

**Scuttlebutt**

**July, 2024**

**Branch/Unit 269**

**Goose Creek  
South Carolina**



**National website: [Fleet Reserve association.org](http://Fleet Reserve association.org)**

**<http://facebook.com/groups/frabrandandunit269>**

**Southeast region: [frasoutheastregion.org](http://frasoutheastregion.org)**

**Branch 269 website: [fra269gc.org](http://fra269gc.org)**

**Branch President's Corner**

Shipmates

Having completed my 2nd term as Branch president which I hope you think has been successful I want to thank the officers and Shipmates being largely responsible.

For their continued Leadership and guidance PNP Don Muckeck, PNC Laurie Bailey and PRPSE Fred Bolz as well as branch officers, V/P Don Barton, Treasurer PNP Don Muckeck and Secretary John Tharp, Branch Chaplain Bobbie Sutton, MMA Glenn Little, Board of directors and committee chair people.

- |                   |                                     |
|-------------------|-------------------------------------|
| PNP Don Muckeck   | Parliamentarian                     |
| PNC Laurie Bailey | Americanism/Patriotism              |
| SM Ken wallace    | Membership and Home Committee       |
| PRPSE Fred Bolz   | By-Laws, Vavs, Legislative          |
| SM John Tharp     | Public Relations/Newsletter         |
| SM Don Barton     | Youth Activities/Budget and Finance |
| SM Bobbie Sutton  | Health and welfare                  |
| SM Larry Pepper   | Ways and Mean                       |
| SM Tim Bailey     | Handyman                            |

Low country cooks Shipmates Ray Stanfield, Kieth Laster and Johnie Brown and our Wonderful hard working LAFRA Unit 269 ladies

Yours in Loyalty, Protection and Service  
Ken Hutchison

**BRANCH OFFICERS**

- |                                    |                                |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| President – Kenneth Hutchison      | Vice-President - Donald Barton |
| Treasurer - PNP Don Muckeck        | Secretary - Cindy Bryan        |
| Jr. Past President – Harry Nettles |                                |

**BRANCH BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

- |                   |                |              |
|-------------------|----------------|--------------|
| PNC Laurie Bailey | Tim Bailey     | Skip Chilton |
| Steven Koch       | Ronald Lamon   | Tom Lawson   |
| Glenn Little      | William Maloon | Rob Melton   |
| Bobbi Sutton      | Larry Pepper   | Ken Wallace  |

- Chaplain – Bobbi Sutton  
 Legislative Affairs – PRPSE Fred Bolz  
 Parliamentarian – PNP Don Muckeck Historian-Mike Sparks  
 By-Laws PRPSE Fred Bolz Youth Activites-Donald Barton  
 Master-at-Arms-Glenn Little Ways and Means-Larry Pepper  
 PRelatations/Newsletter- John Tharp  
 Webmaster PNC Laurie Bailey  
 Newsletter - John Tharp Essay Contest PNC Laurie Bailey  
 Membership – Ken Wallace

**LOW COUNTRY HOME, LLC**

- 99 Wisteria Road- (843) 569-2692  
 Home Chairman – Ken Wallace  
 Admin Secretary-Bobbi Sutton Financial Sec-Steven Koch  
 Director – Sue Peters Director-PNC Laurie Bailey  
 Director -Dee Wallace Director – Gail Bolz  
 Director -John Tharp Director -Rob Melton  
 Director – Skip Chilton Director – Tim Bailey

**LAFRA UNIT 269**

**UNIT OFFICERS**

- |                                     |                                |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| President – Trish Chilton           | Vice President – Marilyn Tharp |
| Secretary Yvonne Wallace            | Treasurer- PRPSE Gale Nathan   |
| Jr Past President – PRPSE Gail Bolz |                                |

**Board of Directors**

- |                    |                  |
|--------------------|------------------|
| PRPSE Gail Bolz    | Kathy Sorenson   |
| PNP/NFS Pat Suckow | Theresa Milligan |
| Linda Cox          | Ann Griffith     |
| Sue Peters         | Anne Barton      |

