

ALLHANDS

MAGAZINE OF THE U.S. NAVY

FEBRUARY 2024

CELEBRATING BLACK HISTORY

This month, we celebrate African American heritage by honoring the dedication, courage, and resilience of Sailors, past and present.

ESCALATION IN CONFLICT

U.S. Targets Militia Sites in Iraq and Anti-Ship Missiles in Yemen amid Rising Tensions with Iranian Proxies



ALL HANDS MAGAZINE

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A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR AND STAFF

Every month, we focus on the Navy's mission-focused people and technologies. As we survey how our naval forces continue to train, fight, and equip the world's toughest Sailors, we look at our advantage at sea and the capabilities of Sailors deployed around the world.

It is our mission to reach Sailors, so please share this issue and follow our social media channels for the latest information for Sailors by Sailors.

This month, we highlight important military figures for Black History Month, cover issues in the middle east, and tell the story of becoming a shellback.

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FIGHT WITH IRANIAN PROXIES INTENSIFIES

US HITS IRAQ MILITIA SITES AND ANTI-SHIP MISSILES IN YEMEN

Story by Tara Copp and Lolita Baldor, AP News

The U.S. military struck three facilities in Iraq and two anti-ship missiles in Yemen operated by Iranian-backed militias that have attacked U.S. personnel and ships in the region as the United States tries to keep the Israel-Hamas war from spilling over into a wider conflict.

Both the strikes in Iraq and Yemen late on Tuesday targeted sites that the U.S. has said are involved in the attacks against U.S. forces in Iraq and Syria and were threatening U.S. military and commercial vessels in the Red Sea.

U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said in a statement that the strikes in Iraq were at the direction of President Joe Biden and targeted facilities used by the Iranian-backed Kataib Hezbollah militia and other Iran-affiliated groups in Iraq.

“These precision strikes are in direct response to a series of escalatory attacks against U.S. and Coalition personnel in Iraq and Syria by Iranian-sponsored militias,” Austin said. Those strikes hit militia facilities in Jurf al-Sakhar, which is south of Baghdad, al-Qaim and another unnamed site in western Iraq, two U.S. officials said.

Iraq’s Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani said the strikes “blatantly violate Iraq’s sovereignty” and contribute to an “irresponsible escalation,” according to a statement from his office. The statement, signed by military spokesman Yahya Rasool, said Iraq considers the strikes “hostile acts” and is taking measures to protect the lives of Iraqis. The Popular Mobilization Forces, or PMF, a coalition of armed mostly Shiite groups only nominally under Iraqi military authority, said the strike near the Syrian border killed one of its fighters and wounded two, while the strike south of Baghdad caused material damage.

The U.S. Central Command announced it had also struck two anti-ship missiles belonging to the Yemen’s Iran-backed Houthi rebels that were being prepared for launch and were aimed at the southern part of the Red Sea.

“U.S. forces identified the missiles in Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen and determined that they presented an imminent threat to merchant vessels and the U.S. Navy ships in the region,” Central Command said.

Both fronts – land attacks in Iraq and Syria, and sea attacks originating from Yemen – have seen a significant

uptick in launches and counterstrikes over the last few days. The U.S. strikes on the Kataib Hezbollah sites in Iraq came hours after the U.S. said militiamen fired two one-way attack drones at al-Asad Air Base, injuring U.S. service members and damaging infrastructure. And they followed the militia’s most serious attack this year on the air base, when it launched multiple ballistic missiles on Saturday.

U.S. Central Command said it targeted Kataib Hezbollah headquarters, storage, and training locations for rocket, missile, and one-way attack drone capabilities. In the drone attacks against al-Asad earlier Tuesday, U.S. defenses were able to intercept the first drone but it crashed on base while the second drone hit the base, U.S. officials said. Injuries, including traumatic brain injuries and smoke inhalation, were reported to be minor. The officials spoke on the condition of anonymity to provide details that had not been announced publicly.

The strikes on the Houthi missile launch sites in Yemen followed a joint operation on Monday night where the U.S. and Britain used warship- and submarine-launched Tomahawk missiles and fighter jets to take out Houthi missile storage sites, drones and launchers.

On both fronts, the Iranian-backed militias have employed ballistic missiles to target U.S. bases and ships, which marks an escalation, said Behnam Ben Taleblu, a senior fellow at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies who specializes in Iran.

