

THE SKYLINE



Volume 62, Number 3

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February 8, 2024

News Bytes

~ Click here ~

Last Harrier mechanics finish training as Corps shifts to F-35

~ Click here ~

Taking care of service members is key to recruiting next generation

~ Click here ~

Favre must finish repaying misspent welfare money

~ Click here ~

The Super Bowl is expected to smash betting records

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2nd Annual State of the Base Breakfast



Photos by MC2 Molly Tice

Left: U.S. Senator Roger Wicker speaks to guests during NAS Meridian's 2nd annual State of the Base Breakfast at the Naval Reserve Center onboard the installation, Jan. 29. Right: Nearly 100 guests, including Wicker, Mississippi Senator Jeff Tate, Marion Mayor Larry Gill, members of the Lauderdale County Board of Supervisors, members of the local business community, school system and others attended. The State of the Base Breakfast is an annual event intended to keep our area stakeholders and partners informed of the progress on the installation, and what we are looking forward to in the future year.

NAS Meridian, partners participate in Citadel Shield-Solid Curtain



NAS Meridian first responders simulate life-saving triage care during a large-scale active shooter exercise on Wednesday, Feb. 7 onboard the installation as part of the Navy-wide Citadel Shield-Solid Curtain (CS-SC24) exercises. Nearly 80 military and civilian personnel were involved in the exercise, including the following departments: Naval Security Forces, Fire and Emergency Services, Emergency Operations Center, Public Affairs and the Safety Department. The Lauderdale County Sheriff's Department, Metro Ambulance and University of Mississippi Medical Center AirCare also participated in the exercise. CS-SC24 is an important annual exercise designed to ensure our people and security forces are at peak readiness to deter and respond to potential security threats. The exercise evaluates and assesses the force protection conditions, command and control and capabilities to evaluate how to respond to multi-dimensional security threats. [• More photos, page 2](#)

Photo by MC2 Molly Tice

Northeast High School NJROTC wins area event



Submitted Photo

The Northeast High School NJROTC SeaPerch team won first place in all events at the inaugural MMI Central Alabama SeaPerch Competition on the campus of Marion Military Institute, Feb. 3. This win qualified the team to compete at the International SeaPerch Competition at the University of Maryland on May 31-June 1. This is the team's first year competing and will compete again on March 23 at the Alabama SeaPerch ROV Competition in Mobile, Ala. Retired Navy Lt. Cmdr. Curtis Meisenheimer, right, presents trophies to cadets, Dylan Lawrence, Gerrian Elam, Antoinette Brown and Allie Dean.

Pentagon identifies possible cause of Nov. 29 Osprey crash

By Tara Copp
Associated Press

The Pentagon believes it has identified the mechanical failure that led to a fatal crash of an Osprey aircraft in Japan and the grounding of the fleet for two months, a U.S. defense official told The Associated Press. It is now weighing how the aircraft can be returned to service.

The Pentagon's Joint Safety Council is now working with the Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps on plans to get Osprey crews ready to fly again, said Navy Rear Adm. Chris Engdahl, chairman of the council and commander of Naval Safety Command.

The Air Force investigation is continuing into the Nov. 29 Air Force special operations command CV-22 crash, which killed eight service members. The crash led to a rare grounding on Dec. 6 of about 400 Osprey aircraft across the three services. Japan also grounded its fleet of 14 Ospreys following the crash.

The official who said the mechanical failure had been identified declined to say what the failure was. The discovery has opened the door to discussions on returning the aircraft to flight because mitigations can be put in place. The official was not authorized to discuss ...

[Read more, click here](#)

Four aviators earn 'Wings of Gold' in February pinning ceremony

There was a naval aviator designation ceremony Feb. 2 onboard Naval Air Station Meridian.

Four aviators received their "Wings of Gold" during the ceremony. The naval aviator designation ceremony is not prescribed specifically by U.S. Navy regulations, but has emerged as an honored product of the rich heritage of naval tradition. It marks the culmination of nearly two years of specialized training, which has prepared these officers for the rigorous demands of aerial combat and carrier operations -- earning each the title of "Naval Aviator" and the right to wear the coveted "Wings of Gold."



