

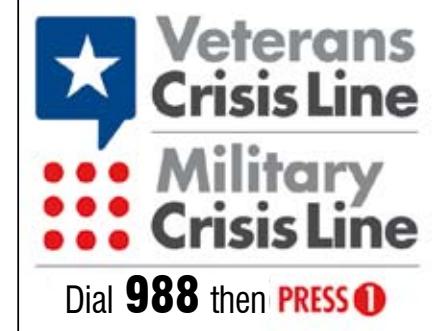
# DISPATCH

San Diego Navy/Marine Corps Dispatch

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FEBRUARY 8, 2024

**JOYFUL JUMP** Space Force Sgt. Kendra Walker holds on tight during a skydive jump over Lompoc, Calif., Jan. 31, 2024. A self-proclaimed "adrenaline junkie," Walker hopes to become a licensed skydiver, which would allow her to conduct solo jumps. U.S. Space Force courtesy photo

## DOD REDUCES ON-BASE CHILD CARE FEES FOR MILITARY FAMILIES

by Joseph Clark, DOD News

The Defense Department is focused on making quality child care options affordable for military families as officials continue to prioritize initiatives to take care of those who serve.

Earlier this month the department implemented its new fee schedule for on base child care designed to reduce fees for lower income military families while maintaining high quality care at DOD child development centers around the world.

Chad Sheldon, DOD's associate director for child and youth programs policy, said the driver behind this year's fee change was "to make the child care fees more equitable and more affordable, specifically for those families with the greatest economic need."

"We wanted to be able to reduce the percentage of income that they're paying for child care and balance that across our fee schedule," he said.

The reduction in the basic weekly rate for on base child care is applied across several tiers under the new structure, as determined by military families' total family income:



A child development center staff member cares for children at Buckley Space Force Base, Colo., Feb. 2, 2023. U.S. Air Force photo by Craig Z. Rodarte

✓ Those with a total family income of \$45,000 will pay a basic weekly rate of \$54, down from \$82 under the previous fee schedule.

✓ Those with a total family income of \$65,000 will pay a basic weekly rate of \$74, down from \$121 under the previous fee schedule.

✓ Those with a total family income of \$90,000 will pay a basic weekly rate of \$104, down from \$143 under the previous fee schedule.

✓ Those with a total family income of \$115,000 will pay a basic weekly rate of \$138, down from \$154 under the previous fee schedule.

Sheldon said child care can be a major expense for new families

see Care, page 4

## USO: Bringing a touch of home to service members through NFL viewing parties

(StatePoint) Service members stationed or deployed away from home often put the treasured Sunday NFL football game-watching ritual on pause because of work responsibilities, time zone differences or lack of access to the game broadcasts.

Fortunately, more service members can get this "home away from home" experience thanks to the generosity of the NFL, which donates NFL Game Pass to the USO's overseas centers, where they can access the games through an app called DAZN. This partnership between the USO and the NFL's Salute to Service initiative makes it possible for the people who serve to watch the game live on Sundays, and join in the shared moments that bring millions of Americans together.

Being stationed abroad can be isolating, making Sunday viewing parties more than just a fun weekly event. Watching the games live is also a way for service members to stay connected to family and friends back home. They text and call during the game, sharing the moments in real time. And like much of USO's programming, these events also provide service members with professional connections and a sense of normalcy under difficult circumstances, helping build a sense of camaraderie among attendees.

Bringing live games to those overseas is just one aspect of the USO-NFL partnership, which began over 55 years ago. Through its support of USO Center expansions, holiday programming and a variety of other events, the NFL helps deliver sports, entertainment and gaming to service members across the world. Continuing the advancement of USO centers around the world, the NFL is supporting a new USO center aboard aircraft carrier *Dwight D. Eisenhower*. This center includes many of the amenities of a land-based center, such as comfortable seating, TVs, video and board games, USO program kits and snacks.

## Navy warships to be repaired at Japanese shipyards, ambassador says

STARS AND STRIPES - The Navy plans to send some of its vessels to Japanese shipyards for maintenance to reduce the time it takes them to return to service, the U.S. ambassador to Japan announced recently. U.S. warships are already maintained and repaired in Japan at U.S. Navy installations like Yokosuka or Sasebo Naval Base, but ships are also routinely sent back to the United States for overhauls, upgrades and major repairs. The process can take months or even years to complete. Eliminating that lengthy process and exploring alternatives is more critical than ever, Ambassador Rahm Emanuel told reporters at Yokosuka. "We know that China watches which ships are coming in and out — it's not a secret; they know what's happening," and China evaluates the United States' deterrence level in the region based on that, he said outside of the base's ship-repair facility.

## 7th Fleet destroyer transits Taiwan Strait

USS *John Finn* (DDG 113) conducted a Taiwan Strait transit on Jan. 24 through waters where high-seas freedoms of navigation and overflight apply in accordance with international law. The ship transited through a corridor in the Strait that is beyond the territorial sea of any coastal State. *John Finn*'s transit through the Taiwan Strait demonstrates the United States' commitment to upholding freedom of navigation for all nations as a principle. No member of the international community should be intimidated or coerced into giving up their rights and freedoms. The United States military flies, sails and operates anywhere international law allows.

