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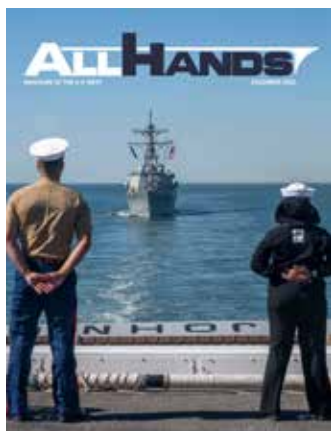
SCAN for City of Meridian App

News Bytes

~ Click here ~
Tate Reeves inaugurated for second term as governor

~ Click here ~
New military childcare benefit to kick in starting January 1

~ Click here ~
Fears grow that Israel, US and Iran's allies are inching closer to war



~ Click here ~
All Hands Year in Review

US Navy fights off latest Houthi attack in the Red Sea

By Jon Gambrell
The Associated Press

Yemen's Houthi rebels fired a barrage of drones and missiles targeting ships in the Red Sea late Tuesday, though the U.S. said Wednesday that no damage was reported.

The U.S. military's Central Command said the "complex attack" launched by the Houthis included bomb-carrying drones, cruise missiles and one anti-ship ballistic missile.

It said 18 drones, two cruise missiles and the anti-ship missile were downed by F/A-18 Super Hornets from the aircraft carrier Dwight D. Eisenhower, as well as by the destroyers Gravelly, Mason and Laboon, and the British warship HMS Diamond.

"This is the 26th Houthi attack on commercial shipping lanes in the Red Sea since Nov. 19," Central Command said. "There



Photo MC2 Aaron Lau/US Navy

The USS Carney defeats a combination of Houthi missiles and unmanned aerial vehicles in the Red Sea.

were no injuries or damage reported."

The assault happened off the Yemeni port cities of Hodeida and Mokha, according to the private intelligence firm Ambrey. In the Hodeida incident, Ambrey said ships

described over radio seeing missiles and drones, with U.S.-allied warships in the area urging "vessels to proceed at maximum speed."

Off Mokha, ships saw missiles fired, a drone in the air and small vessels trailing them, Ambrey said early Wednesday.

"Vessels are advised to transit with caution and report any suspicious activity," the British military's United Kingdom Marine Trade Operations said after the Hodeida attack.

The Houthis, a Shiite group that's held Yemen's capital since 2014, did not formally acknowledge launching the attacks.

However, the pan-Arab satellite news network Al Jazeera quoted an anonymous Houthi military official saying their forces "targeted a ship linked to Israel in the Red Sea," without elaborating.

● Red Sea, page 2



Submitted graphic

Congratulations to Naval Technical Training Center Meridian who is among the FY2023 Personnel, Manpower, and Training Retention Excellence Award winners from the Naval Education and Training Command domain.



Purpose of the Survey:

This survey is designed to gather information on shopping habits of the typical military personnel at a duty station. Information collected in this survey will be used to research a variety of topics, including use of commissaries and exchanges in the computation of cost-of-living allowances.

Link to Survey:

<https://www.defensetravel.dod.mil/Community/se/251137457DFA0FA9>

Time to Complete:

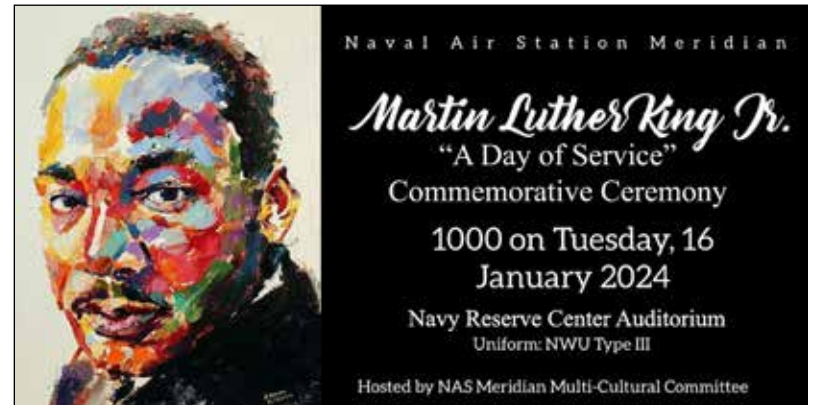
Please take approximately 15 minutes to complete this survey and answer all questions.

