

# ARMED FORCES DISPATCH



San Diego Navy/Marine Corps Dispatch

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**MEET THE FLEET 2025** San Diego is home to the largest concentration of Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard personnel in the country. Join the community to celebrate the 250th birthday of the Navy and Marine Corps while honoring and thanking these men and women for their many contributions to the nation and community. Public events held October 30 – November 9 at Broadway Pier at 1000 N. Harbor Drive. A complete look at FWSD can be found at <https://www.fleetweeksandiego.org/>.

## FAREWELL TO THE HARRIER: A FINAL SUNDOWN FLIGHT

by Michael Smith

Naval Air Warfare Center Weapons Division  
NAVAL AIR WEAPONS  
STATION CHINA LAKE - Air  
Test and Evaluation Squadron  
(VX) 31 concluded the AV-8B  
Harrier's service with a sundown  
ceremony in late September,  
when the squadron flew the jet  
for the final time and shut it  
down on the flight line here.

The final sortie, flown by Jim  
"Jimbo" Coppersmith, VX-31  
technical director, brought  
veterans, Sailors, Marines,  
government civilians, industry  
partners and family members  
to the flight line to watch a  
traditional water salute and to  
say goodbye to a platform that  
served the fleet for more than  
four decades.

Marine Corps Lt. Col. Timothy  
"Little Buddy" Burchett, VX-31  
CO, described the Harrier as  
one of the most challenging and  
rewarding aircraft to fly.

"It's the most fun airplane  
I've ever flown," said Burchett.  
"There are no computers. It's  
cables, pulleys and skill that  
keep that thing in the air."

He called the Harrier "a  
uniquely Marine Corps aircraft"  
and praised the China Lake test  
team for keeping the program  
safe and mission capable to the  
finish.

"We did not coast into the  
finish line. It was a triumphant  
finish for the team partnership,"  
Burchett said.

Coppersmith highlighted the  
squadron's role in strengthening  
the aircraft's combat effectiveness  
and safety record through decades  
of testing at China Lake.

"It's the most successful attack

aircraft in Marine Corps history.  
No doubt about it," he said. "We  
lost many great Marines along  
the way. Those treatments and  
those material fixes, the proce-  
dures we wrote, the engineering  
changes we made, saved lives  
and limbs."

Burchett pointed to VX-31's  
testing culture as a model for the  
entire community.

"You truly were the gold stan-  
dard of testing," he said.

Coppersmith closed his re-  
marks by reflecting on the Har-  
rier's history at China Lake and  
the teamwork that kept it flying  
until the end.

"That jet right there flew its  
very first flight off the produc-  
tion line 33 years ago," he said.  
"Today we completed AV-8B  
flight operations. We shut it  
down full mission capable, and  
it flew flawlessly. It's a testa-  
ment to what we've done to this  
aircraft as a team."



**Jim "Jimbo" Coppersmith, technical director for Air Test and Evaluation Squadron (VX) 31, exits the cockpit of an AV-8B Harrier following its final flight at Naval Air Weapons Station China Lake. U.S. Navy photo by Michael L. Smith**

## Unfit, undertrained troops no longer tolerated

by David Vergun, Pentagon News

Physical fitness and combat training standards will be raised, said Secretary of War Pete Hegseth, who spoke Sept. 30 to an audience of hundreds of generals, admirals and senior enlisted personnel at Marine Corps Base Quantico, Va.

Those same standards will apply to both genders, he said, be it for the combat fitness test or weapons qualification.

Every active component service member will be required to exercise vigorously every duty day and take two physical fitness tests annually, he said.

In a memo Hegseth signed Sept. 30, "Military Fitness Standards," he wrote that National Guard and reserve component service members will take personal responsibility to maintain an appropriate physical fitness regimen, regardless of duty status, and complete one fitness test annually, aligned with their combat or noncombat arms designation.

Overweight troops and their leaders will no longer be tolerated, Hegseth said. "It's completely unacceptable to see fat generals and admirals in the halls of the Pentagon, leading commands around the country [and] in the world."

Hegseth also spoke about beards in the military. "If you want a beard, you can join special forces. If not, then shave. We don't have a military full of Nordic pagans," the secretary said.

In another memo, "Grooming Standards for Facial Hair Implementation," Hegseth signed Sept. 30, he wrote that all personnel must maintain a clean-shaven face consistent with the following:

- Sideburns will be above the ear opening.
- Beards, goatees, and other facial hair are prohibited unless specifically authorized.
- Mustaches are authorized but will be neatly trimmed; not to extend past the mouth corners or into a respirator seal zone.

"Leading warfighters toward the goals of high, gender-neutral and uncompromising standards in order to forge a cohesive, formidable and lethal Department of War is not toxic. It is our duty, consistent with our constitutional oath," he said.

## Navy's future USS Louis H. Wilson Jr., christened in Maine

Future USS Louis H. Wilson Jr. was christened during a ceremony at General Dynamics Bath Iron Works in Maine on Sept. 27. The destroyer's sponsors — Janet Wilson Taylor, only child of the ship's namesake; and Susan J. Rabern, former assistant secretary of the Navy (financial management and comptroller) — broke a bottle of sparkling wine across the bow to christen the vessel, according to a service news release. The ship is named after Marine Corps Gen. Louis Hugh Wilson Jr., a World War II and Vietnam War veteran who was awarded the Medal of Honor for his heroism during the Battle of Guam. Following his service in Vietnam, he served as the 26th Commandant of the Marine Corps from 1975 to 1979. Future Wilson Jr., is the first Flight III Arleigh Burke destroyer to be built at General Dynamics Bath Iron Works. The Flight III configuration includes the AN/SPY-6(V)1 Air and Missile Defense Radar providing greatly enhanced warfighting capability to the fleet.

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# Some Camp Pendleton property may become available for development to fund 'Golden Dome'

Navy Secretary John Phelan visited Camp Pendleton in August touring the 125,000-acre Marine Corps base in coastal North San Diego County looking at possible areas that could be developed or leased by commercial entities.

Lt. Cmdr. Courtney Williams, a Navy public affairs officer representing Phelan, said in a statement that the Navy Secretary's visit to Camp Pendleton included "initial conversations about possible commercial leasing opportunities" by the Department of Defense (War).

"These opportunities are being evaluated to maximize value and taxpayer dollars while maintaining mission readiness and security. No decisions have been made and further discussions are needed," she added.

Located approximately 38 miles from downtown San Diego in North County and 82 miles south of Los Angeles, Camp Pendleton has been the largest employer in North San Diego County for more than 60 years.

Camp Pendleton is one of the Department of Defense's busiest installations and offers a broad spectrum of training facilities for many active and reserve Marine, Army and Navy units, as well as national, state and local agencies.



USMC photo by Zachary Dyer.

The Base is home to the I Marine Expeditionary Force, 1st Marine Division, 1st Marine Logistics Group and many tenant units, including Marine Corps Installations-West, 1st Marine Raider Battalion, Wounded Warrior Battalion-West, Marine Corps Air Station Camp Pendleton, Marine Aircraft Group 39, Marine Corps Tactical Systems Support Activity, Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego's Weapons & Field Training Battalion, Marine Corps and Army Reserve Forces, the Navy's Assault Craft Unit 5, a Naval Hospital and 1st Dental Battalion.

