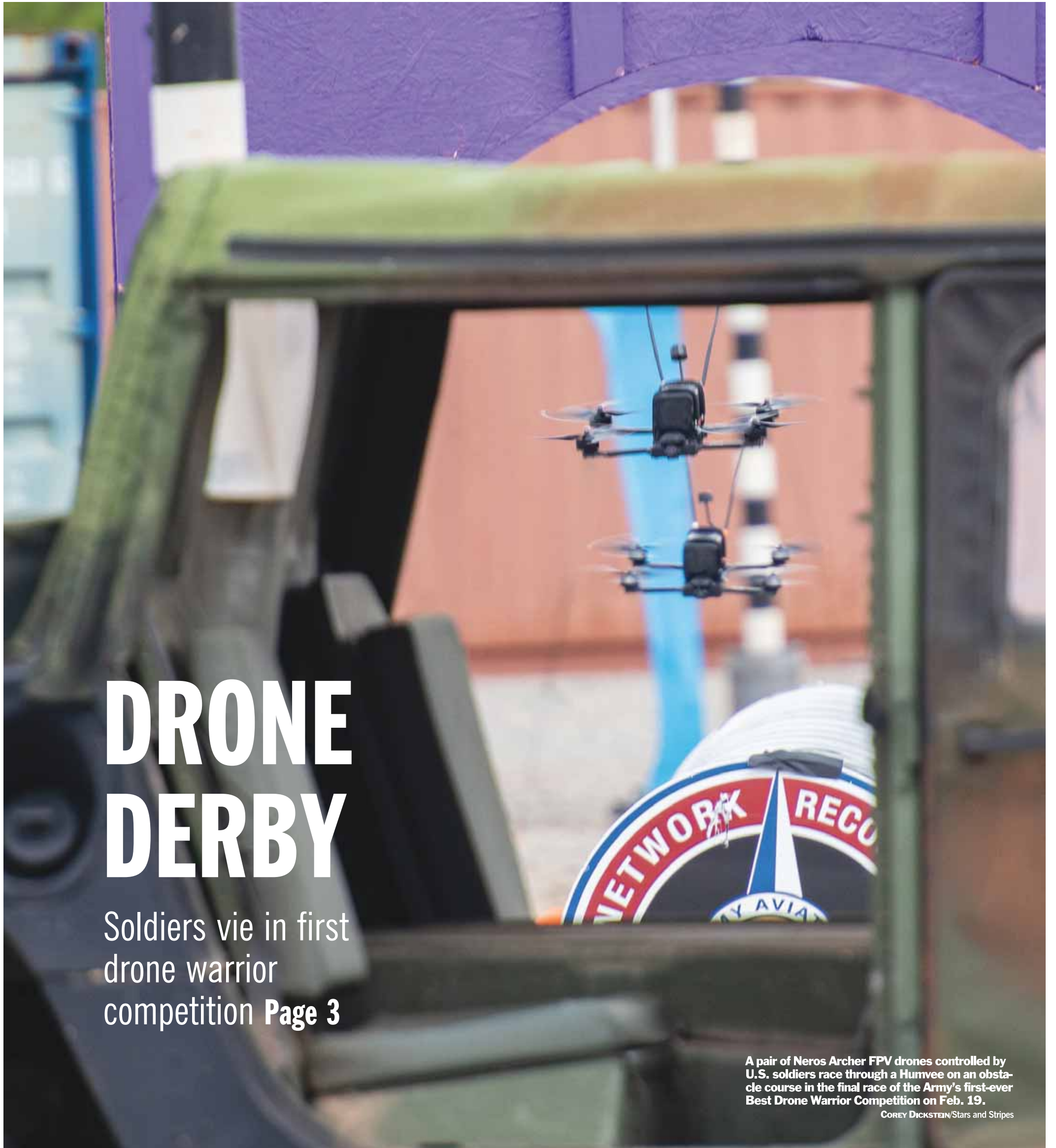


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ITALY EDITION



DRONE DERBY

Soldiers vie in first drone warrior competition **Page 3**

A pair of Neros Archer FPV drones controlled by U.S. soldiers race through a Humvee on an obstacle course in the final race of the Army's first-ever Best Drone Warrior Competition on Feb. 19.

COREY DICKSTEIN/Stars and Stripes

Aviano-based airman competes in Olympics **Page 5**



Trump's plan to build 'Golden Fleet' facing stormy seas **Page 6**



AFN plans to end satellite service to off-base customers **Page 12**



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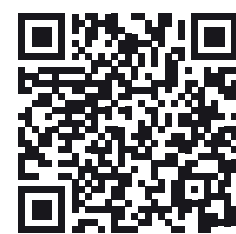
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COVER STORY

Army holds first Drone Warrior competition

Big wins and lots of lessons learned

By COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

HUNTSVILLE, Ala. — Two small quadcopter drones buzzed between a pair of shipping containers, around a bend and through a purple obstacle heading toward the homestretch of the race. Then they collided.

The impact sent one of the Neros Archer drones crashing to the ground on the University of Alabama in Huntsville's drone test range, while the pilot of the other Archer, Army Sgt. Javon Purchner, maintained control and sent his first-person-view drone swooping through the doors of a Humvee and racing on to the finish line. The win in the final race Feb. 19 of the Army's inaugural Best Drone Warrior Competition earned the 22-year-old artillery forward observer from the 1st Cavalry Division the first-ever title of Army Best Drone Operator.

The first-of-its kind Army event was meant to evaluate soldiers' current capabilities with the small drones that are becoming increasingly important to how the U.S. military plans to conduct combat operations, competition organizers said. It also aimed to identify areas where those soldiers and the drones themselves need improvement in a fun setting far from the battlefield.

"I'm still processing it," Purchner, with a wide grin, said of the accomplishment moments after the race's conclusion as he was high-fived and hugged by fellow Fort Hood, Texas, soldiers.

But it almost did not happen. With the best-of-three final tied at one win apiece, Purchner's drone took off at the start of the would-be decisive race and smashed at full speed into a metal cargo container, breaking into dozens of pieces. The sergeant immediately threw his hands up, explaining that he had no control of the drone.

"I thought everyone was going to think that was me messing up as a pilot," he said. "And it was really just that we were having a little bit of interference down there. But after that, once we started up again, I just flew my race, and that was it."

The interference issues were among many other problems that plagued the competitors over the course of the three-day event. Rain slowed the competition because some drones had exposed electronics. Environmental factors jammed communications. Other drones proved inefficient in tactical conditions, and dozens crashed — into each other, obstacles and the ground — over hours of competition.

But that was not necessarily a bad thing, said Army Col. Nicholas Ryan, who led planning for the drone warfare event. Those problems provided Army planners with a clearer picture of the technology and training gaps its soldiers currently face in the emerging field of small drone warfare, which has become a dominant aspect in recent conflicts, especially in Ukraine.

Like other Army-wide competitions the service has held for decades, Ryan said, the new tournament was meant to bring together troops to share their latest tactics, innovations and knowledge about small drones and to discover the remaining capability gaps across the service.

"At the end of the day, it's not about receiving trophies or awards, it is about what lessons can we take from this to find out who the best operator is and how they became the best operator," said Ryan, a career CH-47 Chinook pilot who has spent recent years studying the implementation of small drones into Army combat planning as the director of unmanned aerial systems transformation at Fort Rucker, Ala. "What skills and resources and training allowed them to become the best operator? Who's doing some amazing innovation out there across the Army that we can take and see what kind of innovation — like grassroots soldier-level innovation — is happening, that



PHOTOS BY COREY DICKSTEIN/Stars and Stripes
Army Spc. Dylan Eisenbach, an infantryman from the 25th Infantry Division, lugs a rucksack with five homemade first-person-view attack drones mounted on the outside, during the hunter-killer portion of the Army's inaugural Best Drone Warrior Competition in Huntsville, Ala.



Eisenbach prepares a C100 drone to fly during the hunter-killer portion of the Army's inaugural Best Drone Warrior Competition.

we can then take and scale across the entire Army ... to make the Army the most dominant drone force in the world."

Planners decided in August that a new competition would help the Army implement a series of drone-based executive orders and guidance issued by President Donald Trump and Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth aimed at "unleashing drone dominance," Ryan said.

