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**HOW TO FIND YOUR
DOG'S HEART RATE ...**
page 2

PUP'S PULSE Army Sgt. Camron Allen teaches Pvt. Caden Hines how to locate the pulse on military working dog, Sasu, at Josip Jović Barracks, Croatia, June 7, 2025. U.S. Army photo by Sgt. 1st Class Tanisha Karn

OFFICIALS OUTLINE PRESIDENT'S PROPOSED FY26 DEFENSE BUDGET

by Matthew Olay, DOD News

A group composed of senior Defense Department and military leaders outlined President Donald J. Trump's proposed \$1.01 trillion national defense budget request for fiscal year 2026 during a recent media briefing at the Pentagon.

The request, which represents

a 13.4 percent increase from fiscal year 2025, includes \$848.3 billion for the discretionary budget and \$113.3 billion in mandatory funding through congressional reconciliation.

"This historic defense budget prioritizes strengthening homeland security, deterring Chinese aggression in the Indo-Pacific

[region], revitalizing the defense industrial base and maintaining our commitment to being good stewards of taxpayer dollars," a senior defense official told reporters.

The official added that the \$113 billion in mandatory reconciliation funding would address the president's priorities, including shipbuilding, missile defense, munitions production and quality-of-life initiatives for the nation's warfighters.

Divided across the department, the proposed budget breaks down to \$197.4 billion for the Army, \$292.2 billion for the Navy, \$301.1 billion for the Air Force and \$170.9 billion defensewide, according to the senior defense official.

Included in the Air Force's proposed budget is \$40 billion

toward the Space Force, which represents a 30 percent increase in funding from fiscal year 2025, a senior military official said.

Some of the allocations in the proposed budget include:

****\$25 billion** toward an initial investment in the proposed Golden Dome for America comprehensive missile defense initiative;

****\$60 billion** toward nuclear enterprise modernization, including all three legs of the nation's nuclear triad;

****\$3.1 billion** for continued F-15EX Eagle II fighter jet production;

****\$3.5 billion** in funding for the Air Force's planned F-47 Next Generation Air Dominance fighter jet platform;

****Funding** for 19 new Navy battle force ships while maintaining 287 ships across key

see **Budget, page 4**



Sign outside the Pentagon, April 24. U.S. Navy photo by Petty Officer 1st Class Alexander Kubitza

Navy begins final soil cleanup at former Hunters Point Naval Shipyard warehouse site

by Christopher Dunne

Naval Facilities Engineering Systems Command HQ

The Navy has begun the final phase of soil cleanup at Parcel B-1, Installation Restoration Site 10, the site of a battery and electroplating warehouse (Building 123) at the former Hunters Point Naval Shipyard in San Francisco.

The warehouse was safely demolished last year to facilitate access to the contaminated soil for further cleanup activities - a crucial step toward revitalizing the site for future use.

The project, overseen by the Department of the Navy's Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Program Management Office, will remove approximately 5,000 cubic yards of contaminated soil from the site.

"This final cleanup phase is a significant milestone in our commitment to thoroughly remediate the former Hunters Point Naval Shipyard," said Michael Pound, BRAC environmental coordinator. "We are dedicated to ensuring the site is safe, environmentally sound, and benefits the surrounding community as it moves towards redevelopment."

Previous remediation efforts include installation and operation of a soil vapor extraction system, which successfully removed over 120 pounds of volatile organic compounds between 2000 and 2020. Safe, food-grade materials were injected into the ground to help natural bacteria break down contaminants to biologically clean up contaminated groundwater.

The final cleanup phase involves excavation and removal of contaminated soil, followed by rigorous testing to confirm the successful removal of contaminants.

The Navy's environmental cleanup program is conducted under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act and is overseen by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the California Department of Toxic Substances Control, and the San Francisco Regional Quality Control Board.

The Navy is working closely with the Shipyard Trust for the Arts to minimize disruption to local art studios during the cleanup process.

The former Hunters Point Naval Shipyard was closed in 1991 and is intended for cleanup and transfer to the City of San Francisco for redevelopment.

Naval Facilities Engineering Systems Command is the naval shore facilities, base operating support, and expeditionary engineering systems command that delivers life-cycle technical and acquisition solutions aligned to fleet and Marine Corps priorities.

Navy renames ship for MOH Recipient

by C. Todd Lopez

Navy recently rebranded a fleet replenishment oiler after a Navy Medal of Honor recipient. "USNS Harvey Milk has officially been renamed USNS Oscar V. Peterson," said Chief Pentagon Spokesman Sean Parnell during the Weekly Sitrep video. "The ship is named after Chief Petty Officer Oscar V. Peterson, who was badly burned trying to save his ship during the Battle of [the] Coral Sea in 1942. Peterson died of his injuries and was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor. We are so grateful for his heroic service." Harvey Milk was an American politician and gay rights activist who became the first openly gay man to be elected to public office in California, serving as a member of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors. He was assassinated along with San Francisco Mayor George Moscone by former Supervisor Dan White in 1978.

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FOUNDING FATHER FACTS, CONTRIBUTIONS TO CREATING COUNTRY

by David Vergun, DOD News
The seven Founding Fathers of the U.S. who are widely regarded as having made the most significant contributions to securing independence from Great Britain and establishing the U.S. government are John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Alexander Hamilton, John Jay, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison and George Washington.

Four of those men became president, and all but one had connections to the military.

Washington, the nation's first president, has a rich military background. In 1753, Virginia's governor appointed him to be a surveyor with the rank of major.

During the French and Indian War, he was promoted to lieutenant colonel. In 1755, Washington and his militia joined British Army Gen. Edward Braddock's troops to expel the French from the Ohio River Valley. Before Braddock died in battle, he praised Washington and his Virginia militia for their courage in saving part of the English forces.

When the Continental Congress sought a commander for the Colonial Army in 1775, Washington was selected because of his extensive militia service during the French and Indian War. He served as the Army's commander in chief until the end of the Revolutionary War in 1783.

While Washington led the Army in numerous battles, some of the

most significant include the Siege of Boston, the Battle of Long Island, the Battle of Kip's Bay, the Battle of Trenton, the Battle of Monmouth and the Siege of Yorktown.

During the Whiskey Rebellion in the late 18th century, a western Pennsylvania revolt against liquor taxation, Washington rode at the head of a 13,000-member militia to successfully suppress the insurgency. The rebels fled before the troops arrived. To this day, Washington remains the only sitting president to lead troops into battle.

As commander of the Continental Army, Washington was defending New York City in July 1776 and didn't sign the Declaration of Independence at the time of its adoption July 4, 1776. He received official notification along with a copy of the declaration from John Hancock and ordered it be read out loud to his troops assembled at the parade grounds in lower Manhattan on July 9, 1776.

Washington and 38 others did sign the Constitution of the United States of America on Sept. 17, 1787, and he presided over the debate of that document.

Adams, the nation's second president, is the only Founding Father who didn't have military service. On June 11, 1776, Congress appointed a committee of five, including Adams, to draft the Declaration of Independence, which he and 55 others signed.