The coastal and mountain terrain support a variety of military training. Fleet Marine Force units use Camp Pendleton's ranges and training areas to maintain combat readiness.

The Base also provides specialized schools and training as directed by the Commandant of the Marine Corps. Several schools are located on Camp Pendleton including Assault Amphibian Schools Battalion, School of Infantry-West,

Field Medical Training Battalion - West and Marine Corps University. Following recruit graduation, enlisted Marines receive basic infantry training at the School of Infantry-West before assignment to other units throughout the Corps.

More than 38,000 military family members occupy base housing complexes. However, with a daytime population of 70,000 military and civilian personnel, the Marines, Sailors and their families rely on the surrounding communities for retail goods and services not available on Base.

Camp Pendleton contains the largest undeveloped portion of coastline in Southern California. The ecosystem includes beaches, bluffs, mesas, canyons, mountains and Southern California's only free-flowing river. There are more than 1,000 species of plants, fish and animals, some of which are either threatened or endangered. Wildlife and habitat protection is a top concern of all who live, work and train at Camp Pendleton.



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## Army

- Army cancels Best Squad Competition due to shutdown
- Here's how the Army is scaling its Next Gen C2 platform to an entire division

## Navy

- Trump celebrates the Navy's 250th anniversary in the midst of the shutdown
- USS *Gerald R. Ford* now in the Mediterranean Sea
- Navy SEAL Museum opens showcase location in downtown San Diego

## Marine Corps

- Wayward Iwo Jima plaque moves from general's office in Japan to Marine Corps museum

## Air Force

- Top Air Force commander in Europe will be a 3-star billet as Pentagon trims ranks

## Space Force

- Space Force wants an opposition force in orbit
- Space Force taps SpaceX, ULA for first set of critical launches beyond FY27
- Space Force awards ULA, SpaceX \$1B for seven launches

## National Guard

- Trump authorizes 300 National Guard troops to deploy to Chicago
- Newsom to sue Trump over National Guard deployment, urges Americans to 'speak out'

## Veterans

- U.S. veterans among those on Gaza flotilla detained by Israeli forces, organizers say

## NORAD intercepts violators of temporary flight restrictions over Norfolk

by 2nd Lt. Tyler Turnmire  
TYNDALL AIR FORCE BASE, Fla. – North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) fighter aircraft intercepted two general aviation aircraft that violated a NORAD-enforced Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Temporary Flight Restriction (TFR) airspace over Norfolk, Va., on October 5.

The first civilian aircraft violated the TFR at approximately 11:55 a.m. Eastern Daylight Time. NORAD fighter aircraft safely escorted the aircraft until it landed, after the use of flares to draw the pilot's attention. The second intercepted aircraft violated the TFR at approximately 12:30 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time and was safely escorted out of the area by NORAD fighter aircraft shortly thereafter.

The flares – which may have been visible to the public – are employed with the highest regard for the safety of the intercepted aircraft and people on the ground. Flares burn out quickly and completely and there is



**An Air Force F-16C Fighting Falcon aided in aviation violations. U.S. Air National Guard photo by Airman Hunter Hires**

no danger to the people on the ground when dispensed.

General aviation pilots are reminded to verify all FAA Notice to Airmen (NOTAMs) and TFR procedures must be followed.

Pilots can access the most up-to-date information published by the FAA at <https://tfr.faa.gov/>.

NORAD employs a layered defense network of radars, satellites, and fighter aircraft to identify and respond to potential threats. The identification and monitoring of the civilian aircraft demonstrate how NORAD executes its aerospace warning and control missions for the United States and Canada.

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UP



**Marine Corps Sgt. Gavin Bart completes an obstacle as part of the Basic Jungle Skills Course at the Jungle Warfare Training Center in Okinawa, Japan, Sept. 24, 2025. U.S. Marine Corps photo by Lance Cpl. Trevor BishopWilliams**

## THIS MAGIC MOMENT

**Air Force Master Sgt. Nick Kirchner dances with his wife, Megan Kirchner, during the Air Force Ball at Whiteman Air Force Base, Mo., Sept. 13, 2025. The Air Force Ball is a celebration of the service's history, heritage and Airmen, both past and present. U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Bryce Moore**



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From fleet to courtroom: Program trains enlisted Marines to become lawyers

by Cpl. Brenna Ritchie  
Marine Corps Recruiting Command  
Marine Corps 2nd Lt. William Hardwick is one of the initial applicants to be selected for the Enlisted to Judge Advocate Program. Before earning his commission, he served as a sergeant in the Marine Corps, where he worked as a legal services specialist.

The program offers qualified enlisted Marines a fully funded

path to becoming a Marine Corps lawyer. Those selected attend Officer Candidates School, then head to an American Bar Association-accredited law school, followed by The Basic School and Naval Justice School, all while receiving active-duty pay and benefits.

“This is a tremendous opportunity,” Hardwick said. “If you are enlisted and have any interest in this program, look

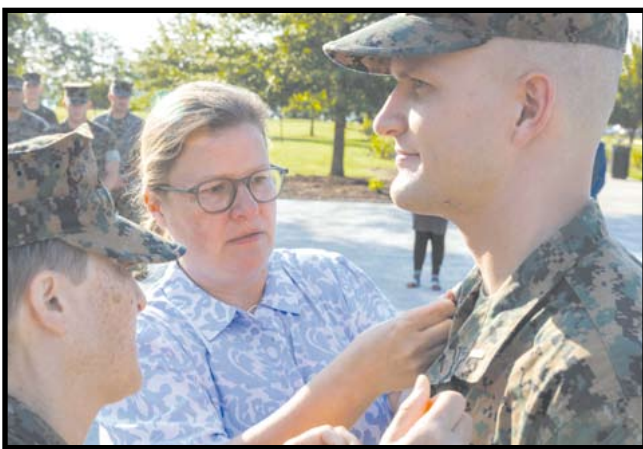
into it, read the relevant [Marine administrative messages], orders and regulations, reach out to the [points of contact], find a judge advocate and ask them about their job.”

Program applicants must hold a bachelor’s degree with a GPA of 3.0 or higher, score at least a 150 on the LSAT, have between four and eight years of active service and be in good standing with no disciplinary actions.

The selection board for the fiscal year 25 cycle closed in August, but the program runs annually.

“The big benefit of this program is you continue to be active duty while you are in law school, with no break in service and no break in benefits,” Hardwick said. “While you are in school, you will continue to be paid basic pay and basic allowance for [housing], which puts you ahead of your peers in law school. All three years of law school will count towards your retirement, if you choose to have a full 20-year career.”

Prior to entering the program, Hardwick served as the noncommissioned officer in charge of the Defense Services Organization at Camp Lejeune, N.C.. His supervisor, Maj. Lauren Neal, recognized how quickly he became paramount to the office, noting that Hardwick’s experience, both in and out of the courtroom, set him apart as a candidate for the Enlisted to Judge Advocate Program.



Marine Corps 2nd Lt. William Hardwick, right, assigned to the 1st Marine Corps District, stands at attention while his mother, Justianna Hardwick, center, and Marine Corps Maj. Lauren Neal, the deputy officer in charge of the Regional Victims Legal Counsel Eastern Judge Advocate Division, pin Hardwick’s new rank on his uniform during a commissioning ceremony at Marine Corps Base Quantico, Va., Aug. 4, 2025. U.S. Marine Corps photo by Cpl. Memphis Pitts

“He consistently demonstrated the kind of leadership and judgment we strive to instill in every Marine,” Neal said. “He brings operational insight, credibility and a deep commitment to the Marine Corps’ core

values of honor, courage and commitment.”  
Hardwick is currently attending Fordham University in New York City, working toward his goal of serving in the Marine Corps as a judge advocate.

