



**LEADING
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SEN. HEINRICH says he'll vote against Steve Pearce to lead the Bureau of Land Management. **A3**



STATE POLICE Chief Troy Weisler is retiring after more than two decades with the agency. **A3**

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OUTLOOK**

WHOLE FOODS plans a long-awaited West Side Albuquerque store. **A5**

SPORTS

LOBO WOMEN'S BASKETBALL easily handled Fresno State in its final home game of the regular season. **B1**

PREP BASKETBALL is heading for the state tournament, but seeding issues are causing headaches. **B1**

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FOUR OF THE SIX U.S. soldiers killed in the Iran war have been identified by the Pentagon as members of the Army Reserve. **A2**

HOMELAND SECURITY Secretary Kristi Noem defends her agency in testimony and under questioning at a Senate hearing. **A6**

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Defense contractor commits to creating 450 high-wage jobs

AeroVironment to increase production at three sites in Sandia Science & Technology Park

BY JUSTIN HORWATH
JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

AeroVironment Inc., a Virginia-based defense contractor, on Tuesday announced \$30 million in new Albuquerque manufacturing facilities in an expansion supported by \$6 million in Local Economic Development Act funding.

AeroVironment currently manufactures advanced radio frequency systems, satellite communications ground terminals, laser systems and stabilized precision optics and tracking technologies, among other products. It was first formed in 2019 by a group of defense companies under the name BlueHalo, which AeroVironment acquired in November 2024 for \$4.1 billion.

The state of New Mexico awarded AeroVironment \$5 million in LEDA funds while the city awarded it \$1 million for the expansion. Under LEDA contracts, companies agree to meet cer-

tain hiring and infrastructure benchmarks in exchange for reimbursements from LEDA money, which comes from the state's general fund.

AeroVironment, which manufactures advanced defense and aerospace components in the Sandia Science & Technology Park, agreed to create 450 high-wage jobs over the next 10 years in exchange for the \$6 million in state support. State officials say that translates into a \$670 million economic impact.

The company currently employs roughly 400

See **JOBS** >> **A7**



EDDIE MOORE/JOURNAL

Paramedic Lt. Jeremy Gonzales, with Engine 2, meets with his team after dealing with a natural gas leak at an apartment complex off Vail Avenue in Albuquerque on Tuesday. The City Council recently settled a yearlong staffing dispute involving paramedics.

Albuquerque City Council settles dispute over firefighter staffing

Albuquerque Fire Rescue leadership and council agree, though union still faces alleged labor board violations

BY GILLIAN BARKHURST
JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

After a year of tense debate and legal strife, the City Council voted on a staffing policy for Albuquerque Fire Rescue on Monday night.

"This is the winding down of a lot of drama," said sponsor Councilor Tammy Fiebelkorn.

The resolution revisited the controversial decision by AFR leadership to split paramedics between firetrucks and ambulances. Under this policy, paramedics on ambulances were reduced from two to one in order to place a paramedic on each firetruck.

Under this change, the lone ambulance paramedic is accompanied by an emergency medical technician, while firetrucks are

staffed with one paramedic and three emergency medical technicians.

Leadership at the local firefighters' union staunchly opposed the change, calling it unsafe and burdensome.

"Our policy over the past 40-plus years is now getting diluted, which is putting the safety and lives of citizens at risk," said union president Miguel Tittmann on Monday.

Fire Chief Emily Jaramillo has repeatedly defended her decision, saying the change

See **AFR** >> **A8**

Feds aid in hunt for missing former Kirtland commander



Neil McCasland

Neil McCasland was reported missing Friday morning

BY GREGORY R.C. HASMAN
JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

The FBI is now assisting with the search for a retired U.S. Air Force major general who mysteriously disappeared last weekend.

On Friday, the Bernalillo County Sheriff's Office issued a Silver Alert for William Neil McCasland, 68, of Albuquerque, a former Kirtland Air

Force Base commander, who was last seen at about 11 a.m. the same day in the area of Quail Run Court NE.

BCSO spokesperson Jayme Gonzales said "due to privacy laws, BCSO will not release specific details regarding (McCasland's) medical information."

"He's not the kind of person that you would expect to disappear," said James Tegnalia, a board member of the Kirtland Partnership Committee, a nonprofit that works to preserve and expand the Air Force base. "And so, we're all concerned about him, and we're hoping that

everything's alright and that he resurfaces."

McCasland is the former commander of Kirtland's Phillips Research Site and Air Force Research Laboratory as well as a Kirtland Partnership Committee board member.

"Due to his background and established partnerships, BCSO is coordinating closely with multiple agencies, including the FBI Albuquerque Field Office, which is assisting as standard practice when it has a tool, tactic, or technique that may benefit

See **MISSING** >> **A7**

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