



Imperial Valley

Jan-Feb

2024

Serving all Imperial Valley communities since 1949

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www.ivnavyleague.org

ivnavyleague@yahoo.com

PO Box 3834

El Centro, CA 92244



We're Celebrating 75 Years

Our Council was granted its charter from national Navy League on January 15, 1949 to serve all Imperial County communities. The chartering ceremony took place on February 12, 1949 at the De Anza Hotel in Calexico with 300 guests attending, and National Vice President Charles Davies presiding, with Senator Owen Brewster of the great state of Maine as the guest speaker.

It was on February 15, 1956 the council received permission from the Chief of Naval Personnel, J. Holloway, Jr. to hold its monthly dinner meetings in what was then the Commissioned Officer's Mess at Naval Air Facility El Centro. It was at that first dinner meeting that we began to serve our famous T-Bone steak dinners, and aptly providing our speakers with the equally (in)famous T-Bone plaque, cast from an actual T-bone.

Though we have seen a lot of changes in our history, one thing that hasn't changed, is our passion for supporting the men and women of the sea services.

We'll be celebrating our 75th anniversary at our Tuesday, February 6, 2024 dinner. Come on out and celebrate with us!

February Dinner | Blue Angels Night



Commander Alex Armatas, USN

Commanding Officer, and Flight Leader
Navy Flight Demonstration Squadron, Blue Angels

Boss Armatas is in his second year of command of the Blue Angels, and we've noticed the team has already begun some practices over the field at NAF El Centro.

Commander Alexander P. Armatas is a native of Skaneateles, New York. He received his commission from the United States Naval Academy in 2002, where he earned a Bachelor of Science in aerospace engineering. He was designated a Naval Aviator in 2005.

Boss Armatas has had numerous shore and operational assignments, and multiple deployments in support of OPERATIONS IRAQI FREEDOM, ENDURING FREEDOM, INHERENT RESOLVE, and OPERATION FREEDOM'S SENTINEL.

Alex joined the Blue Angels in August 2022. He has accumulated more than 4,500 flight hours and 911 carrier-arrested landings. He is a graduate of the U.S. Navy Fighter Weapons School (more affectionately known as TOPGUN), and was named the 2008 George H. W. Bush Leadership award, the 2010 VFA-122 Instructor Pilot of the Year, the 2013 Lieutenant Commander Michael G. Hoff Attack Aviator of the Year, and received the 2020 Navy and Marine Corps Association Leadership Award

President's Message

Our council has been a vibrant part of our community for 75 years -- that's quite a feat to achieve. In order for our council to have achieved this momentous milestone, it required some hard work by our founding members, and continues to be for our officers, and supporting members today. We are proud to carry on the tradition of those that set the standard so many years ago.

Speaking of tradition, as we have since 1967, we kicked off this New Year by welcoming the Blue Angels to the Imperial Valley for their "Winter Training." It's always a joy to see them gracing our local skies.

We began hosting monthly dinner meetings at DeAnza Hotel in Calexico following our charter. It was in February 1956 that we transferred our dinner meetings to Naval Air Facility El Centro, and found our niche with our T-bone steak dinners — how about that cover photo? Our steaks are still just as big, and delicious tasting!

It was in October 2010 that we adopted the Black Sheep squadron designations as both VMA and VMFA 214. We have supported a number of Coast Guard cutters that we adopted, and helped decommission over the years, and it was last in 2016 that we adopted the Coast Guard Cutter Petrel and fully supported their crew.

Our first Navy ship adoption occurred in 1998 with the adoption of the crew of the USS Fitzgerald DDG 62. It goes without saying that our council continues to support the command and families stationed at NAF El Centro as we have for the past 75 years, including their tenant commands, Strike Fighter Wing Pacific Maintenance Unit, Navy Munitions Command Conus West, and Naval Branch Medical.

We'll be celebrating our next T-bone steak dinner with Blue Angels night at Emerald Seed Company. We thank Mike Dessert for his generosity in hosting our dinner. Due to limited space, and larger attendance for this dinner, we will require advance paid reservations. Unfortunately, we won't be able to accommodate walk-ins without a reservation. Make your reservation today, and help us celebrate 75 years!

CMDCM Theodore R. "Ted" Gallinat, USN Retired



February Dinner Pre-Paid Reservations Required

Due to the popularity of Blue Angels Night, and limited space, we require your pre-paid advance reservations. We regret we will be unable to accept walk-ins for this dinner. We appreciate your understanding, and look forward to serving you.

Reservations accepted until February 4th at 5:00 p.m., or until Sold Out.

T-Bone dinners are still only \$30.00. An optional Vegetarian dinner is available for \$15.00.

Date: Tuesday, February 5, 2024

Reservation site:

Time: 5:30 PM Early Star Time!

<https://www.ivnavyleague.org/t-bone-dinner>

Location: Emerald Seed Company
1735 Austin Road
El Centro, CA 92243

Pay via [Square here](#) for T-bone dinner

T-Bone dinners are still only \$30.00. An optional Vegetarian dinner is available for \$15.00.

Please be advised there is a \$2.00 credit card convenience fee for Square card usage.

