

THURSDAY FEB. 13, 2025

THE JACKSON

"V"

# CHILI CONTEST HEATS UP



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# Army to sunset Eagle Cash program in FY25

**Story, photo by MARK ORDERS-WOEMPNER**  
Financial Management Command

The Army will sunset its EagleCash Stored Value Card Program by the end of Fiscal Year 2025.

"After careful evaluation of usage, cost, and relevance in today's technological landscape, the Army determined that its participation in the EagleCash program is no longer the most efficient or cost-effective way to provide financial services to its personnel," said Col. Michelle M. Williams, U.S. Army Financial Management Command commander.

The EagleCash program was spearheaded by the Army in partnership with the U.S. Treasury in 1997 as an alternative to cash, debit cards and credit cards and currently provides for service members' financial needs while also protecting their financial information.

The cards are linked to cardholders' personal accounts at their respective financial institutions and add a layer of security. Funds are loaded on them at military finance offices and self-service kiosks around the globe, similar to a pre-paid gift card.

Terminating the program saves the Army \$1.7 million in costs and administrative expenses a year during a time when the Army's usage of the program is down 92.6 percent from its high mark in 2010 when it processed \$1.9 billion annually.

"The EagleCash program has been instrumental in serving the Army, enabling

seamless and secure transactions even in the most challenging environments," said Tony Taylor, Financial Management Command eCommerce and banking director. "The decision to retire the program was driven by our commitment to stay relevant in today's evolving technological landscape."

According to the Army's studies on the transition, the change, which is only for the Army's EagleCash program, will have marginal impact on various operational areas including dining facilities, Army and Air Force Exchange Service locations, postal services, basic training sites, and deployed locations.

"The operational and technological landscape has evolved significantly since 1997, and especially in the years following the events of 9/11," Taylor remarked. "Our current environment reflects remarkable advancements and changes, highlighting the progress we've made in cyber, infrastructure and financial technology capabilities over the decades."

Per the Army's evaluation of the program, the EagleCash system remained largely unchanged since the mid-2010s, while the commercial Payment Card Industry experienced exponential technological advancements that offer superior alternatives at more competitive prices.

Over the next year, the Army will tran-



**A Fort Jackson Army Military Pay Office military pay technician hands an EagleCash card to a trainee at Fort Jackson, April 20, 2022. The Army looks to end the EagleCash program.**

sition to some of these modern payment technologies, leveraging various mobile applications and minimal-equipment solutions that are tailored to each need, reduce costs and improve service delivery.

These include:

- Army Dining Facilities: The Joint Culinary Center of Excellence will continue their deployment of debit and credit card point-of-sale devices so Soldiers can pay for DFAC meals with their personal cards;
- Army Basic Combat Training Sites: Financial Management Command will tran-

sition all Army BCTs to a U.S. Debit Card Program with Visa-branded debit cards;

- Savings Deposit Program: Financial Management Command will transition the SDP to Pay.gov to allow authorized deployed Soldiers to enroll and establish their SDP through a mobile device anywhere in the world; and

- Foreign currency exchanges: Army finance offices will have the ability to process these on the U.S. Treasury's Over-the-

See **EAGLECASH:** Page 9

## ON THE COVER

**Sgt. Merari Morales, Better Opportunities for Single Soldiers president, photo-bombs a picture of Nicholas Hammond holding the trophy for winning the 2025 Chili Cookoff held Feb. 7.**



Photo by **ROBERT TIMMONS**

See Page 6-7

## THE FORT JACKSON LEADER

**Fort Jackson, South Carolina 29207**

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# SSI welcomes Drummond back to Jackson



Command Sgt. Maj. Monty C. Drummond, Soldier Support Institute senior enlisted leader, speaks after assuming responsibility for the unit from Command Sgt. Maj. Justin E. Turner in a ceremony held in the SSI Auditorium, Feb. 7. Drummond, who went to Basic Combat Training and Advanced Individual Training at Fort Jackson served with the 369th Adjutant General Battalion and the Noncommissioned Officer Academy.

**Story, photo by  
ROBERT TIMMONS**  
Fort Jackson Public Affairs

One senior enlisted leader's new assignment on Fort Jackson brought him back to where his career began.

