

THE SKYLINE



Volume 62, Number 15

<https://www.cnic.navy.mil/meridian> ~ www.facebook.com/NASMeridian ~ Twitter: @nasmeridianms

August 8, 2024

On Base

Homeschool Registration
August 12 • 1030-1200
Andrew Triplett Library

Larry Mullins, NAS Meridian School Liaison, invites parents to our homeschool registration event for the 2024-2025 school year. The Lauderdale County Attendance Officer will be in attendance to register students.

DEADLIFT
COMPETITION
August 19-23 • Fitness Center

SIP AND SPIN
August 20 • 1700
Pottery Studio
(Behind the Andrew Triplett Library)

Open Mic Night
Every Friday in August
Rudders • 1900-2100

Run for the Fallen 5K
September 5 • 1700
Liberty Center

Get
Connected



SCAN for NAS Meridian App



SCAN for the Captain's Virtual Suggestion Box



Follow us!

Ideas in Flight: ONR TechSolutions Delivers New Realistic Flight Simulator

By Cherish T. Gilmore
Corporate Strategic Communications
Office of Naval Research

A new innovation in aviation training, featuring an innovative simulator sponsored by the Office of Naval Research TechSolutions program, delivers a better way to prepare future Navy pilots. The first demonstration of the new T-45C Goshawk mixed-reality simulator was recently showcased at Naval Air Station Meridian.

The new capability will allow future pilots to practice and refine skills before setting foot in an actual aircraft, ultimately saving both time and money for the Navy and taxpayers.

The new flight simulator,

known as Project Link, came from a request from Lt. Cmdr. Geoffrey Dick, T-45C chief standardization pilot, Naval Air Training Command (CNATRA), Corpus Christi, Texas. TechSolutions takes direct requests from Sailors and Marines and rapidly sponsors the development of prototype solutions.

For aviators, the new simulator offers promise. Training new strike pilots can take up to two and a half years – much of it spent in the classroom. While the new simulator won't necessarily shorten the length of training time, Dick says it will better prepare students for an important aspect of their training.

● Simulator, page 2



Photo by MC2 Molly Tice

Capt. Justin Kuch, Training Air Wing One Commodore, operates a simulated T-45 Goshawk in the Operational Flight Trainer onboard NAS Meridian, July 11. The simulators onboard incorporate augmented reality technology to enhance student pilot training.

NAS Meridian Visits the Neshoba County Fair



AC3 William Woody and AC2 Jacob Hatch talk with a young boy during Meridian Day at the Neshoba County Fair at the Neshoba County Fairgrounds in Philadelphia, July 31. NAS Meridian has been a part of the event for more than 30 years promoting the Navy's story and showcasing what we do train the best Sailors and Marines for the Fleet.

Photo by MC2 Molly Tice

Captain's Virtual Suggestion Box: Q & A

Q: I am requesting that the commercial gate on Rabbit Road open at 0530 and close at 1500 due to the amount of people that come to work at 0600 and leave at 1430 down at the hangar. It would relieve the amount of traffic that comes to the front gate around those time frames. A lot of people come by way of HWY 45 and that gate would be easier for them to use. It is already open, and the time frame of being open would have to be extended a little bit longer. I have been hearing for several years that it is a lack of personnel. It is not unusual to see four or five people standing around at the front gate doing nothing and only one of them checking IDs to come on base. They can put one or two of them at the commercial gate instead and open and close it at the time frame I suggested.

A: Due to mission requirements, we are currently unable to adjust the operating hours at the Commercial Vehicle Gate. While we are accommodating POV traffic for airfield personnel when the gate is open as a courtesy, this gate is primarily intended for oversized vehicles and contract companies. We will continue to monitor requirements and hope to adjust the hours in the near future to further support operations. Please note that the NAS Meridian Main Gate remains open 24/7 to accommodate all personnel.