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The U.S. Space Force released its first Space Force Manual 36-2905, Human Performance and Readiness, which establishes clear, mission-focused standards to optimize Guardian fitness and readiness.

All Guardians are now required to complete a Human Performance Assessment once a year if they are enrolled in the Continuous Fitness Assessment Personalized Readiness Integrated Through Monitoring and Engagement study and twice per year if they aren’t. HPA measures muscular strength, muscular endurance and cardiorespiratory fitness on an 80-point scale. Guardians must earn a composite score of 60 or higher to be considered physically ready. One of the HPAs must include a 2-mile run.

To implement the manual, squadrons will establish Unit

Fitness Cells staffed by Guardian Resilience Teams. Unit commanders and UFCs will ensure all Guardians complete an initial HPA between Jan. 1 and June 30, 2026. Physical fitness testing will not be required before Jan.

Space Force releases new Human Performance and Readiness manual

1, 2026, to allow time for UFCs to be established and Guardians to prepare.

“The Space Force human performance standards are mission-driven and tailored to the unique physical and cognitive demands of our Guardians,” said Chief of Space Operations Gen. Chance Saltzman. “The manual reflects a commitment to investing in health, resilience, and long-term performance, and ensures we’re ready to thrive and win in the most demanding operational environments.”

The manual incorporates human performance standards within the Space Force’s Holistic Health Approach, a science-based model that emphasizes Total Force Fitness across eight domains: physical, financial, spiritual, preventive care, environmental, nutritional, psychological and social.

This supports the Secretary of the Air Force’s Culture of Fitness initiative and aligns with the Under Secretary of the Air Force’s efforts to enhance fitness and readiness.

“The Human Performance and Readiness Manual directly supports our commitment to emphasize the Guardian Experience and to execute our mission to deter threats and control the space domain,” said Chief Master Sgt. of the Space Force John Bentivegna.

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## Navy exceeds FY25 recruiting goals

from Commander,  
Navy Recruiting Command

The U.S. Navy has surpassed its recruiting goals for Fiscal Year 2025, bringing in more than 44,096 future Sailors — the highest total since the early 2000s.

This historic achievement reflects the combined effort of leadership, Navy Recruiting Command's front-line recruiters, and support staff, all working together to ensure the Fleet has the right talent to meet the nation's security needs. Senior Navy and Department of War leadership provided the policies, resources, and backing needed to accomplish the mission.

"This success is the result of determination, innovation, and teamwork across Recruiting Nation," said Rear Adm. James Waters, Commander, Navy Recruiting Command. "From recruiters in the field to staff at headquarters, to the senior Navy and Department of War leaders providing critical support, everyone contributed to this win. Most importantly, every new Sailor we welcome strengthens our Navy for the challenges ahead."

According to Waters, Navy Recruiting achieved this milestone with fewer recruiters than in the early 2000s, underscoring the efficiency and professionalism of today's force. Innovative recruiting programs, targeted advertising campaigns, and modernized digital tools allowed recruiters to reach a new generation of Americans where they are — online, in schools, and in communities. Policy changes, including streamlined medical waiver reviews and recruiter manning at 100 percent, helped move qualified applicants through the process more efficiently without relaxing standards.

Navy Recruiting also invested



**Rear Adm. James Waters, commander of Navy Recruiting Command, rings the bell at CNRC, Millington, Tenn., on Oct. 1, celebrating Recruiting Nation's achievement of recruiting 44,096 future Sailors in Fiscal Year 2025. This achievement reflects the combined effort of leadership, Navy Recruiting Command's front-line recruiters, and support staff working together to ensure the Fleet has the right talent to meet the nation's security needs. U.S. Navy photo by MC2 Thaddeus Berry**

in long-term relationships with educators, parents, coaches, and community leaders — key influencers who shape perceptions of military service. These efforts opened doors to underrepresented talent pools and highlighted the Navy's diverse opportunities.

With Congressional support for credentialing, certification pathways, and apprenticeship recognition, the Navy is showing candidates that service not only provides a way to serve their country but also accelerates lifelong careers.

From immersive mixed-reality activations at major events to Navy.com's new Career Quiz, Pay & Benefits Calculator, and streamlined request-for-information forms, recruiters have more tools than ever to connect with today's talent. Real-time data has allowed the Navy to maximize advertising investments and ensure the message resonates with Gen Z prospects.

This achievement was not the result of one single change, but rather the alignment of dozens of efforts across policy, opera-

tions, and communications—all driven by Sailors and civilians who refused to settle for the status quo.

"Culture drives outcomes," Waters said. "Navy Recruiting Command believes in this mission, and we've shown what's possible when we adapt, move fast, and stay accountable. Every recruiter in the field can take pride in knowing they played a direct role in strengthening our Navy and our nation."

The Navy's culture not only set the stage to bring in new talent but retained talent as well. Rear Adm. Jennifer Couture, Director, Military, Personnel Plans and Policy (N13), leads the Navy's retention efforts, which exceeded overall goals for more than a decade.

"Thanks to leaders and teammates all around the Navy for focusing on keeping top talent on the team. Reaching our retention goal in Fiscal Year 2025 was remarkably successful in keeping our best, most experienced people in the Navy," said Couture. "This effort has a direct impact on warfighting readiness,

lethality, and the Navy's decisive warfighting advantage. We look to sustain such commitment from our Sailors as we continue to modernize our capabilities and solidify our dominance at sea."

Rear Adm. Gregory Huffman, Commander, Naval Education and Training Command, emphasized how recruiting successes enabled the Navy to deliver more warfighters to the Fleet.

"These recruits will soon join nearly 40,800 Sailors, officers, and civilians currently in our Navy training pipelines," said Huffman.

"More than 86 percent of these Sailors will flow through NETC's schoolhouses and learning centers once they graduate boot camp. We are truly in 'growth mode' — it's been more than two decades since we've seen numbers this large — and the Navy needs these trained, battle-ready Sailors in the Fleet now more than ever."

To learn about careers, joining the Navy, and the latest incentives, visit <https://www.navy.com>.

## Air Force broadens career development opportunities for Airmen through new developmental duties process

from Secretary of the Air Force Public Affairs

ARLINGTON, Va. -The Air Force has transformed its developmental duty process to offer Airmen more flexibility and control over their career while ensuring high-quality personnel fill positions critical to the future of the force.

As of Oct. 1, Airmen have the opportunity to volunteer to join the following seven developmental duties: military training instructor, military training leader, academy military training noncommissioned officer, officer accessions instructor, first sergeant, professional military education instructor (NCOA/SNCOA) and recruiter.

Previously, the opportunity to volunteer for these developmental duties was limited. Most Airmen selected for developmental duties needed to be nominated by their local leadership and approved by the career field manager to be released. Now, they can view Developmental Duty opportunities on Talent Marketplace where they can volunteer for open positions.

