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HANG IN THERE A Navy explosive ordnance disposal technician fast-ropes from an MH-60S Sea Hawk helicopter during a drill in California, May 19, 2026. U.S. Navy photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class August Clawson

Senate lawmakers renew military right to repair push

WASHINGTON, D.C.- In a report from Sen. Elizabeth Warren's press office, her and Sen. Tim Sheehy wrote to the members of the House and Senate Armed Services Committees highlighting broad support from top military leaders in the Trump administration for codifying the military's ability to repair its own equipment. The senators urged the committee leaders to pass their Warrior Right to Repair Act through the FY27 National Defense Authorization Act to protect military readiness and stop the government's waste of taxpayer funds.

"We write with concern about the ability of our service members to repair their own equipment quickly and securely, and the impact that restricting the 'right to repair' has on our military's readiness, our service members' skills in a contested logistics environment, and growing maintenance costs that are borne by taxpayers," wrote the senators.

Without right to repair provisions, the U.S. military has faced severe delays and massive overcharges by defense contractors, even for simple repairs. In 2021, the Government Accountability Office first revealed that providing the military the right to repair its own equipment "could save billions of (taxpayer) dollars."

In their letter, the Senators highlighted strong support for right to repair from a broad spectrum of Trump administration military officials and national security analysts, including Gen. Dan Caine, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who said the right to repair "would decrease reliance on external contractors, lower service fees, and allow for more efficient maintenance practices, ultimately leading to long-term cost savings."

"Military leaders understand that the consequences of DoD's inability to acquire the right to repair its own equipment have far-reaching implications for our military's readiness... It is more urgent than ever that Congress act decisively to provide DoD with the right to repair," concluded the senators.

Last year, the senators introduced the Warrior Right to Repair Act to require contractors to provide DoD with access to technical data and materials the military needs to repair and maintain its own equipment. Intellectual property law experts have noted that the bill is "consistent with longstanding law and presents no conflict with manufacturers' IP rights" and merely requires DoD offices, "as market participants, to negotiate favorable terms that will save American taxpayer dollars and ensure the effectiveness and safety of the equipment relied upon by U.S. servicemembers."

U.S. BLOCKADE OF IRAN REACHES MILESTONE OF REDIRECTING 100 SHIPS

USCENTCOM
TAMPA, Fla. — U.S. Central Command forces reached the milestone of redirecting 100 com-

mercial vessels, May 23, while enforcing a maritime blockade against Iran.

American forces began imple-

menting the blockade April 13 against commercial ships entering and exiting Iranian ports, in accordance with a presidential

proclamation. Over the past six weeks, more than 15,000 Soldiers, Sailors, Marines and Airmen have redirected 100 vessels, disabled four, and allowed 26 humanitarian aid ships to pass.

"Our service members are doing extraordinary work," said Adm. Brad Cooper, CENTCOM commander. "They have been highly effective by executing the mission with precision and professionalism, allowing zero trade into and out of Iranian ports which has squeezed Iran economically."

More than U.S. 200 aircraft and warships are supporting the mission, including the *Abraham Lincoln* CSG, *George H.W. Bush* CSG, *Tripoli* ARG/31st Marine Expeditionary Unit, and multiple guided-missile destroyers.

The blockade is being enforced against vessels of all nations entering or departing Iranian ports and coastal areas, including all Iranian ports on the Arabian Gulf and Gulf of Oman.



USS Abraham Lincoln conducts U.S. blockade operations. U.S. Navy

Hegseth welcomes Ford strike group home after record-breaking deployment

Secretary of War Pete Hegseth was on hand with his wife, Jennifer, and numerous senior Navy leaders at Naval Station Norfolk, Va., May 15, to welcome home Sailors assigned to the USS *Gerald R. Ford* Carrier Strike Group after a record-setting, multi-month deployment. The strike group returned after a 326-day deployment, the longest U.S. aircraft carrier deployment since the Vietnam War, surpassing the previous post-Vietnam mark set by aircraft carrier *Abraham Lincoln's* roughly 295-day deployment in 2020. "Extraordinary Sailors and crew of Strike Group 12: for nearly a year you have held the line for our nation. Your voyage took you to places never expected," Hegseth told *Ford's* crew while greeting them over the ship's public address system. He then recounted how the strike group set off on a routine deployment to the European theater in June 2025, only to be diverted to the Caribbean Sea shortly thereafter in support of the narco-terrorist drug interdiction mission Operation Southern Spear, as well as the operation that led to the Jan. 3 capture of Venezuelan leader Nicolás Maduro.

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ICE LOVE STORY: The lives, careers, and lessons of a married ICE couple

from Department of Homeland Security

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) shared the inspiring story of two senior U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officials who are married.

Michell Chase and Timothy Stone met in Domestic Operations at ICE in 2019. They

fight drug-trafficking due to his own parents' drug use. He was among the last Customs class before the agency transitioned to ICE. He currently serves as division chief for the Western Hemisphere in Homeland Security Investigations' International Operations.

Michell grew up in Pulaski, N.Y., near the Canadian bor-

after college.

"We understand that you don't always choose your mission," said Tim Stone, Division Chief for the Western Hemisphere in HSI's International Operations. "Sometimes, Michell has to deploy, and I know that's part of the job. It's not always easy, but we accept it as an investment in our careers. We both enjoy what we

do. Being passionate about your work makes it easier to handle the demands and competing priorities."

"Tim has helped me grow as a person and encouraged me to step outside my comfort zone, create new opportunities and programs, and not just go day to day," said Michell Chase, ICE Peer Support National Program Manager.

"We complement each other. Coming from humble backgrounds, we often reflect on how far we've come and appreciate the agency for the opportunities it provides."

As coworkers, they have collaborated on expanding the Peer Support Program internationally, which ensures that locally employed staff and embassy personnel have access to resources. They have also

worked together to secure funds for overseas training and adapt to new processes.

They also reflected on their experiences living abroad, from building friendships with American teachers and embassy staff to connecting with local business owners, as well as the sense of community created by working with many of the same people due to their shared occupation.



Tim and Michell at their Moroccan wedding. DHS courtesy photo

went on to get married in a Moroccan ceremony, where they have spent the past two years following Tim's assignment there as an attaché. Michell initially retired to join him before rejoining ICE a few years later.

Tim grew up in Texas, where he served as a police officer in Midland for nearly eight years before joining the U.S. Customs Office of Investigations. He was inspired to join law enforcement and

der. She developed an early interest in law enforcement after she was inspired by the character Clarice Starling in "The Silence of the Lambs." Her fascination with criminal investigations only grew stronger when she took a class on the history of serial killers at SUNY Oswego. She graduated in December of 2000 and pursued a career with the U.S. Customs Service, attending the academy by May of 2001 and securing the only position she sought

USS *Cleveland* (LCS 31) commissions in namesake city

by Lt.j.g. Rachael Jones and Ensign Dylan Barron

CLEVELAND – The Navy commissioned its newest and last Freedom-variant littoral combat ship USS *Cleveland* (LCS 31) in Cleveland May 16.

Acting Secretary of the Navy Hung Cao highlighted the significance of the crew's role in bringing the ship to life as it began its commissioned service. "Today we celebrate the Sailors who breathe life into this ship. To the officers and crew of USS *Cleveland*, today is your day," said Cao.

LCS 31 is the fourth ship to be named in honor of the city of Cleveland. The first was a cruiser (C-19) commissioned in 1903 that served during World War I. The second was the lead ship of her class of light cruisers, USS *Cleveland* (CL-55), which earned 13 battle stars for its service during World War II.

The third was Austin-class amphibious transport dock,

USS *Cleveland* (LPD 7), which served from 1967 to 2011, providing critical support during the Vietnam War, Operation Desert Shield/Storm, and various humanitarian missions. LCS 31 is the 16th and final Freedom-variant littoral combat ship (LCS) to be built and commissioned in the Navy.

Cleveland's skipper officer, Cmdr. Bruce Hallett, emphasized the significance of the crew's role in shaping the ship's legacy as it enters service.

"You aren't simply serving aboard this ship. You're writing the first chapter of her history. You're forging a legacy that will endure long after all of us have left these decks," said Hallett.

The ship's sponsor, Robyn Modly, said "Every day we do something to support this ship and her sailors will be a glorious day. Today is just the first step toward the many glorious days that will follow."

USS *Cleveland* (LCS 31) was built by Lockheed Martin and Fincantieri Marinette Marine in Marinette, Wisconsin. Following the commissioning, the ship will transit to its assigned homeport at Naval Station Mayport, Fla.