Command Sgt. Maj. Monty C. Drummond, the Soldier Support Institute's senior enlisted leader, took responsibility for the unit charged with training and educating Adjutant General, Finance and Comptroller, Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations, and Recruiting and Retention professionals during a ceremony held Feb. 7.

Drummond, who previously served at the U.S. Army Garrison – Humphreys sergeant major, attended Basic Combat Training and Advanced Individual Training at Fort Jackson in 1997. He took responsibility for SSI from Command Sgt. Maj. Justin E. Turner in a ceremony held in the SSI auditorium.

Col. Jason T. Edwards, SSI commander welcomed Drummond to Fort Jackson and the unit.

"The good news is that Command Sgt. Maj. Drummond had some quality reps at Fort Jackson," Edwards said of his new command team member. "He served in the 369th (Adjutant General Battalion), and at the Noncommissioned Officer Academy."

Edwards added he is "battle tested" in and out of combat zones and has served in some of the best units in the Army.

"We are proud to have you," he said. "I look forward to serving with you and it will be an amazing tour."

Edwards finished by pointing out the importance of the guests in attendance. Those in attendance included current Fort Jackson officials, retired sergeants major and other guests who have played an important role in SSI's history.

When Drummond received the SSI colors from Edwards it signified him officially tak-

ing responsibility of the unit from Turner.

The significance of the passing of the colors symbolizes the continuity and unity of the Soldiers. Historically, troops would follow the unit colors into battle and that is where the unit sergeant major would be too.

"It's great to be back on Fort Jackson," Drummond said during the ceremony.

"Thank you for being here today to witness this important transition of leadership here at the Soldier Support Institute. Your

presence, like the boss said, speaks to the significance of this moment and the strong bonds that unit use as a team and a family."

Drummond thanked his new boss for the opportunity to serve in the assignment.

"Col. Edwards, thank you for the warm welcome this past week and your trust in me as I assume this responsibility. Your leadership and guidance have strengthened this organization, I am looking forward to serving with you and leading this ... institution."

Drummond stressed he would work with "integrity, dedication and a relentless focus on our mission here at SSI. To Soldiers and staff of the great organization, I place my full commitment to assuring that we remain at the forefront of training, developing and equipping our force with the knowledge, skills and leadership necessary for the challenges ahead.

"While challenges are unavoidable, there are also opportunities to learn, grow, and adapt strongly together. I have no doubt that as a team, we will meet every obstacle head on with professionalism, resiliency and the determination that defines us all."

Turner's retirement ceremony immediately followed the change of responsibility ceremony.

The U.S. Army Soldier Support Institute at Fort Jackson is composed of the Adjutant General, Finance and Comptroller School, the Noncommissioned Officers Academy, the Army School of Music, and the 369th Adjutant General Battalion.

I HAVE NO DOUBT THAT AS A  
TEAM, WE WILL MEET EVERY  
OBSTACLE HEAD ON WITH  
PROFESSIONALISM, RESILIENCY  
AND DETERMINATION

- Command Sgt. Maj.  
Monty C. Drummond  
SSI Senior Enlisted Leader

# Community Updates

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Death Notice

This notice serves as a death notice advisory for all those in possession of the property of Sgt. 1st Class Joshua A. Featherston, as well as those whom the deceased is indebted, or those indebted to the deceased. Please contact 1st. Lt. Colin J. Shreves, Summary Courts Martial Officer with questions or concerns at (301) 525-1914 or via email at [colin.j.shreves.mil@army.mil](mailto:colin.j.shreves.mil@army.mil).

### Community Strength & Themes Assessment

Fort Jackson needs your assistance. Take the Community Strengths & Themes Assessment to share with leaders your thoughts and views on improving our community's quality of life, health, and readiness, and available programs and resources. To access the survey visit: <https://phpubapps.health.mil/Survey/se/25113745498E6FB5>, or scan the QR code.



