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Women in combat

Pentagon reviewing
status a decade after
lifting restrictions

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Sgt. Kaity Andersen gets set to jump out of a C-130 Hercules during the 173rd Airborne Brigade's all-female parachute jump in 2024 near Vajont, Italy.

BRIAN ERICKSON/Stars and Stripes

COVER STORY

DOD orders review of women in combat

Pentagon to study 'effectiveness' of ground combat units

By MATTHEW ADAMS
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Pentagon is conducting a six-month review of women serving in combat positions.

“Our standards for combat arms positions will be elite, uniform, and sex neutral because the weight of a rucksack or a human being doesn’t care if you’re a man or a woman,” Pentagon press secretary Kingsley Wilson said in a statement. “Under [Defense] Secretary [Pete] Hegseth, the Department of War will not compromise standards to satisfy quotas or an ideological agenda — this is common sense.”

Anthony Tata, the undersecretary of defense for personnel and readiness, wrote in a memorandum last month that the effort is to determine the “operational effectiveness of ground combat units 10 years after the Department lifted all remaining restrictions on women serving in combat roles.”

Tata requested that the Army and Marine Corps leaders provide data on the readiness, training, performance, casualties and command climate of ground combat units and personnel. The services are to provide points of contact no later than Jan. 15 to the Institute for Defense Analyses, a non-profit corporation that assists the government on national security issues.

Congress received the memo Jan. 6, said an official, who was not authorized to comment publicly on the matter and spoke on the condition of anonymity.

“Contrary to the misguided beliefs of this administration, women have always made our military stronger and are more qualified to serve in their roles than Pete Hegseth is to serve as Secretary of Defense,” Sen. Tammy Duckworth, D-Ill., a combat veteran who served in that state’s Army National Guard, said in a statement. “This shadowy review effort from [the Defense Department] is clearly intended to shrink the number of women who bravely serve in combat roles, which would be devastating to our military readiness. There is no U.S. military as we know it without the incredible



ANGELA WILCOX/U.S. Marine Corps

Marine Corps Sgt. Angela Scolari, front, a combat marksmanship coach, fires a rifle during an all-female marksmanship subject matter expert exchange between U.S. Marines and Jordanian soldiers in Al-Quwayrah, Jordan, in 2024.

women who have earned their places in their units.”

Hegseth, a 45-year-old Army National Guard veteran and former Fox News TV host, drew fierce criticism leading up to his confirmation hearing for saying women have a place in the military but not in ground-based combat positions in special operations, artillery, infantry and armor units.

“I’m straight up just saying we should not have women in combat roles,” he argued on a podcast in November 2024. “It hasn’t made us more effective, hasn’t made us more lethal, has made fighting more complicated.”

Before senators last January, Hegseth denied he ever disparaged women and said his concern was with what he believes are slipping standards and gender quotas. He said he would conduct a review of the requirements for combat positions if confirmed.

“In ways direct and indirect, overt and subtle, standards have been changed inside infantry training units, [Army] Ranger school, infantry battalions to ensure that commanders meet quotas to have a certain number of female officers or female enlisted,” Hegseth said during his confirmation.

Today, thousands of women serve in Army infantry, armor and artillery jobs, hundreds are in combat roles in the Marines and dozens are in special

operations positions across the military.

Kris Fuhr, a West Point graduate who worked on gender integration for the Army Forces Command at Fort Bragg, N.C., said the Army gathered data from 2019 to 2023 and found “no evidence of any degradation to unit readiness or effectiveness due to the presence of women.”

“The reviews have been done. This is a search for a problem that does not exist,” Fuhr said in a statement.

Women fighting on the battlefield can be traced to the Revolutionary War, when Margaret Corbin fired a cannon to defend Fort Mifflin against invading British troops and became the first woman to receive a pension from Congress due to injury. But for much of U.S. military history, women were confined to clerical and medical roles.

That began to change with the more prominent participation of women in the Gulf War, which prompted Congress in the early 1990s to repeal a 1948 statute that had excluded women from positions that could be exposed to combat. By 1993, women gained the right to fly in combat aircraft and serve on combat ships.