The militias have typically used drones and rockets to attack. Tehran supplied Shiite militias in Iraq with short-range and close-range ballistic missiles in 2019, Taleblu said, but they had not been used until November’s attacks.

During Saturday’s larger-scale attack, multiple ballistic missiles and rockets launched by Iranian-backed militias targeted al-Asad, but most were intercepted by air defense

systems there, Pentagon spokesperson Sabrina Singh told reporters on Monday. She said other munitions hit the base. Al-Asad is a large air base in western Iraq where U.S. troops have trained Iraqi security forces and now coordinate operations to counter the militant Islamic State group. Singh said Saturday’s attack was a “barrage” – the first time since Nov. 20 that Iranian proxy forces in Iraq had fired ballistic missiles at U.S. bases there.

A coalition of militias calling itself the Islamic Resistance in Iraq has taken credit for a number of the attacks on U.S. forces. Kataib Hezbollah is one of the groups within that umbrella organization.

Iran has also supplied the Houthis with ballistic missiles, and that group is the first Iranian proxy to fire medium-range ballistic missiles and anti-ship ballistic missiles, Taleblu said. “With Yemen, think of it as an intensification of the problem.” Saturday’s ballistic missile attack on al-Asad injured four U.S. service members, all of whom have returned to duty. One member of the Iraqi security forces was also injured.

Since the Israel-Hamas war began in early October, there have been more than 151 attacks on U.S. facilities in Syria and Iraq. According to the Pentagon, two attacks took place on Monday and included multiple rockets fired at U.S. and coalition troops at Mission Support Site Euphrates in Syria and a single rocket fired at the Rumalyn Landing Zone in Syria. Neither attack resulted in casualties or damage.

The U.S. struck back at the militia groups late last month, ordering a round of retaliatory strikes after three U.S. service members were injured in a drone attack in northern Iraq. Kataib Hezbollah claimed credit for the attack, carried out by a one-way attack drone.

The U.S., in response, hit three sites, destroying facilities and likely killing a number of the militia, the White House said at the time.