### ArmyIgnitED System Update

The ArmyIgnitED portal will be unavailable from Feb. 16-23. As a result, Soldiers will be unable to submit educational goals, request Tuition Assistance and Credentialing Assistance request from Feb. 16. Soldiers must be proactive and plan to submit TA and CA requests before the scheduled downtime. As a reminder, Soldiers may request Army Tuition Assistance up to 60 days prior to the term start date to allow time to correct any issues or

concerns. There are no exceptions or waivers to this rule. For TA for Credentialing Assistance; all requests should be submitted no earlier than 45 days prior and up to 90 days before start dates. All existing CA start dates that occur between Feb. 16 and 23 must be approved and paid by the shutdown date (Feb. 16). There will be no exception to policy granted for CA requests submitted on/after Feb. 24 for any start dates that occur less than 45 days from submission due to the downtime.

### Safety Courses

The Installation Safety Office presents various safety training classes. To register for the Army Traffic Safety Training or Local Hazards training classes, go to the website <https://imc.army.mil/airs/default.aspx>. To register for the Unit Safety Officer training, contact your Safety Specialist.

■ **Basic Riders Course:** March 25-27 (six seats open); April 8-10 (six seats open); April 29-May 1 (six seats open)

■ **Advanced Riders Course:** April 22 (six seats open) and April 23 (six seats open)

■ **Local Hazards Course:** Feb. 24, March 3, 10, 17, 24, 31; and April 7, 14, 21, 28

■ **Intermediate Drivers Course:** March 20 (no seats open)\*; and April 17 (12 seats open)

■ **Remedial Drivers Course:** May 13 (12 seats open)

■ **Unit Safety Officer Course:** April 1-2 (23 seats open)

\* Those wishing to attend this date should still try to attend as there may be last minute cancellations.

### Pharmacy updates

Beginning on May 1, the Moncrief Main Pharmacy and the PX Refill Distribution Center will change schedules. The new hours will be Monday – Friday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., closed on the weekends and federal holidays, and closed after 1 p.m. on the third Thursday of each month.

### Victory Fresh

Victory Fresh offers Military Service Members, Department of the Army Civilians and their guests healthy alternatives to fast food. Located at the U.S. Army Drill Sergeant Academy Dining Facility 9572 Marion Ave. Victory Fresh offers Grab and Go entrees, a Build Your Own Power Bowl station, Hot BBQ bar, and brick oven pizzas during lunch hours of 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Additionally, Grab and Go items are available during extended hours and breakfast is available from 7 - 9:30 a.m. Victory Fresh helps patrons manage fueling their bodies in a healthy way, within the time constraints.

### COMMUNITY EVENTS TOMORROW

#### Youth sports registration

Today is the last day registration for youth sports is open. Soccer: ages 2-4, \$30, ages 5-14, \$50. Volleyball: ages 7-12, \$50. Track & Field: ages 5-15, \$50. Flag Football: ages 7-15, \$50. Baseball: ages 9-12, \$50. Softball: ages 9-12, \$50. For more information, call (803) 751-7451.

### Valentine's Trap Shoot

1-4 p.m. Aachen Range. Come out and join Post Command Sgt. Maj. Erick Ochs for a Valentine's Day trap shoot. Bring your Valentine and they will shoot for half

## Fort Jackson Movie Schedule

3319 Jackson Blvd.

Phone: 751-7488

### SATURDAY, FEB. 15

■ Nosferatu (R) 2 p.m.

### WEDNESDAY, FEB. 19

■ Love Hurts (R) 2 p.m.

● Ticket sales open 30 minutes before each movie.

● Movie times and schedule are subject to change without notice.

price per round. For more information, call Marion Street Station at (803) 751-3484.

### TUESDAY

#### Blood Drive

9 a.m. to 1:45 p.m., Moncrief Army Health Clinic (fourth floor) multipurpose room. Consider donating and give the gift of life. For more information, call (803) 751-2291.

### FEB. 20

#### Olympic Lifting Workshop

5:30-7 p.m., Vanguard Gym. Want to learn how to do the clean and jerk correctly? Join the Olympic Lifting Workshop

### FEB. 22

#### Charleston Brews Cruise

9:30 a.m. to 6 p.m., Marion Street Sta-

See **EVENTS:** Page 10

## THE FORT JACKSON LEADER

SEND ALL SUBMISSIONS TO

[usarmy.jackson.93-sig-bde.mbx.atzj-pao@army.mil](mailto:usarmy.jackson.93-sig-bde.mbx.atzj-pao@army.mil)

Deadline for events to be included in the Community Updates is one week before publication. Include the time, date and place the event will occur, as well as other necessary information.

