

March Speaker 2
 Chapter Awards 4
 February Speaker Report..... 5
 MOAA Legislative News 11
 Surviving Spouses..... 14
 Military News..... 16
 Calendar 26
 VA News 27
 Florida Veteran's Affairs..... 36
 New Members Application 39

CAPE CORAL COMMUNICATOR

March 2026

Volume 7 • Issue 3

**CCMOAA
Monthly Breakfast
Meeting**
*Second Saturday
of the Month
January - May
September - December*

NEXT MEETING:
Saturday, March 14
10 a.m.
**Cape Royal
Golf Club**
11460 Royal Tee Circle
Cape Coral

Cost \$12
(Prefer exact change please)

Breakfast Reservations to:
Cindy Nolan
capecoralmoaa@gmail.com
618-580-2368

PLEASE WEAR YOUR
 NAMETAG
*(If you need one, contact
 Gary Nolan)*



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE: Col Gary Nolan, USAF (Ret)

We are honored to have Lt Gen Mark Ramsay, USAF (Ret) as our guest speaker for our March 14 breakfast meeting.

General Ramsay's distinguished 33-year Air Force career covered many assignments, including commander of the 18th Air Force. Following his retirement from active duty, he served as one of 13 Senior Mentors in NATO training leadership and then was hired to serve part-time by the Institute for Defense Analyses to teach other nations how to better manage and resource their defense forces.

His presentation on current world affairs and our national defense strategy is one you won't want to miss. General Ramsay's biography is on Page 2 of this newsletter.

And if you didn't attend our February meeting, you missed a fascinating presentation by our own Lt Col Gary Peppers, USAF (Ret), a former F-15 and Predator pilot, who talked about the recently unclassified missions he flew in Afghanistan. A story about his presentation in on Page 5 of this *Communicator*.



Several CCMOAA members and some spouses attended the Florida Council of Chapters annual convention and leadership training seminar Jan. 29-31 in Orlando and this issue of the *Communicator* has some photos from that event.

Last month, I was honored to present three MOAA leadership awards to Gary Peppers, Christina Cook and Cindy Nolan. Photos of those award presentations are also in this issue.

This month, we wish a "Happy Birthday" to the U.S. Navy Reserve and the Seabees, and histories of those two organizations is included in this issue.

National Vietnam War Veterans Day is coming up on March 29 and we honor and thank our many Cape Coral MOAA members who served during that conflict. A history of the observation of this important day is in this *Communicator* issue.

MOAA national is busy representing us in Washington on many issues of importance to the U.S. military and veterans. I urge you to read about some of those issues in this *Communicator* and sign up to send letters to your members of Congress in support of MOAA's efforts. It's easy to do with prepared letters (that can be modified by you) online at <https://moaa.quorum.us>.

"Never Stop Serving!"

CAPE CORAL MOAA BUSINESS MEETING MINUTES

February 14, 2026, Cape Royal Golf Community

Cape Coral MOAA Business Meeting Minutes Feb. 14, 2026, Cape Royal Golf Community

President Gary Nolan called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m. with 23 present for breakfast. Our guest speaker was chapter secretary Lt Col Gary Peppers.

Following breakfast, President Nolan presented FCoC Leadership Awards to Christina Cook and to Cindy Nolan in recognition of all their help in organizing chapter activities and managing its affairs. Secretary Gary Peppers was presented a leadership award from MOAA National for his service as FCoC's treasurer for the past three years.

President Nolan also informed the members that

the Naples chapter military ball was scheduled for March 7 and that tickets were available at \$175. It's a fantastic ball, he assured us.

Secretary Peppers was then introduced by Marilyn Stout who recounted his long service to CCMOAA in his various capacities. His presentation to the chapter members is highlighted on Page 5 of this *Communicator*.

With no further business issues to discuss, President Nolan adjourned the meeting at 11:10 a.m.