LTJG Conner Aspray



LTJG Ryan Harrington



LTJG Lawrence Kazanski



LTJG Rebecca White

Golden Stick



Photo by Adam Prince

Laura Carmichael, President of the Mississippi Council of the Navy League, left, presents LTJG Conner Aspray with the Golden Stick award during a winging ceremony in the Chapel onboard NAS Meridian, Feb. 2. The Golden Stick is awarded to the student with the highest composite score during training.

Citadel Shield-Solid Curtain



● **More photos...**

The active shooter exercise utilized realistic scenarios with 30 military members portraying victims and bystanders to help identify areas of improvement in procedures and decision-making processes, strengthen our response as one joint warfighting team and working with our partner agencies from off the installation. The exercise tests information dissemination, individual response plans, security force response, and our ability to coordinate with local emergency responders and the community.

Photos by MC2 Molly Tice



SECO Promotion



Photo by Penny Randall

Senior Chief Jeremy Kelley places a rank insignia patch on the uniform of LT Ashlee South as she was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant, Feb. 1.

Prescription opioids can be addictive and dangerous.

It only takes a little to lose a lot.

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www.cdc.gov



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Local Happenings

FEBRUARY

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

22-25: The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged) Thursday-Saturday at 7 p.m.; Sunday at 2 p.m. at the Meridian Little Theatre. Three madcap men in tights weave their wicked way through all of Shakespeare's comedies, histories, and tragedies in one wild ride that will leave you breathless and helpless with laughter. Call 601-482-6371 or visit <http://www.meridianlittletheatre.com/>

MARCH

1: Full Moon on 5th! from 6-9 p.m. on 5th Street between 22nd and 23rd Ave, downtown Meridian. String lights and two giant illuminated moons set the mood for a unique block party that you don't want to miss. This laid back event has great food, live music, and a revolving showcase of local art talent. Call 601.480.6100 or visit <https://www.acesmeridian.org/>

8: Blues Series – Benstrings and Par from Ferfect from 6-9 p.m. at Mississippi Arts + Entertainment Experience. Get ready for a soulful night at Maxie's Juke Joint Blues Series featuring the sensational Benstrings and Par from Ferfect. Call 601-581-1550, ext 35 or visit <https://www.msarts.org/events/blues-series-benstrings-and-par-from-ferferct/?occurrence=2024-03-08>

Area Happenings

FEBRUARY

11: Hamilton from 1-5 p.m. (EST) at the Fox Theatre, 660 Peachtree St NE, Atlanta. Visit <https://www.ticketmaster.com/hamilton-atlanta-02-11-2024/event/Z7r9jZ1AdqFFU>

24-25: Mississippi Gem, Mineral, Fossil & Jewelry Show starting Saturday at 9 a.m. until Sunday at 4 p.m. at the Mississippi Trade Mart, 1200 Mississippi St, Jackson. Visit <https://xpopress.com/show/profile/1395/mississippi-gem-mineral-fossil-jewelry-show>

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, email adam.w.prince.civ@us.navy.mil. Deadline is the Wednesday prior to publication.

The Sullivans returns to Mayport

The Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS The Sullivans (DDG 68) returned home to Naval Station Mayport following a two-month deployment to the U.S. Naval Forces Europe area of operations, Feb. 3.

The Sullivans deployment – its fourth in two years – further bolstered the U.S. deterrence posture in the region, provided increased options to the combatant commander, and demonstrated U.S. commitment to regional security.

While deployed to the Eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean Sea, the ship provided Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD) for Commander, U.S. European Command amidst the Israel-Hamas conflict.

The Sullivans, alongside USS Delbert D. Black (DDG 119), additionally provided on-station relief for USS

Thomas Hudner (DDG 116) and USS Mcfaul (DDG 74), allowing both ships to return home after multiple deployment extensions. The crew provided escort to the USS Gerald R. Ford Carrier Strike Group and USS Bataan Amphibious Readiness Group, and acted as Surface Action Group Commander, along with other US Destroyers, while Gerald R. Ford conducted a port visit to Souda Bay, Crete.