If you submit an article on an event that already has taken place, please send it as soon as possible. Tuesday is the last day we will be able to accept an article for publication the following

Thursday. Include the date and place of the event, as well as a description of what took place. Please include quotations, if possible.

With any photo you submit, include IDs — rank, unit, and first and last names. All submissions will be edited and published using Associated Press Style.

Questions? Call (803) 751-3615.





Pierce Terrace Elementary School students participate in an exercise that helped them step into the engineering world. The students were tasked with designing and building robots made from cereal boxes, empty paper towel rolls and other readily available materials.

*Courtesy photo*

# Robots!

## School introduces students to engineering

**By LORRAINE EMORY**  
Pierce Terrace Elementary  
School

Recently, first graders at Pierce Terrace Elementary School had an exciting opportunity to step into the world of engineering.

As part of their Unit 5 English Language Arts curriculum, students in Brian Raye and Monica

Trojanowski's classes explored the engineering design process through technology, bringing creativity and problem-solving skills to the forefront.

While this project is an annual tradition within PTES first-grade's curriculum, this year, Raye and Trojanowski introduced a fresh twist to the learning experience.

These teachers inspired their students to think like engineers and embrace the limitless possibilities of innovation within a collaborative atmosphere by focusing on collaboration, creativity, and hands-on learning.

The young engineers were tasked with designing and building their own robots as individual groups, using a variety of materials they gathered, including cereal boxes and empty paper towel rolls. This hands-on experience demonstrated how engineers collaborate to shape the future, reinforcing the idea that even the smallest ideas can lead to amazing creations when teamwork is at the heart of the process.

First grade teacher Raye said, "Students became engineers designing a robot that would be helpful to

others with their group."

The students eagerly collaborated, sharing materials and ideas to bring their robot visions to life.

The phrase, "Engineers at Work: Building the Future Through Collaboration," perfectly encapsulates the essence of this project.

**THE GROUP PROJECT  
WAS CALLED A COLLABORATIVE  
MARVEL WITH-IN CLASS TIME.**

Trojanowski described the group project as a "collaborative marvel" within class time.

The children not only applied engineering principles to build sturdy structures but also seamlessly integrated English Language Arts and science standards into their learning.

Trojanowski explained that reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills were reinforced alongside physical science, life science, and engineering and design concepts.

This engaging project also provided a valuable opportunity for parents and children to work together.

Teachers encouraged students to add unique features and decorative elements, allowing their creativity to shine while deepening their understanding of engineering design.

The experience offered students a novel approach to interacting with their coursework while fostering teamwork and problem-solving skills.

To conclude the project, students gave oral presentations about their robot creations, detailing their robots' names, the materials used, and their robots' intended functions.

This component of the class helped reinforce their speaking and listening skills while giving them a sense of pride in their work.





Photo by NATHAN CLINEBELLE



Photo by ROBERT TIMMONS  
A competitor hands Sgt. Maj. Bradley Lanchester, former senior enlisted leader for the Directorate of Emergency Services, a cup of chili during a competition held Feb. 7 .



Photo by ROBERT TIMMONS  
A firefighter lets the Fort Jackson Fire Department's dalmatian have a taste during the 2025 Chili Cookoff. The cookoff also benefited the local community as competitors had to bring in nonperishable food items to participate.

# Chili contest heats up

By ROBERT TIMMONS and NATHAN CLINEBELLE  
Fort Jackson Public Affairs

What better way to get ready for the big game than making a big bowl of chili.

The Fort Jackson Fire Department held a tasty competition that appealed to judges' taste buds.

Judges were there to name the best chili during the 2025 Chili Cookoff held Feb. 7 at the Fort Jackson Fire Station.

For Amy Wegner, the cookoff was a good way to try her hand at making chili. She entered her first ever pot of chili into the competition.

Wegner, whose husband is a drill sergeant, said the cook off was great to "come out and have fun while getting set up for Super Bowl weekend."

