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 first Tuesday of each month. The meeting time is 7:00 P.M. Contact Carol Riley @ 740-504-3264 to schedule services. Contact Eddie Stage@ 740-504-1597 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.

They are the Joint Veterans Council.

Wow, Bella: Sigonella galley earns top Navy food service award for 7th time

NAPLES, Italy — If there's a secret to keeping service members well-fed and happy, the galley at the Navy's largest air station in Italy has the recipe for it down pat. Ristorante Bella Etna at Naval Air Station Sigonella on the Italian island of Sicily recently received the Capt. Edward F. Ney Memorial Food Service Award as the best overseas galley for 2025, the base said in a statement Thursday. Given annually, it's the Navy's highest honor for food service, and NAS Sigonella has now won it seven times over the past 15 years. The recipients were named April 3. "We try to make Bella Etna feel like a home away from home," Chief Warrant Officer 3 Joe Mattia, food service officer for Bella Etna, said in the statement. Galley employees put in significant effort and long hours to achieve a five-star rating, Mattia said. Earning the rating means a galley can then be nominated for the award, which recognizes the best general messes — onshore and at sea — in the fleet. The galley team's efforts this year included showcasing the culinary skills of local Italian employees along with creative offerings, such as presenting seafood in a boat, and crepe and gelato stations. Hearty steak and rotisserie chicken entrees along with various side dishes also were on the menu during the inspection, the statement said. Bella Etna was announced earlier in the month as a winner of the Capt. Edward F. Ney Memorial Award, recognizing it as the best overseas galley for 2025. It's the seventh time Sigonella's galley has earned the Navy's highest honor for food service. While demonstrating cooking prowess is important, the rigorous evaluation also includes a spot inspection of the galley and of the food itself by members of the International Food Service Executives Association, or IFSEA, and senior Navy mess management leaders. Galleys must score 95% or higher in all categories evaluated to earn a five-star rating, according to the statement. "The team's dedication and work ethic allowed us to win the Ney, and there's nothing better than that for culinary specialists," said Senior Chief Petty Officer Ben Gregoire, who works at Bella Etna. The award was established in 1958 by the Navy secretary and IFSEA, a professional organization for people in the hospitality industry. It is named for Ney, who oversaw the service's food procurement during World War II. Every day, the galley at Sigonella feeds U.S. and NATO service members assigned to the installation and its 39 tenant commands. It also periodically opens to Italian military personnel, Defense Department civilians, contactors and local national Italian personnel working at the installation, according to the statement. Other 2025 award winners include Naval Base San Diego and Naval Station Meridian, Miss., the Navy said.

US to reduce military footprint in Syria to fewer than 1,000 troops

"The United States is consolidating its forces supporting counter-ISIS operations in Syria, reducing the number of U.S. troops in the country to fewer than 1,000 in the coming months, Pentagon officials said Friday. Recognizing the success the United States has had against ISIS, including its 2019 territorial defeat under President Trump, today the Secretary of Defense directed the consolidation of U.S. forces in Syria under Combined Joint Task Force — Operation Inherent Resolve to select locations in Syria," Pentagon spokesman Sean Parnell said in a statement. "This consolidation reflects the significant steps we have made toward degrading ISIS' appeal and operational capability regionally and globally."

The Pentagon did not specify in the release how many troops will be withdrawn, but The New York Times reported Thursday that the number is 600. The release also did not provide a specific timeline for the withdrawal, beyond stating it would "bring the U.S. footprint in Syria down to less than 1,000 forces in the coming months." "As this consolidation takes place, consistent with President Trump's commitment to peace through strength, U.S. Central Command will remain poised to continue strikes against the remnants of ISIS in Syria," Parnell said. "We will also work closely with capable and willing Coalition partners to maintain pressure on ISIS and respond to any other terrorist threats that arise."

The U.S. troops have been critical not only in the operations against the Islamic State but as a buffer for the Kurdish forces against Turkey, which considers them to be aligned with terror groups. President Donald Trump tried to withdraw all forces from Syria during his first term, but he met opposition from the Pentagon because it was seen as abandoning allies and led to the resignation of former Defense Secretary Jim Mattis. The departure of 600 troops would return force levels to where they had been for years, after the U.S. and its allies waged a multiyear campaign to defeat IS. The U.S. had maintained about 900 troops in Syria to ensure that the IS militants did not regain a foothold, but also as a hedge to prevent Iranian-backed militants from trafficking weapons across southern Syria. The number of U.S. troops was raised to more than 2,000 after the Oct. 7, 2023, attacks by Hamas in Israel, as Iranian-backed militants targeted U.S. troops and interests in the region in response to Israel's bombardment of Gaza.