More than 20 years later, amid the U.S. war in Afghanistan, then-Defense Secretary Ash Carter ordered the full

integration of women into the armed forces, without exceptions. The 2015 decision, resisted most by the Marine Corps, opened about 230,000 combat positions that were previously off limits for women.

The military has long had what is largely a two-part system for physical fitness standards — routine annual fitness based on gender and age or more grueling standards for specific combat, special operations, infantry, armor, pararescue jumpers and other jobs. For some combat roles, the standards are the same for various occupations regardless of age or gender.

Since leading the Pentagon, Hegseth has sought to make “gender-neutral” or “male-level” standards for physical fitness. During his address before top military brass at Quantico, Va., in September, Hegseth said it is not about preventing women from serving.

“But when it comes to any job that requires physical power to perform in combat, those physical standards must be high and gender neutral,” the secretary said. “If women can make it, excellent, if not, it is what it is. If that means no women qualify for some combat jobs, so be it. That is not the intent, but it could be the result.”

MILITARY

Leaving 'dysfunction' and 'nastiness'

Several military vets opt not to run again for Congress

BY LINDA F. HERSEY
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Several high-profile veterans in Congress will not seek reelection this year, as a record number of lawmakers have declared they will not run again.

Some of the military veterans leaving Congress expressed frustration over increasing polarization, divides within their own party and an environment of "plain nastiness" in Washington, D.C.

A total of 55 incumbents will not run in midterm elections this year — 46 in the House and nine in the Senate.

With Republicans holding a majority in both chambers, elections in November will likely sway the balance of power on Capitol Hill.

At least seven lawmakers who will exit Congress in January 2027 are military veterans. Five are Republicans, and two are Democrats.

In the House, they include Rep. Don Bacon, R-Neb., a retired Air Force brigadier general; Rep. Morgan Luttrell, R-Texas, a medically discharged Navy SEAL; Rep. Troy Nehls, R-Texas, a retired Army Reserve major; and Rep. Jared Golden, D-Maine, a former corporal in the Marine Corps.

"I'm choosing a different path — one that allows me to stay rooted in Texas and focus on the people and places that matter most," said Luttrell, who is finishing out his second term.

A total of 79 lawmakers in the House are veterans, and there are 18 veterans in the Senate. A significant number, like Luttrell, served following the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

Luttrell, a member of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee, served as a Navy SEAL who was medically retired in 2014 as a lieutenant, after a 14-year military career. He suffered a traumatic brain injury and spinal cord injury in a helicopter crash in 2009 in Afghanistan.

"My service to our great nation started in the Air Force, where I served 16 assignments, five commands and four



Office of Rep. Jared Golden

Rep. Jared Golden, D-Maine, a Marine veteran who served in Afghanistan and Iraq, cites incivility, "plain nastiness" and polarization in Congress in his decision not to run again for his seat. Golden is shown meeting with constituents in Maine.

deployments and will continue in Congress until the end of the 119th Congress," said Bacon, a 30-year Air Force veteran.



Ernst

But Bacon, who has served in Congress since 2017, said he is not ruling out runs for governor or the White House.

Bacon, a member of the House Armed Services Committee, has expressed frustration about the current "dysfunction" in Washington and sharp divisions within his own party.

In 2025, Bacon said he was "mad as hell" after the U.S. voted against a resolution condemning Russia's aggression in Ukraine.

In the Senate, veterans not seeking another term include Joni Ernst, R-Iowa, a retired Army lieutenant colonel; Gary Peters, D-Mich., a Navy Reserve veteran; and Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., the former Senate majority leader, whose Army Reserve service in 1967 ended with basic training because of a serious eye condition.

McConnell has been a steadfast supporter of military aid to Ukraine and critical of the approach by President Donald Trump's administration for a peace deal as too soft on Russia.

"Rewarding Russian butchery would be disastrous to America's interests,"

said McConnell, in his seventh term. McConnell, 83, disclosed in early 2025 he would not run again.



Luttrell

When Ernst announced in September that she would not seek reelection, she said she was sticking to her plan not to serve more than two terms.

