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## PAINFUL NEWS REVEALS BOND BETWEEN SAILOR AND MENTOR AT NAVAL SUPPORT ACTIVITY NAPLES

by Alison Bath  
Stars and Stripes

NAPLES, Italy - "Only when it is dark enough can you see the stars."

Martin Luther King Jr. said those words on April 3, 1968, a day before he was assassinated in Memphis, Tenn. They continue to inspire Petty Officer 2nd Class Danny Smith, a 28-year-old yeoman assigned to Submarine Group 8.

Amid uncertainty about his future and grief over his father's death, which deprived him of the opportunity to fix their strained relationship, Smith found hope from a fellow sailor who shared an unknown bond.

A little more than a year after arriving at Naval Support Activity Naples in January 2019, Smith developed a casual, professional relationship with Cmdr. Hasan Abdul-Mutakallim, who worked in a separate command but in the same building and on the same floor as Smith.

Abdul-Mutakallim, 48, seemed like a "role model and someone you could look up to," Smith said. He was easy to talk to and good at listening, Smith recalled.



Cmdr. Hasan Abdul-Mutakallim, left, and Petty Officer 2nd Class Danny Smith talk at Naval Support Activity Naples, Italy, on March 10. They worked for different commands in the same building on the same floor at the Navy base but didn't know they were cousins until after Smith's father died in May 2021. Navy photo by Cameron Edy

"Even though I was just a random person asking him for advice and things of that nature, he was really just helpful in giving me instruction and guidance," said Smith, who was having doubts about staying in the Navy as a submariner and wanted to apply to be a commissioned officer.

Smith struck Abdul-Mutakal-

lim as a quiet, reserved young man focused on his education and his goals. Yet he knew there was more behind that introverted exterior.

"There's a side of him that I haven't had a chance to fully know," said Abdul-Mutakallim, who joined the Navy in 1996, ultimately earning an undergraduate degree and attending

flight school in 2001.

He now is the C4/Cyber deputy director for U.S. 6th Fleet overseeing information support and technology.

Smith grew up without his father, Raymond, for much of his childhood. As a senior in high school, Smith reconnected with his dad, but the relationship

later grew distant.

Not long after visiting his father, who had suffered a stroke, Smith returned to Naples in May 2021, when his brother Carl called with the news that their father was dead.

"I caught myself punishing him," Smith said, adding that in retrospect, he realized that although he had forgiven his father for leaving the family, he was still angry.

"I never would have thought in a million years that he would (die) while I was making emotionally rash decisions," he said.

At the same time, Abdul-Mu-

takalli learned of the death of "Uncle Ray" from his grandfather. He talked about it with his cousin Carl Smith, a senior chief culinary specialist and submariner in Washington state.

It was during that call that Abdul-Mutakallim learned not only that Carl Smith had a brother but also that the brother was in the Navy and working at NSA Naples.

"I'm like, 'You have a brother? I think I've spoken to him,'" Abdul-Mutakallim recalled. "Sure enough, it was (Danny Smith) and we were related."

Because they had spoken informally just a couple of times

see **Bond page 3**



PRIMM, Nev. (March 11, 2022) - Green Berets hit the first jump during the Mint 400. Army photo by Sgt. 1st Class William Howard

## NAVY: NO MORE SEPARATIONS DUE TO SHAVING-RELATED SKIN CONDITIONS

by MCI Jeanette Mullinax

As a result of feedback from Sailors and waterfront leadership, the Navy has updated grooming policy and requirements for Sailors diagnosed with the shaving-related condition pseudofolliculitis barbae (PFB) in NAVADMIN 064/22, Mar. 9.

Navy dermatologists and the Navy Uniform Matters Office conducted the latest periodic review of the instruction regarding management of Sailors diagnosed with PFB, and took into account recommendations from Sailors directly affected by PFB. This

latest update provides guidance for those Sailors, military medical care providers and commanding officers.

PFB, also referred to as razor bumps, is caused when tightly curled beard hairs, sharpened by shaving, curve back and re-enter the skin, resulting in facial inflammation, bumps and infections.

The first on the list of updates announced that Sailors diagnosed with PFB will be authorized to outline or edge their beards.

"We listened to recommen-



A Sailor shaves during an exercise in 2012 at Camp Shelby, Miss. Navy photo by Ernesto Hernandez Fonte

dations by Sailors personally affected by PFB and we worked with our medical professionals to

refine the Navy's PFB management policy and procedures," said Robert B. Carroll, head of

the Navy Uniform Matters Office. "These changes directly reflect the Navy's commitment to Sailor health, safety and mission readiness in the force."

With this update, the Navy will also eliminate the mandate of carrying a facial hair waiver or "no-shave chit" while in uniform. Sailors have the option to maintain a copy of their waiver treatment form on a personal portable electronic device or a paper copy for convenience in situations such as embarking a ship or temporary duty assignments where medical records may not be immediately available.

Another major update to the instruction will ensure that PFB treatment failures are not considered as grounds for a Sailor's administrative separation. In the vein of prescribed treatments, Sailors diagnosed with PFB no longer have to consider laser hair reduction as a required treatment.

For Sailors whose conditions do not improve with PFB medical treatments, the duration between required evaluations will now occur every two years, unless prescribed more frequently by their military medical care provider.

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**Local Military**

USS Carl Vinson holds a 40th year commissioning party.



**See page 6**

**Recognition**

Nominations sought for Marine Wife Recognition Award

**See page 7**



Marines with the Command Element, 5th Marine Regiment, Marine Rotational Force Darwin arrive at Royal Australian Air Force Base Darwin, Australia, March 12, Marine Corps photo by Cedar Barnes

## Marines begin arriving in Australia for another six-month training mission

by Seth Robson  
Stars and Stripes

A contingent of up to 2,200 U.S. Marines has begun arriving for a six-month rotation to Australia's northern city of Darwin, the Marine Corps and Australian Defence Department announced March 14.

During their 11th deployment to Darwin since 2012, Marines will train with the Australian troops and other friendly forces to respond to a crisis in the region, the Marines said in their statement.

"It is an honor to build upon the continuing legacy of the outstanding U.S.-Australian alliance and AUKUS agreement," the rotational force's commander, Col. Chris Steele, said in the statement, referring to a defense pact reached last year between America, Australia and the United Kingdom.

The force includes a command element from the 5th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division, with most Marines coming from Southern California. They're supported by a detachment from U.S. Army Pacific, the statement said.

"We are excited to integrate two highly capable and interoperable forces that advance our

shared goals, demonstrate the strength and endurance of our alliance, and contribute to regional security," Steele said.

The U.S. military often uses the term "interoperability" to describe the ability of one country's armed forces to use another country's training methods and military equipment.

### LOCAL: Flag officer assignments

The secretary of the Navy and chief of naval operations announced March 11 the following assignments:

Rear Adm. (lower half) **Joseph F. Cahill III**, will be assigned as commander, Carrier Strike Group Fifteen, San Diego. Cahill is currently serving as deputy director for resources and acquisitions, J-8, Joint Staff, Washington, D.C.