Once an Airman has volunteered through Talent Marketplace they will be screened by the developmental duty hiring team. Upon approval by the hiring team to continue the process, the Airman's leadership will have an opportunity to review the members application and records to make a recommendation on whether that Airman is a good fit for the developmental duty.

The developmental duty team will select those Airmen who best fit the position from the pool of volunteer applicants.

Prior to this change, Airmen were required to get career field manager approval to join a developmental duty. However, the new system now streamlines that process by setting a preset number of personnel in each career field allowed to join developmental duties. If a career field has not exceeded the number of maximum releases for that quarter, an Airman who has made it through the selection process will be allowed to be released from their primary AFSC for a limited time. If a career field does not have any releases remaining for that quarter, Airmen will not be able to volunteer.

More information on the Developmental Duty process is available on <https://myfss.us.af.mil/USAFCommunity/s/login/>.

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## Mission complete from earthquake damage in China Lake

by Edward Cartagena  
NAVFAC Southwest

Naval Facilities Engineering Systems Command (NAVFAC) Southwest announced the completion of Resident Officer in Charge of Construction (ROICC) China Lake's portion of work on the historic \$2.7 billion, 26 individual projects that made up the earthquake recovery program at Naval Air Weapons Station China Lake, marking a significant milestone in restoring and modernizing the Navy's premier research, development, testing, and evaluation installation.

"The scale of the earthquake recovery effort at China Lake has been extraordinary, and the successful delivery of 26 projects, building 56 technically complex facilities, is a testament to that scope," said Capt. Cathy Eyrich, commanding officer, NAVFAC Southwest. "This achievement reflects the dedication and teamwork of our Construction, Engineering,

and Contracting professionals across the OICC) and ROICC teams, our industry partners, and the supported commanders. Their collaboration, expertise, and relentless focus on mission success made it possible to transform a devastating event into a modern, resilient capability that will serve the Navy and the nation for decades to come."

The July 2019 earthquakes caused widespread damage across NAWS China Lake, severely impacting facilities critical to the Navy's research, development, acquisition, testing and evaluation mission. In response, NAVFAC stood up the OICC China Lake in August 2020 to execute, at the time the largest military construction program in Navy history aboard the Navy's largest landholding, equal to the size of Rhode Island.

By mid-2024, the program had delivered over half of the projects, oversight transitioned to the ROICC China Lake, led by Capt. Nathan Hardy, assuming



In this July 10, 2019, file photo, Defense personnel repair damaged China Lake Navy base infrastructure after multiple earthquakes occurred July 4-5, 2019, in Kern County, Calif. U.S. Navy photo by MC1 Arthur Gwain L. Marquez

command of the program.

Among the remaining projects, ROICC China Lake delivered the largest project of the program in November 2024: the six-facility South Airfield complex. This major milestone provided state-of-the-art aviation support and research infrastructure essential to NAWS China Lake's flight test mission

and represented the culmination of years of coordinated effort between NAVFAC, Naval Air Systems Command-Naval Air Warfare Center Weapons Division, industry partners, and the community of Ridgecrest.

"Our integrated project teams have performed phenomenally through the last 15 percent of the program, arguably the

hardest part where they have been in the midst of completing construction projects, closing out construction contracts, outfitting buildings and moving the workforce into these brand new, technologically advanced facilities," said Hardy.

The transition of ROICC China Lake's role reflects years of collaboration between NAVFAC Enterprise, the Navy, federal, state and local agencies, and a strong partnership with private industry and the patriotic community of Ridgecrest.

The eight prime contractors, their countless sub-contractors (at the peak 1,200 contractors) worked alongside the 150 military and civilian personnel, during the peak of COVID-19, in austere conditions, at a remote location deep in the Mojave Desert to meet an aggressive timeline.

Throughout the program, safety remained the top priority, while the team displayed the highest quality of workman-

ship, while setting the standard of implementing innovative solutions to complex construction challenges, to include the application of new construction technologies, methods and materials to the highest of quality standards.

In total, the program not only replaced what was lost, but also positioned NAWS China Lake for future mission growth. New facilities were built to modern-day standards, replacing 1940s structures with the means to resist future seismic activity and support evolving operational needs for decades to come.

The completion of this phase ensures the installation is stronger, more modern, and better equipped to support those who work at China Lake to carry out the mission. The program will leave behind monuments of engineering, construction and the excellence of the personnel working to improve the resilience of the base and the community that supports China Lake from future natural disasters.



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FRCSW employees earn Navy Superior Civilian Service Award

by Michael A Furlano, Fleet Readiness Center Southwest

The Navy Superior Civilian Service Award (NSCSA) stands as one of the highest honors a civilian employee can receive. It is awarded to individuals who demonstrate exceptional, long-term contributions to the Navy's mission. This prestigious recognition is reserved for those who have gone above and beyond, showing extraordinary leadership, dedication, and innovation.



Michelle Gomez (left) and Dave Kelly awarded for outstanding careers. Photo by Michael A Furlano

Recently, two individuals, Michelle Gomez and Dave Kelly, were honored with this award for their outstanding contributions in support of the Fleet Readiness Center Southwest (FRCSW) mission. Their service over decades exemplifies not only their professional excellence but also their unwavering commitment to the defense of our country.

Gomez, the FRCSW executive director, has dedicated over 48 years of service to the Navy. In her career, Gomez served in various leadership roles, including as the Vertical Lift Program Manager, prior to shaping the FRCSW depot operations into a model of efficiency, innovation, and mission readiness.

Gomez's leadership at FRCSW has been transformational. She led the command with unmatched organizational expertise and a steadfast commitment to delivering military lethality worldwide in support of the President's National Defense Strategy. Her efforts were instrumental in establishing FRCSW as a customer-focused powerhouse that consistently exceeded expectations in safety, quality, on-time delivery and financial performance.

Kelly, the production director at FRCSW, was the other recipient. A retired officer in the Marine Corps, Kelly has served as the MRO (Maintenance, Repair, and Overhaul) Production Director from 2012 to present. During that time his leadership has played a pivotal role in ensuring the readiness and sustainment of the Navy's aviation fleet.

Under his direction, the FRCSW production team met or surpassed aircraft production goals for 9 consecutive years. In fiscal years 2023 and 2024 alone, the team achieved a 103 percent performance-to-plan rate, producing 298 aircraft on a schedule of 289, with an outstanding 93 percent on-time delivery rate. Additionally, the H-60 Vertical Lift Product Line reached an unprecedented milestone, completing 165 consecutive Planned Maintenance Interval depot events within turn-around-time requirements.

Michelle Gomez and Dave Kelly have not only demonstrated exceptional leadership in their respective roles but have also exemplified the qualities of great American patriots. Their careers have been dedicated to ensuring that the Navy and Marine Corps are prepared for the challenges of today and tomorrow. Their commitment to excellence, innovation, and collaboration has had a profound impact on naval aviation and will continue to resonate across the military for years to come.

Santa Fe returns home from deployment

by Petty Officer 1st Class Tiarra Brown

Commander, Submarine Squadron 11

NAVAL BASE POINT LOMA – Los Angeles-class fast-attack submarine USS *Santa Fe* (SSN 763) returned to its homeport of Naval Base Point Loma following a six-month deployment to the U.S. Indo-Pacific command area of responsibility, Sept. 29.