*Gary Peppers, Lt Col USAF (Ret)
Chapter Secretary*

PRESIDENT:

Col Gary Nolan

US Air Force (Retired)

VICE PRESIDENT:

COL Tom Wagner

USAR (Retired)

SECRETARY:

LtCol Gary Peppers

US Air Force (Retired)

TREASURER:

CAPT Timothy Cook

US Navy (Retired)

BOARD MEMBER:

(at large)

COL Bill Deile

US Army (Retired)

FINANCE:

LtCol Gary Peppers

CHAPLAIN:

Cindy Nolan

WAYS & MEANS:

Col Gary Nolan

SPEAKER PROGRAMS:

Marilyn Stout

WEBMASTER:

COL Tom Wagner

USAR (Retired)

HISTORIANS:

LtCol Gary Peppers

LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS:

COL Tom Wagner

PERSONAL AFFAIRS:*(Vacant)***VETERANS AFFAIRS:***(Vacant)***MEMBERSHIP:**

Col Gary Nolan

PUBLIC AFFAIRS:*(Vacant)***PARLIAMENTARIAN:**

Marilyn Stout

NEWSLETTER EDITOR:

Capt Larry Atkinson

US Air Force

TOPS:*(Vacant)***SURVIVING SPOUSES:***(Vacant)***FCOC SW AREA VP:**

Col Gary Nolan

March Speaker

Lt Gen Mark Ramsay to speak about world affairs/defense strategies

Current world affairs and our national defense strategy will be the focus as the Cape Coral Chapter of the Military Officers Association of America will welcome Lt Gen Mark F. Ramsay, USAF (Retired), as the guest speaker at its Saturday, March 14, Breakfast Meeting, beginning at 10 a.m. at the Cape Royal Golf Course.



Ramsay retired from the U.S. Air Force in October 2015 after 33 years of distinguished active-duty service, culminating a career that spanned operational command, senior Pentagon leadership, and key NATO assignments. Since retirement, he has continued to serve national and allied security interests as a Senior Mentor for NATO, helping train alliance leaders in planning and multinational operations through 2021, and as a defense management expert with the Institute for Defense Analyses, advising partner nations on force resourcing and capability development.

A command pilot with nearly 5,000 flight hours, Ramsay earned his wings in 1983 and began his career flying the C-9A Nightingale medical evacuation aircraft. As a young officer, he flew special air missions from Andrews Air Force Base, transporting the First Lady, Vice President, Cabinet officials, and senior U.S. and foreign leaders. Over the course of his career, he flew a wide range of aircraft—from the KC-135 tanker to

executive airlift and rotary-wing platforms—reflecting the breadth of his operational experience.

From lieutenant colonel through lieutenant general, Ramsay commanded at every level, including air refueling and expeditionary squadrons, the 89th Operations Group at Andrews AFB, an air refueling “super tanker” wing, and ultimately 18th Air Force, where he oversaw

the majority of the Air Force’s airlift and air refueling forces worldwide.

In addition to his command assignments, Ramsay served in seven Pentagon positions across Air Force Headquarters and the Joint Staff, focusing on force structure, mobility, defense policy, and global resourcing. His senior joint and international roles included service at U.S. European Command in Germany and at NATO’s Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) in Belgium, where he oversaw multinational military planning and operations at the strategic military level.

His career has been recognized with some of the Department of Defense’s highest awards, including the Defense Distinguished Service Medal, multiple awards of the Defense Superior Service Medal, and the Legion of Merit, reflecting exceptionally meritorious service in positions of great responsibility. He was also awarded the Air Force Air Medal,

(Continued on next page)



FIVE STARS
Chapter Excellence
Award

2006, 2008, 2009,
2010, 2011, 2012, 2018,
2019, 2020, 2023 &
2024



FOUR STARS
Chapter Excellence
Award

2005, 2007, 2013,
2016, 2017 & 2021



Marvin C. Harris
Newsletter
Communications Award

FIVE STARS

2003, 2018, 2019,
2020, 2021, 2022, 2023
& 2024

Marvin C. Harris
Website
Communications Award

FIVE STARS

2019, 2020, 2021,
2022, 2023 & 2024

March Speaker (Continued)

(Continued from previous page)

the Meritorious Service Medal with three oak leaf clusters, the NATO Meritorious Service Medal and the Air Force Outstanding Unit Award with “V” device and seven oak leaf clusters.