In the week leading up to the commissioning ceremony, the *Cleveland* crew spent time with their ship's sponsor, Mrs. Robyn Modly, a native Clevelander and wife of the former Secretary of the Navy, Thomas Modly. The Sailors also participated in community events to build a strong connection with their namesake city.

Littoral Combat Ships (LCS) are fast, agile, mission-focused warships designed to operate in near-shore environments to counter 21st-century threats. It is a class of small surface combatants equipped to defeat challenges in the world's littorals. LCS platforms can operate independently or in high-threat scenarios as part of a networked battle force that includes larger,

multi-mission surface combatants such as cruisers and destroyers.

The commissioning of USS *Cleveland* underscores the Navy's commitment to building America's Fleet of the Future. For 250 years, American naval power has projected strength globally. That mission continues – and intensifies. We operate forward 24/7, 365 days a year. This operational tempo demands continuous capability delivery, and the Fleet of the Future is our answer.

The mission of Commander, Naval Surface Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet (CNSF) is to man, train, and equip the Surface Force to provide fleet commanders with credible naval power to control the sea and project power ashore.

For more news from Commander, Naval Surface Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet, visit <https://www.surfpac.navy.mil/>.

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Top 5

- House passes budget bill for Veterans Affairs, military construction
- In shift, Trump announces deployment of 5,000 U.S. troops to Poland
- Amid rising military suicides, services can't tell if prevention training is effective
- Iran rebuilding military industrial base faster than expected
- AI-powered tool helps Navy talk thousands of Sailors out of leaving

Army

- Crossed skis return to the Army's 10th Mountain Division insignia

Navy

- USS *Nimitz* arrives in Caribbean as US-Cuba tension mounts
- The Navy is full speed ahead on building a laser fleet

Marine Corps

- Marines now eligible for Mexican Border Defense Medal

Space Force

- Space Force sees path to operationalize on-orbit logistics demos

Veterans

- Appeals court upholds order reinstating VA's union contracts
- VA secretary touts agency's successes as he faces questions on rising costs to purchase private medical services

Cyber, Space & Unmanned

- U.S. military's Shahed-136 kamikaze drone clone is getting hivemind swarming capability

War Department's 'Patriot Pipeline' flows talent to Arsenal of Freedom

by C. Todd Lopez
Pentagon News

As the War Department rebuilds the defense industrial base — the thousands of private businesses that provide the hardware and weapons America's military uses to defend the nation — it will also ensure those businesses have the personnel to build those weapons.

While testifying recently before the Senate Armed Services Committee's personnel subcommittee, Anthony J. Tata, the undersecretary of war for personnel and readiness, said DOW has established Project Patriot Pipeline, an initiative to unify dozens of disparate training and workforce development programs for service members, military spouses and federal civilians.

Tata said Project Patriot Pipeline is a direct result of Secretary of War Pete Hegseth's focus on the arsenal of freedom.

"As [the secretary] has traveled around the country to bolster our defense industrial base, we in the personnel and readiness domain asked ourselves the question: 'How are we going to resource this with the talent necessary to expand the arsenal of freedom and complete the mission?'" Tata said.

Through the department's arsenal of freedom effort, Hegseth has been working closely with industry partners to rebuild America's military might, which includes both the defense industrial base and the government-owned depots — the organic industrial base — that repair and refurbish weapon systems like tanks and helicopters or manufacture munitions.

Insofar as the workforce or potential workforce is concerned, the War Department has visibility of active-duty, National Guard and Reserve military personnel, federal civilian employees and military spouses. For those already in uniform, Tata said, the pipeline aims to retain that talent.

"Within each one, we want to encourage reenlistment, and we want to encourage reenlistment into ... high-demand, low-density military occupational skills," he said.

Tata noted that the department is aligning military bonuses with the services to ensure service members with the right skill sets are encouraged to reenlist. However, if they choose not to stay in uniform, they can continue to serve the nation as civilians through Project Patriot Pipeline.

"If they choose to leave ser-

vice, we want to capture that training and investment that we made in their training," Tata said.

"If they're an aviation maintainer in the military, we want them to be a depot aviation maintainer. And so, we are tweaking tuition assistance and SkillBridge time to be able to incentivize folks that want to migrate into the defense industrial base to try to incentivize them into those key skill sets."

SkillBridge is a program that enables retiring and separating service members to conduct on-the-job training in the private and civil sectors so they can

successfully transition to a civilian job. As part of the program, service members spend time before their separation from service with one of thousands of partner businesses and agencies, learning job skills transferable to the private sector.

Through Project Patriot Pipeline, the War Department hopes SkillBridge can be used to guide departing service members back into service to their nation, as civilians in the defense industrial base or within one of the organic industrial base depots.

Continue reading at <https://www.war.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/4499103/>.

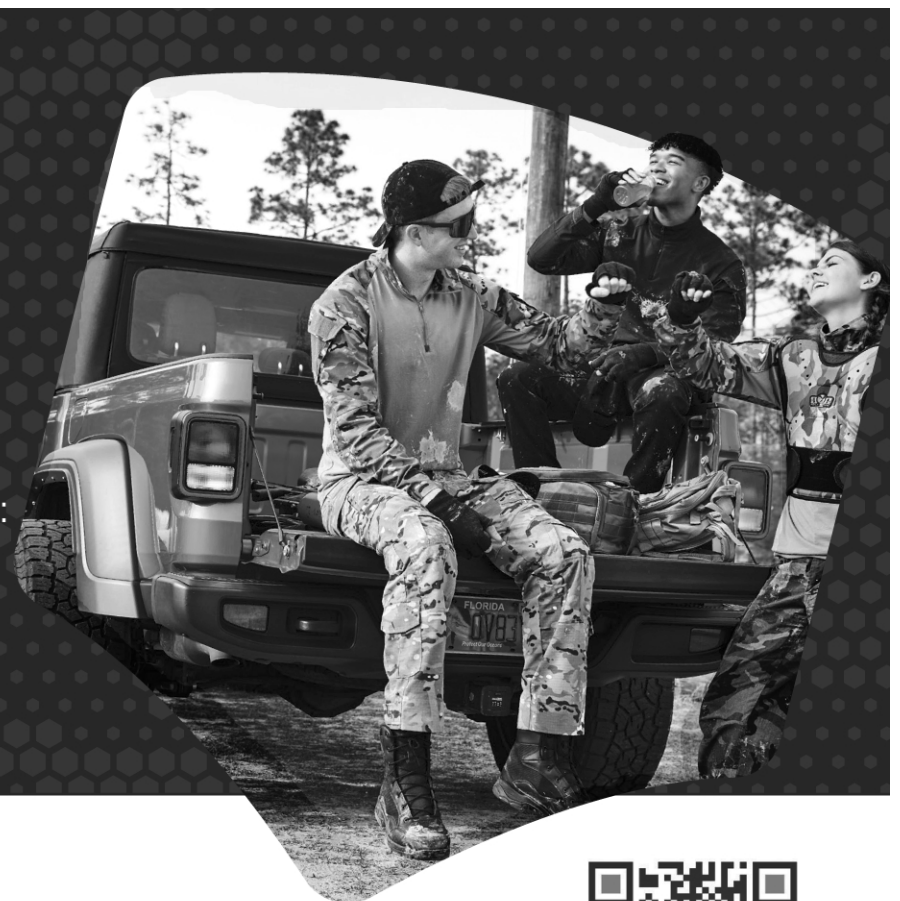
Hegseth orders broad review of military legal system

In a *Military Times* report by Ellen Ioanes May 22, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth ordered the creation of a special review board to examine the military legal system after disbanding a congressionally mandated oversight panel with a similar directive last year. "This panel will conduct an ongoing, long-term, department-wide review of all aspects of the military legal system as it affects our warriors," Hegseth said in a video announcing the new panel. "They're going to go deep, evaluating every service program, comparing them across the services, benchmarking against the Department of Justice and the best state criminal justice systems." Hegseth announced the initiative in a May 8 memorandum that has not yet been made public. According to *Military Times*, he didn't offer specifics about the panel in the brief announcement video, saying only that its aim is to cut down on bureaucracy, "enhance trust, strengthen our force, drive real reform, and help ensure our warfighters receive the world-class military legal system they deserve."

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Hegseth tells West Point cadets they are ready to lead

by C. Todd Lopez

Pentagon News

At the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, New York, May 23, some 998 cadets threw their caps in the air, prepared to disperse out into the Army to lead soldiers in every corner of the world.

Before that happened, Secretary of War Pete Hegseth told those newly minted leaders that they've got his trust and the trust of the president.

Four years ago, he said, they accepted an appointment to West Point to shoulder the burden of military leadership and the dangers of a military career. Now, as they graduate, they will finally be given what they asked for: the opportunity to lead and, in some cases, to fight.