“The ‘Iron Saint’ deployed with the best young Americans our nation has to offer,” said Cmdr. Eric Knepper, *Santa Fe*’s commanding officer. “During our deployment, *Santa Fe* Sailors invested in the mission, our team, and the future of the submarine force, bringing an asymmetric advantage to the maritime domain as America’s apex predators.”

Throughout the regularly scheduled deployment, *Santa Fe* demonstrated professionalism, resiliency, and the U.S.’ commitment to our Allies and partners. The crew conducted port visits in Yokosuka and Sasebo, Japan, and Guam, and participated in multi-national exercises in the Pacific, strengthening interoperability among like-minded nations and reinforcing the shared commitment to peace through strength in the region.

*Santa Fe* participated in Submarine Exercise (SUBEX) 25-1 alongside a submarine from the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF), advancing joint submarine capabilities and showcasing the U.S. Navy and JMSDF’s ability to seamlessly operate while underway in the Pacific.

“I am honored *Santa Fe* was selected to represent the U.S. Submarine Force in multi-national naval exercises in the Pacific,” said Knepper. “These exercises, which included air, surface, and subsurface assets from multiple nations, demonstrated our ability to execute complex missions and maintain dominance in support of America’s top priorities and interests.”

During the deployment, *Santa Fe* Sailors accomplished over 1,000 specialty and watch standing qualifications, and 4 officers and 33 enlisted Sailors earned their submarine warfare qualifications.

“The crew’s determination to perfect their roles in our combat team and pursue qualifications to guarantee *Santa Fe*’s future was rewarding and made the hard work worth it,” said Senior Chief Electrician’s Mate (Nuclear) Jeremy Bauman. “I am proud to be a part of the *Santa Fe* team!”

During the port visits to Yokosuka and Sasebo, *Santa Fe* Sailors had the opportunity to experience the Japanese culture and strengthen friendships.

“This deployment I was able to experience the Western Pacific like never before with multiple ports in Japan,” said Sonar Technician (Submarines) 2nd Class Kevin Boyd. “First, Yokosuka allowed me to experience Japan’s outstanding public transit system, coming from a New Yorker, and then I was able to indulge in myself in the urban food culture of Tokyo and Southern Japan while in Sasebo.”

Commissioned on January 8, 1994, *Santa Fe* is the second vessel to be named after the capital of New Mexico.



CAMP PENDLETON (Oct. 3, 2025) Marines with 1st Distribution Support Battalion, Combat Logistics Regiment 1, 1st Marine Logistics Group, execute parachute operations with direct support from a KC-130J Super Hercules assigned to Marine Aerial Refueler Transport Squadron (VMGR) 352 during Riptide Reach 2-25 here. U.S. Marine Corps photo by Cpl. Savannah Norris



CAMP PENDLETON (Sept. 19, 2025) Petty Officer 2nd Class Juan Delarosa, a utilitiesman with Assault Craft Unit 5, Naval Beach Group 1, saws plywood to build portable air conditioning unit stands during Operation Clean Sweep III here. U.S. Marine Corps photo by Sgt. Bryant Rodriguez

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**SAN DIEGO (Oct. 01, 2025)** Families of Sailors assigned to amphibious dock landing ship *USS Pearl Harbor* wait on the pier as the ship arrives at its homeport here after she participated in Pacific Partnership. U.S. Navy photo by Interior Communications Electrician 2nd Class Ulrika Mendiola



**CAMP PENDLETON (Sept. 30, 2025)** 1st Maintenance Battalion was recently awarded the Secretary of Defense Field-Level Award. Shown here are Marines Lance Cpl. Cadynn Aguiar, left, and Lance Cpl. Silas Smith, both automotive maintenance technicians with 1MB. 1. U.S. Marine Corps photo by Lance Cpl. Mhecaela J. Watts

## Most recent Navy Region Southwest General Court-Martial results

The following reports the results of Special and General Court-Martial tried within Navy Region Southwest for July and August of this year.

At a General Court-Martial in San Diego, AOC Nicholas Robledo pled guilty to one specification of conspiracy to commit indecent recording, one specification of distributing indecent visual recording, one specification of wrongful distribution of a controlled substance, and one specification of wrongful possession of a controlled substance. On July 28, the military judge sentenced him to total forfeitures, 5 years and 7 months confinement, reduction in paygrade to E-1, and a Dishonorable Discharge.

At a Special Court-Martial in San Diego, LS3 Ivan Poplevko pled guilty to one specification of wire fraud. On July 1, the military judge sentenced him to reduction in paygrade to E-1.

At a Special Court-Martial in San Diego, ABE3 Juan Dieppa Guadalupe pled guilty to one specification of domestic violence –

commission of a violent offense, and one specification of child endangerment by culpable negligence. On July 15, the military judge sentenced him to 6 months confinement.

At a Special Court-Martial in San Diego, HMC Christopher Morgan pled guilty to one specification of domestic violence – commission of a violent offense, and one specification of willfully disobeying a superior commissioned officer. On July 18, the military judge sentenced him to 30 days confinement and reduction in paygrade to E-6.

At a Special Court-Martial in San Diego, ABFAN Zaire Childs pled guilty to one specification of fraudulent use of an access device to obtain money of a value of more than \$1,000. On July 30, the military judge sentenced him to 100 days confinement and reduction in paygrade to E-1.

At a Special Court-Martial in San Diego, LSCM Frances Estrada pled guilty to one specification of conspiracy to commit wire fraud. On Aug. 6, the military judge sen-

tenced her to reduction in paygrade to E-8.

At a Special Court-Martial in San Diego, CWO3 Aaron Crawford pled guilty to two specifications of unauthorized absence and one specification of violating a lawful general order. On Aug. 15, the military judge sentenced him to 60 days confinement.

At a Special Court-Martial in San Diego, EN3 Ryan Decker was tried for one specification of desertion, two specifications of disrespect toward a superior petty officer, and one specification of disrespect toward a superior commissioned officer. On Aug. 8, a panel returned a verdict of guilty to all charges and specifications and the military judge sentenced him to reduction in paygrade to E-2.



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# New inspirations at the MCAS Miramar AirShow - ‘America’s Air Show’

The MCAS Miramar AirShow continues to inspire audiences with new additions, while continuing with the traditions that visitors look forward to.

The welcoming ceremonies featured the USMC 3D MAW Marching Band, Mounted Color Guard and USSOCOM ParaCommandos.

New to the airshow this year was the incredible USMC Silent Drill Platoon. Premiering at Marine Barracks, Washington, D.C. during the sunset parades of 1958, the Platoon executed their marching and rifle drill with absolute precision — without cadence or verbal commands. Their M1 rifles, with fixed bayonets, weigh in excess of 10-1/2 pounds.

The Marine Air-Ground Task Force demonstration — in the air and on the ground — was an explosive display of Marine Corps power, in which Marines performed a simulated combat assault, complete with pyrotechnics (explosions!). As F/A-18 “Hornet” and F-35 “Lightning II” aircraft flew overhead, helicopter-borne Marines rappelled from the sky, and infantry platoons moved in on their objective in armored vehicles. The MAGTF demo concluded with one utterly enormous explosion along the flight line.

“Warbirds over Miramar: The History of USMC Aviation” was a soaring tribute to the evolution of Marine Corps aviation, through the decades.

A wide variety of aircraft representing the armed services, law enforcement and others were on static display on the ground. Many offered visitors the opportunity to get inside.

