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## NSAM Officers' Quick Actions a Reminder to Seek Available Resources

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*U.S. Navy photo by Javier Chagoya*

### **NSAM Officers' Quick Actions a Reminder to Seek Available Resources**

*By Javier Chagoya*

Naval Support Activity Monterey Police Officer Eddie Macias, left, and Sgt. Anthony Atofau, right, were in the right place, at the right time, for a distraught woman perched on the edge of the Mark Thomas Drive bridge, overlooking Highway 68, several weeks ago.

Macias and Atofau were driving toward Navy property near the Monterey County Fairgrounds when they encountered a woman straddling the bridge's safety rails. She was clearly distraught, they said, as unaware drivers below sped through the highway interchange.

"It took me a moment to comprehend what was going on. Some people were already at the scene, and it struck me that so many of them had their cell phones pointing at the woman. Maybe someone had already called 911, but no one had tried to approach the woman," said Macias.

The two officers quickly stepped into action, calling a 5150 over the squad car radio to dispatch, alerting the Monterey Police Department. A 5150 is a welfare and institutions code that authorizes a qualified officer or clinician to involuntarily confine a person suspected to have suicidal tendencies or who might endanger others.

"We approached the woman and talked to her, trying to calm her down and to let her know that we were there to help ... anything we could do to distract her from the thought of jumping from that 30-ft. bridge into oncoming traffic. It was an intense situation," said Macias.

The troubled woman acknowledged Macias and talked with him at length, making eye contact during the conversation.

“As part of our training, we do hostage situations and also run different scenarios that deal with suicide,” Macias said. “The training helped immensely, but ultimately you also have to have people skills and know how to communicate to those who are operating in the extreme.”

A short time later, an officer from the Monterey Police Department came onto the scene, with the California Highway Patrol stopping traffic below the bridge. The Monterey Fire Department ladder truck was also dispatched to the scene.

Since Macias and Atofau had already established a rapport with the woman, they were asked to continue their interaction, and shortly after, persuaded the woman off the bridge as an ambulance arrived.

As the calendar turns to September, and communities across the country recognize Suicide Prevention Month, it is important to be aware of the resources available to you, and your families and colleagues, before extreme courses of action are pursued.

The Navy has counseling resources available through the NPS Fleet and Family Services Center, where hotlines and local representatives with training can be called 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

There's also the Military Crisis Line, offering confidential support for active duty and reserve service members and their families at all hours of the day. Call (800) 273-8255 and press 1. You can also chat online at [www.militarycrisisline.net](http://www.militarycrisisline.net) or send a text message to 838255. For more information visit [www.suicide.navy.mil](http://www.suicide.navy.mil).

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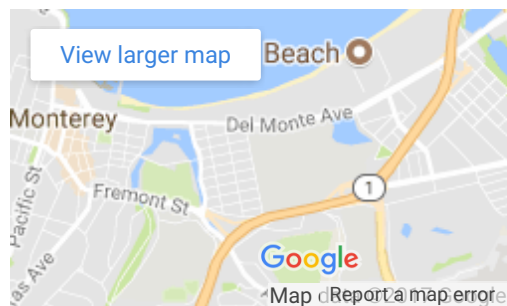
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