Adams wasn't present for the signing of the Constitution because he was in the Netherlands serving

as the U.S. minister to that nation. Although Adams wasn't in the military, he was instrumental in establishing the Continental Navy and Marine Corps in 1775. He also served as the head of the Board of War, which procured supplies for the Continental Army.

Jefferson, the third president, served as a colonel in the Albemarle County militia in Virginia from 1770 until 1779 but did not participate in combat. Jefferson was the primary author of the Declaration of Independence. He did not sign the Constitution because he was overseas serving as the U.S. minister to France.

During Jefferson's presidency, the territory of Louisiana was acquired from France in the Louisiana Purchase. This acquisition nearly doubled the size of the U.S., as it included 828,000 square miles of land in the Mississippi River's drainage basin west of the river.

Madison, the fourth president, was commissioned as a colonel of the Orange County, Virginia, militia in October 1775 and served until May 1776. Like Jefferson, Madison didn't participate in battle.

Madison is considered the "Father of the Constitution" because of his pivotal role in drafting it and the Bill of Rights. The War of 1812 occurred during his presidency.

While Franklin is best known for his work as a writer, scientist, inventor, statesman, diplomat, printer, publisher and political philosopher, he also had military service.



A painting of President George Washington, center, at Fort Cumberland, Md., is on display at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in N.Y. The painting illustrates Washington as he reviews the troops deploying to put down the Whiskey Rebellion in western Pennsylvania in 1794. Photo courtesy of Metropolitan Museum of Art

During King George's War, Franklin raised a militia to defend Philadelphia against a possible French naval attack. During the French and Indian War, he led troops in the defense of Philadelphia and also led a militia to Gnadenhütten, Pennsylvania, to build a fort to defend against Native American attacks.

Franklin was one of the drafters and signers of the Declaration of Independence. He's the only person to have signed that document, as well as the Treaty of Paris, which ended the Revolutionary War, and the Constitution.

Hamilton was commissioned an Army captain, March 14, 1776, and raised a company of artillery troops for the defense of New York City. His company fought in battles around the city and later in the battles of Trenton, Princeton and Yorktown. He was promoted to lieutenant colonel and served as

Washington's aide-de-camp. By the time of his discharge from the Army in December 1782, he had been promoted to colonel.

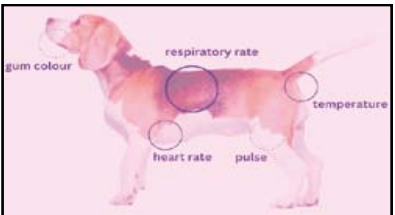
Hamilton's artillery unit, 1st Battalion, 5th Field Artillery Regiment, never disbanded and is currently stationed at Fort Riley, Kansas. Of the Founding Fathers, he and Washington had the most extensive combat experience.

Jay served as an Army colonel with the 2nd New York Regiment during the Revolutionary War but did participate in battle. He went on to serve as president of the Continental Congress as well as the first chief justice of the United States and later became governor of New York.

In addition to the seven Founding Fathers, others made significant contributions to the nation's founding, including George Mason, Patrick Henry, John Hancock, John Marshall and Samuel Adams.

How to take your dog's heart rate

Dogs come in all shapes and sizes, and so do their hearts — and those heart rates vary a great deal. That's why it's important for you to become familiar with what's normal for your pet so you'll know in, well, a heartbeat when a reading is wrong. You'll need a watch with a second hand, a stopwatch or ... your smartphone. Feel your dog's heartbeat with one hand over his left side, just behind his front leg. Count the number of beats in 15 seconds and multiply by four to get the heart rate in beats per minute (bpm). Small dogs, puppies and dogs who are out of shape will have faster heartbeats, and large dogs and those in good physical condition will have slower rates. "Normal" ranges from 60 to 140 beats per minute in a resting dog — 60 to 100 in big dogs and 100 to 140 in little ones. While you can check the rate with your hand over the heart, you can also take a pulse by gently feeling the beat near the inside top of your dog's hind leg. The heart rate will be the same both places, so do whichever is easier for you and your dog. Because normal varies so much, it's difficult to assess abnormal without a baseline, so take your dog's heart rate a few times and make notes. If you're concerned about what you're finding, discuss your results with your veterinarian.



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Army works to deter Chinese threats while supporting joint force, allies, partners

by David Vergun, DOD News

China is developing military technologies, capabilities and procedures at a pace and scale never before seen, said Army Gen. Ronald P. Clark, commander of U.S. Army Pacific, who spoke June 27 during a strategic landpower forum at the Center for Strategic and International Studies headquarters in Washington.

It's also learning lessons from ongoing conflicts and are rapidly improving their ability to operate in a joint capacity, Clark said, adding that China's focus has been on anti-access and area denial in the air and maritime domains against the U.S. and its allies.

Anti-access prevents an advancing military force from entering an area, and area denial limits a force's freedom of action within an area.

"What they have not accounted for is our ability to provide access through multidomain operations from the land," Clark said, referring to the Army's

multidomain task force deterrence concept that prizes operating in space, cyberspace, electronic warfare, information operations and employing long-range fires.

China has increased its aggression, belligerence and co-

Army Gen. Ronald P. Clark, commander of U.S. Army Pacific, speaks during a strategic landpower forum at the Center for Strategic and International Studies headquarters in Washington, June 27. DOD screenshot



erceive tactics against allies and partners in the region, Clark said, noting, "Our ability to be present, to give them an alternative, specifically in the security arena, is very, very important. So, presence matters."

The general cited the large

number of exercises occurring throughout the region, in which the U.S. and other nations participate.

He said the Army is increasing prepositioned stocks in the region, known as joint theater distribution centers, to reduce

reliance on and risk associated with moving supplies from afar by air and sea.

"Our ability to be able to gain positional advantage is all tied to our efforts to campaign inside the first and second island chains, to build positional

advantage through our engagements, through our operations, through our activities and investments in the [Indo-Pacific] region," Clark said.

The first island chain comprises islands and land from Japan to Southeast Asia, much of which lies adjacent to waters illegally claimed by China. The second island chain consists of islands to the east of the first island chain, such as Japan's Bonin Islands, Guam, and those located south to Western New Guinea.

Besides munitions and platforms, Clark said the Army is training its soldiers to meet the demands of the modern battlefield.

"We've doubled down on holistic health and fitness to ensure soldiers and their families are resilient for whatever lies ahead."

Clark said the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command is ready to assist in natural disasters, many of which occur in the region, and soldiers are helping to experiment and develop effective capabilities.




MINE MATTERS Navy explosive ordnance disposal divers prepare to place a charge on a bottom mine during Iwoto Live Minex in Japan, June 29, 2025. The exercise tested mine countermeasure tactics, techniques and procedures against live, unarmed naval mines in a dynamic underwater environment. U.S. Navy photo by Senior Chief Petty Officer Steven Jurgielewicz



Fleet & Family Readiness Hiring Fair Sat., July 19, 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. Anchors Catering and Conference Center, 2875 Recreation Way, San Diego This is a hiring event for positions in MWR and Navy Child & Youth Programs. Find your next career here. See you there! This is an open base event. Please bring government issued ID and a resume.