In 2014, Ernst was the first female combat veteran elected to the Senate. Ernst, a 55-year-old cancer survivor, was a strong advocate for passage of the 2022 PACT Act, which granted benefits and compensation to veterans who became sick from toxic exposures, including burn pits, Agent Orange and radiation.

But Ernst also faced criticism within the Trump administration over her initial hesitancy to support Pete Hegseth, an Army National Guard veteran and Fox News host, as defense secretary. She raised concern about Hegseth's statement on a podcast that "we should not have women in combat roles" and about prior sexual misconduct allegations against him.

But Hegseth emphasized in his confirmation hearing before the Senate Armed Services Committee the need for "equal," not "equitable," standards for men and women in the military.

Ernst ended up backing Hegseth's

nomination, with her vote considered pivotal to his approval.

Peters, a 67-year-old attorney and former naval officer, has complained recently that it is hard to advance policies in the current political climate in Washington.

"Politics are more polarized. Working together to help people does not get rewarded in this environment," Peters said on a Detroit radio talk show.

Peters is completing his third term in the Senate, after three terms in the House.

"The [politicians] who get the most attention are the ones who are more provocative. It's about performative politics — getting the most clicks on social media — instead of getting things done," Peters said.

Peters served in the Navy Reserve from 1993 to 2008. He was a supply corps officer deployed to the Persian Gulf. He achieved the rank of lieutenant commander.

Golden, 43, also complained about the political climate in Washington.

Public incivility, "plain nastiness" and threats of violence against him and other politicians convinced Golden to step aside, he wrote in a recent guest editorial in the Bangor Daily News, a Maine newspaper.

"I have never loved politics. But I find purpose and meaning in service, and the Marine in me has been able to slog along through the many aspects of politics I dislike by focusing on the good work that Congress is capable of producing with patience and determination," Golden wrote.

Golden served in the Marine Corps from 2002 to 2006, achieving the rank of corporal. He had combat tours in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Golden, who sits on the House Armed Services Committee, has served in the House since 2018. But he expressed safety concerns for himself and his family if he runs again.

"As my oldest daughter reaches school age, the threats, the intolerance and hate that often dominate political culture, and my long absences, will be more keenly felt," Golden wrote. "I have to consider whether the good I can achieve outweighs everything my family endures as a result."

MILITARY

Deal could extend B-52H life to 100 years

BY GARY WARNER
Stars and Stripes

Boeing received a \$2 billion contract last month to start work on extending the life of 60-year-old U.S. Air Force B-52H Stratofortress bombers into the 2060s.

The program to upgrade all 76 B-52Hs is expected to cost \$48.6 billion. The Air Force will redesignate the bombers as B-52J.

The \$2 billion contract awarded on Dec. 23 is to upgrade two aircraft with new engines, avionics and other systems, which can be tested before the rest of the planes are converted.

Since entering service with the Air Force in 1955, the B-52 has been powered by eight TF-33 Pratt & Whitney turbofan engines. Pratt & Whitney has said it could no longer support maintenance on the engines after 2030.

Under the Commercial Engine Replacement Program, the Air Force sought new powerplants already used in civilian aircraft that could be converted to use in the B-52.

The winning plan calls for eight Rolls-Royce F-130 engines used in the Gulfstream G650 business jet and in the military variants of the light jet transport, the C-37.

The plan would also upgrade brakes and wheels, improve avionics and communications and convert some remaining analog dials in the bombers' cockpit to digital displays.



U.S. Air Force

A B-52H with possible weapons loads on display at Barksdale Air Force Base, La.

The upgrade is expected to keep the B-52H — delivered in 1961 and 1962 — flying as late as the 2060s. The Air Force said some planes could surpass 100 years in service.

The Air Force wants to keep the B-52 because it can carry over 70,000 pounds of weaponry more than 8,600 miles without refueling.

The Air Force plans to retire its B-1 Lancer and B-2 Spirit bombers by the end of the decade while it receives about 100 Northrop Grumman B-21 Raider stealth bombers.