"The crew's proficiency and flexibility enabled The Sullivans to integrate seamlessly with the Gerald R. Ford Carrier Strike Group and the Bataan Amphibious Readiness Group while operating in the Sixth Fleet Area of Responsibility," said Cmdr. A. C. Wood, commanding officer of The Sullivans.

-- From Commander, U.S. 2nd Fleet

[Read more, click here](#)

U.S. Navy joins Arctic Specialist 2024

Sailors from Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) Mobile Unit (MU) Eight, attached to Commander Task Force (CTF) 68 at Naval Station Rota, Spain, began the annual Norway-hosted exercise Arctic Specialist 2024 in Ramsund, Norway, Feb. 5, 2024.

Arctic Specialist is an annual multinational EOD and mine countermeasures (MCM) exercise aimed to provide training, exercise and development of land and maritime EOD Tactics, Techniques and Procedures (TTPs) at the squad and team level in a cold-weather environment. This exercise is designed to enhance capability and interoperability among participating nations. Forces from Denmark will also participate in Arctic Specialist.

EODMU Eight's MCM Company Commander Lt. Daniel Haines said, "We rely on our experts in the High North to further expand our operations into the Arctic. Exercises like Arctic Specialist allow us to continue improving our collective security by conducting increasingly complex and high-end missions with our Allies."

During the 11-day exercise, EOD and MCM forces will share TTPs for countering regional and global security threats. CTF-68 commands all naval expeditionary forces in the U.S. European Command and U.S. Africa Command areas of responsibility in direct support of U.S. Naval Forces Europe -Africa, and U.S. 6th Fleet.

-- From U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa

[Read more, click here](#)

U.S. can respond decisively to cyber threat posed by China

The cyber challenge posed by China is unlike any challenge ever faced by the U.S. and its allies, said the commander of United States Cyber Command.

Speaking yesterday before the House Select Committee on the Chinese Communist Party, Army Gen. Paul M. Nakasone told lawmakers that cyber actors in China have used malware to hold at risk critical U.S. infrastructure such as systems that provide water, electricity and fuel to U.S. citizens. He said those efforts are meant to provide options for the Chinese in crisis or conflict.

"When we have discovered them in

these critical infrastructures, the first thing that we need to do is to make sure that we get them out," Nakasone said. "The second thing is that we need to have a vigilance that continues onward. This is not an episodic threat that we're going to face. This is persistent ... we have to operate every day; we have to have a vigilance. We have to have offensive and defensive capabilities."

Despite those threats, Nakasone said U.S. cyber warriors are more than adequate defenders of the nation's infrastructure.

-- By C. Todd Lopez, DOD News

[Read more, click here](#)

Sale... Or

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

Marines retaining women at higher rates than men

By Hope Hodge Seck
Military Times

The military service with the smallest proportion of women in the ranks may also be disproportionately good at retaining them, newly obtained information shows.

According to reenlistment and retention data presented by the Marine Corps to the Pentagon's Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services in December 2023, the service retains women at higher rates than men in almost every demographic and category — and in some cases, by a wide margin.

While the Corps' enlisted retention rates are relatively low compared to some of its service counterparts, a function of the service's operational requirements and young, high-turnover workforce, women are dramatically more likely to reenlist.

In fiscal 2023, 28% of first-term male Marines opted for reenlistment, while 35% of women did — a spread of seven percentage points. The year before, 24% of first-term men reenlisted, while 32% of women did. For second-term enlisted Marines, the gap was narrower, but still pronounced.

In 2023, 43% of second-term males reenlisted, compared with 47% of second-term females. Fiscal year 2022 saw a similar 41% to 46% second-term reenlistment gap.

Service data shows this trend has been



Photo by Cpl. Clarence L. Wimberly/Marine Corps

The military service with the smallest proportion of women in the ranks may also be disproportionately good at retaining them.

observable since at least fiscal year 2019, the last year for which data was presented. And the margin shows no signs of narrowing: While in fiscal 2022 the Marines retained 30% of enlisted women and 27% of enlisted men, the gap widened in fiscal 2023, with a 33% female enlisted retention rate compared with 28% for enlisted males.