NAVY SEALS, JOINT FORCE CONCLUDES TRAINING

Courtesy/ Naval Special Warfare Group ONE

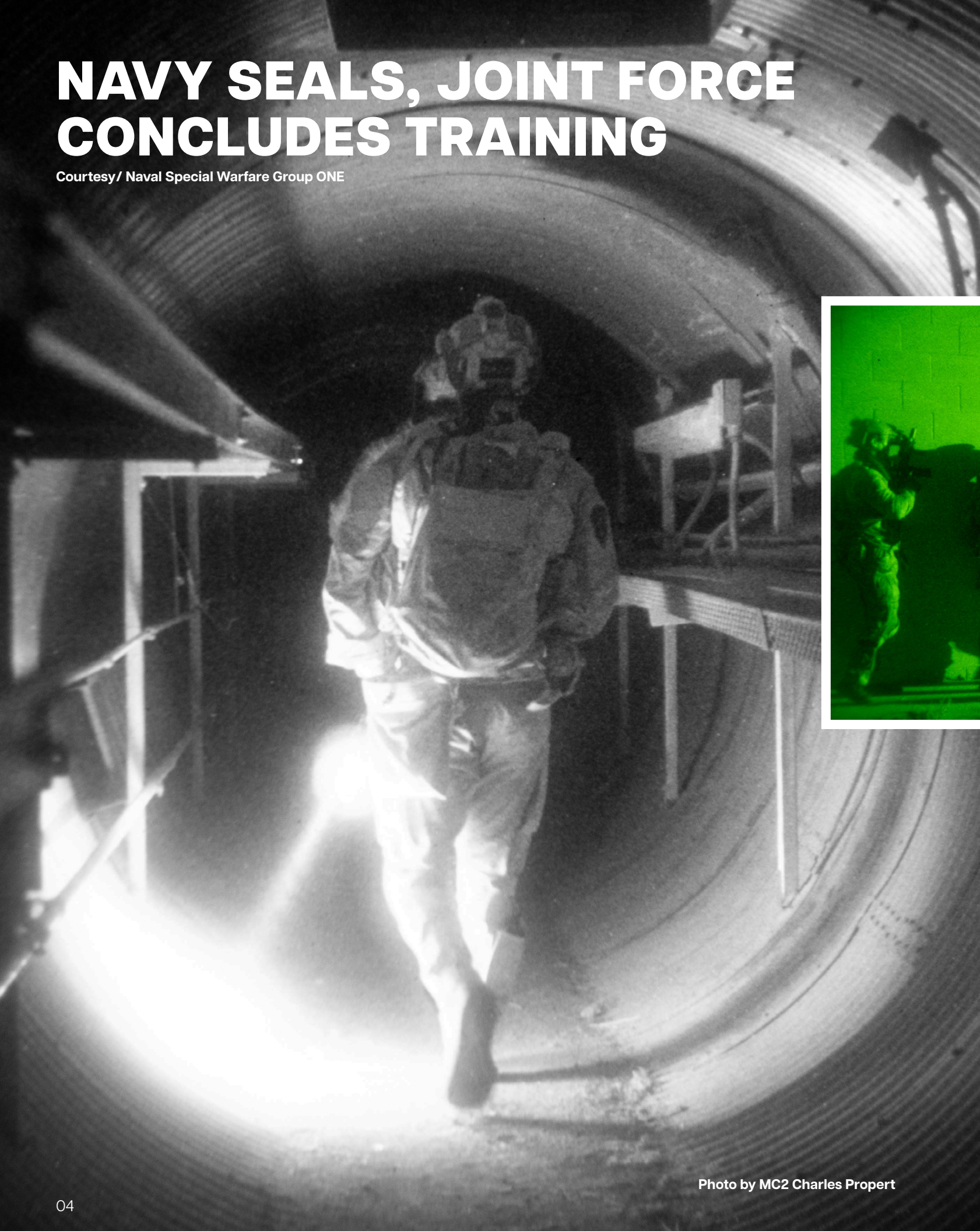


Photo by MC2 Charles Propert



Photo by MC2 Charles Propert



Photo by MC2 Charles Propert



Photo by MC2 Charles Propert

West Coast-based Naval Special Warfare (NSW) operators recently concluded a joint training exercise focused on enhancing operational capabilities and partnerships, Dec.15. The joint training included forces from 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment, 1st Operations Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, 137th Special Operations Wing, 527th Space Aggressor Squadron (SAS), and 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit.

“Our nation’s strategic advantage is bolstered by our collective ability to operate effectively in the joint environment,” said U.S. Navy Capt. Blake Chaney, commander, Naval Special Warfare Group 1. “NSW’s capability to augment the joint force offers our nation’s leaders unparalleled and distinctive options.” During the exercise, the forces conducted numerous interoperability and training iterations, demonstrating the tactics and skills required for complex missions. The training encompassed direct action raid iterations, close-quarters combat techniques, maritime boat operations, aviation insertions, and combat medical tactics. “The 15th MEU’s ability to integrate and partner with

Naval Special Warfare enhances our capabilities as a crisis response force,” said U.S. Marine Corps Col. Sean Dynan, commanding officer of 15th MEU. “Premier training like this allows us to complement each other to support Combatant Commanders and the Joint Force.”

The joint training exercise allowed each force to leverage its unique capabilities and share best practices. The exchange of knowledge and experiences among the units contributed to continuously improving tactics and strategies for future employment.

“The service members of the 527th and the 26th SAS provide the best sparring partner possible to our joint force partners by knowing, teaching, and replicating adversary electromagnetic warfare and cyber threats,” said U.S. Space Force Lt. Col. C. Gene Adams, commander of 527th Space Aggressor Squadron. “Training like this is essential to maintain U.S. advantage in great power competition.” Naval Special Warfare is the nation’s elite maritime special operations force, uniquely positioned to extend the Fleet’s reach and gain and maintain access for the Joint Force in competition and conflict.



PHOTOS FROM THE FLEET

The Naval Service—forward deployed and capable of both rapid response and sustained operations globally—remains America’s most persistent and versatile instrument of military influence.