Harry Stark, interim fire chief, said it was great way to meet the community.

It's a "good way to reach out to the public and have a good time," he said.

He added that anytime firefighters can get with the community and talk is a great thing.

"This is one of the ways we build brotherhood and sisterhood of the fire services by getting together and breaking bread and things like that," said firefighter Whit Dodson, who helped coordinate the event. "Plus, it's for a great cause."

Competitors had to bring seven nonperishable food items, while judges had to bring five to take part in the event.

The food items were donated to local charities.

Dodson met with members of an unofficial group that volunteers all over the community, to plan the event.

Nicholas Hammond, a firefighter and online chef, won the competition with his chili that had a deep smoky flavor.



Photo by NATHAN CLINEBELLE  
Nicholas Hammond, a Fort Jackson firefighter, won the chili cookoff.



# First blood drive surpasses donation goal

Story, photos by  
**ROBERT TIMMONS**

Fort Jackson Public Affairs

Fort Jackson surpassed its goal during the most recent community blood drive held Feb. 4 at the Drill Sergeant Timothy Kay Soldier Performance Readiness Center.

“Our goal today was 21 units,” said Will Sexton, blood drive coordinator for Fort Jackson. “We got 24 whole blood units which is really good.”

It’s really important for donors to give blood.

“It cannot be manufactured,” said Sexton, a retired Fort Jackson firefighter. “There is no other way to get it except through the donation of another human being.”

Each unit of blood donated can help in a multitude of ways.

The platelets can help cancer patients, while red blood cells carry oxygen and are often given to those undergoing trauma. Plasma from the blood can be given to burn patients because it helps maintain blood pressure. Whole blood can also help those with Sickle Cell Anemia.

“So, one unit of blood can save up to three lives,” Sexton added as he checked in a donor.

These drives are crucial for maintaining community blood supply, he added, as only 22% of eligible donors actually donate.

The Feb. 4 event was the first community blood drive held on Fort Jackson this year. They are held every 56 days to allow donors to be able to donate again. That is the minimum time donors must take before donating again.

“We find that when you are able to project the dates out long term and have stuff on the schedule you get people who come repetitively,” Sexton said.

One of those who donates repeatedly is Sydney Leahy.

“I come here to help people who just maybe can’t get access to healthcare easily,” she said. “I also know it can be beneficial to me and my health.”

People shouldn’t be afraid of donating, she said, giving blood isn’t hard.

According to [redcrossblood.org](http://redcrossblood.org), some



**Sydney Leahy gives a donation during the first Community Blood Drive of the year, held Feb. 4 at the Drill Sergeant Timothy Kay Soldier Performance Readiness Center.**

of the reasons people give for not donating are:

- They are afraid of needles – They are not alone many people have a fear of needles, but facing their fear can be rewarding.

- They’re not sure they are eligible – There’s a good chance they do meet the criteria to donate. They should generally feel well, be over 17 years old and weigh more than 110 pounds.

- They’re worried donating isn’t safe – The Red Cross emphasizes donors can’t get COVID or another sickness from giving

**IT’S NOT EVEN PAINFUL, YOU CAN’T EVEN TELL (YOU’RE GIVING BLOOD)**

- Sydney Leahy  
blood donor

ing blood, but in fact are given a mini physical the day they donate.

- They’re afraid they’ll faint – Most donors feel fine, but if they do feel light-headed they should lie down.

Donors usually give a pint of blood during the donation which the body normally replenishes in a matter of hours.

“It’s not even painful,” Leahy said. “You can’t even tell” you’re giving blood.

The next Red Cross Community Blood Drive is scheduled for 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. April 9 at the SPRC.



**A sign points the way to the Feb. 4 Community Blood Drive.**



## Fort Liberty renamed as Fort Bragg to honor WWII Soldier

By **C.TODD LOPEZ**  
DOD News

Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth signed a memorandum Feb. 10 directing that Fort Liberty, North Carolina, be renamed to Fort Bragg.

The new name honors Army Pfc. Roland L. Bragg, a native of Sabattus, Maine, who enlisted in July 1943 at age 23. He served during World War II with the 513th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 17th Airborne Division, XVIII Airborne Corps.