A graduate of Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University and the Naval War College, Ramsay holds advanced degrees in aviation management and national security and strategic studies. He and his wife, Patricia “Patty” Ramsay, a former Air Force nurse who he met while flying the C-9A aircraft, are the parents of three married adult daughters and grandparents to five grandchildren.

Lt Gen Ramsay’s remarks are expected to draw on his extensive experience in global mobility, joint force planning, multinational operations, and senior-level defense decision-making, offering MOAA members a rare perspective shaped by decades at the operational and strategic



Lt Gen Mark Ramsay (right) assumes command of the 18th Air Force from Lt Gen Robert R Allardice in September 2011 at Scott AFB, IL

levels of national defense.

The breakfast cost is \$12 per person and is open to not only Cape Coral MOAA members, but also former and retired U.S. military officers and senior noncommissioned officers.

Reservations are requested by calling Cindy Nolan at 618-580-2368 or emailing her at capecoralmoaa@gmail.com.

TREASURER’S REPORT

CAPT Timothy Cook, USN (Ret)

January 25, 2026 -- February 22, 2026

Beginning Balance 01/2026.....\$3,138.35

DEPOSITS:

Florida Council of Chapters..... \$435.00

TOTAL DEPOSITS: \$435.00

EXPENSES:

Print 1 Group \$262.00

FCoC (convention reimbursements)..... \$2,000.00

TOTAL EXPENSES:..... \$2,262.00

Ending Balance 02/22/2026\$1,311.35

Chapter Awards



Cape Coral MOAA President Gary Nolan presents Gary Peppers with a MOAA Leadership Award for his service as Council Treasurer to the Florida Council of Chapters.

He was cited for managing more than \$100,000 in chapter funds, collection of statewide dues and donations and optimization of the FCoC's accounts and holdings.



Cape Coral MOAA President Gary Nolan presents Christina Cook with a Florida Council of Chapters Leadership Award for her work in assistance with the Cape Coral Chapter's finances.



Cape Coral MOAA President Gary Nolan presents Cindy Nolan with a Florida Council of Chapters Leadership Award for her work in assisting with the Cape Coral MOAA Chapter activities.

Cape Coral Communicator Member Profiles

The Cape Coral MOAA newsletter regularly publishes a profile on one of our members.

We started with the officers, so you can learn about those leading our organization and will then feature other members.

An online Microsoft Word form can be found on the CCMOAA Website at: www.capecoralmoaa.org. Members are encouraged to download the form, fill it out and return it to newsletter editor Larry Atkinson at publisherlarry@gmail.com.

For those who would rather just fill out the form by hand, copies of the questionnaire will be available at each monthly breakfast meeting.

We also request that photos be provided, including a current photo, one in uniform while in the service and any other photos you think other members might enjoy seeing.

Lt Col Gary Peppers shares a combat story that changed Air Force operations

Members of the Cape Coral Chapter of the Military Officers Association of America were treated to a riveting, deeply personal presentation from one of their own on Feb. 14, as Lt Col Gary Peppers, USAF (Ret) recounted the final combat mission of his distinguished Air Force career—a mission that not only saved lives on the ground but also helped shape how the Air Force conducts remotely piloted aircraft operations today.

Peppers, one of the longest-serving members of the chapter and its current secretary and finance officer, has held nearly every officer position in the chapter over the years. His presentation blended combat realism, professional insight, humor, and historical context in a way only a seasoned combat aviator could deliver.

