

New tech, new tactics

Army puts drones,
Infantry Squad Vehicles
through paces **Page 3**

Spc. Lathan Thomley looks over the controls of a Switchblade 600 one-way-attack drone during training for the Army's 2nd Armored Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division on June 1, at Fort Irwin, Calif.

COREY DICKSTEIN/Stars and Stripes

Vicenza's Berico church a literal high point of city
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Army reservist disarms suspect in Italy bar altercation
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SETAF change keeps leadership within AFRICOM
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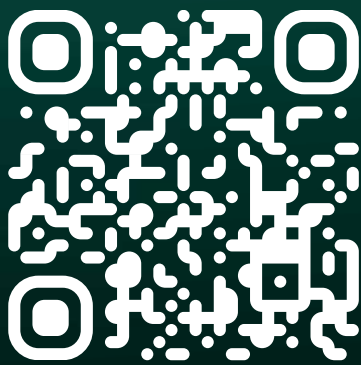
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COVER STORY

Soldiers test latest battlefield technology

Troops drill in austere, warlike environment against peer enemy

By COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

FORT IRWIN, Calif. — High atop a ridge-line, Army Sgt. Carlos Santos launched his small reconnaissance drone 600 feet into the evening sky for a peek over the mountainous terrain separating him from the enemy force he knew was coming.

The 4-pound quadcopter — a Teal Black Widow — buzzed quietly into the distance and disappeared. Santos and his cavalry squad remained hidden in their Infantry Squad Vehicle among boulders and brush as he scanned the Army National Training Center's desert terrain for threats.

"Enemy force about 5 to 6 clicks from here," the cavalry scout with the 3rd Infantry Division's 2nd Armored Brigade Combat Team noted, using military slang for kilometers. "Fifteen to 17 vehicles. Tanks."

Santos reported the enemy — Fort Irwin's dedicated opposing force, the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment, known as Blackhorse — and called for fire. In moments, using a small drone, a communications link to higher headquarters and simulated strikes from artillery and kamikaze drones, the first threat in a weeklong battle was eliminated.

Santos and the rest of the approximately 4,000 soldiers of the 2nd Armored Brigade Combat Team have spent recent weeks at NTC, the Army's 750,000-acre expanse of desolate training grounds in Southern California's Mojave Desert, working to integrate the Army's latest technology into their formation built around the service's heaviest weapons, including M1 Abrams tanks and M2 Bradley Fighting Vehicles.

Small drones are a game changer for cavalry scouts, who were previously limited to finding only threats they could see with their eyes.

Now, Santos can send a drone up to 1,000 feet in the air and 5 miles in any direction to peer around obstacles while maintaining cover.

"We couldn't have just walked those [5 miles] in like 10 minutes and spotted all those targets, right?" Santos said. "So, for us scouts, this is something that gives us a new kind of access and speed. You can get these drones up in the air and clear all these open areas super-fast. Get it up, spot the targets, call for fire on them, and move on."

Recent rapid battlefield tech advancements — underscored by evolving drone tactics in the Russia-Ukraine war — have forced American military leaders to reconsider how they would fight a similarly equipped adversary, such as China or Russia. The widespread adoption of reconnaissance and strike drones, satellite surveillance and electromagnetic warfare capabilities mean large formations such as an armored brigade cannot easily hide or mass their forces to fight.

For the 3rd ID's 2nd Brigade, based at Fort Stewart, Ga., the NTC rotation allowed them to test new technology and tactics in an austere, warlike environment against a peer enemy for the first time.

Top Army leaders in late 2024 charged the 3rd Infantry Division's two heavy brigades with experimenting with the service's latest technologies — mostly off-the-shelf capabilities the Army could buy, test and field quickly — to find ways to become more lethal and survivable on a future battlefield. The program, known as Transformation in Contact, or TiC, came in direct response to innovations on the Ukrainian battlefield.

Army Secretary Dan Driscoll has said he worries the U.S. military has fallen behind its Chinese counterpart, which has quickly adopted new technology and developed a drone-fighting doctrine. Transformation in Contact efforts, he recently told Congress,



PHOTOS BY COREY DICKSTEIN/Stars and Stripes
Army Staff Sgt. James Miller-Kerr controls a medium range reconnaissance drone from inside an M2 Bradley Fighting Vehicle during force-on-force operations June 11 at the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, Calif.



Soldiers from the 2nd Armored Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division operate an Infantry Squad Vehicle during a training rotation at Fort Irwin on June 12.

give the service its best chance to survive modern large-scale combat against China or Russia.

"No one can predict the next war, but we cannot wait ... to innovate until Americans are dying on the battlefield," Driscoll said. "We must act now to enable our soldiers."

The Army has given TiC formations a wide berth to try a huge inventory of new gear and accept risk in training, said Col. Alex Perez-Cruz, the commander of the 2nd Brigade, nicknamed the Spartans.

"You're going to try something that may not work, but the reward is you innovate and if you did something new that worked, now you have a new method," Perez-Cruz said. "We have to have a learning organization that is willing to fail and willing to try new things and willing to do it quickly."

Army brigades in recent decades have trained at NTC to hone their skills ahead of deployments to Iraq, Afghanistan or Eastern Europe. In June, the Army gave Perez-Cruz's brigade more leeway to experiment with new tech and tactics.

Perez-Cruz spread his battalions across much more ground than a heavy Army brigade would have during the Global War on Terrorism, at times leaving miles between vehicles. He sent dismounted cavalry scouts and infantry soldiers forward quickly on the Army's new Infantry Squad Vehicle (ISV), an unarmored troop transport based on Chevrolet's Colorado midsize truck that can carry nine soldiers and their gear.

It marked the first time the Army had paired the ISV with a heavy unit whose scouts and infantrymen usually work from Bradleys or up-armored vehicles such as the Joint Light Tactical Vehicle.



Soldiers from the 2nd Armored Brigade Combat Team operate an M2 Bradley Fighting Vehicle during a training rotation at Fort Irwin on June 11.

The potential reward of employing a tactic never used before was worth the risk, Perez-Cruz said.

Under the cover of night, the colonel sent his ISV crews 13 to 19 miles toward where he expected the Blackhorse soldiers to be operating and tasked them with immediately employing drones and electromagnetic warfare sensors to find the enemy.

"I didn't think that we would be able to put all the technologies into use so quickly," said Perez-Cruz, who will soon relinquish command of the Spartan Brigade after two years at its helm. "And in that first day, within an hour I already had ... ISVs forward, we were setting up launch sites for the one-way attack [drones], we were using the medium-range [reconnaissance drones] and simultaneously they were all talking to me on new forms of communication. They did that all within an

hour."

Perez-Cruz tasked the brigade's reconnaissance-focused 6th Squadron, 8th Cavalry Regiment with leading the brigade's transformation efforts. Lt. Col. J.P. Steadman, 6-8's commander, challenged his soldiers to take risks as they adopted new technology.