Who Should Report?:

Service members (or spouses) assigned to a permanent duty station for three months or more.

Participation:

Participation in this survey is voluntary. Failure to respond will not result in penalty to the respondent; however, maximum response is encouraged so that data will be representative of military shopping patterns in CONUS. Individual response will be treated as confidential.



McKenna

Welcome new NEX GM

Meridian's Navy Exchange recently welcomed its new general manager, Merritt McKenna. Welcome aboard!



Veteran jobless rate drops to lowest average in more than 20 years

By Leo Shane III
Military Times

The veterans unemployment rate rose slightly in December but still finished 2023 at the lowest monthly average in more than 20 years, according to data released Friday by the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Researchers estimated that roughly 261,000 veterans seeking work were unable to find full-time employment last month, an unemployment rate of 3%. That figure was 2.8% in November and had been below 3% nine times since the start of 2023.

But the 3% veterans unemployment rate was still the lowest December figure recorded by BLS since 2000, when the agency began publicly releasing data on veterans

job searches. And veterans unemployment remains well below the national rate of 3.7%.

For all of 2023, the monthly veterans unemployment rate averaged just under 2.8%, the lowest since at least 2000. According to Department of Labor data, it's only the third time in the last 24 years that the average monthly rate was below 3%.

At the height of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the veterans unemployment rate rose to more than 11%, while the national rate rose to almost 15%.

Veterans unemployment has been a focus of lawmakers for years, despite research showing that former military members frequently outperform their civilian peers in finding full-time jobs.

[Read more, click here](#)

Personal Financial Management tips

From Staff Reports

How to Get Your Name Off Solicitation Lists:

Creditors receive lists of names from credit bureaus in order to pre-screen your report and make promotional offers. To be excluded from these lists, call the credit bureaus or 1-888-5 OPT OUT or go to www.donotcall.gov; www.optoutprescreen.com; and www.the-dma.org.

Four Steps to Take if your Identity is Stolen:

1. Place a fraud alert on your credit reports as soon as possible and review your credit reports.

Contact any one of the nationwide CRAs to place a fraud alert on your credit report. Fraud alerts can help prevent an identity thief from opening any more accounts in your name. The company you call is required to contact the other two, which will place an alert on their versions of your report, too

Equifax: 1-800-525-6285; www.equifax.com

Experian: 1-888-EXPERIAN (397-3742); www.experian.com

TransUnion: 1-800-680-7289; www.transunion.com

In addition to placing the fraud alert on your file, the three CRAs will send you free copies of your credit reports. If you ask, they will also display only the last four digits of your Social Security number on your credit reports.

2. Contact the security or fraud department of each company where you know, or believe, accounts have been tampered with or opened fraudulently, and close the accounts. Follow up in writing, and include copies (NOT originals) of supporting documents. It is important to notify credit card companies and banks in writing. Send your letters by certified mail, return receipt requested, so you can document what the company received and when. Keep a file of your correspondence and enclosures. When you open new accounts, use new Personal Identification Numbers (PINs) and passwords. Avoid using easily available information like your mother's maiden name, your birth date, the last four digits of your Social Security number, your phone number, or a series of consecutive numbers.

3. File a report with your local police or the police in the community where the identity theft took place. Get a copy of the police report or, at the very least, the number of the report. It can help you deal with creditors who need proof of the crime. If the police are reluctant to take your report, ask to file a "Miscellaneous Incidents" report, or try another jurisdiction, like your state police. You also can check with your state Attorney General's office to find out if state law requires the police to take reports for identity theft. Check the Blue Pages of your telephone directory for the phone number or check www.naag.org for a list of state Attorneys General.