**LAFRA UNIT 269**

**Appointees & Committee Chairs**

- |                              |                                 |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Chaplain – Theresa Milligan  | Amer/Pat – Vacant               |
| Sergeant-at-Arms             | VAVS – Theresa Milligan         |
| Kathy Sorenson               |                                 |
| Welfare/Rehab                | Parliamentarian-PRPSE Gail Bolz |
| Publicity- Debra Breeze      | Ship's Store --Trish Chilton    |
| Hospital – Theresa Milligan  |                                 |
| Membership Marilyn Tharp     | Unit Activities -- All Members  |
| Youth Activities—Anne Barton |                                 |

## Madam President Tidbits

Hello Auxiliary Members:

The month of June was a busy month. Elections completed, Officers installed and ready for a new year. All without a meeting.

I am looking forward to working with all of you. This year I would like to work on retention, membership and attendance at our meetings and functions.

Our July meeting will include the draping of the charter in honor of FRA PNP Robert "Bob" Beese. Also, the breaking in of a new President.

Trish Chilton

Unit President

Yours in Loyalty, Protection and Service

### **WEEKLY DRAWING AT THE HOME**

Names drawn lately: 5/14 – Tim Cowan, not signed; 5/28 – Robert Clark, not signed; 6/4 – Shannon Caron, not signed; 6/11 – Bobby Beck, not signed; 6/18 – Charles Walker, not signed.

You must be a member of the Branch or Unit in good standing and you must be signed in the log. You can sign up until 1800 hours, on the day of the drawing. The drawing is

### **BRANCH MEMBERSHIP REPORT**

New or Reinstated Members – 2  
Transferred into Low Country Branch 269 – 0  
Transferred from Branch 269 – 0  
Ready to renew – 8  
Past Due - 14  
Suspended members - 8  
Transferred to the Staff of the Supreme Commander - 0  
Total members: 780

### **Membership/Retention: Ken Wallace**

Total Members: 780

**New Join:** Thomas Holcombe, Linsey Rogers

**Ready to Renew:** Lester Callahan, Paul Close, Patricxk Dermody, Arthur Di Filippo, Elmer Feeser. Terry Gomez, Charles Hollowood, Larry Knutson

**Past Due:** Mike Ciesielko, Robert Clark, Harold Crawford Jr., Carter Crosson, Fredrick Daughtery, Stephen Kovacs Jr., William Mcardle, Kenneth Murphy, Michael Pattererson, Rocky Puffer, Sheri Ragan, Cubit Robinson, Larry Tarzwell, Melvin Wright.

**Suspended:** Donnell Blewer, Anthony Dye, Raymond Lassen, Earl Milligan Jr., Arthur Robinson, William Roup, Dwight Wetherly Stephen Woodside.

### **Unit Membership and Retention:**

Past Due 30 Days: Elizabeth Adams, Cacey Anderson, Jacob Becker, Deborah Breeze, Carol Eustace, Ann Griffith Benita Kinlaw, Mildred Koscianski, Margie Rothrauff, Sarah Scott, Barbara Sullivan, Barbara Timmon, Ann Tolentino, Linda Vinson, Martha Willcut.

60 days late: Jayne Campbell

90 days late: Marjorie Gottsch

**Prayers for the family of: PNP Bob Beese and Master Chief Joseph McGorthy**

**Branch Chaplain Bobbi Sutton @ 843-879-9473**  
**Unit Chaplain Theresa Milligan @ 843-535-2757**

**BRANCH TREASURER'S REPORT**

Operations	\$ 3,710.46
Savings	\$ 4,675.29
Certificate of Deposit	\$ 11,437.99
Total	\$ 19,823.74

