

# ALLHANDS

MAGAZINE OF THE U.S. NAVY

JUNE 2024



## PRIDE MONTH

Pride in All Who Serve,  
A Place for All

## JUNETEENTH

This year's theme "Opportunity  
Freedom Celebrated"



Photo by MC1 Jamaal Liddell

# 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, scan the QR codes, and follow our social media channels for the latest information for Sailors by Sailors.

This month, we celebrate Pride, Juneteenth, heros of the past generation, and a continuing legacy of a family name.

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Courtesy photo provided by Lt. Cassidy Lewis



A FAMILY LEGACY

# BORN TO BE A BOXER

Courtesy photo provided by Lt. Cassidy Lewis



Photo by MC2 Connor Burns



## Story by MC1 Kelsey Eades

An 11-year-old boy is fated for a career in the Navy following in the footsteps of his father. His determination and resiliency brought him around the globe and through three military branches as he climbed the ladder to reach lieutenant in the U.S. Navy. It is fate that brought him to the same ship his father served aboard and the one that solidified his passion to serve at sea. Across the U.S., family legacies can look vastly different. For Lt. Cassidy Lewis, the family business includes service aboard the amphibious assault ship USS Boxer (LHD 4).

Born and raised in San Diego, Lewis grew up trying on his father's Navy uniform, knowing he would one day wear the same uniform and experience life at sea like his father, Cmdr. Gerald Lewis, now retired. When he was 11 years old in 1999, Lewis received an invitation to join his father on a five-day tiger cruise aboard Boxer, a Wasp-class amphibious assault ship commissioned four years earlier.

"From a young age, I knew I was going to be in the military and in the Navy," said Lewis. "At that time, my first thought [about the tiger cruise] was 'Finally it's happening. I'm going to be going on a Navy ship.' I knew that I was either going to do one of two things: I'm going to drive the ship, or I'm going to fly something off of it. Now, I'm driving the ship. I definitely see it as a boyhood dream come true."

Twenty-four years after he first stepped onboard, Lewis is now assigned to the same ship that solidified his path in life and that his father once served on as the aviation maintenance limited duty officer.

"This was the last ship my father deployed on, so I am kind of picking up where he left off," said Lewis. "I went to see if I could find his old stateroom and I found it instantly as if nothing had changed."

His journey to reach the Navy is not the typical path that most Sailors would take. Growing up, Lewis admired the Marines as well. He enlisted in the Marine Corps in 2008 and served a total of 6 years. After leaving the Marine Corps, he earned a degree in history from San Diego State University in 2014 and received a commission as a second lieutenant in the Army four years later. After three years in the Army, fate

brought him back to his roots. With his father serving as his commissioning officer, he joined the Navy in 2021 as a surface warfare officer (SWO) in training and finally accomplished his childhood dream.

"I ended up where I wanted to be in the Navy. I just took a unique way of getting there," said Lewis. "When I look back at all of the things I said I wanted to do, at every point—Army, Navy, Marine Corps—it was where I was supposed to be at that time."

Today, Lewis is working towards earning his SWO pin, which will signify him as a subject matter expert on Boxer operations with an understanding of the ship's engineering plant, combat systems, weapons and navigation.

"A SWO is like a jack of all trades," said Lewis. "You're striving to be an expert; it's hard, but it's very rewarding."

His journey has brought him full circle from visiting Boxer at the age of 11, to now serving as ship's company aboard the very same ship. His father had been his inspiration into joining the military, and he credits his determination and will to accomplish his dream to his father.

"My father won't take any credit for it, but he was a major influence to me," said Lewis. "My father never pressed the military on me. I just pressed him for a long time. If my kids wanted to have a career in the military, I would have nothing but good things to say because it's been what I've always wanted to do."

Gerald Lewis shared that he is proud of his son, "As a parent, there will always be special moments you remember about your family, but more so about your children," said the senior Lewis. "My son Cass serving his first commissioned naval tour on board the same ship that I served my first commissioned tour on is 'priceless' to me. Even though I'm retired now, it makes my career feel even more rewarding."

Gerald Lewis retired in 2015 after 32 and a half years of service, but his son now has the watch, onboard the same ship he served on more than two decades earlier.

# 8

# D-DAY

JUNE 6, 1944

**D-DAY**, ALSO KNOWN AS OPERATION OVERLORD, WAS THE START OF ALLIED OPERATIONS TO LIBERATE WESTERN EUROPE, DEFEAT NAZI GERMANY, AND END WORLD WAR II.

ALMOST **133,000 TROOPS** FROM THE U.S., THE BRITISH COMMONWEALTH, AND THEIR ALLIES LANDED ON THE FRENCH SHORES OF NORMANDY.



BY JUNE 11, MORE THAN 326,000 ALLIED TROOPS CROSSED WITH MORE THAN 100,000 TONS OF SUPPLIES. **PARIS WAS LIBERATED** ON AUGUST 25, AND **GERMANY SURRENDERED** ON MAY 8, 1945.



# JUNETEENTH FREEDOM DAY

**End of slavery**  
**Texas, June 19, 1865.**



Graphic by PO2 Tyra Watson



## THE HISTORICAL ORIGIN OF JUNETEENTH

Story by MCSN Juan Cordova

Juneteenth celebrated on the 19th of June since 1865, commemorates the day 250,000 slaves were finally set free by executive decree in Galveston Texas. The holiday became recognized as a federal holiday on June 17th, 2021, bringing more awareness to the holiday long celebrated by African communities as their own Independence Day.

Juneteenth is celebrated yearly as a day of hope and progression. Immediately following the news of freedom, liberated and empowered African Americans sought education and change with an unrelenting drive.

"Formerly enslaved people immediately sought to reunify families, establish schools, run for political office, push radical legislation, and even sue slaveholders for compensation." - National Museum of African American History and Culture.

Many people think that the Emancipation Proclamation ended slavery in 1863 during the Civil War however, it only freed slaves within the Confederate states keeping hundreds of thousands of slaves still under shackles. The proclamation like a roaring tide pushed forth the fight and determination for freedom in the civil war.