"You've proven that you have

what it takes to lead our nation's top 1 percent, America's most valued treasure, America's sons and daughters," he said. "We're sending you to lead, we're sending you to forge warriors, and we're sending you perhaps, to war — and you are ready. The world today is at a crossroads, just as it has been for the past 250 years of our great republic. You are stepping into the arena at a time when the stakes could not be higher."

Early on in his tenure as secretary, Hegseth laid out priorities for his vision of a military based on meritocracy, lethality, accountability, readiness and standards. He said West Point graduates not only possess each of the attributes, but they will be evaluated on them going forward, and they must instill them in the troops

they lead.

"We want high, uniform, unwavering standards," he said.

"We want meticulous discipline, the kind I see right here. We want true accountability, and we want it all in service of readiness and lethality. Readiness means preparation; it means training — realistic, tough training. We must train exactly

like we fight, and that means real, practical warfighting skills; it

means lethality."

The secretary told the graduates that when they raised their



Newly commissioned Army officers toss their covers at the conclusion of the Military Academy graduation ceremony for the class of 2026 on May 23. DOW photo by Petty Officer 1st Class Eric Brann

hand to become cadets at West Point, they committed to serve the nation as students, with the

understanding that later, they'd be called upon to serve within a culture of warriors — to possibly be sent into combat. The time to go, to be sent in, he said, has arrived.

"You are an American Army, an Army of warriors," he said. "Four years ago, you raised your right hand and said, 'Send me.' And today, as you join the ranks of the greatest fighting force in the history of the world, we stand

together as one Army, and we say, 'Send us.'"

The Army, Hegseth said, gets its strength from training, commitment and singular purpose. Those are things cadets learned at West Point, and things they will put into practice now that they are commissioned officers.

<https://www.war.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/4499909/>

Secretary of War flag officer announcements

Secretary of War Pete Hegseth announced May 22 that the president has made the following nominations:

Navy Capt. **Stephen W. Aldridge** for appointment to the grade of rear admiral (lower half). Aldridge is currently serving as deputy director, Politico Military Affairs - Asia, Joint Staff, Pentagon.

Navy Capt. **Joseph A. Baggett** for appointment to the grade of rear admiral (lower half). Baggett is currently serving as commanding officer, Surface Warfare Officer School Command, Newport, R.I.

Navy Capt. **Sean P. Barbabella** for appointment to the grade of rear admiral (lower half). Barbabella is currently serving as the physician to the President of the United States of America, White House.

Navy Capt. **Matthew L. Bolls** for appointment to the grade of rear admiral (lower half). Bolls is currently serving as executive officer to the Director, Defense Logistics Agency, Fort Belvoir, Va.

Navy Capt. **Jeffrey P. Buschmann** for appointment to the grade of rear admiral (lower half). Buschmann is currently serving as information warfare commander, Carrier Strike Group TEN, Norfolk, Va.

Navy Capt. **Michael S. Carl** for appointment to the grade of rear admiral (lower half). Carl is currently serving as executive assistant to the Deputy Chief of Naval Operations for Fleet Readiness and Logistics, N4, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Pentagon.

Navy Capt. **Robert R. Christian** for appointment to the grade of rear admiral (lower half). Christian is currently serving as fleet chaplain, U.S. Fleet Forces Command, Norfolk, Va.

Navy Capt. **David S. Cox** for appointment to the grade of rear admiral (lower half). Cox is currently serving as chief of staff, Submarine Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet, Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.

Navy Capt. **John D. Craddock** for appointment to the grade of rear admiral (lower half). Craddock is currently serving as director, Submarine Officer Career Management and Distribution Division (PERS-42), Navy Personnel Command, Millington, Tenn.

Navy Capt. **Christopher D. Eng** for appointment to the grade of rear admiral (lower half). Eng is currently serving as executive assistant to the Deputy Chief of Naval Operations for Information Warfare, N2, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Pentagon.

Centcom commander says Epic Fury crippled Iran, enhanced military partnerships in region

by C. Todd Lopez, Pentagon News

The U.S. launched Operation Epic Fury in late February, and since then, American military forces in the U.S. Central Command area of operations have crippled Iran's military and its ability to project power, according to War Department leaders. The operation also highlighted military partners in the region.

Adm. Brad Cooper, Centcom commander, testified before the Senate Armed Services Committee May 14 in Washington as part of hearings related to force posture in the region and the command's portion of the fiscal year 2027 presidential budget request. The conversation on Capitol Hill focused largely on the successes of Operation Epic Fury.

"In less than 40 days, Centcom forces achieved our military objectives," Cooper said. "Most notably, we degraded Iran's ability to project power outside its borders and threaten the region and threaten our interests."

In April and October of last year, Iran rained hundreds of missiles down over Israel, Cooper reminded lawmakers. But Iran no longer has that ability after U.S. forces effectively eliminated its conventional missile capacity.

"Today, Iran can no longer attack with that mass and scale," he said. "And further, with 90% of its defense industrial base destroyed, Iran won't be able to reconstitute those weapons for years."

President Donald J. Trump and other administration officials have stated that the Iranians will never have a nuclear weapon. So, military objectives as part of Epic Fury were designed to support that, including degrading Iran's ballistic missile capability and its navy, while also destroying the ability of the Iranian industrial base to reconstitute any of it. All of that has been achieved through Epic Fury, Cooper said.

"The defense industrial base for their drones and their missiles

in their navy were degraded by 90 percent; they have about 10 percent left," he told lawmakers. "My military assessment would be that the [Iranian] navy will not begin to rebuild for five to 10 years."

Iran has been a direct threat, but it's also been an indirect threat, acting as a patron for terrorist proxies that carried out violence benefiting Iranian interests. That threat has been diminished greatly, Cooper said.

We watched Iran spend decades and billions of dollars arming proxies, he said, adding that Hamas, Hezbollah and the Houthis have been cut off from Iran's weapons supply and support because of the operation.

"This result was not foreordained, nor was it brought by chance," he said. "It's the culmination of months of careful planning built upon decades of experience."

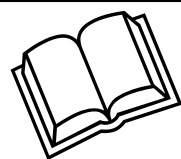
Cooper said that as of now, no resources or equipment are flowing from Iran to terrorist

proxies. Centcom works with partners in the region regularly on shared security goals. The onset of Epic Fury revealed just how good some of those partners are, Cooper said, adding that the operation has been a benefit to those military relationships.

"In terms of our partners, I think a key feature is we have enhanced [military] relationships across the board in the Middle East," he said. "As we sit here right now, we have five specific partner nations who are not just conceptually side by side, but literally side by side with the United States in defense."

Cooper called out the UAE, Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and Saudi Arabia as exceptional partners.

"Over the course of Epic Fury, they've defended themselves, and they defended Americans," Cooper said. "In addition to those key allies, everything that we've accomplished would have been impossible without the Kingdom of Jordan, and clearly, we were operating very closely with the state of Israel."



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Department of Justice
Office of Public Affairs

The Justice Department announced earlier this month that Rental Marketing Solutions (RMS), a property management company based in St. Petersburg, Fla., will pay \$60,000 to resolve allegations that it violated the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (SCRA) by obtaining an unlawful eviction judgment against an active duty Navy Sailor.

This is the largest amount the Department has ever obtained for a single servicemember in a case involving the filing of a false military service affidavit.

"It is unacceptable and illegal for a landlord or property management company to file a false affidavit stating that an active duty servicemember is not in military service," said Assistant Attorney General Harmeet K. Dhillon of the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division. "This SCRA violation had significant consequences, as potential landlords refused to

rent to a sailor once they learned of the eviction on his record. He became homeless and his wife was forced to move back in with her parents in another state. The Justice Department will continue to fight to protect the rights of military families."

"Protecting the civil rights of our servicemembers is a top priority for the U.S. Attorney's Office," said U.S. Attorney Gregory W. Kehoe for the Middle District of Florida. "We will continue to aggressively enforce the SCRA to protect the servicemembers who fight to protect us here at home. These servicemembers, along with their families, sacrifice to serve our country and deserve to be treated with dignity. No servicemember should ever be denied housing or have their record tarnished based on a false affidavit."

The Department alleges that RMS named the Sailor as a defendant in an eviction action for a property he had not lived in for several years, filed a false affidavit stating he was not on

active duty, and obtained an eviction judgment against him in a Florida county court while he was assigned to USS *Nimitz* at the Puget Sound Naval Shipyard in Bremerton, Wash. Because the eviction judgment showed up on his background reports, a dozen or more landlords refused to rent to him and his wife. For four months, he had to live separately from his wife and rotate among temporary accommodations, including sleeping on the berthed naval ship, which had no heat.