**Branch Continuous Membership – July, 2024**

Willie Thompson Jr. (62) John Groover (58) James McKinney (57) Hugh Graham (54) John Lookabill (50) Michael Quigley (47) David Johnston (45) Bobby Barbee (44) Frederick Hooker Jr. (41) Barry Gordon (40) Harry Kirk (40) Michael Andrews (36) Thomas Jennings (31) Robert Ingebretson (30) Richard Miley (30) Steven Geary (29)	Douglas Craig (28) James Spence (27) Roger Rader (26) Raymond Clark (25) Jerry Young (24) William Ambler (23) Wayne Suckow Jr (23) Kenneth Farrell (22) Michael Struve (22) David Dux (21) Brian Koller (21) Robert Zimmer (21) Charles Wright (20) John Cardno (17)	Ronald Snyder (17) Michael Black (15) Gordon Gingras (13) Albert Godwin (13) Norman Jones (13) Harold Starn (11) Craig Wold (10) Winfield Meadows (9) Richmond Smith (9) Daniel Jamison Jr., (8) William Scheer (8) Robert Vehorn (8) William Haney (7)	LINDSAY NELSON (7) CHARLES LEWIS (6) ALAN CHAMBERS (5) MICHAEL CLINE (5) CHRISTIAN LAFORCE (5) THOMAS SULLIVAN JR. (5) Y L LITTLE (4) HENRY PRIDGEN II (4) WILLIAM WOODSMALL (4) JORDAN CARVER (2) MITCHELL NAPPIER (2) DILLON BROWN (1) JOSHUA CHANDLER (1) CASEY PREECE (1)
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**Unit 269 Continuous Membership  
July, 2024**

Linda Brinson (55) Betty Harris (51) Annie Bain (24) Anita Wright (17) Rosamond Milligan (15)	Marilyn Tharp (15) Patricia Day (14) Brian Merrale (13) Joyce Hellsman (7) Kimberly Vandiver (7)	Curtis March (5) Jessica Murphy (5) Sheila Shea (4) Lawrence Fowler (3) Presilla Wilbanks (3)	TAMMY MILLER (3) JOAN WILSON (2) VIRGINIA STAMEY (2) MELISSA MOLINA-MATRIX (1)
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Branch/Unit 269 will be hosting the Southeast Convention in Charleston at the Double Tree by Hilton (7401 Northwoods Blvd, North Charleston. Hotel rooms are \$114.00 plus 14% tax = \$129/96. Call 1-843-518-6200 and ask for the room under "Fleet Reserve Association Convention". **Dates will be September 24-26,2024.** If you have not received the 2<sup>nd</sup> newsletter go to our website ([fra269gc.org](http://fra269gc.org)) and retrieve it. This has the food selections to send to us.



The Welcome Aboard Party will be the theme of the 1960's, 70's. I am sure all of you old Navy Salts remember the days of the Hippies!!



## **YOUR BIRTHDAY IS IN JULY- 2024**

If you are a Branch 269 or Unit 269 member, come on in to the Low Country Home **on your birthday** for a  
**FREE BIRTHDAY LUNCH**

Ray Bryant (1)	Joan Acosta (10)	David Calderhead (20)	David Aldrich (26)
Michael Rikard (2)	Mark Fiorey (10)	Kevin Crawford (20)	Gavin Karelitz (26)
Rosie Soderlund (2)	John Hills (10)	Sarah Harry (20)	Mona Lozen (26)
Michael Fusari (3)	William Bryer (11)	John Hoyt (20)	James Stover (26)
Jeffrey Muniz (3)	William Campbell (11)	J D Porter (20)	Mashelle Ames (27)
Nathaniel Nelson (4)	Paul March (11)	Timothy Reed (20)	Harold Crawford Jr. (27)
Gerald Starr (4)	James Giordano (12)	Jon Simmons (20)	Randy Bognar (28)
Jacqueline Veheyen (4)	Nathan Gottsch (12)	Michael Sosa Jr. (20)	Bruce Brown (28)
Ray Marshall (5)	Albert Stoll (12)	Keith Laster (21)	Ernest Culbreath (28)
George Ellison (6)	Ludwig Burkle (13)	Larry Nicodin (21)	Matthew Aguilera (29)
David Kiger (6)	Mark Hunter (13)	Paul Reece (21)	Joy Lambert (29)
Charles Lewis (6)	James Kint (13)	Ernest Chresoulis (22)	Ronald Snyder (29)
Janet Mizer-Brunner (6)	Mariela Anderson (14)	Mitchell Nappier (22)	Robert Weber Sr. (29)
Edward O'Connor (6)	Willy Hecker (14)	Sandra Peeples (22)	Lester Callahan (30)
Rocky Puffer (6)	Gordon Long (15)	William Pye Jr (22)	Walter Deal (30)
Carey Baxley Jr. (7)	Melissa Molina-Matrix (15)	Gregg Schneider (22)	Jericho Garcia (30)
Merle Knapp (7)	Martin Tinsley II (15)	Ernest Smith (23)	Robert Mastrion (30)
Lewis Flader (9)	Mark Erwin (16)	Camela Day (24)	Denise Barnes (31)
David Menefee (9)	Teri Korinek (17)	Ray Phillips Jr. (24)	Thomas Brown (31)
Michael Scott (9)	Kenneth Murphy (17)	Donald Siron (24)	Arthur Di Fillippo (31)
James Schaefer (9)	Russell Nichols Jr. (17)	Ray Stanfield (24)	John Lemieux (31)
David Smith (9)	Robert Burnett (18)	Patricia Wlazlinski (24)	Thomas Sullivan Jr (31)
	Tim Henson (19)		