"The Proclamation announced the acceptance of black men into the Union Army and Navy, enabling the liberated to become liberators" Cited from National Archives. "By the end of the war, almost 200,000 black soldiers and sailors had fought for the Union and freedom."

Only through the thirteenth amendment, ratified in 1865 at the end of the civil war, did slavery end throughout

the entire United States. Still, however, injustice and discrimination did not change overnight or even over the next few decades. Being free yet poor left former slaves nowhere to turn and start working for their old slaveholders for wages. The Civil War left Confederate states broke resulting in plantations not being able to pay their "new" laborers. Through contracts, laborers would make deals and be indebted to landowners for a section of land and property at the end of the year.

"The only way to receive property and items to farm was to become indebted to landowners. The struggle for freedom morphed into a struggle for economic independence." USF. St. Petersburg

The road to freedom has never been clean-cut and often spiked backward for the African American community, but on Juneteenth, we observe this day and celebrate progression and educate ourselves on the cruel mistreatment history has burdened on African American families. From slavery and Jim Crow to emancipation and the Civil Rights movements, etc.... there has been much change and improvement.

Our nation accepts all races and welcomes any person who wants to serve to keep our country safe and welcoming to all. Through struggles and triumph, we fight for the freedom of all, collectively as one great fighting force, we are here for you.

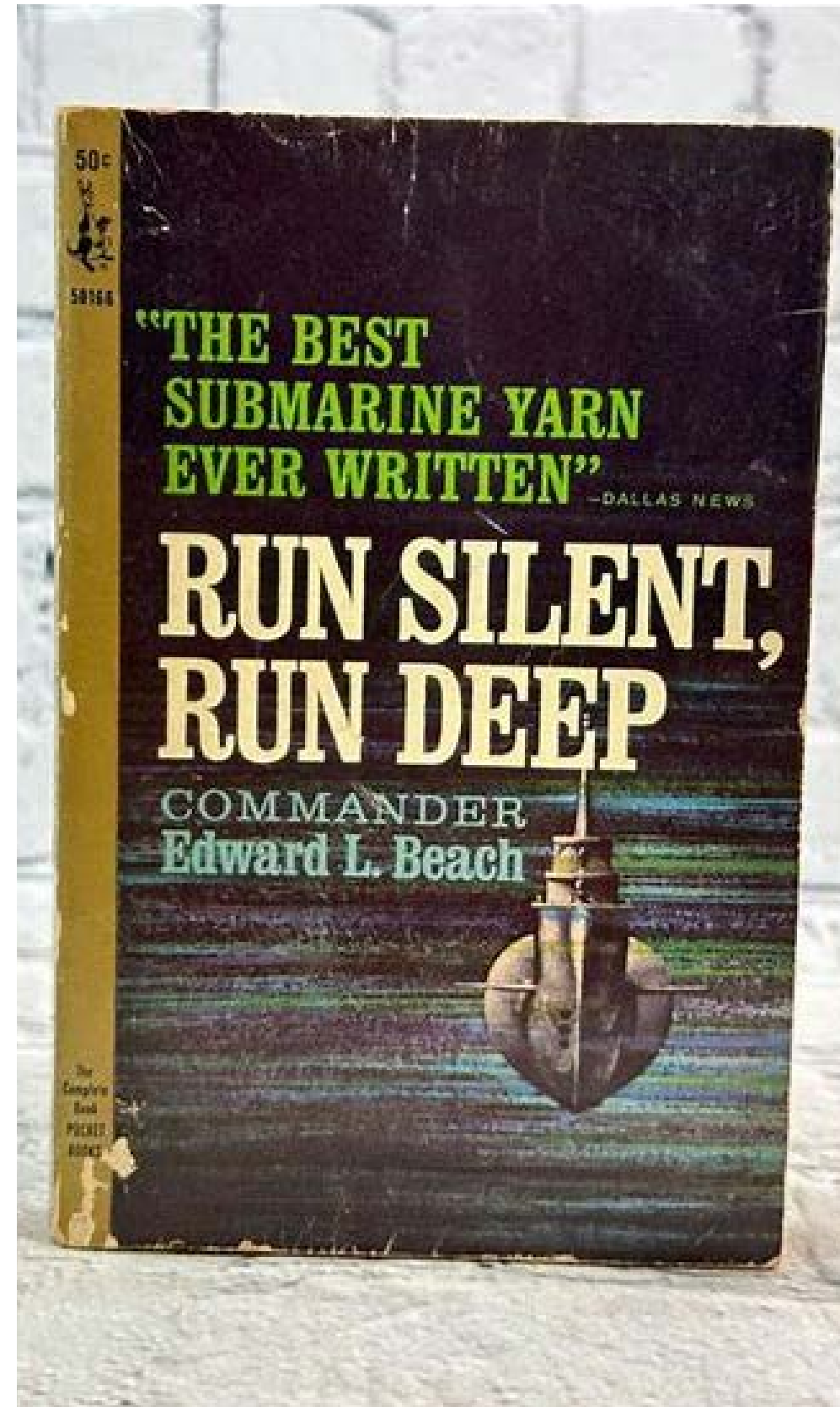
Speak up, Get help.

# PTSD

Not all wounds are visible.

Call 988 or visit: [988lifeline.org](https://988lifeline.org)

## BOOK OF THE MONTH



Most of the books are available at no cost to Sailors in both e-Book and digital audio format from the Navy MWR digital library collection. Eligible patrons can download the books through:

<https://www.navymwrdigitalibrary.org>

*"If ever a book had a ring of reality, this is it . . . combat passages rank with the most exciting written about any branch of the service."*

**New York Times**

Run Silent, Run Deep

**By Commander Edward L. Beach**

With fidelity, Beach creates the anguish, agony, and triumphs of command decisions. The protagonist, Commander Richardson embodies all that is fine and human in an excellent naval officer. This is a monument, not to the misfits and the mistakes, but to those men who rose to greatness under the sometimes unbearable tensions of action.

# HONORING OUR HEROES

HONOR FLIGHT SAN DIEGO'S "TOUR OF HONOR"



Photos and story by MC1 Ramon Go

Ninety Naval Special Warfare (NSW) Vietnam War veterans and their accompanying "guardians" flew to Washington D.C. for Honor Flight San Diego's (HFSD) "Tour of Honor," April 26-28.

