

# Desert Lightning News

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Serving Southern Arizona's military community, including Davis-Monthan Air Force Base

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U.S. Air Force photos by Staff Sgt. Abbey Rieves  
**563RD RQG SALUTES SEAC #4**  
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# USAF Action Shooting Team competition

By Airman 1st Class  
DEVLIN BISHOP

MESA, Ariz. — Members of the U.S. Air Force Action Shooting Team competed in a shooting competition at Rio Salado Sportsman's Club in Mesa, Arizona, Nov. 10, 2023.

U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Robert Wilson, 22nd Security Forces Squadron flight chief and USAF Action Shooting Team captain, U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Michael Schuerhoff, 49th Civil Engineer Squadron intelligence non-commissioned officer in charge; and U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Christian Magaling, 354th Fighter Squadron weapons technician, attended the United States Practical

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U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Devlin Bishop

U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Christian Magaling, 354th Fighter Squadron weapons technician, fires at a target during a shooting competition at Rio Salado Sportsman's Club in Mesa, Arizona, Nov. 10, 2023. The USAF Action Shooting Team competed against Army, Marine, and Secret Servicemen as well as civilian shooters.



U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Robert Wilson, 22nd Security Forces Squadron flight chief, competes in a shooting competition at Rio Salado Sportsman's Club in Mesa, Arizona, Nov. 10, 2023. Wilson was the captain of the USAF Action Shooting Team.



U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Michael Schuerhoff, 49th Civil Engineer Squadron intelligence non-commissioned officer in charge, fires his weapon during a shooting competition at Rio Salado Sportsman's Club in Mesa, Arizona, Nov. 10, 2023. The USAF Action Shooting Team competed nationally and internationally against professional and amateur shooters.

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# Airmen recognized during hockey game

By Airman 1st Class  
**ROBERT ALLEN COOKE III** and  
Airman 1st Class  
**JASMYNE BRIDGERS-MATOS**

355th Wing Public Affairs

U.S. Airmen were recognized at Military Appreciation Night at the Tucson Roadrunners hockey game in Tucson, Arizona, Nov. 4, 2023.

The Airmen's involvement during the Military Appreciation Night event brought families and service members together to celebrate their accomplishments and shed light on challenges that Airmen overcame on a daily basis.

During the game, U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Cliantha Yasenchak, 355th Wing Command Post command and control operations specialist, was recognized as "Hero of the Game #1" on the stadium's promotion deck for her achievements, including her actions against a bomb threat in Tucson.

Yasenchak considered it an honor to be stationed at Davis-Monthan on active duty orders.

"Working here is a huge honor," Yasenchak said. "I'm really happy to be working here."

U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Grayson Landry, 355th Civil Engineering Squadron firefighter, was also recognized as "Hero of the Game #2" for his achievements, including national certifications he earned for his on-the-job training.

Through family ties, Landry found an appreciation for the sport of hockey and the Roadrunners team.

"My dad was born in Boston," said Landry "And so he grew up playing a lot of hockey, and just growing up, we were always watching hockey with him. I went to some Roadrunners games with him, and ever since then, I fell in love with hockey."

U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Dwayne Kennedy, 48th Rescue Squadron maritime pararescue specialist, was the guest of honor who dropped the ceremonial hockey puck, signifying the end of pregame festivities and the start of the game.

"This is an opportunity to connect with the community," Kennedy said. "The community does not see the military a lot. I think it's a good opportunity for each of us to show face."

Bridging the gap between the wider community and the endeavors of service members around the world, military recruiters were stationed on the upper level of the hockey stadium during the game. U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Kiley Everett, 362nd Recruiting Squadron enlisted accessions recruiter, was one Air Force recruiter who offered information to those interested in joining the U.S. Air Force.

"We try to get involved with all of the major events out here," Everett said. "Events, setting up booths, and just making the Air Force presence known to the people of Tucson."