Mission in Afghanistan

Peppers began by taking the audience back to Oct. 13, 2012, during combat operations near Lashkar Gah, the largest city in southwestern Afghanistan. Seated at a remotely piloted aircraft (RPA) control station at 9 a.m. Pacific Time—already early evening in Afghanistan—Peppers assumed control from another



pilot to overwatch a Taliban-occupied village.

The Taliban had overrun the village the previous day, killing the village elder and his wife. Afghan villagers had fled south to an Army camp, and U.S. Army forces were preparing to retake the village as night approached.

From more than 17,000 feet above the battlefield and miles away, Peppers monitored three Taliban fighters attempting to escape north. Their route required crossing a canal and then traveling along a tree-lined road where

overhead cover could easily conceal them from airborne sensors.

With only seconds available to act and strict rules of engagement in place, Peppers coordinated with incoming A-10 Thunderbolt II aircraft. When bombing was not authorized due to visual restrictions, Peppers and his sensor operator identified a creative solution—using laser designation on treetops near the targets, allowing the A-10 pilots to strafe legally and accurately.

Moments later, the quiet Afghan road erupted in dust, debris, and smoke. Two Taliban fighters were killed in the initial pass. A third—the leader—attempted to flee, dropping his weapon and running for his life, only to be eliminated

by a second A-10 attack. Army forces later confirmed three enemy combatants killed.

The mission was recorded and sent to the A-10 squadron involved. Weeks later, Peppers' unit received a surprise package—a bottle of Jeremiah Weed, fighter-pilots' whiskey, and an edited cockpit video that eventually made its way to Air Combat Command headquarters.

The footage became a formal training video titled, "This Is the
(Continued on next page)

February Speaker Report *(Continued)*

(Continued from previous page)

Way We Do It,” now shown to every new MQ-9 Reaper pilot entering the RPA community.

From Retirement Back to Combat

Peppers’s story did not end there.

After retiring from the Air Force in January 2000 following 26 years of service, Peppers went on to fly commercial and charter aircraft, including helicopters and turboprops, eventually becoming a chief pilot in the civilian sector. But in 2009, the Air Force came calling again.

Citing a critical pilot shortage, the Secretary of the Air Force exercised legal authority to recall retired pilots to active duty. At age 57, Peppers returned to uniform—this time to fly RPAs from Creech Air Force Base, one of the most secure installations in the Air Force.

The transition was not easy. Training was computer-intensive and dominated by younger pilots, while Peppers and other recalled veterans—most in their late 50s—struggled through a demanding syllabus. Two pilots from his class did not complete the program.

But when it came to combat tactics, communication with ground forces, and understanding ordnance effects, the veteran pilots excelled. Over time, the younger generation came to rely on them, and respect replaced early skepticism.

Peppers humorously recalled how the veteran pilots eventually became known as the “Silver Knights,” later jokingly dubbed the “Knights of Viagra.” Someone said that should be made into a Morale

Patch that everyone can wear once approved by the wing commander.

“So I designed this patch, with a gold border on a black patch, with the letters KV in the middle, and sword through it, and the motto at bottom was forever stalwart, or always stalwart, my family’s crest for almost 400 years,” said Peppers, and he took it to the wing commander. “So, he signed off on it, and before I could ask him, if I could change it to Latin, he said, ‘You know, you ought to change that English to Latin, though. Look it up, see what that means.’ I said, ‘Yes, sir, I’ll do that.’ Always stalwart in Latin is ‘semper erectus.’”

Combat Effectiveness

Peppers also described one of his early RPA combat missions supporting Marines pinned down by enemy fire. Using a Hellfire missile in a high-angle attack, Peppers destroyed a two-story building being used as an enemy IED factory—igniting fuel and explosives stored inside. The explosion cleared the way for Marines to advance safely.