"We're putting [new capabilities] into the hands of soldiers on the ground who, as you well know, will take it, break it, tell us what we can do to fix it, to

ensure that we're getting the best capability into the hands of our teammates, who are forward in our theater, in real time," Clark said.




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'Low-cost, attritable, no regrets'
At Combined Naval Event 2025, U.S. Navy leaders agree that autonomous is the future, in partnership for peace

by Anna Eisenberg
Disruptive Capabilities Office
Current conflicts across the globe prove that the way we engage in war is changing daily — and that winning requires scalable, attritable systems that can adapt to evolving mission landscapes in real-time.

Capt. Colin Corridan, acting director, U.S. Navy Disruptive Capabilities Office, heard this live from the watch floor of the Maritime Operation Center in Bahrain, where he was stationed 2022-2024.

As he listened to the skippers of U.S. Navy ships take Houthis drone fire, he said, "Hearing the urgency in our warfighters' voices — I realized everything was changing, and that we have to continue to focus on mastering this attritable side of warfare."

Recently, Rear Adm. Michael Mattis, director, Strategic Effects, Commander U.S. Naval Forces Europe/Africa Commander, Task Force-SIX SIX, and Corridan joined a panel discussion to discuss these lessons learned.

Industry partner Insitu hosted the panel, "UxS Exquisiteness to Attritability: How Ukraine has provided insight into how UxS should be deployed for the next conflict in INDOPACOM," as part of the Combined Naval Event (CNE) 2025.

CNE brings together international navies, the defense industry, and academia to power the future of naval environments by helping align the strategic, operational, and technological opportunities and demands of the future.

Three major themes emerged from the panel:



"First, we must get to autonomous systems at size and scale," Mattis said.
Accelerating testing, fielding, and scaling of these new technologies will help the Navy maintain its critical edge. By leveraging existing platforms that industry partners can advance quickly, we will get to that next level of autonomy.
"Ukraine has been an evolution, autonomous will be a revolution," said Mattis.

Second, "Low-cost. Attritable. No regrets," Mattis said. Rather than thinking in terms of lifetime investment, the Navy should consider these new weapons in terms of their short-term use. A symbiotic relationship with industry partners is critical here.
Innovation is happening in the private sector, and the Navy can benefit from their speed, agility, and ingenuity. On the other side of the coin, the Navy should be able to provide feedback to industry partners to generate real-time iteration.

Third, "The whole ocean may soon be a weapons engagement zone," Corridan said.
Our allies and partners are important now more than ever — because no one Navy can or should keep every sea safe. Information is power, and we need to be able to quickly and easily speak with and share data with our allies.
We have the technology — the next step is to enable interoperability. When drones

can talk to each other — and allow us to talk to our partners — we will have upper hand.

Simply put: if we are not conquering the attritable space as well as the exquisite, we are not doing enough.

The DCO was stood up to marry these three major themes. With the mantra that "speed in

Budget continued from page 1

platforms;
**\$2.5 million for nuclear shipyard productivity enhancements;
**\$6.5 billion invested in conventional and non-hypersonic munitions and \$3.9 billion in hypersonic weapons;
**\$15.1 billion invested in cybersecurity to ensure joint, all-domain maneuvering while protecting U.S. interests in cyberspace;
**\$1.3 billion for industrial base supply chain improvements;
**\$2.5 billion for missile and munitions production expansion; and
**\$1.2 billion for the Office of Strategic Capital's loan program, meant to attract private investment in national security projects.

In addition to materiel, the president's budget also addresses military readiness and training, as well as quality-of-life improvements for service members and their families.

"At nearly \$160 billion, the FY26 budget request funds DOD

this space is our new reality," DCO takes specific challenges provided directly by the Fleets and accelerates the acquisition of technology to address them. DCO is focused on a minimal viable product that delivers one capability at a lower cost.

While speed is in DCO's DNA, a careful assessment process considers everything from the engineering design and costs of a proposed solution to its legal and policy implications.

Along the way, DCO is gathering lessons learned that can be applied to improve the entire Navy's capability.

readiness to a historic high to meet the planned employment of forces," the senior military official said, adding that the budget also includes a 3.8 percent pay raise and a \$5 billion investment in unaccompanied housing for service members.

The proposal also recommends some notable reductions, including DOD's cancellation of its E-7 Wedgetail early warning and control aircraft program due to what the official described as "survivability concerns in a contested environment."

The military official also stated the budget recommendations include reducing procurement of the F-35 Lightning II stealth strike fighter from 74 to 47 aircraft.

At the same time, increased funding would go toward modernization of the jet's capabilities, as well as roughly \$1 billion allocated for investment in spare parts to address the F-35's sustainment and readiness challenges, the military official said.

Additionally, the senior defense official noted that the pro-

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Top
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Marine Corps
•Lightning Carriers: The Marines' secret weapon in the Pacific
Air Force
•Air Force cancels E-7 Wedgetail, citing survivability and cost concerns
•F-15EX planned fleet size grows to 129 jets
•Air Force revives ARRW hypersonic missile with procurement plans for fiscal 2026
•Air Force Academy cadets arrive for basic training, encouraged to cultivate intensity and courage
•U.S. Air Force seeks to retire all A-10 Warthogs by 2027
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•Space Force ponders shakeup to LEO satellite strategy, potentially hiring SpaceX for data relay
•Space Force spending could hit \$40B in 2026
•Pentagon to consider SpaceX alternative for Space Force satellite program
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•Veterans fight to fast-track study of 'lifesaving' psychedelic therapy
•Music as meditation: Guitars for vets provides outlet for those who served
•'We need to be doing a better job': Veterans crisis line overwhelmed by volume of contacts, disruptive callers
•Veterans medical center in LA shuts down amid unrest over Trump's immigration crackdown
•Thousands of LGBTQ+ vets were promised pardons. Only 4 have succeeded.

posed budget reflects Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth's Feb. 20, 2025, order to refocus the budget.
lethality and readiness."
The budget also requests \$5 billion for border security. "The \$5 billion we're requesting is [to fund] our troops to actually be [at the border], as well as for detention support," the senior defense official said, noting the initial portion of the FY26 budget justification books — commonly referred to as J-books — were released recently. More will continue to be released daily.

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Army makes new adjustments to retention rules amid high demand for reenlistment

from U.S. Army G-1
Public Affairs

WASHINGTON - Amid continued high demand for reenlistment, the U.S. Army announced two updates to its retention policies to improve retention forecasting while ensuring Soldiers have sufficient time and guidance to make informed reenlistment decisions.

These changes, which begin June 1, include suspending most retention extensions and reinstating the 90-day reenlistment window, aligning retention procedures with mission success and force management objectives.

Special circumstances will be handled on a case-by-case basis. More details are outlined below.

Retention Extensions - Soldiers who are not deployed or deploying with an ETS date before October 1, 2025, had until May 31 to obtain retention extensions (under general circumstances), which allow them to extend their service without officially reenlisting. Soldiers who ETS after October 1, 2025, can extend under

specific conditions outlined in Army regulation 601-280.

