



## 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.

### [Montford Point Marine who served in World War 2, Vietnam dies at 108](#)

One of the first Black Marines — who served in the military during three wars — died Aug. 15 at the age of 108.

Cosmas D. Eaglin Sr. joined the Marine Corps at age 27 and served two years in the Solomon Islands campaign of World War II, according to Monday news release by the North Carolina Department of Military and Veterans Affairs.

North Carolina Gov. Roy Cooper said in the release, “He and his fellow Montford Point Marines defended our freedom against fascism in World War II and set an example at home that helped lead the progress toward racial equality that our country has made over the last 80 years.”

The Marines who trained at Montford Point, North Carolina, were the first to break the color barrier in the Marine Corps following President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s June 1941 executive order opening all of the military services to Black men. The men who came to the segregated post near Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, in 1942 endured racism and harsh treatment, the National Museum of the Marine Corps recounts.

By the time Montford Point was decommissioned in 1949, 20,000 Marines had trained there, according to the museum.

Eaglin was one of the first 300 of those 20,000, according to a January news release from the North Carolina Department of Military and Veterans Affairs. After World War II, he exited the Corps, but during the Korean War he joined the Army and earned his paratrooper wings.

Eaglin lived in Fayetteville, North Carolina, starting in 1951. He served two tours in the Vietnam War in the 1960s, according to the release.

For his 108th birthday in January, Eaglin was presented with a certificate of appreciation and a challenge coin from the North Carolina Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, Marine Corps Times previously reported.

### [8 Marines remain hospitalized after fiery Osprey crash that killed 3](#)

Eight U.S. Marines remained in a hospital in the Australian north coast city of Darwin on Monday after they were injured in a fiery crash of a tiltrotor aircraft that killed three of their colleagues on an island.

All 20 survivors were flown from Melville Island 50 miles south to Darwin, Australia, within hours of the Marine V-22 Osprey crashing at 9:30 a.m. Sunday during a multinational training exercise, Northern Territory Chief Minister Natasha Fyles said. All were taken to the Royal Darwin Hospital, and 12 had been discharged by Monday, she said. The first five Marines to arrive at the city’s main hospital were critically injured — and one underwent emergency surgery.

Fyles said she would not detail the conditions of eight who remained in the hospital out of respect for them and their families. “It’s ... a credit to everyone involved that we were able to get 20 patients from an extremely remote location on an island into our tertiary hospital within a matter of hours,” Fyles told reporters.

The Osprey that crashed was one of two that flew from Darwin to Melville on Sunday as part of Exercise Predators Run, which involves the militaries of the United States, Australia, Indonesia, the Philippines and East Timor.

All 23 Marines aboard the lost aircraft were temporarily based in Darwin as part of the Marine Corps’ annual troop rotation. Around 150 U.S. Marines are currently based in Darwin, Australia, and up to 2,500 rotate through the city every year. They are part of a realignment of U.S. forces in the Asia-Pacific that is broadly meant to face an increasingly assertive China.

The bodies of the three Marines remained at the crash site, where an exclusion zone would be maintained, Northern Territory Police Commissioner Michael Murphy said. The cause of the crash had yet to be explained and investigators would remain at the site for at least 10 days, Murphy said.

The Osprey, a hybrid aircraft that takes off and lands like a helicopter but during flight can tilt its propellers forward and cruise much faster like an airplane, crashed into tropical forest and burst into flame. Before Sunday, there had been five fatal crashes of Marine Ospreys since 2012, causing a total of 16 deaths.

The latest was in June 2022, when five Marines died in a fiery crash in a remote part of California east of San Diego. A crash investigation report in July found that the tragedy was caused by a mechanical failure related to a clutch. There had been 16 similar clutch problems with the Marine Ospreys in flight since 2012, the report found. But no problems have arisen since February when the Marine Corps began replacing a piece of equipment on the aircraft, the report said.

Emergency responders were surprised the death toll from Sunday’s crash was not higher. “For a chopper that crashes and catches fire, to have 20 Marines that are surviving, I think that’s an incredible outcome,” Murphy said.

Defense Minister Richard Marles was also grateful that the toll was not worse. “It’s remarkable that in many ways, so many have survived,” Marles told Nine News television. “This remains a very tragic incident and the loss of those lives are keenly felt,” Marles said.

U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin paid tribute to dead Marines. “These Marines served our country with courage and pride, and my thoughts and prayers are with their families today, with the other troops who were injured in the crash, and with the entire USMC family,” Austin tweeted.

The U.S. Embassy in Australia issued a statement offering condolences to the families and friends of the dead Marines and thanking Australian responders for their help.



## VA healthcare workforce tops 400,000 as more hiring looms

The Veterans Health Administration this month topped 400,000 employees for the first time with staffing levels pushed higher by months of aggressive hiring practices by federal officials. Agency leaders say they aren't finished yet.

"We're really proud of these results," Dr. Shereef Elnahal, VA Under Secretary of Health, told reporters on Tuesday. "But we're not stopping until we reach our external hire goal for this year."

That goal, announced by VA administrators in late 2022, is 52,000 external hires for the fiscal year that ends Sept. 30. Health leaders have already bought on more than 48,000 individuals so far, including more than 27,000 new hires in high-demand occupations such as physicians, nurses, medical support assistants and housekeeping staff.

Those new employees coupled with stronger-than-expected retention of existing workers have grown the agency — the largest within the Department of Veterans Affairs — to its highest staffing level ever. Elnahal insisted that the growth is needed to keep up with increasing demands from patients.