**From the newsletter editor: John Tharp (843-709-8520) Email: [tharpj@sc.rr.com](mailto:tharpj@sc.rr.com)**

The Branch is trying to reduce the number of printed copies to save money.

We now have a webmaster and a web site. if you do not have an email address but have access to a computer you can get all the information at the website:: [fra269gc.org](http://fra269gc.org)

**You will get more information from the website as it shows upcoming events, pictures from other events, by laws as well as the newsletters.**

**Please email me or call me if you want to get off the list of printed copies**

## Home Committee Input

Cash Audit as of 14 June 2024 as follows: Savings account \$26,436.94; Checkbook balance \$16,895.42; Credit Card account \$8,410.35; there is \$1,608.50 in pending deposits. Total cash on-hand \$64,851.21.

Financial Audit for the month of May 2024 as follows: Savings account \$26,436.94; Check account balance \$12,689.05; Credit Card account \$10,246.39. There was a Net Profit for May of \$7,707.48.

### Building and Grounds/Special Events Manager's report:

Golf tournament will be 29 June 2024 followed by meal and awards at the Branch Home. 18 teams currently signed up; Maximum number of teams will be 23.

There will be an indoor picnic at the Home on Thursday, 04 July 2024.

Commemorative Bricks have been received and installed in foyer.

The banquet room will be closed for painting July 27<sup>th</sup> thru August 3<sup>rd</sup>. The foyer will be painted July 29<sup>th</sup>; please use the side entrance facing the motel.

Membership and Security: there was no report available at time of the meeting

Old Business: A/C unit was replaced in the galley area.

Good of the Order: We discussed and decided that when Tuesday night Drawings occur on Holidays, we will move the drawing to the following Thursday.

S/M Koch asked if anyone would like to assist in the Home Audit; S/M Sutton agreed to help.

Our next Home Committee meeting will be at 1300 on 15 July 2024.

**One final reminder, if you bring a Non-Member to Home, please remember to sign them into the Guest Log.**

Ken Wallace, Home Committee Chairman



Above: Branch 269 is being installed by PNP Don Muccheck.

Below: Unit 269 is being installed by PNP/NFS Pat Suckow



Above: President Kenneth Hutchison is receiving his gavel from PNP Don Muccheck for the upcoming Association year.  
Below: President Trish Chilton is receiving her gavel from PNP/NFS Pat Suckow for the Association upcoming year



There will be an indoor picnic at the Fleet on Thursday, July 4 at 12:00 noon



Mark your calendar, watch for  
 details, watch for additions

Friday nights – 1930 hrs – Scotch Doubles, 8-ball Tournament

**July, 2024**

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2	3	4 <b>Happy 4<sup>TH</sup> INDOOR PICNIC Subvet Eboard</b>	5	6
7 Free Pool	8	9	10	11 Subvet Mtg 	12	13 DAV Meeting 1000
14 Free Pool	15 <b>Home Committee 1300</b>	16 <b>Unit Lunch 1130  Unit Meeting 1800</b>	17 <b>LCCC 1900</b>	18 Branch Mtg 	19	20
21 Free Pool	22 VVA MTG 	23	24	25 MCL Mtg 	26 MOAA 1100	27
28 FREE POOL	29	30 <b>Sojourners 1900</b>	31	27	28	29