The unit added platoons focused fully on drone and electromagnetic warfare. Drone and EW specialists were embedded with the squadron's three front-line scout troops, and a platoon of tanks was assigned to each commander.

Those troop commanders, Steadman said, have more firepower and capability available to them than a brigade commander would have had about a dozen years ago.

"We are about three times more lethal than we were before [Transformation in Contact] based on everything we've been given and done," Steadman said. "It makes the troop look like a ... combined arms battalion, which I think throws the enemy off on what they are expecting to see."

Not everything worked smoothly.

Soldiers struggled to keep their electronics charged in the harsh desert environment. Soldiers brought high-capacity portable power stations and some solar chargers into the field, but at times they lacked the juice to fly their power-hungry drones or use their EW systems, Steadman said.

"We thought we had plenty of kilowatts for the things we needed to charge," he said. "And then we get out here and we find that there are so many other little nuances that we weren't prepared for, and we're struggling."

Steadman believes the conditions at Fort Irwin, as temperatures rocketed above 100 degrees, caused the battery issues. He said the unit would analyze the power issues when it returned to Fort Stewart.

Drone operators at times had trouble controlling their small systems in the Fort Irwin wind, which regularly exceeds 30 mph after sundown.

"The terrain out here — the environment is not good for drones, especially at night," said Pfc. Conner Schadwil, a cavalry scout and drone operator. "The mountains and the wind are bad for UAS (Unmanned Aircraft Systems) — the mountains block the signal, so if the drone needs to go anywhere, it needs to fly high, but the higher you go the stronger the wind so it just gets knocked around."

In some cases, soldiers were getting too focused on the newest technology and needed a reminder that the basics of combined arms maneuver still matter, Steadman said.

"For the first six to eight hours, we were using our equipment really well and we had a lot of standoff and we had a lot of success. And when you look at the kill count between what we lost versus what [Blackhorse] lost, it was extremely favorable," Steadman said. "After about the first six to eight hours, that's when some of our battery power problems were coming and that's when we weren't getting as much sensing. And then [Blackhorse] was able to maneuver up onto us and kill us because we were just sitting back and waiting."

He reminded them to aggressively hunt the enemy.

"When we started doing that and we started getting into the terrain and we started using the terrain to our advantage, we were then surprising the enemy and getting our kill count back up," Steadman said.

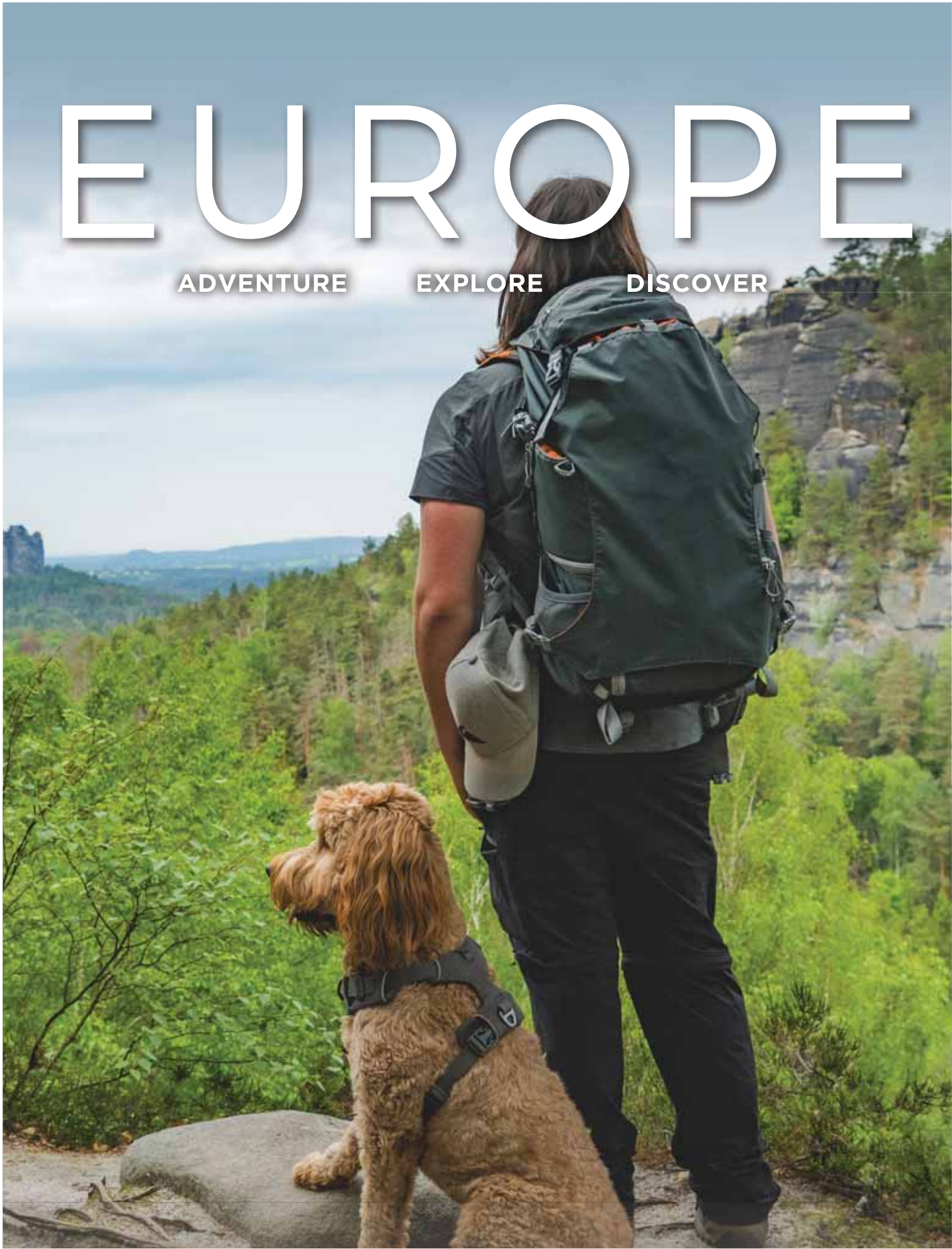
The new tech primarily means that first contact with the enemy is with a machine, Perez-Cruz said. Everything else is the same "basic blocking and tackling" armored brigades have been doing for years.

"If you find it first with one of the drones that has a [lethal] payload on it, great. If you find it first with a scout who calls it in, and we hit a rocket, we hit artillery with it, we hit it with mortars, great," Perez-Cruz said. "We're not doing anything magic. Machines aren't magic. If anything is magic, it's our soldiers ... who are out here and training and very lethal."

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MILITARY

SETAF change keeps leadership within AFRICOM

Maj. Gen. Brown, who recently finished 1-year assignment in Djibouti, takes over from Gainey

By CHAD GARLAND
Stars and Stripes

VICENZA, Italy — A recent leadership change for the Army's Southern European Task Force, Africa will keep things "in the family," as both the inbound and outbound commanders share ties through posts in U.S. Africa Command.

