

NAVY LEAGUE NEWS

F O R T L A U D E R D A L E C O U N C I L

March 2026



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Shipmates and Friends,

As we move into March, I want to begin by reflecting on what an outstanding February dinner meeting we shared together. Vice Admiral William Burke, USN (Ret.), gave us an unforgettable evening. His distinguished naval career, particularly his time in the Submarine Force, reminded us of the

extraordinary commitment required of those who serve beneath the sea. One story that truly resonated with many of us was when he described spending 90 days submerged on patrol without seeing the sun. Think about that for a moment, three months underwater, completely cut off from daylight, operating in silence and discipline, trusting your shipmates and your training. That level of endurance and mental toughness speaks volumes about the caliber of leaders forged in our Navy.

After retiring from active duty, Admiral Burke continued to lead in the private sector with Carnival Cruise Lines. He shared compelling insights about the engine room fire aboard one of Carnival's ships and the extensive safety improvements that followed. What impressed me most was his emphasis on accountability and learning from adversity. Rather than allowing a crisis to define the organization, they used it to implement changes that strengthened safety standards across the fleet. That is leadership owning the problem, fixing it, and ensuring it does not happen again. We are grateful for Admiral Burke's lifetime of service both in uniform and beyond.

Now we turn our attention to our upcoming **Wednesday, March 18, 2026 Dinner Meeting at the Lauderdale Yacht Club.**

Our guest speaker will be **Staff Sergeant Eliezer Olea, USMC, Marksmanship Training Instructor.** This one is personal for me. I had the privilege of serving with SSgt Olea during my time in the military, and I can tell you firsthand that he embodies the professionalism, grit, and quiet determination that define the Marine Corps. From his deployment in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom to his leadership within Marine Forces Reserve Marksmanship Training, he has consistently demonstrated what it means to uphold standards and train Marines to be ready when our nation calls. Marksmanship is more than hitting a target; it is discipline, focus, and accountability. It is about building confidence and ensuring that every Marine is prepared to perform under pressure. SSgt Olea's role in training and mentoring Marines directly contributes to the readiness and effectiveness of our force.

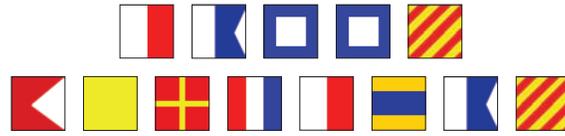
Our Navy League mission is to support the Sea Services and strengthen the bond between our military and our community. When we gather to hear from leaders like Admiral Burke and SSgt Olea, we are reminded that service comes in many forms but it always requires sacrifice, dedication, and character. I encourage you to join us on March 18th at the Lauderdale Yacht Club. Bring a guest. Invite someone who believes in supporting our military. Let's continue building a strong, proud, and engaged Fort Lauderdale Council. It is an honor to serve as your President and to stand alongside each of you in support of those who wear the uniform.

Abiud "Abi" Montes
President
Fort Lauderdale Council
Navy League of the United States

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NAVY LEAGUE OF THE UNITED STATES FORT LAUDERDALE COUNCIL MARCH BIRTHDAYS



Lynn Atkinson Drucker	3/4	Peter Apol	3/19
Jeffrey Schram	3/11	Gary Pirtle	3/24
Bob Hogg	3/15	Michael Ryan	3/25
Marilyn Gari	3/17	Dennis Neutze	3/30
Joan Kovac	3/18		

MEMBERSHIP

Beginning January 1, 2026, Premium Council Membership will be \$400 per person. This fee includes eight dinner meetings (each typically \$55 per person, offering a \$40 discount overall) as well as the \$50 annual dues, resulting in total savings of \$90 per year.

To join and maintain membership in a Navy League council, an individual must be a member in good standing with the Navy League of the United States. It is incumbent upon the member to maintain current national membership.

From page 2-10 of the Navy League of the United States Operations Manual revised November 6, 2021: II.D.6. A council may establish local dues or membership fees as it may deem to be appropriate but such dues or fees must be in addition to, not in lieu of, the national dues.

It is easy to purchase a one year e-membership for \$25 at www.navyleague.org.

Join the Navy League:
FtNavyLeague.org/JoinUs
<https://ftlnavyleague.org/joinus>



GUEST SPEAKER AT OUR MARCH 18TH DINNER MEETING
STAFF SERGEANT ELIEZER OLEA, USMC
MARKSMAN TRAINING INSTRUCTOR



Staff Sergeant Olea

SNCOIC RIFLE TEAM, MFR MTU

(Staff Non-Commissioned Officer in Charge, Rifle Team, Marine Forces Reserve Marksmanship Training Unit)

Eliezer Olea graduated from Recruit Training in August, 2007. Following graduation, he was assigned to TOW Platoon DET 1 Headquarters and Service Company, 4th Tank Bn, 4th Marine Division. In 2008, he completed the Anti-Tank Missile-man Course at School of Infantry East. In 2009, he was assigned to Scout Platoon Headquarters and Service Company, 3rd Bn, 24th Marines. Lance Corporal Olea deployed to Al-Asad, Iraq in support of OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM from 2009-2010.