The journey was the first dedicated exclusively to NSW operators and featured Honor Flight guardians composed of volunteer active-duty and former NSW operators who lent assistance - both physically and spiritually - during the fast-paced three-day tribute which began with the veterans' exchanging smiles, laughter and the occasional faded black-and-white snapshots of their youth.

Leaving San Diego featured a tone-setting boarding where Bruce Springsteen's "Born in the U.S.A.," echoed through the jetway as airline employees formed an applause line just in front of the escort plane's fuselage logo, "Honoring Those who Serve."

The positive vibes continued during the five-hour journey when the plane's captain made a surprise announcement: "Mail Call, Mail Call," where approximately 70 letters were delivered to each veteran. Hands which once wielded the deadly tools of special warfare deftly opened heartfelt messages of deep appreciation, love and admiration from family, friends, children and strangers from around the world. These letters heralded their courage and grit, their dedication and love in fighting one of America's most unpopular wars.

Most of these heroes returned from their little-known riverine battles during a time when scattered public appreciation was drowned out with heavy doses of scorn and protest.

The "Tour of Honor" at our nation's capital started early as four busses toured the Marine Corps, World War II and U.S. Navy Memorials. But it was the time spent at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial where substantive reflection took place. There, the jet-lagged, yet spirited veterans helped place a custom-designed tribute featuring the names and images of the 55 NSW operators who didn't make it home or were killed in action or in training during the war from 1957 to 1975.

After the all-day journey, guardian and Naval Special Warfare Force Master Chief (SEAL) Walter Dittmar, provided the evening's keynote remarks emphasizing his community's debt of gratitude owed to the room of august warriors.

"I am honored, I am humbled, and I am blessed. My voice to you veterans is not mine...the words I will share with you are from the 10,000 members of the NSW community. I pray that these words communicate how highly we think of you and how much we appreciate what you have given to the NSW community.

To my veterans, you and your entire generation not only prepared me, but you have prepared NSW for something they didn't know was coming. You taught us discipline, attention to detail, you hammered rehearsals, tactics, movement, you

taught us how to survive in combat, how to take care of our gear, and how to take care of each other. You taught us how to adapt, how to think. You taught us how to be ready. That is what you gave us, your gift to us. Our successes are because of you, and it was you who prepared us for what would come. Those of you who survived, we owe you our lives. Thank you," proclaimed Dittmar concluding a spirited delivery which - within the short yet visceral remarks - evoked rounds of laughter, moments of silence and tears, but ended with a rousing NSW traditional "Hooo-Ya!" cheer.

This unifying moment galvanized and re-centered the jet-lagged gathering of the brotherhood, as it reinforced a signature element emphasizing the significance of the SEAL Ethos.

"My trident is a symbol of honor and heritage bestowed upon me by the heroes that have gone before it, it embodies the trust of those I have sworn to protect."

The Tour of Honor continued the next day with a few more surprises. First, the weary veterans were immediately welcomed home by Rear Adm. Keith Davids, commander of Naval Special Warfare Command, where he extended his deepest gratitude for their service.

"It is indeed a tremendous honor to shake their hands and personally express gratitude for their invaluable contributions to the NSW community and the Navy," said Davids. "Their

legacy reverberates far beyond their years, inspiring generations of future NSW personnel."

Meanwhile, over 800 friends, family, and eager supporters erupted into a cacophony of welcoming cheers, applause, announcements, and patriotic music as the first veteran - Medal of Honor recipient Mike Thornton passed through volunteer honor sideboys from USS Essex (LHD 2) and Naval Medical Center San Diego, and descended the escalator into a frothy sea of American-style appreciation once sadly withheld from most Vietnam War vets...but no more.

Julie Brightwell, Honor Flight San Diego's Chairman, along with dozens of HFSD volunteers orchestrated the entire journey to include secretly coordinating hundreds of raucous supporters who made their long-delayed hero's homecoming memorable and spiritually fulfilling.

HFSD is a branch of the larger Honor Flight Network, chartered in 2005 by Jeff Miller and Earl Morse, with a mission to honor war veterans by exposing them to D.C.'s tribute memorials built specifically to commemorate their service and sacrifice.

NSW is the nation's premiere maritime special operations force and is uniquely positioned to extend the fleet's reach and deliver all-domain options for naval and joint force commanders.



# JOINING FORCES

## SEABEES JOIN FORCES WITH THE U.S. ARMY AND NORWAY

Story by Maj. Vonnie Wright

In a display of international collaboration the U.S. Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 11, Norwegian Armed Forces and the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division joined forces to construct and maneuver across a medium girder bridge April 26-28 here testing joint mobility capabilities during DEFENDER 2024.

The 21st Theater Sustainment Command is in charge of setting the theater, which means rapidly deploying forces and equipment to the point of need anywhere in Europe. A critical part of that process is conducting Reception, Staging, and Onward Movement. The onward movement piece portion of that sustainment operation requires teamwork from allies and other services within the Department of Defense. The U.S. Navy was just that essential service.

When most people think of the U.S. Navy, massive gray vessels protecting international waters is the initial thought. Yet, the U.S. Navy has a ground force of engineers affectionately titled the “Seabees,” from NMCB 11 that assist mobility and protection efforts for maneuver forces.

U.S. Navy Lt. Mason Mullins, team leader, NMCB 11 discusses the importance of the Seabees on ground with their counterparts and how he prides himself on that expertise within the Navy with light humor.

“Floaty gray thing, what’s that,” said Mullins. “We often joke and say that because most of our operations are on the ground with you guys building resources. This was a

different challenge than usual though as we couldn’t even see the ground when we first arrived as it was covered in snow. We had to use poles to find where level ground was prior to construction.”

The decision to build the bridge stemmed from the strategic importance of the region, which is known for its challenging terrain and numerous waterways. Recognizing the need for improved infrastructure to facilitate military operations and enhance logistical capabilities, the Seabees assembled a medium girder bridge that can be built utilizing their team with nothing but manpower if required, with the largest component of the bridge having the ability to be carried in a four-man lift.