## Read the Dispatch on line!

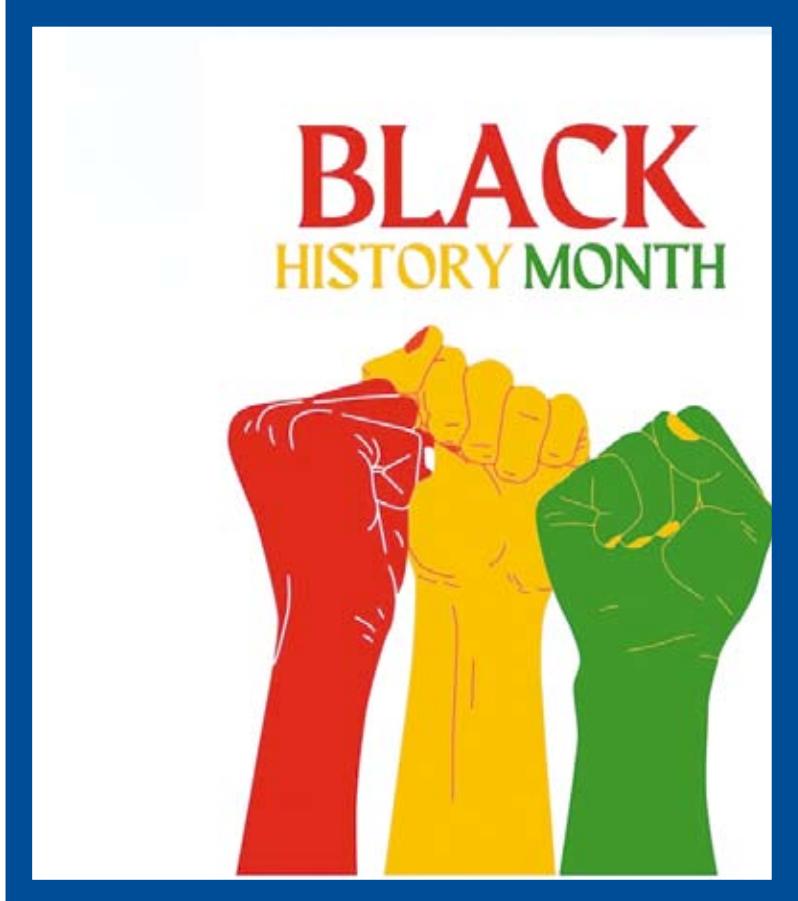
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**Black history in the United States is a rich and varied chronicle of slavery and liberty, oppression and progress, segregation and achievement. Though captive and free Africans were likely present in the Americas by the 1400s, the kidnapped men, women and children from Africa who were sold first to European colonists in 1619, and later to American citizens, became symbolic of the early years of Black history in the United States. The fate of enslaved people in the United States divided the nation during the Civil War. And after the war, the racist legacy of slavery persisted, spurring movements of resistance, including the Underground Railroad, the Montgomery Bus Boycott, the Selma to Montgomery March, and, later, the Black Lives Matter movement. Through it all, Black leaders, artists and writers have emerged to shape the character and identity of a nation.**

## U.S., U.K. launch strikes Against Houthi targets in Yemen to protect Red Sea shipping

by Jim Garamone

U.S. and British forces launched a series of proportionate strikes on Houthi targets in Yemen last week, in response to continuing attacks on shipping in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden.

"These strikes are intended to further disrupt and degrade the capabilities of the Iranian-backed Houthi militia to conduct their reckless and destabilizing attacks against U.S. and international vessels lawfully transiting the Red Sea," Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III said in a statement released by the Pentagon.

While U.S. and U.K. aircraft hit the targets, they were supported by an international coalition. Australia, Bahrain, Denmark, Canada, the Netherlands, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and United States issued a joint statement announcing the strikes.

The international group struck 36 Houthi targets across 13 locations in Yemen in response to the Houthis' attacks against international and commercial shipping, as well as naval vessels transiting the Red Sea. "These precision strikes are intended to disrupt and degrade the capabilities that the Houthis use

to threaten global trade and the lives of innocent mariners," the communique said.

The strikes targeted sites associated with the Houthis' deeply buried weapons storage facilities, missile systems and launchers, air defense systems and radars, officials said.

The Houthis have launched more than 30 attacks on commercial vessels and naval vessels since mid-November. These actions constitute an international challenge, and the coalition that is protecting the sea lines of communication through the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden continues to grow.

"Our aim remains to de-escalate tensions and restore stability in the Red Sea, but let us reiterate our warning to Houthi leadership: We will not hesitate to continue to defend lives and the free flow of commerce in one of the world's most critical waterways in the face of continued threats," the coalition members said in a statement.

The Houthis continue to threaten vessels in the Red Sea. Officials at U.S. Central Command noted that aircraft conducted a strike in self-defense against a Houthi, anti-ship cruise missile that was prepared to launch against

ships in the Red Sea.

"U.S. forces identified the cruise missile in Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen and determined it presented an imminent threat to U.S. Navy ships and merchant vessels in the region," the Centcom release said. "This action will protect freedom of navigation and make international waters safer and more secure for U.S. Navy vessels and merchant vessels."

In addition, destroyer USS *Carney* engaged and shot down one unmanned aerial vehicle over the Gulf of Aden Feb. 2, Centcom officials said. Later that day, U.S. Central Command forces struck four Houthi UAVs that were prepared to launch.

Later, destroyer USS *LaSalle* and F/A-18 Super Hornets from USS *Dwight D. Eisenhower* Carrier Strike Group engaged and shot down seven UAVs over the Red Sea. The Houthis receive equipment, training, intelligence and money from Iran.

All these strikes seek to degrade Houthi capabilities "used to continue their reckless and unlawful attacks on U.S. and U.K. ships, as well as international commercial shipping in the Red Sea, Bab el-Mandeb Strait, and the Gulf of Aden," Centcom officials said.

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**STREAMLIGHT**

## China's buildup of warships on a 'concerning trajectory,' says nominee to command U.S. forces in Indo-Pacific

by Svetlana Shkolnikova

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON - The nominee to command American forces in the Indo-Pacific region told senators on Thursday that he is worried about China's rapid ship and military buildup, describing its momentum as "concerning."

Adm. Samuel Paparo, who now commands the U.S. Pacific Fleet, said the U.S. remains equipped to handle the rising dominance of China and its larger Navy fleet but the pace of the country's warship-building raises alarm.

The Defense Department considers China a "pacing threat" that has the capability to challenge America's military and spark a war over Taiwan, a democratically governed island and U.S. partner that China considers its own territory.

"The [People's Liberation Army] Navy has been on a historic trajectory these last 25 years and while ... I am confident that we would prevail in combat, it is a concerning trajec-

tory," Paparo said. "We are not overmatched but I don't like the pace of the trajectory."

He offered his assessment to the Senate Armed Services Committee during a confirmation hearing on his promotion to commander of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, an area of responsibility that includes nearly 400,000 service members and half of the world's surface.

Sen. Dan Sullivan, R-Alaska, said China's fleet stands at about 370 ships, nearly 80 more than the U.S. Navy's 291 ships. China added 30 ships in the last year, including an aircraft carrier and about a dozen cruisers and destroyers, he said.

The U.S. during the same time added two ships to its fleet and is set to shrink in the coming years as retirement of its inventory outpaces new construction.

"If deterrence fails and we go to war in the near term with China, we have to fight with the fleet we have today," Sullivan said.

Paparo said he had faith the

fleet would overcome any size disadvantages, pointing to American forces on land that would be used to augment its forces at sea.

"We're a joint force that thinks in a multi-domain mindset," he said.

However, Paparo expressed concern about the small U.S. merchant fleet, which is also dwarfed by China's prolific shipbuilding. Only about 100 oceangoing merchant vessels fly under the American flag compared to 5,500 ships under Chinese control.

"I believe that the current size and scope of the U.S. merchant fleet is a vulnerability," Paparo said. "It is a limitation for how forward we can put combat capability and sustain combat capability that was in maritime terrain."