Rear Adm. (lower half) **Daniel P. Martin** will be assigned as director, Maritime Operations (DMOC/N04), Pacific Fleet, Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. Martin is currently serving as commander, Carrier Strike Group One, San Diego.

Rear Adm. (lower half) **Carlos A. Sardiello** will be assigned as commander, Carrier Strike Group One, San Diego. Sardiello is currently serving as director, Joint and Fleet Operations, Fleet Forces Command, Norfolk, Va.

Capt. **Matthew C. Paradise**, selected for promotion to rear admiral (lower half), will be assigned as deputy director, Operations, J-3, U.S. Cyber Command, Fort Meade, Md. Paradise is currently serving as chief of staff, Naval Air Forces, Pacific Fleet, San Diego.

Capt. **Bradley N. Rosen**, selected for promotion to rear admiral (lower half), will be assigned as commander, Navy Region Southwest, San Diego. Rosen is currently serving as chief of staff, Navy Installations Command, Washington, D.C.

Up to 2,200 Marines from Camp Pendleton will be in Darwin until the rotation wraps up in October, according to a statement from the Australia Defence Department.

The rotation will build on last year's deployment, which coincided with the 70th anniversary of the U.S. Marine Corps in Australia. **see Australia page 3**

### Total Navy Battle Force: 297 Ships underway

Deployed ships underway: 66  
Non-deployed ships underway: 22  
Total ships underway: 88  
**Ships deployed by Fleet**  
Fleet Forces, 0: 3rd Fleet, 3  
4th Fleet, 2: 5th Fleet, 11  
6th Fleet, 28: 7th Fleet, 68  
Total 112



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## Russia and China falsely accusing use of biological weapons against Russians, say officials

by David Vergun  
DoD News

The United States is not assisting Ukraine with biological weapons in its war with Russia and there are no indications that biological weapons are being used by Ukraine, said a Defense Department official.

Two senior defense officials held an on-background press briefing at the Pentagon March 10.

There are five biological research laboratories in Kyiv. Their work focuses on diagnostics, therapeutics, treatments, prevention and vaccines, not on military use as the Russians and Chinese accuse, the official said.

"There are no DOD bio-

weapon labs in Ukraine or anywhere else in the world," the official said.

The Biological Weapons Convention effectively prohibits the development, production, acquisition, transfer, stockpiling and use of biological and toxin weapons.

It was the first multilateral disarmament treaty banning an entire category of weapons of mass destruction. The United States, Ukraine and Russia signed onto it in 1972 and all three ratified it in 1975.

The Russians have moved about five kilometers closer to Kyiv since yesterday and are now about 40 kilometers east of the city, the official said.

There are multiple lines of

advancements toward Kyiv, with the assessed intent of encircling the Ukrainian capital. However, their progress to do so hasn't been effective, the official said.

Security assistance continues to flow into Ukraine from the U.S. and NATO allies, the official said.

"The Ukrainians are putting up a very stiff resistance," the official said. The Ukrainians still have most of their fixed wing fighter aircraft available to them, the official said.

The Ukrainians are very effectively using surface-to-air missile systems and anti-armor munitions to slow the Russian advance, particularly in the north, the official said.

## Ukrainians united in resisting Russian invasion

by Jim Garamone  
DoD News

The Ukrainian fight against Russia's invasion of their country is truly a national effort, Pentagon Press Secretary John F. Kirby said March 11.

The free world has been amazed at Ukrainian resistance to Russian President Vladimir Putin's "war of choice." Ukrainian armed forces have demonstrated great tactical proficiency in confronting the much larger foe.

"They're fighting skillfully, bravely, quite creatively," Kirby said. "And the fighting isn't just by the armed forces."

He said that average citizens outraged by the Russian attack received weapons from the government and learned to

use them.

It's unclear if areas of Ukraine now occupied by the Russian military are seeing some guerrilla warfare emerge, but there are videos of Ukrainians confronting Russian tanks.

A male service member holds a scanner up to one of many crates stacked in a large warehouse, which a female service member looks at papers on a clipboard.

"Some of the resistance has been non-violent, with crowds of Ukrainians blocking city streets and actually stopping in their tracks some Russian units," Kirby said. "So, the resistance resides on many levels, and it's quite inspiring. They are resisting; they are defending, and we are going to continue to

look for ways to help them do that better going forward."

Responding to a question about whether the Russians are treating captured Ukrainian service members as prisoners of war, Kirby said he didn't have information on how captured Ukrainians or captured Russians are being treated.

"But our expectation would be that that both parties would abide by Geneva Convention requirements and treat any soldiers that are captured humanely and in accordance with the rule of [war]. That would be, that would be the United States' expectation, as well as [that of] so many other nations."

## Australia

continued from page 2

niversary of the ANZUS treaty between Australia, New Zealand and United States, Col. Marcus Constable, the leader of Headquarters Northern Command, said in the statement.

Australia's alliance with the United States is our most important defense relationship and is central to Australia's strategic and security arrangements, he said.

The allies' training will in-

clude humanitarian assistance, security operations and high-end live fire exercises, Constable said.

Marines arriving for the past two deployments have isolated on arrival to avoid importing the coronavirus into Australia.

Australia closed its borders in March 2020 and has since had some of the longest lockdowns in the world. The country, which has reported more than 3.5 million COVID-19 cases and over 5,000 deaths, reopened to vac-

inated tourists last month.

Measures to mitigate the spread of the coronavirus for this year's rotational force are not as stringent as those faced by Marines for the previous two rotations.

Marines were tested before boarding flights and those with positive tests remained in the United States, rotational force spokesman Capt. Joseph DiPietro said in an e-mail Monday.

The Marines are restricted to their Australian bases for their first seven days and then tested for COVID-19, he said.

## Bond

continued from page 1

and knowing it was a sensitive time, Abdul-Mutakallim reached out to Danny Smith through a mutual acquaintance, saying he thought they might be cousins.

During a subsequent phone call, Danny Smith and Abdul-Mutakallim confirmed their family connection.

"It was pretty cool. It was pretty random but awesome," Smith said.

Since then, the two have built a friendship, met each other's wives and attended family events, including a baby shower for Abdul-Mutakallim's wife.

This week, Smith leaves NSA Naples for an assignment in Maryland. In May, Abdul-Mutakallim also will leave for an assignment at another base, serendipitously in Maryland.

Each of them is looking forward to getting to know the other better, hanging out and attending family events, including reunions.

"Everything we didn't get to do here, we'll get a chance to do there," Abdul-Mutakallim said.

While nothing will replace having his father, Smith said his relationship with Abdul-Mutakallim and the opportunity to meet his "new" family helps fill the void.

"It was like God took away this part, but he also introduced a whole new world of relationships and people I can meet now," Smith said. "I can't do it through my dad or with him, but I have an extension of him now."