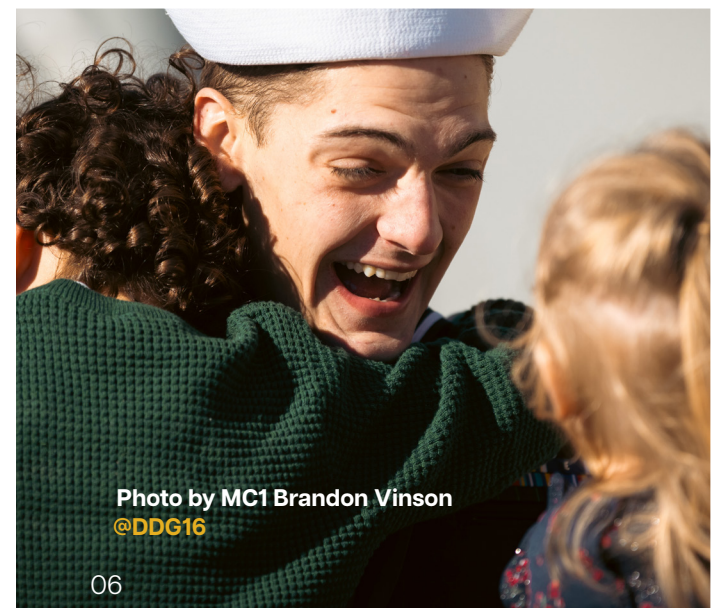


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THE THUD OF A SHELL

A CREATIVE TAKE ON THE EXPERIENCE OF BECOMING A SHELLBACK

Story by MC1 Eduardo Toteró

The polliwog revolt of the previous night was a testament to their poor judgment. He knew this much now. Soaking wet, slimy with seawater, dirt, and uncertainty, Jack could barely hold himself up on his knees grating against the cold, wet non-skid underneath. Struggling to keep his eyes open, he caught a hazy glimpse of the horizon and the imposing silhouettes looming gigantic before his eyes. His tired lungs filled with air -- drags of salty, chill mist that stung with each inhale. He felt the fog freezing his skin and as he took a

weary look around, he saw his fellow wogs -- a brethren of lowly landlubbers, scallywags, scum of the Earth -- kneeling beside him.

Next to Jack, Paul's blood-shot, panicking eyes met his. His lips moved and a cacophonous ditty soon suffused the air. The wog's bodies were battered and bruised, but their spirits remained intact. They sang in unison -- their polliwog song -- as they awaited judgment, and for an instant as fleeting as wet sand slipping through his fingers, Jack felt a shred of relief. Against all odds, after all they'd been through, they

were still standing -- if only figuratively. Yet he couldn't help but wonder for how much longer.

Succumbing to their weight, he allowed his eyelids to close shut, and he remembered. He saw the calm waters of days long gone, smelled the salty, gentle breeze of a nurturing sea cradling the ship in its sway. He felt the deceitful caress he had foolishly attributed to Queen Salacia -- a far cry from the goddess he figured now sat a distance away in front of them next to her husband, His Majesty, Neptunus Rex.

He remembered his sailing days before the Ruler of the Raging Main and his terrible court boarded his vessel, before the revolt, before the accusatory summons, before they approached the line. He reminisced fondly, but hopelessly, for he knew it was all in the past now. His voyaging days as a slimy polliwog, as the court referred to them, were swiftly coming to an end.

Davy Jones, the royal messenger, limped and shambled across the deck in front of the ranks of polliwogs, inspecting them one by one. Soon, it'd be Jack's turn. He shut his eyes in terror, attempting to avoid his fate as he heard the messenger's sloppy steps drawing ever closer until he felt a gust of death upon his slime-covered face. With a harsh tug on his hair, Jack's head was pulled back and his eyes opened, as if possessed, to meet the frightful sight in front of them. Davy Jones' revolting visage dripped with saltwater and seaweed. Jack felt it fall on his face, adding to the slime, flowing in long lines down his neck and into the ruined clothes sticking to his body. Seconds that went on for days in Jack's mind dragged by until finally, with a dreadful growl that pierced his ears, Davy Jones let go. The salty wraith shuffled on, making his way along the rows of shaking polliwogs lined across the deck.

The royal scribe had recorded the proceedings and noted the sentences and punishments for their shortcomings, for their ill-conceived schemes, for being the lowly slime that they were. Davy Jones' deliberation, after all the tests, trials and tribulations of the past day, would be the final step -- the moment of truth. Were he to approve it -- and upon the judgment of Neptunus Rex himself -- the slimy wogs would become trusty shellbacks; loyal servants of the court and worthy of the dreadful mysteries of the deep.

A sound of thunder cut through the air like a razor and as Jack's eyes squinted in disbelief, he saw him. Along the horizon -- amidst the silhouettes he hadn't been able to see clearly moments earlier -- his Royal Majesty, Ruler of the Raging Main, king of all creatures in and upon the seven seas and judge of all those who go to sea in ships, rose tall.