Reenlistment Windows — Beginning July 1, Soldiers are allowed to reenlist from the time their reenlistment window opens until 90 days from their ETS date. Soldiers less than 90 days from their ETS dates will be unable to reenlist.

The Army's retention success has enabled the adjustment of reenlistment options for Soldiers with an ETS date before the end of fiscal year 2026. This adjustment balances the Army's current needs while preserving Soldiers' opportunity to continue serving.

"As the Army adapts to evolving needs and conditions, we have to make sure our retention policies keep pace," said Master Sgt. Kindra Ford, Senior Retention Operations NCO.

"We're working hard to keep career counselors, Soldiers, and leaders up to date to help them make informed decisions about their careers."

In April, the Army surpassed its fiscal year 2025 reenlistment goal by retain-



Sgt. Sylvia Lemus shakes hands with Lt. Col. John Hermida following her reenlistment ceremony at Drawsko Combat Training Center, Poland, Aug. 12, 2024. They are assigned to the 1st Cavalry Division, working alongside NATO allies and regional security partners to provide combat-credible forces to V Corps, America's forward-deployed corps in Europe. U.S. Army photo by 1st Lt. Kimberly Blair

ing 15,600 Soldiers, 800 more than the 14,800 target. The Army's retention success also coincides with it recently exceeding 90 percent of its

recruiting goals in May as it continues to build on its recruiting momentum.

"With reenlistment and re-

cruiting exceeding expectations, the Army is in a good position to maintain its end strength and force requirements for the foreseeable future," said Ford.

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3rd Fleet hosts RIMPAC 2026 Initial Planning Conference

by Petty Officer 1st Class
Brandon Roberson
Commander, U.S. 3rd Fleet

SAN DIEGO - Military members and representatives from nations across the Indo-Pacific and around the world gathered in San Diego recently for the Exercise Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) 2026 Initial Planning Conference.

Hosted by Commander, U.S. 3rd Fleet, the IPC marks the formal commencement of planning for the 30th iteration of the world's largest international maritime exercise, scheduled for summer 2026.

"The Initial Planning Conference is a vital first step in shaping RIMPAC 2026," said Vice Adm. John Wade, commander, U.S. 3rd Fleet. "This week, we brought together our international partners to align on shared objectives, discuss potential training scenarios, and lay the groundwork for an exercise that will enhance our collective interoperability and readiness to respond to the complex challenges of the maritime domain."

The biennial RIMPAC exer-

cise is a cornerstone of international maritime cooperation, providing a unique and invaluable training opportunity to foster and sustain cooperative relationships critical to ensuring the safety of sea lanes and security on the world's oceans.

During the IPC, delegates engaged in a series of discussions and working groups to outline the scope, objectives, and initial scenarios for RIMPAC 2026.

"The RIMPAC exercise is designed to build interoperability through integration of people, platforms and systems across all the theaters of military operations including peacetime operations such as humanitarian assistance and disaster response," said Royal Australian Navy Lt. Cmdr Benn vann Balen, Exercise RIMPAC lead coordinator.

"The IPC is the first opportunity to plan in conjunction with our partner nation staff to achieve this level of integration and the team is looking forward to developing on the lessons identified during 2024. Our focus for 2026 is the safe integration of new capabilities, ensuring the operating environ-

ment we create is relevant to the training objectives of our allies while remaining cognizant of the natural environment we will be operating in and the cultural significance of that environment to the Hawaiian people."

Further details regarding RIMPAC 2026, including specific dates and participating nations, will be released as planning progresses.

Navy accepts delivery of USNS Point Loma

MOBILE, Ala. – The Navy accepted delivery of USNS Point Loma (EPF 15), the second of the Spearhead-class Expeditionary Fast Transport (EPF) Flight II configuration, from Austal USA, June 24.

The delivery of EPF 15 signifies the official transfer of the ship from the shipbuilder to the Navy. This delivery will enhance the Navy's ability to transport troops, cargo, heavy equipment, and vehicles to shallow-draft ports. USNS Point Loma will be owned and operated by the Navy's Military Sealift Command.

"The delivery of USNS Point Loma marks the second Flight II EPF delivered to the Navy, providing essential fast-transport and enhanced medical capabilities to combatant command areas of operation," said Tim Roberts, Strategic and Theater Sealift program manager, Program Executive Office, Ships (PEO Ships).

The ship recently completed a formal Acceptance Trial with excellent scores overall and no significant deficiencies, a testament to the high level of completion, quality, and ship readiness.

Flight II EPF vessels add Role 2 enhanced medical mission afloat capabilities with two operating rooms, and support for up to 147 patients. The ships can also transport approximately 419 short tons and travel 1,200 nautical miles at an average speed of 33 knots.

Future USNS Lansing (EPF 16) is also under construction at Austal USA.

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

Jarrett assumes command of Navy Region Southwest

Welcome to San Diego's new "Navy Mayor" Rear Adm. Rich Jarrett who assumed command of Navy Region Southwest on June 18 from Rear Adm. Brad Rosen. Rear Adm. Jarrett is a native of Charleston, WV. He earned a commission from the Naval Academy in 1996. His sea duties include tours as Commanding Officer of LCS CREW 102 from 2013 to 2015, deploying in San Diego based ships *USS Freedom* (LCS 1) and *USS Fort Worth* (LCS 3) to the Indo Asia Pacific theater of operations. Ashore, Jarrett was assigned at Surface Warfare Officers School in Newport, RI, where he taught the Fleet's future department heads in the subject of tactics, administration, and leadership. He has also served in the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness; the U.S. Fleet Forces Command Liaison Officer in Washington, DC; as Commander, Fleet Activities Yokosuka, Japan; the Chief of Staff for Commander, Navy Installations Command. Jarrett is a graduate of the United States Naval War College and National War College.



Rear Adm. Rich Jarrett

From Adm. Rosen's LinkedIn: "As I turn over command of Navy Region Southwest to RDML Rich Jarrett, I would like to thank the San Diego community for their steadfast support over the past three years. It has been the highlight of my career to serve as the "Navy Mayor" in America's Finest City!

Camp Pendleton wins a award for installation excellence

CAMP PENDLETON - Former President Ronald Reagan instituted the first Commander in Chief's Annual Award for Installation Excellence in 1985. This prestigious award was established to recognize and reward installations that demonstrate outstanding performance in management and maximizing resources. This year, Department of Defense announced the winners in a press release which included Camp Pendleton among four additional service installations representing the Army, Navy, Air Force, Space Force and a defense supply center in Richmond Virginia. "Using ingenuity, innovation, and sheer determination, our world-class team skillfully supported the numerous missions aboard the installation, including improving and expanding training and operational capabilities of I Marine Expeditionary Force (I MEF), structuring and preparing for the next phase of Force Design, and improving the quality of life for our Marines, Sailors, and families," said Brig. Gen. Nick I. Brown, commanding general, Marine Corps Installations West – Camp Pendleton.