The evening not only celebrated the achievements of outstanding Airmen, but also demonstrated the support and appreciation of a community that recognizes their dedication and sacrifices.



U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman William Turnbull

**U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Grayson Landry, 355th Civil Engineer Squadron firefighter, poses for a photo during military appreciation night at a Tucson Roadrunners hockey game in Tucson, Arizona, Nov. 4, 2023. The Tucson Roadrunners gave free tickets to military members as a part of military appreciation night.**



U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Robert Allen Cooke III

**U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Dwayne Kennedy, 48th Rescue Squadron pararescueman, drops the puck at the start of a Tucson Roadrunners hockey game, Tucson, Arizona, Nov. 4, 2023. The Roadrunners honored a "Hero of the Game" to bring attention to the hard work DM Airmen do for the community.**



U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Robert Allen Cooke III

**U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Dwayne Kennedy, 48th Rescue Squadron pararescueman, waits in the hallway near the arena at a Tucson Roadrunners hockey game, Tucson, Arizona, Nov. 4, 2023. Kennedy was selected to drop the puck at the start of the game.**



U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Robert Allen Cooke III

**The 355th Wing Honor Guard prepares to post the colors at a Tucson Roadrunners hockey game in Tucson, Arizona, Nov. 4, 2023. The Honor Guard ceremoniously presented the flags for military appreciation night.**



U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman William Turnbull

**U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Dwayne Kennedy, 48th Rescue Squadron pararescueman, prepares to drop the puck before the start of the game in Tucson, Arizona, Nov. 4, 2023. Events like these helped Davis-Monthan Air Force Base personnel connect with the local Tucson populace.**

# 355th CES Phase II Readiness Exercise

By Airman 1st Class  
JASMYNE BRIDGERS-MATO

355 Wing Public Affairs

355th CES fire protection conducted multiple exercises the 355th CES Phase II Readiness Exercise, Oct. 24-26, 2023.

The exercises consisted of a mock barrier engagement, aircraft live fire, structural fire, and pilot egress, while operating in JFIRE (CBRN environment).



U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Nick Macias, left, and Tech. Sgt. Brian Davenport, right, 355th Civil Engineer Squadron fire emergency services firefighter, check on Keith Mahoney, 355th Civil Engineer Squadron training captain, while responding to a simulated pilot egress at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona, Oct. 24, 2023. The exercise tested their ability to get the call and respond, arrive on scene and extricate the pilot.



U.S. Air Force photos by Airman 1st Class Jasmyne Bridgers-Matos

Airmen assigned to the 355th Civil Engineer Squadron respond to a simulated A-10 egress at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona, Oct. 24, 2023. The A-10 egress sharpened their skills in egressing a pilot from an aircraft that could be experiencing any number of issues.



Airmen assigned to the 355th Civil Engineer Squadron connect a fire hose at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona, Oct. 24, 2023. They set up the hose to combat a structural fire during the 355th CES Phase II Readiness Exercise.



Airmen assigned to the 355th Civil Engineer Squadron extinguish a simulated aircraft live fire at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona, Oct. 25, 2023. The training honed their ability to extinguish a helicopter fire quickly while potentially having to save a pilot's life.



Airmen assigned to the 355th Civil Engineer Squadron unravel a fire hose to extinguish a simulated structural fire at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona, Oct. 24, 2023. The training reinforced their skillset in firefighting operations and victim extrication.



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**ACTION** (from Page 1)

Shooting Association competition to compete against Army, Marine, Secret Servicemen, and professional civilian marksmen.

Magaling placed in the top five out of 142 other competitors in his division.

“Finishing in the top five of the Carry Optics division against some of the best competitors in the country was a humbling experience for me,” said Magaling. “With all the hard work and dedication I’ve devoted to this sport, I feel it was a well-deserved finish, but we will continue practicing and improving for future competitions.”