Bragg received the Silver Star for conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity and a Purple Heart for wounds sustained during the Battle of the Bulge. As part of his actions, Bragg saved a fellow Soldier's life by commandeering an enemy German ambulance so that he could transport a wounded service member 20 miles to an allied hospital in Belgium. The ambulance was under enemy fire the entire time.

Following World War II, Bragg returned home to Maine and married. He owned an auto body shop and later a company that moved buildings. In 1984, he also ran a business that operated a portable sawmill. Bragg died in January 1999 and is buried in Nobleboro, Maine.

The North Carolina installation, one of the largest in the Army, is home to the XVIII Airborne Corps, the 82nd Airborne Division, and U.S. Army Special Operations Command. The installation was initially called Camp Bragg from 1918 until it was redesignated as Fort Bragg in September 1922. In 2023, the name was changed to Fort Liberty. With direction signed Feb. 10 by Hegseth, the installation will again be called Bragg, but this time in honor of



Photo by NAVY PETTY OFFICER 1ST CLASS ALEXANDER KUBITZA

**Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth signs a memorandum to rename Fort Liberty, N.C., to Fort Bragg, while aboard a military aircraft en route to Germany, Feb. 10.**

Pfc. Roland L. Bragg.

"I was honored to be able to put my signature on that (memorandum,) by the way, with the support of the president of the United States, who set the tone on this and said 'I want Fort Bragg back,'" Hegseth told reporters during a briefing in Stuttgart, Germany. "We're honored to support a private first class who received a Purple Heart and the Silver Star at the Battle of the Bulge."

For nearly a century as Camp Bragg and subsequently as Fort Bragg, tens of thousands of Soldiers trained and deployed to crises and conflicts around the world in defense of the nation,

Hegseth wrote in his memorandum.

"Fort Bragg has a long and proud history of equipping, training, and preparing our soldiers to fight and prevail in any operational environment," he said.

Hegseth said the move to rename Fort Liberty to Fort Bragg was about restoring the legacy of the service members who trained and served there. "It's about that legacy; it's about the connection to the community, to those who've served," he said.

Hegseth also said there are other installations being looked at which may undergo name changes as well.

## EagleCash

Continued from Page 2

Counter Channel Application, or OTC-Net.

"This change will enable the Army to take advantage of superior alternatives, many of which are already in place and working now, that offer greater flexibility, convenience, and security," explained Taylor.

"We recognize this change represents a shift in support to our warfighters, but this is essential to providing better, faster, and more cost-effective financial services," concluded Williams.

## Congrats!

Fort Jackson Public Affairs

Fort Jackson recognizes Matthew Henson, GS-8 and below, and Lillian Black, GS-9 and above as the Installation Fiscal Year 2024 Civilians of the Year. The two honorees in the two categories were recognized for their commitment to service and were presented with a Civilian Commendation Medal and time off award.



**MATTHEW HENSON**

GS-8 and below  
Directorate of Emergency  
Services



**LILLIAN BLACK**

GS-9 and above  
Resource Management  
Office

## SALUTING THIS CYCLE'S HONOREES

3rd Battalion,  
39th Infantry  
Regiment

**DRILL SERGEANT  
OF THE CYCLE**  
Staff Sgt.  
Bailey Roberson

**ALPHA COMPANY  
SOLDIER LEADER  
OF THE CYCLE**  
Pvt. Jacob Brown

**SOLDIER OF THE CYCLE**  
Spc. Devin McCullough

**BRAVO COMPANY  
SOLDIER LEADER  
OF THE CYCLE**  
Spc. James Hamilton

**SOLDIER OF THE CYCLE**  
Spc. Alexis Garza

**CHARLIE COMPANY  
SOLDIER LEADER  
OF THE CYCLE**  
Pvt. Donaven Moss

**SOLDIER OF THE CYCLE**  
Pvt. Luke Boyd

**DELTA COMPANY  
SOLDIER LEADER  
OF THE CYCLE**  
Spc. Devin Hannan

**SOLDIER OF THE CYCLE**  
Pvt. Jayden Whetton

**ECHO COMPANY  
SOLDIER LEADER  
OF THE CYCLE**  
Spc. Jacob Herrman

**SOLDIER OF THE CYCLE**  
Pvt. Joseph Gillies



Events

Continued from Page 4

tion. Join Outdoor Recreation for a guided drinking tour downtown Charleston. Snacks and bottled water are provided. Coolers will be on the bus for storage. Must be 21+ Patrons cannot register over the phone if they have never been to Marion Street Station ID Card verification. For more information, visit Marion Street Station, or call (803) 751-3484.