Three U.S. troops in Jordan were killed by a drone fired by an Iranian-backed militia in January 2024. In December 2024, Syrian President Bashar Assad fled the country. In the months since, Syrians displaced by more than a decade of war have returned home, but the country remains unstable. Israel has targeted Syrian weapons installations, and there are some indications that the Islamic State group is trying to reconstitute itself, and Iranian-backed militias in Syria remain a threat to U.S. interests.



Roadrunner and Coyote: Navy Set to Deploy Land-Based Anti-Drone Systems at Sea

The Navy says it is working to reduce the growing costs of fighting Houthi drones launched from Yemen by placing two new experimental systems on destroyers that are slated to deploy later this summer. "We're going to be deploying the Ford strike group with two additional missile systems on our destroyers -- the Roadrunner system and the Coyote system -- both specifically designed to go after UAVs," or unmanned aerial vehicles, Adm. Daryl Caudle, the commander of U.S. Fleet Forces, told reporters last week.

Ever since the Navy repelled its first wave of drone attacks from the Houthi rebels in October 2023, there has been a steady criticism over the fact that commanders were turning to multimillion-dollar missiles to down drones that cost fractions of that amount. The phenomenon became known as the "cost-curve problem." "Those two systems ... are part of that attempt to get after the cost curve, give our commanding officers more options to engage the threat and ultimately be more effective in defending the high-value unit," Capt. Mark Lawrence, the commander of the destroyer squadron whose ships will employ the new systems, told reporters March 21. The USS Gerald R. Ford aircraft carrier, along with a group of destroyers, is set to deploy in the coming months, Navy officials have said.

In January, the Navy revealed that, in 15 months of fighting the Houthis, commanders fired 220 missiles, including 120 SM-2 missiles -- the service's workhorse anti-air missile that has a range of about 90 miles. Officials didn't offer a breakdown of what the missiles were fired at. The SM-2 missiles alone run about $2 million a piece, while some of the newer missiles that were used against Houthi missiles can run as high as nearly $28 million a piece. While a precise cost total for munitions expended from October 2023 to January 2025 is hard to Tough calculate exactly, it's clear that the Navy has expended well over $500 million just in the cost of missiles. The Roadrunner and Coyote systems could reduce those expenditures, but they are not new. According to Capt. Ronald Flanders, a spokesman for the Navy's research and acquisition department, Roadrunner is itself a drone-type loitering weapon capable of targeting other drones and was first fielded by U.S. Special Operations Command.

The head of the company that makes the Roadrunner described it to reporters in 2023 as "somewhere between a reusable missile and ... a full-scale autonomous aircraft." Meanwhile, Coyote is a similar system of launchable interceptor drones that was predominantly used by the U.S. Army to protect its bases. "Both these systems were originally designed for use over land; however, the U.S. Navy has tested and demonstrated these systems in the maritime environment," Flanders said. He was not able to provide a cost per interceptor or the range of either system in time for publication.

The Navy has also been experimenting with laser-based weapons that could be used to take out drones, but those efforts have been going on for years without much success in scaling experimental efforts to more than one or two ships. In January, Caudle called the Navy's inability to scale up the weapon "embarrassing." In the meantime, Caudle also revealed that, thanks to a slew of analysis done on the now hundreds of engagements, the Navy is starting to revise its approach to just how many missiles it will fire to take down a drone. "We may have had a 'shoot two, look, shoot two more'" approach, Caudle said, before noting that the Navy has "been able to reduce that because that wasn't improving our probability of kill."

However, Navy officials like Lawrence and Flanders are clear that the effort to find alternatives to missiles for anti-drone warfare isn't just about money -- it's about saving the missiles for more high-end threats. "We're trying to find ways to make sure that we're going to have the deep missile inventories we might need for other contingencies," Lawrence said. Rear Adm. Paul Lanzilotta, the commander of the USS Ford's strike group, also noted that Navy destroyers have also been employing their deck guns more regularly as well. "That is a very effective weapon -- it is not just for show," he said.

Navy officials revealed in January that, in 15 months of fighting, Navy ships used 160 5-inch shells over the course of 380 separate engagements, though, like with the missiles, they didn't say what they were shot at. At the end of the day, however, Navy leaders stress that they are not trying to discourage commanders and crews from employing the "tried and true" SM-2 missile. In January, the commander of the service's surface forces, Vice Adm. Brendan McLane, said that warship commanders are not worried about munitions cost, "nor should they be." "They have other things to worry about, like what's for breakfast," he quipped. "While we work on fleet initiatives to really get more efficient, I'd say we remain laser-focused on staying effective," Lawrence said.

Pictures of the Month



Air Force and Kern County firefighters extinguish a structure fire near Rosamond, Calif., April 9, 2025.



Marine Corps Sgt. Joshua Williams straps in a training casket as a part of caisson refamiliarization training at Fort Myer-Henderson Hall, Va., April 9, 2025.