King Neptune sat alongside his Queen Salacia on a pearl-shelled chariot, pulled by fish-tailed horses that trembled in a quake of raw power. Jack saw the

members of His Majesty's court gathered around, awaiting the messenger. Their images grew distorted in the fog, but the sounds came clear as a fair winds day. Jack heard the King speak in ancient tongues of the deep, summoning his messenger. He was ready to hear the verdict. Davy Jones turned to the court as the oozing stench of watery doom pervading his garbs whipped Jack across the face one final time.

Jack continued to stare at Neptunus Rex, struggling to hold his gaze, trying to discern fantasy from reality when, suddenly, the King lifted a golden trident that flashed like lightning. As he did, a titanic wave formed along the distance, extending toward the ends of the Earth, making its way to the ship with a deafening roar.

Turning to see a dumbfounded Paul still kneeling next to him, Jack found his brother wog still covered in slime, stare fixed forward, mouth agape. So he shifted his eyes forward once more, back to the horizon, back to his fate, and closed them one last time. He finally gave in, let his head fall into his chest as the wave's terrifying bellow grew louder, closer, and then...

Jack's eyes sprung open to the sound of a whistle. "Reveille, reveille," the 1MC blared. "Heave out and trice up. Reveille."

With an involuntary spring of his back, his head smashed into the lamp overhead and in his painful daze he could tell: he was in his rack. He rolled out, felt the warm deck underneath his feet and with an aching head and a pounding heart, he slowly returned to his senses. He was aboard his ship, his home, USS Nimitz -- another day deployed.

As he scrambled into his salty coveralls, still confused, he caught a glimpse of a familiar face in the corner of his eye and turned to look, it was Paul. His friend stared back at him, and for a moment they shared a look which lasted mere seconds, but felt like an eternity.

Jack's eyes stretched open, trying to take in the moment, putting the pieces of the last few days back together like the morning after a long night in a foreign port. Had it been real? Was it all just a dream? What did it mean?

His mind raced as he looked deep into Paul's stare, desperately searching for answers he knew he might never find, but just as he was about to give up, he saw it. A twinkle began to shine in Paul's eyes and a knowing grin slowly formed across his lips, the revelation of an insane secret known by all across the deckplates.

"Crazy, huh?" Paul muttered as he shuffled toward Jack. "Let's get going, bro. I'm trying to get some chow before cleaning stations."

Before Jack could conjure up a reply, Paul slung his arm around him, slapping a fraternal pat on his back. He couldn't feel the contact but he could swear he heard it. It was a peculiar sound, different, new; it was the thud of a shell.

SAILORS INSPIRE CHILDREN AT ORPHANAGE IN PHILIPPINES



Photo by MC2 Tristan Cookson

Story by MC2 Tristan Cookson

Sailors from the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS William P. Lawrence (DDG 110) participated in a community relations (COMREL) project at a local orphanage in Quezon City, Philippines, Jan. 13.

The 15 participating Sailors spent the day playing games, singing songs, and creating memories at Gentle Hands Home of Grace.

For many of these Sailors, this was their first opportunity to volunteer overseas. The event left quite an impression, according to Logistics Specialist 2nd Class Ashlee Almugla, from South Bend, Indiana.

"I love being around kids that are so happy and energetic; it takes me away from everything else that we deal with," said Almugla. "This is one of the things that makes me say, 'This is why I joined.'"

For other volunteers, such as Fire Controlman AEGIS 3rd Class Kevin Cardea, from West Covina, California, events like these can be a rejuvenating experience.

"Being in the position to help someone other than myself is cleansing for the soul," said Cardea. "Not only was this impactful to serving the community, it was impactful to the individuals that we were able to give one-on-one attention with."

Once lunch and games were finished, the Sailors and kids joined in songs and dances before saying their final goodbyes.

"For anyone who hasn't volunteered for a COMREL, I absolutely think they should," said Almugla. "It's very humbling and it shows that it's possible to be happy in this world, regardless of what you may or may not have."