The service has used competition to test new skills and tactics since the Revolutionary War. Each year, competitors across the Army compete to determine the service's best Rangers, Sappers, snipers, mortar units, medics and combat squads. Why not build something similar to find its best small drone users? Ryan said.

Officials decided to test Army drone operators' skills across three separate competitions built into the event: a drone racing competition to find the best operator; a two-man hunter-killer lane to find the best tactical squad; and a "Shark Tank"-like innovation competition to find the most innovative ideas. Planners opened all the competitions to soldiers from across any military occupational specialty in the regular Army, National Guard and Reserves, including special operators.

In the Best Drone Operators competition, won by Purchner, competitors completed timed laps on their own to build a bracket before a series of head-to-head races determined the winner. All the competitors were provided Neros Archer drones to fly in the competition so that everyone had the same platforms, Ryan said.

The UAH drone test course provided a track with multiple obstacles set up to re-

semble an urban environment to navigate the drones using a video game-like remote control and first-person-view goggles.

In the innovation competition, teams submitted a white paper, conducted a 15-minute pitch to a panel of judges and conducted a flight test, according to the Army.

A Pennsylvania Army National Guard Team from the 28th Infantry Division — 1st Lt. Ryan Giallonardo; Chief Warrant Officer 3 Robert Reed; Chief Warrant Officer 2 Nathan Shea; and Sgt. 1st Class Brent Wehr — took the top prize. Their innovation, dubbed Project R.E.D. (for recovery exploitation drone), used an AI-enabled drone to identify downed enemy or friendly drones and recover them with a 3D-printed carbon fiber claw arm.

Meanwhile, the hunter-killer competition proved the trickiest. Most teams failed to complete the 45-minute exercise to conduct strikes on five targets. The two-man teams were instructed to camouflage themselves and their equipment, conduct a five-minute physical session that included dragging a 145-pound dummy, overhead-pressing water cans and walking with weight before beginning a 1,000-meter hike toward their drone engagements carrying all their equipment, according to the Army.

A 30-minute timer to complete the five strikes by flying their self-selected offensive drones to a target started as teams embarked on the hike, leaving them with a short time to set up their drones, scout five targets with a surveillance drone and then attack.

A team from the Vilseck, Germany-based 2nd Cavalry Regiment, Staff Sgt. Angel Caliz and Spc. Jonah Burks, won that competition and proved one of the few teams able to hit

targets.

Army Sgt. 1st Class Jose Morua, who teaches small drone operations to new soldiers at Fort Benning and helped run the competition, said teams that were successful had mastered the basics of flying drones, showed they were in good physical condition and kept their efforts simple.

The hunter-killer lane best mimicked the conditions front-line troops face in combat in Ukraine, he said. It showed that the U.S. Army is "a little bit behind" on small drone capabilities and must work quickly to improve.

Most of the teams were not completing the hike quick enough to give themselves time to complete the drone attacks, Morua said. Many teams, he said, struggled with their equipment before getting it in the air. Others, he said, got their drones in the air, but struggled to communicate properly to find and attack the targets.

"It just pretty much boiled down to operator and basic fundamentals of knowing the equipment, and that's been the common issue these last two days," said Morua, an infantryman who saw combat in Afghanistan.

The sergeant called the event "an eye opener," because so many capable teams struggled with so many different issues.

The equipment and communications issues were among the more concerning lessons learned for planners, Ryan said. As a career helicopter pilot, communicating in the air is instilled into you from practically Day 1, but it clearly did not come so naturally to soldiers who have spent their careers on the ground.

"We're seeing that kind of a breakdown in that communication because they haven't been trained in that — in Army Aviation, we call that crew coordination — where two people in a helicopter are talking to each other, explaining what they're seeing, what they're doing, and what they need the other person to be doing," Ryan said. "We're seeing that breakdown happen up there that we never anticipated, but it's definitely something that ... standing out as something we as an Army need to do better on if we're going to proliferate these drones and want them to be more effective and lethal."

One team in the hunter-killer competition also found it needed to ensure its equipment was more resilient. The 25th Infantry Division team of Staff Sgt. Andres Garcia and Spc. Dylan Eisenbach managed to get their C100 surveillance drone airborne but could not fly their homemade, 3D-printed, first-person-view attack drones because a piece of their controller broke during the mission.

Garcia said they had tested everything at their home station in Hawaii and during training in the Philippines and came to the competition feeling "super confident." He said they were able to locate all five targets, but after discovering a sensitive pin in the FPV drone controller had bent, the team had no way to fly their drones.

It was a disappointment, Garcia said, but an opportunity to learn that they need to improve how they protect their gear in the field, and, perhaps, carry a second controller.

"Transporting is kind of our next step right now," said Garcia, a cavalry scout. "How to find a way how to actually be able to get all this gear onto the individual infantryman, or scout or whoever's on the ground utilizing this equipment and for them to actually carry it out and employ it correctly."

Ryan said the Army would leave the competition with dozens of data points on where it needs to focus its efforts to improve small drone warfare. He said next year's Best Drone Warrior Competition would reflect those lessons learned and find new ways to challenge soldiers to improve in the drone space.

"This is the first one of many," the colonel said. "It's finding the lessons, improving on things and sharing those best practices and ... then continuing to make [the competition] better and more relevant and more challenging as we move forward in the future for that sole purpose of making the Army better."

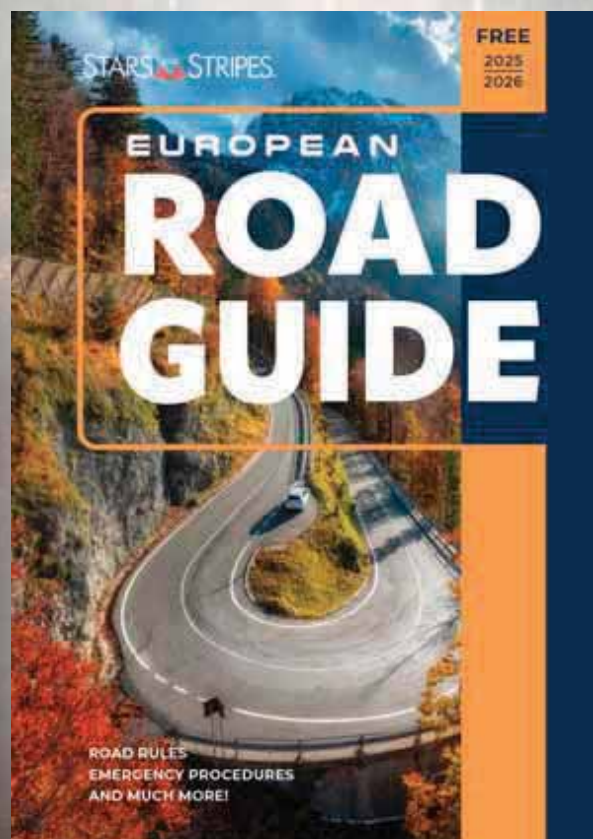


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MILITARY

Aviano-based airman competes in Olympics

By MATT WAGNER
Stars and Stripes

Air Force Staff Sgt. Kelly Curtis anticipated receiving more instruction prior to her first try at the sport of skeleton.

While at bobsled driving school in 2013, the former heptathlete at Springfield College in Massachusetts became aware of the sport, in which athletes can reach speeds up to 90 mph while their heads are only inches from the ice.

Curtis watched a few videos online and was intrigued.

Following a brief introduction from the coaches, though, she was pushed down the hill.

“At the bottom, you’re just checking to make sure everything’s still there, and then you’re like, ‘All right, how can I go again faster?’” she said.

“Your very first run, you figure out a lot about yourself and pretty much know right away it’s something you want to pursue or not.”

That run sparked a pursuit that has lasted more than a dozen years and has seen her make history as the first Black athlete to represent Team USA in skeleton at the Olympics in 2022.

Curtis came back for more at the 2026 Milano Cortina Games, where the 37-year-old competed in the women’s skeleton and mixed team relay at the Cortina Sliding Centre.

She finished in 12th place and was the highest-placed American in the women’s skeleton with a time of 3:52.13. In the skeleton mixed team competition, Curtis and Daniel Barefoot placed 10th with a time of 2:01.43.