The B-52 was initially built as a high-altitude heavy bomber to replace the Convair B-36 Peacemaker. It could reach targets in the Soviet Union, more than 8,000 miles away.

In its conventional bomber role, it served in the Vietnam War, earning the nickname BUFF — for “Big Ugly Fat Fella,” though variations substituting an expletive for “Fella” were common.

Flying at subsonic speeds with no stealth capability, the B-52 has shifted to a role as a launch platform for stand-off conventional and nuclear missiles.

“The B-52 is capable of dropping or launching the widest array of weapons in the U.S. inventory,” according to an Air Force profile of the bomber. “This includes gravity bombs, cluster bombs, precision guided missiles and joint direct attack munitions.”

The first B-52 flew in 1952 and was delivered to the Air Force in 1955. The Air Force received 755 B-52s in total, with the last models — the B-52H — delivered in 1961 and 1962.

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B-52 maintainers win Air Force innovation prize

BY JUAN KING
Stars and Stripes

Airmen who maintain B-52 Stratofortress bombers won the Air Force's top innovation prize after designing a simple adapter that makes one of their most dangerous maintenance jobs faster and safer.

The team from Barksdale Air Force Base in Louisiana took first place at Air Force Spark Tank, the service's championship round for innovators, for a work platform that cuts pylon-loading time from four hours to about 30 minutes while reducing the risk of injury and aircraft damage.

The event, held at the Pentagon in mid-November, featured six finalist projects pitched by airmen. It was

delayed more than a month because of the 43-day federal government shutdown, according to a Dec. 19 news release from the Air Force Research Laboratory. The finalists were selected from 441 projects submitted worldwide.

The Barksdale team won with its Airborne Launcher for Expendables-25 Pylon Load Adapter. The device attaches to an existing lift truck and holds an avionics pylon securely beneath a B-52's wing while maintainers work, according to an Instagram video posed by the 307th Bomb Wing.

“We just had to create an adapter ... to basically fix it to the lift truck, so it would interface between the pylon and the lift truck,” Senior Master Sgt. John



THEODORE DAIGLE/U.S. Air Force

An airman with the 307th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron field tests the pylon-loading fixture at Barksdale Air Force Base, La.

Slaughter, 307th Maintenance Squadron production superintendent, said in the video.

Slaughter said the adapter reduces the risk of injury to airmen and damage to aircraft.

“The ALE 25 Pylon Loading Adapter was born out of real-world challenges faced by maintainers,” the research lab release said. “By cutting task times from four hours to just 30 minutes and eliminating risky manual lifts, it's transforming safety and efficiency for B-52H Stratofortress operations.”

Spark Tank — modeled after the television show “Shark Tank” — provides finalists exposure and potential funding. Winners receive support to further develop their ideas.

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MILITARY

Army shuts down foreign training command

Focus on combat power to close 4 of 6 Security Force Assistance Brigades

By COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

The Army shuttered its Security Force Assistance Command at Fort Bragg, N.C., closing the one-star headquarters that oversaw its brigades of soldiers specially trained to advise foreign military forces.

Unit leaders cased the command's colors for a final time Jan. 8, signaling the inactivation of the SFAC as part of a broader Army reorganization effort that has prioritized units that generate combat power over other capabilities.

The reorganization mandated last year by Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth will also result in the shuttering by the end of the year of four of the Army's six Security Force Assistance Brigades, or SFABs.

Col. Matthew Bunch, who took command of the SFAC from Brig. Gen. Kevin Lambert in June, said that despite the command's inactivation, its soldiers — known as "advisors" for their role in aiding partner armies — had proven successful in their mission to improve allied and partner military forces around the globe.

"From its inception, the Security Force Assistance Command headquarters enabled advisors to deploy with purpose, clarity, and the support necessary to build meaningful relationships with allies and partners," Bunch said during the inactivation ceremony, according to a news release. "Through planning, coordination, and an unwavering commitment to readiness, this headquarters empowered our brigades to operate in every geographic combatant command, advancing the Army's mission in places where trust, cooperation, and shared understanding mattered most. The impact of SFAC's work will continue to be felt long after these colors are cased."

