



The Knox County Joint Veterans Council are looking for **volunteers!!!**

The Knox County Joint Veterans Council is located at the Knox County Veterans Service Office located at 105 E Chestnut St. Mount Vernon, Ohio. The post conducts regular meetings on the third Thursday of each month. The meeting time is 7:00 P.M. **Contact Carol Riley @**

[740-504-3264](tel:740-504-3264) if you are interested in volunteering. Thank you!



They stand guard silently, vigilantly through whatever Mother Nature dares throw at them. They do so with great pride to honor one of their own. And they do this without thought of payment. For them, honoring a fallen brother-in-arms is compensation enough.

For the families of the deceased soldier, they are the ever-watchful sentinels, and their selfless act is a much-appreciated tribute.

The absurdity of 'Cocaine Bear' and its message about the War on Drugs

You might be surprised to learn that a movie about a coked-out bear killing everyone it encounters in the backwoods of Georgia has deeper meaning. "If you try to get just a little deeper with it, it does try to say some things about the War on Drugs," screenplay writer Jimmy Warden told Military Times. "Who are the true victims in this? Is it the people who are doing drugs? Or it people who are trying to stop the sale of drugs?"

While it looks like the bear is the villain on the story's surface, there are actually a few bigger bads in this film than a cocaine-consuming carnivore on a rampage.

The setting, rural Georgia in 1985, comprised the ideal place and time for a dark comedy, Warden notes. He first discovered the true story while visiting Lexington, Kentucky — home to a marketplace that has a stuffed Blackbear on display, affectionately dubbed "Pablo Escobear."

The true story of the cocaine bear dates back to 1985, when a 150-pound black bear's body was found by the Georgia Bureau of Investigation, according to the Associated Press. Its cause of death? Cocaine dropped in a duffel bag by former Army paratrooper Andrew Thornton, who, as his Cessna 404 was going down, released the powdery load over the Chattahoochee National Forest. Thornton died when his parachute never fully opened. The bear got into the duffel containing a reported 75 pounds of cocaine, overdosed, and died. (Unlike in the movie, the bear was the only casualty during its coke-fueled bender.)

"I couldn't stop reading about every angle to it," Warden said. "I couldn't get over the idea that I wanted a movie to be about the bear and less about Andrew Thornton. I knew that I needed to take a departure and make the story about the cocaine bear and not the true crime, bluegrass conspiracy, or anything like that."

That's also the reason Warden decided to make the story into a dark comedy instead of a horror film. The true tale was simply so absurd that in order to build off it, the script needed to be even wilder.

"I think that if the movie took itself too seriously, then people would shrug it off," Warden noted. "I wanted it to be super gory in the way that the gore is so over the top that you have to laugh at a certain point and it stops being scary."

Warden isn't done with the "Cocaine Bear" story either. "I definitely have some ideas ruminating for for a sequel, or multiple," he said.

"Cocaine Bear" premieres in theaters on Feb. 24.

Lawmakers accuse Army of ignoring 'woke' policies that hurt recruiting

A pair of Republican House leaders on Thursday accused Army officials of covering up evidence that social justice initiatives are hurting military recruiting efforts, and demanded the service turn over all survey data on the topic to Congress. "We continue to receive analysis of cherry-picked data that is not giving us the full picture of why the Army is seeing historically low recruitment and retention rates," said Rep. Mike Waltz, R-Fla., chairman of the House Armed Services Committee's panel on readiness, in a statement.

"Right now, it should be the shared goal of Congress, our military leaders, and the [President Joe] Biden administration to get to the bottom of this crisis so we can ensure our military is ready for any threat our nation faces." Earlier this month, Army officials released partial results from surveys of potential recruits which indicated young adults were turning away from the service because of the demands and dangers of military life.

Officials spoke to the Associated Press about the general parameters of the survey (conducted in spring and summer of 2022) but declined to provide any detailed methodology or results. But they indicated to the news service that issues of diversity or inclusion policies represented only a minor factor in individuals' reluctance to consider a career in the Army.

The Army was about 15,000 soldiers shy of its recruitment goal last year. Other military branches reported significant difficulty reaching their recruiting goals as well. While military officials have pointed to the strengthening economy and robust job market as reasons for the shortfalls, conservative lawmakers have blamed the problem on "wokeness" in the ranks, a catch-all term to describe policies connected to race, gender and sexual orientation.