Getting hooked onto skeleton also led to her enlisting into the Air Force in August 2020, when Curtis joined the service’s World Class Athlete Program.

“To have the privilege of wearing the red, white and blue to represent not only my country but the Air Force, my family, my community, it meant so much,” Curtis said. “It’s such a great privilege to be able to earn that uniform.”

Wearing that Air Force uniform has had an unexpected perk for Curtis in her other uniform.

While many bobsled and skeleton athletes are centered around Lake Placid, N.Y.; Park City, Utah; and Colorado Springs, Colo., Curtis requested to PCS to Aviano Air Base in northern Italy. The base sits about 87 miles southeast of Cortina, Italy.

Curtis chose Aviano because she had little experience on European tracks and World Cup events have been exclusively in Europe the past two Olympic cycles. From Aviano, she traveled to Cortina often even over the summer, practicing on the city’s push track.

She’s already seen the results. Curtis ranks



Air Force Staff Sgt. Kelly Curtis sprints down an iced sliding track with her skeleton sled during the start of a skeleton run at the World Cup BOB and Skeleton at Cortina D' Ampezzo, Italy, in 2025. Curtis competed in the Milano-Cortina 2026 Winter Olympic Games.

16th in the world according to the International Bobsleigh and Skeleton Federation.

Curtis also admitted she’s having golden dreams after placing second at World Cup event on Jan. 9 in St. Moritz, Switzerland.

“Just enough that I can be delusional and dream big for these Games,” Curtis said. “It shows me that when I slide my best, I am one of the best in the world.”

Curtis expressed hope that confidence and comfort will help avoid what she called a disappointing result at the 2022 Beijing Games, where she placed 21st.

She described how skeleton athletes control their sleds using their head, shoulders, knees and toes, just like in the kids’ song. Even the slightest movement could change the course or time.

“Looking back at my runs in Beijing, I would have these little make-or-break skids, and it’s just a lot of tension within the body,” Curtis said. “I’m glad I got through that, and I’m glad that I can learn from that. And hopefully, I can bring a more relaxed state into these Games.”

Having adjusted to the Italian lifestyle



Winter Olympian and World Class Athlete Program Curtis is part of Department of the Air Force WCAP, which is managed by the Air Force Services Center.

should play a role in keeping her relaxed.

Her teammates already have tried to use her knowledge of the area, and her husband Jeff Milliron became a point of contact for friends and family for finding accommodations and other subjects.

Once her two events are over, she said she

plans on enjoying the rest of the Olympic experience before rejoining the 31st Communications Squadron as a knowledge management technician.

“I’m just so excited to show friends, family, the different communities, the beauty of Cortina and the surrounding areas,” Curtis said.

Europe to take charge of 2 NATO commands but not top post

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

STUTTGART, Germany — Leadership of two NATO commands will shift from U.S. to European hands in connection with a shakeup aimed at having allies shoulder more responsibility in the 32-nation bloc, according to an organization insider.

NATO Joint Force Command in Norfolk, Va., and a similar headquarters in Naples, Italy, both led by American officers, will eventually transfer to European officers, the NATO official said.

Unaffected by the plan is leadership of NATO’s Supreme Allied Commander Europe slot, which has always been in the hands of an American officer.

“Allies have agreed on a new distribution of senior officer responsibility across the NATO command structure in which European allies, including NATO’s newest members, will play a more prominent role in the alliance’s military leadership,” said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

The official described the arrangement as



NATO Allied Joint Force Command Norfolk’s headquarters building in Norfolk, Va., on Aug. 19. Leadership of JFC Norfolk and a NATO command in Naples, Italy, will shift from U.S. to European hands.

“Europe moving to the fore, and Americans absolutely committed to NATO.”

In a related move, responsibility for NATO’s Maritime Command in the United King-

dom will be shifted to the leader of the Naples-based U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa.

The plan would give the head of NAVEUR-AF dual-hatted NATO command responsibilities in a similar manner to the leaders of U.S. Army Europe and Africa and U.S. Air Forces in Europe and Air Forces Africa, who oversee corresponding NATO land and air command headquarters.

A NATO statement offered more detail about the arrangement.

The U.K. will lead Joint Force Command Norfolk, and Italy will do the same for the Naples headquarters. Meanwhile, Germany and Poland will share leadership of Joint Force Command Brunssum in the Netherlands on a rotational basis.

The change puts Europeans in charge of all three of NATO’s four-star commands, which lead at the operational level in crisis and conflict, the statement said.

The developments, first reported by Politico, come ahead of a NATO defense ministers meeting in Brussels, where allies are expected to discuss U.S. force posture in Europe.

During the past year, American officials including Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth have emphasized the need for allies in Europe to shoulder more responsibility for NATO and the defense of Europe.

In particular, the Pentagon wants allies to provide the lion’s share of military capabilities when it comes to the conventional defense of the Continent. Those priorities also now extend to NATO’s command structure as Europeans take on more prominent roles.

Matthew Whitaker, the U.S. ambassador to NATO, said the U.S. remains committed to the alliance but that allies must follow through on plans to beef up their own defenses.

“We are not trying to dismantle NATO,” Whitaker said at a forum in Munich ahead of a major security conference in that city.

Still, having Europeans play a far more expansive role in NATO’s command structure has been on Whitaker’s mind.

During a November security conference in Berlin, Whitaker said he was hopeful that one day the position of SACEUR would be under German command.

MILITARY

Plan for 'Golden Fleet' faces stormy seas

Navy project met with condemnation as well as commendation

By GARY WARNER
Stars and Stripes

President Donald Trump's plan for a "Golden Fleet" has been short on details so far — its official website says "Webpage currently under construction. Check back soon for updates."

But the lack of specifics hasn't stopped the project from drawing praise and scorn from politicians and military analysts.

Trump announced the concept Dec. 22 during an event at his Mar-a-Lago residence in Palm Beach, Fla., highlighting a proposal for a new "battleship" that would field firepower he said was "100 times more than anything built."

The battleships, as currently planned, would be armed with 128 MK-41 vertical launch system cells, 12 Conventional Prompt Strike long-range hypersonic missiles, an electromagnetic railgun, conventional five-inch guns, and be protected by AN/SPY-6 radar.

Initial schematics of the first battleship — which Trump said should be named USS Defiant — include an array of weapons, including yet-to-be-developed energy weapons, and anti-drone defensive systems.

Trump's proposed 20 or more Golden Fleet BBG(X) battleships would cost \$15 billion to \$22 billion for the lead ship, according to a Congressional Budget Office report. Later ships would cost more than \$9 billion each once production is well underway.

The battleship is projected to have a displacement of about 35,000 tons. The last battleships built by the United States, the Iowa-class, launched near the end of World War II, weighed about 57,000 tons. The new battleship would be significantly smaller than the Navy's largest ships, including the new Ford-class aircraft carriers, with a displacement of 100,000 tons.

The design is similar to the DDG(X) — the Navy's previously planned next-generation destroyer. But the Trump-class battleships are larger.

Navy Secretary John Phelan has recently attempted to flesh out the Golden Fleet plan, saying it is an umbrella term for an overhaul of the size and mix of ships the Navy will have in the future, including uncrewed ships operating in concert with manned vessels. The profile would include the Ford-class carriers, new Virginia-class attack submarines and Columbia-class ballistic missile submarines already joining the fleet.

Phelan touted the Golden Fleet as putting more "hulls in the water" at a faster pace, during a speech Feb. 13 at the West 2026 conference on naval defense in San Diego.

"High-end platforms — Next-generation battleships, continued production of destroyers, carriers, and submarines that deliver survivability, magazine depth, and sustained fires," he said. Phelan said the "low-end mix" would include the new class of frigates based on a Coast Guard cutter design, as well as unmanned surface and subsurface vessels.

While warships are the center of debate, Phelan said the Golden Fleet would also be the proving ground for what he called upgraded Navy's logistics and auxiliaries, "sustaining power across distance." He touted a streamlined procurement system and the use of artificial intelligence for planning and design.

Phelan said in January that the Golden Fleet would boost job growth.

