

Military, Law, and more ...

Saluting and paying homage to Vietnam Veterans

Medal of Honor recipient Navy Captain Michael Estocin has memorial scholarship in his name

By Katie Lange
Department of Defense
(DOD)

Navy Capt. Michael John Estocin flew many perilous missions in the early days of the Vietnam War, and a close call in April 1967 didn't dissuade him from returning to the skies for combat. While he never came home from his last mission, he posthumously received the Medal of Honor for his bravery and devotion.

Estocin was born April 27, 1931, in Turtle Creek, Pennsylvania, to Michael and Mary Estocin. He grew up with four sisters and two brothers.

After high school, Estocin attended Slippery Rock State Teachers College, now Slippery Rock University, graduating in 1954. He then joined the Naval Aviation Cadet program, which started to increase the number of available military pilots following World War II, and earned his wings in 1955.

Estocin's first assignment was with Attack Squadron 56 at Naval Air Station Miramar, California, which included a deployment on the aircraft carrier USS

Bon Homme Richard. He then served with two training squadrons before a stint aboard the carrier USS Ranger that ended in June 1965. Later that year, Estocin was assigned to Attack Squadron 192, known as the "Golden Dragons." With them, he deployed to Vietnam on the Bon Homme Richard, then again on the USS Ticonderoga in 1967 after he'd attained the rank of lieutenant commander.

On April 20, 1967, Estocin led two other aircraft in a coordinated strike against two thermal power plants in Haiphong, North Vietnam. During the mission, he notified leaders of the positions of surface-to-air missiles — known as SAMs — protecting the plants. Estocin then destroyed three of them.

At one point, after his A-4 Skyhawk was hit by an exploding missile, Estocin ignored intense antiaircraft fire, flew back into the target area and used anti-radar homing missiles to finish off his targets. Afterward, he had less than five minutes of fuel remaining. Thankfully, a refueling tanker was nearby and was able to begin in-flight refueling, which kept him in the air for



Navy Captain Michael John Estocin

more than 100 miles.

When Estocin came within three miles of the Ticonderoga, he detached from the tanker and, knowing he didn't have enough fuel for a second approach, expertly carried out a fiery landing on the carrier.

Estocin suffered burns during the landing, but a week later, he convinced his superiors he was OK to fly despite his injuries. On April 26, 1967, he went on another mission to Haiphong to strike more vital fuel facilities. Estocin and another pilot were sent ahead of a bombing squad-

ron to neutralize enemy SAM sites.

The mission at the power plant went off without incident, but on the way back to safety, Estocin spotted an active SAM site that launched a missile that exploded near him, seriously damaging his aircraft. The burning plane went into a barrel roll before Estocin was able to recover.

According to a Veterans Affairs Department profile of Estocin, the second pilot, Navy Cmdr. John Nichols, followed Estocin's aircraft and radioed for help. Estocin didn't respond to radio

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calls, and Nichols noted he could see Estocin motionless in the cockpit with his head bent slightly forward. Soon after, Estocin's aircraft crashed, with no evidence that he'd parachuted to safety before hitting the ground. Estocin was initially presumed dead, but intelligence later suggested he may have survived and was taken prisoner. However, when all U.S. prisoners of war were released from Vietnamese custody in 1973, Estocin was not one of them.

According to the VA, a 1993 committee investigating missing Vietnam POWs determined that Estocin likely died when his aircraft crashed. North Vietnamese officials also insisted they had no record of him ever being held. His remains have not been recovered.

Estocin's courage and devotion were not forgotten. On Feb. 27, 1978, his widow, Quay Marie Estocin, and their three daughters received the Medal of Honor on his behalf during a ceremony at the Pentagon. Estocin was also posthumously promoted to captain.

In 1981, the guided-missile frigate USS Estocin was commissioned and served the Navy for more than two decades. In 2002, a highway interchange in western Pennsylvania, near where Estocin grew up, was named in his honor.

The Captain Michael J. Estocin Award is presented annually to the best strike-fighter squadron in recognition of outstanding achievements in naval aviation. Estocin's alma mater, Slippery Rock University, offers a memorial scholarship in his name to incoming freshmen.