The SFAC was established in late 2018 alongside the 2nd Security Force Assistance Brigade, which was also headquartered at Fort Bragg, until its



JAQUARI LINDSEY/U.S. Army

Command Sgt. Maj. Darvin T. Williams stands before the Security Force Assistance Command colors during the command's inactivation ceremony at Fort Bragg, N.C., on Jan. 8.

inactivation in November.

The 1st SFAB stood up at Fort Benning, Ga., in 2017, as top Army officials pitched it as a smaller-than-normal brigade of volunteer soldiers who are experts in their craft and receive extra training to advise foreign armies on the trades of soldiering. Ultimately, the Army stood up six SFABs — five active-duty brigades and one National

Guard unit — and the SFAC to oversee the training and manning of those units.

The SFABs were the brainchild of retired Army Gen. Mark Milley, who served as the Army chief of staff before becoming chairman of the Joint Chiefs. Milley pitched them as units purpose-built to conduct the kind of training, advising and assisting oper-

ations that brigade combat teams had been doing in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Milley and other top Army officials wanted to employ SFABs to take deployment pressure off the Army's brigade combat teams, which had for years been rotated in and out Afghanistan and Iraq to train those nations' forces to fight the wars there.

As Chinese and Russian military aggression grew during the last decade, top Army generals wanted to shift their combat brigades' focus to preparations to fight a large-scale war against an enemy equipped with similar capabilities to the United States.

As operations wound down in Afghanistan and Iraq in recent years, the SFABs were assigned to geographic combatant commands, where they maintained near constant presence to train partner nation forces.

The service intends to leave only two SFABs beyond 2026. The 1st SFAB, which is aligned to U.S. Southern Command, will remain at Fort Benning and the 5th SFAB, which is aligned to U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, will remain at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash., said Maj. Ryan Miller, an SFAC spokesman.

Under the reorganization, the 1st SFAB has been assigned to the Army's new U.S. Army Western Hemisphere Command, Miller said. The 5th SFAB has been placed under U.S. Army Pacific's command.

The 4th SFAB will hold its inactivation ceremony later this month at Fort Carson, Colo., Miller said. It had been focused on operations in Europe.

The 3rd SFAB at Fort Hood, Texas, will inactivate in late 2026, Miller said. It had previously been aligned with U.S. Central Command but will serve under U.S. Army Pacific until its inactivation, he said.

Bunch, an infantry officer who had previously served as the SFAC's second in command, said that the work of the SFAC and its SFABs would continue to have meaning for the Army for the foreseeable future.

"As we inactivate this command, we recognize that its influence and the relationships it helped forge will continue to guide the Army's approach to global engagement for years to come," he said.

MILITARY

Bill aims to cut Reserve duty statuses to 4

House legislation would reduce number from 30

BY SVETLANA SHKOLNIKOVA
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — A complex duty status system for Reserve and National Guard forces would be reduced from about 30 duty statuses to four under a bipartisan bill introduced in the House on Jan. 8 to ensure equitable benefits and pay.

The Duty Status Reform Act seeks to simplify an overly burdensome system that lawmakers blame for major disparities in health care, pay and benefits such as the post-9/11 G.I. bill when troops move from one type of military service to another.

The current framework, a culmination of various congressional patch fixes spanning from World War II to the Global War on Terror, means service members performing similar assignments often receive different benefits.

It also causes interruptions in pay, creates budgeting difficulties that make it harder to correctly allocate resources and complicates the work of commanders who need to quickly and easily call up service members for duty, according to lawmakers.

Rep. Gil Cisneros, D-Calif., said efforts to resolve the issue began more than 20 years ago and continued during his tenure as an undersecretary overseeing the military's personnel and readiness in former President Joe Biden's Defense Department.



ERIC KAYNE/Stars and Stripes

Members of the West Virginia National Guard patrol around the Lincoln Memorial in Washington on Aug. 26.