"Over the next decade, shipbuilders and suppliers will need to hire roughly 250,000 skilled workers to meet demand," he said during the Surface Navy Association's national symposium, in Arlington, Va. "That means apprenticeships, vocational training,



CHRISTOPHER MATASSA/U.S. Navy

Secretary of the Navy John Phelan speaks at the Surface Navy Association National Symposium in Arlington, Va., next to models of Golden Fleet ships produced by Naval Surface Warfare Center Carderock Division on Jan. 13.



Naval Sea Systems Command

A rendering depicts the proposed Trump-class battleship USS Defiant.

accelerated pipelines and partnerships with local communities."

Phelan reiterated his support for a possible \$1.5 trillion defense budget, which Trump has suggested he will request for the 2027 fiscal year. That figure, at least 50% higher than the 2026 budget, is likely to face significant opposition from many Democrats and Republican fiscal hawks in Congress. But Phelan promised to push on with the plan.

"American industry is resurgent, and the Golden Fleet exists because the president looked at the world as it is, not as we wish it to be, and said plainly: Move faster. Build smarter. Deliver capability now."

The Golden Fleet garnered early support from some experts who said naval strategy has been too rooted in the past of the Cold War and the post-9/11 wars against terrorism.

Brent Sadler, Senior Research Fellow for Naval Warfare and Advanced Technology in the Allison Center for National Security, wrote an article for the conservative Heritage Foundation titled "The U.S. Navy Must Build the 'Golden Fleet'."

While lamenting a lack of details so far, Sadler said an overhaul of the Navy's ship types and purposes was long overdue. He listed several types that he believes the Gold-

en Fleet will bring to American power projection at sea.

"A new frigate based on U.S. Coast Guard's National Security Cutter, large unmanned corvettes armed with long-range weapons, and logistics ships," Sadler wrote.

The idea, Sadler said, could lead to the construction of smaller escort carriers like those used in World War II to supplement today's large main carriers.

But for some analysts, the "Golden Fleet" is less a boon to Navy planning than a boondoggle that will lead to more planning U-turns, pushing several surface fleet proposals farther into the future.

Ronald O'Rourke, who recently retired after 42 years with the nonpartisan Congressional Research Service, including as lead defense analyst, spoke last month at a panel on shipbuilding at the West 2026 conference.

O'Rourke said the Navy can ill afford another major course change in ship production, another reversal for the Navy that has left in its wake discontinued programs and abandoned ship types.

"They're all well intentioned," O'Rourke said. "But in some cases, it's resulted in people learning just enough about shipbuilding to get things wrong. And the discussion about shipbuilding has suffered from bad

"There is little need for said discussion because this ship will never sail."

Marc Cancian

Center for Strategic and International Studies

information, magical thinking, hand waving, arguments and confusion about causes, effects and solutions."

O'Rourke pointed to the "sustained churn" in surface ship designs over the past 25 years, across programs for littoral combat ships, frigates and destroyers, leaving some projects abandoned or truncated. He pointed to the recent cancellation of the delayed Constellation frigate program, which will end after the first two of the six initial ships are completed at a Fincantieri Marinette Marine shipyard in Wisconsin.

Marc Cancian, a former Marine officer now an analyst for the Center for Strategic and International Studies, says flatly that the Golden Fleet — at least the battleships at the center of its concept — will never be built.

"There is little need for said discussion because this ship will never sail. It will take years to design, cost \$9 billion each to build, and contravene the Navy's new concept of operations, which envisions distributed firepower," Cancian wrote in January on the CSIS website.

Phelan has countered critics by saying the Golden Fleet addresses churn by casting a hard eye on delayed Navy programs approved by earlier administrations and by putting AI and a business-style approach into building and operating the fleet.

"We've been locked in a perpetual state of triage, diverting attention to shipbuilding programs that fall behind schedule and grow in cost," Phelan said.

Phelan told the naval defense industry audience in San Diego that support for the Golden Fleet would bring an upgraded Navy.

"The modern fight favors those that can rapidly prototype, test under fire, incorporate operator feedback and scale successful innovations on the front lines in real time, faster than their opponents can react," Phelan said.

MILITARY

Soldier who saved Jewish POWs in WWII honored

By MATTHEW ADAMS
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Chris Edmonds knew his father, Roddie, served during World War II, was captured and came home.

“He never told us anything about his experience ... and took it to the grave,” Edmonds said.

Master Sgt. Roddie Edmonds died in 1985. Chris learned about his father’s actions in 2013 from a prisoner of war who said Edmonds deserved the Medal of Honor.

And on Feb. 3, Chris received a call from President Donald Trump to inform him that his father would posthumously receive the nation’s highest award for courage under fire.

“He said, ‘Well, I’m surrounded by a bunch of high-level military leaders now, and so they are very excited about this and they look forward to meeting you,’” Edmonds said.

The White House confirmed Feb. 19 that Edmonds would receive the Medal of Honor.

Edmonds, of Knoxville, Tenn., was serving in the U.S. Army’s 106th Infantry Division, 422nd Infantry Regiment when he was captured by the Germans in December 1944 during the Battle of the Bulge. He, along with other Americans, were taken to Stalag IXA, a camp near Ziegenhain, Germany. Edmonds was held captive for 100 days.

A Nazi officer ordered Edmonds, the senior American noncommissioned officer, to line up more than 1,200 American troops in the camp and for Jewish soldiers to fall out separately. Edmonds ordered all POWs — Jews and non-Jews alike — to stand together.

When the German officer in charge saw that all the camp’s inmates were standing in front of their barracks, he turned to Edmonds and said, “They cannot all be Jews.”

“We are all Jews,” Edmonds fearlessly pronounced.

The German took out his pistol and threatened

Edmonds.

“Dad looked at him in the eyes, square in the eyes, because he was that kind of a guy that always made eye contact,” Chris said. “He looked him in his eyes and said, ‘Major, you can shoot me, but you’ll have to kill all of us because we know who you are, and you’ll be a war criminal when we win this war.’”

Edmonds then added the dagger in his heart, Chris said. “And you will pay.”

“He basically turned the tables on that major and said, ‘You know you’re gonna pay for this, and you don’t want to do this,’” Chris said.

The German gave up, turned around and left. Edmonds saved about 200 Jewish Americans.

Edmonds again stood his ground months later in a showdown with Nazi guards who ordered the POWs to evacuate the camp into a death march, according to his son.

“He was just an ordinary guy, just like the rest of us, but he had a real sense of moral clarity about right and wrong because of his faith,” Chris said.

Edmonds also served in the 1st Cavalry division during the Korean War, earning the combat infantryman’s badge, according to the Knox County (Tenn.) Archives.

And Chris, an interim pastor at Oakwood Baptist Church in Knoxville, said he never knew much about it.

Edmonds was still in the National Guard when he was called back. He served in Korea for at least eight months before coming home.

“It was bloody, brutal and cold once it turned to winter. And you know that’s what he experienced at the Battle of the Bulge,” Edmonds said. “He’s probably thinking, ‘What in the world? You know, God, I love you, but I’ve had enough.’”

On Feb. 10, 2015, Edmonds was posthumously recognized as Righteous Among the Nations, a title awarded by Yad Vashem, the World Holocaust Remembrance Center, to non-Jews who risked



CHRIS EDMONDS

Master Sgt. Roddie Edmonds will posthumously receive the Medal of Honor for protecting about 200 Jewish American prisoners of war.

their lives to save Jews from extermination by Nazis during the Holocaust.

He is one of five Americans, as well as the first American service member, to earn the honor.

Chris said he hopes to get a moment in Heaven to ask his dad why he didn’t tell the family about his actions. He recalls that he did press his father about it.

“‘Son, the heroes are buried over there,’” Chris remembers Edmonds saying about troops who paid the ultimate sacrifice. “‘They’re the ones who saved my life.’ He said, ‘I wouldn’t be here if some of the men, some of my boys, hadn’t have died for me.’”

Chris worked with then-Rep. John “Jimmy” Duncan and then-Sens. Lamar Alexander and Bob Corker for a recommendation to remove a five-year statute of limitations rule so his father could be considered for the nation’s highest honor. The package of information was submitted in 2014.

He knew the award was likely to happen because the Army and Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth had signed off.

Chris was given a heads up that a “high-ranking military official” would call, but he did not expect it to be the president.