The USAF Action Shooting Team competes at dozens of competitions each year and is always looking for new talent.

“The way our team is currently postured, we are all Airmen first, completing our day-to-day duties in our respective AFSCs, and compete as Air Force ambassadors and professional shooters as a secondary duty,” said Wilson. “This means we’re not all stationed together, and while this can allow us more widespread reach as a team, we don’t always get a chance to train or attend matches as teammates.

“One of the things that may

help the team to continue to grow and develop, in addition to a potential increase in funding, is increased public affairs and media engagement as there are many Airmen, and Senior Leaders alike, who are unaware we have world-class Airmen competing on behalf of the USAF against the best professional shooters in the world every weekend.”

Despite any shortfalls, the team still manages to provide valuable outreach on behalf of the Air Force.

“There are a lot of junior shooters in the sport,” said Schuerhoff. “We get quite a bit of interest from young people asking about the Air Force, our team and how to join. I always encourage them to find resources or help them get in contact with a local recruiter.”

Competitions such as these give the Action Shooting Team opportunities to build connections with civilians and represent the Air Force.



A U.S. Air Force Action Shooting Team member reaches into a bag of ammunition during a shooting competition at Rio Salado Sportsman’s Club in Mesa, Arizona, Nov. 10, 2023. The USAF Action Shooting Team aimed to recruit avid shooters who were interested in going to competitions on behalf of the Air Force.



U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Christian Magaling, 354th Fighter Squadron weapons technician, completes a course during a shooting competition at Rio Salado Sportsman’s Club in Mesa, Arizona, Nov. 10, 2023. The USAF Action Shooting Team competed on 17 different shooting courses during the competition.

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# Warthog Wednesday



U.S. Air Force Airman 1st Class Max Velez, 357th Fighter Generation Squadron weapons load crew member, and U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Blake Hewitson, 357th Fighter Generation Squadron weapons load crew member, load chaff and flare countermeasures onto an A-10C Thunderbolt II aircraft. The A-10 aircraft was designed to be serviced and operated from bases with limited facilities near battle areas.



An A-10C Thunderbolt II aircraft is displayed at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona, Nov. 9, 2023. The A-10 aircraft's 30mm GAU-8/A Avenger was designed to fire 3,900 rounds per minute and can defeat an array of ground targets, including tanks.



U.S. Air Force Airmen load a missile onto an A-10C Thunderbolt II aircraft at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base. The A-10 aircraft was designed for the close air support mission and has the ability to carry 16,000 pounds of ordinance.



U.S. Air Force Airmen load a missile onto an A-10C Thunderbolt II aircraft at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base. The A-10 aircraft was designed to have a long loiter and wide combat radius.

U.S. Air Force photos by Airman 1st Class Robert Allen Cooke III




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# 563RD RQG SALUTES

By Staff Sgt.  
ABBEY RIEVES

355th Wing Public Affairs

*Chuff chuff chuff.*

The HH-60G Pave Hawk helicopter roars to life, like a heartbeat quickening during a race.

The chuffing sound of the rotors even out into a familiar, steady pulse while he pulls on his ear protection.

As a career pararescueman, the Department of Defense's only joint rank service member, has flown countless hours in Pave Hawks like this.

*Clank.* The Senior Enlisted Advisor to the Chairman clips his gunner belt around his waist, securing him for his final flight.

Hand signals from the crew chiefs communicate to the helo pilots. *563rd Rescue Group, ready for takeoff.*

In a career lasting over 33 years, this human weapon system understands the need to sustain and strengthen deterrence against China through continued growth in the pararescue field.

"I have been able to witness the generational commitment of the Guardian Angel, combat search and rescue," said U.S. Air Force SEAC Ramón "CZ" Colón-López. "The strides, feats and progress this career field has made, especially over the past 20 years of war."

Throughout wartime, Colón-López deployed numerous times and continues to lead the Department of Defense with expertise only understood by someone whose combat boots trod the trail in search of Osama Bin Laden.