That single mission resulted in multiple confirmed enemy casualties and quickly placed Peppers near the top of his squadron’s kill leaderboard—an ironic achievement for a pilot



Cape Coral MOAA Chapter President Gary Nolan (right) presents Gary Peppers a bottle of his favorite gin following his Feb. 14 presentation.

who had only recently returned to active duty.

A Lasting Impact

Throughout his presentation, Peppers emphasized that RPA pilots are not detached from combat realities. Every decision carries real consequences, and every mission demands judgment, discipline, and accountability.

His stories—by turns dramatic, thoughtful, and humorous—offered MOAA members a rare inside look at modern air combat and the evolution of Air Force doctrine through experience and necessity.

As Peppers concluded, the room responded with applause—recognition not only of an extraordinary career, but of a presentation that captured the professionalism, adaptability, and quiet courage of those who continue to serve, even long after retirement.

Florida Council of Chapter Convo

Cape Coral MOAA Chapter members attend FCoC convention Jan. 29-31 in Orlando



Cape Coral Chapter President Gary Nolan and his wife, Cindy



Gary Nolan and Tom Wagner look over the table of prizes for the Casino Night Fundraiser with proceeds going to the MOAA Foundation. Wagner was in charge of the event, which raised \$10,000.

Bill Deile (right) talks with another attendee who was in the 525th Military Intelligence Brigade that Deile served in while stationed in Vietnam.



Florida Council leaders present a \$10,000 check to Lauren Walters of MOAA Charities and Lt Gen Kelly on behalf of the Florida Council and its 36 MOAA chapters. (L-R): COL Steve Bond, USA (Ret), Council President; COL Tom Wagner, USA (Ret), Casino Night Chair; Lauren Walters; MOAA President/CEO Lt Gen Brian Kelly; CAPT Pat Kluever, USN (Ret), Immediate Past President and Chairman; and CAPT Tony LaVecchia, USN (Ret), Council Vice President.



Frank Sciortino (left) visits with attendees from other chapters.



Cape Coral Board Member-at-Large Bill Deile and his wife, Janet

February Meeting Events



Cindy Nolan hands Larry Atkinson an envelope containing \$90 as the winner of the 50/50 drawing at the February breakfast meeting.



Thomas Polacek draws the 50/50 winning ticket from the mug of tickets held by Cindy Nolan. A 50/50 drawing is held at each meeting to provide needed funding for chapter activities and scholarships.



Legislative Action Center Card



TAKE ACTION!

GROUND ZERO

Open your browser and go to www.moaa.org

STEP 1

Click Log In and enter your MOAA username and password ***IF this is your first time, you must enter correct address that is displayed in the box that is shown.***

STEP 2

From the top menu, click Advocacy

STEP 3

Select Legislative Action Center from the dropdown

STEP 4

Browse the list and choose a campaign you support ***IF responding to a "Take Action" Alert, the campaign will appear on screen.**

STEP 5

Review the pre-written message and personalize if desired

STEP 6

Click Send to submit your message to Congress

STEP 7

Look for the confirmation screen – your action is complete

***IMPORTANT: Make sure cookies are enabled in your browser or the site may not load properly.**

NEVER STOP SERVING

Armed Forces Service Medal

Award goes unnoticed as it notes service outside of traditional combat operations

(Source: Wikipedia)

Many former service members may be surprised to learn they are eligible for the Armed Forces Service Medal (AFSM)—a U.S. military award that often goes unnoticed because it recognizes significant service outside of traditional combat operations.

At a recent Cape Coral MOAA board meeting, COL Bill Deile, USA (Ret.), Board Member At-Large, brought a sample of an Armed Forces Service Medal from his medal collections to share with fellow board members and to highlight the importance of this lesser-known decoration.

According to Wikipedia, the Armed Forces Service Medal was established on January 11, 1996, by President Bill Clinton under Executive Order 12985. The medal recognizes U.S. service members who participate in designated military operations that involve significant activity, but do not involve combat or imminent hostile action, and for which no other U.S. campaign or service medal is authorized.