Also on the ground was a wide variety of other exhibits, food and

merchandise vendors, and more. Precision Exotics “Precision Air Show Performance” combined runway drag races between cars and aircraft, while their “Precision Extreme Drive” gave members of the audience an opportunity to personally experience speeds of up to 150 mph on a controlled, wide runway.

The Blue Angels headlined “AMERICA’S AIR SHOW,” supported by a maintenance and support team of over 140 people.

As James B. Wellons, Marine major general, Marine Corps — com-

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by Jan Wagner

manding general of the Third Marine Aircraft Wing, and Col. R. Erik Herrmann, commanding officer of MCAS Miramar, wrote in their opening welcome address, for the air show program, “America’s Air Show reflects our people-centric organization built by Marines, Sailors, and their families.” This emphasis on the importance of people, who work tirelessly, was on full display at the air show.

I sincerely appreciated this firsthand on Friday afternoon, as I was trying in vain to speak on my cellphone with the Excalibur Hotel & Casino in Las Vegas, to finalize my upcoming hotel reservations (so that I could cover the SEMA Show and CES). I had been unable to find

a quiet place to make that phone call. I was standing as far away as I could get from the flightline, close to some vegetation and a building. Intermittently, very loud aircraft flew overhead during my phone conversation, which made it impossible for me to hear the person at the hotel.

To the rescue came a woman who was part of an ENVIRONMENTAL crew at the airshow. After learning of my predicament, she led me around to the side of the building and invited me to get inside one of their trucks. I was loaded down and restricted by my two heavy professional cameras, a stuffed shoulder bag and a backpack, so she then cleared their supplies off of the passenger seat and helped me get into the truck, so that she could close the door behind me.

Being in that quiet space made all the difference in the world, enabling me to successfully make my two hotel reservations. I took a selfie of me wedged into the truck, to send to the person who patiently waited every time that loud planes flew overhead, and to help remind me about this act of kindness of others. It will be a fond, lasting memory of the 2025 MCAS Miramar AirShow.

To learn more about the MCAS Miramar AirShow — “America’s Air Show,” visit: <https://miramarairshow.com>.

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## The Meat & Potatoes of Life



by  
Lisa  
Smith  
Molinari

“That’s your prerogative,” the commissary bagger grumbled resentfully. I’d unknowingly stiffed him out of his rightfully earned tip. It was 1993, I was a newly married military spouse, it was my first commissary experience, and I was clueless.

I’ll never forget that bagger’s grumble. It has become a much-used phrase in our military household, every time someone makes a stupid mistake.

Thirty-two years of marriage later, I’m now a seasoned veteran military spouse that knows the drill. I shop almost exclusively at my local base commissary, because it’s an essential part of the military lifestyle (and most importantly, price point) to which I’ve become accustomed.

However, commissaries as we know them may soon become a comfort of the past. DeCA, aka Defense Commissary Agency, has set an Oct. 21 deadline for input from the grocery industry on the idea of privatizing 178 military commissaries in the U.S and Puerto Rico.

The question DeCA and the Pentagon want potential private investors to answer is, “If you took over our military commissaries ‘as is’ with little to no funding from the federal government, how would you meet the Defense Department policy that commissary shoppers

## Commissary privatization: Milspouse non-negotiables

save 23.7 percent as a benefit to military service and still turn a profit?”

But this question begs another question - Why isn’t DeCA asking for input from its patrons?

Currently, of the 8.35 million households with DeCA shopping privileges at 235 commissaries located at home and abroad, approximately 1.8 million people shop monthly. This includes the vast majority of military spouses like me who shop at commissaries.

Since my first commissary experience in 1993 when I ticked off the bagger, I’ve become a regular customer at approximately 11 commissaries both overseas and in the U.S. I’ve come to appreciate commissaries. My shopping trips are quick, efficient, affordable, and surprisingly entertaining.

I know where items are located. I know where the bathroom is, and that it will be clean. I know the meat department guy is always helpful. I know which brands are stocked. I know if I’m at the deli, and realize I forgot walnuts, I won’t die of exhaustion on the way back to Aisle #2. I know if I’m particularly hormonal and have filled my cart with embarrassing items and binge-worthy snacks, I will run into my husband’s boss. I know the check out line won’t be long. I know to have my military ID ready to scan. I know the cashier that calls me “Dear,” and the one that catches me up on the latest antics of her bulldog.

And I know very, very well — that I must always tip the baggers.

When I must go to a regular

grocery store, I spend a lot of time grimacing at prices, overwhelmed by choices, and wondering where items are located. Everything seems so darned far away. God forbid I should need a half-gallon of milk after picking up lettuce, because I swear, the dairy section is a half-mile hike from produce. The public restrooms are to be avoided. I wait in long lines. Checkout chit-chat is a rarity.

And, while lugging my groceries into my trunk after trudging through acres of grocery store aisles, I most definitely miss my commissary baggers.

If DeCA and the Pentagon cared to ask me, a military spouse who has been a commissary shopper for over 30 years, I’d offer the following list of milspouse non-negotiables for any privatization deal:

Don’t increase the prices. (If you do, we’ll eventually stop coming.)

Don’t add more choices to make up for higher prices. (We’re used to sacrificing choice for price, so that won’t work on us.)

Don’t even think of eliminating our favorite overseas tour foods. (I can no longer live without spaetzle and McVite’s Digestives.)

Don’t expand the store size. (If you do, we’ll need golf carts.)

Check out lines must be short, and uniformed personnel go first. (Don’t mess with our hierarchies. It’s a cultural thing.)

Cashiers, butchers, and deli counter folks must be willing to build relationships with us. (It’s called camaraderie, and its what we do.)

We love baggers, so keep them forever. (I promise, I’ll always tip.)

## Veterans News

### Baseball great Joe DiMaggio also served during WWII

by David Vergun  
Pentagon News

Throughout center fielder Joe DiMaggio’s years with the New York Yankees, 1936 to 1942 and 1946 to 1951, the team won nine World Series championships, and DiMaggio set a record for the longest hitting streak — 56 games from May 15 to July 16, 1941, a record still unbroken by any Major League Baseball player.

While away from the Yankees for three years, DiMaggio served in the military during World War II.

On Feb. 17, 1943, DiMaggio enlisted in the Army Air Forces in San Francisco. He then went to Santa Ana Air Base, California, for training.

Before entering the service, he earned about \$43,000 a year as a baseball player, and as an Army airman, his annual salary dropped to a meager \$600. DiMaggio reportedly applied for combat duty but was rejected and instead served out his en-



**New York Yankees executive Bob Fishel, left, Army Brig. Gen. William O. Desobry, former Yankees baseball player Joe DiMaggio and Cincinnati Reds baseball player Pete Rose visit U.S. troops in South Vietnam in 1966. Courtesy photo**

listment stateside as a physical education instructor.

DiMaggio also played for the Armed Forces All-Stars, managed by baseball great Babe Ruth, who was a post-World War I soldier in the 104th Field Artillery Division of the New York Army National Guard.

In 1944, DiMaggio was transferred to Honolulu. On Sept. 14, 1945, he received a medical discharge, a type of honorable discharge, because of chronic stomach ulcers. He got out as a staff sergeant.

