

There were no May 2020 Executive Board and Post meetings due to restrictions on social gatherings related to the COVID-19 outbreak; Post and Executive Committee meetings are suspended until further notice. We are in communication with the South Montgomery County Community Center as to when the facility will become available for our meetings.

I encourage you to continue to use good judgment in your upcoming activities. Please follow the guidelines for mask use and social distancing. Remember: "It's better to be safe than sorry".

Victoria Glover, 1st Vice Commander and Director of our Boys State program and Emery Heuermann, Finance Officer completed the registration of 25 boys from local high schools for the upcoming online event. I would like to commend both of them for doing a superb job of organizing this within the constraints caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Victoria has been the leader on this effort for the last two years and has done a remarkable job of recruiting schools to encourage their students to participate. I joined her on some of the interviews and she was extremely organized. Emery was relentless in ensuring that all financial matters relating to this event were handled in a timely and efficient manner. We have always been able to count on Emery for this as well as all other financial matters for the Post. Thank you both for such good service.

It has been decided that there will not be an event at UT this year as has been the tradition. The current planning is for an on-line event. The details of this are currently being arranged and we will know more soon.

Although I described the program last month I believe it's worthy of repeating:

American Legion Boys State is among the most respected and selective educational programs of government instruction for high school students. It is a participatory program where each student becomes a part of the mock operation of local, county, and state government.

Boys State has been a program of The American Legion since 1935, when it was organized to counter the fascist-inspired Young Pioneer Camps. The program was the idea of two Illinois Legionnaires, Hayes Kennedy and Harold Card, who organized the first Boys State at the Illinois State Fairgrounds in Springfield.

At American Legion Boys State, participants are exposed to the rights and privileges, the duties and the responsibilities, of a franchised citizen. The training is objective and practical, with city, county, and state governments operated by the students elected to the various offices.

The American Legion Auxiliary sponsors a similar program for young women called Girls State.

We conduct a ceremony in the fall of the year and invite the boys that participated and their parents to listen to what they learned at Boys State and how they see the experience impacting their lives. Many of them may choose to pursue a career in government or politics in some way. In any case, they all will have learned far more about how our government works than they knew before.

We have been advised of free legal advice for veterans available from Houston Volunteer Lawyers, a service of the Houston Bar Association. A flyer describing these services is attached here:



Free Legal Advice Clinic for U.S. Veterans

Every Friday from 2 pm - 5 pm

Due to Harris County's stay-at-home orders, Houston Volunteer Lawyers' will be conducting legal advice clinics remotely. Volunteer attorneys will conduct one-on-one legal advice interviews over the phone to those who submit an application and are eligible for HVL's services.

To be eligible for free legal services, you must:

- (1) have household income at or below 300% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines
- (2) have limited assets.

Legal Issues:

Family Law	Landlord/Tenant
Guardianship	Homeownership
Probate & Estate Planning	Consumer Matters
Tax Disputes with the IRS	Bankruptcy
VA Benefits	Disaster-Related Issues

We do not accept criminal, traffic, or fee-generating cases.

**Those interested in legal assistance, should fill out an HVL application.
Applications can be found online at <https://bit.ly/hvlapps>.**

Completed applications should be emailed to info@hvlp.org

One of the topics I am interested in is news about our MIAs. Below is a link to a website that documents recovery of MIAs:

<https://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/Recent-News-Stories/>

This is an impressive listing that showcases the diligence of our Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency.

Some interesting military news:

Military service academies plan for students' return in fall

- By BRIAN WITTE Associated Press
- Jun 1, 2020

ANNAPOLIS, Md. (AP) — The U.S. Naval Academy is planning to have its 4,400 midshipmen return to campus in Annapolis, Maryland, for the fall, after students completed the last semester with online learning from their homes around the nation due to the [coronavirus](#), academy officials said Monday.

Vice Adm. Sean Buck, the superintendent, told the academy's Board of Visitors he has been communicating with the leaders of the nation's other service academies, and they also plan to have their students on campus in the fall.

“I can tell you, as of this morning, every single military service academy in this country is opening in the fall,” Buck told the board in an online meeting. “We all are developing very detailed plans with regards to health, safety and the protocols that we need to put in place to manage risk.”

Lt. Col. Christopher Ophardt, a spokesman for the U.S. Military Academy in West Point, N.Y., said the academy will have a fall semester with cadets present, though the academy is still making plans. The U.S. Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colorado, did not immediately return an email and call seeking comment on its plans.

While academics can be done online, Buck said the other two pillars of the academy's mission statement are developing midshipmen morally and physically, and those goals require hands-on experiences on campus.

"We cannot develop leaders for our nation's military services online," Buck said.

The superintendent told the board that even if an online distance learning must continue with faculty off of campus, the academy is planning to have its midshipmen in Annapolis.

"In the military, we are taught how to accept risk, manage the risk and lead through the risk, and that's what I intend to do," Buck said. "And I want to give you all the confidence that your Naval Academy team is very postured and thinking hard to minimize the risk of bringing those 4,400 midshipmen back in mid-August to start in-person development of leaders."

While midshipmen were away starting March 6 for nine days of spring break, Buck decided for them not to return due to the coronavirus. The students were instructed to return to their home of record and transition to online learning.

"I couldn't have been more impressed with the faculty and the staff and the midshipmen themselves who took the orders and executed it very smartly, and we transitioned on the 20th of March to online learning," Buck said.