Appearance of the Medal

The AFSM is a round bronze medal, measuring 1 1/2 inches (32 mm) in diameter.

- The obverse features a demitorch, similar to the torch held by the Statue of Liberty, with rays radiating behind it. The inscription "ARMED FORCES SERVICE MEDAL" encircles the top.
- The reverse displays the Department of Defense eagle,



Cape Coral MOAA member Bill Deile displays the Armed Forces Service Medal from his collection.

above a laurel wreath, with the inscription "IN PURSUIT OF DEMOCRACY"

The ribbon is 1 1/2 inches wide and consists of stripes of goldenlight, jungle green, green, mossstone green, and a central bluebird stripe, symbolizing service, stability, and democratic ideals.

Eligibility Criteria

Wikipedia describes the Armed Forces Service Medal as the non-combat counterpart to the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal, which is typically awarded for combat or combat-support missions.

To be eligible, service members must have participated on or after

June 1, 1992, in a designated U.S. military operation that:

- Is deemed a significant activity by theater commanders
 - Involves no foreign armed opposition or imminent hostile action
 - Warrants recognition through a permanent service medal
- Qualifying service generally requires:

- 30 consecutive days in the area of eligibility (or the full duration of the operation if shorter), or
- 60 non-consecutive days

For aircrew members, eligibility is based on flight operations into, out of, within, or over the area of

(Continued on next page)

Service Medal (continued)

(Continued from previous page)

eligibility in direct support of the operation.

The AFSM is commonly authorized for:

- Peacekeeping operations
- Prolonged humanitarian missions
- U.S. military operations supporting the United Nations (UN), NATO, or friendly foreign nations, provided there is a concurrent U.S. military operation

The medal is not authorized for national or international training exercises.

Additional Awards and Devices

Only one Armed Forces Service Medal is awarded for each designated operation.

- Multiple deployments for the same operation do not result in additional medals.
- Subsequent awards for different operations are indicated by bronze service stars on the ribbon, with a silver star worn in place of five bronze stars.

Approved Operations

The following U.S. military operations have been officially approved for award of the Armed Forces Service Medal:

- Operation Maritime Monitor (June 1, 1992 – December 1, 1992)
- Operation Provide Promise (June 2, 1992 – February 15, 1996)
- Operation Deny Flight (April 12, 1993 – December 2, 1995)
- Operation Sharp Guard (June



15, 1993 – September 20, 1996)

- Task Force Able Sentry (supporting the UN Preventive Deployment Force) (July 12, 1993 – March 31, 1999)
- Operation Uphold Democracy (April 1, 1995 – January 31, 2000)
- Operation Joint Endeavor (November 20, 1995 – December 19, 1996)
- Operation Provide Comfort (December 1, 1995 – December 31, 1996)
- Operation Joint Guard (December 20, 1996 – June 20, 1998)
- Operation Joint Forge (June 21, 1998 – December 2, 2004)
- Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Rita relief efforts (August 27, 2005 – February 27, 2006)

- Operation Jump Start (May 15, 2006 – July 15, 2008)
- Operation Unified Response (January 14, 2010 – June 1, 2010)
- Operation United Assistance (September 16, 2014 – June 30, 2015)
- Operation Oaken Steel (July 12, 2016 – January 26, 2017)
- DoD Support to Customs and Border Protection, including Operation Faithful Patriot (April 7, 2018 – TBD)
- COVID-19 Response Operations (January 31, 2020 – June 1, 2023)
- Capital Response I & II and Presidential Inauguration Support (January 6, 2021 – May 23, 2021)
- Operation Allies Refuge & Operation Allies Welcome (August 31, 2021 – April 1, 2022)
- Israeli Defense in the 12-Day War (USS Arleigh Burke) (August 15, 2024 – December 16, 2024)
- Operation Rising Lion (USS Arleigh Burke) (June 12, 2025 – June 24, 2025)

Special Note

As an exception to Department of Defense policy, both the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal and the Armed Forces Service Medal may be awarded concurrently for Operations Joint Endeavor and Joint Guard. Wikipedia also notes that while Operation Sharp Guard took place during the Bosnian conflict, the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) does not recognize AFSM recipients from that operation as qualifying for Bosnian War veteran status.