Maj. Gen. Matthew W. Brown, who recently completed a one-year assignment as head of the Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa in Djibouti, takes over SETAF from Maj. Gen. Andrew C. Gainey, who is bound for AFRICOM headquarters to work on planning and strategy.

"There's zero spin-up time because you guys both know what's going on," AFRICOM boss Gen. Dagvin Anderson said during a ceremony at Caserma Ederle on June 26. "You guys are just going to get after it."

The bar has been set high for Gainey's successor, Anderson said, describing Brown as driven and "very forward-leaning."

"I know you'll put your foot on the accelerator and keep things going," he said. "That's exactly what we need to do."

Brown takes command as U.S. forces in Africa face the challenges of reduced access and basing on the continent, which has seen intensified terrorist activity and growing efforts by Russia and China to extend their influence.

Anderson praised Gainey's leadership over the past two years, including his deployment of a task force in West Africa "just in case something went wrong." The relationships with counterparts in Senegal, Ghana and Nigeria ended up paying dividends later, he said.

Setting up an initial presence in Ghana and providing Nigeria with the security, force protection and other elements necessary for intelligence and surveillance support led to strikes that killed a top leader of the Islamic State militant group, Anderson said.

"We didn't expect to go after ISIS' number two terrorist in the world, because he was hidden up in the Lake Chad basin," Anderson said in his remarks. "What SETAF was able to do ... allowed us to develop a high-value



Maj. Gen. Matthew W. Brown, incoming SETAF commander, speaks during the change of command ceremony.

target that threatened all of us."

Both Anderson and Gen. Christopher Donahue, the outgoing head of U.S. Army Europe and Africa, highlighted Gainey's transformation of the African Lion exercise.

It historically was discussed in terms of size and combined arms set pieces, until Gainey shifted the participants' focus to adapting to the changing nature of warfare, Anderson said.

This year, dozens of vendors brought drones, artificial intelligence systems and other high-tech gear to be field-tested during African Lion.

Those capabilities were quickly put to use in a search-and-rescue operation when two U.S. soldiers went missing during an off-duty hike along an oceanside cliff in Morocco on May 2.

Spc. Mariyah Symone Collington, 19, and 1st Lt. Kendrick Lamont Key Jr., 27, were swept into the Atlantic Ocean. Their remains were recovered after several days of searching.



PHOTOS BY ZION THOMAS/U.S. Army

Maj. Gen. Andrew C. Gainey, left, outgoing commander of U.S. Army Southern European Task Force, Africa, passes the unit guidon to Gen. Christopher Donahue, commander of U.S. Army Europe and Africa, during a change of command ceremony at Caserma Ederle in Vicenza, Italy, on June 26.

"That is the organization that he has built," Donahue said of Gainey in describing the rapid shift from training to supporting the efforts to return the soldiers' remains to their families.

The focus on innovating to adapt to the future of war is something Anderson expects Gainey to bring to his role helping define strategy for AFRICOM, he said.

It's an apt assignment, he added, since Gainey's first question for him had been about what his strategy was for Africa.

Gainey's fate underscores a key lesson, Donahue said, addressing the formation and

other soldiers.

"Andy Gainey highlighted a problem to his boss, and his boss turned it around and gave it back to him," he said. "Don't ever forget that leadership technique. I use it every day."

For Gainey, the opportunity to lead the task force, which traces its roots back to 1955, was like "walking in the footsteps of giants," he said.

"Today, our soldiers stand guard at the tip of the spear in austere environments," he said. "They are looking the enemy in the eye, facing danger. ... They represent the very best of our Army."

NATO hackathon tests data sharing system

By BRADLEY LATHAM
Stars and Stripes

WIESBADEN, Germany — U.S. Army and NATO allies say they achieved a major milestone in communication and information sharing as part of reinforcing deterrence on the eastern flank.

U.S. and European service members worked alongside industry partners at Clay Kaserne from June 15-18 for a first-time event dubbed the "hackathon."

They tested a new information network that will serve as the backbone for combined military operations in the theater.

During the hackathon, the militaries of Finland, Lithuania and Italy, among others, accessed the network, marking the first use of the data system across the coalition.

Over the past six months, a U.S. Army Europe and Africa team of computer engineers and data scientists developed a data ecosystem to streamline information sharing in real time across NATO for the Eastern Flank Deterrence Initiative.

The concept uses innovative technologies and artificial intelligence to prevent adversaries from operating freely in contested areas and counter Russian advantages in troop

numbers and battlefield speed.

"I've been incredibly impressed with our multinational partners," said Capt. Bennett Hellman, a USAREUR-AF machine learning engineer. "Within one week alone, we've ingested Lithuanian radar data and sent it to Finnish (platforms) that platoon leaders on the ground would be using."

Participants likened current data sharing procedures to a telephone switchboard that requires hundreds or thousands of individual connections for each system in the network to communicate.

The new framework operates more like a radio channel that provides one connection point for users to "dial in" to begin sharing and receiving real-time data across the alliance, Hellman said.

The hackathon kicked off as Army Secretary Dan Driscoll signed an agreement in Paris to expand the counter-drone marketplace to U.S. allies in Europe. He emphasized the need for the U.S. and its allies to have systems that can talk to each other.

The new Eastern Flank Deterrence Initiative's data backbone directly supports this initiative, allowing USAREUR-AF to bridge the gap between industry and NATO partners and eliminate the need for country-spe-



KEVIN DUNNAWAY/U.S. Army

An Italian soldier reviews computer code during the U.S. Army Europe and Africa hackathon on June 17 in Wiesbaden, Germany.

cific software.

"We make a common open-source architecture that anybody can plug into, so if they can plug into the data backbone once, it unlocks the entire European theater's marketplace," Hellman said.

He added that the program's continued success will rely on participation across NATO.

"The more we can share in common, the

better we work at scale and at speed," Hellman said. "If we truly want to be in the modern ... AI battle space, we need all of the alliance data right when it's happening."

Six other nations had joined the U.S. on the network as of June 26.

"This is going to be a persistent network that exists for both testing and exercises," Hellman said. "It's live, it's living and it's not going to die."

MILITARY

‘Right place at the wrong time’

Army reservist disarms knife-wielding man in Italy bar altercation

BY CHAD GARLAND
Stars and Stripes

For an Army reservist in Italy, an evening that began with the chore of taking garbage to the curb ended with the takedown of a would-be attacker wielding a meat cleaver outside a local bar.

Master Sgt. Gary Lee Jr. is being considered for a medal for his actions, which may have prevented injury to the staff of a Vicenza bar popular with American service members and civilians from the nearby military bases.

“Right place at the wrong time or wrong place at the right time, I don’t know,” Lee said in a recent interview.

The Tuesday night in early June began innocently enough for Lee, who works in finance both in his capacity as an Army reservist and as a contractor with the Southern European Task Force-Africa at Caserma Del Din in Vicenza.