Sen. Mark Kelly, D-Ariz., said an insufficient commercial maritime capacity not only impacts trade and supply chains during peacetime but will hinder U.S. ability to supply troops in a conflict.

"This isn't a capability that we can just turn on overnight with a switch," he said. "We need investments now to be ready for tomorrow."

If confirmed, Paparo said he would work with U.S. Transportation Command to identify shortfalls.

His nomination is expected to easily earn the support of the Senate panel. Sen. Roger Wicker of Mississippi, the top Republican on the committee, said he was confident Paparo is "exceptionally qualified to lead our forces in the Pacific."

Paparo would succeed Adm. John Aquilino when he retires in the spring.

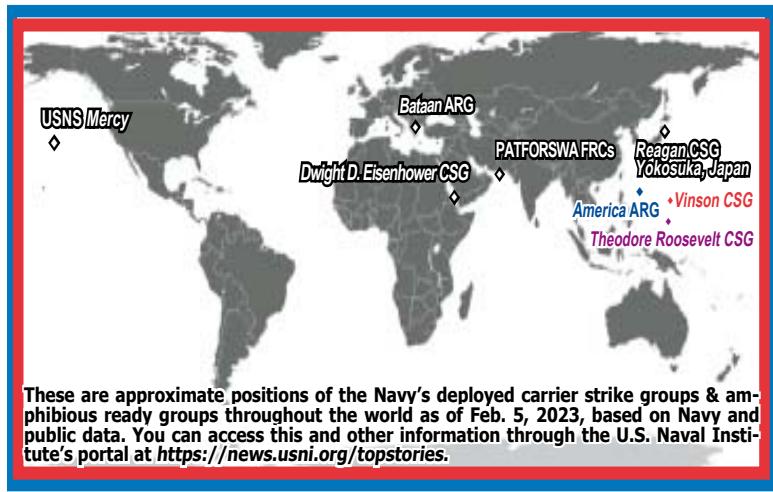
In a 37-year military career, Paparo has served as a sailor, naval officer and a fighter pilot. He has commanded the U.S. Pacific Fleet since 2021 and previously served as the operations chief for

U.S. Central Command, which controls U.S. military operations in the Middle East.

and seven of the 10 largest militaries in the world.

China, the region's preeminent power, is extending its influence and increasingly poses an existential threat to Taiwan.

"We're in a global environment that is increasingly disordered, increasingly chaotic. The logic of rules has been replaced with a logic of power," Paparo said. "We must, as a nation, counter that logic with comprehensive national power across all levers of statecraft."



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**Army**

✓ Army still weighing combat awards for Soldiers hit by deadly drone attack at Jordan base

**Navy**

✓ Wikoff assumes command of Navy's operations in Middle East  
✓ Destroyers and jets took out at least 12 Houthi drones Feb. 2  
✓ Navy sinking nearly \$1 billion into barracks construction amid revelations of poor living conditions  
✓ For Navy submarines and Norfolk's USS Pasadena, surfacing for supplies is a matter of life or death

USS *Farragut* returns to Mayport after tracking down drug traffickers in the Caribbean

✓ For U.S. carrier pilots, a vexing mission hunting down Houthi missiles and drones

**Marine Corps**

✓ Marines in California barracks lacked consistent hot water for months

✓ Last Harrier mechanics finish training as Corps shifts to F-35

**Air Force**

✓ Air Force preps for mega overhaul with an eye toward China  
✓ N.C. airman sentenced for grooming girls in Hampton Roads; child sexual abuse images

✓ Maxwell AFB activates new Grey Wolf training unit

**Space Force**

✓ Space Force to put firms under contract for commercial reserve by 2025

✓ Space Force effort to replace aging space tracking software lagging: DOT&E

**Coast Guard**

✓ Dog rescued after more than a week trapped inside shipping container in Texas port

**National Guard**

✓ Alaska NG plans deployment to assist federal government on U.S.-Mexico border  
✓ Another round of extreme storms could cause more life-threatening conditions in waterlogged Southern California

**Your Military**

✓ Military grave markers stolen from cemetery, two people arrested  
✓ Police find military grade air-to-air rocket in Washington home

# Strikes against Iran-backed militias had 'good effects,' Pentagon spokesman says

by Jim Garamone, DOD News

U.S. strikes against militias affiliated with Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps on Feb. 2, "had good effects," said Pentagon Press Secretary Air Force Maj. Gen. Pat Ryder at a news conference.

President Joe Biden ordered the strikes in response to the Jan. 28 militia strike that killed three U.S. service members and wounded more than 40 others at Tower 22 base in Jordan. The American forces are in the region as part of the defeat-ISIS effort.

U.S. military forces conducted strikes Feb. 2 on seven facilities in Iraq and Syria and hit more than 85 targets.

The facilities that were hit include command and control operation centers, intelligence centers, rockets, missiles, unmanned aerial vehicle storage and logistics, and ammunition supply chain facilities, Ryder said.

"Although we continue to evaluate, we currently assess that we had good effects and the strikes destroyed or functionally damaged more than 80 targets at the seven facilities," the general said. "The number of casualties is still being assessed."

Ryder emphasized that the strikes are the start of U.S. response. "There will be additional actions taken to hold the

IRGC and affiliated militias accountable for their attacks on U.S. and coalition forces," he said.

He reiterated that the United States does not seek conflict in the Middle East, "but attacks on American forces will not be tolerated, and we will continue to take all necessary actions to defend the United States."

The Feb. 2 attacks are separate and distinct from the multinational actions taken Feb. 3, Ryder said. On Saturday, U.S. forces along with forces from the United Kingdom, Australia, Bahrain, Canada, Denmark, the Netherlands and New Zealand hit targets in Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen.

"These strikes were intended to further disrupt and degrade Houthi capabilities to conduct their attacks against U.S. and international vessels, lawfully transiting the Red Sea," Ryder said.

Coalition forces targeted 13 locations striking 36 Houthi targets. These included buried weapons storage facilities, missile systems and launchers, air defense systems and radars. These are capabilities the Houthis use to attack international merchant and naval vessels in the region, Ryder said.

<https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/3666229/>

## Care

**continued from page 1**

who are typically still in the early stages of their careers and not at the peak of their earning potential.

"By making these adjustments to our fees, our intent is that they're going to have more money in their pocket to cover additional expenses – food, diapers, all those things that come along with being a parent as well," he said.

President Joe Biden and First Lady Dr. Jill Biden have made reducing child care costs for military families a key focus of the Biden-Harris administration.