“This was my No. 1 priority returning to Congress,” said Cisneros, a Navy veteran who served in the House from 2019 to 2021 and returned in 2025. “Having worked on this issue during my time at the Pentagon, I learned about the complexity of the current

duty status system and how it hurts our readiness and quality of life for service members.”

The bill proposes creating four broad service categories: Contingency Duty, Training and Support, Reserve Component Duty and Remote Assignments.

Contingency duty covers deployments for missions such as responding to a national emergency or a natural disaster. Training and support includes required training, administrative assignments and support to reserve units. Reserve component duty represents traditional partial-day reserve service. Remote assignments refer to online learning and other virtual duties.

Rep. Jack Bergman, R-Mich., described the legislation as “common sense” and said it cuts through “decades of red tape” to ensure members of the Reserve and National Guard get “consistent benefits, clear orders and the support they’ve earned.”

In addition to Bergman and Cisneros, the bill is also co-sponsored by Reps. Ted Lieu, D-Calif., and Sam Graves, R-Mo.

Several military organizations have endorsed the measure. The National Guard Association of the United States said it would clean up nearly 300 laws, save taxpayer dollars, clear up confusion for service members and remove administrative burdens.

When statuses are clear, pay is timely and health care coverage is continuous “commanders can focus on the mission instead of paperwork,” said Francis M. McGinn, a retired Massachusetts Army National Guard two-star general who now serves as president of the National Guard association.

“That will be the result of this legislation,” he said.

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2-mile run dropped in latest Air Force fitness test update

BY ZADE VADNAIS
Stars and Stripes

Airmen will no longer be required to complete a 2-mile run to meet fitness standards, according to updated guidance released by the Air Force.

Previously mandated once per year under a policy revision in September, the 2-mile run is now optional for both semiannual tests. Airmen may instead choose the high aerobic multi-shuttle run to fulfill the cardio component.

Fitness testing remains paused until the end of February to give units time to adjust to the updated standards and

procedures. The upcoming diagnostic period, which begins March 1, will now end June 30 instead of Aug. 31 as previously planned.

Diagnostic tests are unofficial assessments conducted under official conditions and are widely treated as practice runs. After completing one, airmen may accept the score and have it entered into their records or decline it and test again later.

The service is maintaining its shift to twice-yearly testing, regardless of score. That change, announced in September, ended a policy in place since

2010 that allowed airmen who scored 90 or above to test just once a year.

Fitness scores will begin appearing in annual performance briefs starting in February for officers and in May for enlisted members, according to the update, which was issued Jan. 6.

The change is part of a broader Defense Department review of grooming and readiness standards ordered by Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth in March.

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TIFFANY DEL OS/U.S. Air Force

Airmen do a 2-mile run as part of a physical training test at Fairchild Air Force Base, Wash.

MILITARY

Navy flip-flops on naming subs after fish

Switcheroos have marked naming of boats for decades

BY GARY WARNER
Stars and Stripes

In December, a welder at a Virginia shipyard etched the keel plate of the USS Barb, the ceremonial birthing of a new submarine.

The Virginia-class fast attack submarine joins hundreds of Navy subs through history named after sea creatures. So will the next three on the construction list: the USS Tang, USS Wahoo and USS Silversides.

The names are throwbacks to an earlier time. Only one Navy submarine has been commissioned with the name of a sea creature since the USS Cavalla, named for a saltwater fish, in 1973.

Since 1862, federal law directs that the Secretary of Navy will choose the names of new ships, in consultation with the president and Congress. There are longstanding protocols: For decades, battleships were named for states, cruisers for cities and submarines for sea creatures.

But a 2012 congressional report outlining the protocols said one rule was above all others:

“A secretary’s discretion to make exceptions to ship-naming conventions is one of the Navy’s oldest ship-naming traditions,” the report said.

Nowhere has the naming protocol gone through as many variations as with submarines.

A Revolutionary War-era submersible was called “Turtle.” The Union experimented with a submersible named “Intelligent Whale” during the Civil War. Sea creature names were applied to submarines through two world wars and the first two decades of the Cold War. Sailors might serve on a fearsome sea creature, such as Barracuda, Stingray or Shark. Others pulled duty on what sounded like entrees on a wharf diner menu: Trout, Bass, Tuna and Cod.