Yet, the elements of Norway did provide key lessons learned to the warm weather stationed allies. 3BCT, 10th Mtn. Div. is not stationed with the rest of their division in Fort Drum, New York where conditions are similar to Norway. Additionally, the crew of 25 personnel from NMCB 11 are all stationed from the humid climate of Gulfport, Mississippi. The challenges for both teams were substantial and required adaptation to the arctic environment.

Petty Officer 1st Class Melissa Desalvo, bridge master, NMCB 11 led her team through 25-30 mph winds and snow so high the ability to find solid ground became difficult for bridge placement across the crossing site. Desalvo’s team worked together to ensure the safety and completion of the bridge

site for Norwegian and 3BCT, 10th Mtn. Div.’s different vehicle types during the movement of the convoy.

“The biggest difference in building this bridge is the arctic conditions,” said Desalvo. “In Gulfport you have a lot of humidity which is a lot of heat slowing down the bridge building process, but out here you also have to take breaks to warm back up. Similar in slowing the process down, but just a completely different obstacle because you can at least see the ground during construction of the bridge in a warmer environment. The ice and snow made that task tremendously difficult, but the Norwegians assisted us and there was a lot of cross training involved. They gave the Army and us a few tips. It took us 12 hours which is pretty fast under these conditions.”

The construction process was a testament to the collaborative spirit between the U.S. Navy and Norway. Navy Seabees, renowned for their expertise in construction and infrastructure development, worked side by side with Norwegian engineers and the U.S. Army but the Seabees did majority of the heavy lifting as this is their expertise.

1st Lt. Stone Sawyer, sapper platoon leader, A Company, 326 Brigade Engineer Battalion, was grateful for the cross training his team of Sappers received working with the Norwegian Allies and the Seabees.

“This was a good training opportunity,” said Sawyer. “As light combat engineers we don’t get to do these things often. We had about 20 Soldiers here with eight Soldiers rotating through to receive the training with the Navy during construction. It has been great for me working with Lt. Mullins as I get to witness how he does his job as an engineer in the Seabees and how he can integrate into what we do as combat engineers to improve our unit’s mobility. This was a great opportunity to work with him and our Norwegian partners.

The successful collaboration between the NATO allies caused six multinational vehicles to cross the bridge and confirm their joint capabilities crossing linear danger areas. As the bridge stands tall, bridging not only physical gaps but also forging stronger bonds between two nations, it serves as a reminder of the incredible things that can be achieved when NATO comes together in defense of its territories.

“I’m the most proud of this crew,” said DeSalvo. “They came out here and overcame a lot of obstacles in an inexperienced climate and knocked it out of the park. This proves as a major benefit for mobility when it comes to the Army and our allies. When you come to an impasse and you need an alternate route, we can establish a bridge quickly, which allows you to get to where you need to go a little faster.”

As the 21st TSC continues to set the theater within the onward movement process, the U.S. Navy and our Norwegian partners have proven to be a vital ally for military exercises in the European theater.

DEFENDER is a Dynamic Employment of Forces to Europe for NATO Deterrence and Enhanced Readiness, and is a U.S. European Command scheduled, U.S. Army Europe and Africa conducted exercise that consists of Saber Strike, Immediate Response, and Swift Response. DEFENDER 24 is linked to NATO’s Steadfast Defender exercise, and DoD’s Large Scale Global Exercise, taking place from 28 March to 31 May. DEFENDER 24 is the largest U.S. Army exercise in Europe and includes more than 17,000 U.S. and 23,000 multinational service members from more than 20 Allied and partner nations, including Croatia, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Georgia, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom.



# PLAN OF THE MONTH



Your Leadership Tool for Communicating Internally

## JUNE 2024

### IMPORTANT DATES:

Feb. 1- Nov. 30	CY24 PRT Cycle
June 1	First Day of Pride Month
June 4-7	Commemoration of the Battle of Midway
June 6	D-Day
June 19	Juneteenth
June 25-28	SSLA Joint Women's Leadership Symposium

### DEADLINES:

June 10	<a href="#">FY25 AD Chief Selection Boards: Letter to the Board Due</a>
June 30	<a href="#">Health of the Force Survey Input Due</a>
July 1	<a href="#">Seaman-to-Admiral (STA-21) Applications Due</a>

## SPOTLIGHT

### APPRENTICE ADVANCEMENT ALIGNMENT

As of July 1, all E-1 to E-4 advancements will be based on time-in-service (TIS).

- E-1 to E-2: 9 months TIS
- E-2 to E-3: 18 months TIS
- E-3 to E-4: 30 months TIS

To advance, Sailors must maintain a CO's retention recommendation and meet the TIS. Sailors are not required to complete Professional Military Knowledge Eligibility Exam (PMK-EE) to advance to E-4. This policy does not apply to nuclear, advanced technical, and electronic field Sailors who are already obligated for additional service to advance to E-4.



## NAVY CULTURE



### HEALTH OF THE FORCE SURVEY

The Navy's annual Health of the Force Survey is now active! This is YOUR opportunity to provide input and offer insight into how Navy programs and policies impact you. Your participation directly contributes to improving climate and culture, supporting Navy personnel, and facilitating readiness. The survey is available online via computer or phone until June 30. Make sure your voice is heard via the survey link [here](#).

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

### CAREER DEVELOPMENT BOARDS

Career Development Boards (CDBs) allow all enlisted Sailors to develop their professional skills and make informed decisions based on Navy policies and programs. CDBs are a tailored experience for outlining personal and professional goals. It is important that leaders at all levels understand the purpose of these boards. Watch this video for the most up-to-date CDB guidance: [Navy Career Development Board - Training Video 2024](#)



PREPARED BY  
Navy Office of Information

## MONEY MATTERS

### TRANSFERRING EDUCATION BENEFITS

Are you considering transferring your education benefits to a dependent? If you are eligible for the [Post-9/11 GI Bill](#), you can visit milConnect to transfer up to 36 months of this benefit to your DEERS-registered dependents. Service members who have served on active duty for at least six years can initiate a transfer and must be eligible to serve an additional four years for the transfer to take effect. The [milConnect TEB](#) page enables you to review, modify, or revoke a transfer request at any time, so don't wait to take advantage of this valuable education resource!