# **THE WALL THAT HEALS**

## **VIETNAM VETERANS MEMORIAL REPLICA & MOBILE EDUCATION CENTER**

The three-quarter scale Wall replica is 375 feet in length and stands 7.5 feet high at its tallest point. Visitors will experience the Wall rising above them as they walk towards the apex, a key feature of the design of the Wall in DC. Visitors are able to do name rubbings of individual service member's names on The Wall

It will be open 24 hours a day and free to the public. The Wall That Heals honors the more than three million Americans who served in the U.S. Armed forces in the Vietnam War, and it bears the names of the 58,281 men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice in Vietnam

October 17-20, 2024

Dorchester Heritage Center

Site: 964 Highway 78,  
Ridgeville, SC

Open to the public 24 hours daily

Closing on Sunday at 2:00 pm

Free admission and parking

Hosted by Dorchester Heritage Center



# Social media among many barriers to bringing back a draft, report says

Amid a revived national discussion about a possible return to mandatory military service, a new think tank report illustrates how doing so in today's America would require the Defense Department to navigate unprecedented social and cultural challenges.

While military conscription — colloquially known as the draft — effectively ended in 1973, all U.S. males aged 18 to 25 are required to register with the U.S. Selective Service in case the draft ever needs to be revived. The House passage of its version of the annual defense policy bill this month included a provision that would make Selective Service enrollment automatic. That, combined with comments by Chris Miller, the former acting defense secretary, about his interest in implementing mandatory service have again spurred curiosity and concern over the possibility of a future draft.

Against that backdrop, the Washington, D.C.-based think tank Center for a New American Security (CNAS) released a report this week about what it would take to do just that. The 35-page document, titled “Back to the Drafting Board,” contains 11 recommendations pulled from a tabletop exercise run by the think tank to simulate the mobilization of conscripts in a military crisis. While the U.S. military has run its own mobilization exercises in the wake of the draft — the memorably named exercise Nifty Nugget was run in 1978, followed by Proud Spirit and Proud Saber in 1980 and 1982 — no full test of U.S. mobilization capacity has been executed in the last 50 years, the report states. And the four teams tasked by CNAS with meeting the U.S. Selective Service System planning criteria of being able to produce 100,000 new military inductees within 193 days, found they couldn't meet those benchmarks. In fact, no team even came close.

The new report emphasizes that a military draft should still be considered a measure of last resort, not a tool for meeting peacetime military needs or a way to encourage national service or close the civil-military divide, which refers to the gap in understanding between the civilian population and the all-volunteer professional military. The tabletop exercise provides such a scenario: it posits that the U.S. is in a hot war with China following either a Chinese invasion of Taiwan or of the U.S. West Coast. These scenarios drive home just how dire national security circumstances would have to be to bring back the draft: one figure highlighted in the report shows casualty rates on the order of hundreds per day at the start of the conflict. While there's no guarantee that future draft would be instituted under the conditions the exercise CNAS assumed, the think tank sought realism by involving uniformed and civilian Defense Department personnel, legal experts, and Selective Service staff.

One of the four teams, which operated under best-case assumptions about current policy and response to draft notices, had the best outcome: it was able to mobilize 100,000 conscripts in 211 days, and just over 53,000 by the target 193-day mark. Another team, which made realistic assumptions about current conditions, took 402 days to conscript 100,000 troops. The third team, which took on worst-case assumptions for variables, took 1,336 days, or more than three-and-a-half years, to reach 100,000 conscripts. The final team, which assumed that the Selective Service System had been abolished and had to be restarted before conscription could begin, did surprisingly well, taking 223 days to reach the conscription target.

Based on the exercise, it appears that American culture and resistance to the draft in its historical form may present a major obstacle, the report shows. The U.S. public has to believe that the draft is enforceable for mobilization to work, the report's authors found, and social media messaging could amplify perceptions of inequity or perpetuate disinformation from adversaries.

“The credibility on Day One is really going to matter for proper implementation if we ever have to enact a draft,” Katherine Kuzminski, the report's primary author, told Military Times. “There's a lot of ability to sow confusion.”