In 2013, Corporal Olea completed Civil Military Operations Course and was assigned to 4th Civil Affairs Group. In 2014, he completed Combat Marksmanship Coaches Course and deployed in to Dominican Republic in support of Multinational Exercise Trade Winds. In 2015, he completed Combat Marksmanship Trainer Course and deployed to Dominica in support of Operation Continuing Promise. Sergeant Olea joined Marines Forces Reserve Marksmanship Training Unit as a member of the Rifle Team and Certified instructor.

In 2015, Sergeant Olea transitioned to the Individual Ready Reserve, in order to attend Basic Law Enforcement Academy. Sergeant Olea returned to 4th Civil Affairs Group in 2016.

In 2017, Sergeant Olea transitioned to the Individual Ready Reserve. In 2018 Staff Sergeant Olea completed Instructor Development Course.

In 2025, Staff Sergeant Olea joined the Individual Mobilization Augmentee Detachment of Weapons Training Battalion at Marine Corps Base Quantico.

His personal decorations include Bronze Division Rifle Competition Badges, and Silver National Rifle Competition Badges.

Staff Sergeant Olea his wife Bianca and their two sons Elias and Noah, reside in Pembroke Pines, Florida.



SSgt Olea with Sea Cadets

NAVY LEAGUE DAY AT THE RACES 2026, GULFSTREAM PARK



Saturday, March 7th, was our annual Navy League Day at the Races at Gulfstream Park, Hallandale Beach. This year, close to 40 attendees came out with family and friends to enjoy watching and betting on the races. The Ten Palms restaurant offers breathtaking views of the legendary Gulfstream racetrack and serves a spectacular all-you-can-eat buffet. This is always a fun social event and this year did not disappoint.



35TH ANNIVERSARY OF DESERT STORM – A MIAMI TOW MARINE REMEMBERS

By Abiud Montes

Thirty-five years ago, on January 17, 1991, Operation Desert Storm began with an air campaign to drive Iraqi forces out of Kuwait. It marked the start of what would become one of the fastest and most decisive victories in U.S. military history.

I was a Lance Corporal in the Marine Reserve, barely 11 months out of boot camp at Parris Island, South Carolina, when the world shifted beneath my feet. I had just turned 21 on November 19, 1990, the same day I received my activation orders. As reservists, we were told we wouldn't be going to war. The plan was for us to go to Camp Lejeune and replace the active-duty Marines heading overseas.



Then they told us we'd receive additional desert warfare training at 29 Palms, California. That never happened either.

Instead, on Thanksgiving night, I got a call from my platoon sergeant: report at 0600 the next morning at the Miami Tow Company Reserve HQ, which today is the Miami-Dade Military Museum. That call changed everything.

By December 24, we went from Camp Lejeune to Cherry Point by bus, then boarded a flight to Aviano, Italy, and from there flew straight into Saudi Arabia, landing on Christmas Day, 1990. It was a 24-hour trans-Atlantic journey, my first ever.

The air war kicked off on January 17, and after weeks of strikes, the ground war began at 0300 on February 24. Miami



35TH ANNIVERSARY OF DESERT STORM – A MIAMI TOW MARINE REMEMBERS continued

Tow Company was the first to cross the Line of Departure, pushing into enemy territory 13 hours before the active-duty Marines, who crossed later that afternoon at 1600. We saw combat; they didn't.

Our unit destroyed over 33 enemy tanks and captured more than 1,800 Iraqi soldiers. Despite the odds and the lack of extra training, we suffered zero casualties.



35TH ANNIVERSARY OF DESERT STORM – A MIAMI TOW MARINE REMEMBERS continued

At our 35th Anniversary Reunion on January 17, 2026, more than 350 of us came together to remember and reflect. It was powerful to see the faces of those I had stood beside in the desert all those years ago.

Our CO, Col Radtke, shared something that stuck with all of us. Before we deployed, an Army officer told him to expect 80% casualties from our unit. To them, we were expendable. But by the grace of God, we proved otherwise.

We weren't just a group of young reservists thrown into the unknown; we were United States Marines, and we carried out our mission with pride, courage, and brotherhood. We did what Marines do: we led from the front, held the line, and brought each other home.