At least part of that stems from the Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics Act — better known as the PACT Act — signed into law one year ago. Provisions in that sweeping military toxic exposure benefits legislation have allowed more than 100,000 new veterans to sign up for VA medical care in the last year.

Department officials have projected more than 7.4 million in-house patient visits next fiscal year and nearly 140 million outpatient appointments, both up about 1% from fiscal 2023 levels.

"We're going to take a close look at our hiring goals for next year on particular types of staff for which we are short," Elnahal said. "Our teams now are working to see what our revised goals will be based on trends. But for sure, we will still be on a hiring agenda next fiscal year."

The VA health care chief said that part of that work will also include continuing improvements to the federal hiring process for his agency and bringing on more human resources specialists.

"We can't hire enough of them," he said. "We want as many HR specialists in our system as possible, because that will help reduce times to onboard and hire employees, which is really the main challenge that we're faced with right now."

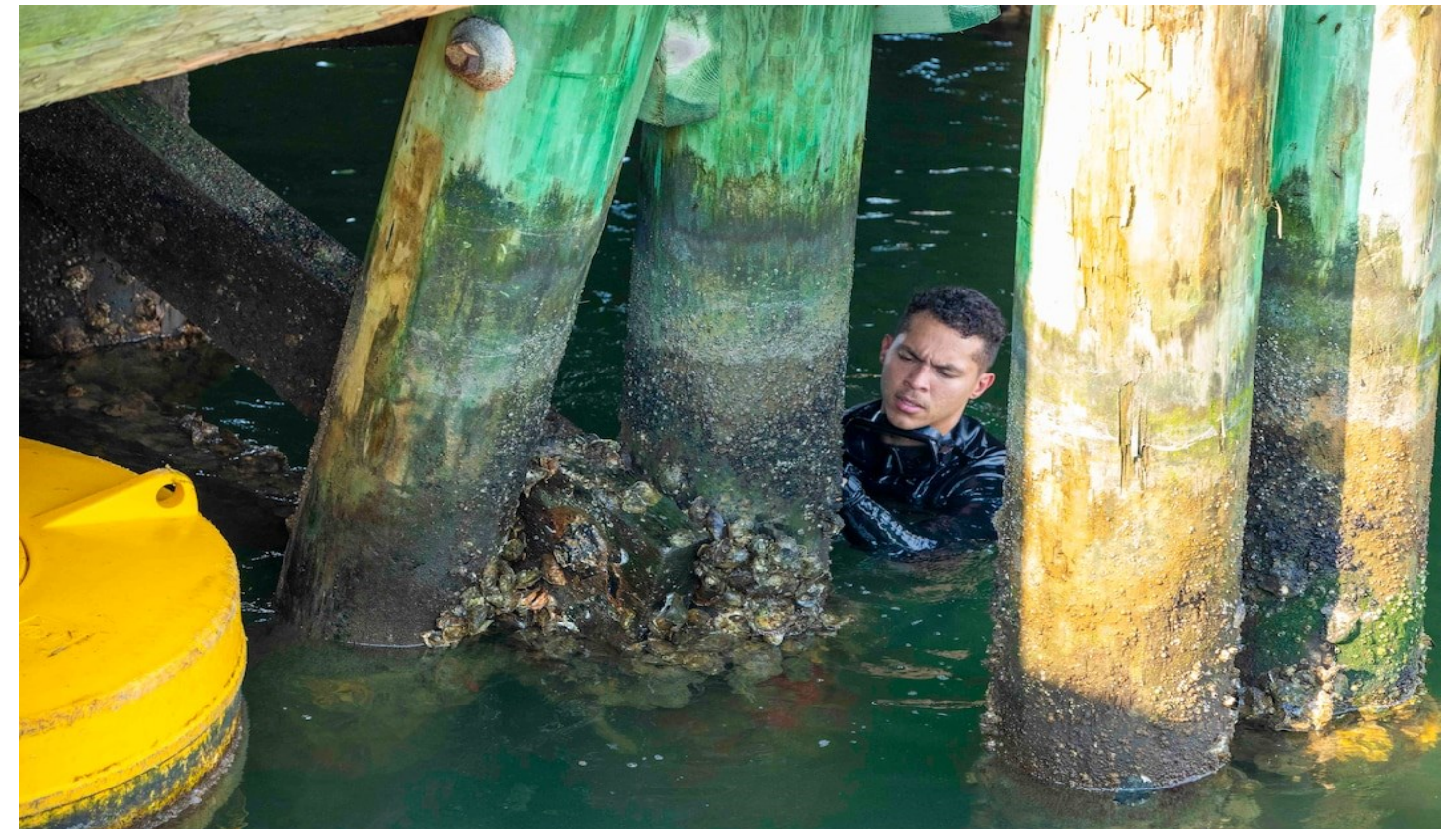
Congressional appropriators have backed preliminary plans for a \$320 billion budget for VA in fiscal 2024, the largest ever. Lawmakers have warned that they'll scrutinize hiring practices to ensure that department growth makes sense in light of the slow decline in the veteran population in America over the last few decades.



## Pictures of the Month



The USS Boxer returns to San Diego, Aug. 22, 2023, following an initial sea trial period. The ship will continue sea trials in preparation for its eventual deployment.



Army Spc. Raphael Ramirez inspects a pier for damage at Naval Station Norfolk, Va.