4. File a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission. By sharing your identity theft complaint with the FTC, you will provide important information that can help law enforcement officials across the nation track down identity thieves and stop them. The FTC also can refer your complaint to other government agencies and companies for further action, as well as investigate companies for violations of laws that the FTC enforces. You can file a complaint online at www.consumer.gov/idtheft. If you don't have Internet access, call the FTC's Identity Theft Hotline, toll-free: 1-877-IDTHEFT (438-4338); TTY: 1-866-653-4261; or write: Identity Theft Clearinghouse, Federal Trade Commission, 600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20580.

For more information, see "ID Theft: What's It All About or Take Charge: Fighting Back Against Identity Theft" at www.ftc.gov/idtheft.

Visit your FFSC Meridian PFM Marie Brinston at 601-679-2360.

New life insurance program for disabled vets sees high demand

By Leo Shane III
Military Times

More than 31,000 disabled veterans received life insurance coverage through a new targeted federal program last year, a total that Veterans Affairs officials said underscores the interest in the offerings and the need for wider outreach on its availability.

The VALife program — open to veterans aged 80 and under with no disqualifications for medical reasons — was launched in January 2023 to expand available life insurance options for disabled veterans. It was the first new life insurance offering by the department in more than 50 years.

Congress mandated the new insurance program in 2022. Ahead of last year's launch, VA officials said that more than 4 million individuals would be eligible for up to \$40,000 in coverage through the new policies but did not know what the interest in the program would be.

Daniel Keenaghan, executive director of VA's Insurance Service, said the department has been pleased by the response so far, with



Photo by Justin Sullivan/Getty Images

A veteran with prosthetic legs looks on during a archery competition at the Valor Games Far West.

about 31,400 veterans signing up for \$950 million in coverage last year alone.

"Having such a solid response demonstrates that we're filling a gap veterans saw," he said. "We have some testimonials from veterans ... who see the coverage as a lifesaver, because they couldn't get insurance through the private sector due to existing service-connected disabilities."

Keenaghan said his office is now looking to further publicize the VALife program, based on a belief that many eligible veterans still do not know about the low-cost offering. The insurance policies have been included in outreach efforts over the last year, and officials said they regularly see sign-ups increase with each new round of distribution of information materials at large veterans events.

[Read more, click here](#)

Navy tests how to relieve carrier strike group warships on station

By Diana Stacy Correll
Military Times

The Navy is exploring a new surface fleet model that would augment a carrier strike group with additional destroyers and cruisers that the strike group did not initially deploy with, a move leaders hope will bolster readiness and improve flexibility of forces worldwide.

Such a model brings a "plug-and-play" capability to naval forces like those currently in the Middle East — allowing for a sustained gray hull presence at a given location, according to U.S. Fleet Forces Command head Adm. Daryl Caudle.

The move would essentially allow warships to relieve other warships that have been on station for long periods of time, Caudle told reporters Tuesday at the Surface Navy Association's annual conference.

It's a model that could prove useful as the Navy faces a variety of contingencies worldwide that could test its surface combatants, from the risk of wider war erupting out of the Israel-Hamas conflict in the Middle East, to continued deterrence needs in the Mediterranean Sea and the ever-present concern about a Chinese invasion of Taiwan.

"In large conflict, I'm going to deploy ready-up strike groups," he said. "But eventually, as everybody knows, when you're on station for a long time on a ship,

you got to take a knee. And so as you roll out to take a knee and somebody rolls in, I have to have high confidence that they come in at the right level of training, certification, mastery and the ability to plug and play into that strike group."

The Navy tested this array during its response at the onset of Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, and also last fall following the start of the Israel-Hamas war, when the Ford Carrier Strike Group steamed to the eastern Mediterranean Sea.

In the Ford's case, destroyers The Sullivans and Delbert D. Black inserted themselves into the strike group so that the strike group's original destroyers could return home.

"What we found is I didn't have good standing capability to go do that," Caudle said. "I had to start from scratch, develop that training plan, that training model. How am I getting the ordnance on them? I had to do an assessment of their people. And all those things are necessary to make sure they go over there ready. And so I'm trying to make that more of a standing capability."

The current strike group architecture requires carriers, destroyers and cruisers to complete work-ups and certifications together before deploying as part of the Optimized Fleet Response Plan...