FEB. 25

Shred Day

9 a.m. to 2 p.m., 5671 Liberty Division Ave. Come and bring your paper, cardboard, magazines, containers, steel cans, newspapers and writing paper to the Fort Jackson Recycling Center on shred day. The event is open to all Department of Defense ID card holders.

FEB. 27

Citizenship and Immigration Services Virtual Training

5:30-6:30 p.m., MS Teams. Get all your questions answered regarding: how to apply for lawful permanent residency (green card) or naturalization/citizenship;how to replace lost or misplaced permanent residency and/or citizenship documentations; how to complete application forms and all supporting documents needed to complete the application; and any other questions you may have. Participants are invited to ask questions that are not case-specific.

Pickleball Tournament

5 p.m., Perez Gym. Come and out show off your pickleball prowess. Sign up at any gym, or call (803) 751-6258

MARCH 8

Offshore Fishing Trip

5 a.m., Marion Street Station. Join Outdoor Recreation on a trip to Hil-


ton Head, S.C., for a deep sea fishing trip. The trip will go 3-5 miles offshore for black sea bass, mac-kerel, black drum, red fish, bluefish and maybe even a shark. Outdoor Recreation will provide the transportation and coolers for you to transport your catch back home. Cost covers transportation, license, bait, tackle and trip. Pre-registration is required. For more information, call (803) 751-3484.

Memorial Bataan Death March

6 a.m., Hilton Field Sports Complex. Honor the heroic service members who defended the Philippine Islands during World War II. Participants can select from a full route 26.2 miles or honorary route 14.2 miles. A 35-pound rucksack is optional both male and female. The first 25 to register online get a free t-shirt. Registration begins March 1, but is not required to attend. For more information, call (803) 751-3700.



**ARMY EMERGENCY RELIEF**

ANNUAL CAMPAIGN MARCH 1 - JUNE 14



**AER CELEBRATES THE U.S. ARMY'S 250 YEARS OF BRAVERY AND SERVICE**

HONORING THE PAST 1775-2025 SECURING THE FUTURE



2025 AER Campaign Kickoff and Bowling Competition takes place from 3-5 p.m. Feb. 27 at the Century Lanes Bowling Center

**DID YOU KNOW:** Risk management is the process of identifying and controlling hazards to protect the force and is a continuous process applicable to any situation and environment.

WORSHIP SCHEDULE	FAITH GROUP	DAY	TIME	PLACE
	CATHOLIC MASS	SUNDAY	9:30-10:30 A.M.	MAIN POST CHAPEL
	CATHOLIC MASS	MON-FRI	NOON	MAIN POST CHAPEL
	GOSPEL SERVICE	SUNDAY	10:30 A.M.	KINGS MOUNTAIN CHAPEL
	GENERAL PROTESTANT	SUNDAY	11 A.M. TO NOON	MAIN POST CHAPEL
	REVIVE SERVICE	SUNDAY	5 P.M.	MAIN POST CHAPEL
	JEWISH SHABBOS SERVICE	FRIDAY	6-7 P.M.	LIGHTNING CHAPEL
	INITIAL ENTRY TRAINING	DAY	TIME	PLACE
	CATHOLIC MASS	SUNDAY	8-9 A.M.	SOLOMON CENTER
	PROTESTANT CONSOLIDATED SERVICE	SUNDAY	9:30-10:30 A.M.	SOLOMON CENTER
	CHURCH OF CHRIST	SUNDAY	10:30-11:30 A.M.	CENTURY DIVISION CHAPEL
	HISPANIC PROTESTANT SERVICE	SUNDAY	8:30-10 A.M.	POST THEATER
	ANGLICAN	SUNDAY	8-9 A.M.	SOLOMON CENTER
	ISLAMIC SERVICE	SUNDAY	8-9 A.M.	KINGS MOUNTAIN CHAPEL
	JEWISH SERVICE	SUNDAY	10:15-11:30 A.M.	LIGHTNING CHAPEL
	THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER DAY SAINTS	SUNDAY	10:30 A.M. to NOON	WASHINGTON ROAD CHAPEL
	HEATHEN/PAGAN	SUNDAY	8:30-9:30 A.M.	CENTURY DIVISION CHAPEL