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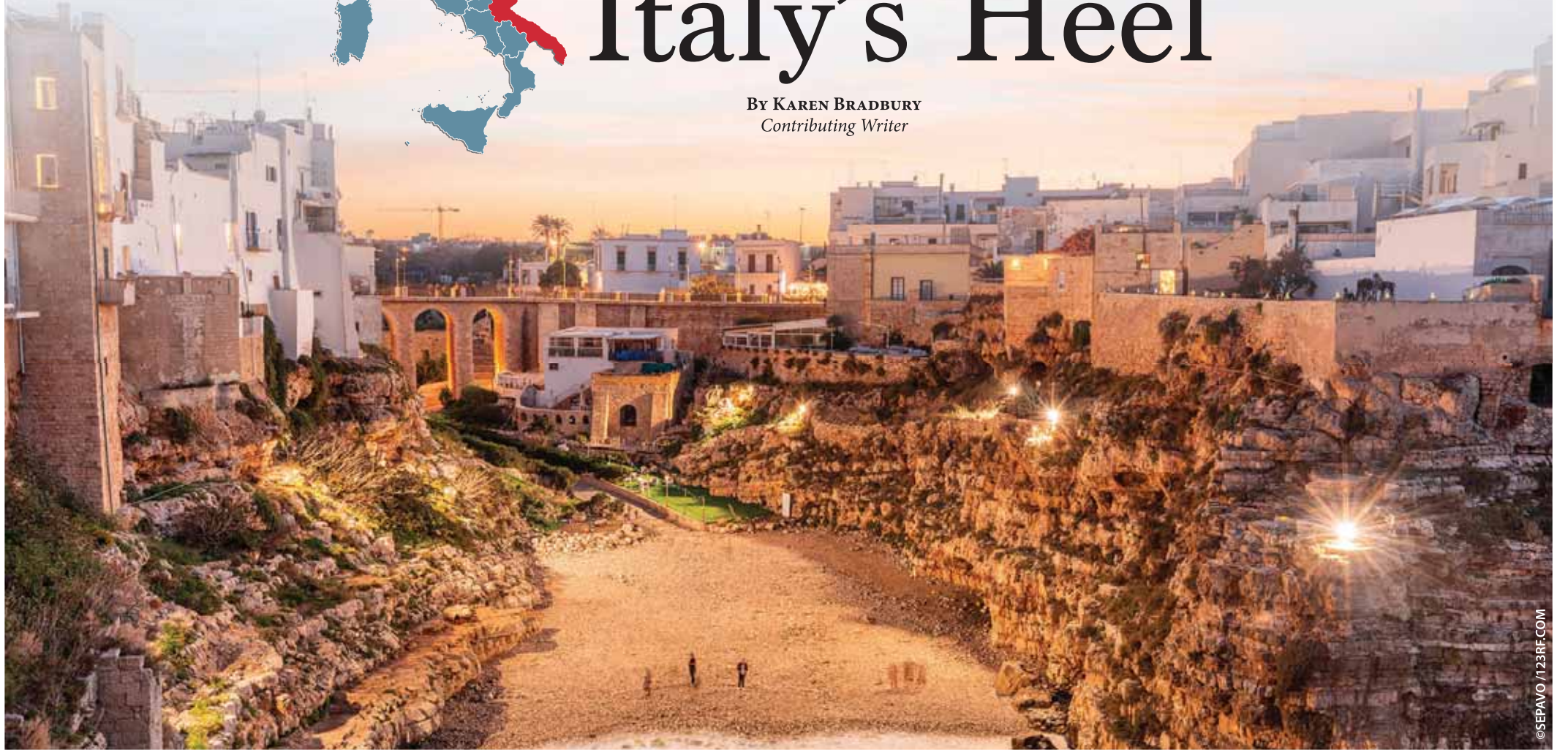
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Discovering Italy's Heel

By KAREN BRADBURY
Contributing Writer



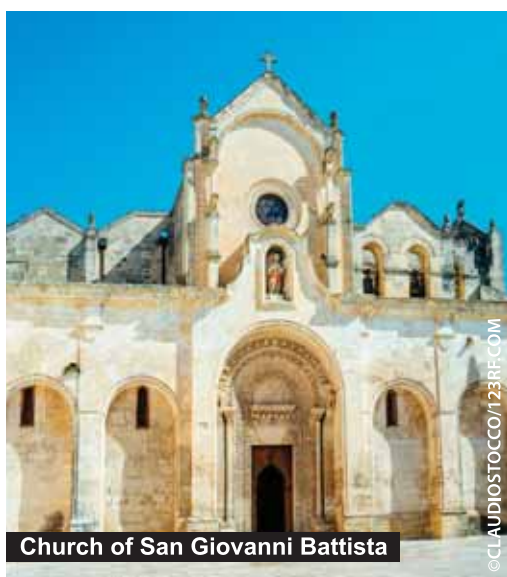
My five days in Apulia, the region that makes up the heel of Italy's boot on a map, were filled with beauty, serendipity and warm weather for dips in the sea. It's true that Apulia, or Puglia as the region is known in Italian, ranks amongst the country's poorest regions. And while rural, remote and dry are fitting descriptors for its inland areas covered with vast groves of olive trees, I found its cities and beaches tidy and alluring.

Going outside of the peak tourist season meant that crowds were thin on the ground. This proved optimal for a solo traveler who enjoys off-season rates and plenty of elbow room.

Baroque Treasures

A highlight of any tour to Apulia includes the city of Lecce, often referred to as "Florence of the south" for its Baroque architecture. The university town and center for religious instruction acquired many of its handsomest buildings in the seventeenth century, a period of prosperity characterized by a boom in monumental construction and lavish ornamentation.

My day in Lecce began with the purchase of a LecceEcclesiae ticket, a pass granting me access to six sacred spaces including churches, a museum and a seminary at a set price of 11 euros. Amidst a blur of cupids and twisting columns,



Church of San Giovanni Battista

two places stood out. The church of San Matteo awed with its riotous altar, and the Basilica of San Giovanni Battista al Rosario impressed me with its exuberant two-tiered façade embellished with oversize flower vases and statues.

Another highlight was the centrally located Piazza Saint Oronzo, where a column that once marked the end of the 230-mile Appian Way stands proud and the remains of a Roman amphitheater have been repurposed to provide today's visitors with less bloodthirsty entertainment than what was once enjoyed by their ancestors. Centrally located, La Torre di Merlino was the perfect place for a coffee and pastry. Lecce certainly deserved more than the single day I'd allotted for my visit, but my schedule was tight.

Seaside Treasures

Each of the three beach towns in which I overnights offered unique features. The southernmost, Otranto, wowed me with its cathedral perched high above town and the 15th-century Aragonese Castle, whose mighty walls were the site of a festival on the night of my stay. Gallipoli won me over with its old town sprawled over an island reached by means of a 16th-century bridge.

But it was Polignano a Mare that surprised and delighted me the most. Its Cala Porto was a compact but perfectly formed pebble beach embraced on either side by towering limestone bluffs. On the outskirts of town stood a bronze statue of a man, his arms outstretched and his back to the azure sea. Italian tourists were eagerly snapping photos of Domenico Modugno, the hometown boy who made it big as a singer, his "Volare" is known and loved by audiences around the world.

Bustling Bari

While Apulia's capital city of Bari hadn't ranked highly on my list of must-see places, I was flying back home from its airport, which made an overnight stay there the most practical option. Without particularly high expectations, I began my evening wander through its Old Town, where dozens of restaurants stretched along narrow pedestrian streets and tucked themselves into hidden squares. Eventually, I reached the Basilica di San Nicola, whose



Otranto town on the Salento Peninsula



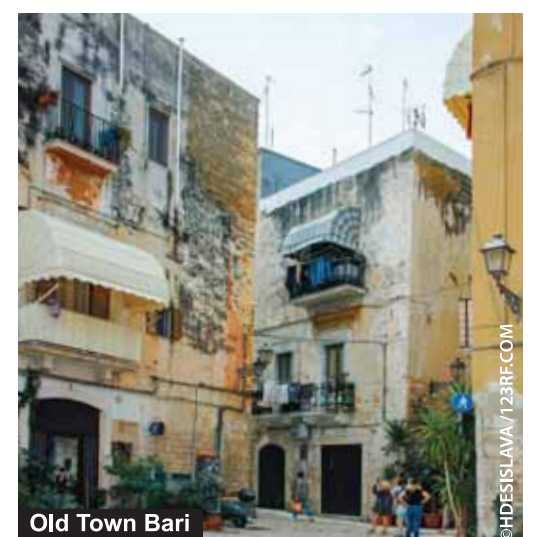
Basilica di San Nicola

soaring interior holds the relics of the saint who inspired Santa Claus.