[Read more, click here](#)

● Red Sea

The Houthis say their attacks aim to end the pounding Israeli air-and-ground offensive targeting the Gaza Strip amid that country's war on Hamas. However, the links to the ships targeted in the rebel assaults have grown more tenuous as the attacks continue.

The attacks have targeted ships in the Red Sea, which links the Mideast and Asia to Europe via the Suez Canal, and its narrow Bab el-Mandeb Strait. That strait is only 29 kilometers (18 miles) wide at its narrowest point, limiting traffic to two channels for inbound and outbound shipments, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration. Nearly 10% of all

oil traded at sea passes through it. An estimated \$1 trillion in goods pass through the strait annually.

A U.S.-led coalition of nations has been patrolling the Red Sea to try and prevent the attacks. American troops in one incident sank Houthi vessels and killed 10 rebel fighters, though there's been no broad retaliatory strike yet despite warnings from the U.S.

Meanwhile, a separate, tentative cease-fire between the Houthis and a Saudi-led coalition fighting on behalf of Yemen's exiled government has held for months despite that country's long war. That's raised concerns that any wider conflict in the sea — or a potential reprisal strike from Western forces — could reignite those tensions in the Arab world's poorest nation.

The Skyline ~ Naval Air Station Meridian, Miss.

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Hotlines & Helpful Numbers

SAPR Victim Assistance: 601-604-3037
SAPR Civilian Victim Assistance: 601-486-3122
SARC: 601-481-4274
SAFE Helpline: 877-995-5247
Suicide Hotline: 800-273-8255
Military OneSource: 800-342-9647
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EAP (NAF Civilian): 800-932-0034
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Local Happenings

JANUARY

27: Meridian Symphony Orchestra at 8 p.m. at the MSU Riley Center. Join the Meridian Symphony Orchestra and opera's preeminent voices as they transport you through history stepping into Mozart's Figaro, Puccini's La Bohème, Bernstein's Garden, and so much more! Call 601-696-2200.

FEBRUARY

2: Queen City Friday Night Comedy from 8-11 p.m. at the Temple Theater. Get ready for a hilarious night of laughter at Queen City Friday Night Comedy, where top comedians will tickle your funny bone in person. Visit <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/queen-city-friday-night-comedy-tickets-776715626347?aff=oddttdcreator>

9: Love Bug Boogie! from 6-8 p.m. at the Mississippi Children's Museum - Meridian. This family-friendly Valentine's dance will soon become your favorite heart-day tradition. Bring your little love bugs and prepare to create the sweetest memories! Visit <https://mschildrensmuseum.org/event/love-bug-boogie/>

9: Masquerade at Merrehope from 6-8 p.m. at Merrehope. Join us for live entertainment, Mardi Gras surprises and the best King Cake ever. Call 601-483-8439 or email merrehopemeridian@gmail.com

Area Happenings

JANUARY

28: Disney's Aladdin (Touring) from 1-5 p.m. at the BJCC East Exhibition Hall, 2100 Richard Arrington Boulevard North, Birmingham, AL. Discover a whole new world at Disney's ALADDIN, the hit Broadway musical. Visit https://www.cbs42.com/community-calendar/?_escaped_fragment_=/show/?start=2023-11-13#!/details/Disney-s-Aladdin/12364841/2024-01-28T13

FEBRUARY

2: WWE Friday Night SmackDown from 6:45-10:45 p.m. at Legacy Arena, 1898 9th Ave N, Birmingham, AL. Visit <https://local.aarp.org/event/wwe-friday-night-smackdown-2024-02-02-tm-birmingham-al.html>

3: Memphis Monster Truck Wars 2024 from 1-5 p.m. at the Agricenter ShowPlace Arena, 105 S Germantown Pkwy, Cordova, TN. Visit <https://event.attendstar.com/event/show/memphis-monster-truck-wars-2024/>

Self-defense strike in Iraq kills terrorist leader

U.S. forces in Iraq recently conducted a self-defense strike which killed Mush-taq Jawad Kazim al-Jawari, a leader of the Iran-backed Haraqat al-Nujaba terrorist group that is operating both in Iraq and Syria, said the Pentagon press secretary.