Semper Fidelis

Abiud Montes

Desert Storm Veteran

Miami Tow Company, USMC





United States Naval Sea Cadets Corps

FORT LAUDERDALE DIVISION & TRAINING SHIP RADFORD

Sponsored by the Fort Lauderdale Council of the Nay League of the United States

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 21101, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33335-1101

Headquarters: 300 S.W. 25th Street, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33315



LT Rosa Ryan, USNSCC

Commanding Officer

A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE

U.S. Naval Sea Cadet Corps, Fort Lauderdale Division

February was an active month for our Sea Cadets. On February 14th, Cadets prepared for the Annual Inspection. On February 18th, our Sea Cadets attended our Council Dinner Meeting at the Lauderdale Yacht Club to present the colors, mingle with council members and active-duty military guests, enjoy a delicious dinner, and learn about the inspiring career of speaker retired Vice Admiral William Burke, USN, who spoke about his experience as a submariner.

On February 21st, all Cadets were “on deck” in their dress uniforms for our Annual Personnel Inspection, performed



A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE

U.S. Naval Sea Cadet Corps, Fort Lauderdale Division continued



by Sea Cadets Regional Director LTJG Kevin Grams. We had excellent attendance, and the unit passed “with flying colors.”

On February 28th, Cadets participated in the High Ropes and Team-Building exercises at Broward College’s Tiger Tail Lake Recreational Center. The Cadets climbed up the 3-story platform, traversed the rope ladders, rappelled down, and had a ball. Cadets also enjoyed the water activity course on the lake. It was an educational day with great camaraderie and teamwork enjoyed by all.





Support Sea Cadet Funding in 2026 Defense Appropriations!

1827 actions taken

173 needed to reach next goal

The Issue

The U.S. Naval Sea Cadet Corps is a federally supported youth program that provides hands-on training to approximately 8,000 participants each year. The program develops skills in shipbuilding, cybersecurity, aviation, skilled trades, and maritime operations. Nearly half of graduating cadets enter military service.

Congress authorized \$4.3 million in supplemental funding for the Sea Cadets in the FY 2025 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), but these funds were not appropriated due to the passage of a full-year continuing resolution. In December 2025, Congress again authorized \$4.3 million for the program in the conferenced version of the FY 2026 NDAA. However, members of the House and Senate must still approve this funding in the conference report for the Department of Defense Appropriations Act, which has not yet been released.

The House-passed defense appropriations bill fully funds the Sea Cadets under the Recruiting and Advertising section of the Navy's Operations and Maintenance Budget. The Senate's draft does not include this provision. Until negotiators agree to include Sea Cadet funding in the final appropriations bill, the program's funding remains uncertain.

The Solution

If enacted with the relevant provision, the FY 2026 Defense Appropriations Bill would make available the \$4.3 million authorized in the FY 2026 NDAA for the U.S. Naval Sea Cadet Corps. The appropriations process determines whether authorized funds can be spent. As of December 2025, a conference report for the appropriations bill has not yet been released. Ensuring that the conferenced bill includes Sea Cadet funding will secure the program's financing for next year, provided the House and Senate pass the negotiated bill.

Why You Should Take Action

If appropriated funding is not provided in FY 2026, the Sea Cadet program may face reduced training opportunities and higher costs for participants. The program relies on federal funding to maintain robust training and keep participation affordable for families. Its mission is to support national security workforce development and provide career pathways in defense and maritime industries. The Sea Cadets have historically received funding in appropriations legislation, and continued support is essential to sustain this critical program.

Act Now!

Sign up with Facebook

or

To register to participate in the Navy League Quorum Action Center and our Voice to Congress campaigns, please enter your information below.

Fields with an asterisk (*) are required.

First Name *

Last Name *

Address *

Email

Council

By registering with the Quorum Action Center, you agree to receive the Legislative Affairs Weekly Roundup email. You may unsubscribe from the Weekly Roundup at any time by following the links provided in each email.

Sign Up



<https://navyleague.quorum.us/campaign/seacadets/>

DINNER MEETING FEBRUARY 18TH, 2026

On February 18th, we were honored to welcome retired Vice Admiral William Burke, USN as our guest speaker. The Admiral's detailed account of his exemplary service as a naval officer and submariner was motivating and clearly demonstrated his professionalism and exceptional leadership abilities. Upon retiring from the Navy, the Admiral leveraged his extensive experience and leadership skills in the private sector to serve as an executive at Carnival Cruise Lines. We extend our sincere appreciation to the Admiral for generously sharing his remarkable experiences with us. We would also like to thank our sea cadets for coming out on a school night to present Colors with obvious pride and professionalism. Their commitment to the sea cadet program, along with their patriotic spirit, deserves both admiration and respect.