"It's a very proud moment to see people now that I put through pararescue school," said Colón-López. "Back then they were brand new Airmen, now they are running the show."

In 2004, the SEAC shared his knowledge and developed hundreds of Pararescue pipeliners, to include the now U.S. Air Force Senior Master Sgt. Joshua Andrada who is the 563rd Rescue Group's standards and evaluations superintendent at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona.

"The greatest value CZ taught me was to be a patriot and a warrior with a never-quit mindset," said Andrada. "To remember my oath of enlistment and that the only colors that matter are the ones on an American Flag."

Colón-López was also assigned to the 48th Rescue Squadron at Holloman Air Force Base, New Mexico, which is now located at Davis-Monthan, where it holds true to its lineage: Train, equip and employ combat-ready pararescue-

men, combat rescue officers and supporting personnel worldwide.

"No matter what is going on in this world," said Andrada, whose military service totals more than 20 years. "A dedication to civil service and more specifically, rescue, is a righteous way to live each day to your fullest potential."

Keeping U.S. national security interests in mind, the SEAC praised the ingenuity and dedication of CSAR.

"I have seen how we have advanced our techniques and procedures for not only the pararescue career field, but for many other medical branches across the joint force," said the SEAC. "They continue to lead the charge for the Department of Defense, bringing the latest technology to the fight."

Advancing this effort, the 355th Wing is actively replacing the HH-60G Pave Hawk helicopters with the whiskey fleet, set to be accomplished by 2024. The new HH-60W Jolly Green II helicopters are equipped with advanced avionics, new navigation systems and substantially upgraded survivor authentication capabilities.

"We are seeing our competitors modernizing their fleet, and we need to continue to lead the charge when that fight comes," said Colón-López. "We need to have a couple aces up our sleeve to keep the element of surprise, coupled with our combat forces experience."

The new HH-60W Jolly Green II helicopters assigned to the 55th Rescue Squadron have a dual purpose, utilized in military operations such as civil search and rescue, disaster relief, international aid, emergency medical evacuation and counter-drug activities.

"CSAR is more important to the American public, than just the Air Force," said Colón-López, his deep brown eyes widened with emphasis. "PJs train to the extreme level, to make sure we are at our BEST, when someone is having their worst day."

As one of the only active-duty wings dedicated to CSAR, the 355th Wing builds warfighting Airmen who are ready to attack and rescue.

"These men and women live, breathe and train to make sure they can provide somebody else the chance to live," the SEAC continued. "Knowing their dedication level in that mission, they will not fail. They will give their life before they fail."

*Chuff chuff chuff.* The 563rd RQG helo forcefully lifts from the ground, and SEAC Colón-López embarks on his final flight over the Ohio River, in Louisville, Kentucky, Sept. 6, 2023.



U.S. Airmen, assigned to the 563rd Rescue Group, and pararescue career-field members gather with SEAC Colón-López in Louisville, Kentucky, Sept. 6, 2023. Colón-López served active duty for more than 20 years, including a final flight that day.



U.S. Air Force Senior Enlisted Advisor to the Chairman Ramón "CZ" Colón-López offers words of wisdom to Airmen assigned to the 563rd Rescue Group and pararescue career-field members in Louisville, Kentucky, Sept. 6, 2023. After the mentorship session, the 563rd RQG provided asset support for SEAC's final flight.

# S SEAC #4



U.S. Air Force photos by Staff Sgt. Abbey Rieves

gather for a mentorship lesson from the Senior Enlisted Advisor to the Chairman Ramón for more than 32 years and continued to mentor the next generation of Airmen until his fini-



words of wis-  
s in Louisville,  
port for the



U.S. Air Force Senior Enlisted Advisor to the Chairman Ramón “CZ” Colón-López, left, coins Senior Master Sgt. Joshua Andrada, 563rd Rescue Group standards and evaluations superintendent, in Louisville, Kentucky, Sept. 6, 2023. Colón-López’ was a career pararescueman and was assigned to the 48th Rescue Squadron at Holloman Air Force Base, N.M., before the squadron was relocated to Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona, where Andrada now develops and leads PJs in the 48th RQS, 55th Rescue Squadron, 68th Rescue Squadron, and additional supporting squadrons.