Al-Jawari, also known as Abu Taqwa, was actively involved in planning and carrying out attacks against American personnel. Abu Taqwa, along with another member of Haraqat al-Nujaba, were both killed in a strike that took place around noon, Jan. 4, in Iraq, said Air Force Maj. Gen. Pat Ryder during a briefing today.

"It is important to note that the strike

was taken in self-defense, that no civilians were harmed, and that no infrastructure or facilities were struck," Ryder said.

The U.S. currently has a military presence in Iraq as part of Combined Joint Task Force Operation Inherent Resolve. The CJTF-OIR mission is to advise, assist and enable partnered forces in the defeat of ISIS within designated areas of Iraq and Syria. Inside Iraq, the U.S. works in partnership with both the Iraqi Security Forces and the Kurdish Security Forces to carry out that mission.

-- By C. Todd Lopez,
DOD News

[Read more, click here](#)

CMF forces seize illegal drugs in Gulf of Oman

U.S. Coast Guard cutters assigned to the Combined Maritime Forces seized illegal drugs with a total estimated street value of \$24.5 million on Dec. 24 and Dec. 26 from vessels in the Gulf of Oman.

At approximately 2 p.m. local time (10 a.m. Greenwich Mean Time) on Dec. 24, a team from USCGC Clarence Sutphin Jr. (WPC 1147), a Sentinel-class cutter patrolling under the command of Combined Task Force 150 of the Combined Maritime Forces, boarded a dhow after it displayed several indicators consistent with illicit drug trafficking.

Aboard, the crew discovered 90 ki-

lograms of heroin with an estimated street value of \$3.2 million.

After testing and seizing the narcotics, the team disembarked the dhow, allowing it to continue on its journey.

At approximately 5 a.m. local time (9 a.m. Greenwich Mean Time) on Dec. 26, a team from USCGC John Scheuerman (WPC 1146), a Sentinel-class cutter patrolling under the command of Combined Task Force 150 of the Combined Maritime Forces, boarded a dhow after it also displayed several indicators consistent with illicit drug trafficking.

-- From Combined Maritime
Forces Public Affairs

[Read more, click here](#)

U.S. committed to defensive operations in Red Sea

The U.S. remains committed to providing a persistent defensive presence in the Red Sea alongside allies and partners, the commander of Naval Forces Central Command said today.

Navy Vice Adm. Brad Cooper said about 1,500 merchant ships have safely transited the Red Sea since mid-December when the U.S. launched Operation Prosperity Guardian. The operation is a multinational, maritime security initiative responding to the recent escalation in Houthi attacks originating from Yemen.

"We are certainly mindful of the continued threat and expect the Houthi attacks may continue," he said. "I think really importantly, though, our actions in this defensive operation are not just through words, but through deeds."

Since mid-November, Houthi rebels have launched 25 attacks against merchant vessels operating in the Red Sea. Those include the detonation of an unmanned surface vessel in international shipping lanes earlier today.

While no ships were hit in the most recent attack, Cooper said that the persistent threat from the Iran-backed Houthi rebels in an international shipping lane is a vital concern.

"Our assessment is that 55 nations have direct connections to the ships who've been attacked, whether through the flagging state, where the goods were produced or destined, or the nationalities of the innocent mariners aboard each vessel," Cooper said.

-- By Joseph Clark,
DOD News

[Read more, click here](#)

Sale... Or

BOATS/CAMPERS/TRAILERS

New Price 21 foot - 2021 Jayco Travel Camper. Like new; beige & walnut interior and mattress kept in original plastic. Selling to upgrade to larger size - Price is \$15,000 some accessories included. To view or request pics please contact: Gary 601-575-5062.

2018 Mallard M185 Travel Trailer. Sleeps 4 with 1 queen bed/2 bunks. Easy to tow at 3,575 lbs; only selling because military member is moving overseas. Great living

quarters with lake view. Hooked up and ready to live in, including cables, hoses, plus the \$500 towing kit. Asking \$17,000. Call 360-434-3035.

AUTOMOBILES, ETC.