Q: If possible, could both dog parks be improved on base. Quite a few service members have one or more dogs. The dog park by base housing is always filled with mud holes and a gate that does not lock. The one by Rudders

has no trash bags in it and trash is never emptied either. Meaning no one picks up their dog's poop. Thank you for the consideration.

A: NAS Meridian Housing Office along with Balfour Beatty have completed repairs on the mudholes and is working on a solution for the gate lock. Additionally, the MWR team has supplied waste bags and will start emptying the containers daily.

● Suggestions, page 4



● Simulator, page 2

“A large portion of our syllabus consists of formation training, tactical formation, and a lot of events where we are training with another aircraft—and that’s something we cannot currently do in our operational flight training,” he noted.

Dick said putting students into an aircraft for the first time is also costly. Up to that point, they’ve only had the opportunity to virtually experience flying in formation.

“A student would take a class in tactical formation. They would take an exam in tactical formation, but there’s just that question left in their mind of what does this actually look like? How is this going to feel? What am I exactly going to do?”

Dick believes the new mixed-reality tool will better prepare students for flying tactical strike formations – creating less potential for wasted time and effort in one of the Department of the Navy’s most expensive resources.

“We want them to be

able to flip switches, turn dials – physically interact with the cockpit. Virtual reality didn’t quite get us there because of the fact that there’s no cockpit built into it. You’ve got to kind of move your head around, then stare at something and pull the hand trigger to select it, which introduces the possibility of a negative transfer of training. Mixed reality should help solve that problem.”

Mixed reality combines elements of both virtual reality and augmented reality to create immersive experiences that blend the real world with digital elements. By overlaying digital content onto our physical surroundings, mixed reality has the potential to revolutionize training.

The aviator didn’t really know what to expect when he sent the request for a mixed-reality training program to TechSolutions, which contacted him within six weeks to begin project development. Less than a year later, Project Link underwent testing by the development team at Naval Air Warfare Center Training Systems

Division (NAWCTSD), which designed the system. Along with TechSolutions and NAWCTSD, Project Link is supported by CNATRA, Naval Air Systems Command’s (NAVAIR), the Naval Aviation Training Systems and Ranges Program Office and Naval Undergraduate Flight Training Systems Program Office.

Cmdr. Lee Sciarini, deputy director, NAWCTSD Research and Technology Programs, said the Project Link team conducted extensive research and development, then tested and evaluated the system.

“In the span of approximately 12 months, the NAWCTSD team took the concept of a research prototype device and created a networked training system capable of conducting critical training events such as formation flights and basic fighter maneuvers,” he said. “The current system consists of a nearly full-function physical cockpit, custom software, a video see-through head mounted



Photo by MC2 Molly Tice

Pictured is the view from inside of the simulator headsets in the Operational Flight Trainer onboard NAS Meridian, July 11. The simulators onboard incorporate augmented reality technology to enhance student pilot training.

display and accurate flight physics models.”

In addition, Sciarini noted the mixed-reality training system also includes an instructor station known as The Wizard, which allows an instructor to manage multiple students across different training worlds.

Jason Payne, director, TechSolutions, said the new mixed-reality simulator illustrates just how quickly a request

from a Sailor or Marine can be developed into a prototype and deliverable solution. “We received a request about a year ago and began working on the solution for a mixed-reality training program almost immediately. The development team at NAWCTSD quickly prototyped the solution and we’re now delivering a new capability to the fleet.”

Payne added that

TechSolutions is constantly on the lookout for suggestions and requests from Sailors and Marines who have firsthand knowledge of what is needed to fulfill their mission. He encourages warfighters to email his team directly at ONR_TechSolutions@navy.mil or look on the website for more information: <https://www.onr.navy.mil/Techsolutions/>



Courtesy Photo

NEWPORT, R.I. – The U.S. Naval War College (NWC) hosts Convocation signaling the start of the 2024 – 2025 academic year August 6, 2024. During the ceremony, NWC President Rear Adm. Pete Garvin announced the introduction of a new course Perspectives on Modern War (PMW), combining the theoretical analysis of war with the development of practical solutions for current and future global security.

