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 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.

The Space Intelligence Production Cell at the Springfield-Beckley Air National Guard Base -- which will have a ceremonial ribbon-cutting Friday -- will be on the front line of informing national leaders of what's happening in space, an area of ever-growing significance in national defense.

"We call ourselves part of the invisible front line, which is a quote from the Space Force song," said Space Force Lt. Col. Stefan Katz, commander of the 76th Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance Squadron. "Even though we may be here in quaint, little Springfield, Ohio, we are part of the space fight above our heads."

Comprised mainly of young Space Force enlisted members, the 76th's mission is to produce fast, timely and accurate intelligence on threats "in, to and from space," Katz said. While the 76th is focused on making sense of what's happening today, Space Force Lt. Col. Aaron Echols, who commands the 4th Intelligence Analysis Squadron (IAS), leads a more senior unit able to offer insights of greater depth and longer-term analysis.

A lot of IAS members are senior civilians who have been engaged in this this tradecraft and analysis for some time, Echols said. He has about 80% civilians and about 20% uniformed members of the military, many of whom regularly travel to Washington, D.C. to confer with senior leaders.

Together, the 91 members of these two units will work with the National Air and Space Intelligence Center (NASIC) and the National Space Intelligence Center at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Katz and Echols told this newspaper in a new interview.

Members will go back and forth between Springfield and Wright-Patterson, as a building on the Springfield base is refurbished, and as a permanent home for the National Space Intelligence Center -- of which the IAS is part -- is built on Wright-Patterson. "We'll have guardians going back and forth in both directions," Katz said.

Even though the ribbon-cutting is Friday, there has been more than a year of work toward the Space Intelligence Production Cell, Katz said. "We're 91 souls at present," he said. "But we consider that half of the capacity that we need in order to get to 24-7 (operations)." "We will still be in a growth phase in the years ahead, depending on a couple of variables," he added.

"We are doing things that are primarily just focused on space, whereas NASIC is doing a lot of, obviously, air-focused things," Echols said. "They are the service intelligence center for the Air Force. We are the service intelligence center, and support elements of intelligence, for the Space Force."

An enduring symbol: why troops keep naming things after reptiles

October 21st marked National Reptile Awareness Day, a time to appreciate the cold-blooded creatures that have slithered, crawled and snapped their way through human history. For the U.S. military, that appreciation runs deeper than curiosity. From cobras to gators, reptilian mascots and call signs appear on patches, aircraft and unit logos across every branch. These creatures represent qualities service members value most: patience, precision and power.Reptiles embody a primal toughness that resonates with warfighters. A cobra never warns before it strikes. A gator waits still and silent until the right moment. That instinct for timing and discipline mirrors how military personnel are trained to operate. A sniper may hold his breath for hours before taking a shot. A gator may wait underwater for the same amount of time before ambushing prey. Both rely on control, not chaos. That kind of symbolism has shaped unit identity for generations.

During World War II, the U.S. 158th Infantry Regiment earned the nickname “Bushmasters” after encounters with the deadly snake in the jungles of Panama and the Pacific. The name was not chosen for flair. It came from survival. The men faced the snake daily, and it became a symbol of resilience and grit. The Bushmaster remains part of the regiment’s heritage today, its image still coiled across the insignia. Reptiles thrive in the same kinds of environments where American forces have fought for more than a century: deserts, swamps and jungles. That shared toughness has made them natural emblems. In Iraq and Afghanistan, Marines in amphibious assault units often referred to themselves as “Gators.” The nickname reflected both their vehicles and their versatility. Like the animal, they could move between land and water without hesitation. Adaptability became part of the identity. The 75th Field Artillery Regiment made that link official. Its distinctive unit insignia, approved in 1923, features a gold lizard on a red shield. The design honors the regiment’s roots in Alabama, once called the “Lizard State.” The symbol stands for quickness and survival, traits that define the artillerymen who served under its banner.

Reptilian call signs and nicknames also work from a practical standpoint. On radio channels, short names like “Cobra One” or “Viper Six” cut through static and confusion. They are clear, aggressive, and easy to remember. Their sharp consonants sound fast and decisive, reinforcing the message. Over time, those names become part of a unit’s mythology, spoken with pride by generations of soldiers who never even met. The connection between reptiles and flight became permanent during the Vietnam War. When the Bell AH-1 “Cobra” helicopter was introduced in 1967, the aircraft’s sleek profile and lethal precision fit the name perfectly. The helicopter’s reputation for speed and firepower helped solidify the snake as a symbol of American air dominance. The tradition continues today with the AH-1Z “Viper,” a modernized version that carries the same bite in combat.