The 43-year-old Mississippi native had just returned to Italy from weekend drill at Fort Devens, Mass., and was taking some trash to a curbside dumpster near Jammin’ Club in Vicenza’s historic Pedemuro San Biagio neighborhood when he saw two friends from base enjoying drinks on the bar’s patio. Having just finished a round of golf, the friends offered to buy Lee a drink.

While other patrons were eating dinner or sipping aperitivos, children were playing and riding bikes nearby, Lee said. That’s typical for the neighborhood, where he’s lived for several years, and he prefers what he described as a laid-back vibe at Jammin’ Club.

But the placid evening took a turn when a man on the street approached a nearby patio table and got into a loud argument with patrons seated there.

A member of the staff confronted the man and urged him to leave. Then owner Jeffrey Errante, who had been seated on the patio eating dinner with his family, did the same.

“When come the crazy people in the bar, we take out, but we don’t want a problem here,” Errante said, adding that he thinks the man had gotten drunk somewhere else before approaching the patio.

The man eventually left, but it was all a bit too much excitement for Lee’s friends, who decided to settle up. As one was inside paying his tab, Lee was on the patio texting his girlfriend when the man rounded the street corner moving quickly toward the bar’s front door.

Lee tried to wave him off and put himself between the man and the entryway. He didn’t know it until someone translated for him later, he said, but the man was shouting threats that he was going to kill everyone.

At some point, as Lee was blocking his path,



CHAD GARLAND/Stars and Stripes

Jeffrey Errante, left, owner of Jammin’ Club, and Master Sgt. Gary Lee Jr. sit at a table at the bar in Vicenza, Italy, on June 18, near the place where the two men subdued and disarmed a knife-wielding man about a week earlier.



City of Vicenza

Italian authorities recovered a meat cleaver they say was brandished by a man who accosted patrons and staff at Jammin’ Club in Vicenza.

the man reached behind his back into the waistband of his pants. Lee initially feared he was going for a firearm, but the man pulled out a heavy kitchen knife.

“He was coming back on a mission, and I don’t know if it was to threaten or to do harm,” Lee said. “But you don’t really pull a knife out like that, make those motions unless you’re trying to inflict horrible (damage).”

Lee focused on remaining calm and trying to deescalate the situation, he said, but once

the man went into a chopping motion, Lee knew he had to go for his wrist.

Errante was on the phone with police and had moved toward the man from the other side, grabbing a metal stool, Lee recounted. Using it almost like a lion tamer’s chair, Errante knocked the man to the ground and held him there so the soldier could disarm him, Lee said.

“He had him pinned down with the chair, which was great, because it blocked a lot of

his movements to allow me to get (the knife) out,” Lee said. “He was still trying to do a motion of slicing.”

As others came to help, they let the disarmed man up, but he ran away. Police arrived about 20 minutes after the altercation and began searching for the attacker.

They eventually arrested a 48-year-old Italian man with a criminal record and charged him with threats and possession of the meat cleaver, the city of Vicenza said in a statement days after the attack. Police also requested a restraining order.

A photo the city released shows a knife that appears to have a 6-inch blade.

Aside from basic military training, Lee has had no other special instruction in hand-to-hand confrontations. If anything he may have picked up a few things about staying calm under pressure from his time in Stuttgart, Germany, supporting the 10th Special Forces Group, he said.

He credited Errante’s quick action for the fact that there was no bloodshed or injury.

“Without him, I don’t know if it would have ended as easy or as smooth without anybody getting hurt,” Lee said. “Just grabbing a knife is not enough sometimes, especially when the guy’s pretty quick.”

AI helps draft mandatory Pentagon reports

BY MATTHEW M. BURKE
Stars and Stripes

The Defense Department is increasingly using artificial intelligence to handle administrative work, including drafting congressionally mandated reports, as Pentagon officials push to expand the technology’s use across the military.

Emil Michael, the Pentagon’s chief technology officer, championed the use of AI for writing reports to lawmakers during a Hudson Institute forum in Washington, D.C., on June 12.

“I have to report to Congress every year on this thing,” Michael said at the forum. “Let me load all the papers on and have it draft me a congressional report that would otherwise take 200 hours of staffing time and do it in five hours. It’s just a matter of trying to catch up to, in this case, what’s basic in the com-

mercial world.”

Michael brushed off questions about risks and the potential for AI hallucinations.

“I mean, there’s risk in everything, and we also offer training,” he said.

Pentagon officials draft hundreds of reports per year, and these documents inform lawmakers who generate policy on a variety of national security issues.

The use of AI to draft congressional reports is part of a broader Pentagon effort to incorporate the technology into administrative, intelligence and warfighting functions.

In June, Michael said the number of Defense Department personnel using AI tools had grown from about 80,000 to more than 1.5 million over the past year, a more than 17-fold increase.

The Pentagon began using Google’s Gemini for government use on its custom GenAI.mil

platform in December. The AI hub has since grown to include xAI’s Grok and OpenAI’s ChatGPT, according to Department of Defense statements.

Anthropic also was awarded a one-year, \$200 million contract last year to develop AI infrastructure that would address national security challenges in “warfighting and enterprise domains,” the contract announcement from July 2025 states.

The growing use of AI for administrative tasks comes as the Pentagon’s congressional reporting requirements have expanded.

The number of reports the department submits to Congress increased threefold, from just over 500 in 2000 to nearly 1,500 in 2020, according to a Government Accountability Office report.

Researchers say that while AI can improve efficiency, it can also provide inaccurate



Department of Defense

The Defense Department is now using artificial intelligence platforms to draft reports to Congress.

information.

A BBC-led study published in October found that nearly half of the answers generated by major AI platforms about newsworthy events contained at least one significant error. Twenty percent of the responses included hallucinations or made-up information.

MILITARY

Ex-soldier guilty in plot to steal \$1M of MREs

By CHAD GARLAND
Stars and Stripes

A federal jury in Texas convicted a former soldier and Army contractor of stealing more than 200 pallets of Meals, Ready to Eat from Fort Bliss as part of a plan to sell the stolen goods online, the Justice Department said June 30.

Joseph Lavar Davis, 47, was found guilty in federal court in El Paso of one count of conspiracy to commit theft of government property and one count of theft of government property on June 24, court records show. The haul of MREs was valued at about \$1.12 million, prosecutors say.

While serving on active duty in the Army, Davis held a position in food service supply and later held a similar position as a contractor, which he used to steal the MREs, according to Justice Department statement.

As part of the conspiracy, Davis created false requests for the MREs, negotiated sales prices for the stolen rations and coordinated their payment, the statement said.

“Joseph Davis betrayed the very country he once swore to protect in an effort to satisfy his own selfish ambition, and a jury of his peers held him accountable for it,” said Justin Simmons, the U.S. attorney for the western district of Texas.

Davis was indicted in February 2025 alongside three others, who prosecutors say worked together between February and August 2020 to obtain the pallets of MREs by submitting false paperwork, renting trucks, hauling the pallets away to a warehouse and selling them for their own gain.