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**Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro is greeted by Capt. Paul Lanzilotta, aircraft carrier Gerald R. Ford's commanding officer, during a ship visit March 10 in support of the centennial of Navy aircraft carriers. Del Toro conducted an all-hands call with the crew to congratulate them on their success during the ship's planned incremental availability., Photo by MC3 Jackson Adkins**

### Army

- Arrest in fentanyl overdoses of West Point cadets in Florida
- Army to award production contract for light tank this summer
- Less than a quarter of Army recruiters are women.
- 100 women have now graduated Army Ranger School
- What the Army can learn from Operation Warp Speed



### Navy

- 4 more areas on Navy's Oahu water system declared safe
- Del Toro: Navy will not need to build fuel facilities to replace Red Hill fuel depot

### Marine Corps

- Marines, Japanese troops brush up old partnership for a new Pacific era
- Marines touch down at RAAF Base Darwin

### Air Force

- Air Force investigating unnamed drone safety "incident" at Creech

### Space Force

- Automating launch safety is helping the Space Force speed up the tempo

### National Guard

- Newly proposed bill looks to standardize military service records for National Guard, Reserves

### Coast Guard

- Coast Guard repatriates 198 Haitian migrants

### Veterans

- Despite risks, veterans reckon with joining Ukrainian war effort

## SECNAV visits USS *Gerald R. Ford* to honor '100 Years of Carrier Aviation'

by Seaman Apprentice Manvir Gill

NORFOLK, Va. - Throughout the 2022 calendar year, the U.S. Navy is commemorating 100 years of aircraft carriers, celebrating the strategic importance of aircraft carriers and the future of naval aviation while honoring their history.

As part of this important milestone, Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro, visited the first-in-class aircraft carrier USS *Gerald R. Ford* (CVN 78), March 10.

Capt. Paul Lanzilotta, *Ford's* commanding officer, led Del Toro on a tour of the ship, discussing and showcasing several unique systems and equipment, including the state-of-the-art Electromagnetic Aircraft Launch System.

"It was a real honor to host Secretary Del Toro and have the opportunity to show him first-hand the capabilities and advantages of our first-in-class warship," said Lanzilotta. "This crew put in a lot of hard work to ensure we came out of the shipyard on time and operationally ready which shows real ownership, and I believe we were able to demonstrate that to SECNAV today."

*Ford's* Ordnance Handling Officer Lt. Cmdr. Paul Castillo and several aviation ordnancemen provided Del Toro an Advanced Weapons Elevator (AWE) demonstration, bringing training ordnance from the magazines, through the hangar bay and up to the *Ford's* unique weapons handling transfer area.

"It was a pleasure to have the opportunity to demonstrate the AWE and ordnance movement for the Secretary of the Navy," said Aviation Ordnanceman 2nd Class Karen Smith, from Austin, Texas. "A lot of hard work goes into what the weapons

department does as a whole, and we were able to show that we always do what it takes to complete the mission."

*Ford's* AWEs are smart elevators that add redundancy and survivability to the ship using touchless charging and Wi-Fi cables instead of hydraulics.

"The capability of this aircraft carrier is like nothing we've ever seen in our United States Navy," said Del Toro. "The technology and capability of this ship and future Ford-class carriers are unmatched. I am undeniably impressed by this crew - pro-

fessionalism, perseverance, and dedication in getting this ship ready to crew."

Del Toro also had the opportunity to eat lunch with *Ford's* newest Sailors of the Quarter.

"It is clear that the Secretary of the Navy looks out for the well-being of Sailors," said Hospital Corpsman 1st Class Nicholas Allen, from Columbia, Connecticut, assigned to *Ford's* medical department and *Ford's* Sailor of the Quarter. "He remembers his experience as a commanding officer and Sailor himself, and it shows in his lead-

ership style. He talked about PPV (public private venture) housing initiatives and the families of Sailors and their importance. It shows that he really does care about those in the fleet."

Following lunch, Del Toro and the Sailors of the Quarter cut a cake in honor of the centennial anniversary of United States Navy aircraft carriers.

Del Toro also conducted an all-hands call with *Ford's* crew and Sailors from cruisers *Gettysburg* and *Vella Gulf*, and destroyers *McFaul* and *Bulkeley*. He congratulated the *Ford* crew on their successful completion of the ship's six-month Planned Incremental Availability (PIA) and sea trials.

"You all just finished your PIA, and you're about to deploy now; it all gets better from here," he said. "The work, the energy that each and every one of you have put into making the capabilities on this ship the best that they can be is extraordinary."

Del Toro emphasized the critical role that Ford-class carriers play in the Navy's warfighting capabilities.

"The United States Navy brings power projection to anywhere that it's needed across the world in a time of crisis," he said. "We deploy to protect the national security interests of the American people. On behalf of your entire United States Navy, thank you for the hard work that you have done here on USS *Gerald R. Ford*."

*Ford* is the first of the Gerald R. Ford-class aircraft carriers and represents the first major design investment in aircraft carriers since the 1960s. *Ford* is in Naval Station Norfolk executing a tailored basic phase prior to the ship's first operational deployment.

## U.S. forces prepare to join Norway's biennial Exercise Cold Response 22

by 1st Lt. Jasmine Scott

Thousands of Marines and Sailors are participating in Norway's Exercise Cold Response 22, the ninth iteration of this exercise, occurring now until April 1.

The exercise is designed to enhance military capabilities and allied cooperation during a high-intensity warfighting scenario in a challenging Arctic environment with rugged terrain and extreme cold weather.

This iteration will emphasize and test critical activities ranging from the reception of allied and partner reinforcements and command and control interoperability, to combined joint operations, maritime prepositioning force logistics, integration with The Royal Netherlands Navy, and reacting against an adversary force in a dynamic training environment.

U.S. forces began training in Norway in December as Marine units conducted cold weather training and planning in the lead up to the exercise.

Approximately 200 military vehicles, attack and assault aircraft and other equipment departed Camp Lejeune, N.C., in January as part of II Marine Expeditionary Force's participation in Exercise Cold Response 2022.

U.S. forces traveling to Norway are following COVID-19 mitigation protocols. All deploying troops are vaccinated, and tested before and after travel. Self-sufficient logistics and medical components are structured to support the Marines and Sailors in event of emergencies.

## Future USS Frank E. Petersen Jr. (DDG 121) set for Charleston, S.C., commissioning

SAN DIEGO - Future USS Frank E. Petersen Jr. (DDG 121), will be commissioned May 14, in Charleston, S.C. Cmdr. Daniel Hancock is the commanding officer of the ship and leads the core crew of 32 officers and 297 enlisted personnel. The ship was built by Ingalls Shipbuilding in Pascagoula, Miss. The ship is nearly 510 feet long, has a beam of 59 feet, and a navigational draft of 33 feet. Four General Electric LM 2500-30 gas turbines and two shafts power the ship, making it capable of speed in excess of 30 knots.

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## Stop your world and recharge

by Dr. Daneen Skube,  
Tribune Content Agency

*Q: There are days lately where I long for the chance to stop the world and get off. I know this is unrealistic but I'm so tired of being tired especially at work. Are there ways to recharge your empty batteries when you get up and go has got up and went?*

**A:** Yes, and actually there are multiple ways to stop your world and get off without leaving for a desert island. The secret is to create rejuvenation breaks throughout your work day so you quit draining your already empty energy tank!