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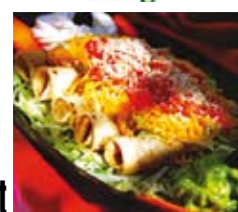


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PHOTO GALLERY



SAN DIEGO (June 25, 2025) Two research teams from Naval Health Research Center's Warfighter Performance Department won the 2025 Dr. Dolores M. Etter Top Scientists and Engineers of the Year award. NHRC supports Navy, Marine Corps, and joint U.S. warfighter health readiness and lethality with research and development that delivers high-value, high-impact solutions to the health and readiness challenges U.S. military population faces on the battlefield, at-sea, home and abroad. U.S. Navy photo by Danielle Cazarez

SAN DIEGO (June 25, 2025) Vice Adm. Brendan McLane, commander, Naval Surface Force, Pacific Fleet, walks through sideboys as he arrives at destroyer USS Russell (DDG 59), during a visit to the ship. While aboard, McLane spoke with the ship's leadership about its readiness, and recognized Sailors for their achievements with challenge coins. U.S. Navy photo by MC1 Sara L. Eshleman



Naval Research Laboratory tests hydrogen fuel for Marines' future fight

by Lance Cpl. Jozef Majewski
MARINE CORPS AIR-GROUND COMBAT CENTER, Calif. – Naval Research Laboratory, based in Washington, D.C., demonstrated the potential of hydrogen power to enhance warfighter capabilities here recently.

The NRL is actively researching and analyzing innovative applications of hydrogen for both Marines and Sailors, focusing on improving the efficiency and extending the operational limits of unmanned aircraft and ground systems. The demonstration showcased how hydrogen gas can significantly expand the capabilities of unmanned aircraft systems.

“We have found that outfitting unmanned aircraft and ground systems (UAS) systems with hydrogen fuel cells allowed us to operate those systems significantly longer than current UAS,” said Marine Corps Capt. Joshua Ashley, a science and technology analyst with the Expeditionary Energy Office, Capabilities Development Directorate. “This is beneficial because we are trying to maintain intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capabilities in the air, not only for longer but to increase our range.”

Ashley said hydrogen technology offers a potential strategic advantage against adversarial

forces. Utilizing hydrogen power for small ground systems also reduces both thermal and

Fuel cell technology has come a long way since the 1980s. We have been able to figure out how to manufacture these capabilities and provide them in the United States which is an enormous improvement from where we were at.”

Justin McRoberts, program manager for the manufacturing and technology program, The Office of Secretary of Defense

audible signatures, enhancing a warfighter's ability to operate undetected under enemy observation.

During the demonstration, Ashley presented an Ultra-Light Tactical Vehicle outfitted with enhanced hydrogen storage and a hydrogen fuel cell, capable of exporting 10 kilowatts of power – sufficient to operate high-energy-demand weapon systems.

Testing these systems at MCAGCC's challenging envi-

ronment – characterized by high temperatures and arid conditions – rigorously assesses their performance limits.

“Fuel cell technology has come a long way since the 1980s,” said Justin McRoberts, program manager for the manufacturing and technology program, The Office of the Secretary of Defense. “We have been able to figure out how to

manufacture these capabilities and provide them in the United States which is an enormous improvement from where we were at.”

The NRL remains focused on furthering this technology, leveraging sponsor-funded research projects to ensure the continued success of the Navy and Marine Corps and maintain a competitive edge in future conflicts.

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NAVWAR recognized with Navy-wide award for process improvement

by Lily Chen, NAVWAR
Naval Information Warfare Systems Command (NAVWAR) was recognized at the recent Department of Navy (DON) Financial Management (FM) awards ceremony. With the ceremony broadcast from Washington, D.C., awardees gathered at the command headquarters in San Diego to watch it together and receive their plaques. The NAVWAR Financial Enterprise Resource Management Council Process Improvement and NAVWAR Workforce Initiative Support teams were honored for their efforts in improving FM systems processes and enhancing

collaboration. “This ceremony was about recognizing the award winners and the great work being done across Navy Financial Management & Comptroller,” said Greg Koval, deputy assistant secretary of the Navy financial management systems. “There’s no shortage of work or challenges, but it’s important to acknowledge our people and teams who went above and beyond, celebrate our success, and look to the future.” The NAVWAR FERMC Process Improvement team took on the challenge of itemizing their current processes and identifying areas for improvement and

optimization. Their efforts resulted in financial statement integrity and process efficiencies, leading to improved budget allocation and faster procurement for critical warfighter requirements when and where needed.
*Team lead: Jenise Cruz
Team members: Frances Rosal, Schwanka Liu, Bradford Tennyson, Richard Aranda, Rob Burnett, Roselle (Aileen Potes), Lerabel Maninang, Clara Lugo-Emondi, Vicki Chupas, Jacob Thiry, Lisa McLeod, Andrew Chevie, Kathleen Dockler, Rita Ramos and Darby Currier*

Navy corpsmen support Marines during Integrated Training Exercise at MCAGCC

by Christopher Jones
Naval Hospital Twentynine Palms
TWENTYNINE PALMS, Calif. - More than 70 Navy corpsmen from across the country, including several from Navy Medicine Readiness and Training Command here, supported Marines during a recent Integrated Training Exercise (ITX) held here in June. ITX is a service-level, live-fire, combined arms exercise designed to enhance combat readiness and lethality for the Marine Air Ground Task Force (MAGTF). The 31-day exercise prepares units for deployment by testing command and control, tactical operations, and the ability to

sustain high-intensity combat scenarios. Among the participating Sailors was Hospital Corpsman 1st Class Juan C. Garcia, a Fleet Marine Force and Expeditionary Warfare (FMF/EXW) qualified corpsman, who deployed as part of the Navy Medicine Augmentation Program (NMAP). Garcia emphasized the significance of NMAP in bridging manpower gaps during large-scale exercises like ITX. “I along with over 70 other augments were part of the Navy Medicine Augmentation Program, which is critical to support units that are struggling with manpower such as the Reserves,” said Garcia.

“We provided this year’s unit, the 25th Marine Regiment, with the crucial medical staffing and support they needed to conduct a successful exercise.” During ITX, corpsmen operated in both simulated and real-world medical environments. They supported live-fire ranges, responded to casualty scenarios at Forward Battalion Aid Stations, and treated Marines at the Regimental Aid Station. The training included realistic simulations of combat-related injuries such as heat casualties, trauma-level amputations, and fractures, as well as routine daily sick call cases.

Nanosatellite mission yields key insights for warfighter capabilities

SAN DIEGO – A team of engineers at Naval Information Warfare Center (NIWC) Pacific recently concluded a groundbreaking nanosatellite mission, the Laser Crosslink Experiment (LaCE), which has yielded valuable insights for future warfighter capabilities. The LaCE team, part of the Space Systems branch, integrated, tested, and operated the 6U nanosatellite mission. Adding to the challenge,

almost all the hardware and software used in these missions was first-of-a-kind, meaning it had never been flown or tested in space. “We achieved significant milestones, collecting substantial experimental data and results,” said Sean Stanko, LaCE lead systems engineer. LaCE was a two-CubeSat mission designed to test various optical and radio payloads in low earth orbit. Key payloads included a laser communication termi-

nal, optical beacon, a payload radio, and a newly-developed NIWC Pacific Tracking, Telemetry, and Command ground operations center. The mission also led to the development of the Stratospheric Optical Link Demonstration, a high-altitude balloon experiment that served as a risk reduction and alternate execution path. “The value of stratospheric pre-launch test campaigns cannot be overstated,” said Stanko.

