards is “effective immediately,” the official said. However, that doesn’t mean service members who currently have shaving waivers will be separated in August 2026.

“Each individual case will require an individual review by the service member’s medical provider and commander before the initiation of separation takes place. Commanders are charged with determining if retention is appropriate based upon the service member’s progress, or if separation is in the best interest of the service and the member,” the official said. “Over the next year, we will see movement by individuals to come into compliance with the secretary of war’s established standard for the department.”

The new direction from the secretary does not affect shaving waivers related to religious accommodations, nor does it impact growing mustaches if the military departments permit their service members to do so, the official said.

DAF launches Culture of Fitness initiative

from Secretary of the Air Force Public Affairs
ARLINGTON, Va. - The Department of the Air Force announced its Culture of Fitness initiative to transform the way Airmen and Guardians approach physical fitness and readiness. The initiative aims to reinvigorate a holistic culture of well-being that empowers Airmen and Guardians to be more dominant, agile and lethal through physical fitness. The transformation to a Culture of Fitness comes after a critical review of existing DAF fitness programs, which revealed necessary improvements to increase overall well-being and operational readiness required for mission success. The department has structured the initiative around four key lines of effort: **•Being Physically and Medically Ready** **•Fostering a Culture of Fitness:** **•Fueling a Culture of Fitness:** **•Measuring a Culture of Fitness:** “Having a Culture of Fitness for the Department of the Air Force is more than just physical training,” said Secretary of the Air Force Troy Meink. “It is about making sure we enable Airmen and Guardians to be wholly resilient, healthy and ready to defend our nation.”

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Groundbreaking Explosive Ordnance Disposal concussion study nears enrollment goal

by: Derik Crotts
MHS Communications

Researchers at the Department of War's premier explosive ordnance disposal training school are making major strides in a landmark study focused on the effects of concussions and blast exposures among Explosive Ordnance Disposal technicians.

Working directly with students at the Naval School Explosive Ordnance Disposal at Eglin Air Force Base, Florida the site has enrolled 1,908 participants since October 2022 — 95 percent of its target goal of 2,000.

NAVSCOLEOD, which trains approximately 1,350 students annually from all branches of the U.S. military, runs a rigorous eight-month training pipeline. The course is divided into eight technical divisions, with an additional underwater component for U.S. Navy students. The demanding physical and intellectual challenges of the program mirror the intensity of the EOD career field itself.

The enrollment strategy is tailored to this unique environment. The study team conducts recruitment briefings at multiple touchpoints, including U.S.



A major study at the Naval School Explosive Ordnance Disposal is tracking concussion and blast exposure effects on EOD technicians, with 1,908 participants enrolled since October 2022, representing 95 percent of the enrollment goal of 2,000. This EOD cohort represents enlisted service members with high cumulative exposure to blast and explosions over the course of their careers, a particularly important population for understanding brain health risks. Photo courtesy of Military Health System

Army, U.S. Marine, and U.S. Air Force indoctrinations, range indoctrination, and the Advanced Improvised Explosive Devices Division course for operational EOD technicians. They also partner annually with the local Eglin AFB EOD shop to engage service members after permanent change of station.

“Meeting students where they are — literally and figuratively — has been critical,” Sarah Delgado, one of the researchers supporting NAVSCOLEOD explained. “The training schedule is relentless, and even small barriers, like running across campus to our office, can make follow-up participation difficult.”

Currently, the site maintains a 36 percent follow-up rate. While distance and the high demands of the curriculum pose challenges, the team is countering them through consistent community engagement. Staff members volunteer at major schoolhouse functions and teach classes tied directly to their research expertise, building credibility and trust within the EOD community.

This cohort is the newest addition to the Concussion, Assessment, Research and Education Consortium's service member initiative, otherwise known as

the CARE Consortium. Unlike previous groups, the EOD cohort represents enlisted service members with high cumulative exposure to blast and explosions over the course of their careers — making them a particularly important population for understanding brain health risks.

Leaders and instructors at NAVSCOLEOD are key partners in reinforcing the importance of the study.

“EOD technicians are expected to perform at the highest lev-

els in some of the most dangerous environments imaginable,” said Navy Lt. (Dr.) Colin McNamara senior medical officer at NAVSCOLEOD. “Supporting this research is about more than collecting data — it's about protecting the long-term health and readiness of our force.”