New Course Fuses Theory and Practice in Study of Modern Warfare

NEWPORT, R.I. - The U.S. Naval War College (NWC) began its 2024-2025 academic year with the introduction of a new course, Perspectives on Modern War (PMW), combining the theoretical analysis of war with development of practical solutions for current and future global security challenges, Aug. 6.

PMW was announced as part of NWC’s convocation ceremony welcoming more than 462 students from all six branches of the U.S. armed services, civilian employees of the U.S. federal government, and international military officers from 46 partner and Allied nations.

--U.S. Naval War College

[Read more. click here](#)



The Skyline ~ Naval Air Station Meridian, Miss.

Command Staff

Commanding Officer ~
CAPT Luke H. Davis
Executive Officer ~
CDR Mike Missler
Command Master Chief ~
CMDCM Randy Griffeth

Editorial Staff

Public Affairs Officer ~
Penny Randall
Public Affairs Specialist~
Evelyn Adams
Photographer~
MC2 Molly Tice

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
CEAP (DoN Civilian): 844-366-2327
EAP (NAF Civilian): 800-932-0034
FFSC Meridian: 601-679-2360
Chaplain: 601-604-2015
NMCRS Duty Cell: 601-604-2206
EEO (NAF): 866-295-0328
EEO (GS): 904-542-2802

This DoD newspaper is an authorized publication for members of the Department of Defense. Contents of The Skyline are not necessarily the official views of, or endorsed by, the U.S. Government, the Department of Defense, or NAS Meridian, Mississippi. The editorial content of this publication is the responsibility of the NAS Meridian Public Affairs Office. The Skyline solicits news contributions from military and civilian sources. It reserves the right to edit material selected for dissemination. The deadline for material is 4:30 p.m. the Thursday before publication. Send submissions to: The Skyline, 255 Rosenbaum Ave., Suite 163, Public Affairs Office, Naval Air Station, Meridian, MS 39309-5003 or e-mail: penny.l.randall2.civ@us.navy.mil or evelyn.m.adams@navy.mil. For more information, call (601) 679-2318 or (601) 679-2809. The appearance of any advertising in this publication, including inserts or supplements, does not constitute endorsement by the Department of Defense or NAS Meridian of products or services advertised. Everything advertised in this publication shall be made available for purchase, use or patronage without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, marital status, physical handicap, political affiliation, or any other non-merit factor of the purchaser, user or patron.

LOCAL HAPPENINGS

AUGUST

22: Lorrie Morgan Ruby Anniversary Tour - 7:30 p.m.
 Located in Meridian, MS at the MSU Riley Center. [Click here for tickets, entries, & info.](#)

SEPTEMBER

7: Experience Walter Anderson, The South's Most Elusive Artist - 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. Join us for opening day of the MAEX's new exhibit, The South's Most Elusive Artist: Walter Inglis Anderson, featuring 40 pieces of art. **Located in Meridian, MS at the Mississippi Arts + Entertainment Experience.** [Click here for tickets, entries, & info.](#)

AREA HAPPENINGS

AUGUST

21 - Chris Stapleton - 7 p.m. - Concert features special guests Grace Potter and Allen Stone. **Located in Birmingham, AL. at the BJCC.** [Click here for tickets, entries, & info.](#)

30 - Elle King - 8 p.m. - Located in Biloxi, MS at the Beau Rivage Theatre. [Click here for tickets, entries, & info.](#)

31 - USS Alabama: Living History Crew Drill - 8 a.m. - 3 p.m. - Come see history come to life with our WWII reenactors during the Living History Crew Drill. Interact with historical WWII reenactors aboard the USS ALABAMA and USS DRUM. These historical reenactors, dressed in WWII period Navy uniforms, demonstrate what life aboard ship was like during wartime. **Located in Mobile, AL at USS ALABAMA Battleship Memorial Park.** [Click here for tickets, entries, & info.](#)

SEPTEMBER:

1 - Tom Segura - 5 p.m. - Stand up comedy show featuring, Tom Segura, actor, comedian, writer, and one of the biggest names in comedy. **Located in Memphis, TN at the Orpheum Theatre.** [Click here for tickets, entries, & info.](#)

7 - Childish Gambino - 8 p.m. - Concert features special guest WILLOW. **Located in New Orleans, LA at the Smoothie King Center.** [Click here for tickets, entries, & info.](#)

12 - Hardy - 6:15 P.M. - Concert features special guests Randy Houser, Travis Denning, & Ella Langley. **Located in Starkville, MS at the Dudy Noble Field.** [Click here for tickets, entries, & info.](#)

Navy Conducts Humanitarian Exercise as Atlantic Prepares for Historic Hurricane Season

VIRGINIA BEACH, Va. – Navy and Marine Corps units from across the region assembled in Hampton Roads from 18 to 24 July to rehearse humanitarian response missions in preparation for what is forecasted to be a historically active Atlantic hurricane season. Led by the staff of Expeditionary Strike Group TWO (ESG 2), the forces rehearsed one of the strike group's primary on-call missions, defense support to civil authorities/foreign disaster response (DSCA/FDR).

DSCA/FDR missions are core capabilities of the participating units, and the exercise was an opportunity to further refine techniques among various inter-service units that would likely be called upon to respond in the event of highly destructive hurricane landfall.

"Putting in the reps to fine-tune our preparations and overall response to a major humanitarian event is critical to ensuring we are ready to

go when the call is made," said Read Admiral David Walt, Commander, Expeditionary Strike Group TWO, "We have already seen the strongest, earliest hurricane of a season in history. The threat is real, and it brings home the need to maintain a rigorously-rehearsed, integrated capability to respond."

In the event of responding to the aftermath of a destructive storm, units must be prepared to operate in austere environments that may have severe degradation to infrastructure and services related to health and habitation. The exercise included rehearsing the tactical loading and staging of supplies and equipment aboard the amphibious ship USS Fort Lauderdale (LPD 28), and movement of supplies and personnel from ship to shore using landing craft, a critical capability in the event that port facilities in an affected area are damaged.

- Lt. Cmdr. Christopher Giglio, Expeditionary Strike Group 2

[Read more. click here](#)

Reenlistment



Photo by Evelyn Adams

AC2 Mason Kendrick receives the reenlistment oath from LCDR Lier Maybethbarrios during his reenlistment ceremony, Aug. 2.

Sale... Or

BOATS/CAMPERS/TRAILERS

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.

HOMES/APARTMENTS

NEW! For Rent: Studio Apartment located on North Hills Street. \$825 a month. Call 601-504-5415.

For Rent: 2 BD/1 BA home located in Dalewood community on the water. \$900 a month. Call 601-683-6038.

For Rent: 3 BD/2 BA, only 5 mins from main gate of NAS Meridian. Nice size private yard / garbage and

water provided. Pets permitted with deposit. \$1,150 a month. Contact 601-480-1324.

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 Rent: Fully furnished home in Dalewood. \$1,500 a month; \$50 application fee; \$900 Dalewood membership fee. Trailer, washer and dryer included. Call Jim 601-480-4865.

For Rent: 4 BD/2.5 BA home 3632 sq ft, just over 6 acres with workshop attached to 2-car carport. Owners will consider a lease of 12-36 months, and rent is negotiable the longer the term. Call (601) 517-1707.

For Rent: 3 BD/1.5 BA home 15 minutes from NAS at 4814 36th Ave. New refrigerator and 2-year old AC & furnace. Call Terrance at 469-318-9769.

MISCELLANEOUS

For Sale: Double wall Frigidaire oven \$500; Bosch dishwasher \$500. Both three years old. 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.

Listings in the "Sale...Or" column are free!
 Submission deadline is the Wednesday prior to production.
 Email information to nasmeridianpao@gmail.com

MyNavy Family App

Updates

New resources and links continue to be added. Check out the new ways you and your family can receive support. Visit applocker.navy.mil to learn more!