The new fee structure follows Biden's executive order in April directing the DOD to improve child care affordability on military installations.

Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III has prioritized efforts to strengthen support for DOD personnel and family members

under his "Taking Care of Our Service Members and Families" initiative.

Improving access to child care is a key part of that effort.

The DOD operates one of the largest employer-sponsored child care programs in the U.S., serving more than 160,000 children every year, according to 2022 figures.

"Our service members matter," Sheldon said. "Their families matter. And certainly we

have a vested interest in children and youth. Our mission is a really important one and one that we take seriously."

He said child care providers and child development center staff throughout DOD, take their mission to serve the children of military families to heart.

"I hope that service members know that their well-being and their family's well-being is something that is critically important to us," he said.



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# Career & Education

## Are these common myths preventing you from securing your family's future?

(StatePoint) With the cost of most goods and services on the rise, straining many household budgets, families are likely looking for ways to cut expenses. But it's important to make wise decisions before cutting, as some expenses are worth more than they cost and can provide a lifetime of benefits.

Life insurance is one example. While often viewed as just a cost, life insurance is actually an investment in your family's well-being. Unfortunately, too many people don't have any life insurance or don't have enough because they don't have all the facts. That's why Erie Insurance is working to debunk some of the more common myths that prevent families from having sufficient coverage.

### #1: It's too expensive

Many people believe life insurance is a monthly payment comparable to a car or house payment. In reality, the average cost of life insurance (depending on individual situations) is \$14 a month, according to Erie Insurance. Giving up one restaurant meal a month can help set your family up for financial stability for years. To roughly calculate how much life insurance would cost to cover your family's needs, check out Erie Insurance's Life Insurance Coverage Calculator.

### #2: Stay-at-home and single parents don't need it

If you're a stay-at-home or single parent, life insurance might seem like an unnecessary expense. Yet, if you or your spouse are gone, someone will need to provide childcare and cover other expenses for your

children. Life insurance could take away the burden of figuring out how to afford childcare as you or someone else adjusts and assimilates to a huge life change.

### #3: It is only beneficial after you die

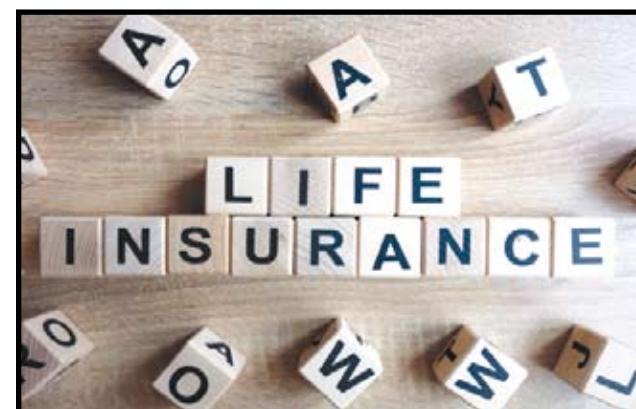
Although life insurance is typically used for after-death support, some policies allow you to tap into your benefits for certain reasons while you are alive. For example, with some terminal or chronic illnesses, your policy may pay out a certain amount to support medical expenses. With some policies, you can also use your life insurance to support long-term care. To learn more about pre-death life insurance benefits, contact your insurance agent.

### #4: My employer already covers me, so I'm set

Even though many employers offer life insurance plans, those plans tend to be limited in their coverage and options. Also, most employer-sponsored coverage disappears after you leave that job. Adding an additional policy allows you to have more security in the event you were to pass away. To calculate how much life insurance you need to sufficiently cover your loved ones, visit <https://www.erieinsurance.com/lifecalc>.

### #5: I'm too young to worry about life insurance

When you are young, the last thing you want to do is think about death and dying. However, life insurance premiums tend to be cheaper the younger you are. Plus, having life insurance while paying off debts, especially if you have a cosigner, gives extra



security to your cosigner in the unfortunate event you were to pass away.

Life insurance is designed to support your loved ones should

something happen to you. Show them you really care about their long-term welfare. Talk to your agent today about adding a policy that fits your needs.

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If you're interested in attending one of these classes, call the Centralized Scheduling Center at 866-923-6478. Legend: (V) Virtual (IP) In Person (NBSD) Naval Base San Diego (NBPL) Naval Base Point Loma (NBC) Naval Base Coronado (KMB) Kearny Mesa Branch (GBV) Gateway Village Branch (VSM) Village at Serra Mesa Branch (BVH) Bayview Hills Branch

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*Finding Federal Employment*

Wednesday, February 21 | 1300 - 1500 | NBPL (IP)

Wednesday, March 6 | 0900 - 1100 | NBSD (IP)

**Capstone**

Friday, February 23 | 0800 - 1130 | KMB (IP)

Friday, March 15 | 0800 - 1130 | KMB (IP)

**Job Search Strategies**

Wednesday, February 14 | 0900 - 1030 | NBSD (IP)

Wednesday, February 14 | 1330 - 1530 | KMB (IP)

Wednesday, March 6 | 1300 - 1500 | NBPL (IP)

Wednesday, March 13 | 0900 - 1030 | NBSD (IP)

**Resume Writing**

Wednesday, February 14 | 1300 - 1500 | NBPL (IP)

Wednesday, February 21 | 0900 - 1030 | NBSD (IP)

Thursday, February 22 | 1330 - 1530 | VSM (IP)

**FFSC Job Fair**

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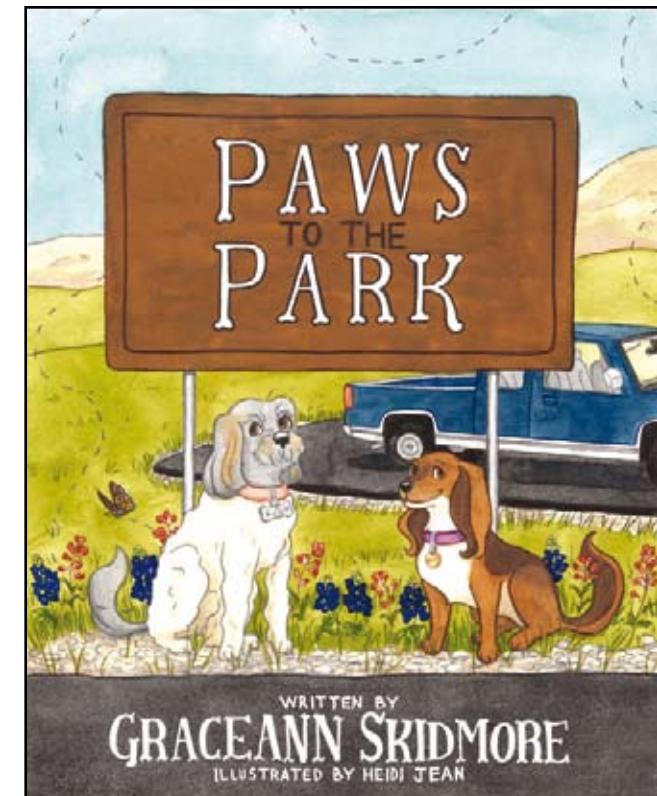
Wednesday, March 20 | TBA