With recruitment nearing completion, these efforts mark a significant step forward in addressing one of the most pressing health concerns for today's warfighters: the long-term effects of concussions and blast exposure.

Air Force experiments with AI, boosts battle management speed, accuracy

by Deb Henley

LAS VEGAS - The Air Force wrapped up the second Decision Advantage Sprint for Human-Machine Teaming, known as DASH 2, a fast-paced experiment exploring how artificial intelligence can help operators make faster, smarter decisions in complex battlespaces.

DASH 2 took place at the Shadow Operations Center-Nellis' unclassified location and was led by the Advanced Battle Management System Cross-Functional Team. The effort was conducted in partnership with the

Air Force Research Lab's 711th Human Performance Wing, the Integrated Capabilities Command and the 805th Combat Training Squadron.

“DASH 2 proved human-machine teaming is no longer theoretical,” said Col. Jonathan Zall, ABMS Capability Integration chief. “By fusing operator judgment with AI speed, the Air Force is shaping the future of decision advantage in joint and coalition operations.”

Initial results showed that machines produced recommendations in less than 10 seconds and generated 30 times more

options than human-only teams. Two vendors each produced more than 6,000 solutions for roughly 20 problems in just one hour. The software's accuracy was on par with human performance, despite only two weeks of development. In one case, a single algorithm adjustment would have raised recommendation validity from 70 percent to more than 90 percent.

Continue reading this story at <https://www.af.mil/News/Article-Display/Article/4310090/>.

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Local Military

Local nonprofit Zero8Hundred honored with Navy's Spirit of Hope Award

by Sergio Hernandez

Zero8Hundred, a San Diego-based nonprofit dedicated to supporting military service members and their families during the challenging transition to civilian life, has received the Navy's prestigious 2025 Spirit of Hope Award.

The award is presented annually to individuals and organizations from each branch of the U.S. military who exemplify the enduring values embodied by the legendary entertainer Bob Hope - Duty, Honor, Courage, Loyalty, Commitment, Integrity, and Selfless Dedication. For over five decades, Bob Hope tirelessly uplifted U.S. military personnel through his performances and humanitarian efforts, making this award a significant honor for recipients.

Naval Base Point Loma command leadership, nominated Zero8Hundred for the award, recognizing the nonprofit's exceptional impact on the lives of transitioning service members and their families. The

installation and Zero8Hundred collaborate annually on MWR, Fleet Week and FFSC events, emphasizing their commitment to support our Navy community.

"We're deeply honored to nominate Zero8Hundred in recognition of their unwavering support to transitioning service members and their families," said Cmdr. James Gallagher, NBPL executive officer. "Through innovative programs and dedicated service, they've significantly improved the quality of life for countless Sailors and their families. Their work reflects the very spirit this award represents."

Founded in 2014, Zero8Hundred provides vital resources including personalized transition assistance, counseling, and community integration services designed to help veterans and their families successfully navigate



Zero8Hundred received the Navy's prestigious 2025 Spirit of Hope Award. U.S. Navy photo by Sergio Hernandez

life after military service. The organization conducts baseline mental health screenings and offers compassionate support addressing essential needs such as health and wellness, employment, education, and social connections.

Staffed by a team of social workers, Zero8Hundred advocates for and supports the active-duty military community within San Diego County.

Ashley Camac, CEO of Ze-

ro8Hundred, expressed gratitude for the recognition, said, "Zero8Hundred is honored to be a 2025 Recipient of the Department of Defense Spirit of Hope Award.

"We're grateful that our mission to support service members transitioning to civilian life is being acknowledged for the positive impact it has on those we serve."

Zero8Hundred formally received the Navy's 2025 Spirit of Hope Award at a ceremony held on September 17, at The Hall of Heroes in the Pentagon.

This award highlights the critical role organizations like Zero8Hundred play in easing the transition from military to civilian life, ensuring that veterans and their families receive the support and care they deserve.

Naval Base Point Loma's nomination of Support the Enlisted Project, was also selected in 2023. For more information, visit Spirit of Hope Award at navy.mil.