U.S. Air Force Senior Enlisted Advisor to the Chairman Ramón “CZ” Colón-López, checks his hoist during his fini-flight in Louisville, Kentucky, Sept. 6, 2023. Colón-López was a career pararescueman and was assigned to the 48th Rescue Squadron at Holloman Air Force Base, N.M., before the squadron was relocated to Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Ariz.



U.S. Air Force Senior Enlisted Advisor to the Chairman Ramón “CZ” Colón-López, right, loads PJ Charlie into his backpack in Louisville, Kentucky, Sept. 6, 2023. Colón-López would hoist down the HH-60G Pave Hawk helicopter, assigned to the 55th Rescue Squadron, with PJ Charlie for his fini-flight.



U.S. Air Force Senior Enlisted Advisor to the Chairman Ramón “CZ” Colón-López, prepares for take-off during his fini-flight in Louisville, Kentucky, Sept. 6, 2023. Colón-López served in the Air Force for more than 32 years and was the first E-10 rank in the Air Force.

# Air Force students find resources with new Student Success Center

By  
**LARISA LANGLEY**

Air Education and Training Command/A3BP

**JOINT BASE SAN ANTONIO-RANDOLPH, Texas (AFNS)** — The Air Force Learning Professionals' Program recently launched the Student Success Center, a new feature on the website that provides additional academic resources and fosters academic achievement for Airmen and Guardians.

The new page provides a curated list of resources to support students' academic journey including academic preparation, studying, and writing techniques, and overall well-being through a holistic approach.

"We identified the need for students at every level to easily locate information that can help them grow in both their academic and personal lives," said Dana

Horn, AFLP branch chief. "The Student Success Center brings resources together in one place for easy access by students across the Department of the Air Force."

The content includes information appropriate for initial skills training as well as for seasoned students aiming for excellence and can be accessed anytime to assist with academic and learning challenges.

Included in the Student Success Center is evidence-based information to promote effective study habits, tools for better writing, and techniques and resources that assist in student resilience. Content is aligned under tabs for preparation, studying, writing, and well-being.

Each focus area includes a strengths and weaknesses section where students can view skill benchmarks through links to the DAF e-Learning platform. Students can access comprehensive self-assessments to identify

their strengths and areas for growth. Based on the results, a personalized learning plan will be generated for use within DAF e-Learning.

The Student Success Center is available on both government and personal computers, as well as mobile devices, allowing students on-demand resources at their fingertips. The skill benchmarks are accessible from mobile devices through the integration of the Percipio application, available through the Apple App Store or Google Play Store.

To access the Student Success Center

<https://www.learningprofessionals.af.mil/S2C/>

To access information about the Learning Professionals program, <https://www.learningprofessionals.af.mil/>

For questions on the Student Success Center or the Learning Professionals program, email [aetc.a3bp.workflow@us.af.mil](mailto:aetc.a3bp.workflow@us.af.mil).

## Air Force selects 506 senior master sergeants for promotion

By  
**AIR FORCE  
PERSONNEL CENTER**

Public Affairs

**JOINT BASE SAN ANTONIO-RANDOLPH, Texas (AFNS)** — Air Force officials selected 506 Air Force senior master sergeants for promotion to chief master sergeant out of 2,249 eligible for a selec-

tion rate of 22.5% in the 23E9 promotion cycle, which includes supplemental promotion opportunities.

Senior raters will be granted access to the select lists via the Virtual Enlisted Promotion Release application on Nov. 29.