GUEST SPEAKER AT OUR APRIL 15TH DINNER MEETING
KEN DENISON
Broker, Denison Yacht Sales



Ken Denison was raised in the boat business, being the youngest son of Frank and Gertrude Denison, founders of Broward Marine. Ken graduated from the University of Miami in the late '70s and then worked in real estate in Michigan prior to joining the family business in 1983.

His role as vice president of new boat sales and construction ushered in a new era of marketing, not only for himself, but for the industry. Ken has also given insightful commentary, and is known as a leading voice, on the history and evolving market of American-made yachts. Considered a marine marketing innovator, he brought the concept of the “Yachting Rendezvous” into place for the first time. These events grew to an annual Broward Marine Summer Cruise in New York, Newport, and Nantucket, as well as the Ocean Reef events.

In addition to these yachting events, Ken was one of the first to uniquely and successfully “brand” a yacht builder by instituting an ongoing program of print advertising using double-page spreads with very little copy, and primarily just the headline “IT MUST BE A BROWARD” (which became an industry icon). It’s a hefty resume that all began at what was once revered as “the industry’s most prolific shipyard.”

After he left Broward, he co-founded the single largest marine charity event, the Boys and Girls Club of Broward County Yacht Rendezvous, raising millions of dollars each year for the Broward County chapter of the club. The marketing success also brought with it great prominence for this U.S.-based company during Ken’s time there, with over 80 new boat sales. In 1993, for the first time, Broward Marine had the number one order book in the world, beating the largest builders globally, the first US yard to ever attain this achievement.

He founded Broward Yacht Sales in the mid-'80s along with his partner Chris Daves, which then became Denison & Daves in the late 1990s. Ken’s knowledge of yacht construction naturally led him to representing buyers in large yacht construction projects at Lurssen, Abeking & Rasmussen, Oceanco, Hakvoort, and Westport shipyards.





Navy League of the United States Fort Lauderdale Council

Social Calendar 2026

Wednesday, March 18, 2026, Dinner Meeting, Lauderdale Yacht Club

Guest Speaker: SSgt Eliezer Olea, USMC, Marksmanship Training Instructor

Wednesday, April 15, 2026, Dinner Meeting, Lauderdale Yacht Club

Guest Speaker: Ken Denison, Former VP Broward Marine

Wednesday, May 20, 2026, Dinner Meeting, Lauderdale Yacht Club

Guest Speaker: LT Matias A. Sueldo, USNR (Ret)

Sunday, May 31, 2026, Sea Cadet Awards Banquet, Pembroke Pines

Tuesday, September 22, 2026, Dinner Meeting, Lauderdale Yacht Club

Sea Cadet Night

Saturday, October 10, 2026, Pursuit of Honor, Courage, & Commitment 5K, Hollywood Beach, Honor5K.org

Wednesday, October 21, 2026, Dinner Meeting, Lauderdale Yacht Club

Guest Speaker: TBD

Wednesday, November 18, 2026, Dinner Meeting, Lauderdale Yacht Club

Guest Speaker: TBD

Tuesday, December 15, 2026, Holiday Celebration Dinner/Toys for Tots Drive

Guest Speaker: TBD

Dinner Meetings and Events Web Page:



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*We proudly support the
Navy League, Fort Lauderdale Council
and the U.S. Naval Sea Cadet Corps,
Fort Lauderdale Division.*



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ENGINE!**

We are extending our thanks to the Military community with a new discount program. All Active Duty Military Members and Veterans receive discounts on all purchases made online at www.FERREA.com with approved military verification.




Ferrea is a proud community affiliate with the Navy League.

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Jim Black
Elaine Hogg
Elaine Nasta
Oscar Romano

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

Wednesday, April 1, 2026 3:30 PM EDT
Join Zoom Meeting:
Meeting ID: 899 9626 3102
Passcode: GoNavy

**FORT LAUDERDALE COUNCIL
2026 OFFICERS**

President – Abiud Montes
1st Vice President – Barbara Kelleher
2nd Vice President – Aaron Bresnahan
3rd Vice President – Peter Apol
Treasurer – Diana Molina
Secretary – Elaine Nasta

**FORT LAUDERDALE COUNCIL
BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Peter Apol
Lynn Atkinson
Jim Black
Pat Du Mont
Elaine Hogg
Alan Stotsky

GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Wednesday, March 18th, 2026

6-7 PM Cocktails • 7-9 PM Dinner Buffet

LAUDERDALE YACHT CLUB

1725 SE 12th Street

Fort Lauderdale, Florida 33316

Guest Speaker

STAFF SERGEANT ELIEZER OLEA, USMC
Marksman Training Instructor

Guests \$55 per person

RSVP Required! Limited Seating!

No later than noon, Friday prior to the meeting.

Call 954-522-8995 or Online at www.ftlnavyleague.org/events

visit us on the web at www.ftlnavyleague.org