Navy relieves USS Santa Barbara commanding officer

MANAMA, Bahrain – Commander of Task Force 55, Capt. Kelley Jones, relieved the commanding officer of USS *Santa Barbara* (LCS 32) Blue crew, Cmdr. Adam Ochs, Sept. 11, due to a loss of confidence in Ochs's ability to command the littoral combat ship. Blue Crew Executive Officer Cmdr. Jeff Steiner has temporarily assumed command of *Santa Barbara*. Gold crew commanding officer Cmdr. Linzy Lewis is slated to assume command Sept. 12. The Navy maintains the highest standards for leaders and holds them accountable when those standards are not met. *Santa Barbara* is currently on a scheduled deployment in the U.S. 5th Fleet area of operations. The relief does not impact the ship's mission or schedule. Ochs assumed the role as *Santa Barbara*'s commanding officer Nov. 22, 2023. He has now been temporarily reassigned to Commander, Naval Surface Group Southwest.

Navy SEAL Museum San Diego opens to the public October 4

The Navy SEAL Museum San Diego, located downtown near the Embarcadero at 1001 Kettner Blvd., will open to the public on October 4. Navy SEAL Museum San Diego (NSMSD) will provide a world-class experience to hundreds of thousands of visitors annually and will offer unparalleled access and insight into the secretive world of U.S. Navy SEALs. NSMSD will bring the Navy SEAL story to life through educational exhibitions, retired SEAL docents, sensory interactive experiences, virtual reality environments, and community engagement impact programs which will impart values found in the Navy SEAL Ethos like leadership, adaptability, perseverance, and serving something higher than oneself. Tickets went on sale on September 1. Visitors should buy their tickets online in advance. Admissions will be timed-entry tickets to ensure a smooth visitor flow.

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NMCSD’s own blood’ologist

from Naval Medical Center San Diego
SAN DIEGO – Lt. Erin N. Snyder, an emergency medicine physician at Naval Medical Center San Diego (NMCSD), was selected as a finalist in the Fourth Annual Young Investigator Competition hosted by the Clinical Investigations Program Office under the Defense Health Agency (DHA) Research and Engineering Directorate.

Snyder’s research, titled “Dimensions of a Ruler to Measure and Mark Donor Blood Bags to Reliably Fill to 450mL,”addresses a critical operational challenge in combat casualty care: the need for precise, reliable field methods to collect whole blood from walking blood bank donors in austere or forward environments.

“This work was driven by the need to support field medics and corpsmen who are providing life-saving care far from the safety and structure of a hospital,” said Snyder. “Being able to standardize a reliable way to fill donor blood bags to the proper volume with just a ruler and marker could reduce preventable deaths from hemorrhage, which remains the leading cause of battlefield mortality, as well as reduce complications and reduce the cognitive load on the end user.”

Snyder’s two-phase research project demonstrated that simple measurement tools—specifically, a marked ruler placed along the blood bag—could foster accurate blood volume collection to within ±10 percent of the 450mL target. This is critical due to the precise balance required between the blood volume and the citrate preservative in the bag. Underfilling risks citrate-induced hypocalcemia, while overfilling can result in clot formation and line blockage, both of which can compromise patient outcomes in the field.

“This research exemplifies the kind of pragmatic, mission-driven innovation that we need in military medicine,” said Capt. Nancy Miller, director of profes-



Lt. Erin N. Snyder, an emergency medicine physician at Naval Medical Center San Diego, was chosen as a finalist in the Young Investigator Competition. Courtesy photo

sional education at NMCSD. “Lt. Snyder’s approach is resourceful, simple to implement, and directly supports warfighter survivability in the most challenging conditions.”

Snyder was selected as one of the top submissions – and the only U.S. Navy selectee – from among 35 finalists across the Army, Navy, and Air Force, whose research addressed a

wide array of topics from surgical systems in space to fitness risk factors and trauma care innovations. The competition recognizes exceptional scientific inquiry and research with direct military relevance.

Her work is supported by the Combat Trauma Research Group – West and reflects NMCSD’s broader commitment to medical readiness and innovation.

Man pleads guilty after landing plane twice on San Clemente Island restricted area

LOS ANGELES - In a report compiled from national news sources, a California man who illegally landed his small aircraft on a naval base twice and stole a Navy truck has pled guilty to federal charges, officials said. The report named Andrew Kyle White, 37, as pleading guilty to a felony count of theft of government property and illegal entry into a naval installation.