Table Sponsors

Table sponsorships underwrite the cost of our speakers, and active duty award recipient's dinners. Want to lend your support? Contact us to find out how, and become a sponsor today!

We extend our thanks to these individuals and businesses with their continued generous support:

THE DAHM TEAM REAL ESTATE CO.

BRUCE & AVA CROWDER

USAA

PREMIER TOWING

December SITREP

There was a lot happening in December. We began with Naval Air Facility's Holiday Parade. Our volunteers led by Roy Caldwell who designed our float, gathered support, and built the framework for our T-bone on Wheels. The float centered around our trailered grill, and what Navy League does best — feeding the troops of all our adopted commands.

We were assisted by some of our active duty members stationed at NAFEC from Branch Medical, and Strike Fighter Wing Pacific and their spouses who generously gave up off-duty hours to help build, decorate, and ride the float.



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December SITREP (continued from previous page)

The NAFEC Command Triad must have been impressed, as the council was the recipient of a trophy for its efforts along with the other award recipients Heber Hawks Drumline, and the Holtville Viking Band of Pride. Many thanks to volunteers Roy Caldwell, Sue Caldwell, Bill Browning, Claire Bradfield, AM2 Randon Bradfield, HM3 Chase Gibbs, AM1 Jeramie Race, Rebekah Race, Ted Gallinat, Lisa Gallinat, Liam Caldwell, and George Caldwell. We were proud to recognize our Sailor-power during our December dinner for their tremendous support.



The USCGC PETREL and VMFA-214 Black Sheep also held their holiday parties, and we were pleased to be able to support their gatherings. The Black Sheep even had their mascot, "Gregory" in attendance!



To round out the holiday, we with your generous support, we were able to provide additional help to eight active duty families, to make their Christmas holiday much brighter. Each of these families were grateful for our generosity, and were overwhelmed by their gifts. The children of each family received gifts, and the parents received an additional \$300 gift to use at their discretion to augment their holiday meals, and needs. In addition, the families received various treats. Our Treasurer, Gaylla Finnell, and her husband Joe chair this Christmas Gift program each year, and do all the heavy lifting to purchase gifts, wrap them, and make the holiday baskets. We don't know how they do such an amazing job each year, but they do, and we are grateful for their dedication to the program. Thank you, Finnells!

During our December dinner, Lt. Col. Christopher Kelly gave his farewell address, as he retires from the Marine Corps next month. We also met, and welcomed Lt. Col. Robert Guyette who will assume command of the Black Sheep following Kelly's retirement. Because Lt. Col. Kelly was already a recipient of our T-bone award, he received the T-bone ornament to remember us by, and Lt. Col. Kelly presented President Ted with a beautiful custom-framed Black Sheep lithograph with coins and patches.

Two of our young attendees both won our December door prize, and were happy to take home stockings.



Our Mission | Educate. Advocate. Support.

The Navy League of the United States, founded in 1902 with the support of President Theodore Roosevelt, is a nonprofit civilian, educational and advocacy organization that supports America's sea services: the Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard and U.S.-flag Merchant Marine.

As part of its mission focus, the Navy League of the United States:

- ◆ Enhances the morale of sea service personnel and their families through national and council level programs.
- ◆ Is a powerful voice to educate the public and Congress of importance to our nation's defense, well-being and economic prosperity.
- ◆ Supports youth through programs, that expose young people to the values of our sea services.

[Ready to Join Us? Become a Member.](#)

Adopted Commands



NAVAL AIR FACILITY
EL CENTRO



US NAVY BLUE ANGELS FLIGHT
DEMONSTRATION SQUADRON



USMC MARINE FIGHTER ATTACK
SQUADRON VMFA-214



USCGC PETREL
WPB 87350



NAVY MUNITIONS COMMAND
CONUS WEST DETACHMENT



STRIKE FIGHTER WING PACIFIC
MAINTENANCE UNIT EL CENTRO



NAVAL BRANCH MEDICAL
EL CENTRO



USS FITZGERALD DDG 62



DESERT EAGLE SQUADRON
ESCONDIDO BATTALION
TRAINING SHIP KIT CARSON



CALEXICO HIGH SCHOOL

Become a Unit Sponsor

Would you like to consider sponsoring one of our units? Sponsors underwrite special events and awards. Ask us how.

NAF EL CENTRO

USS FITZGERALD DDG 62

VMFA 214

USCGC PETREL

STRIKE FIGHTER WING PACIFIC MAINTENANCE UNIT DETACHMENT EL CENTRO

NAVY MUNITIONS COMMAND CONUS WEST DETACHMENT EL CENTRO

Table Sponsors

Looking for a way to support the Council? Join our Sponsorship Team

Table sponsorships underwrite the cost of our speakers, and active duty award recipient's T-bone dinner meals. Give your business exposure on our website, and newsletters. Sponsorship is a great way that individuals, families, and businesses can directly support our adopted commands. Navy League is a 501(c)(3) organization, and your donations are tax-deductible. Contact us to find out how, and become a sponsor today!

We extend our thanks to these individuals and businesses with their continued generous support:

The Dahm Team Real Estate Company

Bruce and Ava Crowder

USAA

Premier Towing