Many Americans are stoic. As long as we're not in the hospital we keep going. The reality is when we're running on fumes we're likely to make poor choices that exhaust us further. Also, we're unlikely to see the most efficient way to operate, especially at work.

The key is to restructure your day with recharge breaks being mandatory, not optional. Consider how you manage your mornings. Do you get up early

enough to meditate, exercise, or eat a decent breakfast? I'd bet if you have kids you work hard to make their mornings calm or prepare them for their day. Are you giving the same consideration

### Interpersonal Edge



by  
Dr.  
Daneen  
Skube

to yourself?

Obviously, this means going to bed earlier. Studies tell us optimum sleep is more likely if we are in bed by 10 p.m. Turns out the sleep we get from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. is the deepest. Items like blackout blinds, ear plugs, and sound machines help. Also, make sure you keep the television out of your bedroom and avoid doing things not conducive to sleep (like working in bed).

As a mental health counselor for 30 years, I've been surprised to notice how many clients never

develop good sleep habits. They habitually use alcohol, or sugar at night to self-soothe and stay up until they're exhausted. Alcohol and sugar interfere with deep restful sleep.

William Shakespeare wrote a line that is truer today than in his times: "Sleep that knits up the ravell'd sleeve of care, the death of each day's life, sore labour's bath, balm of hurt minds, great nature's second course, chief nourisher in life's feast." Shakespeare gave good workplace advice since a good rest each night is a huge contributor to a good next day.

Other ways to rest include meditation and physical exercise. When our minds get quiet during meditation our bodies recharge. When our bodies are absorbed in physical exercise our minds become quiet.

Many adults forget that we're human animals and need lots of healthy movement and lots of rest to have physical and emotional wellness. No animal in nature sits in a chair all day.

Be aware that you don't need

to retire in Panama to stop your world and get off. Finding a cabin in the woods to stare at trees or heading to a body of water for short breaks are easy ways to rejuvenate the soul and remind you of what you value.

The end goal of stopping our world and getting off is to gain perspective on our lives. Rejuvenating breaks make us pause and ask the big questions: Where are we going? Who do we love? What do we want? We can then return to our lives refreshed and clear about adjustments we need to make.

Start integrating moments of stopping your world so you return to your workplace and life with a full - not empty - tank. Both you and your career will benefit!

The last word(s)

*Q: I have numerous crises going on in my life and want a quick fix. Do you have any advice?*

**A:** Yes, stop looking for quick fixes. Many crises are predictable problems that occurred because we kept ignoring the warning signs while waiting for a quick fix!

### Naval Community College accepting applications for Military Studies; Nuclear Engineering Technology

by MCC Xander Gamble

The U.S. Naval Community College officially began accepting applications for its Military Studies and Nuclear Engineering Technology associate degree programs March 6.

These are the first two degrees the USNCC offer made available to active duty enlisted Sailors, Marines, and Coast Guardsmen and Coast Guard Reservists as a part of the Department of the Navy's initiative to develop a naval-relevant community college focused on enlisted education.

"This is an opportunity for pioneering men and women in our naval services to be amongst the first enlisted leaders to earn a naval-relevant degree through the USNCC," said USNCC's President Randi R. Cosentino. "These Sailors, Marines, and Coast Guardsmen will be a part of making the future of the services' enlisted education with quality degrees in coordination with military-friendly schools."

Both of these degrees include the Naval Studies certificate, a five-course, 15-credit program based on naval sciences courses taught in the Naval Academy and Naval ROTC programs. These 15 credits are applied to the associate degree programs and count towards the required courses for each degree. The courses include Naval Ethics and Leadership, Modern Naval History, Naval Force Design and Concepts, Civilian and Military Organization and Policies, and the certificate capstone course Introduction to Geopolitics.

The Associate of Arts in Military Studies is a 60-credit program completed in part with Arizona State University. The Associate of Science in Nuclear Engineering Technology is a 63-credit degree program completed in part through Alexandria Technical and Community College. Both degrees are completed completely online and both have established pathways to a relevant four-year degree with little to no loss of credit.

Active duty enlisted Sailors, Marines, and Coast Guardsmen and Coast Guard Reservists can fill out an application on the USNCC website, [www.usncc.edu](http://www.usncc.edu). The first courses will start in June 2022.



**AIR GROUND COMBAT CENTER,  
TWENTYNINE PALMS  
March 1, 2022.**

**Sgt. Maj. Troy Black, sergeant major of the Marine Corps, speaks to Marines and their families during a town hall. The town hall provides a platform for families to address their concerns with senior leadership. The Marine Corps provides various family care plans and housing options for service members who live and serve on Marine Corps installations. Photo by Staff Sgt. Victoria Ross**



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U.S. NEWS & WORLD REPORT

## Carrier *Carl Vinson* reaches 4 decades of service since commissioning

Courtesy Story

NAVAL BASE CORONADO - Aircraft carrier *Carl Vinson* (CVN 70) celebrated its 40th commissioning anniversary, March 13, a milestone in the ship's long history of service.

The third of 10 Nimitz-class aircraft carriers active in the fleet, *Vinson* commissioned in Newport News, Va. on March 13, 1982, after over seven years of construction. The ship is named for the late senator Carl Vinson of Georgia, who served in Congress for over 50 years and sponsored two bills that played a significant role in the build-up of the Navy prior to World War II. For these accomplishments, *Carl Vinson* is now known as the "Father of the Two-Ocean Navy."

Since commissioning, *Vinson* has deployed many times overseas in support of American operations

abroad, including Operation Southern Watch, Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom. Most notably, the ship was underway during the September 11 terrorist attacks and later launched the first airstrikes in the Global War on Terrorism. Four years later, *Vinson* became the third Nimitz-class carrier to undergo a mid-life Refueling and Complex Overhaul, which took place from 2005-2009. In January 2010, *Vinson* provided humanitarian aid after the devastating 2010 earthquake in Haiti.

Most recently, the ship returned from an Indo-Pacific deployment in February. The successful completion of deployment marked the debut of the "Air Wing of the Future," including the first employment of the F-35C Lightning II and the CMV-22B Osprey in a carrier strike group. For all of the above and more, *Vinson* has earned 15 unit commendations during its

distinguished career.

While looking forward to many more years in service, *Vinson* honored its storied past by hosting nine members of the ship's original crew for a tour on March 13 followed by a cake-cutting ceremony in the ship's wardroom.

Otherwise known as "plank owners," the former crew members visited key areas of the ship, to include the flight deck, navigation bridge, hangar bay, captain's in-port cabin,

fo'c'sle and wardroom. They were joined by the ship's commanding officer, Capt. P. Scott Miller, who cut the anniversary cake with Kurt



Plank owners and visitors pose for a photo on the flight deck of aircraft carrier *Carl Vinson* during a tour of the ship March 13. Navy photo by MC2 Aaron T. Smith

Webber, the oldest plank owner in attendance.

"This ship has a deep history of service over the last 40 years. The accomplishments of multiple generations of Sailors has truly earned USS *Carl Vinson* the title of 'America's Favorite Carrier,'" said Miller.