# Secretary of Defense: enlisted morale is high at border

By **MATTHEW OLAY**  
DOD News

During a recent media interview, Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth said morale is high among U.S. troops currently assisting with enforcement operations at the southern border because they are supporting the strengthening of their own country.

The Defense Department announced, Jan. 22, that it would be sending an additional 1,500 active-duty service members to the border to bolster the more than 2,500 active-duty troops and National Guardsmen already in the region.

Hegseth traveled to the border, Feb. 3, to see operations firsthand and interact with the service members stationed there, many of whom serve in the pay grade of E-6 and below.

“When you’re able to be in your own country (while) defending your own country ... it just creates a different feel that it (may not be one’s assigned duty location), but it’s (also) not Afghanistan,” he said.

“We’ve spent two decades guarding other people’s borders,” Hegseth said, in reference to the U.S. military’s campaigns in Southwest and Central Asia since 2001.

“And when you meet these men and women on our border in real time, able to defend their communities, their families, their churches (and) their schools, they love that,” he said.

“(The service members are) invested in a way that’s really cool to see,” he added.

Noting that he observed a “real investment” by the service members at the border, Hegseth said he sensed that their morale was further boosted by the realization that they’re participating in a real mission with real-world impact rather than just a routine exercise.

“When you feel like you’re just playing a bit role so some politician can say there (are) people at the border, but you’re not really doing anything, people see through that,” Hegseth said.

“That’s not what this is like. This is a real mission, and I think (the service members) respond to it (and) appreciate it,” he continued.

Regarding the overall border enforcement operation and criticisms that putting service members on the bor-



Photo by SGT.1ST CLASS ANDREW R. SVEEN

**Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth visits Joint Task Force North, U.S. Northern Command, to see the efforts military men and women are undertaking in support of U.S. Customs and Border Protection to secure the southern border at Fort Bliss, Texas, Feb. 3.**

der might deter them from their ability to respond to other military contingency missions, Hegseth said he sees the opposite happening.

“In the past, there’s been criticism that these types of rotations take away from readiness,” he said.

“(But) I actually think this (border enforcement operation) — when you do it more robustly, the way they’re turning into a joint task force and it becomes a real-world exercise — I think it (actually) contributes to readiness; there’s a commitment to the mission,” he added.

In addition to the status of the service members on the border, Hegseth was also asked about the current status of DOD utilizing Naval Station Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, to house criminal migrants.

President Donald J. Trump announced, Jan. 29, 2025, his intention to sign an executive order instructing DOD and the Department of Homeland Security to prepare Naval Station Guantanamo Bay for the detention of 30,000

criminal migrants. The administration announced recently it had begun flying migrants to that base on the island of Cuba

Having seen the naval station firsthand while stationed at Guantanamo Bay as an officer on an active-duty National Guard deployment from 2004 to 2005, Hegseth described the facility as “phenomenal” and built for such a housing operation.

“You have the hardened facility for ... violent gang member types who need that kind of lockdown, and then you have — on the other side of (the naval station) — a place built for migrants; for those who peacefully are going to be extradited out of the United States,” Hegseth explained.

“We’re going to find those here illegally, prioritizing those with violent or sketchy pasts, and use Guantanamo Bay as a transit way to remove them and send them back to their home (countries),” he said.



# VICTORY... START HERE



A Religious Affairs Specialist with Advanced Individual Training Class 25-004 at the Institute for Religious Leadership pauses during patrol operations during the cycle's culminating training exercise.

Photo courtesy of the INSTITUTE FOR RELIGIOUS LEADERSHIP