The SCRA requires a plaintiff in a case where a defendant does not make an appearance to file an affidavit stating whether the defendant is in military service, with necessary supporting facts. This allows the court to appoint an attorney to represent the servicemember and to postpone the proceedings if a defense cannot be presented without the servicemember's presence. Because RMS filed a false affidavit stating that the sailor was not in military service, he did not receive the benefit of those protections.

Under the settlement, RMS will pay \$60,000 in compensation to the sailor and for ten years of credit monitoring for him. RMS will also be required to pay a \$6,000 civil penalty and maintain SCRA policies and procedures to avoid committing future violations.

The Department's enforcement of the SCRA is conducted by the Civil Rights Division's Housing and Civil Enforcement Section in partnership with U.S. Attorneys' Offices throughout the country. Since 2011, the Department has obtained \$489 million in monetary relief for 152,000 servicemembers through its enforcement of the SCRA. For more information about SCRA enforcement, visit www.servicemembers.gov.

Servicemembers and their dependents who believe that their rights under the SCRA may have been violated should contact the nearest Armed Forces Legal Assistance Program Office. Office locations can be found at legalassistance.law.af.mil.

Quantico hosts inaugural Presidential Fitness Test for military installations

Shaehmus Sawyer,
Marine Corps Base Quantico
Over 100 Crossroads Elementary School and Quantico Middle High School students participated in MCB Quantico's Presidential Fitness Test at Butler Stadium, April 12.

"This was the kickoff [of the Presidential Fitness Test]," said Steve Simmons, the Deputy Assistant Secretary of War for Military Community and Family Policy, following the PFT. "So, you kids are setting an example for your peers, the youth, and the rest of the Nation to follow."

Throughout the entire event, music filled the stadium, Marines and family members danced and played with kids, and food and refreshments were provided for all.

Every student, ages 6 to 17, competed to earn the Presidential Fitness Award. They ran through the gauntlet of the three components of the event:
- Core and Abdominal Strength: curl-ups or plank

- Upper Body Strength: pushups or pullups
- Cardiorespiratory Fitness: 1-mile run or 20-meter beep test

Out of all the students present, 15 earned the Presidential Fitness Award, including an unsuspecting Crossroads Elementary student in the 6-9 age group. As the 40-pound, 44-inch-tall girl walked up, the crowd awed, cheered, and applauded as the rest of the names were called.

Each Presidential Award recipient exemplified the words of Simmons, which echoed the sentiment of President Donald Trump after he signed the executive order that reinstated the PFT on July 31, 2025, making the PFT mandatory for the 161 schools across military installations.

The new competitive test replaces the more recent wellness-focused programs, returning to the competitive model originally established in 1956.

Navy Recruiting selects Riverside native Sailor of the Year

Commander, Navy Recruiting Command recently named Navy Counselor (recruiter) 1st Class Brenda Robinson, a recruiter assigned to Navy Talent Acquisition Group Southwest, as the fiscal year 2026 Sailor of the Year. Along with the honor Robinson was meritoriously promoted to Chief Navy Counselor, and after Chief Petty Officer initiation she will don her new rank.

Robinson, a native of Riverside, is the department leading chief petty officer of NTAG Southwest's division 4. Division 4 covers five stations including Hemet, Palm Springs, Moreno Valley, Menifee and Temecula, Calif.

"This year was especially meaningful because it was the first year CNRC's winner was selected for meritorious advancement to Chief following the season," said Robinson. "I was eligible through the Recruiter of the Year pipeline. Although I was nominated for Sailor of the Quarter and NTAG Sailor of the Year and was not selected in those categories, I remained eligible because I was selected as Recruiter in Charge of the Nation, which earned me the opportunity to compete in the SOY semi-finals. To me, that became another reminder that closed doors do not always mean the journey is over."

Robinson has served for more than 12 years; she's been underway with aircraft carrier USS *Theodore Roosevelt* (CVN 71) and dock landing ship USS *Comstock* (LSD 45). Both successful tours, but recruiting is where she found her passion. "I had Sailors who trusted me, even during difficult seasons when I asked them to continue delivering while many were already burnt out," said Robinson. "I had mentors who challenged me, guided me, and kept me grounded in remaining true to myself."

Robinson credits being recognized as the best in the nation by Navy Recruiting Command to the people she has worked with and guided her throughout her career.

"Initially, it felt surreal," said Robinson. "The realization really set in halfway through reading the citation when I realized this wasn't another award—this was a promotion. I thought I would immediately become overwhelmed with emotion and tears of joy, but that came later during my speech. What made me most proud was seeing the confidence and excitement my Sailors and supporters felt, because the win was never just mine."

163rd RTS instructors strengthen mission readiness

by Senior Master Sgt.
Julianne Sitterding

163rd Attack Wing
MARCH AIR RESERVE BASE, Calif. - Seven instructors assigned to the 163rd Regional Training Site are strengthening mission readiness across the Total Force by training more than 1,000 Airmen annually in Rapid Damage Repair and other Civil Engineer specialty courses.

Through technical expertise, mentorship and teamwork, the instructors prepare Airmen to restore critical airfield operations in demanding environments around the world.

"We're building good foundations here. We're teaching them things they can't do at home-station. By the end of the week, they are operating equipment with confidence," said Senior Master Sgt. Reuben Dominguez, 163rd Regional Training Site superintendent.

RDR is an essential capability for civil engineer squadrons and plays a critical role in sustaining airfield operations during contingency, restoration, and disaster-response missions. The RTS provides the equipment, training environment, and instructor expertise needed to ensure deploying Airmen are mission-ready before arriving in theater.

"We teach them to a standard directly tied to deployment operations where damaged airfields have to be recovered

within a specific timeline so aircraft can land and take off," said Master Sgt. Scott Eversole, 163rd Regional Training Site instructor.

"In some scenarios, we may be isolated at a location with little to no options. That means not only repairing the airfield, but sometimes training augmentee Airmen on the spot to help accomplish the mission."

This iteration of the week-long course was comprised of Airmen from 11 different wings learning how to execute full-scale crater repair procedures, beginning with debris removal and upheaval marking before progressing through excavation,

backfilling, compaction, and surface restoration. RTS instructors evaluate both completion time and structural performance, conducting repair quality criteria testing to ensure repairs can withstand projected aircraft loads and operational demands.

Beyond teaching technical skills, the instructors focus heavily on building teamwork and confidence among students who often arrive with little familiarity with one another but must quickly learn to operate as a cohesive unit.

"We have people coming here from across the service, and they have to perform together throughout the week

even though they just met," said Eversole. "I try to instill confidence in them that they can do this. After 15 years as an instructor, I've learned how important motivation and teamwork are to getting the mission done."

That same culture of teamwork exists within the instructor cadre itself. Because each instructor serves as the sole subject matter expert for their Air Force specialty code, successful course completion depends on strong cross-functional support and collaboration.

<https://www.af.mil/News/Article-Display/Article/4500465/>

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U.S. Pacific Fleet announces 30th RIMPAC Exercise

U.S. 3rd Fleet Public Affairs
SAN DIEGO - The biennial Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) exercise will bring 31 nations in and around the Hawaiian Islands from June 24 to

July 31. The exercise will feature a multinational force of approximately 40 surface ships, five submarines, 140 aircraft and more than 25,000 personnel.

It is fitting that the world's premier maritime exercise occurs as the United States celebrates its 250th anniversary. For 250 years, the United States has built relationships with inter-

national partners based on trust, cooperation, and shared values. RIMPAC is where we put that trust into practice, strengthening the people-to-people relationships that are the bedrock of our collective security.

jectives to strengthen integrated and prepared partners.

command the air component.

RIMPAC 2026 will build on the success of RIMPAC 2024 with a larger contingent of partners demonstrating the inherent flexibility of maritime forces.

The exercise will cover a wide range of capabilities including amphibious operations, gunnery and missile proficiency, anti-submarine warfare, air defense exercises, military medicine, humanitarian assistance and disaster response, counter-piracy, mine clearance, explosive ordnance disposal, and diving and salvage operations.

Throughout the exercise, partners train and operate together to strengthen our collective forces and promote a free and open Indo-Pacific.

In a related story, Gary Robbins of *The San Diego Union Tribune* reported that the Navy is preparing to sink two prominent and retired San Diego warships off Hawaii. USS *Peleliu* and USS *Mobile Bay* will be destroyed as part of the RimPac military exercise that will begin on June 24.

The SDUT report says the date of the sinkings, and the manner in which they will be carried out, have yet to be announced.