A memorial marker honors Estocin at Fort Rosecrans National Cemetery in San Diego.

Bill Bachenberg
elected NRA
president and
Doug Hamlin
re-elected VP &
CEO

ATLANTA, GA , April 29, 2025- the Board of Directors of the National Rifle Association of America (NRA), elected Bill Bachenberg of Pennsylvania as President of the NRA and Doug Hamlin as NRA Executive Vice President & CEO. The meeting of the Board of Directors followed the 154th NRA Annual Meetings & Exhibits where over 70,000 NRA members, their families, and supporters of the Second Amendment gathered at the Georgia World Congress Center in Atlanta, Georgia to check out the latest guns, gear, and accessories from over 600 exhibitors. "I am deeply honored to be entrusted by my colleagues on the Board to serve as President of the



NRA," said Bill Bachenberg, NRA President. "We are at a pivotal point in our Association's history as we work to reach out to new members, build upon the trust of existing members, and provide the gold-standard programs that American gun owners expect. As the Nation's oldest civil rights organization, the NRA plays a critical role in protecting and advancing freedom in America."

The NRA Board of Directors also elected Mark Vaughan of Oklahoma as NRA First Vice President and Rocky Marshall of Texas as NRA Second Vice President.

"As we conclude a very successful NRA Annual Meeting in Atlanta, I know one thing for sure: NRA's best days are ahead of us," said Doug Hamlin, NRA Executive Vice President & CEO. "This Association is moving forward, full speed ahead, to support the shooting sports, train new gun owners, and defend the sacred right to self-defense. I thank the dedicated staff of the NRA who work day and night on behalf of NRA's millions of members and America's more than 100 million firearms owners."

Following Mr. Hamlin's reelection, he reappointed John Comerford as the Executive Director of the NRA Institute for Legislative Action (NRA-ILA)

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DOD declares 100 days of success, bringing back wrongly discharged service members

By C. Todd Lopez
Department of Defense
(DOD)

April 25, 2025 - Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth told young military leaders, April 23, 2025, that since January, the Defense Department has focused entirely on restoring the warrior ethos, rebuilding the military and reestablishing deterrence.

"This week at the Department of Defense, we got to work for our warfighters," said Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs and Senior Advisor Sean Parnell during the Weekly Sitrep video, which highlights department activities each week.

"Secretary Hegseth visited Carlisle, Pennsylvania, to meet with emerging leaders at the United States Army War College and deliver remarks on President [Donald J.] Trump's historic first 100 days in office."

At the school, Hegseth spoke with senior, field-grade officers and civilian equivalents who are in the final stretch of the school's 10-month strategic leadership resident program. Graduates of the course will be eligible for major command and civilian

equivalent executive leadership positions.

The secretary said over the past 100 days, the department has been working to restore the warrior ethos by refocusing the military on lethality, meritocracy, accountability, and standards and readiness.

"To be lethal, you have to trust that the warrior alongside you in battle, or the troops fighting in the units that many of you will lead, are capable — truly, physically capable — of doing what is necessary under fire," Hegseth said, adding that such a standard is especially applicable to leaders.

Back in Washington, Navy Secretary John Phelan contributed to the department's efforts by removing yet another program that distracts sailors from their warfighting mission.

"Navy Secretary John Phelan announced this week that he's rescinding climate change initiatives established by the previous administration, which is fantastic," Parnell said. "President Trump and Secretary Hegseth have been very clear: less woke, more warfighting."

Phelan signed a memorandum,

April 22, 2025, rescinding the Navy's "Climate Action 2030" program, saying that action would free up the service to focus on a more lethal and ready naval force, with a goal of achieving "peace through strength."

"Today, I'm focusing on warfighters first," Phelan said. "Our focus needs to be on lethality and our warfighters."

Parnell said while the Navy was refocusing on lethality, the Army caught the spotlight with top-notch recruiting and retention efforts.

"Some record-breaking news on the warfighter front. For the last seven years, the United States Army has met or exceeded its retention goal. However, this year, that accomplishment comes nearly six months ahead of schedule," he added.