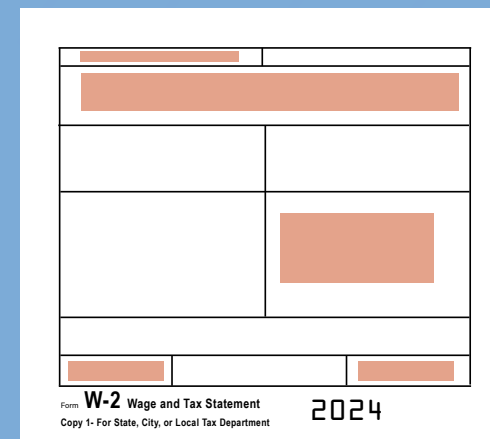
Gentle Hands was founded 30 years ago by Denie Heppner as a Non-Government Organization. The organization's goal is to create a safe and loving environment in which the children entrusted to their care are able to be in a safe place of healing, and learn what it means to be loved, and to have their rights respected.

"This visit means so much because it's so rare to have volunteers be as involved as the Sailors are," said Sarah Jane, arts and recreation coordinator for Gentle Hands. "The kids love the challenge of keeping up physically with the Sailors." William P. Lawrence, assigned to Carrier Strike Group (CSG) 1, was in the Philippines for a scheduled port visit, supporting operational readiness and regional partnerships. CSG-1 is currently deployed to U.S. 7th Fleet's area of operations in support of free and open Indo-Pacific.

CSG-1 is a multiplatform team of ships and aircraft, capable of carrying out a wide variety of missions around the globe from combat missions to humanitarian assistance and disaster relief response.

U.S. 7th Fleet is the U.S. Navy's largest forward-deployed numbered fleet and routinely interacts and operates with allies and partners in preserving a free and open Indo-Pacific region.

TIPS FOR FILING YOUR TAX RETURNS



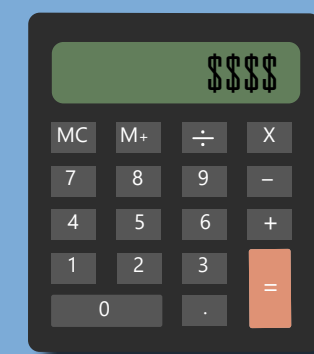
Find W-2 and 1099's on myPay. Tax statements sent through the U.S. Postal Service will be in the mail by January 31, 2024.



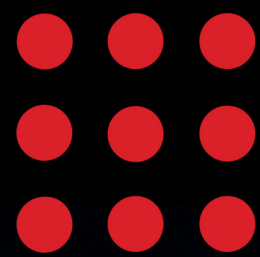
Service members may deduct unreimbursed moving expenses as long as the move is part of an authorized permanent change of station.



Certain military members, like those serving overseas, can automatically extend their tax deadlines beyond the general April 14th cutoff.



Combat zone pay is partially or fully tax-free with exemptions. Other nontaxable benefits include housing and subsistence allowances as well as uniform allowances.



Veterans Crisis Line

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FEB 2024

AH SHORE TO SEA



NAVADMIN 258/23

PHYSICAL READINESS PROGRAM UPDATE FOR CALENDAR YEAR 2024

NAVADMIN 258/23 announces a single Calendar Year 2024 (CY2024) Physical Fitness Assessment (PFA), policy changes for postpartum wellness PFA, Command Fitness Leader (CFL) recertification and a PFA Physical Readiness Information Management System TWO (PRIMS-2) update.

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NAVADMIN 303/23

SELECTED RESERVE PORTION OF THE MILITARY SERVICE OBLIGATION

NAVADMIN 303/23 discusses the Military Service Obligation (MSO) and reiterates Selected Reserve (SELRES) requirements for first term officer and enlisted Sailors transitioning from Active Duty at the completion of their Active Duty service obligation.

Requirements:
- Joined on or after 01 October 2020
- Separing with less than 6 years active duty



APP OF THE MONTH: MYNAVY FINANCIAL LITERACY

MYNAVY FINANCIAL LITERACY application provides Navy personnel with information to help them achieve their personal financial goals and meet the Navy's financial literacy education requirements. This app allows Service members and their families to access financial literacy resources and training anywhere, anytime via their mobile devices.

Resources include:
- Financial Readiness Touchpoint Training Courses
- Blended Retirement System (BRS) Resources
- Debt Destroyer@ Workshop
- Financial Literacy Resources and more!