The San Diego man first flew a Glastar airplane — a home-built kit airplane popular among hobbyists — to San Clemente Island in October 2023 and landed on a Navy airstrip without permission.

At the time, he received and signed a letter that notified him that it was a federal crime to travel to San Clemente Island without the Navy’s permission and instructed him not to return.

But on April 6 of this year, military authorities say, White flew his plane to San Clemente Island again and landed it without permission. While on the island, he stole a Navy-owned Ford F-150 truck and drove it around the island, crashing it into locked gates that blocked off certain locations.

He faces a maximum penalty of 10 years in federal prison for theft of government property and up to six months for illegally entering a naval installation.



PADRES PREPARE CARE PACKAGES FOR DEPLOYED SQUADRON

by Lance Cpl. Samantha Devine
3rd Marine Aircraft Wing

SAN DIEGO – The San Diego Padres knocked it out of the park sending a morale boost across the Pacific by partnering with Marines from Marine Aircraft Group 11, 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing, and local volunteers in building and sending care packages to deployed Marines with Marine Fighter Attack Squadron (VMFA) 232, MAG-11, 3rd MAW.

Each care package was filled with Padres merchandise, snacks, activity books and hygiene products, offering Marines both practical supplies and a reminder of support from home.

The Padres have supported servicemembers for more than 30 years and continue this tradition by honoring the military during Sunday home games with service members in attendance, military aircraft flyovers, and the adoption of a deployed Marine Corps or Navy unit each year.

The Padres military ties trace back to retired U.S. Marine Corps Lt. Col. Jerry Cole-

man, a professional ballplayer, who paused his MLB career twice to fly in combat. The legacy continued through Navy Capt. (Ret.) Jack Ensich, who established the first military marketing department in professional sports with the Padres in 1995.

“Our military lineage goes back through Jerry and continued by Jack. San Diego has one of the highest concentrations of military personnel and families of any community,” said Navy Capt. (Ret.) Johnny Nilsen, the Padres’ military affairs adviser. “This is a military town, it’s a no brainer for an organization like the Padres who really want to make a genuine connection with the community, to connect with the heart of the community.”

VMFA-232, an F/A-18C/D Hornet squadron, is currently deployed with over 10 aircraft and approximately 250 personnel, including pilots, maintainers and support staff on a unit deployment program rotation to MCAS Iwakuni, Japan, conducting bilateral training and deterrence in the Indo-Pacific region. Deployments to Iwakuni provide critical experience in the Indo-Pacific region to West Coast-based Marine aviators, enhancing readiness and capabili-

ties for operations in a forward posture. That presence is vital, as Iwakuni offers a unique base location that supports U.S. and allied operations across the Pacific — from combat missions to joint training to humanitarian assistance and disaster response.

A flyover by two KC-130J Super Hercules aircraft from Marine Aerial Refueler Transport Squadron 352, MAG-11, opened the Padres’ Sept. 14 home game. The flyover honored service members past and present while symbolizing the enduring connection between military aviation and the San Diego community. The support carried on days later as volunteers packed the care packages for VMFA-232.

Sgt. Maj. Kenneth Williamson, the command senior enlisted leader of MAG-11, 3rd MAW, describes what this support means to the Marines: “From a guy that deployed with a squadron before moving here, I was out in Japan in the winter months last year, this same rotation, and getting these care packages is huge for our Marines and Sailors, especially our young ones who aren’t as resilient. It has a huge impact.”

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C3F serves as keynote speaker at Ombudsman of the Year Appreciation Dinner

by Petty Officer 2nd Class Lordin Kelly
Commander, U.S. 3rd Fleet
SAN DIEGO – Vice Adm. John Wade, commander, U.S. Third Fleet, spoke at the annual Sybil Stockdale Ombudsman of the Year Appreciation Dinner at the Adm. Baker Clubhouse, Sept. 12.

The Office of the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) established the Sybil Stockdale Ombudsman of the Year Award in 2015. Stockdale set an unfaltering example for her support to families of other POWs during the seven-year captivity of her husband, Vice Adm. James Bond Stockdale, in Southeast Asia.

Wade was the evening’s keynote speaker and highlighted the invaluable contributions of Ombudsmen as trusted liaisons between command leadership and families.