**How to Work a Job Fair**

Thursday, March 14 | 0900 - 1000 | NBC (IP)

**Spouse Employment, Empowerment and Development**

Monday, February 26 | 1300 - 1500 | KMB (IP)



## CPen spouse pens second book 'Paws To The Park'; Order now on Amazon

The book is a short story based on the adventures of puppy dog friends Dixie and Ruby. Dixie is a sassy little Dachshund, and Ruby is a Maltipoo. They are always getting into new things together. This short story explores the day Dixie and Ruby have at the park, the animals they encounter, the fun they have together, and the joy of companionship.

"Paws To The Park" is GraceAnn's second children's book. She has also written, "Wings Away, A Tale Of Friendship" which was released in July of this year.



GraceAnn was born and raised in Corpus Christi, TX. GraceAnn is a proud Texan with a deep appreciation for southern charm. She holds a bachelor's degree in Agricultural Business and an MBA from Texas A&M University-Kingsville. Currently working in the tech industry GraceAnn resides in Southern California with her husband who serves in the United States Marine Corps.

Beyond her professional pursuits, GraceAnn is dedicated to military advocacy. During her leisure hours, she finds joy in reading, traveling, crafting, volunteering, and trying new things. Most importantly, she cherishes the precious moments spent with her loved ones, including her treasured companion, Dixie, the miniature Dachshund who plays a central role in this story. GraceAnn decided to write children's books as an outlet for her passion for storytelling. She is expecting her first child in the Spring of 2024 and cannot wait to share her love of literacy with her child.

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## Local Military

# NHC Lemoore doctor brings rural care specialty to military clinic

by Elaine Heirigs  
Naval Health Clinic Lemoore

LEMOORE - Dr. Dustin Schleif is a physician in the Urgent Care Clinic (UCC) at Naval Health Clinic (NHC) Lemoore since the department reopened in the fall of 2017. He came to the Central Valley while completing the rural track for Loma Linda University's Family Medicine residency program.

Schleif provides patient care and helps guide corpsman-led care of patients at the military treatment facility. He takes pride in being a part of a healthcare team that genuinely cares for patients and their wellbeing.

"I have previously been a primary care provider, hospitalist, and a medical director of civilian rural health clinics,"

said Schleif. "Working in the UCC has been my most enjoyable and satisfying job."

Schleif hopes to continue his contract at NHC Lemoore for many more years.

"I am honored to work with medical assistants, nurses, and corpsmen who go above and beyond their UCC responsi-

"When possible, I like to bring fun and humor into the workplace," said Schleif. "I believe people work better together when work is something to look forward to. I also believe every person in a team is equally important, we just have different roles to fill."

The best part of his job is

**“**  
When possible, I like to bring fun and humor into the workplace. I believe people work better together when work is something to look forward to **”**

bilities to help people in need, including jump starting a car or two in the parking lot."

He is also the designated mac-and-cheese provider for potlucks, his coworkers joke.

working with the Navy's hospital corpsmen.

"I enjoy showing them a lighter, more fun side of healthcare, and hopefully life in general," said Schleif.

Naval Health Clinic Lemoore, co-located with Navy Medicine Readiness and Training Command Lemoore, ensures the readiness of its active-duty service members and improves the lives of military families through the delivery of high-quality healthcare to over 18,000 eligible beneficiaries at Naval Air Station Lemoore, California and NAS Fallon, Nevada.

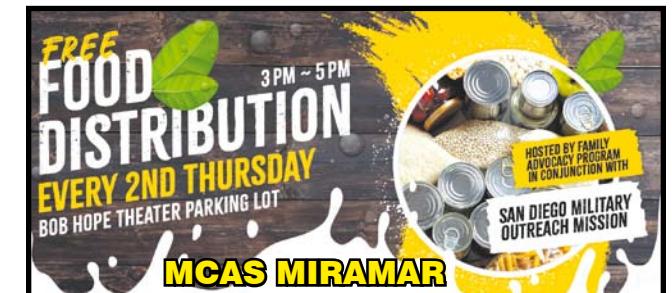
The command also provides dental care and medical administrative support to Navy, Marine Corps, and international students at the Naval Postgraduate School, Defense Language Institute and the Center for Information Dominance in Monterey.

The command's mission is to advance the readiness and health of our warfighters and beneficiaries and to invest in our people and partnerships.



**Dr. Dustin Schleif is a physician in the Urgent Care Clinic at Naval Health Clinic Lemoore since the department reopened in the fall of 2017. He came to the Central Valley while completing the rural track for Loma Linda University's Family Medicine residency program. U.S. Navy photo by Elaine Heirigs**

Total Battle Force	Deployed	Underway
292 (USS 232, USNS 60)	102 (USS 70, USNS 32)	66 (40 Deployed, 26 Local)





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## Missing sailing vessel Malulani arrives in Hawaii

ALAMEDA, Calif. - The missing individual, 60-year-old Noel Rubio, arrived safely in Hawaii with his sailing boat "Malulani" on Feb. 3.

The vessel Malulani is a 32-foot Westsail sloop that departed Long Beach, Dec. 28 enroute to Kaneohe, O'ahu, Hawaii, crewed by Noel Rubio with a planned arrival date of Jan. 18.

After receiving notification on Friday, the Coast Guard began efforts to locate Noel Rubio and the vessel Malulani.

The Coast Guard used all available means to determine the Malulani's location, including urgent marine information broadcasts (UMIB) and harbor checks in California, Hawaii, and Mexico. He last made contact via cellphone Dec. 28, from south of Catalina Island, informing a friend that he was enroute to Hawaii. The only means of communication aboard the



In this Coast Guard photo, vessel Malulani is a 32-foot Westsail sloop that departed Long Beach on Dec. 28 enroute to Kaneohe, O'ahu, Hawaii, crewed by the 60-year-old Noel Rubio.

vessel Malulani is a VHF-FM marine band radio.