A viral video of a pop star ripping up a draft notice, or a social media allegation that a local draft board is racist, for example, could quickly turn the tide of public opinion against drafting authorities. She suggested, on the other hand, that enlisting well-known sports figures or celebrities to promote responding to the draft as a civic duty could help the Defense Department and the Selective Service get in front of these obstacles.

Other problems surfaced in the tabletop exercise included the likelihood of legal challenges to the current all-male draft mobilization model, which would likely create “significant delays” in building an emergency force of conscripts. Declining trust in institutions, exercise participants found, would also likely result in historically high rates of deferment, conscientious objector requests, and draft-dodging, raising the possible need for more muscular enforcement mechanisms.

Alongside cultural obstacles are practical ones. The report also found the military services would likely need to relax military entry standards to accommodate a conscripted force of young people who largely don’t meet fitness, education, and mental health standards.

In 1940, Selective Service rejection rates were around 30%, according to the report. Under current models, and assuming only 23% of the draftable population is eligible to serve without a waiver, the military could run out of prospective draftees in just seven rounds, the report found. In addition, the professional all-volunteer force isn’t ready to accept conscripts into the ranks, the report shows. The military, it indicates, would have to plan and prepare to accept draftees in a way that emphasizes their skills and contributions and does not create the perception they’re “cannon fodder,” or simply bodies brought in to inflate the size of the force. Even the Military Entrance Processing Stations, or MEPS, which are now facing delays in recruit in-processing due to health record screening through the new GENESIS platform, would have to get staffed up, potentially with drafted medical professionals, to process a new round of inductees.

The report recommends that the Defense Department create an “executive agent for national mobilization” position to prepare for and address future issues raised in the report. This position was actually required by the fiscal 2022 National Defense Authorization Act but remains unfilled, the report notes. It also calls for the National Security Council to return to full-scale mobilization exercises across the government every two years to highlight preparation needs for a future draft.

For the president, the report recommends considering starting a potential future draft round by calling up older conscripts first — those at the upper end of the 18-25 eligible range. Current plans call for mobilizations of those turning 20 at the time of the draft.

“Operational requirements in a future combat environment may mean that individuals with more experience or technical proficiency are needed,” the report states.

While the prospect of a return to the military draft remains politically unpopular, making it an unlikely scenario in all but the most extreme of circumstances, the ability to call up conscripts quickly and build up military strength and technology can send a deterrent message of its own to the enemy, Kuzminski said.

“The ability to signal that we can be in it for the long haul, and that we have the ability to sustain that, can serve as a deterrent value when it comes to what [China’s] decision calculus is,” Kuzminski said. “They don’t want to start a war that could end up being protracted.”



### **‘Small detachment’ of Marines to arrive on Guam this winter**

A small detachment of Marines is expected to arrive at Marine Corps Base Camp Blaz on Guam sometime in late 2024. (Alex Wilson/Stars and Stripes) A “small detachment” of U.S. Marines is scheduled to relocate to Guam at the end of the year as the island prepares for thousands more transferring from Okinawa, according to the Marine Corps. An undisclosed number of logistics Marines will move to Marine Corps Base Camp Blaz this winter, where they’ll help ready new facilities for another 1,300 Marines from the III Marine Expeditionary Force, according to Marine Corps Headquarters spokeswoman Capt. Brenda McCarthy.

The base will also host another 3,700 Marines as a rotational deployment force. The base is scheduled to be at full operational capacity by 2028, base spokeswoman told Maj. Diann Rosenfeld told Stars and Stripes in December. The Marines’ transfer is part of the Defense Policy Review Initiative, an agreement by the U.S. and Japan to relocate some Marine assets from Okinawa to Guam. The deal includes Japan funding \$3 billion of the estimated \$8.6 billion cost to build Camp Blaz and its surrounding infrastructure.