"It is fitting that some of the first Sailors to serve aboard *Vinson* are represented here today, standing next to Sailors who have furthered *Vinson's* legacy of service with a recent deployment to the Indo-Pacific. We are proud to see the ship turn 40 as we continue to train and maintain readiness in the coming years."

A plank owner is Navy jargon for an original member of the crew who was present for the ship's commissioning. The nine plank owners in attendance represented thousands of the original crew that served on "America's Favorite Carrier" in 1982.

## Special Warfare celebrates first woman commanding officer

by Petty Officer 1st Class Alex Smedegard

CORONADO - In honor of Women's History Month, Naval Special Warfare is celebrating Cmdr. Blythe Blakistone, who became the first woman to serve as a commanding officer of a Naval Special Warfare unit when she took command of Tactical Communications Command (TCC) 1.

Special Warfare Group 1, which mans, trains and equips West Coast-based SEAL Teams, is comprised of SEAL Teams 1, 3, 5, and 7 as well as Logistics Support Unit 1 and TCC-1. Blakistone has served in her role since 2020 and her command supports SEAL Teams, other special operations forces, and conventional forces worldwide by providing tactical communications in all environments and levels of conflict.

"We're the voice of the nation's most elite warfighters," said Blakistone. "I'm privileged to be in a position overseeing Sailors operating at the forefront of technology to maintain an edge over our adversaries."

She described what makes her successful in her role at NSW.

"I think I bring a different perspective," said Blakistone. "Not just as a woman, but also serving in the fleet aboard ships with my background, I believe, has made me hugely valuable to not only the Naval Special Warfare enterprise but also to my Sailors and the team at TCC-1."

During her tenure she has furthered the partnership between the fleet and NSW by bringing a sense of enthusiasm to everything she does, according to Capt. David Abernathy, commander of Special Warfare Group 1.

"It's been incredible to watch Blythe lead over the past two years," said Abernathy. "She is exactly the officer we need in our toughest situations - her strong character, sharp intellect, and innovative spirit are second to none."

Rear Adm. H.W. Howard, commander, Naval Special Warfare Command, said diverse backgrounds like Blakistone's are what give NSW teams a competitive edge.

"NSW values diversity," said Howard. "We simply cannot accomplish the mission without diversity of roles, responsibilities, backgrounds and perspectives. Blythe's innate ability to lead, along with her unique background and expertise are just one example of how diversity gives our teams the ability to fight and win when it matters most."

Blakistone served 11 years as a surface warfare officer where she led Sailors operating some of the most advanced warships in the world. "A lot of my experiences as a Midshipman [at the United States Naval Academy] really influenced my approach to leadership," said Blakistone. "I was able to observe a lot of styles of leadership, and I took the points that resonated most with me as I went into the fleet as a young [surface warfare officer]."

In 2013 Blakistone was re-designated as an information warfare officer, entering the vast evolving battlespace of technological and cyber domain dominance.

"I really enjoy [science, technology, engineering, and mathematics]. I always have," said Blakistone. "I started to look at what more could I do. I made the change because I wanted better technology, bringing technology to the fleet, and then also the cyber aspect. At [TCC-1] I love that we are doing experimentation and bringing that new technology forward to the mission."

Blakistone credits much of her success to the role models she has had along the way. One of those role models was the first woman officer in the history of the U.S. military to command a major unified combatant command, Air Force General Lori J. Robinson. "I love her tag line: 'I'm a good officer. I'm a good airman. I just happen to be a woman - and that's not how I got here.' It was a privilege working for her and to see her at the top and how she handled things."

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# 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing prepares for next maritime campaign

by 1st Lt. Nicholas Paglialonga

MCAS MIRAMAR - Marines and Sailors with 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing (MAW) prepare for an island hopping campaign as part of advanced naval base training during Exercise Winter Fury 22. With units positioned across California, Arizona, and Washington, both on land and at sea, 3rd MAW tested components of expeditionary advanced base operations in preparation for future maritime conflicts in the Indo-Pacific region.

Expanding upon the island hopping blueprint developed in the Pacific Theater of World War II, 3rd MAW synchronized the seizure of strategic airfields on Camp Pendleton, San Clemente Island, Laguna Army Airfield, and Moses Lake, Washington which enabled the Marine Aircraft Groups (MAG) to support follow-on actions throughout a vast area of operations.

During the course of the evolution, Marines with MAG-11 and MAG-13 reinforced 3rd MAW efforts by establishing a joint forward arming and refueling point (JFARP) at Grant County International Airport in Moses Lake, Wash. This enabled both F-35B and F/A-18C aircraft to rapidly conduct long-range strike operations stretching from Arizona to Washington State.

Concurrently, Marines with MAG-39 established advanced naval bases (ANB) on Camp Pendleton, Fort Hunter Liggett, and San Clemente Island, allowing AH-1Z, UH-1Y, and MV-22B aircraft to push the fight further into a contested maritime theater. These ANBs effectively increased the range and tempo of aviation operations within

the simulated island chain increasing 3rd MAW's ability to help control a maritime region.

Additionally, MAG-39 conducted operations with MH-60Rs from Helicopter Maritime Weapons School Pacific to assist in the Navy's anti-submarine warfare mission. This marked the first time that a Marine Corps MV-22B deployed a screen of SSQ-53G sonobuoys, less than a year after the first Marine Corps UH-1Y conducted the same operations. The MV-22B's speed and range can be leveraged to augment the Navy sub-hunting helicopters by deploying the tracking buoys while the MH-60Rs are off station to refuel.

Another unique event for MAG-39 was the deployment of the Joint Precision Aerial Delivery System of fuel bladders via MV-22B aircraft. This enabled UH-1Y aircraft to land at predetermined coordinates, refuel and rearm, and get back in the fight without having to return to a FARP.

At Laguna Army Airfield, Marines from MAG-16 provided assault support for 3rd MAW operations during Winter Fury. While at Laguna Army Airfield, MAG-16 MV-22B and CH-53E aircraft recovered a retired UH-1 Iroquois rotary aircraft as part of a Tactical Recovery of Aircraft and Personnel mission. MAG-16 also took part in a large-scale air assault mission with a reinforced infantry company from 1st Battalion, 4th Marines.

As warfighting proves to be ever changing, 3rd MAW continues to implement concepts from Force Design 2030 through adversarial-minded war gaming and combat-driven exercises. During

Winter Fury 22, 3rd MAW units participated in evolutions such as advanced naval base training, long range strike operations, and anti-submarine warfare, enhancing readiness and lethality in support of a maritime campaign.

3rd MAW continues to "Fix, Fly and Fight" as the Marine Corps' largest aircraft wing, and remains combat-ready, deployable on short notice, and lethal when called into action.

For additional information go to the program tab of [www.flyingleathernecks.org](http://www.flyingleathernecks.org) or call the Flying Leatherneck Historical Foundation office at (858) 693-1723.

## Nominations sought for Marine Wife Recognition Award

Online nominations for the 2022 Irene Ferguson Marine Wife Recognition Award are due by April 4.