“My wife, Catherine, and I are absolutely honored and humbled to be here with you tonight,” Wade said. “Your service is humbling, absolutely critical, and fully deserving of recognition.”

DURING THE CEREMONY, VICE ADM. BRENDAN MCLANE, COMMANDER, NAVAL SURFACE FORCE//PACIFIC FLEET, PRESENTED SEIRA DE VEAU, REPRESENTING CNSP, SELECTED

FROM ALL SHORE COMMANDS IN THE NAVY; AND JESSICA PUGH, REPRESENTING USS ABRAHAM LINCOLN (CVN 72) AND ALL AFLOAT COMMANDS UNDER PACIFIC FLEET, AS AFLOAT OMBUDSMAN OF THE YEAR.

In his remarks, Wade emphasized the profound and far-reaching impact of the Ombudsmen’s work. He noted that their value extends well beyond simple communication and directly impacts Sailors.

“Supporting our families is not a ‘nice-to-have’ thing, it is an imperative.” Wade said, “Behind every uniform

is a family! And behind every family is an Ombudsman who ensures they have a voice, resources, and the support they need.”

The appreciation dinner, an annual cornerstone celebration, was organized by the Fleet and Family Support Center (FFSC) team.

Also in attendance was Rear Adm. Rich Jarrett, commander, Navy Region Southwest, along with the commanding officers

of all three San Diego metro bases.

The event was hosted by Na-

val Base San Diego, Naval Base Coronado, and Naval Base Point Loma, welcoming over 240 guests, including 61 registered Ombudsman, with attendees traveling from as far as Fallon, Nevada

An integral part of U.S. Pacific Fleet, U.S. 3rd Fleet operates naval forces in the Indo-Pacific and provides the realistic, relevant training necessary to execute the U.S. Navy’s role across the full spectrum of military operations. U.S. 3rd Fleet works together with our allies and partners to advance freedom of navigation, the rule of law, and other principles that underpin security for the Indo-Pacific region.



CAMP PENDLETON (Sept. 17, 2025) Camp Pendleton Marines organize landscaping equipment during Operation Clean Sweep III here. OCS III, part of the ongoing Barracks 360 Reset initiative, demonstrates a collective commitment to improving living conditions through shared ownership, sustained accountability, and tangible improvements to the barracks. U.S. Marine Corps photo by Cpl. Noah Martinez



NAVAL BASE POINT LOMA (Sept. 2, 2025) Vice Adm. John Wade (second from right), commander, U.S. 3rd Fleet, greets Chilean Navy Sailors assigned to the Chilean Navy Submarine (CNS) Thomson (SS 20) during a meet and greet aboard Thomson. The sub is in San Diego as part of the annual Diesel-Electric Submarine Initiative (DESI) program. U.S. Navy photo by MC1 Aaron T. Smith



ABOARD USS PINCKNEY (Sept. 17, 2025) Vice Adm. Brendan McLane, commander, Naval Surface Force, presents a challenge coin to MA1 Jeanette Pinela, assigned to destroyer Pinckney, during a visit to Naval Base San Diego. McLane also engaged with Sailors and spoke with command leadership about the ship’s readiness. U.S. Navy photo by MC1 Claire M. Alfaro

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It boggles my mind but this column, after about 25 years of work, is column number 900 in the ever-evolving history and legacy that has become “AutoMatters & More,” and with it my life as a very active, ‘retired’ senior. This week I want to discuss with you something particularly important, and hopefully memorable, to celebrate and commemorate this milestone, but I’ve wrestled with what that topic might be.

This column, somewhat to my surprise, proves that we seniors do, indeed, have much to contribute. Our perspective is one borne of experience that only years of life can provide. Far from being on the decline, our ability to contribute can still be going strong. That is a great feeling.

I’ve just spent four days’ worth of hours — many of them non-stop, individually editing dozens of my photos shot two weekends ago for last week’s “AutoMatters & More,” entitled “Dramatic H1 Unlimited Hydroplane blowover & more at San Diego Bayfair 2025.” I encourage you to read it and enjoy the many photos at: <https://automatters.net/dramatic-h1-unlimited-hydroplane-blowover-more-at-san-diego-bayfair-2025/>.