Captain's Virtual Suggestion Box: Questions & Answers



● Suggestions, page 4

Q: For those of us that stand duty as either CDO or ACDO, it seems unjust when only one, either CDO or ACDO can eat for free on a duty day. There is so much food waste that goes on that I am sure that one extra meal, especially for individuals who don't have a choice about standing duty. To me, this seems unreasonable to only provide a free meal to only one watch stander.

A: Effective July 18, 2024, the command duty officer and the assistant command duty officer of NAS Meridian and tenant commands are authorized to dine in the galley free of charge on their assigned duty days, provided they are listed on the monthly watch bills submitted to the galley for that month.

Q: Throughout the installation Crepe Myrtle trees need to be trimmed so they look like an actual Crepe Myrtle and grow properly. Thanks!

A: Thank you for raising this concern! Base beautification is a command priority, and suggestions like these help us identify where we can best make an impact. Station grounds are maintained through contractor services funded to specific levels of service based on regional guidance. In essence, we maintain to the level we can afford. We do have a limited fund to address specific concerns, and we

balance this fund between emergent, operational, and quality-of-life matters. I encourage you to share more specific information with the Public Works Department so that we can ensure this receives continued attention.

Q: I wonder why NAS Meridian's Admin office is only open 0800-1600. I've needed to come several times and either there is a note that says training or out to lunch. Really the entire office is out to lunch?

A: The NAS Meridian Admin is dedicated to providing seamless service to All Hands. In order to provide great service to customers, it's imperative that the admin team is properly trained on all nuances surrounding Military Pay and Personnel Systems and Civilian Administrative requirements. As we navigate an ever-evolving environment where systems and policies are constantly changing, we conduct training when time allows. If there are ever moments when a customer sees a sign on the door when training is being conducted, please walk to Warrant Officer Winters office as his door is always open to address all inquiries. In the event no one is available, please send your inquiry to cnicsemrdnadmin@us.navy.mil and it will be addressed swiftly.

Q: I ordered a taco salad on 07/24 through the app and received an email that my order was cancelled. I went to Rudders and I was told that they ran out of meat. I am not sure how this happens at a restaurant, but I took my business off-base.

A: Throughout MWR, we try hard to meet the needs and desires of our patrons. As the MWR Director, I apologize that we fell short this time and assure you we will continue to strive for excellence in our every endeavor.

Q: Respectfully requesting the Commissary cease to keep expired food on the shelves selling for full price. It's not the customers' responsibility to check the expiration date, nor is it on most of their

minds, and it's highly disappointing to pay hundreds on groceries only to pull some out a few days later and see it's been expired since before it was bought. Your diligence would be appreciated.

A: On behalf of NAS Meridian Commissary Leadership, we apologize to our valued patrons who experienced this inconvenience. Thank you for being a valued customer at the Meridian Commissary. We work to ensure expired products are promptly removed from our shelves daily. We take pride in being the grocer of choice for military families and retirees, delivering the quality service you deserve. We sincerely apologize for this oversight. Thank you for your feedback and for bringing this to our attention. My staff and I will continue to work diligently to address and prevent this issue in the future.

Q: More food options on base please, Rudders and Subway are beyond depressing. Thanks!

A: We're still researching this question and hope to provide an answer soon.

Q: The two-way stop after you pass admin has been a bit concerning. For the past year I've almost gotten hit a few times due to people with a stop sign treating the intersection like a 4 way. Maybe putting up greater clarification so military and civilians alike are on the same page via the road rules. Thank you.

A: We're still researching this question and hope to provide an answer soon.

Q: It would be helpful if the NAS CDO watch bill was signed and distributed at least by the 25th of the month prior. It is currently the 29th of June, and the watch bill has not been released. It makes it difficult to plan for the next month.

A: The senior watch officer and the senior enlisted watch bill coordinator for NAS Meridian will ensure that the watch bills are distributed no later than the 25th of each month.