Women whose husbands are currently on active duty and serving in a unit with a home base located in the USMC Southwest Region of the United States qualify.

The award was founded by the late World War II pilot, Major (Ret.) Glenn Ferguson, in memory of his wife Irene.

The award honors and highlights the resiliency, strength, and dedication that a Marine Corps wife embodies as she supports our military men and women, families, and communities.

The winner receives a \$1,500 monetary award, along with a plaque and recognition ceremony. Friends and family members of USMC wives are encouraged to submit a nomination.



**Marine Corps Sgt. Maj. David M. White's wife, Jennifer White, receives a letter of appreciation from Lt. Gen. Edward D. Banta, the Deputy Commandant for Installations and Logistics during a relief, appointment, and retirement ceremony. Jennifer White receives a Letter of Appreciation for her sustained faithful and devoted support during Sgt. Maj. David M. White's 28 years of honorable and faithful service to the Marine Corps.**

*Marine Corps photo by Cpl. Samuel Fletcher*

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## NRSW changes of command

### VX-9 in China Lake

by Hannah Moore

CHINA LAKE - Air Test and Evaluation Squadron Nine (VX-9) held an aerial change of command ceremony above Naval Air Weapons Station China Lake, Mar. 10.

Capt. Todd Zentner assumed all duties and responsibilities as the commanding officer of VX-9 from Capt. William McCombs.

McCombs' command began in 2021 and since then he has led over 350 officers and enlisted personnel through a variety of events.

"I had the privilege of joining this squadron exactly 4 years ago. During this tour I have witnessed amazing things from Vampires. Your demonstrated expertise, hard work, and sweat is essential to ensuring our warfighters can launch off the pointy end of the boat on dark nights, and fly into battle with confidence," he said.

During Capt. McCombs tour as Commanding Officer, he focused on not only maintaining Navy standards but also updating and refurbishing outdated elements of VX-9.

Vice Adm. Kenneth Whitesell, Commander, Naval Air Forces/Commander, Naval Air Force, Pacific Fleet, had this to say about Capt. McCombs' service, "As a quiet, humble professional over the last 26 years, you have lived the warrior ethos many strive for, but few realize. No words will capture all you have done for our country."

"Captain Zentner, your leadership will ensure VX-9 continues to evolve to support the Air Wing of the Future in the most effective and cost-efficient manner," said McCombs about his relief.

### ACCLOG in Point Mugu

by Ensign Drew Verbis

POINT MUGU - Capt. Christopher Hulitt relieved Capt. Michael France as commodore of Airborne Command & Control and Logistics Wing (ACCLOGWING) at a change-of-command ceremony onboard Naval Base Ventura County (NBVC), Mar 3.

ACCLOGWING oversees 12 squadrons that operate the E-2C Hawkeye, E-2D Advanced Hawkeye, and C-2 Greyhound, ensuring they are manned, trained, and equipped to conduct sustained combat and logistic operations.

Vice Adm. Kenneth Whitesell, commander, Naval Air Forces, officiated the ceremony and commended France on his superb leadership.

"The Wing is about driving outcomes and improving lethality in an area of great power competition," said Whitesell. "Capt. France set the requirements for the E-2D platform which is truly the quarterback for the Air Wing of the Future. He drove the coordination with industry and Naval Air Forces necessary to achieve the warfighting capability the Navy needed to make the E-2D sea capable."

France was presented with the Legion of Merit medal for his exemplary service as commodore of ACCLOGWING from 2020 to 2022.

"I endeavored to depart this Wing better than I found it," said France. "We have embraced lessons learned from other communities to ensure we navigate and maximize efficient operations. There is no shortage of great activity happening at ACCLOGWING."

## Reservists lend helping hands to Navy's only remotely controlled test ship ahead of upcoming inspection

by Latasha Ball

Reservists with the Navy's Surge Maintenance (SurgeMain) program are providing time, effort and additional skills to Naval Surface Warfare Center, Port Hueneme Division's Self Defense Test Ship to help her crew prepare for an upcoming in-service inspection later this year.

The SurgeMain program has supported the Navy's four shipyards during peak workload periods since 2005, according to Cmdr. Richard Scitzs, regional executive officer for Surge Maintenance Region Pacific and unit commanding officer for Navy Reserve Surge Maintenance Los Angeles.

"In the past before SurgeMain, shipyards had to either pay someone overtime, borrow or loan personnel from a shipyard or contract out," Scitzs said. "SurgeMain provides a gap measure which has been a very significant cost saving to the fleet."

But when the COVID-19 pandemic first hit the country, SurgeMain leaders at a national level started seeking additional sites to send their Sailors for training. The team then discovered NSWC PHD's SDTS and saw it as an opportunity to provide its Sailors hands-on training

while also assisting the ship's project team with accomplishing tasks needed for its INSURV, Scitzs explained.

SurgeMain is able to expand its support across the entire Navy for ship maintenance thanks to the new Chief of

**"... senior leaders said SurgeMain reserve Sailors are a game changer in how reservists are perceived, after they saw us hit the deck plates to take care of the SDTS, which is a critical asset to NSWC PHD and the fleet ..."**

Naval Reserves Warfighting Instructions in support of Battle Damage Assessment and Repair (BDAR) capabilities, he said.

"We saw the need to support NSWC PHD when we had discussions with the SDTS project team," Scitzs said. "We saw that we could provide maintenance support, and it would also free up the test ship staff to focus on other critical items that may impact INSURV or operational requirements."

Since SurgeMain reservists

first began providing INSURV support aboard the SDTS in July 2021, rotating teams of typically five to nine Sailors have corrected discrepancies and provided other assistance, working between 12 to 29 days depending on available funding and annual training requirements for the reservists.

According to Lt. Junior Grade Eduardo Quintero Vera, SDTS' SurgeMain liaison officer, team members provided nearly 3,700 hours of ship maintenance aboard the SDTS during fiscal 2021. So far in fiscal 2022, starting in the second quarter, team members have worked nearly 2,200 hours with the test ship crew and are predicted to exceed 1,000 days or 9,000 hours.

"What is great about the SurgeMain program is we have a great pool of both enlisted and officers who have a wide variety of skillsets," said Quintero.

"We have Sailors who are zone managers, combat systems project engineers, project managers, business owners and students, anything that has to do with a civilian skill trade. So it's a combination of both military and civilian skillsets that we are trying to bring to the Self Defense Test Ship."

## The Meat & Potatoes of Life



by Lisa Smith Molinari

"Dad, are your military friends in crisis mode because of the war in Ukraine?" our 24-year-old daughter Anna asked. She was home from her fashion job in New York City for the weekend, and was sewing a vest in the colors of the Ukrainian flag. She planned to auction the vest online, and donate the proceeds to a Ukrainian relief fund.

Obviously, war was on her mind.

"What do you mean?" my husband, Francis, who retired five years ago, after 28-years in the navy, asked.

Anna clarified her question. "Aren't military people getting briefed on the war, making preparations, flying overseas, marching around, deploying, or whatever?"

"Well, not necessarily," Francis said. "It depends upon their area of responsibility. Every military person is assigned to a command that covers a specific area of the world. Only those commands assigned to the areas affected by the Ukraine War would be involved. Make sense?"