In 1959, the Navy rolled out a nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarine. Instead of a fish, the first of its class was named the USS George Washington. The other four “boomer”



JOHN NAREWSKI/U.S. Navy

The USS Hyman G. Rickover is commissioned at Naval Submarine Base New London in Groton, Conn., in 2023. Rickover, the father of the nuclear Navy, saw the practicality of abandoning fish names for subs, saying, “Fish don’t vote.”

nuclear missile boats bore the names of people from American military and wartime history: Patrick Henry, Theodore Roosevelt, Abraham Lincoln and, in a sign of a different time, Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee.

Attack subs retained fish names for another decade. In 1969, the Navy was preparing to christen the USS Redfish when Rep. William H. Bates, a Massachusetts Republican and staunch Navy supporter, died. Navy Secretary John Chafee broke with tradition and named the attack submarine for the congressman.

What happened next drew unfavorable comment from The New York Times in 1985.

“Within the next few years, down the ways slid the Glenard P. Lipscomb, ranking minority member of the House Defense Appropriations Subcommittee, the L. Mendel Rivers, chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, and the Richard B. Russell, chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee and ranking majority member of the Senate Armed Services Committee.”

It was the beginning of a shift that saw submarines increasingly named for cities, then states, with occasional persons thrown into the mix. The Navy built 62 Los Angeles-class nuclear attack submarines from 1976 to 1996,

with all but one named after cities.

Adm. Hyman Rickover, the “father of the nuclear Navy,” accepted the politically expedient naming change. “Fish don’t vote,” he said.

Ironically, when Rickover retired in 1984, the future USS Providence was renamed the USS Hyman G. Rickover. It was the only Los Angeles-class submarine to break the naming protocol of American cities.

For fish-favoring traditionalists, there was hope for the future. As Cold War tensions ratcheted up in the 1980s, the Navy announced it would build more than 25 new fast-attack submarines called the Seawolf class.

The collapse of the Soviet Union and congressional efforts to cut the post-Cold War defense budget led to the Seawolf program ending with just two more submarines, with only the first, the USS Seawolf, getting a sea creature name. The second was named the USS Connecticut. The third and final, the USS Jimmy Carter, was for the 39th president, who served under Rickover as a young submarine service officer.

By the time the renewed Russian military threat had the U.S. Navy ratcheting up construction of the new Virginia-class attack submarines in the late 1990s, the fish monikers were shelved.

Of the first 30 Virginia-class boats of

its class christened, 28 are named for states. Boats named for former Navy Secretary and U.S. Sen. John Warner, and a new submarine named for Rickover, were the exceptions.

At the end of President Donald Trump’s first term, the Navy decided it was time to bring back the sea creature names. Navy Secretary Kenneth Braithwaite chose the names of four World War II submarines that had some of the highest scores for sinking enemy ships: Barb, Tang, Wahoo and Silversides.

The switch was short-lived. When President Joe Biden was elected in 2020, new Navy Secretary Carlos Del Toro made a U-turn. He named a Virginia-class submarine the USS John H. Dalton, in honor of the Navy secretary under President Bill Clinton.

Eight more were given place names associated with the Navy, including Potomac, Norfolk and Brooklyn.

Trump’s return to the White House has not yet manifested any new trend in submarine names. But with up to two Virginia-class boats to be built each year, Navy Secretary John Phelan will have a chance to make his own mark on the ever-shifting tradition of submarine names.

MILITARY



GABRIEL ENDERS/U.S. Air National Guard

A U.S. airman monitors an LC-130 Skibird as it offloads cargo at Amundsen-Scott South Pole Station last month in Antarctica.

National Guard wing fuels Antarctica research station

By SETH ROBSON
Stars and Stripes

The New York Air National Guard is using ski-equipped versions of Lockheed Martin's long-serving cargo plane to collect scientific data on flights to and from Antarctica, according to the commander of the 109th Airlift Wing.