The chief master sergeant list will be publicly available on the Air Force Personnel Center Enlisted Promotions website

<https://www.afpc.af.mil/Promotion/Enlisted-Promotions/> Nov. 30 at 11 p.m. Arizona time. Members will also be able to access their score notices on the virtual Military Personnel Flight via the AFPC secure page upon public release.

For more information about Air Force personnel programs, visit the AFPC public <https://www.afpc.af.mil/> website.



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# Nation celebrates Native American Heritage Month

By  
David Vergun

DOD News

President Joe Biden issued a National Native American Heritage Month proclamation for the month of November calling attention to the service of Native Americans.

The proclamation states: "Despite centuries of violence and oppression, Native peoples remain resilient and proud. Today, Native Americans are essential to the fabric of the United States. They serve in the United States armed forces at higher rates than any other ethnic group.

"They continue to steward so many of our great lands. Their contributions to science, humanities, arts, public service, and more have brought prosperity for all of us. Their diverse cultures and communities continue to thrive and lead us forward."

Ashish S. Vazirani, acting undersecretary of defense for personnel and readiness, said the Defense Department recognizes November as National American Indian Heritage Month.

"This year's theme is 'Tribal Nations Soaring to New Heights.' American Indians and Alaska Natives have a long history of military service. During World War II, the legendary contributions of Navajo Code Talkers were critical for U.S. success. Similarly, Alaska Natives fearlessly defended U.S. territories from Japanese raids.

"Many American Indians and Alaska Natives serving today cite a desire to follow in the footsteps of their family members and have a deep patriotism for protecting and serving their homeland," he said.

Alicia Madalena Sylvester, from the Pueblo of Jemez tribe, is the Defense Department's senior



Photos by Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Alexander Kubitza, DOD

**Dancers perform during a celebration at the Pentagon for National Native American Heritage Month, Nov. 8, 2023.**

tribal advisor and liaison for Native American affairs. She and others spoke Nov. 8 at the Pentagon's National Native American Heritage Month celebration.

Native American men and women serve in the armed forces at five times the national average, Sylvester said. They have served with distinction in every conflict since the birth of this country.

"As Native American veterans have pledged their service to the nation, the Department of Defense is also committed to fulfilling its legal and moral responsibilities," she said. "I want to assure all tribal leaders present here that DOD is committed to ensuring that government-to-government consultation with American Indian and Alaska Native tribes are consistently timely, respectful, meaningful and robust."

The Pentagon event included tribal dances from different Native American tribes. "It is truly

a blessing to hear the songs, the native language, and drumbeats throughout the Pentagon courtyard and within our corridors," she added.

According to the Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute, the 2023 National American Indian Heritage Month poster depicts America's landscape interspersed with symbols that depict American Indian and Alaskan Native achievements and contributions.

The poster is also an ode to the "Skywalkers." Iroquois ironworkers, especially Mohawks, are legendary for their dizzying work in erecting skyscrapers and steel bridges. Mohawk men have walked and worked on nearly all of New York City's towering buildings, including the Empire State Building, the Chrysler Building,