Anna's brown eyes darted as scenes played out in her head. She seemed stressed, emotional, trying to contemplate that which is incomprehensible.

It occurred to me, our kids have no concept of modern war. There hasn't exactly been worldwide peace since

## War in Ukraine: A different conversation for military families

9-11, but Putin's invasion of Ukraine has been the first highly visible war in decades.

It also occurred to me that we, as parents, may not be equipped to help our young adult children understand it all. I wondered, are they seeing images of bloody conflict and worrying that it might happen in the U.S.? Do they read about biological weapons and nuclear bombs and fear that we're on the brink of a World War?

I searched for advice on how parents should talk to children about war in Ukraine, hoping to find wisdom that could guide discussions with our young adult children. The suggestions in the articles I read made sense: Limit children's exposure to potentially frightening media. Ask children to share what they've heard and seen. Give facts and context. Offer a safe space to share their feelings. Talk about bad decisions but not bad people. Read positive stories about people helping. Reassure them that it is your job to protect them.

However, one guide stated that, depending on the child's age, there may be no need bring the topic of war up, "unless they have a family member in the military."

Ah, there's the catch.

Talking about war is different for military kids, because they know certain things about military life. They know that, when fights happen in far away places, sometimes military parents are called upon to help. They know parents might have to go away for months at a time. They know parents' military jobs might put them in danger. They've heard stories

about military parents who never came home.

When searching for advice specifically geared toward military children, I found "Talking to Children About Armed Conflict" (2015) by Family Science Specialist, Sean Brotherson, Ph.D., stating that addressing military children's reactions to news of war "is particularly important because these issues directly relate to their military family life." I contacted Professor Brotherson to pick his brain.

"Children in military families grow up in a unique context that makes their experiences different from other peers," he told me, because acts of violence create a compounded sense of uncertainty, fear and insecurity in children with military parents. "In times of war or conflict, taking the extra time needed to listen to one's children and allow them to share their feelings can do much to reassure them. Also, connecting with other military families who have kids that understand can help them feel reassured... Finally, try to find small ways that your children might get involved in helping those affected by war, whether sending cards or gathering items needed for humanitarian assistance. Being proactive and reassuring in small ways can help children feel more in control when things around them seem out of control."

Anna might be 24, but having grown up in the military, she is understandably anxious about this new war, and is seeking ways to cope. She's back in New York, determined to finish her Ukrainian flag vest, and do what she can to help.

## AutoMatters™ & More



by Jan Wagner

iPhone users: is this a familiar situation? You're out for the day, perhaps shooting lots of pictures with your iPhone, and it runs out of charge before your day is over. No more phone calls, no checking your email or social media, and no more pictures. Instead, you need to stop what you're doing to recharge your phone. Finding a charging station or an electrical outlet to plug a charger into is one not-so-convenient solution. Another is to connect a charged external battery to your iPhone with a charging cable, if you brought them, but that would leave you with a battery connected by a long cable to your iPhone. Neither solution is particularly convenient.

For years, OtterBox has been a leader in high quality cellphone cases and much, much more. Recently they sent me their OtterBox Wireless Power Bank for MagSafe to review. Especially when it is magnetically attached to MagSafe-compatible iPhones (models 12 and 13), it offers a truly convenient solution to extending the on-board battery power of Apple's iPhone. With this Power Bank and a MagSafe-compatible case for your iPhone, you can confidently leave for the day with a fully charged phone and a wirelessly connected, slim, fully charged 5k mAh battery (3k mAh also available).

Here is how MagSafe technology

## Increase iPhone run time with an Otter-Box Wireless Power Bank for MagSafe

for Apple iPhones works. Perfectly aligned, strong magnets in MagSafe-compatible iPhones align with the Power Bank, resulting in a good, reliable connection every time. To attach the battery to the iPhone, simply bring the battery up to the back of the iPhone and it will accurately and effortlessly locate itself magnetically, snapping into the correct position.

The OtterBox Wireless Power Bank for MagSafe features two-sided charging, for wireless output to the iPhone, and wireless power input to the power bank. Two-sided magnets attach the power bank to the iPhone and to a mount simultaneously. The dual direction USB-C port enables the power bank's use as a standalone power supply. Press the button on the bottom of the power bank to turn it on.

**The design of the OtterBox Wireless Power Bank incorporates drop protection.** You have several convenient options for recharging the OtterBox Wireless Power Bank for MagSafe. You can use the supplied USB-C to USB-C cord to recharge it from a USB-C power adapter, or you can wirelessly recharge it from a MagSafe or Qi wireless charger (each sold separately), even while the battery remains attached to the iPhone, which will also charge the iPhone's internal battery (the iPhone's internal battery will charge first, followed by the external power bank). Four LED power indicators on the OtterBox battery display its charging status.

By the way, you should know that Apple's new iPhones no longer come with a power adapter, to benefit the environment by conserving raw materials such as copper and zinc, and

even to reduce the size of the box. I only have the older, small, USB type-A power adapters. Fortunately, I have a USB-C outlet on a large power strip.

The price of the Wireless Power Bank for MagSafe (5k mAh) on the OtterBox website is \$69.95. A range of accessories are available, including a charging pad (\$29.95), charger stand (\$49.95) and car vent mount for MagSafe (\$39.95).

Make sure you have, or get, a MagSafe compatible iPhone case. I didn't have one but, eager to do this review, I used my Dremel multi-purpose, rotary motorized tool and various attachments to carefully cut an opening in the rather thick rubber of my non-MagSafe compatible iPhone case, so that the OtterBox battery would be able to magnetically attach to my iPhone 12 Pro Max. The power bank now attaches well, but my cutout for it in my iPhone's case is a bit sloppy. I'd rather have the OtterBox iPhone 12 Pro Max Defender Series XT with MagSafe case (\$69.95).

For more information on the Otter-Box Wireless Power Bank for MagSafe, visit [OtterBox.com](https://www.ottterbox.com). Navigate to the "Accessories" tab, "For MagSafe" and "Wireless Chargers." While you are there, also check out OtterBox MagSafe compatible cases, power adapters and other accessories.

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## Four firemen of USS Richmond earn Medal of Honor for Civil War heroism

by Katie Lange

During the Civil War, Union naval forces in the south worked to divide the Confederacy by conquering the Mississippi River. One of the many ships involved in that mission was USS Richmond. During one intense battle, the ship was in danger of exploding, but thanks to four of the ship's firemen, it survived to see the war's end.

All four firemen - Navy 2nd Class Fireman John S. Hickman, Navy 1st Class Fireman Matthew McClelland, Navy 1st Class Fireman John Rush and Navy 1st Class Fireman Joseph E. Vantine - received the newly created Medal of Honor for their bravery.

Not a lot of information can be found online detailing the early lives of these men other than where they grew up. Hickman was from Altoona, Pennsylvania; McClelland was born in Ireland before his family emigrated to Brooklyn, New York; Rush grew up in Washington, D.C., while Vantine was from Philadelphia.