Both *Peleliu* and *Mobile Bay* operated out of San Diego for more than 20 years, and both were decommissioned in the city.

Peleliu became famous in military circles for launching a daring mission into Afghanistan after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, the report stated.

Mobile Bay has been widely praised for its role in Operation Desert Storm, the U.S. led effort to drive Iraq out of Kuwait in 1991. The cruiser used its Aegis combat system to help the U.S. take command of the skies.

NEXCOM unveils NEX-themed design with NASCAR driver Jesse Iwuji

Courtesy Story

Navy Exchange Service Command
The Navy Exchange Service Command (NEXCOM), alongside NASCAR driver and Navy Lt. Cmdr. Jesse Iwuji, unveiled his NEX-themed NASCAR driver uniform and vehicle on May 14.

Iwuji will race the DGM Racing x JIM No. 91 Chevrolet Camaro SS when NASCAR hosts its first race on an active military installation on June 20, on board Naval Base Coronado.

"We are thrilled to have Lt. Cmdr. Iwuji wear the NEX logo during this historic race," said Rear Adm. (Ret.) Robert J. Bianchi, Chief Executive Officer of NEXCOM.

"We are proud to be an integral part of the Navy's 250th birthday. This race will honor the Navy's legacy and programs

that strengthen quality of life across the fleet."

The race will be broadcast live across the continental U.S. on local CW affiliates and some live



NASCAR driver and Navy Lt. Cmdr. Jesse Iwuji. U.S. Navy photo

TV streaming services. The event supports broader Navy engagement tied to its 250th birthday, using NASCAR's national platform to highlight service and the Sailor experience.

Iwuji's dual role as a Naval Reserve officer and professional driver reflects the importance

of leadership for those in demanding and high-visibility environments.

"As a Naval Reserve officer and NASCAR driver, representing the Navy on this stage is about more than racing," said Iwuji.

"It is an opportunity to show what service looks like in action and to inspire the next generation to see what is possible through discipline, commitment and hard work."

As part of the NASCAR event, three NEX sweepstakes winners will receive exclusive behind-the-scenes VIP access and a meet-and-greet with Iwuji to talk all things military and motorsports.

The theme of RIMPAC 2026 is "Partners: Integrated and Prepared." With teamwork at its core, RIMPAC fosters multinational cooperation and trust, leverages interoperability, and achieves respective national ob-



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For general NASCAR event details, visit NASCARSanDiego.com

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Navy, DOD accused as Sailor's wife beaten, left naked and videos circulated

A military news outlet reported last month that a woman who was allegedly assaulted by Sailors and had videos of her naked self disseminated online has filed a \$7 million legal complaint against the Navy and Department of Defense.

According to *Military.com*, the victim, identified only as Jane Doe in a Federal Tort Claims Act administrative complaint, alleges that a group of 10-15 Navy Sailors assaulted her in 2024 outside a San Di-

ego nightclub. Videos of the female civilian, who is married to a Sailor, were purportedly recorded and later circulated across social media and among the Navy community.

In the *Military.com* story, it's also alleged that the Navy's security department was aware of the video's dissemination through the broader service community "but ultimately allowed

the videos to continue spreading without taking any action to stop it."

A DOD spokesperson, when asked about the complaint, told *Military.com* that it does not comment on pending litigation. Inquiries to the Navy never garnered a response, the report said.

Nick Mordowanec filed this report for Military.com.

ATTENTION, BOSS ON DECK



NAVAL BASE SAN DIEGO (May 20, 2026) Installation commanding officers from various regions who are attending the CNIC Commander's Training Symposium, assemble for a commemorative photo during a scheduled tour of Pacific Beacon military housing here. Established in 1922, NBSD is the largest West coast naval installation and principal homeport of the Pacific Fleet, supporting more than 60 combatant and auxiliary surface ships and more than 250 shore commands. U.S. Navy photo by Interior Communications Electrician 2nd Class Ulrika Mendiola



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The state of special forces discussed on the Hill

by Scott Sutherland
Staff writer

It was nearly a year ago when former and current warfighters from every era of American combat since the Vietnam War reunited in Coronado to celebrate a milestone – 50 years of Naval Special Warfare Group 1.

Recently, the military service's special operations leaders convened before the Senate Armed Services Committee to provide updates on the "state of SOF" in their respective branch.

Each branch's main Special Operations Forces are Army headquarters at Fort Liberty, N.C., primarily home of the Green Berets; Navy headquarters at NAB Coronado, primarily home of the SEALs & SWCC; Air Force Special Tactics (Pararescuemen/Combat Controllers) at Hurlburt Field, Fla.; and Marine Corps headquarters at Camp Lejeune, N.C., primarily home to MAR-SOC 'Marine Raiders.'

During the recent testimony by spec ops bosses, all praised the effectiveness and resiliency of their service's SOF compo-

nents, specifically relating to events of the past five months. According to Pentagon News, on Jan. 3, SOF played a key role in the capture of Venezuelan leader Nicolás Maduro, following an overnight joint U.S. military extraction in Venezuela's capital of Caracas.

On April 3, SOF contributed to the rescue of one of two downed F-15E Strike Eagle crew members who had been conducting operations in support of Operation Epic Fury in Iran. Two days later, the second crewman was also safely recovered.

"Events over the past five months clearly demonstrate that, while special operations comprise a small percentage of our military, both in size and cost, we continue to play a key role in enabling our joint force partners and allies to deliver strategic effects for the nation," Army Special Operations Commander Lt. Gen. Lawrence G. Ferguson told the committee, according to the Pentagon News report.

During the May 22, 2025, anniversary event for Naval Special Warfare Group at Coronado, speakers talked about "building on a legacy" that began

before 1962, a half-century of continuous adaptation and unwavering commitment following President Kennedy's initial direction to establish the force.

"In the last 50 years, SEALs from NSWG-1 have fought in Vietnam, the Persian Gulf, Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, Somalia, Yemen, and the Philippines, said retired admiral and former NSWG-1 Commander William McRaven. "While our weapons, boats, and teams have evolved, one constant remains: our people. The men and women of Group ONE are as professional, committed, and honorable today as they were in 1975."

Before the Senate Armed Services Committee this month, each branch's SOF boss testified about challenges the SOF community is facing, including perennial budgetary shortfalls and the need for additional materiel being chief among them. All of the senior leaders reassured the committee that, with Congress' continued financial support, the joint force SOF community stands at the ready to execute the mission.



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TPU CELEBRATES 43 YEARS OF SERVICE

The Navy's Transient Personnel Unit, a tenant command of Naval Base San Diego, recognized 43 years of service, marking more than four decades of support to Sailors in transition.

Commissioned in 1984, TPU was established to provide structure, accountability and assistance to Sailors temporarily assigned while awaiting training, transfer, medical care, or separation.

"For 43 years, TPU has

quietly executed one of the Navy's most vital missions: delivering manpower to the Fleet," said Cmdr. Lauran Garcia, commander of TPU. "We serve as an extension of forward-deployed ships and squadrons, providing housing, work assignments and training for Sailors in transit.

"Whether a Sailor is awaiting a flight to meet their command, or processing for separation or retirement, TPU provides the structure, leadership and support necessary to keep our



U.S. Navy photo by MC2 Nettie Mae Manfull

force ready and resilient."

"This unit welcomes and supports Sailors," said BM2 Jacob Gonzalez. "Here we remind our warfighters to stay motivated, remember why they joined, and know that we're here to help every step of the way."

"TPU continues to stand as

a reminder that every Sailor's journey matters," said Chief Navy Counselor Heather Sanchez.

"From its commissioning in 1984, we remain committed to service, support and professionalism - an enduring pillar of the Navy's personnel enterprise."

Department of War contract for Northrup Grumman San Diego

Northrop Grumman Systems Corp., San Diego, was awarded a \$196,066,981 contract May 15 for technical and engineering support to ensure that the MQ-4C Triton air vehicle are mission-capable for Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance missions in support of the Navy and the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF).



Triton carries all payloads for every flight without sacrificing endurance or altitude. Photo by Northrop Grumman

surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR), tracking targets, and augmenting the manned Boeing P-8 Poseidon.

A majority of the work will be done in San Diego, and is expected to be completed in May 2027.

The Triton is an advanced, high-altitude, long-endurance unmanned maritime surveillance aircraft. It's designed for continuous, wide-area intelligence,

Miramar Marines using helicopters in tests to launch killer drones

In what the Marine Corps called "a significant leap forward for aerial warfare," pilots from Miramar are testing the use of combat drones launched from helicopters operating far from targets, according to a report in *Times of San Diego*.