## HEALTH & WELLNESS

### NEW PARENT SUPPORT HOME VISITATION PROGRAM

Learn how to navigate the transition to parenthood with the New Parent Support Home Visitation Program! This program is a free support service for Sailors and their spouses who are expecting or have children under the age of four. Visits provide prenatal and parenting education while connecting families with local services and resources. Contact your local Fleet and Family Support Center to learn more.



### RELOCATION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM



Moving Made Easy

## FAMILY RESOURCES

### RELOCATION ASSISTANCE

Need additional support as you prepare for a PCS? The Relocation Assistance Program (RAP) available at your installation offers one-on-one consultations for service members needing assistance with moving logistics, those making their first overseas move, and those with complex situations such as special needs family members or financial constraints. Reach out to your Fleet and Family Support Center (FFSC) to learn more about the Relocation Assistance Program — this [Fleet and Family Support Center directory](#) lists the contact information for each region.

## RESOURCE SPOTLIGHT

### FEDERAL VOTING ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

The Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) works to ensure service members, eligible family members, and overseas citizens are aware of their right to vote and have the tools and resources to successfully do so - from anywhere in the world! Visit [FVAP.gov](#) to ensure you are registered to vote in the upcoming election season.



**FVAP.GOV**  
FEDERAL VOTING ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

<https://www.navy.mil/Resources/Plan-of-the-Month/>



# 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.

Photo by MC3 August Clawson  
[@vfa103jollyrogers](#)

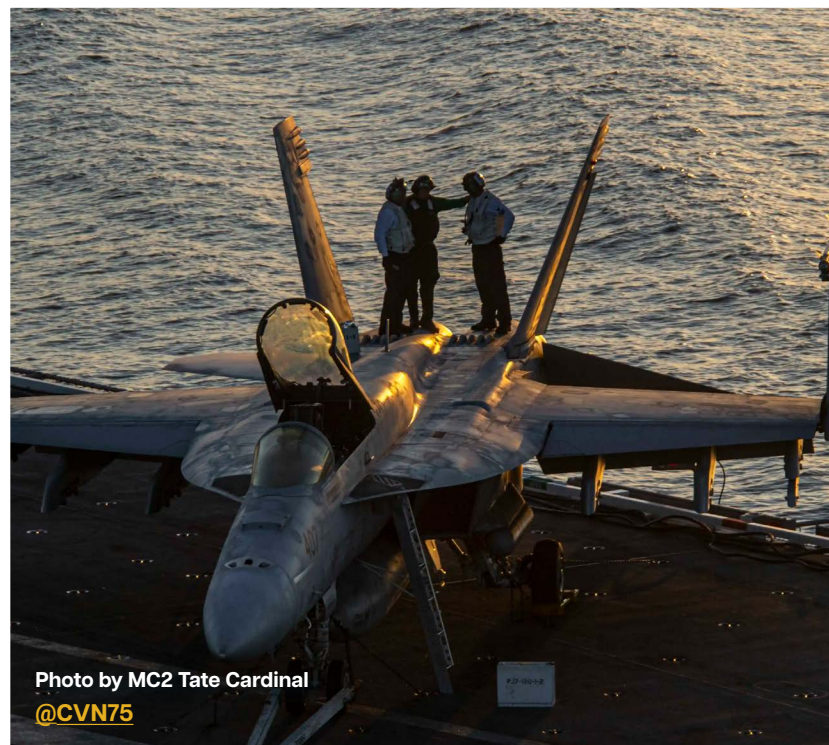


Photo by MC2 Tate Cardinal  
[@CVN75](#)



Photo by MC1 Liz Dunagan  
[@DESRON7](#)