By the time the Civil War broke out, all four men were sailors in the Union Navy stationed

aboard the wooden steamship USS Richmond. The Richmond spent the first part of the war in the Caribbean before joining the



**Battle of Forts Jackson and St. Philip; Richmond is in the right foreground. Courtesy photo**

West Gulf Blockading Squadron, which aimed to divide the Confederacy at the Mississippi River by cutting off its main southern supply and communication route.

By the spring of 1862, New Orleans - the Confederacy's busiest commercial port - and nearby Baton Rouge had been captured by the Union. The only portion of the Mississippi that remained in Confederate hands was a roughly 150-mile-long stretch of territory between Vicksburg, Mississippi, and Port

Hudson, Louisiana.

In December 1862, Navy Adm. David Farragut - who would later be given credit for uttering the famous naval phrase "damn the torpedoes, full speed ahead!" - was in charge of the West Gulf Blockading Squadron. He and other military leaders learned that the Confederates

were making improvements to their defenses at Vicksburg and Port Hudson, about 15 miles upriver from Baton Rouge. So, they started making plans to complete their mission sooner rather than later.

Farragut was tasked with getting his flotilla past Port Hudson. On March 14, 1863, Farragut ordered seven ships, including USS Richmond, to make their move. Farragut was expecting a coordinated attack by the Union Army to divert enemy fire that would damage the ships, but

that inland support arrived too late. The ships ended up facing the full force of Confederate artillery shelling.

The Richmond was the second ship in line in the flotilla. Between the enemy fire and the river's strong current, it struggled to continue its journey upstream. Before it could round a curve in the river to get past the fort, Richmond was hit by a 6-inch shell that shattered the starboard safety-valve chamber and damaged the port safety-valve chamber. This ruptured the ship's steam lines, which caused the engine room to immediately fill with steam. If something wasn't done quickly, the ship would explode.

As firemen, Hickman, McClelland, Rush and Vantine knew what to do and immediately jumped to it. Without concern for themselves, each man wrapped wet cloth around their faces and ran into the steam-filled room to put out the furnaces.

The men relieved each other when they were overcome by heat and kept this up until the threat of explosion dissipated. Their actions saved the ship, which had to turn back and abort

the mission to continue past Port Hudson.

While that battle wasn't very successful - only two of the seven ships in the convoy succeeded in getting past Port Hudson - the bigger mission eventually triumphed. Four months later, the Union Army and its naval ships, including the Richmond, captured Port Hudson. A few days prior, a nearly two-month siege of Vicksburg to the north also ended in a Union victory, finally bringing the entire Mississippi River under Union control.

For their bravery under fire, Hickman, McClelland, Rush and

Vantine were awarded the newly created Medal of Honor on July 10, 1863.

All four men survived the rest of the war. Hickman went back to his hometown and lived there until he died on Dec. 24, 1904. Vantine returned to Philadelphia and got an education. He eventually married, settled in Newcastle, Delaware, and became an engineer at an iron works company.

No details on McClelland's post-war life were available, but he died in Philadelphia on Jan. 30, 1883. Rush returned to D.C., eventually changed his name to Israel Little and got married.

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## Defense Health Agency data registry helps improve research and treatment for eye injuries

The Defense Health Agency is expanding its capability for researching and treating eye injuries and vision problems to improve care for service members and veterans.

**Recent enhancements to the Defense and Veterans Eye Injury and Vision Registry Defense and Veterans Eye Injury and Vision Registry website, known as DVEIVR, are giving doctors and researchers new insights into ocular injuries and outcomes across the departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs.**

“DVEIVR transforms data into useful information and, ultimately, practical knowledge that can be applied at the user level for tangible clinical impacts,” said Army Colonel Scott McClellan, Defense Health Agency Vision Center of Excellence branch chief in Silver Spring, Maryland.

The registry is a managed clinical health tool overseen by VCE to provide the DOD/VA vision care community and, with appropriate agreements in place,

academic eye care professionals with unique clinical ocular and vision-related data.

### New Value

Established in 2011 by congressional mandate, newly added components in the registry offer helpful context and supplemental information for doctors and researchers.

“The value of DVEIVR in practice is related to the source of the data, which are medical records,” said Dr. David Eliason, deputy chief for the VCE and a practicing ophthalmologist. “It’s not just how the eye injury is coded [medically] but it has the doctor’s note itself, so it’s clinically relevant in that way.”

Long-term research may be especially valuable. As the U.S. military conducts fewer combat operations overseas, there are fewer combat injuries, but the VA continues to provide follow-on care for veterans injured years ago, Eliason said.

“I’m very much interested in the long-term disposition of these patients, 10 to 12 years post-injury. The registry data help us to determine who is going to the VA and who doesn’t know about VA programs for eye injury follow-on care.”



**SAN DIEGO (March 10, 2022)** A group photo of Navy Medicine Readiness and Training Command (NMRTC) San Diego’s command triad and NMRTC San Diego’s Regional Medical Boards team during a Commander’s Cup for the first quarter of 2022 award ceremony at the hospital March 10. NMRTC San Diego’s Regional Medical Boards team was awarded the Commander’s Cup for exhibiting outstanding performance and excellent customer service. NMRTC San Diego’s mission is to prepare service members to deploy in support of operational forces, deliver high quality healthcare services and shape the future of military medicine through education, training and research. NMRTC San Diego employs more than 6,000 active duty military personnel, civilians and contractors in Southern California to provide patients with world-class care anytime, anywhere. U.S. Navy photo by MC3 Mariterese Merrique.

### CLIP & SAVE

#### VA Urgent Care Assistance Information

Regions 4-6 (includes AK, AS, AZ, CA, CO, GU, HI, ID, MP, MT, NM, NV, OR, TX, UT, WA, WY)

#### For Veterans

- Call 800-MYVA411 (800-698-2411) and select option 1 and then option 3 to verify eligibility for urgent care services, or for general questions related to the urgent care benefit.
- Use the VA Facility Locator to find in-network urgent care and pharmacy locations (<https://www.va.gov/find-locations/>)
- You must visit an in-network pharmacy location in the same state as your urgent care visit to avoid any issues filling your urgent care prescription.
- Bring a valid, government-issued photo ID to the in-network urgent care location/pharmacy. Ask and verify the urgent care provider/pharmacy is in

the VA network.

- Call 866-620-2071 for assistance if you have difficulty receiving urgent care or filling your urgent care prescription.
- DO NOT pay a copayment at the time of urgent care visit.

#### For Providers

- Call 833-4VETNOW (833-483-8669) to confirm Veteran’s eligibility for urgent care services.
- Ensure 14-day Rx is on VA Urgent/Emergent Formulary (<https://www.pbm.va.gov/PBM/NationalFormulary.asp>) if prescribing an urgent care prescription.
- Be sure to activate Veteran’s pharmacy benefit by calling to check their eligibility.
- DO NOT charge a copayment to Veteran.
- File urgent care claim within 30 days with TriWest.
- Submit medical documentation to the Veteran’s home VA medical center (VAMC) within 30 calendar days. Find a VAMC at <https://www.va.gov/find-locations/>

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