Veterans Legacy Golf Classic



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Airing dirty laundry while on vacation

Except for the years when we were stationed overseas, our military family has always taken a summer vacation at an old beach cottage in North Carolina. Through the years, it's been a fun way for extended family and old friends to reunite with us, since we lived in so many different places. However, the "fun" sometimes felt like harassment.

"Whose are THESE?" I recall my sister-in-law saying with a laugh while holding up a large pair of underwear from a basket of warm laundry. Voices rang out from around the cottage. "Whoa! Not mine!" came from the couch. "Me neither!" broadcasted from the staircase. "Mine aren't THAT big!" emanated from the hallway.

"Uh, yea," I had to admit sheepishly, "those are mine, thank you very much." I claimed my stack of folded clothes and slinked off to my room.

But I can't blame my sister-in-law for calling me out. Anytime family and friends vacation together, laundry is bound to get mixed. Someone typically announces they're throwing in a load of hot whites, and a couple hours later, whoever decides to fold the dry clothes becomes privy to the size of everyone else's underwear, setting up perfect opportunities to crack jokes. Admittedly, my undies were ample enough to fold over several times, while my thinner relatives' teensy-weensy skivvies were constructed with so little material, I once mistook a pair of my niece's underwear for a hair scrunchie.

One year, I tried to combat the unavoidable ribbing by secretly planting a humongous E-cup bra and a massive pair of flowered

briefs in the laundry, thinking that my tomfoolery might make me the joker rather than the butt of the joke. But when I found the planted garments neatly folded on my dresser, the realization that my relatives honestly believed that I wore underwear that big only served to further assault my battered ego.

Actually, when people vacation together, they don't necessarily want to know intimate details about each other, much less the size of

The Meat & Potatoes of Life



by
Lisa
Smith
Molinari

their undergarments. However, when you are packed into a summer beach cottage together, embarrassing personal secrets are inevitably revealed.

At the beginning of each vacation, we tried to maintain a facade of virtuousness, cleanliness, and self-control. But eventually, we'd give in to our natural tendencies, forcing us to acknowledge that we were not, by any means, perfect.

By the end of the vacation week, the crude realities of life were exposed. We placed our toiletry bags in shared bathrooms, where anyone could see that we needed embarrassing pharmaceuticals such as stool softeners and anti-fungal ointment. We shared meals, so that everyone saw that we ate too much mayon-

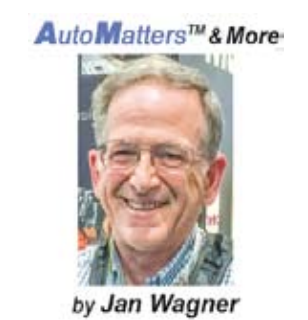
naise on our sandwiches, we dipped into the chips every couple of hours, and we'd get caught taking another brownie from the pan. We dozed off on the couch in front of everyone, showing the unflattering way that our mouths fell open and our chins multiplied when we are asleep. And yes, we commingled our laundry, allowing everyone to bear witness to the sometimes alarming size of our undergarments.

Exposing imperfections to friends and family wouldn't be a problem if everyone was compassionate enough to mutually ignore each other's foibles while vacationing together. However, after spending a whole week together in cramped conditions, my friends and family consider taking pot shots at each other to be a kind of vacation-time sporting event, like corn-holing or ladder ball.

So, in order to withstand the inevitable barrage of insults that would be hurled like bocce balls, I learned to develop a thick skin. I also learned that, while vacationing with others, harassment, brow-beating, rude sarcasm, relentless needling, and verbal abuse should be taken as nothing more than "playful banter."

Based on my summer vacation experiences over the years, I'd advise that when your uncle says he thinks your mole is growing an eye, or when your best friend offers to put Metamucil in your daiquiri to help out with your constipation, or when your sister imitates your dance moves to make the kids laugh, you must try to appreciate their witticism and have a good laugh.

Oh... and never forget to fold your own laundry.



This summer movie season has a bumper crop of potential big-screen blockbusters for your consideration. That is why I've covered so little of other subject recently, and the succession of review-worthy movies is not letting up.

By now, you are probably quite familiar with the "Jurassic Park" movie franchise. A Google search yields an AI-generated chronological history that dates way back to 1983, when Michael Crichton first conceived the idea for a screenplay about a pterodactyl cloned from fossilized DNA.

In retrospect, considering the incredible longevity and popularity of the franchise, one might reasonably wonder why the studios expressed little interest back then. Eventuality a studio took the chance, which led to the premiere of "Jurassic Park" in 1993.

Steven Spielberg's ground-breaking film, with its state-of-the-art CGI effects, a suspense-filled story and brilliant, believable acting kept audiences on the edge of their seats, as they became immersed in a terrifying, prehistoric world where dinosaurs ruled the Earth. The film was a world-wide box office smash hit, grossing over a billion dollars!

That led to the publication by Michael Crichton of a second novel, entitled "The Lost World," which led to the second film: "The Lost World." The franchise was on a roll.

Crichton was not involved in the third film: "Jurassic Park III." The

Review of 'Jurassic World Rebirth'

fourth film was "Jurassic World," with new characters and a different park.

2018 saw the release of "Jurassic World: Fallen Kingdom," followed in 2022 by Jurassic World: Dominion."

The movie experience was vividly brought to life at Universal Studios Hollywood, with the opening of the astronomically expensive "Jurassic Park: The Ride" in 1996. At the time it was said to be the most expensive theme park attraction ever built. It featured animatronic dinosaurs, and 85-foot drop and other dinosaur-themed chills and spills. It was, and remains, a thrilling ride back to the days when dinosaurs ruled the Earth.

Through it all, the Jurassic Park franchise continued to break new ground, surprising and captivating audiences with fresh, new and unexpected developments in each installment, made all the more vivid, realistic and frightening with the latest in CGI and believable acting. It was and is best experienced in movie theaters, on the big screen.

So we arrive at "Jurassic World Rebirth." Three years after the "Jurassic World" trilogy, where each film had surpassed one billion dollars at the global box office.

Specially brought out to the theater in San Diego for the press preview were two Jurassic Park-liveried vehicles.

"Jurassic World Rebirth" seemed to have all the elements needed to make it yet another smash hit: Executive Producer Steven Spielberg, a stellar cast including Scarlett Johansson, the latest and greatest in CGI special effects that have created hyper-realistic dinosaurs, a remote and foreboding location, and plenty of action. Five years after the events of "Jurassic World Dominion," according to jurassicworld.com, it is set in yet another new location — this

one an isolated equatorial environment with a climate resembling the ones in which the dinosaurs once thrived. It is a place where people are prohibited from visiting. It is "the most dangerous: a shuttered island research facility for the original Jurassic Park, inhabited by the worst of the worst that were left behind."