Reptile imagery also appears in the Army’s heraldic tradition. The 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment once used the motto, “Brave Rifles, Scales of the Dragon,” merging reptilian symbolism with mythology to convey unity and strength. The Marine Corps’ Amphibious Assault Schools in California still informally call themselves “the Gator School,” a title that reflects their amphibious heritage and connection to World War II landings. Reptiles have appeared in military symbolism around the world for thousands of years. In ancient Egypt, crocodiles represented power and protection. Sobek, the crocodile god, was invoked for strength and military success. That same instinct to channel the reptile’s strength appears in modern American patches, coins and mottos. No matter the era, the message is the same: be patient, strike hard and survive.

Reptiles have even influenced how service members describe themselves. The term “cold-blooded” has become shorthand for operating without emotion. It means carrying out the mission despite fear, fatigue or doubt. That is not heartlessness. It is control. It is the same focused discipline a gator shows before it snaps its jaws shut. When you hear a call sign like “Cobra One” or see a gator stitched on a sleeve, you are witnessing more than branding. You are seeing the result of decades of storytelling, myth-making and tradition. Reptiles have survived longer than almost any other species on earth. They adapt, endure and dominate in silence. It makes perfect sense that service members, who are trained to do the same, would see themselves in those scales. From the jungles of the Pacific to the deserts of Iraq, from the cockpits of attack helicopters to the beaches of Camp Pendleton, the reptile has remained one of the military’s most enduring symbols. It represents readiness, resilience and survival. So when a young soldier earns a patch marked by a gator’s jaw or a coiled snake, they join a lineage that stretches across decades of service.



With his bare hands, this sailor sealed off his ship to save its crew

Evaluated on strictly tactical terms, the Japanese surprise attack on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii on Dec. 7, 1941 has been praised for its precision and criticized for the importance of targets it neglected. The Japanese focused their effort against warships and aircraft, but overlooked fuel stores and a new fleet oiler, USS Neosho (AO-23). Although Neosho would be eliminated five months later — and even then, due to misidentification — its presence over those months kept the recuperating United States Navy operational in a desperate hour — and produced a Medal of Honor recipient amid its last fight.

Oscar Verner Peterson was born Aug. 27, 1899 in Prentiss, Wisconsin, and swiftly grew into his chosen career, enlisting in the U.S. Navy on Dec. 8, 1920. By the end of 1941, he was Chief Water Tender (chief petty officer) aboard Neosho, which had just been commissioned in 1939. “She simply was the kind of unglamorous workhorse without which a modern navy could not operate,” writes historian Robert C. Stern. “Excepting a few token defensive guns, no one would ever mistake her for a warship. But against all odds, not only did the Neosho have a combat career, she had an extraordinary one.”

Capable of carrying 146,000 barrels of fuel, the ship was delivering aviation gas at Ford Island on Dec. 6, 1941. The next morning saw it tied up in Battleship Row. And while the Japanese were targeting the battleship Maryland (BB-46), their bombs fell nearer to Neosho as it cast off its moorings. Its three 3”-23 caliber anti-aircraft and one 5”-51 caliber gun were among the first to fire back against the enemy that December day.

Narrowly missing the Oklahoma, the Neosho backed its way into mid-channel and slipped into Southeast Loch. Three of the oiler’s crew were wounded by strafing, while its gunners claimed to have shot down a Japanese plane. Otherwise unscathed through the carnage, Neosho played an important role supporting the aircraft carriers that had likewise avoided the disaster at Pearl Harbor.

The fate that Neosho initially managed to avoid finally caught up during the Battle of the Coral Sea,however. On May 1, 1942, Neosho fueled up carrier Yorktown (CV-5) for the coming fight. As the main carrier forces closed on each other, Rear Adm. Frank Jack Fletcher, commanding Lexington (CV-2) and Yorktown, ordered Neosho to withdraw south of his force, with destroyer Sims (DD-409) for escort.

Ironically, Neosho became involved in the battle by mistaken identity. At 0722 hours on the 7th, it was spotted by two patrolling Nakajima B5N2s from the Japanese Shokaku, whose crews reported it to be an “aircraft carrier.” Vice Adm. Chuichi Hara sent contingents from both of his flattops to dispose of that threat and in the ensuing action Neosho took seven dive bomber hits, with another eight near misses. Even then, some crewmen manned the oiler’s anti-aircraft guns, setting fire to a Zuikaku D3A crewed by Petty Officer 2nd Class Shigeo Ishizuki and Petty Officer 3rd Class Kawagoe Masayoshi.