Marine UH-1Y Venom reconnaissance helicopters and AH-1Z Viper gunships now have the capability of acting as airborne drone "motherships." The helicopters can also take over control of ground-launched drones.

The Marine Corps said in a news release that the goal is to keep air crews safe while "pushing the lethal edge of the battlefield out to where the enemy is" with inexpensive but lethal drones.

"We are still providing our ground support, and close air support, but in a way that lets the drones close with and destroy the enemy, rather than putting our Marines in harm's way," said Sgt. Matthew Pocklington, a UH-1Y crew chief.

Times of San Diego reported that in recent exercises near Twentynine Palms, Marines tested launching a Neros Archer first-person view drone from a flying UH-1Y Venom.

The Marines said the new tactic gives commanders a scalable, cost-effective option to counter a wide range of threats without risking aircraft or expending expensive munitions on every target.

The U.S. military is rapidly deploying drones based on lessons from their successful use by Ukraine in battling the Russian invasion.

Secretary of War flag officer announcements

Secretary of War Pete Hegseth announced May 22 that the president has nominated Navy Capt. Thomas T. Bodine for appointment to the grade of rear admiral (lower half). Bodine is currently serving as chief of staff, Naval Air Forces/Naval Air Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet, San Diego.

Man-on-the-Street

If you had a choice between 2 super powers - being invisible or flying - which would you choose?



"Flying, because I go to Mexico often, and that would save time."
Marco De Los Cobos
NAB Coronado
Recreational Specialist



"Invisible, so I can get away with {stuff} and get out of duty."
AM2 Michale Fox
FRCSW



"Flying. Commercial flights are expensive, and I'd do it for the adrenaline rush."
RS3 Rosario Garciapena
NAB Coronado 1st Lieutenant



"Invisible. Nobody will bug me, and I'll be on my own."
Charlie Ratcliff
NAS North Island
Recreational Aid



"Invisible. I can walk into places where I've never been, or experienced."
Annette Saculla
Navy Inn Front Desk
Supervisor



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Fri., April 17, 5pm	Quad City Steamwheelers at San Diego Strike Force
Sun., April 26, 4:30pm	Tucson Sugar Skulls at San Diego Strike Force*
Sat., May 23, 7pm	NAZ Wranglers at San Diego Strike Force*
Fri., June 19, 7pm	Vegas Knight Hawks at San Diego Strike Force*
Mon., July 6, 6pm	Arizona Rattlers at San Diego Strike Force*
Sat., July 18, 8pm	New Mexico Chupacabras at San Diego Strike Force*
Fri., July 24, 6pm	Tucson Sugar Skulls at San Diego Strike Force*

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by Jan Wagner

Review of STAR WARS: The Mandalorian and Grogu in 4DX

on Disney+, visit <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sn9INA7qUew>.

STAR WARS: The Mandalorian and Grogu has it all: a monumental challenge to overcome; heroic, familiar characters; evil villains; familiar STAR WARS tech used to fight epic battles; humor; awesome special effects throughout. This movie is non-stop action and adventure. Fans of STAR WARS will love it.

The two principal characters have a father/son dynamic. The Mandalorian continues to take the young Grogu under his wing, teaching him The Way and protecting him. As the adventure intensifies and Grogu matures, we not only see Mando taking care of Grogu, but Grogu looking out for Mando. I began to see Grogu more and more like my recollection of Yoda.

Other characters in the film called to mind characters from previous STAR WARS films. One in particular was Sigourney Weaver's Colonel Ward. Her portrayal of a take-charge, brave, action-oriented, daring-do rebel leader reminded me ever-so-much of Princess Leia Organa, the rebel leader portrayed by the late, great Carrie Fisher.

Now, as promised, for my take on the cinematic experience of 4DX. What is 4DX? 4DX adds moving seats (up/down, tilt and vibrate), simulated weather (wind, water mist and fog), scents, strobe lighting, pokes (from the seat back and legs) and more, synchronized with action sequences in the movies — sort of like motion simulator rides in theme parks.

I thought that this would further immerse me in the movies and make them seem more real — hopefully justifying the hefty premium (\$30 for a matinee showing) to see STAR

WARS: The Mandalorian and Grogu in 4DX. First, however, I searched Google for some advice.

In my local theater (Regal Edwards Mira Mesa, in San Diego), there are two alternatives for 4DX: regular 4DX (2D) and 4DX in RealD 3D. I learned that RealD 3D significantly darkens the on-screen image, due to a combination of the 3D system and the polarized lenses of the 3D glasses. Also, 4DX screens are significantly smaller than IMAX screens. Wearing eyeglasses in combination with 3D glasses, while watching a 4DX movie, is uncomfortable. The glasses move around as the seats shake, and the interaction between two stacked pairs of eyeglasses can create distracting reflections.

I learned that the best place to sit is right in the middle of the theater, and that the seat motions closer to the aisle is more exaggerated.

The verdict: the shaking seats and blasts of water mist distracted me. I prefer IMAX, with its larger, more immersive screen.

Afterwards, I bought some pricey souvenir popcorn buckets: A STAR WARS AT-AT Walker and a Mandalorian bust with Grogu, complete with a projector on Mando's helmet that projects the movie's title graphic on a wall. To watch a trailer, go <https://www.starwars.com/films/star-wars-the-mandalorian-and-grogu>.

To explore a wide variety of content dating back to 2002, with the most photos and the latest text, visit "AutoMatters & More" at <https://automatters.net>. Search by title or topic in the Search Bar in the middle of the Home Page or click on the blue 'years' boxes and browse. Copyright © 2026 by Jan Wagner – AutoMatters & More #930

The Meat & Potatoes of Life



by
Lisa
Smith
Molinari

Driving toward the base recently, I was hit with an awful odor. I thought it might be related to the record-breaking spring heatwave we experienced in the Northeast, but then I remembered. Oh yeah, it's just the sewage treatment plant. I braced myself for an involuntary memory.

For me, scents often trigger associative thoughts and feelings. For example, the smell of aftershave makes me think of the television program "Hee Haw," a country music-themed variety show that aired on CBS when I was a kid.

One might wonder why Buck Owens and Roy Clark "a-pickin and a-grinnin'" in a fake cornfield would spring from the smell of cheap men's cologne. There's usually a rational explanation for strange things, and this peculiar connection is no exception.

"Hee Haw" aired on Saturday evenings at 7 PM, right after I'd been fed a Swanson TV dinner, given a Mr. Bubble bath, and parked in front of the console television in my flammable pajamas. But also, 7 PM on Saturday was when that my father — doused in Aqua Velva — and mother left me I with a babysitter to go out for the night.

Other aromas release echos of the past. Chlorine's acrid odor

A sniff down Memory Lane

evokes the community pool of my youth. I see the rubber coin purse holding my snow-cone money. I hear the lifeguard's whistle and call, "Clear the pool for Adult Swim!" I feel the painful snap of my brother's damp Budweiser towel, rolled into a rat tail and whipped at me.

A tangy-toasty waft of sourdough bread reminds me of being pregnant in our first base house on Fort Ord in California. In that drab Army-brown house at the top of Ardenes Circle, I cracked open the gingham Better Homes and Gardens cookbook I received as a wedding present and made classic dinners like pot roast and stuffed shells, often serving small "bake and serve" sourdough loaves with dinner. I can still hear the rush of wind through the eucalyptus tree outside the sliding glass door, and see Francis' teal green Saturn "Twin Cam" sedan in the driveway. I feel the frumpy maternity clothes I bought at Mervyn's Department store, and the weight of the nine-pounder in my womb.

My tendency to connect scents to the past isn't uncommon; it's how human brains work. According to Harvard neuroscientists, smell and memory are closely linked because odors are sensed by the olfactory bulb, and go directly to the amygdala and hippocampus where memories and emotions are stored. Common smells that trigger childhood memories include crayons, cut grass, honeysuckle, tobacco, Play Doh, charcoal grills, and Vicks Vapo-Rub.

It's no wonder a whiff of sewage

triggers a very specific recollection for me. When I met my Navy husband, I was a new attorney in a Pittsburgh litigation firm, being assigned to cases that no one else wanted. One was an engineering malpractice case involving a Pennsylvania sewage treatment facility. I attended depositions and document searches on site at the plant, where the foul stench of raw sewage permeated my dry-clean-only suits, my hair, my briefcase and my car.

Now, when I detect the pungent odor of sewage, I'm instantly back at the plant, struggling to breathe through my mouth. I see the filthy "plant cat" sleeping in its hairy office chair. My face contorts into the same grimace I had while searching through odiferous files. I re-experience my pity for the employees, who seemed immune to the unbearable stink of the place.