The baseball champion eventually got his wish of landing in a combat zone. In 1966 and

later in 1967 during the Vietnam War, DiMaggio visited South Vietnam to boost morale for the U.S. troops and for those at the base hospital recovering from their wounds.

DiMaggio was elected to the National Baseball Hall of Fame in 1955, with a lifetime batting average of .325 and 361 home runs. He was also awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom by President Gerald R. Ford in 1977.

American folk music duo Simon & Garfunkel paid tribute to DiMaggio, who is mentioned in their 1968 song, “Mrs. Robinson.” A month after DiMaggio’s death in 1999, the duo sang the song in Yankee Stadium.

Musician Billy Joel also paid tribute to DiMaggio, including his name in his 1989 hit song, “We Didn’t Start the Fire.”

DiMaggio was born in Martinez, Calif., Nov. 25, 1914, and died in Hollywood, Fla., March 8, 1999.

### VA extends support for family caregivers

Veterans Affairs has finalized a rule extending eligibility for certain participants in the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers PCAFC. The extension ensures that legacy participants, legacy applicants, and their Family Caregivers will remain eligible through Sept. 30, 2028, honoring VA’s earlier commitment announced in July. Under this extension, those in the legacy cohort will continue to receive PCAFC benefits without a reduction in their monthly stipend due to reassessment, with limited exceptions. This decision provides stability for caregivers who rely on the program to support the needs of severely injured and ill vets. VA is taking steps to ensure broad awareness of this update, including direct communication with members of the legacy cohort. By extending the transition period, VA aims to give caregivers and veterans continued security while longer-term policy updates are considered.

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To place your ad, please call our Classified Advertising Department at (619) 280-2985.

### CATERING

We can cater your event with the 'Best Mexican food in San Diego!' Military Discount. El Indio 619-299-0333

New military families have moved to the area over the summer. Advertise your goods & services to the assured-income military community in The Dispatch Classifieds 619-280-2985



## REAL ESTATE LOANS

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Call or text: 858-883-9114  
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## RENTALS APARTMENTS

AVAILABLE NOW!!!  
1, 2 or 3 BR's  
Apartments, Townhouses & Houses

## MOVE-IN SPECIAL! LEADINGHAM REALTY

1062 Palm Ave., Imperial Beach  
619-424-8600

**SAN DIEGO** – New construction, never lived in. TWO 1BR1/BA units. Stnls steel, granite, AC, solar. Under mile to 32nd St Base. \$2250/mo, renter pays all utilities. Adriana 619-921-1010.

## RENTALS CONDO

### BEAUTIFUL 1BR/1BA CONDO AVAILABLE IN MISSION VALLEY!



Email Jessica at  
jessica@socalprem.com  
to schedule a tour.  
1651 Hotel Circle So, Unit D103, SD 92108

### CHARMING 2BR/2BA CONDO AVAILABLE IN SAN CARLOS!



Email Jessica at  
jessica@socalprem.com  
to schedule a tour.  
6812 Hyde Park Dr, Unit H, SD 92119

## RENTALS CONDO

**SCRIPPS RANCH** – 2BR/1BA, 914sf \$2700/mo. W/D in unit. Fireplace, balcony, community pool, parking. Water/trash paid. EZ access to I-15. Now Available, 760-517-6316.

## RENTALS HOUSE

**IMPERIAL BEACH** – 3BR/2BA, 2 car gar, 4 blks to beach, appl's avail. No smoking. Water/trash paid. \$3350/mo. 619-403-2146

## RENTALS TOWNHOUSE

**HILLCREST** – 3BR/1.5BA, unfurn, with private fenced yard, newly remodeled, AC \$3900/mo. 619-992-9927.

## WANTED TO BUY

**TOP CASH PAID**  
Records, CD's, cassettes, DVD's, VHS. I pick up. 858-382-7396.

## HOT ASPHALT!

Air Temp	Asphalt Temp
77°	125°
86°	135°
87°	143°

At 125° skin destruction can occur in just 60 seconds. Always check the asphalt prior to allowing your pet to walk on it.  
**Paws will get burned.**  
TIP: If it's too hot for your bare feet it is too hot for theirs!

## MOVIES AT THE BASES

**MOVIE SCHEDULES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE SO PLEASE CHECK THE WEB SITE DAY-OF TO MAKE SURE THE TITLE AND TIME ARE STILL CORRECT...**

<https://sandiego.navylifesw.com/> select movies at dropdown menu on left  
<https://miramar.usmc-mccs.org/dining-entertainment/movies>  
<https://pendleton.usmc-mccs.org/dining-entertainment/theater>

### NBSD and Lowry Theater Policy

- Outside food and beverage are NOT permitted: Sales from the snack bar support the movie program.
- These Theaters are cashless facilities. Debit and credit cards accepted only.

### Premium Offerings

- Audiovisual assistive equipment available to customers at the front counter.
- Handicap seats and child booster seats are available.

### Movie Rating System

G – General audiences ALL ages admitted.



PG – Parental guidance suggested some material may not be suitable for children.

PG-13 – Parents strongly cautioned some material may be inappropriate for children under 13.

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

NC-17 – No one 17 or under admitted.

## Palm Springs Aerial Tramway continues yearly tradition with Annual 'Snow Guessing' contest

Dreaming of a winter wonderland in the desert heat? The Palm Springs Aerial Tramway's Annual Snow Guessing Contest is just around the corner! Kicking off October 1, the contest continues until the first measurable inch of snow falls at the Tramway's Mountain Station, elevation 8,516 feet.

The first ten guests to accurately select the date of snowfall will win four regular Tram admission tickets, plus a special Tram gift. If there are more than ten correct entries, winners will be chosen by the earliest postmark date.

To submit an entry, write your best-guess date on a postcard and mail it to: Snow Guessing Contest, 1 Tram Way, Palm Springs, CA 92262. Please note that only one date per postcard will be accepted. For more information and contest rules, visit <https://pstramway.com/snow-guessing-2025>.

This winter season, gather your friends and family for a snow day, just a 10-minute tram ride away from the desert floor!

### About Palm Springs Aerial Tramway

The Palm Springs Aerial Tramway is the world's largest rotating tram car. Opened in 1963, the Tram's 80-passenger cars travel along the breathtaking cliffs of Chino Canyon from the Valley Station (elevation 2,643 ft.) to the Mountain Station (elevation 8,516 ft.) in approximately 10 minutes. For more information, please call 888-515-TRAM or 760-325-1391 or visit [www.pstramway.com](http://www.pstramway.com).

## SOCIAL SECURITY MATTERS

### When will my disability become my regular Social Security?

*Dear Rusty: I hope you can answer this question. I'm currently receiving Social Security Disability benefits, and I will be turning 65 in February 2026. I'm confused as to how Social Security Disability transitions to regular Social Security, and when. I assume it's age 65 but maybe it's my retirement date? Also, does the amount remain the same or will it change? I'm not working. I've been on SSDI for about 15 years. Thank you.*

*Signed: Disabled Senior*

**Dear Disabled Senior:** If you are collecting Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) benefits, those SSDI benefits will automatically convert to become your regular Social Security retirement benefit when you reach your SS full retirement age (FRA) which, in your case, is age 67. For information, FRA today is somewhere between age 66 and 67, depending on your year of birth, and the full retirement age for everyone born in 1960 or later is age 67.