Overall, the female reenlistment rate for women was 33% for women, compared

to 28% for men.

Among Marine officers, continuation rates are closer, but still show a gap. In fiscal 2023, 90% of female officers opted for continuation, compared to 88% of men. The year before, 92% of officer women and 90% of officer men stayed in. The gap holds true across the past five years.

These trends are especially remarkable because they have no parallel among the

other services, which also presented retention data to the committee.

The Air Force, which has similarly high enlisted and officer retention rates, had exactly the same enlisted retention rate for men and women in 2023, 88.68%, and a negligible .14% difference in officer retention. At 90.71%, male officers had the higher rate.

In the Navy, which also has similar enlisted and officer retention rates, enlisted men stay in at higher rates than women. In 2023, 86.5% of enlisted men opted for continuation compared with 84.8% of women. And female officers barely edged out their male counterparts, with a continuation rate of 91% compared to 90.6% for men.

The Army, which did not provide officer data, showed an overall retention rate of 80.4% for women, slightly higher than the 77.1% rate for men.

Why does the Marine Corps retain women at such a markedly higher margin than women? It's not exactly clear, although job distribution may play a role.

In the Marine Corps infantry, where women still constitute a small minority, the service typically opts not to retain all the Marines who want to reenlist. Last year, only 16% of first-term male riflemen were selected for continuation, according to Marine Corps data.

[Read more, click here](#)

Lawmakers press for junior enlisted pay boost as soon as possible

By Terri Moon Cronk
DoD News, Defense Media Activity

Key House lawmakers on Tuesday renewed their promise to dramatically boost junior enlisted pay in the near future but warned that other budget limits may complicate hopes for a quick fix.

Those include other priorities like restoring full military housing stipends to all troops and boosting child care options across the services. Rep. Don Bacon, R-Neb. and chairman of the House Armed Services Committee's special quality of life panel, said getting all of that work done may require a multi-year plan.

"We've got to look at our top lines for next year, build out a plan and get it done as fast as we can," he told Military Times. "If we can get everything done in one year, great. But we have to make a plan to get all of these things fixed to help out our junior enlisted troops."

Bacon's comments came following lawmakers' presentations for military quality of life improvements during a hearing Tuesday afternoon.

Among the speakers was Rep. Mike Garcia, R-Calif., who has been lobbying fellow members of the House Appropriations Committee since last summer to enact a major overhaul of the military's pay tables which would boost some younger enlisted troops' pay by 35%.

"Right now, it's not until troops are promoted basically two or three times and serve at least four years that they get the same salary as a fast-food worker making \$15 an hour," he told panel members. "We've got to raise that."

Garcia's proposal — which could still be approved as part of the fiscal 2024 defense appropriations bill pending in the House — would guarantee that even the lowest-ranking service members would make at least \$31,000 annually in base pay.

In addition, an E-3 with three years service would see his or her annual salary jump from just under \$31,000 to more than \$35,000 under the plan. An E-4 with six years in service would see annual pay go from about \$36,500 to \$38,500.

Garcia's plan would not change other financial compensation that military personnel are eligible for, includ-

ing housing stipends, free health care coverage and food allowances.

White House and Pentagon officials have already voiced concerns about the costs and impact of a military pay table rewrite, however. They have pushed for delaying any such moves until a military review of service-member compensation is completed early next year.

But neither Garcia nor Bacon said they plan to wait that long. If the junior enlisted boost is not included in a final fiscal 2024 budget plan (which is now five months overdue), Bacon vowed to include some parts of the plan in the upcoming fiscal 2025 defense authorization bill debate.

"We've been doing across the board pay raises, which over time has pushed the junior enlisted pay and senior officers' salaries farther apart," he said. "It's past time we fix that."

Most junior enlisted service members currently make around \$24,000 a year in basic pay, while enlisted troops nearing retirement typically earn about \$70,000 annually.

[Read more, click here](#)

For the love of football; Growing up in Western Pennsylvania

"Tray, your sister missed the bus, so drop her off on your way to school!" my mother bellowed from the porch as my brother was about to get into his maroon Galaxy 500.