"The Coast Guard is greatly appreciative of the expert consult advice on weather and routes provided by experienced trans-pacific sailors," said Douglas Samp, a search and rescue mission coordinator in the Rescue Coordination Center Alameda. "Mariners intend-

ing to conduct an open ocean passage are highly encouraged to have multiple layers of communication, including a VHF-FM DSC radio, HF DSC radio, satellite communications, and a 406MHz electronic position indicating radio beacon (EPIRB) as the notification of last resort to help SAR authorities locate your position in a time of need."



**MCRD San Diego (Jan. 29, 2024)** Marine Corps Sgt. David Plummer, a drill instructor with Receiving Company, Support Battalion, gives instructions to a new recruit of Golf Company, 2nd Recruit Training Battalion here. During the receiving process, recruits are searched for contraband, given a haircut, allowed a phone call home, and issued gear. U.S. Marine Corps photo by Lance Cpl. Sarah M. Grawcock

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## Navy sacks USS Howard commander, marking 2nd ouster for destroyer's skipper in 6 months

by Corey Dickstein

Stars and Stripes

The commander of USS *Howard*, a guided-missile destroyer based in Japan, was fired Feb. 6, the Navy announced without providing a specific reason.

Cmdr. Cameron Dennis was dismissed as the ship's skipper by Capt. Justin Harts, the commodore of Yokosuka Naval Base's Destroyer Squadron 15, for "a loss of confidence in his ability to perform his duties," the Navy announced in a brief statement.

Dennis' firing marks the second dismissal of a *USS Howard* commander since August. Navy officials on Feb. 6 declined to provide additional details about Dennis' dismissal beyond the "loss of confidence" statement

that the military services use in nearly all announcements of fired commanders.

The Navy said Dennis would be reassigned to the 7th Fleet staff, which is also headquartered at Yokosuka Naval Base. Capt. Dave Huljick, who had been serving as the deputy commodore for Destroyer Squadron 15, will take temporary command of *Howard*. It was not immediately clear when a new, permanent *USS Howard* skipper would be named.

"There is no impact to the ship's mission or schedule," the Navy said.

Dennis took command of the *Howard* on Sept. 1, replacing another temporary commander who took the helm of the ship from Cmdr. Kenji Igawa, who

was fired in August for poor performance, Navy officials said at the time. Igawa's dismissal came just days after the *Howard* sustained a "soft grounding" just before arriving in port in Indonesia on Aug. 10, 7th Fleet officials said.

A soft grounding is described as the ship bottoming out on soft seabed without major damage to the vessel. No injuries were reported in that August incident.

Dennis is a San Antonio native who previously served as an enlisted Sailor, according to his Navy biography. He had previously served as the executive officer on the *USS Higgins*, another guided-missile destroyer. He also had served on the staff of the 6th Fleet in Italy.

## San Diego Humane Society needs foster families

Dear Dispatch reader,  
The San Diego Humane Society is looking for foster volunteers who can temporarily open their homes and hearts to animals in need. With an influx of mama dogs and puppies, along with animals in need of temporary boarding due to the recent rain and flooding, we have an increased need for loving foster homes. It's easy to sign up, and our Foster team will provide

you with training, supplies and veterinary care. You just provide a loving temporary home. Foster assignments are available for a wide variety of animals, but we have a special need for ✓ mother dogs with puppies, ✓ Safety net fosters, and ✓ large dogs. Additionally, kitten season is around the corner and it's never too early to prepare for bottle-feeding babies. If you're interested in becoming a kitten foster for

the busy upcoming baby season, don't wait - start the process today. Ready to foster? Visit [sdhumane.org/foster](http://sdhumane.org/foster) to learn more and sign up. If you'd like to make a difference but can't commit to fostering at this time, you can still help. By donating a gift from our dog-supply wish list, you'll help ensure that our foster families and pets have everything they need.

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## USS Stockdale named Secretary of the Navy Energy Excellence Award winner

WASHINGTON – San Diego-based USS Stockdale was named one of six winners for the Secretary of the Navy Energy Excellence Award for fiscal year 2023 were announced Jan. 23.

The SECNAV Energy Excellence Awards Program is designed to promote excellence in the areas of energy security, energy resilience, innovation, combat effectiveness, and program management.

After careful consideration of all nominations, the Secretary of the Navy is pleased to announce the 2023 Energy Excellence Award Winners:



**USS Stockdale**, participating in integrated exercises as part of the Abraham Lincoln Carrier Strike Group. U.S. Navy photo

**Afloat (Large)**: USS *Kearsarge* (LHD 3)

**Afloat (Small)**: USS Stockdale (DDG 106)

**Afloat (Logistics)**: USNS *Joshua T. Humphries* (T-AO-188)

**Installation (Large)**: Naval Station Norfolk

Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center (MCAGCC) Twentynine Palms

**Installation (Small)**: Commander, Fleet Activities Sasebo

Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island

**Technology Development and Acquisition**: Naval Surface Warfare Center Carderock

"Congratulations to the winners of the 2023 SECNAV Energy Excellence Awards for their work and accomplishments to advance the Department's energy initiatives," said Meredith Berger, assistant Secretary of the Navy, Energy, 2030 efforts."

For more information about the Secretary of the Navy's energy program, refer to <https://www.secnav.navy.mil/eie/Pages/default.aspx>.

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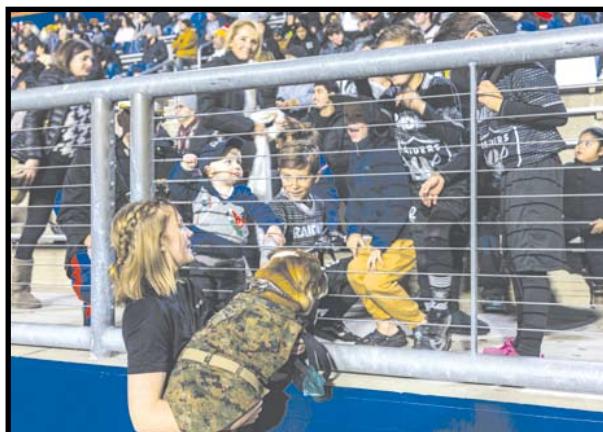
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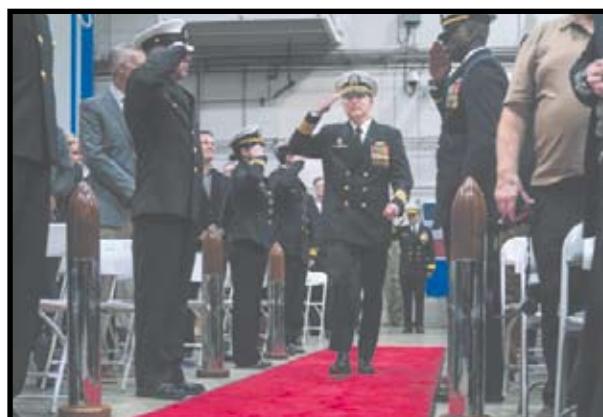
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### PHOTO GALLERY