The change from SSDI to your regular Social Security benefit will be transparent to you because your monthly benefit amount will remain the same. SSDI benefits were originally awarded to you based upon your full retirement age entitlement when you applied for SSDI (even though you hadn't yet reached your FRA when you went on SSDI). Thus, the monthly benefit amount will not change because it is based on your lifetime earnings record, from before you became disabled.

FYI, although age 65 was once Social Security's "retirement age," full retirement age for Social Security today is based on the year you were born. So, your SSDI benefit will automatically switch to become your regular Social Security retirement benefit as soon as you reach age 67. Essentially, the only thing that will change is the Social Security Trust Fund from which your benefits will be paid.

*This article is intended for information purposes only and does not represent legal or financial guidance. It presents the opinions and interpretations of the AMAC Foundation's staff, trained and accredited by the National Social Security Association (NSSA). NSSA and the AMAC Foundation and its staff are not affiliated with or endorsed by the Social Security Administration or any other governmental entity. To submit a question, visit our website ([amacfoundation.org/programs/social-security-advisory](http://amacfoundation.org/programs/social-security-advisory)) or email us at [ssadviser@amacfoundation.org](mailto:ssadviser@amacfoundation.org).*

### About AMAC

The 2.4 million member Association of Mature American Citizens [AMAC] [www.amac.us](http://www.amac.us) is a vibrant, vital senior advocacy organization that takes its marching orders from its members. AMAC Action is a non-profit, non-partisan organization representing the membership in our nation's capital and in local Congressional Districts throughout the country. And the AMAC Foundation ([www.AmacFoundation.org](http://www.AmacFoundation.org)) is the Association's non-profit organization, dedicated to supporting and educating America's Seniors. Together, we act and speak on the Association members' behalf, protecting their interests and offering a practical insight on how to best solve the problems they face today. Live long and make a difference by joining us today at [www.amac.us/join-amac](http://www.amac.us/join-amac).

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### SOCIAL GROUPS

#### HORSESHOE CLUB

Southern California Horseshoe Pitchers Association (SCHPA)  
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### MARINE CORPS LEAGUE

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760-271-7369  
Meeting monthly, 3rd Thursday @ 6pm  
Veterans Association of North County  
1617 Mission Ave. Oceanside 92058

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Sales support veterans & their families



## Navy Medicine and Defense Partners Deliver Urgent Support to Guantanamo Bay

**From Julius Evans - Naval Medical Readiness Logistics Command, Williamsburg**  
WILLIAMSBURG, Va. -- Navy Medicine commands and partners responded to an urgent requirement request from U.S. Naval Hospital, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, Sept. 19, delivering critical surgical equipment and expertise that bolstered medical readiness across the Fleet and Joint Force.

When GTMO reported a shortage of sterilization equipment and trained personnel, Naval Medical Readiness Logistics Command (NMRLC), Naval Medical Forces Atlantic, Naval Medical Center Portsmouth, Naval Hospital Jacksonville, Defense Health Headquarters, U.S. Naval Hospital Guantanamo Bay, and Defense Logistics Agency, coordinated under a tight 48-hour timeline.

The mission required locating and preparing Automated Field Steam Sterilizers and Ultrasonic Portable Washers without drawing down prepositioned war reserve materiel already set aside for other operational commitments. Once the equipment was identified, biomedical technicians at NMRLC conducted immediate maintenance and calibration to ensure the systems were fully mission ready.

"An Automated Field Steam Sterilizer is a device used to kill or remove all forms of microbial life, including bacteria, viruses, fungi, and spores, to render objects or surfaces completely free of viable microorganisms," said Jerhmain Jordan, NMRLC's Electronic Technician (Biomedical) supervisor. "Sterilization is the highest level of microbial killing, going beyond simply cleaning or disinfecting."

An Ultrasonic Portable Washer is a military biomedical portable ultrasonic cleaner used for sterilizing surgical instruments and other medical equipment in field hospitals and other austere com-

bat environments.

Transporting the gear posed additional challenges since commercial carriers do not service GTMO. The team secured military airlift, ensuring delivery by the deadline. When one sterilizer malfunctioned after arrival, technicians at NMRLC provided remote troubleshooting to restore full capability within 24 hours.

This rapid, coordinated response ensured GTMO remained fully equipped to deliver surgical care in support of deployed Sailors, Marines, and joint partners. The effort demonstrated Navy Medicine's ability to move quickly, solve complex logistics challenges, and sustain readiness in austere environments.

"This was a perfect example of multiple commands coming together to maintain mission capability," said Capt. Jared McKendall, chief of staff, Defense Health Network Atlantic. "The teamwork ensured uninterrupted support for the Fleet and our operational mission overseas."

Naval Medical Readiness Logistics Command (NMRLC), headquartered in Williamsburg, Va., provides centralized program management and logistics support to ensure Navy Medicine is manned, trained, and equipped to support the operational forces. NMRLC delivers expeditionary medical systems, optical fabrication, medical logistics, and materiel readiness to sustain Sailors and Marines worldwide. The command plays a vital role in supporting the Navy Surgeon General's priority of medical force readiness and the Navy's overall warfighting mission.

Navy Medicine -- represented by more than 44,000 highly-trained military and civilian healthcare professionals -- provides enduring expeditionary medical support to the warfighter on, below, and above the sea, and ashore.



**HM2 Nive Hamilton, one of NMRLC's Biomedical Technicians, works on the Automated Field Steam Sterilizer prior to transport to Naval Hospital Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, Sept. 19. Navy Medicine commands and partners responded to an urgent request from GTMO, to deliver critical equipment and expertise. Photo by Julius Evans.**



## Accessing military health care during lapse in appropriations

The Military Health System will continue to provide health care. There may be some effects on delivery of health care services within military hospitals and clinics. Contact your hospital or clinic to confirm hours of operation and services provided.



### From the TRICARE website:

*During the current lapse in government appropriations, you may continue to get care or attend currently scheduled appointments with your civilian providers. Your usual out-of-pocket costs will apply.*

*You may also continue to fill prescriptions at military pharmacies, retail network pharmacies, and home delivery.*

*However, TRICARE may not be able to process or pay medical claims for services received on or after October 1, 2025, until funding is restored. The Defense Health Agency is also working with our TRICARE contractors to also communicate with health-care providers on potential delays in payment.*

*We understand this may cause concern and inconvenience, and we sincerely regret the disruption. We remain committed to resuming full operation as quickly as possible once appropriations are enacted.*

**For additional information and details visit:**  
<https://www.tricare.mil/shutdown>

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## GET CONFIDENTIAL ADDICTION HELP NOW!

**Are you struggling with drugs or alcohol but afraid of getting in trouble?**

Active duty service members in San Diego can now seek treatment without involving their command.\*

Confidential Recovery is in-network with TRICARE. Family members aged 18+ on the plan are also eligible. Private\* outpatient drug and alcohol treatment is available in Mission Valley.

**CALL US AT (619)452-1200-FELLOW VETS ARE STANDING BY.**  
*Support is Covered, Private, and Easier.*

### CONFIDENTIAL RECOVERY

[www.confidentialrecovery.com](http://www.confidentialrecovery.com)

\*We will not share information with your command per HIPAA and Title 42 CFR, but TRICARE has records of services billed (if not the medical record). Records could be accessible for a special duty screening, medical board, or security clearance check.





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