



June Speaker | The Vietnam Tunnel Rats



Gunny Sergeant Joe C. Noriega, Jr. USMC (Retired)

Born in San Jose, California in 1948, the Noriega relocated to El Centro in 1960. Joe's father purchased a ranch on Dannenberg Road, and operated a farm and established Noriega Trucking, a family owned business. Growing up on the farm, Joe learned farming and began driving 18-wheeler trucks at the age of 16.

In June 1971, Joe was hauling tomatoes in San Jose when he received his Draft notice. He took his physical exam at the Oakland induction center. It was during one of those examination stations, that "A Marine Corps Captain showed up, and started hollering out numbers, and pulling people out from the lines." One of those people, was Joe.

Following Boot Camp and Infantry training school, Joe was shipped to Okinawa, Japan for further jungle training. Thereafter ships were loaded, and Joe headed for Vietnam. While conducting patrols in-country, Joe's duties rotated from one patrol to another. These tasks included Point Man, Right Flank Security, Tail-end Charlie, Left Flank Security, and Tunnel Rat.

During the Vietnam War, the "tunnel rat" became an unofficial specialty for U.S. Army Infantryman who cleared and destroyed enemy tunnel complexes. To remain undetected, the Viet Cong had created an extensive underground system of tunnels and tunnel complexes. These complexes could include hospitals, training areas, storage facilities, and barracks. These facilities, coupled with sophisticated ventilation systems, allowed Viet Cong guerillas to remain hidden underground for months at a time.

The tunnel rats were given the task of destroying the tunnels, gathering intelligence within them, and killing or capturing their occupants. Tunnels were often booby trapped with hand grenades, anti-personnel mines, and other methods to kill or maim U.S. troops.

Joe was discharged from the Marine Corps in 1975 as a Sgt. He re-enlisted to the Corps in 1978, and was stationed in Camp Pendleton with the 5th Marine Division, a ground combat division. It was from there that Joe went on to the 2nd Battalion, 9th Marines Division (2/9) on Camp Pendleton at Jack Rabbit Hill. From the 2/9 Joe went to Marine Fighter Squadron VMF 633. Not liking the Air Wing, S-4, he requested to be placed back in a line company and was assigned to 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marines (3/3) Kilo Company.

In 1993, while training with the Kenyan 1st Rifle Battalion in Africa, Joe's battalion received orders to proceed to Beirut, Lebanon. On the way, his ship crossed through the Suez Canal. Said Joe, "It took the ship two days to cross the 93-mile canal stretch."

While in Beirut, making a supply run in a 1/2 ton, 4x4 infantry vehicle, commonly known as a "Mule", a terrorist bombed the Beirut Marine Barracks. Joe and the mule he was driving were "almost turned over by the blast." That blast killed 243 Marines and Sailors.

Joe's last assigned deployments were Kuwait and Desert Storms. The land campaign lasted 100 hours, and the troops called it the "Nintendo War." Following these campaigns, Joe retired from the Marine Corps in March 1993 at the rank of Gunnery Sergeant.

Joe has been deployed around the world including Spain, Israel, Portugal, Italy, France, Diego Garcia, Patrols in Liberia (Peacekeepers), Morocco, Japan, Taiwan, and 13 afloats aboard amphibious ships with the U.S. Navy.

Following his retirement, Joe has authored nine books to date. His writing is one method he uses as a means of coping with post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Joe will be speaking about his experiences as a Tunnel Rat. Meet the author, and hear his first-hand experiences.

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We'll be serving up pollo asada, beans, salad, and all the fixings.

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After everyone is fed, we'll pack it all up, and all feel good on the way home for a job well done.