So why does this movie not live up to rich history of its predecessors? I lay the blame on a rather weak, uninspired story. The adventure needed a world-threatening consequence for failure to subdue the threat presented by the dinosaurs. What it got was a shallow, undeveloped opportunity for the characters to save the world from various diseases, with dinosaur DNA. Seriously? Explain to us how that is, exactly. That is difficult to take on faith.

Furthermore, the only people that were really threatened by the dinosaurs was a family, a few villagers and the formulaic opportunists looking to make a buck.

Does "Jurassic World Rebirth" entertain? Yes, but it is too familiar, and its story is uninspired. It is not the sort of stuff that keeps audiences on the edge of their seat.

Visit the official movie website for trailers, movie showtimes and other information at: <https://www.jurassic-world.com/>.

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Veterans News

Medal of Honor Spotlight: Air Force Capt. Steven Bennett

by Katie Lange, DOD News

When friendly troops fighting in Vietnam needed airpower to survive, Air Force Capt. Steven Logan Bennett didn't hesitate to come to their rescue. When his aircraft was seriously damaged during that attempt, Bennett made another quick decision — to give up his life so his wingman could survive. That extraordinary act of heroism led to Bennett posthumously receiving the Medal of Honor.

Bennett was born April 22, 1946, in Palestine, Texas, to Elwin and Edith Bennett. He had five siblings.

After a few years in Texas, the family moved to Lafayette, Louisiana, where Bennett grew up playing football. After high school, he attended the University of Southwestern Louisiana, now known as the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, and participated in the school's Air Force ROTC program.

After graduating with a bachelor's degree in science in the spring of 1968, Bennett joined the Air Force and, once he'd completed pilot training, received his commission. Shortly after, he married his girlfriend, Linda Leveque. They went on to have a daughter, Angela.

By 1970, Bennett had completed B-52 Stratofortress bomber training and a course to become a forward air controller. In April 1972, he de-

ployed to Vietnam and was assigned to the 20th Tactical Air Support Squadron.

Bennett was in the country for less than three months when he gave his life to save another.

On June 29, 1972, Bennett flew his OV-10 Bronco light attack and observation aircraft as part of a mission to direct close-air support strikes by Navy fighters along a heavily defended area near Quang Tri City in South Vietnam. Sitting in the rear seat of the aircraft was Marine Corps Capt. Michael B. Brown, an airborne artillery observer, who was also directing gunfire from two American destroyers stationed in the Gulf of Tonkin.

After approximately three hours, the pair was ready to return to Da Nang Air Base, Vietnam, when Bennett received a call for help. A small South Vietnamese unit of about 50 men was close to being overrun by a much larger enemy force. They needed air support to escape.

Unfortunately, no friendly fire-power was left in the area. Bennett was informed there was no tactical air support, and any supporting gunfire from the ships off the coast would endanger the South Vietnamese unit. The only way the unit would get help from the skies was if Bennett intervened.

The 26-year-old pilot knew it was



Air Force Capt. Steven L. Bennett, Medal of Honor recipient. U.S. Air Force photo

a massive risk because of the enemy's heat-seeking surface-to-air missiles; however, he didn't hesitate to start attacking the hostile positions with his aircraft's four small machine guns.

After four passes, the enemy began to retreat. However, as Bennett completed a fifth pass, one of the missiles struck his aircraft, severely damaging the left engine and the left main landing gear. A fire quickly began spreading throughout the aircraft.

Bennett realized they would likely

not make it to a friendly airfield for an emergency landing, so he told Brown to prepare to eject from the plane. However, Brown quickly noticed that his parachute had been shredded by the missile.

Bennett's parachute was still intact, but he knew that Brown would have no chance of survival if he ejected alone. Instead, Bennett chose to do the most selfless thing he could think of — ditch the plane in the Gulf of Tonkin. No pilot in that type of aircraft had ever survived a controlled emergency water landing before, so Bennett knew his chances of survival were slim. But he wanted Brown to live.

When the aircraft hit the water, the plane cartwheeled and smashed the front cockpit into pieces. Brown struggled to get out at first, but he finally reached the surface. He tried numerous times to reach Bennett, but the plane began to sink before he made any headway.

"There were five or 10 minutes before we would hit the water, and [Bennett] knew full well his chances were virtually nil," Brown told The Daily Advertiser newspaper out of Lafayette in 2010. "He could have gotten out himself, but he chose not to do that."

Brown, who was rescued soon after, knew Bennett had given his life to save him.

Bennett's body was recovered from the gulf the next day. He was returned home and buried in Lafayette Memorial Park Cemetery and Mausoleum in his hometown.

More than two years later, on Aug. 8, 1974, Bennett's widow and young daughter received the Medal of Honor on his behalf from Vice President Gerald Ford.

Brown, who met Angela Bennett when she got older, became close with the daughter of the man who saved his life.

"I've never met a braver man than Steve," Brown said during his 2010 interview.

Bennett's sacrifice has been remembered across the Defense Department. In 1997, the Military Sealift Command acquired a container ship and renamed it the Capt. Steven L. Bennett. Buildings at other military installations are also named for the pilot.

In his hometown of Lafayette, the Cajundome Convention Center dedicated a memorial plaza to Bennett in 1985.

This article is part of a weekly series called "Medal of Honor Monday," in which we highlight one of the more than 3,500 Medal of Honor recipients who have received the U.S. military's highest medal for valor.

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SOCIAL SECURITY MATTERS

Please clear up our confusion about our Social Security payments?

Dear Rusty: I am thoroughly confused. What do I need to do to continue receiving automatic Social Security deposits to my bank account, and maintain our Medicare and Supplement health insurance? My wife has received her SS deposit regularly on the 3rd Wednesday each month with automatic bank deposit for many years. I have received my SS deposit regularly the 4th Wednesday each month with automatic bank deposit also for many years. Can you please tell me what to do to continue receiving these automatic deposits?

First, I hear that we do not need to do anything. Then I hear that we must show up in person at our local SS office to visually confirm our identity. We live 100 miles away from our only SS office, and apparently, they don't take walk-ins. Next, I hear that we must contact the SS on the internet and answer their questions in order to continue receiving our checks. I am totally confused and don't know what to do, and we don't want to miss our checks or have our Medicare and supplemental insurance cancelled. Can you please help us?

Signed: Confused in Hawaii

Dear Confused: I know there have been a lot of news media reports and articles written on the recent changes announced by the Social Security Administration (SSA) with respect to a need to confirm one's identity in-person. Allow me to set your mind at ease because, from what you have described (that you are already receiving Social Security benefits and Medicare insurance), you do not need to do anything to have your Social Security benefits, and your Medicare insurance continue without interruption (and that includes your wife as well).