Fort Bliss routinely uses the MREs to feed troops in Texas and New Mexico on mobilization or training orders who are assigned to the Fort Bliss Mobilization Brigade, the indictment said.

Units assigned to the brigade submit requests for MREs and send unit representatives to the brigade’s supply office to sign for them and pick them



WESTON BROWN/U.S. Marine Corps

A Marine eats a Meal, Ready-to-Eat during a field exercise at Combined Arms Training Center Camp Fuji, Japan, in December. A federal jury in Texas last week convicted a former soldier and Army contractor of stealing more than 200 pallets of MREs valued at about \$1.1 million, the Justice Department said Tuesday. A Marine in full combat gear eats from a field ration pouch while leaning against a tree.

up, it said.

In August 2020, FBI and Army Criminal Investigation Division agents executed a search warrant at a civilian warehouse in El Paso and found about 100 pallets, or about 57,600 of the shelf-stable meals, the statement said.

The warehouse owner purchased the pallets from the others, who had stolen them from Fort

Bliss, it said. Others named in the indictment were Jatavis Lenard Fuse, Tyrone Lamar Odum Turner and John Broberg.

Fuse, a former soldier who was assigned to the 1st Armored Division at Fort Bliss from July 2014 to August 2020, pleaded guilty to both charges in February, court records show.

Turner, another former service member, plead-

ed guilty the same month to the conspiracy charge under a deal with prosecutors, the records show.

Broberg, the owner and operator of the warehouse, also pleaded guilty to the conspiracy charge under a plea agreement in March.

According to the indictment, Broberg paid more than \$44,000 over several transactions to Fuse or to bank accounts designated by Turner in exchange for the stolen MREs.

Those payments coincided with truck rentals by Davis and Fuse and with pickups of pallets from Fort Bliss in March and August 2020, prosecutors said.

On roughly the same dates, Fuse and Turner exchanged thousands of dollars with Davis, court records said.

Each 1,000-pound pallet contains 48 cases of the meals-in-a-bag designed to sustain service members in the field during training or military operations, according to the Defense Logistics Agency.

The pallets contain an even split of two different variants of MRE cases, “A” and “B.” Each case weighs 22 pounds and contains 12 different menus of the bagged entrees and other components, according to the DLA website.

It’s not unheard-of for base workers to be caught stealing MREs. In 2014, police in Seoul investigated a ring of contractors working on U.S. bases who picked up unused and expired MREs that had been thrown away or designated for burning and sold them on the black market.

During the war in Afghanistan, Stars and Stripes found vendors in Kabul’s Bush Bazaar selling expired MREs and other items from U.S. outposts.

Davis is on pretrial release and is scheduled to be sentenced in October. The case was prosecuted as part of a task force chaired by Vice President JD Vance to root out fraud, waste and abuse in federal benefit programs, the DOJ statement said.

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APEROL AND THE *Incredible Spritzes* IT HAS INSPIRED

BY KIMBERLY KEPHART
Contributing Writer

We’ve all seen it: the beautiful orange hued drink on everyone’s table in the local piazza or village square in Europe. It’s the classic Aperol spritz. Locals and tourists alike enjoy this light drink before and during dinner. Its vibrant orange hue and refreshing taste evokes images of sun-soaked terraces and relaxed afternoons that carry you through even the harshest of seasons.



Padua, Italy is the birthplace of the Aperol; it was created in 1919 by the Barbieri brothers. This aperitif was made from a blend of bitter and sweet oranges. It was designed to be low in alcohol and served as an aperitivo – a drink meant to stimulate the appetite before a meal.

The spritz itself predates Aperol, emerging in the 19th century when Austrian soldiers occupied northern Italy during World War I. They would dilute local wines with soda water which gave birth to the “spritz,” which means “splash” in German. Some locals in Venice often joke that the “Germans just couldn’t handle a good strong Italian wine.”

The combination of Aperol with Prosecco and soda water solidified the modern Aperol spritz as we know it today in the 1950s, eventually becoming synonymous with Italian social life.

Spritz Varieties

Did you know there are numerous variations on the spritz that cater to different tastes and regional preferences? Each of these mixtures offers a unique twist to the traditional Aperol recipe, allowing cocktail enthusiasts to explore a range of flavors.

Hugo spritz: Originating from the Trentino-Alto Adige region, the Hugo spritz has gained popularity for its refreshing, floral taste. It was created by bartender Roland Gruber in the early 2000s in the town of Naturno. Gruber wanted to develop a refreshing aperitif that would appeal to a younger crowd. He combined Prosecco with elderflower syrup, fresh mint and soda water resulting in one of the best drinks to have after a long hike in the Dolomites, and, in my opinion, the best way to hydrate after a long hike!

Cynar spritz: This is a must-try while in Italy and was created by a company called G.B. Pazzoli in Padova. Three brothers: Angelo, Amedeo and Mario Dalle Molle believed that the properties of Cynar would bring a healthier option to the market. Cynar offers a distinctive twist as this is an herbal aperitif made from artichokes and various herbs, and while it brings a complex taste profile, it’s refreshing. The bitterness of Cynar balances beautifully with the sweetness of Prosecco, appealing to those who enjoy a more adventurous cocktail. At some places in Venice, it’s served with a green olive.

Campari spritz: Utilizing Campari instead of Aperol, this version is bolder and more bitter, perfect for those who appreciate a deeper flavor. It’s a mix of herbs and fruits including chinotto (Myrtle) and cascarilla, a shrub whose bark is used for flavoring. This is the choice for those who love anything bitter. It’s a bright blood-orange color that cannot be missed. Campari was created in 1860 by Gaspare Campari in Novara, Italy. This is located in Piemonte, west of Milano.

Select spritz: Hailing from Venice, this spritz incorporates Select, another herbal aperitif, adding unique botanicals and a slight sweetness.

This particular blend contributed to the social and economic revitalization of Venice when the Pilla brothers created this aperitivo in 1920.

Spritz Bianco: A lighter alternative, this version replaces the bitter component with white wine and a splash of soda, catering to those seeking a refreshing option. Rumor has it that this was the original spritz that Austrians invented in the 19th century. In Austria, they’ll call it a Gespritzer!

Each of these variations showcases the spritz’s adaptability, allowing for creativity and personal preference while still capturing the essence of Italian aperitivo culture.



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THE INCREDIBLY SCENIC AMALFI COAST OF SOUTHERN ITALY IS NOTHING SHORT OF ASTOUNDING. THE SPARKLING BLUE SEA WATER PAIRED WITH QUAIN T VILLAGES AND DELICIOUS FOOD LURES VISITORS FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD. FOR THE PERFECT BEACH EXPERIENCE, VISIT THE SPIAGGIA GRANDE IN POSITANO.

Spiaggia Grande literally means “large beach,” and is the main coastal and activity hub in the village. The surroundings of this area are truly spectacular, as the beach is backed by the rocky walls of Sant’Angelo a Tre Pizzi Mount and the village seems to be suspended over the glittering sea.