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— JUNE 14 • 7 AM —

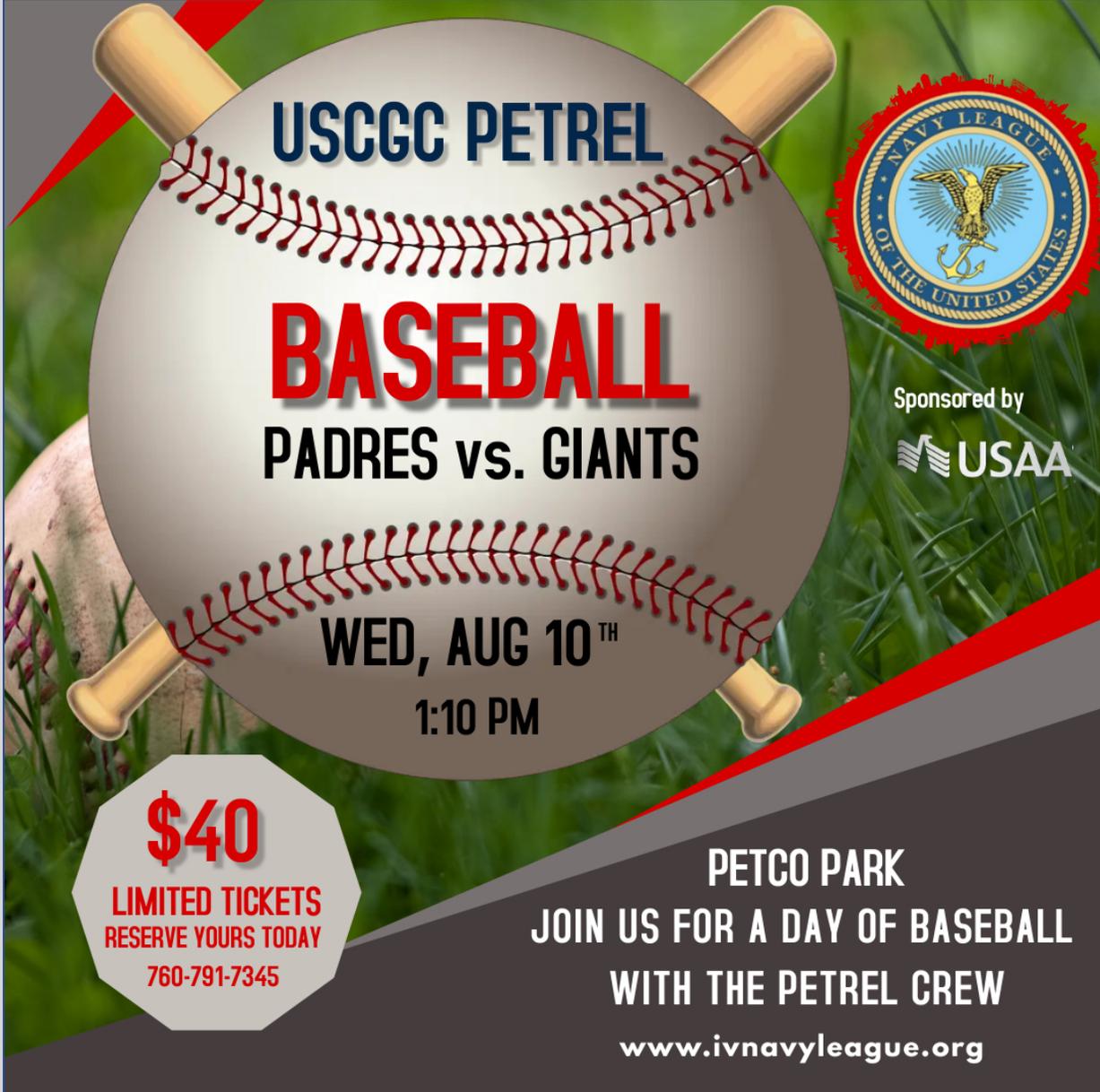
VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

RSVP (760) 791-7345 or
ivnavyleague@yahoo.com

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Caravan will depart El Centro @ 7am

USCGC PETREL Crew & Family Annual Baseball Outing



USCGC PETREL

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Start making your summer plans now to get out of the heat, and plan on joining us for some great Padres baseball and cooler weather in San Diego.

We'll spend the afternoon with the crew and families of the Coast Guard Cutter Petrel in celebration of the Coast Guard's 232nd birthday. A limited number of tickets will be available.

Fagan Confirmed as Next Coast Guard Commandant

WASHINGTON — Seapower

The U.S. Senate confirmed Adm. Linda Fagan Wednesday to lead the Coast Guard as its next commandant, said Kara Noto of the Coast Guard's MYCG staff.