Last month, the academy held its first-ever virtual graduation and commissioning ceremony. Defense Secretary Mark Esper congratulated the graduating midshipmen in remarks recorded earlier.

The academy's Class of 2020 returned in groups from mid- to late-May to gather their belongings. The academy held five mini-commissioning events with about 210 graduating seniors every other day for 10 days, Buck said, and those events were stitched together in video and photographs for the virtual graduation ceremony last month.

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This aircraft carrier skipper fled Iran as a child. Now he's preparing to deploy amid heightened tensions.

- By Brock Vergakis Staff writer
- Aug 13, 2019

NORFOLK

The new skipper of one of America's aircraft carriers fled Iran as a child.

Now, he's preparing for a deployment that could take him back to the region at a time of heightened tensions between the two nations that helped mold him into who he is today.

Capt. Kavon Hakimzadeh took command of the USS Harry S. Truman in July, achieving a goal he set for himself 30 years ago after he first laid eyes on an aircraft carrier in Norfolk. Back then, he was a young sailor who'd joined the Navy straight out of high school to serve a country he had only lived in for about a decade.

His journey from Tehran to enlisted sailor to an officer in command of the ultimate symbol of American sea power is a story that he believes serves as a testament to the opportunities the United States provides.

Hakimzadeh (pronounced Ha-KEEM-za-day) was born in Texas to an American mother and an Iranian father, but moved to Iran when he was still a baby. He fondly remembers his childhood there during the 1970s.

He attended an international school where they spoke Farsi and English, kept the faith of his Southern Baptist mom and had uncles and cousins who lived nearby. At the time, Iran was pro-American and embraced many aspects of Western culture.

It was, as Hakimzadeh says, an "idyllic" childhood.

But that quickly changed during the Islamic Revolution in 1979.

He and his family were forced to flee to America when he was 11, his sister was 9 and his mother was seven-months pregnant. They were rushed onto an airplane as the airport was about to close, destined for a small town near Hattiesburg, Miss. where the son of one of his father's business partners had agreed to take them in.

He said the weeks leading up to their departure were very much like the opening scenes in the 2012 Ben Affleck film "Argo," which is based on the true story of the CIA's efforts to rescue six Americans who were hiding in the Canadian embassy in Iran after the revolution.

"It just happened to be a country in chaos, a country in revolution. And so as an 11-year-old it was a little traumatic to have life as you know it completely change like that," Hakimzadeh said. "I think it is probably a lot to do with why I decided I wanted to serve and wanted to be in this line of work."

Hakimzadeh enlisted in the Navy to take advantage of the opportunities the military provided and give back to a country he and his family love for all it's done for them.

"Coming from the experiences we dealt with as a family ... They've seen the alternative," he said. "They strongly support what I do."

Hakimzadeh is now preparing for the possibility that he could be called to return to the Middle East. His carrier strike group has already completed its last major pre-deployment exercise.

While the Navy doesn't disclose where its ships plan to go or when, aircraft carriers are frequently used as a highly-visible deterrent when tensions flare up around the world. The aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln is currently in the Middle East serving that purpose after Iran shot down an American drone and seized foreign oil tankers.

If the Truman is called to take the Lincoln's place in the region, Hakimzadeh said he and his crew are prepared.

"There's not some particular personal angst involved," he said. "I've deployed there multiple times in the past."

Hakimzadeh, whose call sign is "Hak," spent much of his career as an E-2 Hawkeye flight officer based in Norfolk. He's flown in combat zones in Iraq and Afghanistan and has completed eight operational deployments on seven different ships, earning the Bronze Star and Legion of Merit.

While he knows his last name is uncommon in the United States, in some ways it helps serve as an icebreaker when he's deployed in the Middle East working with U.S allies or during port visits. Hakimzadeh still speaks a little Farsi and is always happy to tell his family's story to those who want to know more:

"I love to tell people that it's a testament to our merit-based Navy that a kid at 19, 20 years old can look at these things and go, 'You know what? I want to command those one day.' And it's certainly a testament to the United States of America that a guy named Kavon Hakimzadeh can do that."



- Tribune News Service (TNS)
- May 28, 2020 Updated May 28, 2020

VA secretary grilled on Nazi grave markers at military cemeteries

WASHINGTON — Veterans Affairs Secretary Robert Wilkie on Thursday wouldn't commit to removing three headstones containing swastikas and messages honoring Adolf Hitler from the graves of German prisoners of war, frustrating House lawmakers.

Wilkie said he wanted to work with members of Congress to put such anti-Semitic and racist imagery in the proper "historical context."

“I happen to think that making sure that when people visit our cemeteries they are educated and informed of the horror is an incredibly important thing to do,” Wilkie said during testimony before the House Military Construction-VA Appropriations subcommittee. “Erasing these headstones removes them from memory and as we continue to study the Holocaust, the last thing any Holocaust scholar wants to do is erase that memory.”

Subcommittee Chairwoman Debbie Wasserman Schultz, D-Fla., was not satisfied with Wilkie’s answer. She said the presence of such imagery in cemeteries that are home to World War II veterans, who died fighting Nazis and the ideology they represented, is unacceptable.

The VA cemeteries in question — Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery in Texas and Fort Douglas Post Cemetery in Utah — contain the remains of the German soldiers and the Nazi inscriptions.