Don't Just Take Care of Your Soldiers: Take Care of Yourself Too!

By MaryTherese Griffin
Army Recovery Care Program

FALLS CHURCH, Va.- Anyone in a leadership position knows that the pressure is tremendous, and meeting the wants and needs of others is a daily task. Sgt. Christna Wray learned that not listening to her body would cause a different kind of pressure. "I tell my Soldiers not to be like me because I kept myself on the back burner."

Wray immigrated from Jamaica with her mother and has been in the Army for 12 years. The active-duty Soldier had training injuries over the years to her knee and hip that she says parlayed into back issues. She learned how bad it had become on a recent deployment with her company from Fort Riley. "I went on sick call when I was in Korea, and they did an MRI on my back and saw I had a bulging disc that was pretty severe. I was told it was so severe that surgery would have been risky," says Wray, who, on top of all that, said doctors told her she has fibromyalgia.

As a motor transport operator, she became the Korean deployment's platoon sergeant and operations NCO. The very demanding job she loves kept her focused on pleasing leadership and taking care of Soldiers. "It was mentally demanding, and there were times I admit I just wasn't focusing on what was going on with my body, and it got worse," said Wray, who wants to remind leaders to take care of themselves.

In August last year, Wray was assigned to the Fort Belvoir SRU. Her road to recovery included physical therapy and adaptive



Courtesy Photo
Sgt. Christna Wray – "I live my life with no regrets."

reconditioning events, and she is also in the process of going through the medical board. "When it came to my hip, back, and knees, I was approached about a med-board, and I asked if there was an alternative. A permanent profile was suggested so that I couldn't do certain activities. I didn't have it in mind to get out of the military. I migrated from Jamaica and a year later joined the military, so since I've been in America, this is all I've done."

Wray learned at the SRU about opportunities offered through Career Education and Readiness (CER). Facing the medical board, she is taking her skills in the military and getting help correlating them to the civilian world.

"I have an internship with the DOD Inspector General's office. I've been interning with them since February," said the mother of two. She was also offered an internship with the National Geo-Spatial Intelligence Agency.

Wray is in awe of the support from the Fort Belvoir SRU for her recovery and the future. "From the beginning, when I arrived, my Nurse Case Manager told me they were here for me. It was a weird feeling—my command at the SRU was amazing, and they were a massive help. I'm used to taking care of people, not people taking care of me," said the 33-year-old.

Wray will always prioritize ensuring Soldiers understand the value of going to the SRU, and she will share her experiences of what to do and not do. "Use all the resources and go to school. Ask multiple questions. Never say no to any opportunities. I've seen a few Soldiers who had the same opportunities but didn't take them, and then, in the end, they wished they had."

For the Soldiers who are unsure of their future, Wray insists that the staff and cadre are ready to help. "Let them know your goals, and if you don't have any, let them know what you think you want to do so they can help you with resources."

It's not how she wanted to end her Army career, but with a positive attitude, Wray is ready to face the next chapter of her life. "I live my life with no regrets. I go by that personally. If I did something right or wrong, it's a teachable moment. I want to be able to help others."

MONDAY		TUESDAY		WEDNESDAY		THURSDAY		FRIDAY		SATURDAY	
915	TRX Kristen	915	Upper Body Strength (NOFFS SES Series) Jenni	915	HIIT (NOFFS SES Series) Kristen	915	Lower Body Strength (NOFFS SES Series) Jenni	915	FIIT Friday (NOFFS Endurance Series) Jenni	930	HIIT (1st & 3rd Saturdays of each month) Tanisha
1100	Upper Body Power Hour (NOFFS SES Series) Jenni	1100	KettleFit Jenni	1100	Lower Body Power Hour (NOFFS SES Series) Jenni	1100	TRX Kristen				
1600	Upper Body Power Hour Tanisha	1600	HIIT Tanisha	1200	YOGA Ryan	1600	Lower Body Power Hour Tanisha	1600	HIIT Tanisha		
1730	Upper Body Power Hour Tanisha	1630	YOGA Ryan			1730	Lower Body Power Hour Tanisha	1730	HIIT Tanisha		
		1730	HIIT Tanisha								

PERSONAL TRAINING AND NOFFS/COMMAND PT SESSIONS ARE ALSO AVAILABLE. CONTACT THE FITNESS COORDINATOR OR FITNESS DIRECTOR FOR INFORMATION.