Spiaggia Grande stretches for over 1,000 feet and is a fabulous place to sunbathe. The combination of sunshine, the smell of citrus, colorful gardens, the clear blue sea, buzzing shops and amazing restaurants all meld together to give Positano its international fame. If you have the pleasure of spending time on the beach, you’ll find a bathhouse where you can rent sunbeds and umbrellas. There is also a children’s play area, numerous restaurants and a free area where you can stake your claim with a towel. This is a pebble beach, so consider wearing water shoes.

Wander around to get a feel for the village of Positano and you’re sure to be dazzled by the Church of Santa Maria Assunta with its tiled Moorish dome. Inside you’ll find Byzantine era treasures. The church is considered a centerpiece of the village and makes an ideal photo background.

While ambling through the village you can shop for local and international pieces as you take in the sights. There is no shortage of artwork, ceramics, jewelry, food, pet gifts and clothing. Browse

the numerous boutiques for the perfect pair of custom-made leather sandals, as southern Italy is known for its handmade leather goods.

If you want to venture beyond the beach, you can take a boat tour of the Amalfi coast or even to the island of Capri if the mood strikes you. It is also fun to rent a vespa and cruise along the cliffside roads and through Positano.

Naturally, Positano couldn’t be more ideal for finding the freshest seafood. The beach itself is bordered by some of the village’s best restaurants, so you don’t even have to wander far to have something amazing. Check out Chez Black, a casual dining restaurant that will make you feel like you are on a yacht. They have both indoor and outdoor seating. While you’re there, you can have a friendly argument about which is better: the food or the view?

For a romantic dinner, make a reservation at Rada. This restaurant features an elegant atmosphere, fine Italian wine and the freshest ingredients. It is located above The Music on the Rocks venue and is situated on a cliff right above the beach. Be sure to finish every meal while you are in Positano with limoncello, a chilled lemon-flavored alcohol. Italians consider this a digestivo and the perfect end to each meal.

The perfect beach does exist, and it’s waiting for you in Positano. Soak up the sun as you relax in one of Italy’s most popular destinations. Unparalleled views, truly exquisite food and the bluest of waters are calling you to Spiaggia Grande.





If you’re missing the sea air, fresh seafood and a vacation attitude, in just 90 minutes from Aviano, or two hours from Vicenza, you can be in glorious Grado!

Explore the beach where lounge chair rentals and food and drink service are readily available. If the kiddos are along, they’ll love the playground equipment set up in the sand. The marble seawall adjacent to the beach is ideal for strolling, jogging and sunset-watching.

Amble through the pedestrian zone, enjoyed by locals and tourists

alike. For shoppers there are unique boutiques to explore, and for people-watchers it’s head-spinning!

Dining options are plentiful. For family fun, don’t miss the beachside restaurant and bar with the Key West theme. You’ll find that businesses along the beach are kid-friendly, reasonably priced and staffed by English-speakers. For more upscale

options, head to the pedestrian area or explore the maze of side-streets to find a local gem. My favorite restaurant is on Calle Porta Piccola where both the service and food are first class.

If you want to add some exercise and cycling scenery to your visit, park in Aquileia, a UNESCO heritage site just north of Grado. Hop on the paved bike path which traverses the SR352



causeway and roll into town. The scenery along this 15 kilometer route is great. You’ll be riding on the famous Alpe Andria cycle route (FVG1).

Aquileia is also home to the Basilica Patriarchal di Santa Maria Assunta. There you’ll find mosaics dating from 313 A.D. that feature unique depictions of biblical stories and Christian symbols. You can purchase a com-

bination tour ticket at the Tourist Information (TI) office which allows access to the basilica, crypt, baptistry and in-town archeological sites. The pass is good for 48 hours from first use, so you can explore the town over the course of a weekend stay.

In your northern Italy backyard, visit Grado for the beach, the basilica and bicycling...buonissimo!



1. The name Mediterranean is Latin for “center of the earth.”



2. The sea is surrounded by 22 countries, resulting in a constant fusion of different cultures over many centuries, the most appetizing of which is the food.



3. The mild climate is partially a result of its location on the western coasts of Europe and Africa, where moisture comes from the Atlantic during the cooler rainy season. California has a similar mechanism for its climate.

10 Things to Know About

THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA

By ERICA FOWLER
Stars and Stripes



4. The sea once nearly dried up, but about five million years ago, long-term flooding refilled the basin and carved out access to the world’s oceans via the Strait of Gibraltar.



5. There are actually two deep basins holding the often pristine blue water: the Occidental and Oriental, linked by the Strait of Sicily.



6. Large swathes of seagrasses, called Posidonia oceanica meadows, are considered the lung of the Mediterranean Sea, sustaining ocean life, food chains and preventing beach erosion by slowing down the tides.



7. The clearest water can be found around the Ionian Sea, between Italy and Greece, and the saltiest water is in the eastern areas due to more evaporation.



8. There are numerous ancient cities underwater around the Mediterranean such as the Baiae Roman city near Naples, Pavlopetri in Greece and Thonis-Heracleion in Egypt.



9. One of the world’s most active volcanic sites is in and around Italy, due to the African tectonic plate slipping under the European one.



10. Cruising in the Mediterranean is very popular, and if you’d like to go while saving some money, consider the off seasons of spring and fall. The crowds will be more manageable, though beach swimming may be off the table.

MILITARY

4 in 10 military families see food insecurity

Rate has surged in last two years, survey says

BY LARA KORTE
Stars and Stripes

The rate of military families suffering from food insecurity has surged in the last two years, according to the latest annual survey of spouses, active-duty service members and veterans.

More than 41% of respondents in a new Military Family Advisory Network study said they experienced low or very low food security in 2025, up from about 16% in 2023.

That is nearly three times the national rate of food insecurity in 2024, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

The findings point to growing financial pressures across military households that researchers said threaten morale and military readiness.

"Military families are operating with really tight financial budgets, and food insecurity is just one indicator of a larger financial strain," said Gabby L'Esperance, vice president of research and evaluation at MFAN.

The survey found that 85% of respondents were paying more than what they could comfortably afford to cover housing, rent or utility payments. Much like food insecurity, housing burdens were also greater on enlisted families compared with officer families.

"We see enlisted family respondents consistently reporting different outcomes than their officer counterparts," L'Esperance said.

Junior enlisted families reported the highest rate of food insecurity among those surveyed, about 74%. Currently serving families also reported food insecurity at higher rates than veteran and retiree populations, according to the report.

Researchers cautioned that the increase from 2023 was partly driven by changes in the survey population, which included a larger share of currently serving families and enlisted respondents compared to previous years.

But they said the findings also reflect growing economic strain facing military families.

The polling was conducted between October 2025 and January 2026 as rising costs, a strained housing market and the government shutdown worsened financial conditions for many military families.

For the first time since the survey launched more than a decade ago, military families identified grocery prices as a significant factor preventing them from making ends meet. Nearly 58% of respondents said rising food costs were the biggest barrier to saving money.