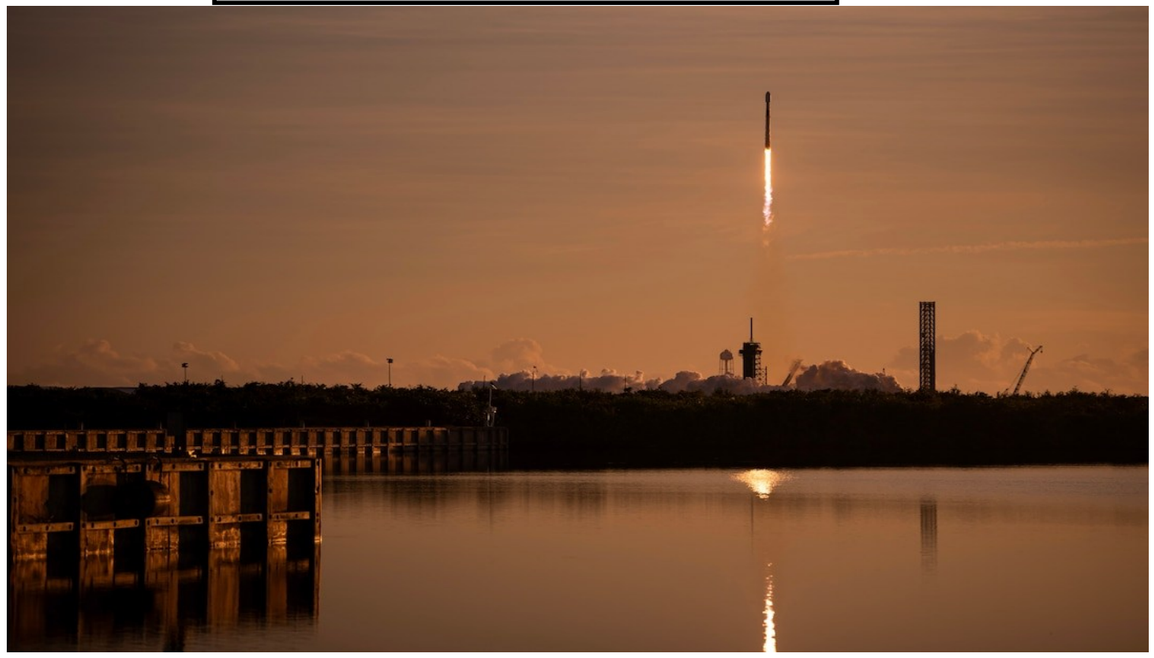
Judging his plane doomed, Ishizuki pulled up enough to drop his bomb and then crashed into Neosho’s No.4 gun, further spreading the fire. At the same time, USS Sims was hit by three bombs, one of which which caused a boiler explosion causing the destroyer to sink within minutes, taking all but 15 of its 250-man crew with it. Neosho was turned into a floating conflagration, but its crew did all they could to save it, most notably Chief Water Tender Peterson, who led a repair party throughout the uneven encounter. As his citation describes:

“Lacking assistance because of injuries to the other members of his repair party and severely wounded himself, Peterson, with no concern for his own life, closed the bulkhead stop valves and in so doing received additional burns, which resulted in his death.” In spite of third degree burns, Peterson’s determination in mechanically closing critical stream-line valves amid smoke and flames kept Neosho — and 123 of its crew — afloat until well after the battle.

Coral Sea ended in a tactical victory for the Japanese, seeing the sinking of Lexington, but a strategic win for the Americans, who sank the light carrier Shoho and, more important, drove back the Japanese attempt to seize Port Moresby in Papua New Guinea. In its aftermath, the destroyer Henley (DD-391) rescued Sims’ 15 survivors and on May 11 it found Neosho, dead in the water with a 30-degree list and 21 of its crew dead. After evacuating its 123 surviving sailors — including Peterson — it finished off the valiant oiler with gunfire.

On the 13, Peterson died from the severe burns he had suffered during battle and was buried at sea. In December 1942, Peterson’s wife, Lola, and his sons, Fred and Donald, received a letter announcing his award of the Medal of Honor. A memorial to him can be found in the “Tablets of the Missing” in the American Cemetery in Manila, Philippines.

Pictures of the Month



A Falcon 9 rocket carrying the Interstellar Mapping and Acceleration Probe lifts off from Kennedy Space Center, Fla., Sept. 24, 2025. The probe will study solar wind affecting the Earth, other planets and every spacecraft in the solar system



The USS Pierre arrives in Panama City, Fla., ahead of its commissioning ceremony, Nov. 7, 2025. Pierre is the second U.S. Navy ship of its name and the final Independence-variant littoral combat ship to be commissioned