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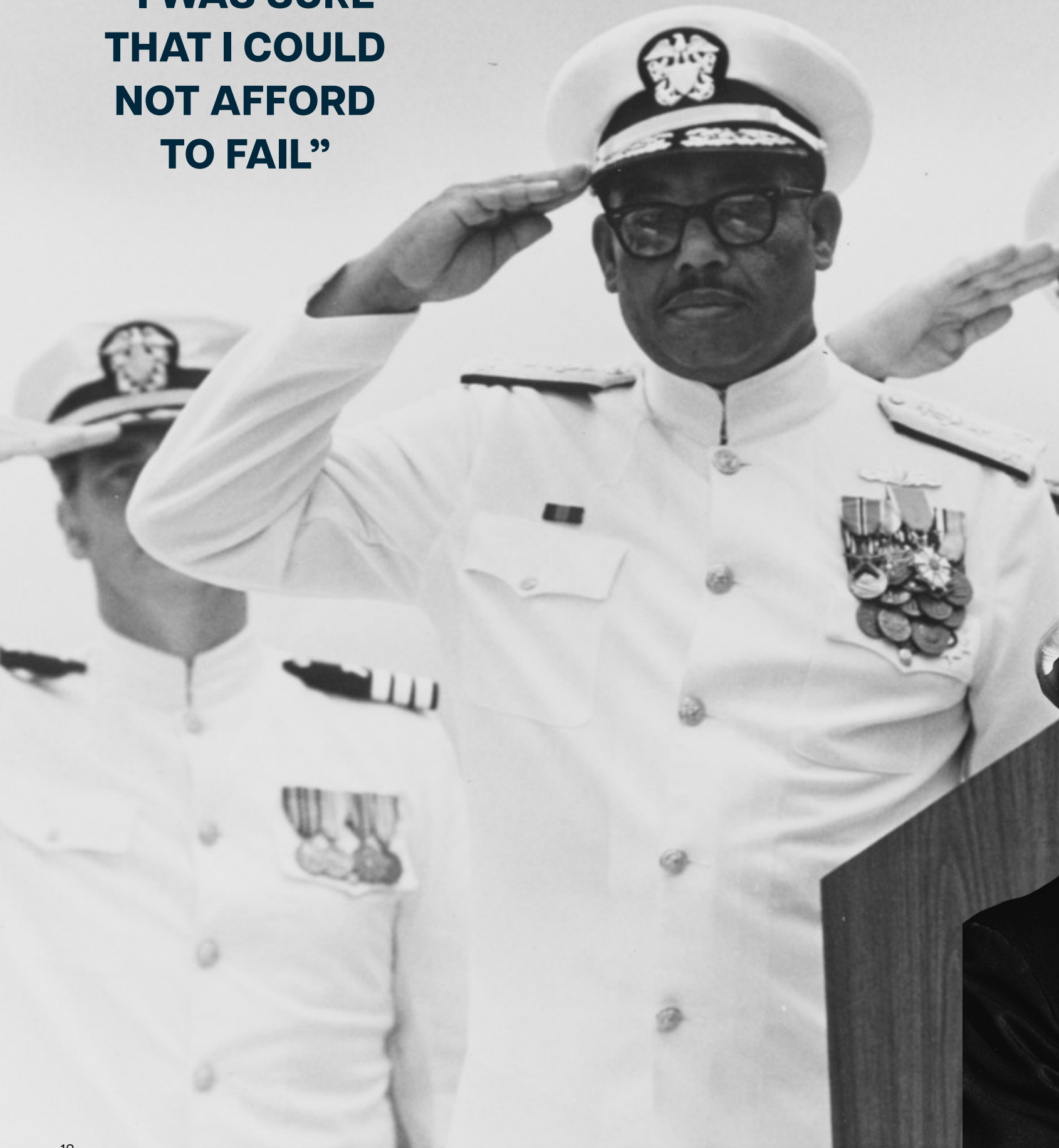
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CELEBRATING
BLACK HISTORY MONTH

**“I WAS SURE
THAT I COULD
NOT AFFORD
TO FAIL”**



THE FIRST

A BLACK HISTORY MONTH FEATURE

Story by MC3 Timothy Carley

In the shadow of war, surrounding WWII, a young man rose above the rest and became a legend in Naval history. Commanding his destiny, Vice Admiral Samuel Lee Gravely Jr. was a stark example of honor, courage, and commitment. He had the will to achieve, strive for change, and redefine leadership. Gravely shared the same humble beginnings as almost every other Sailor. Gravely started his career in 1942 at Great Lakes, IL, as a Seaman Apprentice. He understood the challenges and limitations placed on black Sailors when they joined. Factors like segregation and non-inclusion that may have turned some people away from service at the time, did not discourage Gravely, as he accepted the challenges and refused to succumb to them. Instead, he used them as an opportunity to accelerate his career. Despite African-American Sailors not receiving a “square break” according to the 1944 Secretary of the Navy, James Forrestal, the perseverance, drive,