Emerging from the maze-like Old Town onto the broad and beautiful Corso Vittorio Emanuele and on to the bustling Corso Cavour, I was stirred by the sight of crowds of people old and young, strolling, shopping, sipping cocktails and enjoying the beautiful Sunday evening. And I was glad to be one of them.

Plan Your Trip

The driving distance between Naples and Bari is 170 miles and would take about three hours;



Old Town Bari

those based in Vicenza would face a 500-mile, eight-hour drive. However, several airlines fly directly to Bari including budget carriers easyJet, Ryanair and Eurowings.

Although I could have traveled further and seen more had I rented a car, I was pleased with the train service. It wasn't frequent, but the tiny two-carriage trains from a forgotten era ran according to schedule, and when switching trains at the small, far-flung stations, the conductors would always watch carefully to make sure I caught the train to take me on the next leg of my journey.

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By Tamala Malerk
Stars and Stripes

Whether you are familiar with the Tuscan aesthetic and history or have only gotten as far as the Zuppa Toscana from Olive Garden, there is no doubt that the threads of Tuscan culture are woven throughout America thanks to generations of immigrants. Get ready to delve into this central Italian region using all five senses.

SEE

Nestled in the Tuscan Archipelago, one incredible historic site to see is the medieval village of **Isola del Giglio**. Travel back in time with a visit to Giglio Castello, whose medieval walls and atmosphere have been little touched by time. It is impossible to list the sites in Tuscany without mentioning the famous **Statue of David** by Michelangelo and the collection at the **Uffizi** in Florence featuring art by Botticelli, Leonardo, Raffaello and Caravaggio. If you want to see something atypical to the tourist experience, check out the "Filippo Civinini" **Museum of Human Anatomy** in Pisa. You can see an Egyptian mummy, the anatomical tables of Paolo Mascagni as well as anatomical and archaeological collections.



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HEAR

In Florence, delight your ears at the famous **Teatro Verdi**. The Orchestra della Toscana main-



© SAILIKO, CC BY 3.0

tains a permanent residence here, but you can also listen to a variety of concerts, musicals and theater shows. If you need a break from translating from Italian, you can take in a performance of the choir at **St. Mark's English Church**. Not only can you catch them at Sunday services, but they also have bi-monthly recitals and concerts at festivals.

TOUCH

Get a feel for the local area on a bike tour to the vineyards around **Chianti**. Often using e-bikes, these tours include visits to historic villages, castles and monasteries, plus delicious local wine tastings. Warm up in the **Thermal Springs of Saturnia**. These waters are a nice 37.5 degrees Celsius (99.5 degrees Fahrenheit) all year long. There is no lifeguard at these free natural sulphureous springs. For a refined experience, there are also wellness spas in the area that use the spring waters. Olive harvesting season runs from October through early December. Take part in the harvest by hand-picking some olives. **Villa Campestri** prides itself on utilizing a completely organic process because their microclimate allows for a "superior" extra virgin olive oil.



SMELL

There is no doubt that truffle oil French fries are delicious. However, those tasty treats don't just magically appear. One must hunt for the buried truffles, and you can go along. With the help of a guide and dog (who does most of the smelling) you can hunt truffles in towns like **San Miniato**. In Florence, the first leather workers' union date back to the 13th century, and there is no denying it's distinct scent. A handmade leather item is a great Tuscan souvenir, and you can use your nose



to help you find some great keepsakes in the **San Lorenzo Market**. For a more leisurely activity, take in the floral scents at the **Botanical Garden of Lucca**. On-site you will find over 200 types of trees and shrubs, a botanical museum and greenhouses filled with tropical plants, rhododendrons, camellias and more.

TASTE

Italy is known for great food and each region boasts its own specialty. Even within one region, cities have their own distinct flavors and styles. In **Pisa**, after taking your obligatory photo at the Leaning Tower, make sure to sample some Pisano-style food which is known for meat-based dishes such as Pisan tripe and wild boar mixed with local vegetables and fruit. **Castellina** is a medieval village found in Chianti; it is also home to cultivators of olive oil and wine. Several places in town allow you to book olive oil and wine tasting tours. La Castellina Winery also boasts an exquisite extra virgin olive oil grown from their highest altitude fields. **Pienza** is the birthplace of Pecorino cheese. Whether you like strong Pecorino di Pienza DOP cheese or a mild Pecorino di Grotta, there is a local cheese for you. This cheese is so popular that every September a fair is held in its honor, the Fiera del Cacio.



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KID-FRIENDLY MUSEUMS ACROSS EUROPE

BY HEATHER ANN COSIMO, Contributing Writer
AND KATIE WELLS, Stars and Stripes

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One of the worst things to be told as a kid, or curious adult, is “Do Not Touch.” Luckily, kid-friendly museums allow for a more interactive experience, and Europe has quit a few. Most European museums will offer an English version or explanation of their exhibits and you can check with the information desk for free handouts as well as kids activity sheets.

Keep your children entertained while they learn at these amazing kid-friendly museums throughout Europe!

Explora il Museo dei Bambini
Rome, Italy

This play-focused museum in the heart of Rome challenges kids to unfold the mystery of how things like architecture, the human body and sound function. Children can conduct experiments and make observations with the help of facilitators in various installations.

Eureka!
Halifax, U.K.

The Museum for Children in Halifax, West Yorkshire is designed specially for kids 11 and under. Feel more than 400 must-touch exhibits in six zones and participate in fun events and activities. At the new Eureka Science+Discovery section of the museum, kids can learn all about their bodies by walking through a giant pair of lungs or learn about how homes work with a cool bathroom DJ display.

Explorado
Troisdorf, Germany

This museum is all about the mind, heart and hand connection. Children are encouraged to touch and interact with everything in the museum to learn about their own environment through play and adventure. Kids can get their Explorado Driver’s License and drive wooden cars that they steer with their feet. They can also try active gaming with a giant trackball as their controller.

Interactive Museum of Music Malaga
Malaga, Spain

Se ruega tocar means “please touch” and is a sign posted throughout this music museum in Spain. In areas with the sign, kids and adults are invited to play instruments like classic violins, pianos and guitars, or try more unique ones like a eucalyptus pipe didgeridoo. There is also a “Laboratory” where you can conduct unique sound experiments.



Nemo Science Museum

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Leonardo Interactive Museum
Florence, Italy

100 percent interactive is an accurate description for the Leonardo Interactive Museum. Here, kids can test out Leonardo da Vinci’s famous machines which have been recreated in painstaking detail according to his notebooks. Kids can also try their hand at building polyhedrals or domes designed by da Vinci and see some of his famous sketches.

Le Musée des Enfants
Brussels, Belgium

This museum is known for being ‘a museum like no other.’ Children can learn about themselves in an interactive way. One of the themes encourages kids to put their emotional and physical balance put to the test. Kids pile into a uniquely designed attic where they can try out stilts, balance blocks and learn about the gravity of the pyramids along with other interactive activities.

NEMO Science Museum
Amsterdam, Netherlands

At the massive NEMO Science Museum, kids and adults alike can dive deep into all aspects of science. With exhibitions that encourage hands-on testing and research, kids can learn about physics, scientific history, technology, power, elements, the universe, human bodies and more. There are daily activities and

workshops that allow kids to participate in labs, experiments and invention.

Zoom Kindermuseum
Vienna, Austria

Kids ages 8–14 can get creative and collaborate in the ZOOM Lab to produce animated films and sounds. If you like working with your hands, head to the Zoom Studio where kids ages 3–12 can learn woodworking. For younger creatives under the age of four, Zoom Ocean is the perfect colorful and interactive space to learn fine motor skills.



Museo dei Bambini

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MILITARY

AFN plans to end satellite TV service soon

Off-base customers to rely on streaming app after March 22

By **SETH ROBSON**
Stars and Stripes

The American Forces Network is ending its eight-channel satellite television service for U.S. military personnel living off base across Europe and Asia.