In a letter to Army leaders on Thursday, Waltz and Rep. Jim Banks, R-Ind., the chairman of the House Armed Services Committee's military personnel panel, asked for the release of the entire survey results, saying the findings are "of great importance to the American people." They cited a pair of polls by conservative groups that showed declining trust in the military because of over politicization of the force, saying the results directly contradict the Army's findings. Banks has vowed to make the Defense Department's diversity and inclusion policies a focal point of his subcommittee's work this spring. "Wokeness at the Defense Department has harmed recruitment, retention and morale, wasted service members' time and taxpayer's dollars, and undermined the apolitical character of the military which is a major threat to democracy and the American way of life," he said in a statement. He also promised that upcoming hearings will be devoted to "rooting out wokeness" in the military ranks.

Army officials told the Associated Press that they could not release the full data sets connected to the surveys because the work was done by a private research contractor, whose licensing agreements limit the public release of some portions. Service leaders have already warned that recruiting for the current fiscal year may be even worse than fiscal 2022, with a potential shortfall of 20,000 soldiers. Hearings on the topic before the House Armed Services Committee are expected to begin in March, but no specific timeline has been announced yet.

<https://www.militarytimes.com/news/pentagon-congress/2023/02/23/lawmakers-accuse-army-of-ignoring-woke-policies-that-hurt-recruiting/>

Boeing will close Super Hornet production line in 2025

WASHINGTON —Boeing will end the F/A-18E-F Super Hornet production line in 2025 and will not accept any more U.S. orders beyond the eight aircraft Congress added to the fiscal 2023 budget. The company, describing the move as a “pivot,” will refocus its people and facilities on other projects and look ahead at future work, it said in a Feb. 23 statement. With the St. Louis-based workforce and production facility freed up, Boeing said it will be able to increase production of the T-7A Red Hawk all-digital training system, F-15EX Eagle IIs and 777X wing components for the U.S. Air Force and the MQ-25 Stingray unmanned tanker drone for the U.S. Navy.

The company is building three new facilities in St. Louis for advanced crewed and uncrewed platforms. These, plus the MQ-25 production facility at the MidAmerica St. Louis Airport, a new Advanced Composite Fabrication Center in Arizona, and new design and production tools at existing St. Louis plants, represent a \$1 billion investment in the company’s future in military aircraft, according to the news release.

Boeing’s announcement caps off a decade of fluctuations for the Super Hornet production line. The Navy initially planned to stop buying the jets in FY14, amid sequestration budget caps, only for Congress to continue adding planes incrementally over the next few years. The Navy eventually began planning for additional purchases, including a multiyear contract covering fiscal years 2019 through 2021, to help manage a projected fighter shortfall in its inventory.

The service intended to end its Super Hornet orders after that multiyear contract wrapped up. But Congress intervened again and added \$977 million in FY22 for 12 planes and \$600 million in the current year’s budget for eight additional aircraft. Boeing spokeswoman Deborah VanNierop told Defense News these eight would roll off the production line in 2025 and be the last American Super Hornets ever built. The Navy will have bought a total of 698 Super Hornets over 30 years, according to budget documents.

India is still in the process of selecting a fighter, and the Super Hornet is one option under consideration. If the Indian Navy selects the Super Hornet, Boeing would build those aircraft and shut down the line in 2027 upon their completion, she said.

Asked about the timing of the decision to close the production line, VanNierop cited internal and external factors. “We must inform our customer and supply base as long-lead aircraft parts and components are ordered and built well ahead of Boeing’s final assembly schedule,” she said. “Announcing this decision now also allows us to work with our teams to successfully staff F/A-18 in the future and meet the production ramp-ups on T-7A and MQ-25.” She noted the Super Hornet program’s employees are well suited to work on other projects — Super Hornet modernization and life extension work, and the new crewed and uncrewed platforms. “Recently, we announced a plan to grow year-by-year in employment numbers at our St. Louis site, and we expect this growth to minimize the need for reductions in the workforce” as a result of ending the Super Hornet line, she said.

The Super Hornet Service Life Modification program, which upgrades the jets and adds about 4,000 flight hours to their service life, along with an EA-18G Growler modernization program, will continue into the 2030s on a separate production line in St. Louis.

Boeing has not spoken publicly about specific future projects. However, Boeing Defense, Space and Security CEO Ted Colbert told reporters last summer, months after taking the helm, that “fighters are an important business to the Boeing Company.” Despite the last major U.S. military aircraft programs going to Boeing competitors — the Joint Strike Fighter program to Lockheed Martin and the B-21 bomber to Northrop Grumman — Colbert said “we haven’t given up the fight in that space. We are continuing to invest in it.”

<https://www.militarytimes.com/naval/2023/02/23/boeing-will-close-super-hornet-production-line-in-2025/>

Pictures of the Month



A soldier participates in high angle shooting training in Djibouti, Africa, Feb. 13, 2023.



Soldiers rappel from a UH-60 Black Hawk with their counterparts from Romania, France, the Netherlands and Slovakia during air assault training in Romania, Jan. 30, 2023.