“This commencement of force flow honors a concurrence with the Government of Japan and secures a U.S. Marine Corps posture in the Indo-Pacific region that is more geographically distributed, operationally resilient, and politically sustainable,” McCarthy told Stars and Stripes by email Tuesday. McCarthy didn’t elaborate on the timeline or disclose the number of Marines slated to relocate. Guam Gov. Lou Leon Guerrero, in a June 17 interview with Japanese outlet Kyodo News, estimated the detachment will include about 100 Marines and will arrive sometime in December, according to an audio recording of the interview provided by her office Friday. Camp Blaz currently only has about 80 Marines or U.S. sailors, Rosenfeld told Stars and Stripes by email Monday. The relocation likely won’t be completed until the Marines finish construction of Camp Blaz in two to three years, Guerrero added. Camp Blaz, an approximately 4,000-acre facility on the northwest edge of Guam, was activated in 2020 as the first new Marine Corps installation since 1952. Construction on the base is progressing rapidly, with 23 projects completed since work began and another 50 projects underway, Rosenfeld said. All projects were slightly delayed due to Typhoon Mawar, which passed just north of Guam in May 2023 bringing 150 mph winds and more than 2 feet of rain in some areas. Most delays were caused by lost time due to site preparation and recovery, she told Stars and Stripes by email Monday. “A few projects were negatively impacted by the destructive winds, but this type of damage was not widespread,” she said.



**The activity room at the 24-hour child care center at Joint Expeditionary Base Little Creek-Fort Story, Va., March 20, 2024.**

## **As troops struggle to find child care, 24-hour centers offer help**

VIRGINIA BEACH, Va. — In the wee hours of the morning, Master-at-Arms 1st Class Imani Solomon pulls on her Navy uniform, loads her 5-year-old son Isaiah's stuffed backpack into the car, and heads back upstairs to gather her still-sleeping son.

The sky is still dark as she gently buckles Isaiah into the car. Most days, it's around 3 a.m. when they arrive at the 24-hour child development center here at Joint Expeditionary Base Little Creek-Fort Story, where Isaiah will grab a few more hours of sleep while his mother heads in to work.

After they're let inside, Solomon tucks Isaiah into his designated bed alongside his stuffed toy and unpacks his clothes for the day into a nearby cubby.

"Then I give him a kiss ... go to the front desk, sign him in, and I'm off for the day," Solomon said. "He does all his waking up at the center."

The Little Creek-Fort Story facility is one of eight military child development centers that are open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to help troops whose odd hours and unpredictable schedules rule out the option of relying on traditional day cares. Seven are operated by the Navy; the Army has one.

Proponents argue the military services should build more of those facilities to support single parents, dual-military families and troops whose unique jobs can create unusual child care needs, particularly as families nationwide struggle to find reliable, affordable options for care. But the services say they have no plans to open more 24-hour centers, and are instead trying to grow the number of in-home child care options.

That leaves many U.S. service members without an around-the-clock option for child care, potentially adding stressors that can affect troops' performance at work and spur them to consider more stable work in the private sector.

For Solomon and her husband, Gunner's Mate 2nd Class Niko Solomon, workdays are rarely routine. But the 24-hour child development center at Little Creek-Fort Story offers the family peace of mind that their son is cared for while they turn to the matter of national defense.

"This 24/7 center has helped parents with that nontraditional work schedule,"



## Do military families really need to move so much?

Moving to a new base every few years is among the most taxing requirements military families face. But is all that effort to uproot really necessary?

A new report from a leading advocacy group argues it's time to give the pace of those moves, known as permanent changes of station, a fresh look.

“We’re seeing PCS as being a big moment that puts people in a situation of vulnerability,” Shannon Razzadin, chief executive officer of the Military Family Advisory Network, told Military Times on Tuesday.

The group’s 2023 Military Family Support Programming Survey, released Wednesday, explored some of the perennial challenges that burden military families. The 109-page report questioned whether changing the frequent shuffle between bases — which military officials argue is necessary to meet operational requirements and fill empty jobs — could affect recurring issues related to financial stability, such as military spouse unemployment, and other concerns such as children’s education.

“Is there a capacity to expand telework to provide more stability?” the report asked. “There is an opportunity to explore the cost savings of less frequent moves, not just for military families, but also for taxpayers.”

The survey drilled into some of the second- and third-order effects of frequent moves, when people struggle with everything from the amount of time spent in temporary lodging to security deposits, extra rent and unreimbursed expenses.

“These things are adding up. When you move every two to three years, and layer on top of that potential gaps in employment, you have this ‘aha’ moment where it’s not surprising that people are having a hard time getting ahead,” Razzadin said.