Fagan will be the first woman to lead a U.S. military



service branch.

Fagan has served as the service's vice commandant since June 2021, when she became the first woman four-star admiral in Coast Guard history.

The White House issued the following May 12 statement from President Joe Biden:

"It is with deep pride that I congratulate Admiral Linda L. Fagan on her confirmation by the Senate as Commandant of the U.S. Coast Guard. Admiral Fagan is the Coast Guard's first woman to hold the rank of four-star admiral. Today, she again makes history not only as

the first woman to lead the Coast Guard—but also as the first woman Service Chief of any U.S. military service. Admiral Fagan's leadership, experience, and integrity are second to none, and I know she will advance the Coast Guard's mission to ensure our nation's maritime safety and security.

"My administration is committed to seeing more qualified women in senior leadership and command roles; making sure women can succeed and thrive throughout their military careers. Today, Admiral Fagan's confirmation as Commandant of the U.S. Coast Guard signals to women and girls across our nation they have a place in protecting their country at the highest level."

President's Message

I know the calendar doesn't say it's summer...yet, but the outside temperature certainly does. We've barely begun the month of June, and triple digits are already registering on my vehicle's temperature gauge. As the temperatures rise outside, the temperature on our grill gets cooler, which means we'll be taking a respite from the heat of the grill, but not before we see you on June 7th -- and on June 14th, where we will gather to celebrate our Black Sheep as they enjoy some post-deployment R&R on Lake Martinez near Yuma, AZ.

These Marines worked hard while on deployment, and we get a rare opportunity to show our deep appreciation for their being on our nation's front lines. I hope you will set aside a day to pitch in as we prepare a BBQ lunch of pollo asada for them on the lake's edge. It's a great day of breaking bread with these young Marines, and to let them know that people that they have never met appreciate the job they're doing for us. They might not be our own sons or daughters, but they are the sons and daughters of a grateful nation. I look forward to seeing your name on our list of volunteers for this event.

As you begin to make your summer plans, I hope you will also plan to join us for a cool day in San Diego with our adopted Coast Guard unit, PETREL, as we enjoy fun, food and baseball on Wednesday, August 10th. Tickets are \$40 per person. Please call us to reserve your spot. A limited number of tickets will be available.

Sponsorships are important to our council. As most of you know, we hold one major fundraiser each year, and self-fund the monthly dinner raffle. All other events are funded at cost, such as the Ballgame tickets. I say this, because sponsorships help us underwrite additional squadron and unit support, and our Sailor and Marine award programs -- without having to ask you for continued donations.

Last month two of our members -- a husband and wife team, Ava Chan Crowder and Bruce Crowder have signed on to be a Table Sponsor. Table Sponsorship isn't just for businesses! The Crowder's donation will help us in underwriting the dinner costs for our active duty guests when they receive award recognitions each year. THANK YOU Ava and Bruce for helping us support our adopted units!

Additionally, we learned last week that USAA will make a generous donation toward the cost of hosting the PETREL's crew and their families for the Padres baseball game. We extend our sincere thanks to USAA for continuing to support this important event.

We're looking forward to seeing you next Tuesday for that last T-bone dinner before summer. Get out of the kitchen, and invite a Dad to join you! Don't forget to call in your reservation. We'll be putting our steak order in this Friday.

Until we "Meat" again next Tuesday.



Ted Gallinat, President
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Navy League of the U.S.
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Upcoming T-Bone Dinners and Events

JUNE

7 | Navy League Dinner | 6:30 pm
NAF El Centro Mirage Club

14 | VMFA-214 Barracks Bash & BBQ | 7:00 am caravan
Lake Martinez, Yuma AZ

JULY

4 | Independence Day!

5 | Navy League Dinner | DARK -No Meeting

AUGUST

2 | Navy League Dinner | DARK -No Meeting

10 | USCGC PETREL San Diego Padre Baseball | 1:10pm First Pitch
Petco Park, San Diego

SEPTEMBER

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Charles Hill
Barbara Snagg
Tami Tyree

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WPB 87350



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