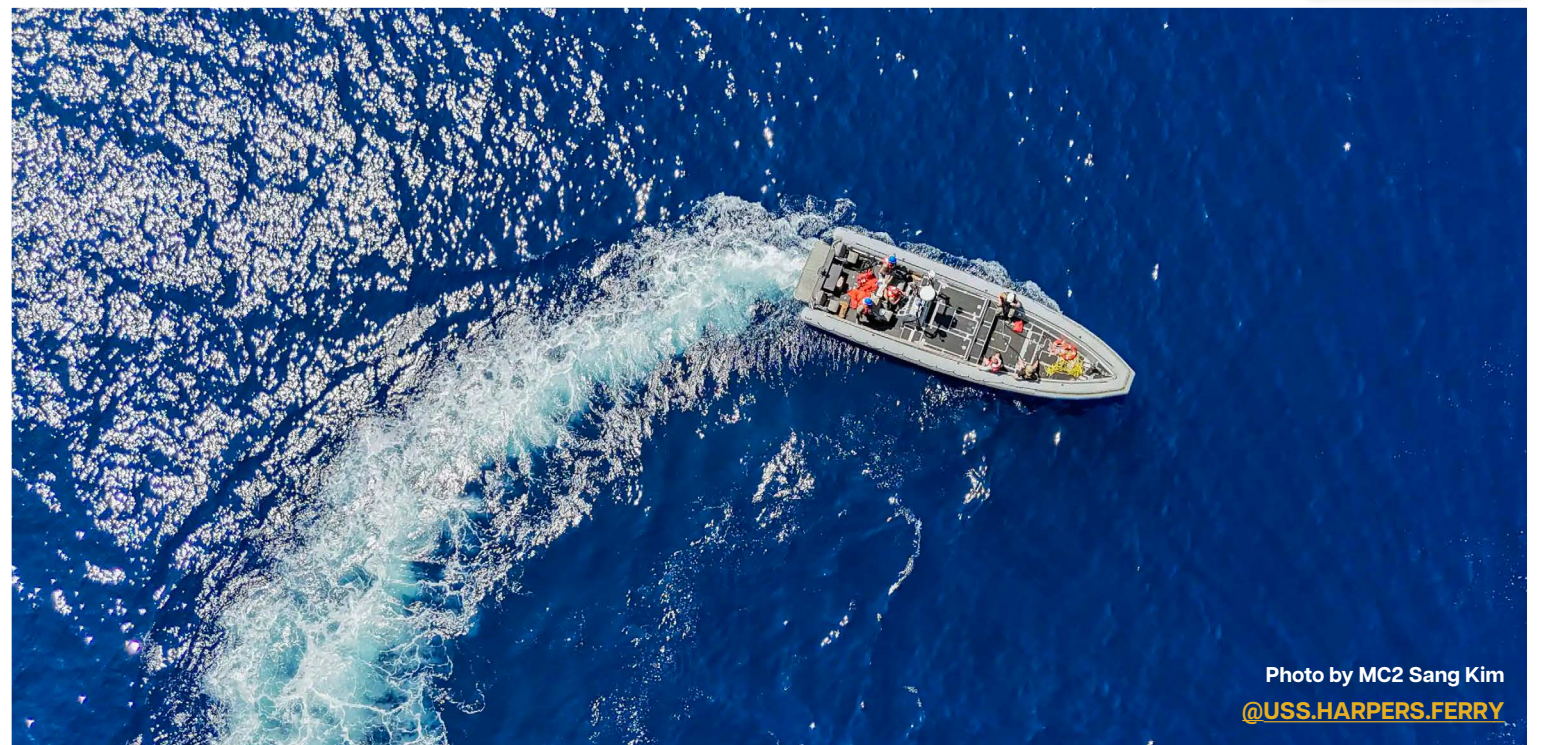


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@MASONDDG87



Photo by MC2 James Hong  
@NMC801



Photo by MC3 August Clawson  
@USSCW

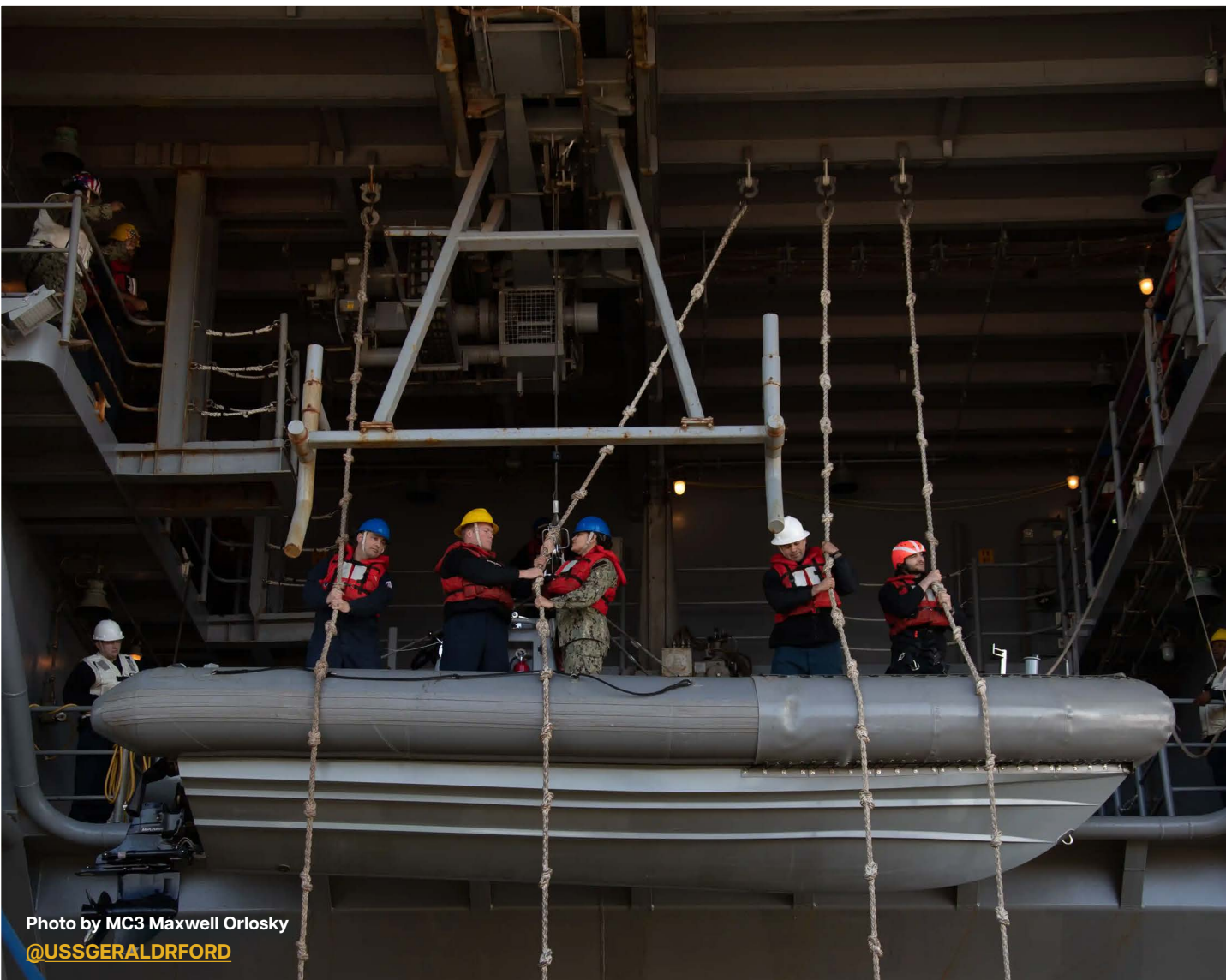


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@NAVFAC



Photo by MC2 Matt Hall  
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# CELEBRATING PRIDE MONTH

# PRIDE MONTH:

REAL FACTS ABOUT LIFE FOR LGBTQ IN THE MILITARY

# 59%

of LGBTQ service members are not openly gay in their workplace

LGBTQ active-duty service members were nearly

# 4x more likely

than non-LGBTQ active-duty service members to report that their household sometimes or often did not have enough to eat in the past seven days, at 27 percent and 7 percent.

# 6.1%

of current military personnel identify as LGBTQ. There are roughly 1.3 million individuals serving in the U.S. armed forces.

LGBTQ service members are **more likely to experience sexual harassment, stalking, and sexual assault** than their non-LGBTQ counterparts

# PRIDE

LGBTQ active-duty service members were

# 9x

more likely than non-LGBTQ active-duty service members to report feeling down, depressed, or hopeless nearly every day over the past two weeks, at 55 percent and 6 percent.