2018 Subaru Outback 2.5 limited, 12k miles; Subaru safety features and warranties included. Asking \$29k. Call 601-480-5100.

2017 Dodge Challenger, grey with racing stripe. \$24k. Call 601-880-3237.

HOMES/APARTMENTS

New! For Rent: 3 BD/1.5 BA home 15 min-

utes from NAS at 4814 36th Ave. New refrigerator and 2-year old AC & furnace. Call Terrance at 469-318-9769.

For Rent: 3 BD/1.5 BA with another room used as a gym. All kitchen appliances included. Large backyard. Address 145 Skyland Drive, Meridian. About 25 minutes to Navy Base. \$900 per month, with \$900 deposit. Available Aug. 1. No pets. Call 601-490-0849

For Rent: 3BD/2BD home near Causeyville Road. Furnished in quiet neighborhood. \$900 per month. 954-895-5485,

601-692-4048 or 606-571-0820.

For Rent: Water front home in Dalewood. Spacious two-story home facing the Lake; great for fishing and relaxing. Remodeled kitchen and new appliances. Rent is \$1,800; please call 813-406-9687.

For Sale: 3BD/2BA Home with 2,560 sq. ft. Sits on 1 & 1/2 lots on dead end with privacy woods on 3 sides. Asking \$180,000. Contact: lucindawnichols@gmail.com, call 601-527-7829 or 601-917-6145.

For Rent: 2BD/1.5BA

Home at 3702 Rollins Dr, Lauderdale in Dalewood. 2136 sq ft on a .29 acres lot. Beautiful newly renovated single family home. Call 973-876-5006.

For Sale By Owner: 3BD/3BA brick home with sunroom, large fenced in yard. Convenient to shopping and base. \$139K. Call 601-513-3395 or 601-227-1870.

MISCELLANEOUS

New! For Sale: Husqvarna RZ 4623 Zero Turn Mower. 46 inch cut. \$900. Call 601-616-4242.

Nanny or caregiver services. Call Alice at

601-934-1866 or 601-679-8112. Has installation access; can take children to school and pick up and available days, nights and weekends.

Event Space for Rent: Deer Creek Banquet Hall. 6000 sq. ft. indoor with 1600 sq. ft. outdoor spaces for rent for gatherings and events. Call Reginald at 251-455-1559.

To submit an item to the "Sale...Or" column, e-mail adam.w.prince.civ@us.navy.mil. Deadline is the Wednesday prior to publication.

Listings in the "Sale...Or" column are free for anyone who works at NAS Meridian. To include your announcement, email adam.w.prince.civ@us.navy.mil

Nick Saban retires after 7 national titles, most in major college football history

By John Zenor
Associated Press

Nick Saban's coaching reign has come to an end. His dominance over college football, however, will forever linger in lore.

Saban, who won seven national championships — more than any major college football coach — and turned Alabama back into a national powerhouse that shattered an Associated Press poll record for most consecutive seasons at No. 1, announced his retirement Wednesday.

"The University of Alabama has been a very special place to Terry and me," Saban said in a statement. "It is not just about how many games we won and lost, but it's about the legacy and how we went about it. We always tried to do it the right way."

Alabama lead rusher Jase McClellan joins Tide's NFL draft exodus

Saban, 72, restored a Crimson Tide program once ruled by Paul "Bear" Bryant to the top of college football after taking over in 2007. As he stacked his wins, Saban's celebrity status reached royalty levels in the state of Alabama.

For a time, he was the sport's overlord and there was little that could be done to stop him.

Saban won six of his titles during his 17 seasons at Alabama. He won his first with LSU in 2003. His Tide teams were ranked No. 1 in the AP poll in a remarkable 15



Associated Press Graphic

straight seasons, breaking the old record of seven held by Miami.

Saban's wife, Terry, posted about their "incredible run" at Alabama on the Facebook page for Nick's Kids Foundation.

"We hope that the Saban legacy will be about helping others and making a positive difference in people's lives as well as the winning tradition on the field," Terry Saban wrote.