I'll never forget the plant foreman inviting me to their end-of-summer company picnic on the plant grounds. He enthusiastically told me about the annual "tomato battle" made possible by plants that grow wild from undigested seeds in the sludge beds. I politely declined.

To make this vivid association even more unpleasant, I also recall the humiliation I felt when, after a month or so of arriving back at the law firm feeling like I needed to be bathed in acid or set on fire, my colleagues gave me the unfortunate nickname, Sister Sludge.

I still let my nose take me back to the past. Unless Memory Lane passes by a sewage treatment plant, then I definitely take a detour.

Veterans News

Retired combat vet rejoins Marine Corps

by C. Todd Lopez
Pentagon News

Marine Corps Staff Sgt. Johnny "Joey" Jones lost both of his legs in combat in Afghanistan in 2010 and was medically retired in 2012. On May 20 at the Pentagon, after 14 years out of uniform, he reenlisted in the Marine Corps Reserve.

Secretary of War Pete Hegseth administered the oath of enlistment to Jones, whom he knows from working together at Fox News, where Jones is a contributor across a variety of broadcast platforms and offers insights on military topics.

"I don't think there's a better spokesman for the Marine Corps, understating what it's all about, what it means to serve, the brotherhood that exists, than how Joey talks about it on television so that the American people understand it and connect to it in a visceral way," Hegseth said. "You can talk about it academically, or from a detached perspective, or you can talk about it having lived it, the way he has. ... It's in his bones, it's in

his heart and soul, wearing that uniform."

For Jones, Hegseth said, the Marine Corps values have always been a full-time thing.

"Semper Fi means that for him every day," Hegseth said. "He's just a good human being who does the right things for the right reasons. And when I first got word that he was interested in getting back in uniform, it actually didn't surprise me."

The secretary said he knows Jones is motivated by changes that have been made in the department over the past 16 months and wants to be a part of it. He also said Jones, being a visible contributor on military matters, will be a good role model for young people who are also considering military service.

"Young Americans are looking up at the men and women in uniform and saying, 'I want to do that profession, the profession of arms,'" Hegseth said. "And when they see that the guy they know on TV ... wants to get back in uniform and be a part of that



Secretary of War Pete Hegseth hosts a reenlistment ceremony for Marine Corps Staff Sgt. Joey Jones at the Pentagon, May 20. U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Madelyn Keech

... that gives me the shivers just saying it. I think it's an absolute no-brainer."

Jones enlisted in April 2005 and for a time fixed radios. Later, he retrained as an explosive ordnance disposal technician. He deployed twice in his Marine Corps career, first to Iraq in September 2007 and then to Afghanistan in March 2010, as part of Operation Enduring Freedom.

While on that deployment

to Afghanistan, his EOD team destroyed nearly 80 improvised explosive devices. However, on Aug. 6, 2010, he stepped on an improvised explosive device. The explosion took both his legs, above the knee, and injured his arms as well.

After that, Jones spent two years recovering at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland. While at the hospital, Jones founded a program where veterans in more advanced stages of recovery

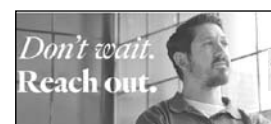
could mentor those who had been recently injured.

Living in Washington, he served a year on Capitol Hill as part of a fellowship with the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs and also took college classes. Upon his recovery, he was able to enroll at Georgetown University and complete his degree there in 2014.

Jones said he opted to reenlist because he said he feels he owes a debt to the Marine Corps and the nation. After he was injured, he said, his family was instrumental in helping him heal but something was missing.

"The last job I had in uniform, my job was to get better, it was to heal; it's a very selfish thing," he said. "And then I retired. And there's nothing wrong with that, but it was unfinished business."

Now, as a Marine Corps re-



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6:10pm Devil Wears Prada 2
Thursday, June 4
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CROSSWORD PUZZLE

Across

- 1 Arthur with Emmys
- 4 DVR copying button
- 7 Futuristic TV family
- 14 Reply to "Excuse me, you're in my seat"
- 16 Modified to fit
- 17 Reacted to shearing
- 18 Fitness regimen
- 19 *Tour de France participant
- 21 Manage moguls
- 22 Rhinitis docs
- 23 Thumb drive port
- 26 Pinochle combos
- 30 Meticulous to a fault
- 31 ___ vez: Rosa's "once"
- 34 *Lo-cal tea brand
- 38 Islamic holy month
- 40 Scam targets
- 41 *Singer who's the namesake of the high school in "Grease"
- 43 Rapper Lil ___ X
- 44 Poirot's pals
- 45 "To recap ..."
- 47 Small point
- 48 Pedestal or plinth
- 51 Wedding vow
- 54 One who might use one of the ends of the answers to starred clues
- 59 SeaWorld tanks

- 62 Collectibles from afar
- 63 Happening now
- 64 Med. imaging procedure
- 65 Bob and weave
- 66 Medical ins. plan
- 67 Denver-to-Wichita dir.

Down

- 1 Lettuce variety
- 2 "The Name Game" singer Shirley
- 3 Smart ___: wisecracker
- 4 Campus mil. group
- 5 First name in stunt driving
- 6 Formally transfer
- 7 "Shogun" setting
- 8 Decree
- 9 Stories
- 10 Practice boxing
- 11 Giants legend Mel
- 12 Bridal bio word
- 13 '60s antiwar gp.
- 15 "The Big Bang Theory" actress ___ Bialik who is also a scheduled 2021 "Jeopardy!" guest host
- 20 Remainder
- 23 Remove, as a brooch
- 24 Actress Hayek
- 25 Grace verb
- 27 Stream swirl
- 28 "You made that up!"
- 29 Claim to be untrue
- 30 Well-suited
- 31 Not at all bucolic
- 32 Judd of country
- 33 Scope
- 35 "Frozen" reindeer
- 36 Guitarist Lofgren
- 37 Org. in many civil rights cases
- 39 Short muscles?
- 42 God, in Grenoble
- 46 Tic Tacs, e.g.
- 48 Yawning, perhaps
- 49 Essential acid
- 50 Minor arguments
- 52 Prepare for takeoff, as a frosty windshield
- 53 Aquatic predators
- 54 "The Alienist" author Caleb
- 55 Field for this puzzle's theme
- 56 Possible cause of student nervousness
- 57 Revolution prefix
- 58 Hamlet, by birth
- 59 Allentown: "Alas!" :: Altenburg: "___!"
- 60 Sine ___ non
- 61 Ocean State sch.

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Visit our military museums

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MCRD Command Museum & Historical Society. Museum focusing on Marine Corps history from the 19th century to today is also a research library. <https://www.mcrdmuseum.org/>
Free admission • The Pass and ID Center may issue day passes to visitors who wish to visit the museum and do not possess military ID-call (619) 524-4200 for information on base access.
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USS Midway Museum. The USS Midway Museum is a maritime museum located in downtown San Diego at Navy Pier. The museum consists of the aircraft carrier Midway. The ship houses an extensive collection of aircraft, many of which were built in So Cal. FREE for children 3 & under and Active Duty military including reservists (w/valid ID). Adult \$39 (ages 13+). Youth \$26 (ages 4-12). Veterans (w/ID) \$26*Must show ID at entrance. Open daily 10-5, last admission 4pm. <https://www.midway.org/>

The Ranch House Complex at Camp Pendleton. Listed as the Santa Margarita Ranch House Nat'l Historic Site and as a California State Historical Landmark. Docent-led tours are available by appointment; masks required. Please email your request to: MCBCAMPEN_history@usmc.mil or phone (760)725-5758 The Camp Pendleton Historical Society is a 501(c)3 organization in support of the base's History and Museum's programs. Go to: www.camppendletonhistoricalsociety.org/ for information. Hours: Open Mondays 10am-2pm

Marine Corps Mechanized Museum Camp Pendleton. Managed under the auspices of Camp Pendleton's Museum Division Office, the collection of over 50 vehicles ranges from World War I to the first Gulf War. It includes Patton tanks, armored wheeled and tracked vehicles, trucks, jeeps and amphibious vehicles. When coming aboard Camp Pendleton, please ensure that you have a valid photo ID for every vehicle occupant along with current registration and proof of insurance. <https://www.themecm.org/> 24194 Vandegrift Blvd, Oceanside, CA 92058. (760) 725-5758. Mon-Thur 8am-4pm, Fri 8am-1pm, Closed Saturday & Sunday

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Avoiding the Walker Dip: Military health professionals must 'train how you're going to fight'

by Robert Hammer,
MHS Communications

The Military Health System is actively spearheading initiatives to ensure doctors, nurses, medics and other health professionals sustain and enhance vital medical skills to keep service members at peak readiness.