The long-running service known as “direct-to-home” is screening its final programming before going dark March 22, said Kimberly Antos, director of AFN’s Broadcast Center.

The network is replacing the satellite broadcast with its AFN Now application, which has drawn 57,000 registered users since it launched in 2022, she said in an email.

“This transition is absolutely a cost-saving measure,” Antos said, adding she doesn’t have information about how much money the broadcaster will save.

The change reflects the way modern audiences expect to consume their news, sports and entertainment, she said.

AFN will continue its “direct-to-sailor” broadcast of four standard-definition channels intended for U.S. Navy, Coast Guard and Military Sealift Command vessels, Antos said. Receiving that service requires a 6-foot-wide satellite dish.

The U.S. military began television broadcasts in 1953. Satellite broadcasts to off-base customers, who could tune in with a pizza-box-sized dish and decoder, began in Europe in 1997 and the Pacific in 2004, Antos said.

AFN doesn’t have a way to measure its direct-to-home audience but estimates 400,000 viewers, including service members, government civilians, their families and retirees, across all services, she said.

Not everyone is thrilled about the change. Lanny Haney, a retired airman and AFN viewer since 1980 who lives near Yokota Air Base in western Tokyo, reported technical issues with AFN Now.

“There are times it will lag,” he wrote in a



MARC CASTANEDA/Stars and Stripes

A satellite dish stands near the American Forces Network Pacific headquarters on Yokota Air Base, Japan.

recent text message. “It will also timeout in the middle of something you’re watching (and) you then have to take the time to go to the website and reauthorize the device.”

Haney called the direct-to-home shutdown “the death of being able to easily watch American programming.”

The app shouldn’t be glitchy, Antos wrote in her email. Viewers with technical issues should contact the AFN Now help desk at +1 571-559-1415 or via email at DMA.AFN-

now.Help@mail.mil.

Viewers living on military installations or receiving AFN through an on-base cable system should see no change when direct-to-home ends, she said.

Off-base residents can watch AFNsports, AFNsports2, AFNnews, AFNprime Atlantic, and AFNprime Pacific on AFN Now, Antos added.

“We will add additional AFN channels later this year,” she said.

The app also features sports, news, TV series, movies and specials as on-demand content, Antos said.

AFN Now is available free to all Defense Department personnel and their families assigned overseas, she said.

The service is available on mobile devices, some smart TVs, and devices like Roku, Amazon Fire and Apple TV, and will soon be available on the Microsoft Xbox gaming console, Antos said.



MICHAEL RICHMOND/U.S. Air Force

An unarmed LGM-30G Minuteman III sits inside the silo of U-01 at F.E. Warren Air Force Base, Wyo.

GAO: ICBM test flight unlikely until 2028

By **GARY WARNER**
Stars and Stripes

Software delays related to the U.S. Air Force’s future LGM-35A Sentinel intercontinental ballistic missile could pose “significant risks” to the program, requiring the U.S. to continue using the existing LGM-30G Minuteman III arsenal for longer than expected, the Government Accountability Office said Feb. 18.

The first flight of the new Sentinel is unlikely to occur before March 2028, according to the GAO report.

The timeline runs counter to a U.S. Air Force news release issued Feb. 17 that said the Sentinel could receive a new Milestone B rating, allowing for a prototype, by the end of the year. The Air Force said that it believed

the missile’s first flight could occur in 2027.

The Air Force said Feb. 18 that it was aware of the GAO report but felt confident that the accelerated timeline it presented was accurate.

“The Air Force has made tremendous progress since the GAO reports were written, and the Sentinel program is on track to complete its restructure by the end of 2026,” the service said in a statement.

The new missile would be the land-based piece of the United States’ nuclear triad, along with submarine-launched ballistic missiles and manned bombers.

The Sentinel program’s cost is now pegged at about \$141 billion, including construction of 600 silos and other facilities.

The new ICBM program exceeded statu-

tory cost thresholds in January 2024, delaying the development of a prototype. The so-called Nunn-McCurdy unit cost limits created by Congress govern the pace of spending on defense programs. Specifics were not immediately available at press time.

The GAO said the delay could allow the service time to address issues in the program.

The GAO report said the Sentinel program is four years behind schedule, requiring a 14-year life extension of the Minuteman.

The Los Alamos Study Group Exchange Monitor, a publication for nuclear weapons experts, reported in January 2025 that the last Minuteman III would likely not be decommissioned until 2050 or later, as the two programs overlap during the Sentinel rollout.

Auto dealer with solely American clientele hit by thieves in Aviano

By **KENT HARRIS**
Stars and Stripes

AVIANO, Italy — Thieves stole two cars and a safe from a dealership that caters exclusively to Americans during a burglary last month, according to multiple Italian media reports and the local Carabinieri office.

Capitol Motors, located about a block from Aviano Air Base’s north gate, was broken into in the early morning hours of Feb. 1.

The cars stolen were a Honda Civic and a

BMW X1, both of which were new and had no license plates, *Il Gazzettino* reported.

The safe was eventually found along the Brentella stream underneath a recently renovated bridge near San Martino di Campagna about 3 miles east of Aviano, another report from the newspaper said.

A passer-by found keys and documents scattered in the area. Authorities told the paper they were concerned that the two stolen vehicles might be used in other crimes.

Capitol Motors employees said they could not comment on the situation, and attempts to obtain more information from the company were not successful.

The dealership is based in Kaiserslautern, Germany, and has other locations in Spangdahlem, Germany, and in Aviano and Vicenza in Italy.

A Carabinieri officer in Aviano, who asked not to be identified, largely declined to comment about the case, citing the ongoing in-

vestigation.

When asked whether the business had been targeted because of its American clientele, the officer said it was a “random theft.”

Local news outlet *La Gazzetta di Pordenone* reported that the thieves appeared to know their target, “suggesting that the burglary may have been planned in advance.”

Investigators were reviewing footage from the dealership’s surveillance cameras.

MILITARY

Clear rules needed when troops go missing

GAO: Better guidance could help save lives

By ALISON BATH
Stars and Stripes

Giving U.S. military commanders clear, specific procedures to follow in the critical hours after service members unexpectedly go missing could improve the odds of saving their lives, a government watchdog agency says.

Air Force and Navy guidance on facilitating the search for absent personnel should designate a timeline for certain actions, such as notifying law enforcement or family members, the Government Accountability Office said in a report.

Also, the Marine Corps still has not issued formal guidance for locating missing service members despite a 2022 recommendation by the GAO that it do so, according to the report.

“Clear formal guidance for the commanded response process during the first 24 hours following an absence can help to prevent harm and save lives,” the report’s authors said.

The agency noted that only the Army has specified when certain actions, such as notifying law enforcement or family members, should take place.

That and other gaps in guidance for commands in locating and tracking absent personnel could result in missed opportunities, the report stated.

“A timely and well-coordinated response to a service member’s absence between unit commanders and law enforcement is critical to establishing the facts and helping to ensure the service member’s safe return, if possible,” the GAO said.

The Marine Corps will issue an interim directive this month addressing the GAO recommendations, with full implementation by January 2028, the report stated, citing service officials.

The report findings follow updates to the Army’s missing-soldier process in the aftermath of the killing of Spc. Vanessa Guillen in 2020.

Guillen was reported missing from Fort Hood, Texas, in late April of that year. She was last seen working in an arms room on base. Her remains were found over two months later more than 20 miles from the base.

Authorities believe she was bludgeoned to death with a hammer by fellow soldier Spc. Aaron Robinson and then taken in a large plastic box to the place where her remains were found. Robinson fatally shot himself during a confrontation with law enforcement.

The case led to Defense Department policy reforms on sexual harassment and sexual assault.

The GAO recommendations also come amid questions about the Navy’s handling of the disappearance of now-Petty Officer 3rd Class Angelina Resendiz last year.

Her badly decomposed body was found in a wooded area near Naval Station Norfolk in Virginia in early June, 12 days after family members and fellow sailors raised concerns about her well-being on May 29.

But it wasn’t until June 3, five days after she was last seen or in contact with family and friends, that a statewide alert was issued, a lag that occurred because the Navy initially considered her absent without official leave.

That response has drawn criticism from her family and congressional inquiries into the handling of her disappearance.