Saban's tutelage helped launch the head coaching careers of Georgia's Kirby Smart, Texas' Steve Sarkisian and Mississippi's

Lane Kiffin, among others.

He finished just shy of the top in his final season, leading the Tide from a shaky start to a Southeastern Conference championship and back into the College Football Playoff before falling in overtime to Michigan in a semifinal game at the Rose Bowl.

Alabama athletic director Greg Byrne called him "one of the greatest coaches of all time, in any sport."

Saban led the Tide to nine SEC championships and won his first national title at Alabama with a 14-0 season in 2009. Titles

came again in 2011, 2012, 2015, 2017 and 2020. He also won the SEC with LSU in 2001 and 2003.

After a 7-6 debut in 2007, Saban won at least 10 games in his final 16 seasons.

It wasn't until the rise of Dabo Swinney's Clemson teams in the late 2010s and later Smart's Georgia Bulldogs that any school could be considered a consistent threat to the Tide.

Saban has stepped away as the fabric of college football undergoes dramatic change. Colorado's Deion Sanders, a coach who has sought to capitalize on the intervention of players profiting financially from their play on the field, said on social media "College Football just lost the GOAT."

"WOW! I knew it would happen 1 day soon but not this soon," he wrote. "The game has change so much that it chased the GOAT away. College football let's hold up our mirrors and say HONESTLY what u see."

Terry Saban addressed the changes to college football in her post, referencing her husband's famed "process."

"The rules for the game of football may change, but the 'process' will never go out of style: hard work, discipline, the relentless pursuit of a worthy goal, not cutting corners, and doing things the right way for the sake of constant personal improvement, not for the scoreboard," she wrote.

[Read more, click here](#)

Patriots parting ways with Bill Belichick after 24 seasons and 6 championships

Kyle Hightower
Associated Press

Six-time NFL champion Bill Belichick agreed to part ways as the coach of the New England Patriots on Thursday, bringing an end to his 24-year tenure as the architect of the most decorated dynasty of the league's Super Bowl era, a person with knowledge of the situation told The Associated Press on the condition of anonymity because it has not yet been announced.

ESPN first reported the decision. A news conference is planned for later in the day in which team owner Robert Kraft and Belichick will address the decision.

Belichick, 71, became just the third coach in NFL history to reach 300 career regular-season wins earlier this season, joining Hall of Famers Don Shula and George

Halas. With 333 wins including the playoffs, Belichick trails only Shula (347 wins) for the record for victories by a coach.

But the Patriots ended this season 4-13, Belichick's worst record in 29 seasons as an NFL head coach. It supplanted the 5-11 mark he managed in his last year in Cleveland in 1995 and again in his first year in New England in 2000. Including the playoffs, he ends his Patriots tenure with a 333-178 overall record.

It's not immediately clear who Kraft will tap to replace the future Hall of Famer.

Patriots linebackers coach Jerod Mayo won a Super Bowl ring playing under Belichick and has interviewed for multiple head coaching vacancies since becoming a New England assistant in 2019. Mayo turned down a few interviews last offseason before signing a contract exten-

sion to remain with the Patriots.

Mike Vrabel, who was fired earlier this week by the Tennessee Titans and won three Super Bowls with the Patriots, is also expected to be a candidate for the head coaching job.

Belichick had been grooming offensive coordinator Josh McDaniels to replace him before McDaniels left following the 2021 season to become the coach of the Raiders. He has since been fired by Las Vegas. Belichick's two sons, Steve and Brian, are also on the coaching staff.

Belichick's exit from the Patriots comes just a day after another legendary coach and his longtime friend Nick Saban announced he'd retire after winning seven national championships at the collegiate level. Saban worked for Belichick's father, Steve, in the 1980s as a coach at Navy.

[Read more, click here](#)

Winter of discontent can't chill optimism for future

Despite the fact that I live in a coastal New England village where one expects snowy Currier and Ives scenery this time of year, the first weeks of winter have been drearily damp, foggy and muddy. But we maple-syrup swilling yankees weren't the only ones robbed of a white Christmas.