Shooting all of the photos that I shot for this, over 2-1/2 long days on my feet, was not easy. Yes, at 71 I am not as mobile as I used to be but, through pacing, I am still able to walk long distances, wielding not one but two heavy professional

Seniors have much to contribute and a unique perspective

cameras and miscellaneous equipment and supplies.

The result of my efforts is a column (some call it a blog) that, after 898 columns before it, represents some of my best work as a photo-journalist — further described by my text, written in an easy to read, conversational style.

Cumulatively, we seniors have a vast wealth of life experience. Whatever that may be informs what is available for us to share with others. How — or if — we choose to use this knowledge and experience, is as individualized as we are. I choose to share my experience with you, through these columns. That gives me a great sense of satisfaction, keeps me mentally and physically active, and motivates me to keep on keeping on.

Retirement is but one important milestone in our lives that have been marked with other important, life-changing milestones. I’ve thought about this as I watch my young grandchildren grow and experience the world for themselves. After we are born, our parents and society endeavor to prepare us for life. Soon we go to school, where we learn additional life skills, and where we socialize with others of our age group, and our teachers.

Out in the working world, we build our professional reputations as we further develop our skills and earn money, to enable us to live independent lives. Society continues in myriad ways to nurture us, as we continue to develop interpersonal relationships.

Eventually we enter retirement, but that does not mean that we have to stop growing as individuals and

contributing to society. Institutions are in place that serve to recognize our medical needs, which increase as we age. That, in turn, enables us to continue to give back.

Perhaps an area where there is a less robust system in place is with regards to supporting seniors need to socialize.

At a time in our lives when our physical abilities are beginning to decline, we typically no longer socialize in the institutions that have been there for us thus far in our lives — at school or working at a job with others. Perhaps that is an opportunity for some of our fellow seniors to take the lead and create a new institution for us, rather than leave us to fend for ourselves.

One area where I could really use some help is sharing these columns with a much larger audience. For several years the expanded, AutoMatters.net website version of “AutoMatters & More” also had broad international distribution on the DriveTribe website (the website started by the three former, wildly popular hosts of the BBC’s popular “Top Gear” TV show), but that site closed down several years ago. I failed to seek out a replacement for the widespread, international distribution of “AutoMatters & More.” Will you help me find that?

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 © 2025 by Jan Wagner – AutoMatters & More #900

Flights of fancy

Flights of frenzy

“Call me when you arrive, love you,” my husband, Francis, said, putting my carryon on the curb. Leaning in for a hurried kiss, he inadvertently hit my left nostril, before I scurried into the airport for my flight.

When I fly, I experience tiny panic attacks at each crucial step in the process. As soon as the double doors at arrivals closed behind me, it started. “[Gasp!] Where’s my boarding pass?!” It was in my purse, where I’d put it two minutes before.

I wheeled my carryon to the TSA check area and entered the maze of ropes intended to corral hundreds of passengers. However, Providence Airport was nearly empty, so I zig-zagged back and forth, back and forth, back and forth. One other woman giggled every time we passed each other. I almost moored at her in mutual recognition of the ridiculousness of it all.

At the end of the maze, I faced a TSA official at a podium. “[Gasp!] Where’s my ID?!” It was in my wallet, as always. The photo identity confirmation happened so fast, I had no time to stretch my neck out to minimize my double chin. “Could we take another, this time on my good side?” I wanted to ask the TSA agent, but he sternly directed me into another cattle maze leading to the conveyor belts.

“[Gasp!] Should I take off my shoes?!”

“[Gasp!] Is there anything in my pockets?!”

“[Gasp! Where’s my laptop?!”

Thanks to new technology, all I needed to do was fill two grey bins and head to the body scanner.

“Does this device register my weight?” I wondered. Before I could offer my regular excuses (e.g., “I’m retaining water,” “I have unusually thick hair,” and “menopause packs the pounds on”) I was told to retrieve my belongings. My two grey bins emerged from the scanner, but the one containing my purse was diverted onto another belt behind a plexiglass barrier.

“[Gasp!] Is it the grapes?!”

This time, I hadn’t made the humiliating mistake of bringing a bottle of Miralax powder. During

The Meat & Potatoes of Life



by
Lisa
Smith
Molinari

that trip, the TSA agents not only confiscated my very necessary bottle of stool softener, they proceeded to inspect every pocket, coin, sock, Chapstick and lint ball in my bags. They even had the nerve to pat down all nooks and crannies of my very crannied body.