Seaman Jermiah Copeland, who was assigned to the same ship as Resendiz, is charged with premeditated murder in her death, along with several crimes involving three other women.

Service members can be absent from their duty stations for varying reasons, which may be either voluntary or involuntary.

For example, 295 service members were listed as involuntarily absent in a nonhostile



ILLUSTRATION BY NOGA AMI-RAV/Stars and Stripes



A mural of Army Spc. Vanessa Guillen standing outside the Vanessa Gate of Fort Hood in Killeen, Texas, in October 2020.

setting from 2015 through 2024, with 93% of those absences resulting in a declaration of death, according to the GAO report.

About 78% of those deaths were from accidents, including service-related ship collisions and aircraft crashes. A further 10% were from suicides. The causes behind the remaining involuntary absences were not identified in the report.

In its assessment, the GAO said the Navy and Air Force should augment their processes to include greater specificity in the timing for taking certain actions.

For example, Army guidance requires commanders to notify service law enforcement officials of a soldier’s absence within

three hours of discovery and to inform family members within eight hours, the GAO said.

Navy and Air Force officials interviewed by the GAO recognized the importance of locating a missing service member quickly, but the guidance issued by each service outlines response time frames with varying specificity, according to the report.

That gap results in “different interpretations among officials regarding how quickly certain actions should be initiated,” the report stated.

For example, some officials said they would alert the appropriate higher-level command of an absence within a few hours, while others said they would wait until the end of the day,



Resendiz family

The body of Seaman Angelina Resendiz was discovered June 9, 2025, in a wooded area about 10 miles from Naval Station Norfolk, Va.

the following day or potentially longer.

Some indicated they would contact installation law enforcement within a few hours of being unable to locate a service member, while others preferred to wait until the following day to give the service member an opportunity to return to duty without escalating the issue.

The GAO made 12 recommendations, including that the services also better address the role of mental health in unexpected absences and potential safety issues that could arise during the response process.

The watchdog agency also wants the Defense Department to issue a policy requiring guidance that commanders presume a service member’s absence indicates they may be in danger and that they consider absences most likely involuntary after a specific time period unless available information indicates otherwise.

That recommendation, also made to the Navy and Air Force, is in line with recent changes to Army policy.

The Defense Department concurred with the recommendations.

MILITARY

IG: Kennel conditions put working dogs at risk

Report cited extreme heat, inattentiveness in care and aging facilities

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

At least four military working dogs died after being housed in kennels that a recent Defense Department inspector general report called unsatisfactory.

IG investigators visited a dozen military kennels across the U.S. and assessed 10 of them as substandard. The report cited problems such as overexposure to extreme heat, caregiver inattentiveness and aging facilities.

Between 2021 and 2023, there were four fatalities as a result of the dogs' stay in one of those 10 kennels, the IG said in the report, which was issued Feb. 17.

Service officials told investigators that the poor conditions stemmed from command decisions to prioritize other mission requirements over renovating existing kennels or building new facilities.

Part of the review keyed in on military dogs in nontraining status, meaning they were either in initial training, awaiting an assignment or under some type of assessment.

That focus was chosen because dogs in an operational environment generally receive more stimulation, the report said.

Dogs under the purview of the Air Force's 341st Training Squadron experienced higher rates of diseases, injuries and behavioral problems than those in operations units, the IG said in a report released early last month.

The Air Force is the executive agent for the Pentagon's working dog program.

Because of understaffing, some dogs received only a few 10-minute walks per week rather than the five hours of daily physical and mental activity required by regulations, the report said.

German shepherds and Belgian Malinois are the most common breeds in the ranks of military working dogs, which help in activities ranging from explosive detection, drug discovery and search-and-rescue operations.

Multiple service components failed to consistently protect dogs from extreme weather conditions and kennel mold issues, the report



SARAYUTH PINTHONG/U.S. Air Force

An animal caretaker makes her rounds in the military working dog kennels at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland, Texas.

said.

Managing quarantine and isolation areas in the kennels also was problematic, according to the IG.

During an August 2024 visit to the 341st Training Squadron's facilities at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland in Texas, investigators said they saw signs of dogs under stress.

Among the troubling behaviors they saw

were continuous spinning, jumping, chewing on metal water buckets and "excessive vocalization."

They also found signs of heat stress, the report said.

The IG recommended that the Air Force coordinate with the other services on a plan to upgrade kennel facilities to meet current DOD standards.

The Air Force agreed with the recommendation and said steps were being taken to address the issues.

In addition, the Air Force should reduce the number of military working dogs in non-training status until enough caretakers are in place, the IG recommended.

Air Force officials responded that efforts are underway to fix the staff shortages.



U.S. Air Force

Volunteers remove rivets from an Avro Canada VZ-9AV Avrocar, a Cold War-era experimental aircraft resembling a flying saucer, in Dayton, Ohio, in 2017.

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Trump orders release of Pentagon files related to UFOs, extraterrestrial life

By JENNIFER H. SVAN
Stars and Stripes

Documents detailing what the U.S. government knows about whether intelligent life exists beyond Earth may not be under wraps for much longer.

Citing "tremendous interest" in the subject, President Donald Trump on Feb. 19 said he's instructing the Pentagon and other government agencies to identify and begin releasing files related to extraterrestrials and unidentified flying objects.

Trump made the announcement in a post on Truth Social, saying his order applies to all "information connected to these highly complex but extremely interesting and important matters."

Trump's order came on the heels of former President Barack Obama's remarks about aliens several days earlier.

Asked about aliens in an interview being filmed with podcast host Brian Tyler Cohen, Obama said "they're real, but I haven't seen them, and they're not being kept ... in Area 51."

The place Obama referred to is a classified Air Force installation in southern Nevada initially built as a test facility for the Lockheed U-2 spy plane.

In recent decades, it's become the topic of various conspiracy theories about whether the government is using the secretive site to hide alien bodies and recovered UFOs.

Obama made a subsequent clarifying post on Instagram saying he had not seen any evidence during his presidency "that extraterrestrials have made contact with us."

Trump's post did not give a timeline for the release of the files.

He told reporters on Feb. 19 on Air Force One that he doesn't have an opinion on whether aliens exist, according to The Associated Press.

The Pentagon in recent years has stepped up efforts to investigate unidentified and unexplained aerial phenomena, the government's term for UFO-type sightings.

An intelligence report released in 2023 revealed that there were hundreds of new reports of these sightings and many of them were unexplained.

Most of the new sightings came from Navy and Air Force aviators and operators who had witnessed such objects while flying.

In a 2024 report, the Pentagon said there was no indication suggesting that what observers had reported seeing was extraterrestrial.



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- Lunch Spot **Panda Koreano Catania**
- Special Occasion Restaurant **La Buca Taormina**
- Pizzeria **Al Vicolo Pizza & Vino**
- Cocktail/Wine Bar **Bohème Mixology Bar**
- Sushi Restaurant **Gohan**
- Pastry Shop **Old Time Pasticceria**
- Day Trip **Ortigia/Siracusa**
- Hiking Trail **Pista Altomontana Etna**
- Tour Guide/Tour Company **MWR**
- Lido **Lido San Lorenzo**

NAPLES

- Hair Salon/Barber **Antonio Zaccariello**
- Nail Salon **Aya Corpo e Anima Beauty Center – Angela**
- Tattoo Shop **Family Addiction Tattoos and Piercing in Aversa**
- Car Dealership **Military AutoSource**
- Auto Shop **Lellos Cars**
- Spa **Negombo**
- Dentist **Sadile Studio Dentistico**
- Shopping Mall **Shopping Complex Campania**
- Gelato/Granita **Nice Point**
- Special Occasion Restaurant **Osteria Angelina**
- Breakfast Spot **Divina's**
- Cocktail/Wine Bar **Wild Buffalo**
- Winery **Tenuta Cavalier Pepe**
- Pizzeria **Kajna' Pizza & Cucina**
- Pastry Shop **Pasticceria Caffetteria Feliciello**
- Day Trip **Sorrento**
- Children's Attraction **Zoo di Napoli**
- Hiking Trail **Path of the Gods**
- Lido **Seven Beach Sunset**
- Tour guide/Tour company **S&G Tours**

Save for later!