"Our No. 1 priority is medical force readiness to ensure that our military forces are ready for combat," said Dr. Stephen Ferrara, principal deputy assistant secretary of war for health affairs. "Our system is and remains the only medical system in the United States that goes to war. Our doctors, nurses, technicians, and support staff must be fully ready to deploy and provide care to our forces at a moment's notice, anywhere in the world."

With this mission come challenges—much of them rooted in what is referred to as the Walker Dip.

Rooted in history, with real-world impact

The Walker Dip is the decrease in medical readiness that happens during peacetime, when combat

lessons fade and clinical skills can regress. It's not just a theory: It's a lesson from the past.

The term comes from Adm. Alasdair Walker, a former surgeon general of the British Armed Forces who studied battlefield medicine. Ferrara said Walker looked back to the Napoleonic era and found a clear pattern: During war, military medical teams became highly capable through repetition, urgency, and experience. But in the years between conflicts, those skills diminished. When the next war starts, fatality rates can rise until the system relearns what it once knew.

The phenomenon, he noted, estimated about 106,000 avoidable U.S. deaths since World War II.

That is why, Ferrara explained, the Walker Dip is a direct threat to readiness and addressing it across the MHS is an operational imperative.

"Medicine is both offense and defense. No one else will go to war and provide medical care on the battlefield, except us. That mission belongs to military medicine," he

emphasized.

While the Department of Veterans Affairs and private health systems partner with the MHS, they do not deploy into combat to care for wounded troops, Ferrara noted.

"I think of the MHS as a war-fighting platform," he said, stressing that military healthcare does more than treat the wounded after an attack. The MHS keeps troops in the fight, prevents disease and nonbattle injuries, and gives commanders confidence that trained medical teams can preserve combat power when it matters most.

He also warned that as methods of military operations evolve, so must medical preparation and response. The tactics and techniques of executing modern warfare—such as the use of drones—could result in more severe injuries, delayed evacuation, and longer periods of field care. Military clinicians may have to hold patients for hours or even days in harsh environments instead of stabilizing them for a rapid flight out, he said.

"We have to anticipate the methods of combat," Ferrara said. "We have to have a relentless focus and an obsession with these sorts of vulnerabilities."

How the MHS mitigates the Walker Dip

Ferrara's answer starts with a simple idea: Keep military medical teams engaged with the kind of work that builds combat-relevant skills.

"The best way to prepare is high-volume, high-complexity" care that sustains capabilities for battlefield care, he said. "Train how you're going to fight."

That is where partnerships have become essential.

Ferrara pointed to growing partnerships with the VA as a key way to keep teams sharp.

He cited collaboration with William Beaumont Army Medical Center William Beaumont Army Medical Center webpage in El Paso, Texas, and the El Paso VA Clinic to refer over 12,000 neuro-

surgery, orthopedic surgery, and general surgery cases a year.

"That should translate into more than 1,200 extra surgeries," he said.

"That helps the surgical techs, the anesthesia providers, the nurses, the doctors," Ferrara said. "Everybody is benefiting from that—strengthening the chain and sustaining our skills."

He noted the MHS is bringing back more TRICARE For Life TRICARE For Life webpage beneficiaries into larger military hospitals and clinics to increase the amount of complex cases physicians see.

Those patients give military clinicians more opportunities to sharpen assessments and hands-on skills while serving people who want care inside the system.

"Our military hospitals and clinics are our force-generation platforms," Ferrara said, emphasizing military hospitals do more than deliver care. They pass knowledge from one generation to the next—from senior physicians and nurses to residents, medics, and corpsmen.

Military-civilian trauma partnerships

Ferrara also highlighted partnerships with civilian trauma centers and academic hospitals to expose military personnel to the kind of severe trauma cases they may not see often during peacetime.

For example, Navy Medicine coordinates extensive trauma training for deploying teams at the University of Pennsylvania, Cook County Health in Chicago, and the Navy Trauma Training Center at Los Angeles General Medical Center. Regional Navy Medicine commands also coordinate team training for fleet surgical teams at Harbor-UCLA Medical Center, UC Irvine, and Virginia Commonwealth University. Hospital corpsmen receive hands-on trauma experience in Level 1 trauma centers, known as Hospital Corpsmen Trauma Training, at four locations in the U.S.

The Army Medical Department Military-Civilian Trauma Team



Pacific Partnership 2025 members and healthcare workers prep a patient for surgery in Chuuk State Hospital, Chuuk, Federated States of Micronesia in August 2025. Training and deployments for military medical personnel are one of many avenues the Military Health System ensures its personnel stay sharp during peacetimes to avoid the Walker Dip. Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of War for Health Affairs Dr. Stephen Ferrara explains the phenomenon and what the MHS is doing to ensure medical force readiness.

Training Program focuses on nine critical wartime specialties and provides individual and collective skills sustainment for U.S. Army trauma teams, including surgeons, emergency physicians, nurse anesthetists, intensive care and emergency room nurses, and combat medics.

Participants maintain their clinical proficiency through embedded and rotational assignments at eight premier Level 1 trauma centers across the country, such as Cooper University Hospital in Camden, New Jersey, and Grady Memorial Hospital in Atlanta, Georgia.

The U.S. Air Force operates the Las Vegas Military-Civilian Partnership Las Vegas Military-Civilian Partnership webpage, considered the largest and most integrated in the country. It combines the integration of military medics into the local civilian healthcare infrastructure and care provided at the Level III trauma center at Mike O'Callaghan Military Medical Center. It was designed to develop and sustain critical lifesaving skills for military medical personnel in all aspects of expeditionary medicine, while also supplementing local healthcare services.

Ferrara recalled his own experience while assigned to Naval Medical Center San Diego Naval Medical Center San Diego webpage, where he worked at a Level 1 trauma center, which gave him exposure to high-complexity, high-volume cases that he would not have seen otherwise in his military practice.

The experiences gave him a broader case mix, more repetitions, and more exposure to the kind of injuries that matter in war, he said. "It was part of skill sustainment."

Ferrara urged the next war will not wait for military medicine to regain lost confidence, lost volume, or lost instincts—and military healthcare professionals need to ensure that their skills remain sharp to be at the ready.

"You can't plan to be prepared," Ferrara said. "You just have to be prepared."

"Every morning you wake up, and you say, 'if we had to go into battle today, would I be at my best?'" he said. "And if the answer is not yes, then you say, 'Where do I need to improve?'"

This mindset, Ferrara urged, is how military medicine keeps the dip from becoming the next war's first casualty.

THINGS TO DO!

Cajon Cruise Nights, Wednesdays, through July 22, 5-7:30pm, Main Street and Prescott Promenade. Live music, great food, and a welcoming community vibe. www.downtownelcajon.com/do/cajon-cruise

Encinitas Cruise Night Third Thursdays thru Sept, 5:30-7:30pm. Live music, hotrods, classics, woodies, Hwy 101. encinitas101.com

Giro di San Diego GranFondo June 6, 7:15am-4pm. Celebrate cycling, food, and San Diego's North Inland region. Challenging, picturesque routes, ride support, food both on & off the course, post-ride party! Ryan Park, Escondido. 858-668-1739. www.girodisandiego.com

Sam Hinton Folk Festival. June 6, 10am-5pm / Old Poway Park. Free outdoor event features musical performances, storytelling and family/ contra dancing. Variety of folk music including cajun, zydeco, jazz, bluegrass, country, and punkgrass. 858-668-4576. poway.org

2025 USA Surfing Championships. June 7-12. Includes Para Surf, Longboard, Adult Divisions Shortboard, SUP Surf, SUP, Prone Distance, Tech & Age Group Races. Oceanside Harbor North Jetty. www.usasurfing.org

San Diego County Fair. June 10-July 5, Del Mar Fairgrounds. "ONCE UPON A FAIR" in a land not-so-far-away, the story of your San Diego summer begins. Food, fun, friends, family, laughter, tradition, music. See website for schedule www.sdfair.com

Annual Switchfoot BRO-AM June 11 & 13. Thursday, 6-10pm @ Viasat, Carlsbad. Saturday, 7am-5pm @ Moonlight Beach, Encinitas. 15,000+ beach lovers for a free, all ages, family friendly, community giving event to enjoy a whole day of surf contests, live concerts on the beach with Grammy award-winning rock band Switchfoot, food and drinks, vendor booths, green initiatives, and more. Benefit Party on the 11th and Beach Fest on the 13th. www.broam.org

Scottish Highland Games, June 20-21. Competitions, vendors, live music, whiskey, herding dogs. SDSU Mission Valley River Park. sdhighlandgames.org

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