Transgender individuals were banned from serving in the military from 1960 until 2016, and from 2019 to 2021—though as many as **20 % of transgender individuals have served in the military at some time in their lives.**



LGBTQ veterans attempt suicide at a rate **15x** higher than veterans overall.



Source: <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/lgbtq-military-members-and-veterans-face-economic-housing-and-health-insecurities/>



Photo by SN Darren Cordoviz



Photo by MCSA Raquell Williams

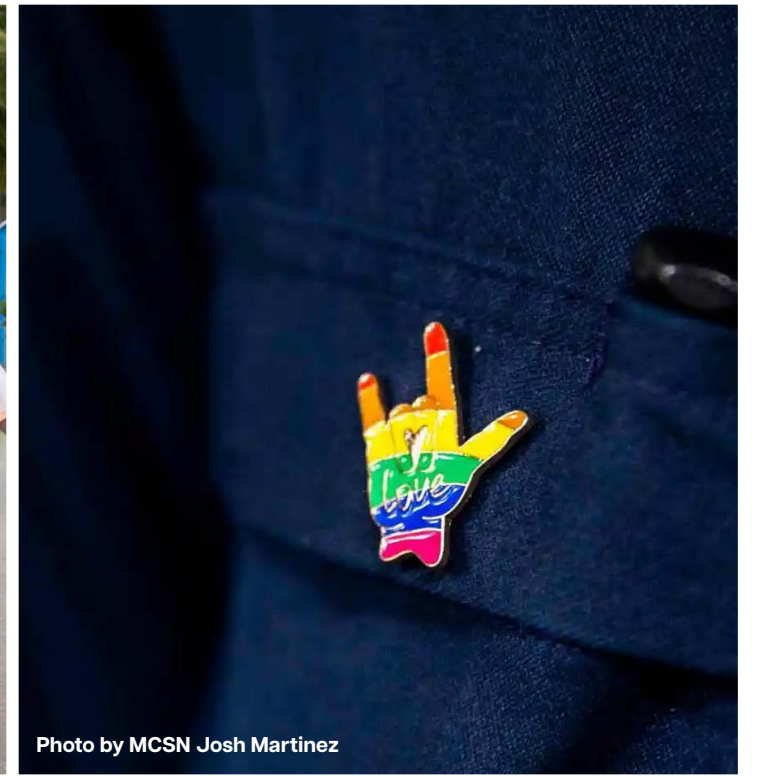


Photo by MCSN Josh Martinez

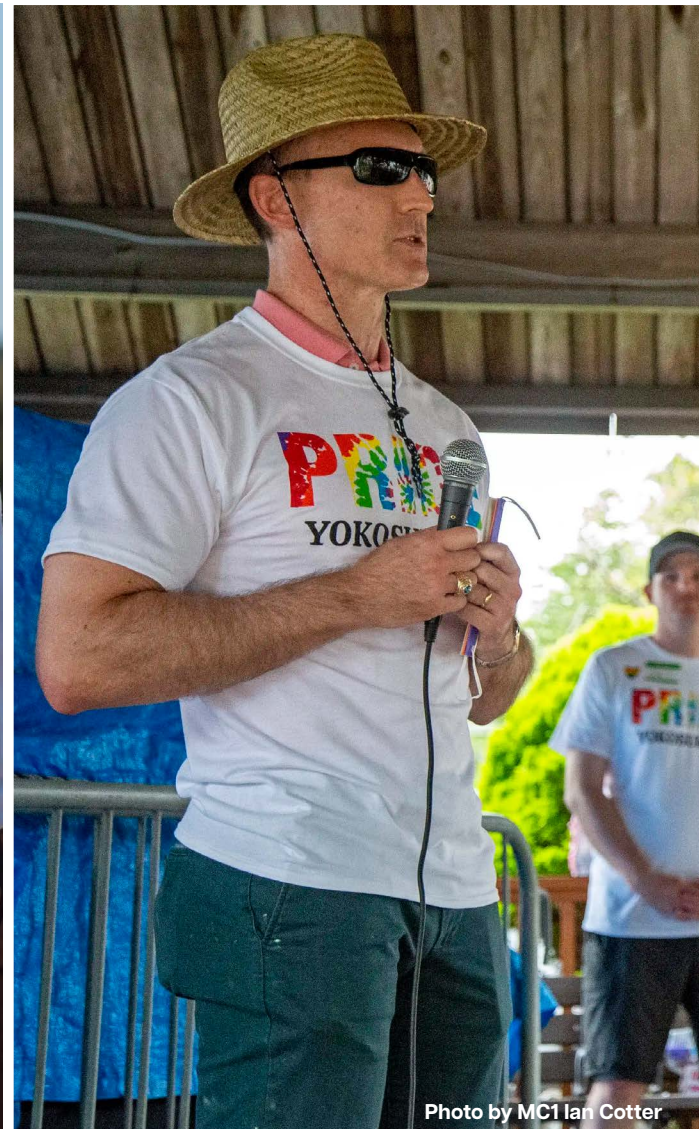


Photo by MC1 Ian Cotter

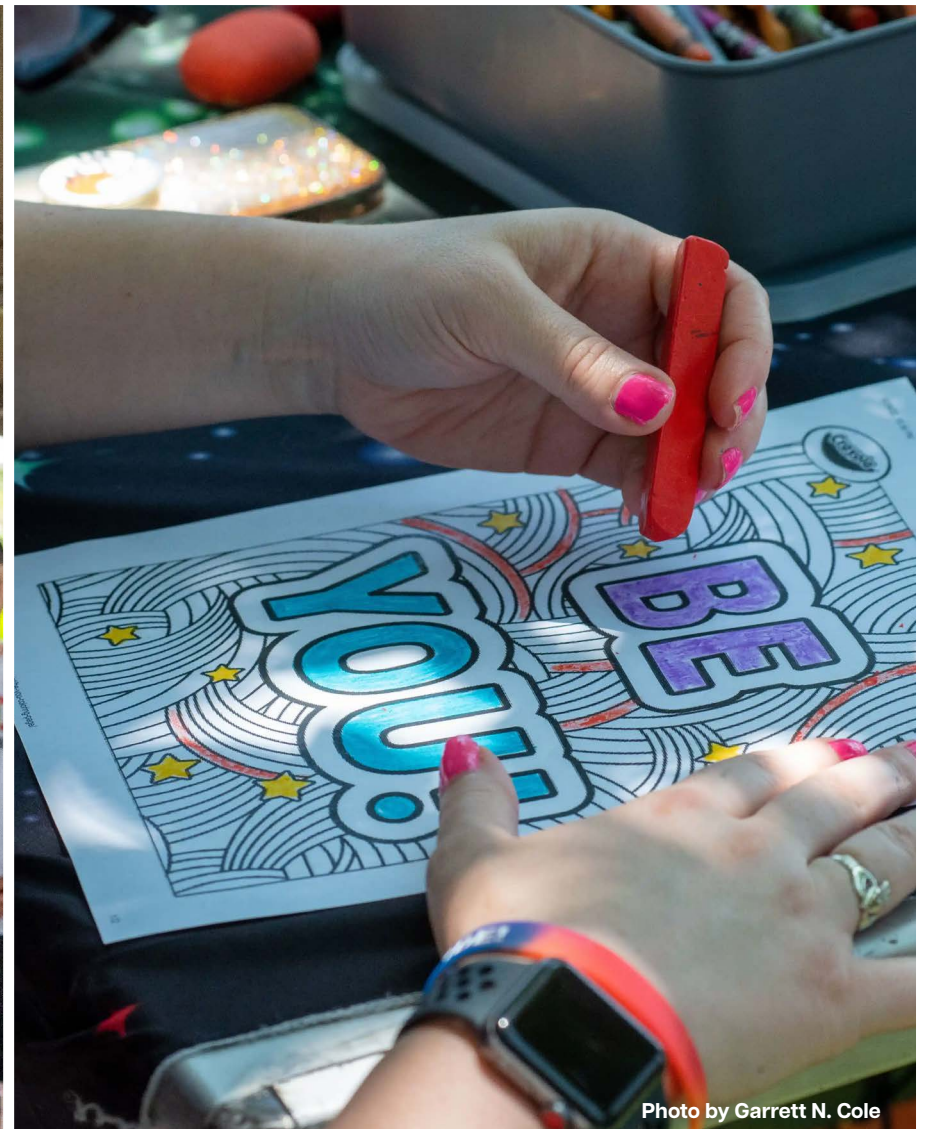


Photo by Garrett N. Cole



# JUNE IS PRIDE MONTH

EQUALITY WITHOUT EXCEPTION:  
PRIDE IN ALL WHO SERVE

Story by MC2 Bayley Foster

The United States Department of Defense observes Pride Month to celebrate and recognize the contributions that the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ+) service members do to defend the country. Honoring and treating all service members equally regardless of sexual orientation and gender identity is crucial in maintaining an environment capable of successful warfighting.

After winning the presidential election in 1992, President Bill Clinton shared his intention of allowing gay people to serve in the military. This stance faced a lot of backlash, so a compromise was made. On July 19, 1993, President Clinton announced the 'don't ask, don't tell, don't pursue' policy (DADT). This policy allowed for lesbian, gay, and bisexual service members to serve, but it established that service members not be asked about, nor allowed to discuss, their sexual orientation as to not 'risk the high standards of morale, good order and discipline essential to military capability.' Before the policy, service members were discharged of service under less than honorable conditions as a result of their sexual orientation, leading to most LGBTQ+ service

members having to hide a piece of themselves while serving. According to the DoD, over 19,000 personnel were separated under the 'homosexual conduct' policy before DADT, and over 13,000 personnel during DADT. As of Sept. 20, 2023, the DoD is now working to amend the separations for the veterans discharged during DADT by reviewing and assessing for an upgrade in discharge where it may be warranted.

On December 18, 2010, the 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' policy was officially overturned by a 65-31 vote, and for the first time in U.S. history, lesbian, gay, and bisexual service members would be allowed to serve openly in the armed forces. DADT officially ended on September 20, 2011, marking the first day that part of the LGBTQ+ community could serve freely.