Most of the Northern Hemisphere has experienced warmer temperatures this season, affecting crops, exposure to allergens, and the winter sports season. Heck,

even up at the Minnesota Ice Festival, where ice carvers were planning to unveil the world's largest ice maze on January 5th, the event was cancelled due to the danger of ice structures melting.

When I read all the pessimistic scientific research about our warming globe, I find it hard to contemplate Earth's destiny. Perhaps out of fear, my brain short circuits, making it impossible for me to envision a future in which winters cease, ice caps disappear, and the Earth

self-destructs. Instead, I prefer to believe that, somehow, Mother Nature or God or the Great Gazoo will save humankind, regardless of climate change or human foul-ups.

Consider, if you will, a winter thousands of years from now...

January, in the year 5024.

Despite several hundred World Wars, twelve Ice Ages, nine asteroid hits, three robot takeovers, seven alien invasions, and an unfortunate but brief worldwide prohibition on bacon; human beings have survived.

The Earth, along with its sister colonies on Mars and Venus, is experiencing her 177th recorded Period of Enlightenment — a time of flourishing advances in science, art, philosophy, culture, and, ever since the recent eradication of male pattern baldness, cosmetology.

With public interest in ancient history on an upswing, more and more young scholars have chosen to study Archaeology, a science which had been somewhat neglected in recent centuries. One aspiring graduate student, Fizeq, is the Principal Investigator of an archeological excavation that has captured the world's attention. Mr. Fizeq's Data Recovery site is located at Sector 52b, formerly known as the Balfour Beatty military housing complex at Tinker Air Force Base, Oklahoma.

Ever since the Great Ocean receded to

prehistoric levels, evidence of complex ancient civilizations has been exposed, dating back as early as the 21st Century. Although most artifacts have eroded, a curious substance known as "plastic" is conspicuously present in the strata of Mr. Fizeq's survey, shedding light on the ethnography of this ancient society.

Shortly after breaking ground, the archeological team uncovers an assemblage of brightly-colored plastic artifacts. A fleet of tiny red cars, several hundred whimsically pastel-colored houses, countless itty-bitty kitchenettes, and numerous eensy-weensy tool benches are unearthed, all bearing the mark of the manufacturer, "Little Tikes." Naturally, Mr. Fizeq concludes that the humanoids of this era, or at least the Air Force families, were no taller than three feet.

Perplexing is the presence of thousands of bottles of purified water, contradicting evidence that 21st Century people had plenty of fresh water to drink. Even more puzzling is the discovery of a multitude of knotted plastic bags, containing petrified canine fecal matter, more commonly known as, "Doggie Doo Doo." Mr. Fizeq wonders why this tiny ancient culture felt the need to bag up a naturally prolific substance.

After all, everyone poops.

Other items found preserved in copious amounts include strange footwear labeled "Crocs," beverage implements

known as K-cups, Ikea furniture, Tupperware containers, defunct television remotes, and molded plastic lawn furniture

But the most amazing discovery is found just beneath the excavation's datum point. Deep in the ancient strata of the Tinker AFB quarters lay the well-preserved remains of an ancient tool of communication, known as an "iPhone." By extracting its data, Fizeq believes he will reveal a complete chronology of 21st century humans that'll blow the top off the archaeological world.

However, exhaustive laboratory testing produces nothing except a curious language of colloquial terms including "idk" "lol" "srsly" and "rofl." And several dozen digital videos bearing the common tag "twerk."

Despite this disappointment, Mr. Fizeq goes on to successfully publish his doctoral thesis, appropriately entitled, "The Plastic Age: An archeological analysis of the strange little humans of the 21st Century." However, he is forced to cut his lucrative speaking tour short, after breaking his leg in a winter skiing accident.

Lisa Smith Molinari's self syndicated columns appear on her blog, www.themeatandpotatoesofflife.com and she recently co-authored *Stories Around the Table: Laughter, Wisdom, and Strength in Military Life* Follow [Lisa@MolinariWrites](mailto:Lisa@MolinariWrites.com).

COLUMN



Molinari



INDOOR PICKLEBALL TOURNAMENT

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FEBRUARY 1 AT 1500

GAMES BEGIN:
FEBRUARY 5 AT 1730

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