Spouse unemployment is also increasing, especially among active-duty families. The survey found that nearly a third of spouses in currently-serving families are unemployed, compared with 19% across the entire population.

One of the biggest factors driving spouses out of the workforce is access to affordable child care, L'Esperance said. Without it, she said many spouses can't maintain a full-time



Tenison Shirai/

Soldiers' Angels volunteers sort food into bags at a military food distribution event. A new survey by the Military Family Advisory Network found food insecurity among military families jumped from about 15% in 2023 to more than 41% in 2025, with enlisted families hit hardest.

job, which in turn worsens other financial burdens related to food and housing.

Housing costs have also become a major burden. Nearly 60% of active-duty families are paying more than their basic allowance for housing, the report said.

The financial strain has left many families with little cushion for emergencies. Nearly 1 in 3 respondents said they have less than \$500 in emergency savings.

That rate was highest among veteran and retiree families, at 36%.

The report urged leaders and policymakers to treat military families' financial health as a national security imperative.

"Ultimately, economic security has emerged not just as a matter of household welfare but as the foundational infrastructure for readiness," the report said.

Although more respondents said they would recommend military life than in 2023, active-duty spouses were the least likely to do so. L'Esperance said that suggests spouses are carrying much of the stress of military life.

"We are taking away from this that spouse well-being is a readiness concern," she said.



JANECE WRIGHT/U.S. Army

Soldiers load fresh produce into a car at the Fresh Food for Families drive-thru food distribution event at Fort Hood, Texas, in November.

Army captain admits giving abortion drug to enlisted soldier

BY GARY WARNER
Stars and Stripes

JOINT BASE LEWIS-MCCHORD, Wash. — An Army captain was sentenced June 24 to 12 years in prison after pleading guilty to intentionally killing the unborn child of a junior enlisted soldier he impregnated.

Capt. Brandon Jones-Adams, 34, admitted to secretly administering the drug mifepristone to the soldier, causing an abortion.

Mifepristone is a medication that works primarily by blocking the hormone progesterone. By blocking progesterone, mifepris-

tone causes the uterine lining to break down, ending the pregnancy.

Jones-Adams also pleaded guilty to domestic violence, fraternization and conduct unbecoming an officer under the Uniform Code of Military Justice.

The prosecution was led by the Army Office of Special Trial Counsel, based at Fort Belvoir, Va. The office handles murder, kidnapping and major sex crimes involving soldiers.

"Capt. Jones-Adams' actions were deliberate, calculated and malicious," said Circuit Chief Lt. Col. Tyler Heimann, 6th Cir-

cuit, Army Office of Special Trial Counsel. "By committing these crimes, he inflicted profound harm on his victim and betrayed the trust placed in him as an Army officer. Today's sentence holds him accountable for his conduct and provides a measure of justice and closure for those harmed."

Jones-Adams is assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 23rd Brigade Engineer Battalion, 1-2 Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 7th Infantry Division, Multi-Domain Command Pacific, at Lewis-McChord.

Based on the terms of his plea agree-

ment, Jones-Adams could have been sentenced anywhere between four and 12 years in prison, according to the Army.

In addition to prison, the military judge sentenced Jones-Adams to forfeiture of all pay and allowances and to be dismissed from the Army.

A dismissal is a punitive discharge for military commissioned officers, equivalent to a dishonorable discharge for enlisted members of the armed forces.

Jones-Adams will begin his confinement at the Northwest Joint Regional Correctional Facility at JBLM.

MILITARY



PHOTOS BY CHAD M. BUTLER/U.S. Navy

Sailors assigned to the Small Craft Action Team aboard the USS Mount Whitney train on a deck-mounted weapon during an unmanned vessel swarm exercise in the Baltic Sea on June 13. A recent NATO exercise underscored the need to train sailors on detecting and countering surface drones, a potentially deadly threat to warships with limited defenses against the technology.

Sailors train to counter swarming drones

Lessons on display during NATO maritime exercise in Baltic Sea

BY ALISON BATH
Stars and Stripes

BALTIC SEA — These northerly waters recently served to show Navy sailors how to spot and destroy deadly surface drones, whose devastating consequences for ships have been demonstrated from the Middle East to Crimea.

The lessons were on display in June during BALTOPS, an annual NATO maritime exercise in the Baltic. Stars and Stripes observed U.S. and U.K. sailors training in rainy, rough conditions.

That effort builds on lessons learned by watching Ukrainian surface drones batter Russia's Black Sea Fleet and force its ships to stay bottled up close to shore.

It also draws on insights gleaned from surface drone and fast-boat attacks on ships by Houthi rebels in Yemen and, more recently, by Iranian forces.

The training builds the readiness the fleet will need to handle the complexities of dealing with such systems in conflict, said Lt. Nick Anderson, the weapons and anti-terrorism officer aboard the command-and-control ship USS Mount Whitney, which also participated in the exercise.

"Kind of like a football team, if your defensive line doesn't have a plan on how to react to a play and doesn't have a shared mental model, it's much, much harder to stay coordinated in your spots," Anderson said.

BALTOPS aims to sharpen the skills of NATO navies in defending the Baltic Sea and keeping allied forces and supplies moving through the region during a crisis.

In this year's iteration, poor weather added realism to the drone training by making it more difficult to spot the low-profile craft in rain and choppy seas.

Sea state and weather conditions as well as an unmanned boat's low profile and fast speed all make the craft difficult to detect. While radar is useful, a ship's best defense against any threat at sea is sailors' eyes, likely enhanced by a pair of binoculars, Anderson said.

In the training scenario, Mount Whitney and participating allied ships practiced detecting, identifying and evading Navy Global Autonomous Reconnaissance Craft, or GARC,



A Global Autonomous Reconnaissance Craft assigned to Unmanned Surface Vessel Squadron 3 approaches Mount Whitney during the exercise.



A sailor assigned to the Small Craft Action Team aboard Mount Whitney scans for a target during the exercise.

from the San Diego-based Unmanned Surface Vessel Division 32, established in January.

Surface drones "are intended to be small and sneaky and to exploit blind spots," said Stacie Pettyjohn, a senior fellow and director of the defense program at the Washington, D.C.-based think tank Center for a New American Security.

While sailors may be on the lookout for other vessels, such as enemy warships, surface drones can catch them unaware, she added.

Protecting ships from explosive-laden boats has been a longtime challenge, Navy officials and analysts note, pointing to the October

2000 suicide bombing of the destroyer USS Cole as it was refueling in a Yemeni port. The attack killed 17 sailors and injured more than three dozen.

Now, the threat of inexpensive, radar-evading drone swarms is pushing the Navy to rapidly shift unmanned systems out of the lab and into active operational training while it works to develop and deploy new technologies to defend against them.

The urgency reflects the rapidly evolving nature of naval warfare. Russia's invasion of Ukraine has shown how relatively inexpensive unmanned boats can damage or sink much larger warships, while repeated Houthi

attacks in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden have forced commercial vessels and Western navies to adapt to drone and missile threats.