More than half of the survey’s respondents made a PCS move in the previous two years, the advocacy group said. Those who did were more likely to report poor family well-being than those who hadn’t moved, at 25.7% and 20.3%, respectively, according to the survey.

About 4 in 10 respondents who PCSed in the past two years reported low or very low food security; around half reported it was “difficult or very difficult” to find a place to live.

The MFAN survey, conducted online from Oct. 2 to Dec. 10, 2023, sought to hear from current and former members of the military community. Of the 10,149 participants, 39% said they were active duty spouses, 19% were veterans, and 11% were active duty troops. Seventy-six percent of respondents identified themselves or their spouse as enlisted, whether active duty, retiree or veteran.

The survey isn’t a scientific poll because researchers did not verify the identity of respondents, or conduct a random sample, for instance. The 2023 report is the survey’s fifth iteration since it began in 2014.

Researchers measured family well-being using the Family Health Scale, a research tool of 10 questions that measure factors like relationships, health care, lifestyle, financial health and housing.

Other findings related to PCS moves include:

- Most respondents reported spending between \$500 to \$1,000 out of pocket on moving expenses that aren't reimbursed by the military.
- 53% of active duty military family respondents say they are paying more than \$251 out of pocket each month for rent/mortgage or utilities.
- 43% said the reimbursement process took one to two months after they moved.
- 29% reported staying in temporary lodging between 11 to 30 nights during their PCS move; another 21% reported staying in temporary lodging between 31 to 60 nights.
- 56% of respondents said their [household goods](#) were lost or damaged during their most recent move, including retirees and veterans. 70% filed a claim. "Respondents who filed a claim most commonly experienced a financial loss between \$500 and \$1,000 above the reimbursement for their claim," according to the report.
- 46% of respondents said moving has the greatest impact on children and their education, social life, and adjustment to a new location. "It takes a great deal of work to support the children before, during and after a move. The ripple effect is large and long lasting," said one active duty sailor who responded to the survey.
- 38% said that moving affects the entire family's mental health and well-being, "oftentimes causing stress, sadness, depression, anxiety, loneliness, and even adjustment disorder," according to the report.
- 30% cited the effects of PCS moves on military spouse employment; 36% of unemployed active duty spouses shared stories of challenges with frequent moves.
- 11% of respondents cited moving or PCS as a barrier to saving money.
- 30% of respondents said they had difficulty establishing mental health care in a new location.

"The journey of a military family like yours or mine comes with sacrifices," said Christine Grady, wife of Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Adm. Christopher Grady, during an event Wednesday announcing the results of the survey. "It comes with great rewards."

Overall, military family well-being has declined since the last MFAN survey in 2021. In the past two years, those reporting poor family well-being increased from 14% in 2021 to 26.5% in 2023. Those who described their well-being as "excellent" fell from 41.3% in 2021 to 27.9% in 2023. Enlisted families with children — one of the largest groups in the survey — were less likely to report excellent well-being, at 20%.

Razsadin said one of the more disheartening results is the uptick in loneliness reported among military and veteran families, which rose by 5 percentage points to 59% in 2023.

Many said they would recommend military life with a healthy dose of caution, or as short-term service instead of a career.

"I found it surprising," she said. "The last time we fielded the survey was in 2021, in the pandemic. We have to figure out how we can create meaningful connections with people."

Among the bright spots in the findings, said Gabby L'Esperance, MFAN's insights director, was the increase in usage of mental health support. Nearly 60% of respondents sought out mental health services in the previous two years, up from 46% in 2021.

Survey results showed that families with poor or moderate well-being were less likely to recommend military life to others, as were enlisted families, veteran families, respondents with children under 18, and those who joined military life in the last 10 years.

Nearly 58% of those surveyed in 2023 would recommend a military career, a 5-percentage-point drop since 2021. Those who recommend military life to others has fallen steadily since 2019, when it stood at 74.5%.

Many said they would recommend military life with a healthy dose of caution, or as short-term service instead of a career.

The advocacy group warned that failing families can have wider repercussions for retention and recruitment — and in turn, military readiness — than on those households alone.

“Ensuring families can thrive in service isn’t just the right thing to do,” the report said. “There are long-term consequences if they don’t.”