"Are you kidding me?" he griped, as I stood pathetically in the driveway. He was a senior in high school, and I was in middle school. He drove himself, along with several football team buddies, to school each morning, passing right by the middle school on the way, but he didn't want

to be seen with his geeky little sister. In my defense, my bus stop was a half-mile down our rural dead-end road, and the bus had come a smidge early.

"Get in, and keep your trap shut," Tray snapped. In the back seat, I tried to be invisible. He fired up the Galaxy's engine, and turned on the stereo, which he'd installed himself. "Wango Tango" by

Ted Nugent blared.

On the outskirts of town, Tray's football buddies hopped in the Galaxy with a quick "Sup" before the stereo volume was turned back up. They all looked the same — hair parted down the middle, stone washed jeans, tube socks, and turf shoes.

I was star struck. I didn't interact with the cool crowd, much less high school football players. Even though they glared at me with disdain, I savored this rare opportunity.

As Tray's car approached my middle school, he slowed and gave me a threatening glance. I'd better get out, and quick. No good-byes, just go, and never let this happen again. Regardless of my brother's irritation, I was exhilarated, and hoped someone saw that I'd jumped out of a car full of high school football players.

Growing up in Western Pennsylvania, football was a big part of life. If you didn't play football, you watched it. Being a Steelers fan was mandatory. High school football games were the prime event on fall Friday nights. Even though I didn't understand much about the game, positive associations were imprinted that would last a lifetime.

Later on, it took marriage and kids before I discovered the pleasure of sitting on a couch and watching football at home. It's there that I began to understand the rules.

When our son was eleven, we signed him up for flag football. Having registered late, Hayden was placed on a team that was so bad, no one stepped up to coach. My husband volunteered, and I became team mom. "The Sharks" lost every game, but we excelled in team spirit, creating unique cheers, waving purple towels, and blasting the theme from "Jaws" from our side of the field.

While stationed in Europe, we went to great lengths to watch American football, often resorting to the frustrating early versions of online streaming. Since our cumbersome Dell computer was located in the primary bedroom, our family of five, along with our 110-pound dog, would gather on our bed with snacks. When our team scored, the bed became a human salad shooter, with nacho chips, paper plates and drink cups flying everywhere.

On a fall family trip to Paris, we found a bar that played the Steelers-Browns game. And on a February trip to Rome, we woke in the middle of the night to

watch the Packers beat the Steelers in Super Bowl XLV.

During that tour, Hayden joined the high school football team. A band geek at heart, during halftime, he'd run off the field, fully geared up in his pads and jersey, to play tuba with the band. Then back on the field for the second half. We were so proud.

Hayden went on to play lineman at two more high schools. In Florida, I was team mom again, which became my unpaid, full-time job. I baked cupcakes, raised funds for a new scoreboard, applied for tax-exempt status for the Boosters Club, and planned the end-of-season banquet. During the season, I communicated with the coach more than my husband.

Now empty nesters in Rhode Island, my husband and I will be watching the Super Bowl on our couch at home with a pot of chili, while we wait for grandchildren that we can manipulate into playing football one day.

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

COLUMN



Molinari



CAPTAIN'S CUP 5V5 INDOOR SOCCER

REGISTRATION:
FEBRUARY 8-MARCH 7

TEAM MEETING:
MARCH 7 AT 1500

GAMES BEGIN:
MARCH 12 AT 1730

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CUPID 5K FUN RUN

February 20th @ 1700 @ School Age Care Center

A 5K event for all ages!
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T-Shirts will be available to the first 40 participants!
top 3 male & female finishers will given MWR Challenge coins!



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valentine's Sip & Spin

Great date night ideal

**Feb. 13
5 p.m.**

Scan for details




Black History Month: AFRICAN AMERICAN ATHLETES Story Time

February 21 • 1000 • Library



Painting with Friends-: Candles or Collet Glass Edition

February 25 • 1400 • Liberty Center

Bring a friend to paint a candle or goblet glass!
All materials will be provided while supplies last!