“Is it the grapes?” I asked the serious woman assigned to search through my stuffed-to-the-gills purse.

“Nope,” she offered bluntly, digging deeper into the abyss. Another nervous moment passed before she pulled a zip lock bag out of the depths and announced, “It’s your fudge.” I’d forgotten about the sweets I’d packed for my trip.

Apparently, like Miralax powder, fudge looks very much like the elements used to create explosive devices or traffic illegal drugs. I guess

the baggie of Rice Krispy Treats also hidden in the bottom of my bag didn’t make the contraband list.

After boarding my Southwest flight and selecting a window seat in the exit aisle, I snuggled up with my earphones in to listen to my Audible book and house a few Rice Krispy Treats.

“Ma’am!” a voice snapped me out of my sugar-induced travel trance, and I saw a flight attendant and several passengers staring at me.

“[Gasp!] Was my Security Screening photo so bad, they’ve confused me for someone on the international terrorist watch list?!”

“Do you consent to the exit aisle passenger responsibilities I just described?”

“Uh, yes, of course,” I said, having no idea what she’d described.

A few hours later, I was searching for my rental car at the Norfolk Airport parking garage.

“[Gasp!] Am I in the wrong garage?!”

I panicked when I found a Chevrolet in spot A7 where my KIA was supposed to be.

“Not your car?” a woman wearing a fluorescent orange vest shouted from a kiosk, “Just press the emergency button on the key fob and follow the alarm!” Sure enough, my KIA was flashing, three aisles over in spot G7.

“I made it, Hon,” I telephoned my husband while driving down I-64, “but next time, remind me that fudge gets me in trouble.”

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Veterans News

Medal of Honor spotlight: Marine Corps Cpl. Jack Davenport

by Katie Lange

Do I save others or save myself?

That’s a question an unknown number of service members have asked themselves during battle throughout the ages. It’s one Marine Corps Cpl. Jack Arden Davenport didn’t hesitate on. During an attack in Korea, he chose to save his comrade’s life instead of his own. That selfless decision led him to receive a posthumous Medal of Honor.

Davenport was born Sept. 7, 1931, in Kansas City, Missouri, to Fred and Gloria Davenport. He had a sister named Jane and a twin brother, Karl, who served in the Navy.

Davenport was an active child who always liked to be on the go, his parents told the Kansas City Times in 1952. Throughout high school, he played baseball and was a paperboy for the Kansas City Star newspaper, where his father worked.

After graduating from Paseo High School in 1949, Davenport studied for a year at the University of Kansas, where he played on the school’s football team. He was also an amateur boxer who participated in at least one Golden Gloves tournament.

However, when the Korean War broke out, Davenport decided to trade in studying for the fight against communism. He enlisted in the Marine Corps July 1950. After basic training, he was stationed at Camp Pendleton outside of San Diego, where he earned the nickname “Dynamite” from other Marines. In December of that year, he was deployed to join the 3rd Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division in Korea.

According to newspaper reports of the time, Davenport was on the front lines almost continuously until the day he made the ultimate sacrifice.

Early on Sept. 21, 1951, Davenport was serving as a squad leader with Company G in the



Marine Corps Cpl. Jack Arden Davenport was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor for his actions during the Korean War. Photo courtesy of U.S. Marine Corps

Songnae-dong area of Seoul, South Korea, when they were attacked by enemy troops trying to infiltrate their sector.

Davenport directed his comrades to defend their position. He and a fellow Marine, Pfc. Walter Barfoot, were doing so from a foxhole. Suddenly, an enemy grenade fell at their feet.

Without any concern for his own life, Davenport jumped on the deadly projectile, which killed him. Barfoot was spared, however, and their unit managed to repulse the enemy, largely in part to Davenport’s calm leadership.

Many of Davenport’s fellow Marines wrote to his family after his death, according to a December 1952 issue of the Kansas City Times.

“He was the best. They didn’t come finer or more courageous than little ole Dynamite,” one Marine wrote to Davenport’s mother.

The fallen 20-year-old’s body was returned to the U.S. in January 1952 and buried in Mount Moriah Cemetery in Kansas City.