Four LC-130 Skibirds are shuttling between Christchurch, New Zealand, and McMurdo Station and other locations in Antarctica this research season, which kicked off in October and runs through February.

The wing is sending 250 airmen south to fly and maintain the aircraft during the Southern Hemisphere's summer months, when daylight hours run around the clock in Antarctica, said wing commander Col. Steven Slosek.

The planes are flying with a specialized laser instrument that measures

atmospheric gases, he said.

"It's understanding how carbon moves from the Southern Ocean into the atmosphere," he said.

The wing has also been supporting an upgrade to the IceCube Neutrino Observatory with flights to the South Pole, Slosek said. The observatory is designed to observe the cosmos from deep within the South Pole ice.

The airlifters carry about a quarter of the fuel required to power the United States' Amundsen-Scott South Pole Station with the rest brought overland, Slosek said.

"We will offload between 18,000 and 20,000 pounds (of fuel) directly from aircraft into their fuel blivets," he said, referring to flexible fuel bladders.

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Sailors charged in fake marriage case

By ALISON BATH
Stars and Stripes

Two Navy sailors are facing federal charges for what authorities say were sham marriages with Chinese immigrants seeking U.S. residency.

Jacinth Bailey and Morgan Chambers are charged with one count each of conspiracy to commit marriage fraud, federal court records show.

Bailey and Chambers were to receive \$45,000 and \$35,000, respectively, as part of the scheme to recruit American citizens, preferably U.S. service members, prosecutors said in separate filings last month in federal court in Jacksonville, Fla.

The Navy didn't respond to questions about the rank and duty assignment of the sailors. The service has an air station in Jacksonville.

If convicted, Bailey and Chambers face up to five years in prison. Neither of them has appeared in court or entered a plea, but each waived their right to be formally indicted.

At least two other sailors are involved in the case.

In August, former Navy recruiter Brinio Urena pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to commit marriage fraud, The New York Times reported on Jan. 2.

As part of his plea deal, Urena admitted to marrying a Chinese woman for money in August 2024 and also admitted to helping recruit fellow service members to do the same.

Navy reservist Raymond Zumba pleaded guilty in July to attempting to bribe a Naval Air Station Jacksonville official in exchange for fraudulent military identification cards for two ineligible people with links to China.

Separately, he also faces a charge of conspiracy to commit marriage fraud related to his April 2024 wedding to a Chinese national, according to a Dec. 5 federal court filing in Jacksonville. A Dec. 12 court entry indicates that Zumba agreed to plead guilty in the case.

In their Dec. 5 filing, prosecutors said Zumba recruited Urena in May 2024 to enter a sham marriage.

After Urena's wedding, Zumba asked him to obtain a military identifi-

cation card for his new wife because it would help the immigration process, according to the filing.

He also asked Urena "to help him find and recruit other U.S. citizens who would be willing to marry Chinese nationals and facilitate their immigration status for money," the filing states.

In October 2024, Urena and an unidentified Navy sailor contacted another service member to recruit her for marriage to an unidentified Chinese national. About a month later, Urena introduced the service member to Zumba, who specified the payment terms, according to the filing.

That marriage took place on Jan. 2, 2025, after Zumba and another unidentified co-conspirator drove the service member and her soon-to-be husband from New York City to a Connecticut courthouse, according to court documents. The documents do not name the service member involved, but the dates and payment terms are consistent with information contained in a court filing for Bailey.

Afterward, Bailey attended a "sham wedding party," during which photographs were taken to substantiate the legitimacy of the marriage for immigration application purposes.

Bailey also was paid an additional \$10,000 at the party, court documents show.

She also was asked to apply for and obtain a military identification card for the Chinese national that would allow him access to U.S. military facilities, prosecutors say.

Chambers flew to Las Vegas in October 2024 for her wedding and afterward was paid \$10,000 cash in a restaurant restroom, court documents state.

A separate court document indicates that Urena flew with an unidentified co-conspirator to a sham wedding in Las Vegas that took place on the same day.

The scheme came to light during a conversation between Zumba and a confidential informant, court records show.

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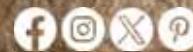


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