NOFFS & COMMAND PT SESSIONS AVAILABLE BY APPOINTMENT

NOFFS
Heavy Operational Fitness and Pooling Systems

Group Exercise Schedule

All classes are FREE to authorized patrons. For more information call 601.679.2379.

PERSONAL TRAINING SESSIONS AVAILABLE BY APPOINTMENT

HIIT: High Intensity Interval Training
KETTLEFIT: All Things Kettlebell! - A full-body workout that's Kettlebell focused.
TRX: Suspension training sure to challenge your core, balance, and enhance strength and stability
UPPER/LOWER BODY CLASSES: Using free weights and exercises that will help build muscle in specific areas of the body.
FIIT FRIDAY: Frequency/Intensity/Time/Type: varied modalities to give you a total body workout.

Strahon and Csonti: A Military Working Dog Story

By Keefer Patterson
Space Base Delta 1

On the afternoon of July 13, in Butler, Pennsylvania, the presidential rally was in full force — crowds cheering, American and campaign flags waving in the wind and citizens champing at the bit to see their presidential choice speak.

For Staff Sgt. Jessica Strahon, 21st Security Forces Squadron military working dog handler, and Military Working Dog Csonti, this was a relatively routine event supporting the U.S. Secret Service. That is until loud popping sounds and screams echoed across the stage and nearby bleachers.

The radios rang out, “Shots fired, shots fired!”

Strahon, MWD Csonti and the Explosive Ordnance Disposal team — famished from a long day of sweeping the area for explosives and grabbing a quick bite to eat — heard the call, dropped their food and ran toward the screams.

“We were initially confused because Trump was raising his fist, people were chanting ‘USA’ and nobody was running,” Strahon said. “But then we saw the Secret Service agents with their weapons pulled and moving Trump off stage toward the motorcade.”

While the motorcade was leaving, Strahon and others turned their attention to caring for the wounded.

“They started taking the other gunshot victims off the bleachers,” Strahon said. “One guy was brought over to a minivan. I think he was a staffer; he looked a little confused. I asked if they needed gauze or any help. They said yes.”

EOD personnel immediately jumped into the minivan and started doing body sweeps to identify any other wounds.

“He had a gunshot wound to his left tricep and then what looked like shrapnel or a splinter of a bullet in his abdomen,” Strahon said. “He had a lot of bloating and didn’t have an exit wound... Even though it’s really small, thankfully, I had Csonti’s med kit with me.”

While emergency medical services focused on Trump and more severe gunshot victims, Strahon and her team provided the best first-aid care that they could until EMS arrived.

“We got him bandaged and did everything we could and about 10 minutes later, EMS was able to take over,” Strahon said.

The team was then notified that another victim was to be medevaced and the helicopter needed to land nearby.

“I looked at my EOD guy and said ‘I know this is not a bomb threat but normally we train to sweep helicopter landing zones for explosives. So, we should do that,’” Strahon said. “We ran to the softball fields behind the stage and the barn. We did it sprinting because the helicopter was coming in and waiting to land.”

After that, all the EOD and handlers returned to the barn to conduct a head count and a quick debrief with their Secret Service point of contact.

“After an hour or two, we were informed that the shooter had a remote on his body and they now had reason to believe that he had explosives,” Strahon said.

“They wanted us to re-sweep the entire site. So, we swept everything — the bleachers, the stage, the field. There was trash everywhere. People left their phones; someone even left a scooter.”