That which has been reported in the media is sometimes misleading or misinformed, but here at the AMA Foundation's Social Security Advisory Service we are watching these events very closely and can assure you that your regular benefits will continue uninterrupted. The only people who may be affected by the SSA's new processes are those who are applying for Social Security for the first time, or those who need to change where their monthly benefit is deposited. In those cases, the SSA is being very careful that no fraud is being attempted and, thus, the reason for a possible in-person SSA office visit (but only in those specific unique circumstances). But for you and your wife, it will continue to be "business as usual" and you will see no interruption in either your monthly Social Security benefit nor in your usual Medicare coverage and supplement. You don't need to do anything to have all your benefits continue.

So, please relax and do not worry. And rest assured that here at the AMAC Foundation we are watching all events occurring in Washington, D.C., especially those related to Social Security and Medicare, and will promptly inform our members of anything which affects them.

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

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NC-17 – No one 17 or under admitted.

Ask the Doc: Hearing ringing, seeing floaters, what is this?

by **Robert Hammer,**
Defense Health Agency Communications
Dear Doc,
When I'm sitting at my desk working or even when it's quiet, I hear ringing or sounds when there aren't any noises in the room. Sometimes, I see lines or spots that appear to be floating in my eyes. What could be causing these? Are they related? Part of my military duties involve training around loud noises or blasts—could this be a reason?
I'm a little worried that it might affect my mission readiness.
U.S. Army Sgt. T.S. Ringer

Dear Sgt. Ringer,
Hearing and vision issues can be concerning, especially in how it may affect your ability to serve.

We talked to a couple of experts who can help address your vision and hearing questions. They have key information as well as advice on how to maintain your readiness.

Dr. LaGuinn Sherlock, a research audiologist serving as a hearing program studies investigator for the Defense Centers for Public Health-Aberdeen, with duty at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, helps answer your hearing questions. For your eye concerns: We turned to Dr. Sally Dang, an optometrist with the Vision Center of Excellence, who can help explain what you may be experiencing with your vision.

Dr. Sherlock: Ringing in the Ears could be Tinnitus

Sounds like the ringing you are hearing could be tinnitus, which is the perception of sound in the absence of an external sound source. Tinnitus is often a symptom of auditory damage. Any hearing damage can cause tinnitus, in particular, noise exposure.

Common causes of tinnitus are exposure to blasts and other sources of loud noises, like being on an aircraft carrier, using power tools, or being in a shooting range. Tinnitus can also be caused by medications that are toxic to the ear, such as chemotherapeutic drugs and high doses of aspirin.

Sometimes tinnitus is caused by ear infections or an ear full of wax. Certain health factors, including ear infections, high blood pressure, and diabetes, can make tinnitus worse.

What are the typical symptoms?
People with tinnitus describe it as a high-pitched tone or ringing, hissing, humming, crickets, or cicadas. Sometimes it's described as motor noise or even a helicopter noise.

Can tinnitus be treated?
There is no cure for tinnitus. If there's an underlying treatable medical condition that's causing the tinnitus, then it can be treated. For example, when some people get their ear canals cleared of wax, they no longer hear the tinnitus. More commonly, though, tinnitus develops due to sensorineural hearing loss, which is usually irreversible.

You can reach out to your hearing healthcare professional to determine the appropriate plan of care.

If tinnitus is bothersome, what are some ways to manage it?
The key to living better with tinnitus is to reduce the stress response. The stress response causes disruptions to sleep and concentration and can affect mood. It's activated by perceived threat. Tinnitus can be consciously or sub-

consciously threatening because of concerns about what is causing it, if it will get worse, and about how intrusive it is.

You can reduce the stress response by learning what tinnitus is and, more importantly, what it isn't. Relaxation exercises and therapies like cognitive behavioral therapy can also help. Additionally, listening to low-level sounds can help reduce the contrast between the internal sound of tinnitus and the external sounds in the environment.

Does the ringing get louder?
Tinnitus can get louder over time, but that's most likely related to changes in your hearing. Reducing the contrast by using hearing aids or enriching your sound environment, can really help make tinnitus less noticeable.

Can service members remain on active duty if they have tinnitus?
Tinnitus doesn't affect your ability to remain on active duty. Screening for bothersome tinnitus is part of the annual hearing test for those enrolled in the hearing conservation program. The purpose of the screening is to refer service members for follow-up care when needed.

There are a couple of types of phantom sounds that military and civilians can experience. A high-pitched tone that turns on suddenly in one ear and fades away within a

few seconds to a few minutes is a phantom sound known as transient ear noise. It can be quite loud, but it is a normal occurrence and does not require a clinical evaluation. Tinnitus, on the other hand, can be an early warning sign of damage to the auditory system.

Regular and correct use of hearing protection devices, or earplugs, reduce the risk of hearing loss and reduce the risk of tinnitus. Tinnitus can be disruptive to sleep and concentration, but not always. It can make you feel irritable, anxious, or depressed.

What kind of treatment is available for tinnitus in the Military Health System?

Hearing aids are a good first step. Some places offer a program called Progressive Tinnitus Management, or PTM, which teaches coping strategies to help patients live better with tinnitus.

If your military hospital or clinic doesn't offer PTM, a self-help version is available as part of the VA/DOD clinical practice guideline for tinnitus.

Dr. Dang: Visual Disturbances Could be Eye Floaters

The small, visual disturbances you see floating in your vision could be eye floaters. Floaters

are common, especially as we get older. This is due to parts of the vitreous (gel-like fluid in the eye) that start to shrink or get loosened up in the back of the eye. Since the vitreous is located between the lens and the retina, the clumps, or strands of loose vitreous, float around and their shadows are cast on the retina. Those shadows are commonly referred to as floaters.

What are some symptoms of eye floaters?

Floaters may appear in all shapes and sizes, varying from light to dark, and may move quickly as you try to follow them. Some may be more noticeable when looking at a white wall, or in bright light with a plain background. More serious symptoms may appear as flashes like lightning bolts or strong flashlights, especially in dim areas.

What should you do if you have eye floaters?

Regular eye exams are important, especially when new floaters are experienced. While these symptoms are painless and may not directly affect vision, they can be early signs of a retinal tear or detachment, which could lead to impaired vision. A sudden onset of flashes or multiple floaters would warrant an urgent exam to rule out a retinal tear or detachment.

Any specific duties in the mili-

tary that can cause eye floaters? Side effects of blast injuries?
No specific duties directly lead to causing floaters; however, accidents or direct blunt trauma (including blasts) may cause issues that first appear as floaters.

If the eye floaters are messing up my vision, is there treatment?
Some surgeries can remove floaters; however, they aren't without risk and are rarely recommended.

The first step is going to your primary eye care provider and explaining your symptoms.

How do eye floaters affect mission readiness?

Although floaters can be irritating, it would be very rare for them to affect the ability of a service member to perform their job or to be mission-ready.

The Defense Health Agency's Vision Center of Excellence can provide more information about vision-related ailments, as well as resources for providers and service members.

U.S. Army Sgt. T.S. Ringer, appreciate the opportunity to connect you with experts to address your vision and hearing concerns. Now, you can connect with your doctor fueled with more knowledge. Stay safe out there and mission-ready.

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