"Our people sacrifice a lot for their country, including their lives. None of them should have to sacrifice their integrity as well," said President Barack Obama, who officially signed the repeal.

Although DADT was repealed in 2011, policies still excluded transgender individuals from serving openly in the military. Executive Order 10450 was the order banning transgender

individuals from service with the language, "any criminal, infamous, dishonest, immoral, or notoriously disgraceful conduct, habitual use of intoxicants to excess, drug addiction, or sexual perversion." This order stayed in place from the late 1950's until 2016, when transgender individuals could serve in their identified gender upon completing their transition. However, this still didn't allow service members to transition in the service or allow anyone with gender dysphoria to serve. This changed in 2021, with the Executive Order on Enabling All Qualified Americans to Serve Their Country in Uniform, stating all Americans who are qualified to serve, are able to serve. Estimates from the Williams Institute at UCLA suggest that nearly 150,000 transgender individuals served the nation under disguise of their true identity before 2021.

Harvey Milk was a prominent gay rights activist who served as a Lieutenant in the U.S. Navy during the Korean War as a diving officer aboard the submarine rescue ship USS Kittiwake. In 1955, he was forced out of the Navy because of his homosexuality. Later, Milk was elected to serve on the San Francisco Board of Supervisors, making him the first openly gay man elected to public office in California.

While on the board, he fought against discrimination based on sexual orientation before being shot and killed the following year. His sacrifice to service and his commitment to equality without exception is a great reminder in how far the U.S. has come. In July 2016, the USNS Harvey Milk was commissioned in his honor. The oiler officially launched during a christening ceremony on November 6, 2021. During the christening ceremony, 78th U.S. Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro expressed hope that the ship naming helps right past wrongs, and he reaffirmed the Navy's commitment to providing a welcoming and inclusive environment for all qualified Americans who want to serve.

In celebrating Pride Month, All Hands is committed to honoring the diversity and inclusion that strengthens the United States Armed Forces and fostering a sense of pride in all who serve. It is a time to reenforce the commitment needed for equality, and to continue to fight for the challenges that remain. Without the LGBTQ+ personnel, the United States Armed Forces would not be the warfighting force that it is today.

Graphic by DEOMI



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