The team was then asked to sweep the building the shooter was in — one handler covering the exterior, one covering the second floor and Strahon covering the first floor.

“It was a workshop,” Strahon said. “My EOD people said that it looked like an improvised explosive device factory because of all the wires, soldering irons and weird machines. Even though it was just a workshop, it still puts you on edge.”

While sweeping the building, Csonti had a distinguishable behavior change in one of the rooms and sat down — indicating the dog had identified something. Strahon and her team made the call to evacuate the building and notify local EOD authorities who are legally required to take over.

“After they took some X-rays, there was a safe they couldn’t get into,” Strahon said. “So, they did an intentional detonation. They don’t know if anything was in there, but they counted it as a positive find simply due to the nature of the events and because you can’t really test after it’s been blown up. After that, our day was pretty much over.”

Throughout the day leadership consistently checked in on Strahon and Csonti.

“They were contacting me when it was going on saying we know you’re busy but please let us know if you need anything,” Strahon said. “Upon our return, my unit and base leadership came out to say thank you and told us they were here if we needed anything, which was very sweet. Col. Klock [Space Base Delta 1 commander] coined me and Csonti. We joke about maybe putting the coin on a chain so Csonti can wear it. Lt. Gen. Miller [Space Operations Command commander] called me a few days later to provide the same sentiment,” Strahon said. “He made me promise that I would let him know if I ever needed anything. Everyone was very nice and welcoming.”

Professionals practice until they can’t get it wrong. Before July 13, 2024, Strahon’s previous six years of military training and experience prepared her for the events that would unfold that day.

“At my previous bases, before I went canine, we did a lot of active shooter training,” Strahon said. “That’s the main reason why I didn’t have to really think about anything, because I did it so much.”

“It helped that I had that training, but it also helped that my two EOD guys were both prior infantry — one Army and one Marine. So, we were all on the same page and didn’t have to tell anyone what to do. We just did it and worked together despite meeting each other six hours prior.”

Growing up in a military family, Strahon always thought about serving. When she eventually decided on the Air Force, she set her sights on security forces, specifically becoming a military working dog handler.

“I’ve always loved animals and dogs and had dogs growing up. So, working with canines was the goal,” Strahon said. “The Air Force is a little different than the



Photo by Keefer Patterson

Staff Sgt. Jessica Strahon, 21st Security Forces Squadron military working dog handler, and Military Working Dog Csonti pose for a photo at Peterson Space Force Base, Colorado, July 29.

other branches. You must be a regular cop first. Then after you volunteer at the kennels, you can get a letter from the kennel master endorsing you. Then you can apply for the MWD program. But the Air Force wants you to be a subject matter expert on being security forces first.”

The majority of MWDs are procured from kennels across the world. Csonti was born in Hungary and brought to the United States at an early age. His name means “bone” in Hungarian.

“Csonti is certified in detecting explosives. We’ve been together for almost three years — he’s my first dog and I’m his first handler,” Strahon said. “New handlers don’t usually get new dogs but that’s just how it worked out. It was difficult at first because we both didn’t know what we were doing but we figured it out and grew up together. I think everyone loves their first dog the most. Most handlers do not get to keep their dogs for three years, so I’ve been really fortunate that we’ve stuck together for so long. I’m not looking forward to the day I have to give him to someone else.”

Strahon and Csonti’s story is but another addition to the greater, age-old narrative highlighting the relationship between man and beast. Their unbreakable bond, forged through countless trials, emphasizes the importance of MWDs and their place as Airman’s best friend.

“It’s hard to express how proud my team is of Jessica and Csonti” said Daniel Beaudoin, 21st Security Forces Squadron commander. “MWD teams spend many hours together developing a strong bond so they can do a tough job together. Our men and women in this specialty sacrifice lots of personal time to ensure their K-9s are healthy, trained and ready for anything. My squadron and I are proud to serve alongside heroes like Jessica — the focus, tenacity and selflessness she displayed by springing into action, despite a dangerous situation, to save another person’s life was truly exemplary.”