and work ethic of Gravely led

to him commissioning as an officer that same year. Despite

the segregationist attitude and policies surrounding black service members at the time he led the way, embarking on a new path as a Navy commissioned officer and etching his name into history. Shortly after that,

in 1946, President Harry S. Truman in

issued Executive Order 9981,

disallowing the unfair treatment of Sailors

discrimination

based on race, religion, national origin and color in the military. This included eligibility for officer candidate programs and new special duty assignments, making it easier for others to follow in Gravely’s footsteps. In February of 1961, Gravely had the opportunity to become the first black Sailor to assume command of a United States Navy Ship. Aboard the USS Theodore E. Chandler, (DD-717) he led the ship through a rigorous rehabilitation and modernization cycle, improving the ship’s quality of life standards as well as increasing the time that it could stay operational, making strides in fleet readiness. With a career spanning thirty-eight years, Gravely was a Seaman Apprentice, commissioned as an officer, became the Navy’s first black Commander, first black Captain, first black flag officer, and the first black Sailor to assume command of an entire U.S. Navy fleet, proving that anybody, from any background is capable of being an effective leader when they take initiative. Gravely’s desire to be better and achieve something bigger than himself is what caused him to reach these heights to begin with. His “never say quit” attitude and unwillingness to accept career limitations placed on him by society and his peers has made him an example to all Sailors past and present that regardless of who you are, what you look like or what you believe in, anyone can be great.



Source: Navy History and Heritage Command

Photo by MC2 Nolan Pennington



Photo by MC2 Christopher Jones



Photo by MC3 Malachi Lakey



Photo by MC2 Leon Vonguyen



Photo by MC3 Victoria Armstrong



A SEA OF ACHIEVEMENTS

TRAILBLAZERS AND MILESTONES IN BLACK NAVAL HISTORY

USS MASON: BREAKING WAVES AND BARRIERS



During the segregated era of WWII, USS Mason (DE-529) emerged as a symbol of courage and progress. Manned primarily by African Americans, this vessel played a crucial role in escorting and safeguarding Atlantic convoys, pivotal for the Allied war effort. Their seamanship challenged the racial barriers of the time, marking a significant step towards integration in the U.S. Navy.

PRESIDENT TRUMAN ISSUES EXECUTIVE ORDER 9981

Harry S. Truman, the 33rd President of the United States, played a pivotal role in desegregating the armed forces. On July 26, 1948, Truman issued Executive Order 9981, which aimed to eliminate racial discrimination in the military. This decision marked a significant step toward civil rights progress. It called for equal treatment and opportunity for all service members, regardless of race or ethnicity. Truman's order set in motion the desegregation process, prompting the military to gradually integrate its units. His stance against discrimination laid the foundation for a more inclusive and diverse armed forces.



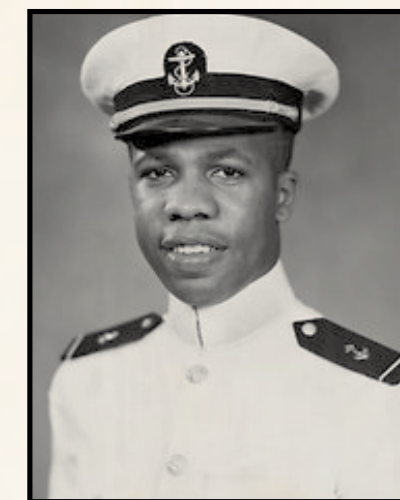
SAMUEL LEE GRAVELY JR.

A remarkable leader who made history as the United States Navy's first black admiral. Throughout his distinguished career, he shattered barriers and paved the way for greater diversity and inclusion within the Navy.



HARRIET IDA PICKENS

A pioneering African American woman who broke barriers as one of the first black female officers in the United States Navy, leaving a legacy of courage and determination for the generations to come.



WESLEY BROWN

The first African American to graduate from the U.S. Naval Academy. Brown excelled academically and demonstrated remarkable perseverance. Brown's legacy serves as a testament to the importance of diversity and inclusion in the armed forces.

THE NAVY'S FIRST BLACK COMMISSIONED AND WARRANT OFFICERS KNOWN AS THE GOLDEN THIRTEEN





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