The Army revealed, April 22, 2025, that it had surpassed its fiscal year 2025 reenlistment goal by retaining 15,600 soldiers, 800 more than the target of 14,800. That feat was accomplished well before the end of the fiscal year in September.

Incentives such as current station stabilization, specific training opportunities, overseas assign-

ments, or choice of duty station within the continental United States partially contributed to the Army's success.

"That is some great work [by] the United States Army," Parnell said.

Also this week, the secretary signed a series of memos, each focused on strengthening the military.

"Secretary Hegseth signed three memos this week, the first to restore good order and discipline through balanced accountability. In other words, we want to embolden our commanders to be able to lead fearlessly," Parnell said. "Second, a memo to eliminate the availability of ridiculous medical waivers. And finally, a memo to further clarify how we will bring back valuable service members discharged for their refusal to take the experimental COVID-19 vaccine and to ensure those service members are

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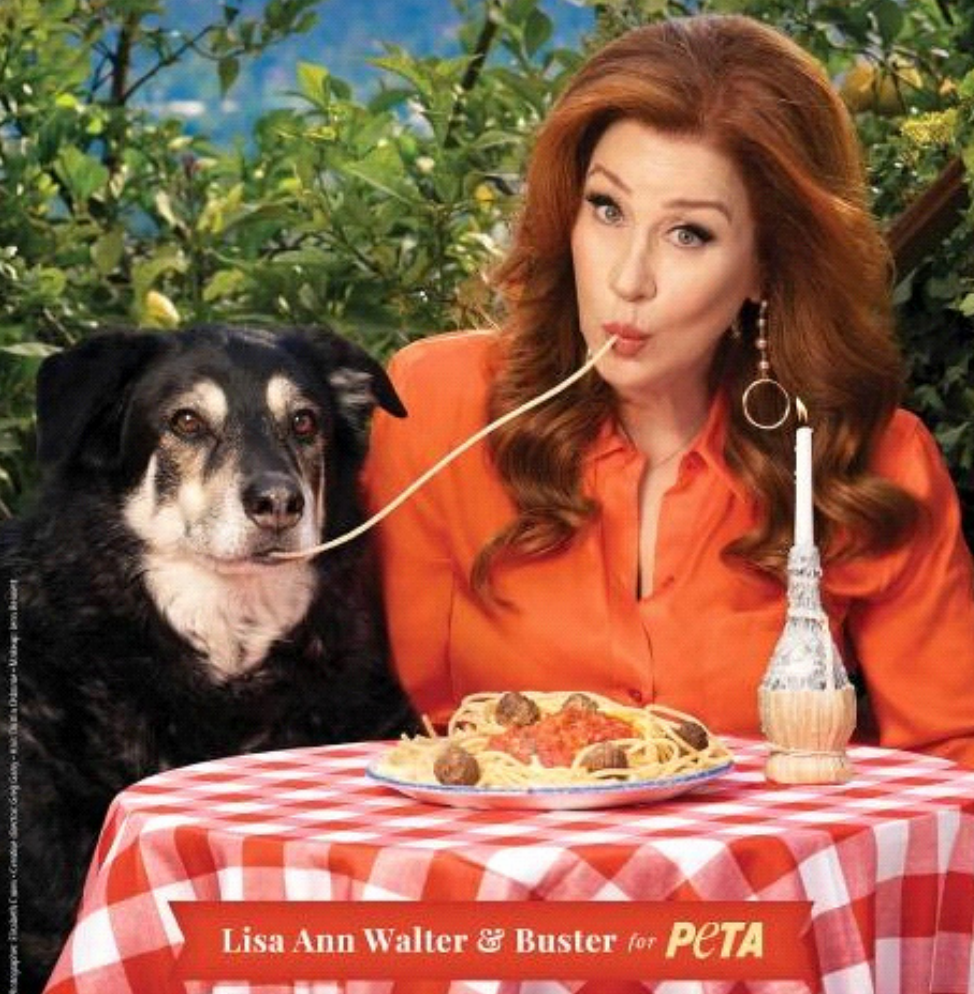
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