About a year later, Davenport posthumously received the nation’s highest honor for valor. The Medal of Honor was presented to his father on his behalf during a Pentagon

ceremony. Davenport’s brother, Karl, was flown in by the Navy from Japan on special leave for the ceremony.

In the late 1980s, a gymnasium at Camp Pendleton was named in Davenport’s honor.



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Congratulations to NMRTC San Diego's newest Chief Petty Officers for FY26! A pinning ceremony was held in the command's courtyard, where family, friends, leadership, and Shipmates proudly came together to celebrate this milestone in our Navy Chiefs' journey, 16 Sep. Anchored in Excellence, Committed to Health! They now join the ranks of the Navy's Chiefs Mess—upholding the tradition of excellence and service.



CAMP PENDLETON, CALIFORNIA, UNITED STATES (Sept. 16, 2025) -- Petty Officers 1st Class Jessica Pohl (left), Sarah Isaacs, and Michael Leftwich report for frocking to the rank of Chief Petty Officer during the Chief Pinning Ceremony held aboard Naval Hospital Camp Pendleton on Sept. 16, 2025. The selectees had successfully completed the initiation season and were officially joined to the Navy Medicine Training and Readiness Command Camp Pendleton Chief's Mess once they were frocked to the rank of Chief. Photo by Curtis Hill.

NIH launches landmark project on whole-person health

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) has launched an effort to advance research on whole-person health and create an integrated knowledge network of healthy physiological function. Whole person health involves looking at the whole person—not just separate organs or body systems—and

considering multiple factors that promote health. For example, a multicomponent lifestyle intervention including healthy diet, physical activity and stress management may improve multiple and interconnected aspects of health including cardiovascular (e.g. blood pressure), metabolic (e.g. glucose metabolism) and

musculoskeletal function (e.g. muscle strength).

More information about the research program is available on the NIH Research Portfolio Online Reporting Tools (RePORT) website, here: <https://reporter.nih.gov/search/NHCW3mdunUCF3ULUAviYQ/project-details/11224772#description>

NMCSO enhances orthopedic care with 3D-printed waterproof casts

by Seaman Jason Afbale

Naval Medical Center San Diego (NMCSO) has become one of the first Military Treatment Facilities (MTF) to adopt a cutting-edge new 3D-printing technology for producing waterproof casts. The technology, developed by ActivArmor, uses additive manufacturing to create breathable casts and splints that allow for improved treatment options with fewer limitations on patients' activities.

The waterproof casts offer several advantages over traditional fiberglass casts or plaster splints, according to U.S. Navy Cmdr. Kimberly Spahn, department head, Orthopedics, Naval Medical Center San Diego.

"You can swim in these and play sports, so they're great for kids. They're more hygienic. You can take them on and off so we avoid a lot of the skin breakdown we see with fiberglass and plaster casts," Spahn said.

Spahn noted that the new casts are not appropriate for all orthopedic conditions, and traditional fiberglass or plaster casts remain an effective treatment in many cases, but if deemed appropriate by a medical provider, the waterproof



casts can be especially useful for military service members, who can return to duty or training throughout the recovery process.

"It's great for service members whose training involves water activities," said Jill Eastin, business manager, Department of Orthopedics Surgery, Naval Medical Center San Diego. "They are able to still go out in the water and continue training in a way that isn't possible with traditional casts."

Each cast is custom-fit, allowing providers to make patient-specific modifications, such as amputated fingers or toes, metal pins or other surgical implants, and children with small limbs that don't fit standard casts or splints, according to U.S. Navy Hospital Corpsman Petty Officer Third Class Danny

Berroa Figueroa.

"It's actually a really simple process. We just use the forward facing camera on a mobile device, and we will mark on the skin around bony areas or anything we don't want to rub, and just scan someone's arm or leg like that," said Berroa Figueroa. "Once it's good, we send it off to an engineer who analyzes it and figures out the best way to create the cast, they send back the guide file and we feed it into the machine to start printing."

NMCSO is the second MTF to implement the technology, along with Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland, after ActivArmor received a \$1.3 million competitive SBIR direct-to-phase II grant award from the Defense Health Agency. The award "will facilitate the deployment of ActivArmor systems to 11 military bases over 24 months," according to the company's website.

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