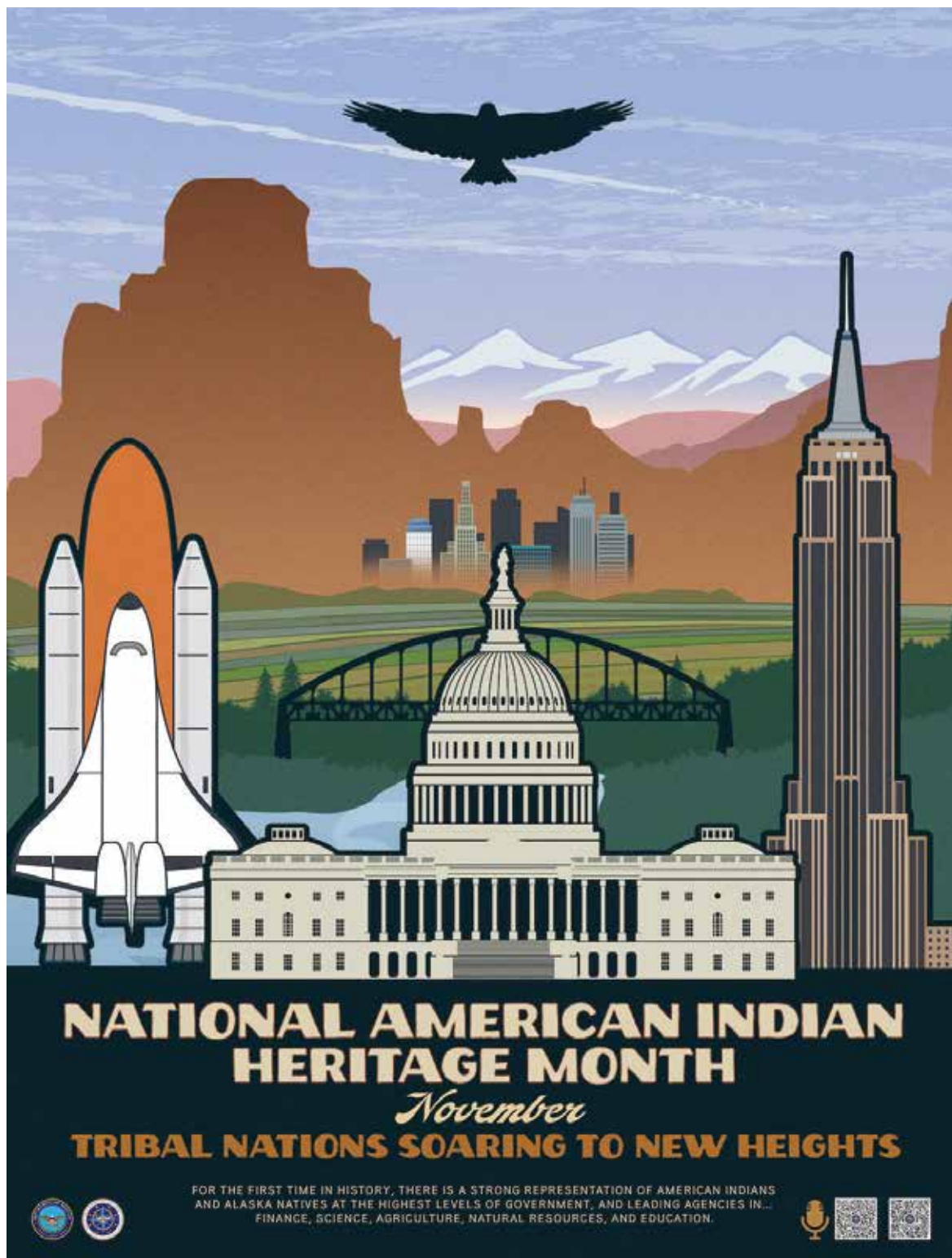
and Rockefeller Center. In Pittsburgh, they worked on the U.S. Steel Building, the Civic Arena, and the Fort Pitt Bridge, among other structures.

During the 2020 census, the U.S. Census Bureau identified the following numbers of Native peoples who identify solely as Native American and who are U.S. residents:

American Indian: 2,159,802  
Latin American Indian: 766,112  
Alaska Native: 133,311  
Canadian Indian: 7,723

The census also recorded the following number of U.S. residents who identified as Native Americans of mixed race:

American Indian: 6,363,796  
Latin American Indian: 1,319,523  
Alaska Native: 241,797  
Canadian Indian: 72,701



**Members of the Kiowa Black Leggings Warrior Society and Zotigh Singers present the colors during a celebration at the Pentagon for National Native American Heritage Month, Nov. 8, 2023.**



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