**BRUNO** Marine Corps **STAR** Lance Cpl. Sarah Grawcock lifts Pfc. Bruno, the Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego mascot, to meet spectators at the Orange County North-South High School All-Star football game in Costa Mesa, Calif., Feb. 3, 2024. U.S. Marine Corps photo by Sgt. Jesse Carter-Powell



**NEW SKIPPER** Maritime Expeditionary Security Group 1 welcomed Capt. Edward Bertucci as he relieved Capt. Scott Tasin (shown here) as the group's new leader, at Naval Outlying Landing Field, Imperial Beach, Feb. 2, 2024. U.S. Navy photo by MC2 Megan Alexander



**HIKING** Marine Corps **HUES** recruits with Delta Company, 1st Recruit Training Battalion, conduct an 8-kilometer hike at Camp Pendleton Jan. 30, 2024. The hike helps condition recruits to rigorous terrain on Camp Pendleton in preparation for their 13-kilometer hike and culminating event - the Crucible. U.S. Marine Corps photo by Sgt. Yvonna Guyette

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by Jan Wagner

## Bard AI by Google as a tool for writing

thing, and avoiding redundancy will only eliminate a relatively small number of words. The rough draft of this column had ballooned to nearly 1,200 words. How much could Bard help me by only cleaning up things like spelling mistakes and redundancy?

At bard.google.com, I began my research by entering this at Bard's prompt: "Tell me how you reduce the word count on columns that I write, to achieve the desired word count." Bard's quick answer was an actionable, thorough, useful response over a page in length.

Later, after considering Bard's answer, I re-entered that same exact question at the prompt. To my surprise, Bard's two responses were quite different.

In one, Bard told me what it would do to achieve my goal, ending by saying: "I'm ready to assist you with word count reduction whenever you provide these details," whereas in the other,

Bard told me what I (not Bard) should do to achieve my goal, ending with this much more tentative statement: "If you'd like, I can also help you with specific examples from your columns. Just let me know what you're working on and I'll be happy to provide some suggestions!"

Then Bard's document became downright bizarre, mixing English and Chinese!

I think you will agree that Bard's version of this column was very different from mine, which I prefer. Furthermore, as I edit I often add new content. I ended my test of Bard and edited my column down from 1,338 words to approximately 750 words.

*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.*

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Until I ventured inside the sprawling Google exhibit at CES 2024, I had been unaware of Bard AI. As a writer, I was intrigued to learn that it can write documents based on what it learns from a variety of sources.

While I have no interest whatsoever in giving Bard topics and asking it to write my "AutoMatters & More" columns, I am interested in exploring how Bard might be used as a useful tool to proofread what I write. That could enable me to do the routine stuff more quickly and have more time to spend developing the creative side of my message.

I already use AI this way in my very time-consuming photo editing process. I used to do repetitive but necessary tasks, like reducing high ISO noise in my photos that are taken in very low light, with manually adjusted photo editing tools.

These days I use a program called "Topaz Photo AI." While it allows a variety of manual adjustments, often the AI-powered default adjustments are good enough.

I already use software tools to flag possible typos and other such technical writing errors. Can Bard do more than that, while leaving the creative aspects of my writing to me?

Early drafts of my "AutoMatters & More" columns usually exceed 750 words — often in the 800-900 words range, and sometimes even more. Yet publications expect approximately 750 words. Could Bard help me write to a word count without replacing my creative, original content with its own, that would entirely be based upon other people's work? Using fewer words to say the same

I tried asking again, but this time I further clarified my command: "Reduce the text of this column to approximately 750 words."

This time Bard actually responded with what began as a very impressive, well written document, heavily condensing what I wrote down to its very essence. See that for yourself in the attached screenshot.

## For the love of football

"Tray, your sister missed the bus, so drop her off on your way to school!" my mother bellowed from the porch as my brother was about to get into his maroon Galaxy 500.

"Are you kidding me?" he griped, as I stood pathetically in the driveway. He was a senior in high school, and I was in middle school. He drove himself, along with several football team buddies, to school each morning, passing right by the middle school on the way, but he didn't want to be seen with his geeky little sister. In my defense, my bus stop was a half-mile down our rural dead-end road, and the bus had come a smidge early.

"Get in, and keep your trap shut," Tray snapped. In the back seat, I tried to be invisible. He fired up the Galaxy's engine, and turned on the stereo, which he'd installed himself. "Wango Tango" by Ted Nugent blared.

On the outskirts of town, Tray's football buddies hopped in the Galaxy with a quick "Sup" before the stereo volume was turned back up. They all looked the same — hair parted down the middle, stone washed jeans, tube socks, and turf shoes.

I was star struck. I didn't interact with the cool crowd, much less high school football players. Even though they glared at me with disdain, I savored this rare opportunity.

As Tray's car approached my middle school, he slowed and gave me a threatening glance. I'd better get out, and quick. No good-byes, just go, and never let this happen again. Regardless of my brother's irritation, I

was exhilarated, and hoped someone saw that I'd jumped out of a car full of high school football players.

Growing up in Western Pennsylvania, football was a big part of life. If you didn't play football, you watched it. Being a Steelers fan was mandatory. High school football games were the prime event on fall Friday nights. Even though I didn't understand much about the game, positive associations were imprinted that would last a lifetime.

**The Meat & Potatoes of Life**

by  
Lisa  
Smith  
Molinari

can football, often resorting to the frustrating early versions of online streaming. Since our cumbersome Dell computer was located in the primary bedroom, our family of five, along with our 110-pound dog, would gather on our bed with snacks. When our team scored, the bed became a human salad shooter, with nacho chips, paper plates and drink cups flying everywhere.

On a fall family trip to Paris, we found a bar that played the Steelers-Browns game. And on a February trip to Rome, we woke in the middle of the night to watch the Packers beat the Steelers in Super Bowl XLV.

During that tour, Hayden joined the high school football team. A band geek at heart, during halftime, he'd run off the field, fully geared up in his pads and jersey, to play tuba with the band. Then back on the field for the second half. We were so proud.

Hayden went on to play lineman at two more high schools. In Florida, I was team mom again, which became my unpaid, full-time job. I baked cupcakes, raised funds for a new scoreboard, applied for tax-exempt status for the Boosters Club, and planned the end-of-season banquet. During the season, I communicated with the coach more than my husband.