"They're trying to learn on the fly," Pettyjohn said. "They're deploying the prototypes into the exercises, into operations, even as they're still sort of shaping requirements."

Differentiating an attack drone from a fishing boat or other vessel, determining its intent and potentially eliminating it require coordination and clear communication between a ship's bridge and small-craft action team members manning guns on deck, said Petty Officer 2nd Class Marcus Guy, a member of Mount Whitney's small-craft action team.

That can be challenging in the heat of the moment when multiple teams are tracking and calling out the position of a potential threat, he said.

Lt. Sarah Weinstein, commander of USVD 32, said that for many U.S. and NATO sailors, the exercise offered a firsthand look at drone tactics and a critical opportunity to apply knowledge and skills learned in previous training.

The division was operating in support of the Navy's Task Force 66, which is focused on integrating robotic and autonomous systems with manned platforms.

Internal lessons and operational feedback gained during counter-drone training with unmanned surface vehicles in the Baltic have fleetwide implications, she said.

The GARC "operates the same way no matter what ocean or sea you happen to be in," Weinstein said. "The lessons learned while employing it are entirely universal."

TRAVEL

Vicenza's Berico church a literal high point

Whether via stairs or path under portico arches, trek offers short, scenic climb

By CHAD GARLAND
Stars and Stripes

About a week before arriving in Vicenza, Italy, I told someone the first fun thing I wanted to do was trek up to the Sanctuary of the Madonna di Monte Berico along a path under porticos that for centuries have sheltered pilgrims on their journeys.

And then on arrival, I promptly forgot about those plans. The closest I got was on an impromptu drive on one of my first nights in town, when my family and I stopped to view the sunset from the terrace across from the awe-inspiring church on the hill overlooking Vicenza.

The roughly half-mile walk up to the church atop the mountain isn't a best-kept-secret kind of thing. Rather, it's exactly the type of obvious and doable activity that one might neglect for far too long.

I waited until a recent afternoon when the temperature peaked somewhere in the sticky mid-80s, making for just the right kind of almost penitential discomfort.

There are two routes up the hill, both a short walk from the bus stops at Viale Risorgimento Fronte Civico 24 or Viale Risorgimento 22 along the train tracks at the southern edge of Vicenza's historic core, but in opposite directions.

To enter the porticos at the base of the hill, head west to Viale X Giugno and follow the tree-lined street until there's a break in the foliage where the arcades begin on the left.

Or head east to the Arco delle Scalette, a triumphal arch that serves as the gateway to a long staircase up the hill.

Topped with statues of patron saints Leontius and Carpophorus flanking a Venetian lion, it features internal niches adorned with Orazio Marinali's representation of the Annunciation, the biblical account of the angel Gabriel's visit to Mary to tell her she would give birth to Jesus. It's the kind of Renaissance beauty that spoils us here.

The stairs lead to a narrow road that eventually opens onto the hairpin turn known as the Curva del Cristo, where the portico-covered path's two sections meet.

The ornate arch is believed to be based on a drawing by architect Andrea Palladio. Created in about 1575, the drawing was part of a plan for the route up the hill to the site where the Virgin Mary is said to have appeared to a peasant woman six centuries ago.

After the Madonna di Monte Berico's second appearance there, offering in 1428 to end a plague outbreak in return for the construction of a church dedicated in her name, a Gothic church was erected in three months and a monastery soon thereafter.

Palladio himself built the church a nave in 1578, though no trace of that structure remains, as it was demolished during construction of a later Baroque church from 1688 to 1703. A bell tower was added between 1825 and 1852.

It's one of those odd contrasts of modern life in Italy that the ascent to a 600-year-old shrine adorned with statues of martyrs and



A visitor passes through the final arch of the Portico di Monte Berico route in front of the Sanctuary of the Madonna di Monte Berico at the top of the hill overlooking Vicenza, Italy, on June 16.

PHOTOS BY CHAD GARLAND/Stars and Stripes



A woman walks up the incline beneath the porticos of Monte Berico heading toward the basilica on the hill overlooking Vicenza.

saints begins at an arch inspired by classical Roman architecture that is now frequented by joggers in bright synthetic fabrics.

After surmounting the steps and following the road around to the Curva del Cristo, visitors who cross over to the porticos will enter near a small shrine featuring a crucifix and a statue of Mary at an altar behind locked gates.

Built between 1746 and 1780, the porticos are made up of 150 arches, divided into groups of 10. The numbering is patterned after the decades of the rosary, in which sets of 10 Hail Marys are grouped into 15 mysteries from the life of Jesus Christ.

While the structure is said to be favored by the faithful on their pilgrimages, I noted that a more fitness-minded crowd seemed to prefer an open-air paved path across the road.



Votive offerings of metallic hearts, representing "graces received," are displayed alongside photos of twisted car wrecks near a gift shop situated behind the basilica shrine of the Madonna di Monte Berico. These offerings testify to the apparent intercession of Vicenza's patron saint, who is believed to assist accident victims.

Some visitors have complained online of encounters with homeless people in the portico section, but the only aggression I met was from mosquitoes.

At the top of the hill, I first dallied a bit in the Piazzale della Vittoria, venturing to the large terrace to admire the beauty of the towers, cupolas and copper-green domes amid the dozens of clay tile roofs of the city below, all bathed in warm afternoon sunlight.

Inside the basilica, which has served the faithful on their pilgrimages since the early 15th century, evening Mass was concluding when I entered.

The church itself houses several important works of art, and a museum behind the sanctuary exhibits hundreds of artifacts and works of art donated over the centuries in gratitude to God. The museum is accessible through a passage next to the altar.

Back outside, a cafe in the shade of the basilica's bell tower offers coffee, gelato, aperitifs, pastries and other treats.

After getting only a bottled water, a further penance, I lingered in the shade of the basilica steps nearby, listening to the pleasant

burble of patrons and the excited chatter of the many swallows or swifts flitting and gliding around in the sky above them.

I began to see how a sweat-inducing trip up to this sanctuary could become a daily or weekly ritual.

Quick trip

Address: For the church, Viale X Giugno, 87, Vicenza, Italy. The porticos are roughly at Viale X Giugno 2. The Arco delle Scalette is at Piazzale Fraccon.

Hours: The Arco delle Scalette and the porticos are open all hours. For the Sanctuary of the Madonna di Monte Berico: Monday through Saturday, 6 a.m.-12:30 p.m. and 2:30-6 p.m. (7 p.m. in summer); Sunday, 6 a.m.-7 p.m. (8 p.m. in summer). Check website for Mass times. For the art museum: Monday through Friday, by appointment; Saturday and Sunday, 8 a.m.-noon and 2-6 p.m.

Cost: For the museum, a donation of 3 euros is recommended.

Information: Phone: +39 0444 559411; on-line: monteberico.it or easyvi.it/monumenti

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