Now empty nesters in Rhode Island, my husband and I will be watching the Super Bowl on our couch at home with a pot of chili, while we wait for grandchildren that we can manipulate into playing football one day.

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**CORONADO** – Studio, single occupancy, near NASNI. No pets, no smoking. Furn/unfurn. Private patio with private W/D, utilities incld. \$1950 + deposit. 619-339-7039.

2/1

**RENTALS TOWNHOUSE**

**MISSION HILLS** – 3BR/2BA, 2 units, completely remodl. 2 off st prkg spots, laundry on-site, private yard. \$3900/mo. 619-992-9927.

3/1

**ROOM WANTED**

**LA JOLLA-UTC-MIRAMAR** – Vetted & employed female needs a room & bath. No pets, no kids, no issues. Good refs, stable emplmt. Prefer military/law enforcement. 760-271-3144.

2/15

**RENTALS CONDO**

**EASTLAKE SHORES** – 2BR/2BA, Villa Martinique Complex. Upper floor overlooking pool.

2/15

**CHULA VISTA** – 4BR/3.5BA. 3737sf, large backyard, newly painted. Near military bases/ fwys. \$5500/mo. Available now. 949-293-8481.

3/1

**IMPERIAL BEACH** – 3BR/2BA, 1500sf, Irg backyard, 3 blocks to beach, newly remodl, new applis, w/d incl. \$3600/mo. 619-746-0077.

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**NATIONAL CITY GRANNY FLAT** – 1BR/1BA 10 min to 32nd St., off st. prkg, incld utils, newly built, quiet area. \$1600/mo. 619-823-7500.

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**PARADISE HILLS** – Open House Feb 3rd 12-3pm. 4BR/3BA, 2 car garage \$3795/mo. 619-972-3724. <https://sdmls.paragonrels.com/CollabLink/?id=7b9517b8-f13f-46f4-91b0-bea2b831c796&forMlsId=SDMLS>

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**SAN DIEGO** – 3BR/3BA, 3 car gar, no smoking/drinking/pets, no evictions, W/D hookups, \$3500/mo. 4300 Newton Ave. 951-210-8392.

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# Providing stress relief for deployed USNS Mercy Sailors

by Chief Petty Officer

Shamira Purifoy

USNS MERCY (T-AH 19)

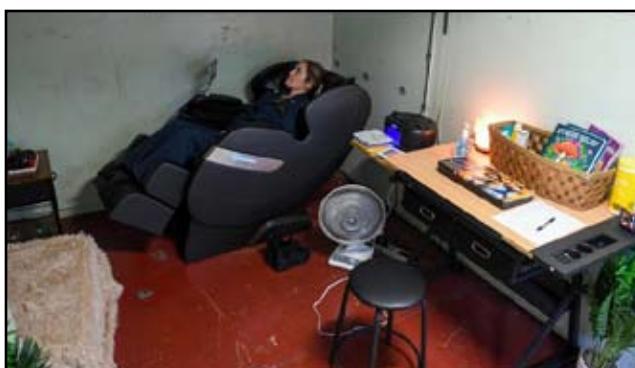
The hospital ship USNS Mercy (T-AH 19) is targeting the unique stressors faced by military healthcare workers during Pacific Partnership 2024-1 (PP24-1).

The Resiliency Room aboard Mercy gives Sailors access to a massage chair, yoga mat, calming music, scent sticks, and coloring books as ways to decompress and relax while aboard the ship. Sailors sign up for 30-minute blocks at a time.

"The resiliency room is an evidence based space, where crew members of the Mercy can go to get away and use evidence based items to de-stress, relax, and renew themselves from having a stressful day," said U.S. Navy Lt. Erik Sanchez, a clinical nurse specialist aboard Mercy.

Medical care is one of Pacific Partnership's four lines of effort. The military doctors, nurses and hospital corpsman aboard Mercy provide care to thousands of patients during mission stops in host nations throughout the unifying mission.

"When we care for patients, we need to be at peak performance mentally," said Sanchez. "If we're really stressed, we won't be so focused on the patient and that's where errors can occur. Patient



**U.S. Lt. Cmdr. Katie Lee, an ER doctor, relaxes in a massage chair in the resiliency room aboard the hospital ship USNS Mercy (T-AH 19) underway in the Pacific Ocean, as part of Pacific Partnership 2024-1, Jan. 23, 2024. Pacific Partnership, now in its 19th iteration, is the largest multinational humanitarian assistance and disaster relief preparedness mission conducted in the Indo-Pacific and works to enhance regional interoperability and disaster response capabilities, increase security stability in the region, and foster new and enduring friendships. U.S. Navy photo by MC3 Justin Ontiveros**

safety can become an issue."

Research shows that the use of wellness rooms, like the resiliency room aboard Mercy, mitigate worker stress in acute care settings.

"This room is designed to help reduce workplace stress which hopefully will improve staff members' morale and can also improve patient safety if the staff member is more relaxed and de-stressed," said Sanchez. "New environments can add to the difficulties faced by healthcare team members."

"Caring for the sick and injured

in a military treatment facility has its stressors. Those same stressors are here aboard the Mercy, but they're amplified because everyone here is away from friends and family," said Sanchez. "They're missing holidays. They are in new environments, experiencing language barriers, and the potential stress level for Sailors aboard this ship providing healthcare is exponential compared to back home, so myself and the team felt that it was important that we did something to help look after these caregivers."

During its two months of avail-

ability, more than 130 crew members have utilized the room and its features. Staff who utilize the room have the option of filling out an anonymous survey, and Sanchez reports that the reviews are positive. "People who have used the room are reporting about a 50% reduction in their self-reported stress level and about 78-80% of people leaving the room are reporting feeling more focused and ready to go back to work, so we're getting very positive results," he said.

"I appreciate the team coming together to make sure that this

happened even if it's only on Mercy," said U.S. Navy Hospital Corpsman 2nd Class Christina Kaesberg. "It's been a great experience even as a trial run. It really has helped a lot of people on this ship."

"It's exciting," Sanchez contin-

## Reduce 'sit time' to up your fitness level

Turn off the TV, computer, and smart phone. Cutting back on screen time is a great way to curb your "sit time." Move around instead, by visiting the gym or even cleaning the house. Turn sit time into fit time. Try to combine cardiovascular exercise with a sedentary activity that you already do. For example, try doing simple exercises while watching TV, or set a reminder at work to get up and walk a few minutes every hour.



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**ARMED SERVICES YMCA CAMP PENDLETON**  
STRENGTHENING OUR MILITARY FAMILY™

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

**OUR IMPACT**

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

**OUR CORE PROGRAMS**

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

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