MOAA-backed caregiver bill takes major step forward in the House

By: René Campos

Bipartisan legislation that would provide much-needed support to veteran caregivers took a significant step toward becoming law recently, advancing out of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee alongside other important MOAA-supported bills.

The progress of the Veteran Caregiver Reeducation, Reemployment, and Retirement (3R) Act (H.R. 2148) highlights growing bipartisan commitment to strengthening support for caregivers, families, and some of the most severely wounded, injured, and disabled veterans in the country.

[\[TAKE ACTION: Ask Your Lawmakers to Support Veteran Caregivers\]](#)

The legislation represents a major step forward for the caregivers who form the backbone of veterans' long-term care. By expanding access to education, easing reemployment barriers, and enhancing retirement planning resources, the bill helps ensure caregivers have the tools they need to maintain stability while supporting those who served.

Without targeted reforms like those in the 3R Act, caregivers could be left to rely on public assistance, shifting costs between government agencies rather than reducing them.

MOAA is grateful to every member and veteran advocate who contacted their lawmakers urging action on this critical measure. Your engagement made a real difference. Now that the bill has passed out of both the House and Senate Veterans' Affairs



Committees, it is more important than ever to keep the pressure on this priority. We encourage you to continue urging your elected officials to bring H.R. 2148 and S. 879 to the floor in both chambers and ensure it becomes law before the end of this year.

The legislation was a key part of MOAA's upcoming testimony before a joint Feb. 24 hearing of the House and Senate Veterans Affairs Committees. That testimony covered a range of veterans' priorities, such as protecting veterans from unaccredited "claim sharks" via the Governing Unaccredited Representatives Defrauding (GUARD) VA Benefits Act and ending the "wounded veteran tax" faced by tens of thousands of combat-injured veterans via the Major Richard Star Act.

More Bills Move Forward

Along with the 3R act, House Veterans Affairs Committee members advanced other MOAA-supported legislation in their Feb. 12 hearing:

- The Fisher House Availability Act (H.R. 3726), which would allow TRICARE beneficiaries,

including active duty families, to stay in VA Fisher Houses on a space-available basis. This change would expand access to lodging for families traveling for specialty or emergency care, reducing financial strain and ensuring they can remain close to their loved ones during treatment.

- The Sharri Briley and Eric Edmundson Veterans Benefits Expansion Act (H.R. 6047), which would increase the rate of Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) to provide additional financial support for survivors and increase the rate of Special Monthly Compensation (SMC) to boost financial support for catastrophically service-connected disabled veterans. The bill is named for Sharri Briley, widow of an Army Black Hawk pilot killed in Somalia in 1993, and for Eric Edmundson, a former Army sergeant who suffered shrapnel wounds, a heart attack, and a brain injury after his Humvee struck a roadside bomb in Iraq in 2005.

Your Advocacy Remains Essential

The hearing delivered meaningful momentum, but much work remains to get MOAA's legislative priorities across the finish line. MOAA urges all members and supporters to continue contacting their lawmakers to ensure these bills move swiftly to the floor and are enacted into law. Add your voice to our cause via our Legislative Action Center.

MOAA will continue to monitor developments closely and keep you informed as these important measures progress.

Stop VA claim sharks: Why MOAA backs the GUARD VA Benefits Act

By: Jen Goodale

Veterans and survivors face a growing threat from predatory companies that siphon earned disability benefits under the guise of “help.”

At the center of MOAA’s work to combat this threat is the Governing Unaccredited Representatives Defrauding (GUARD) VA Benefits Act (H.R. 1732), a bipartisan bill which would restore long-overdue accountability to the VA disability claims process.

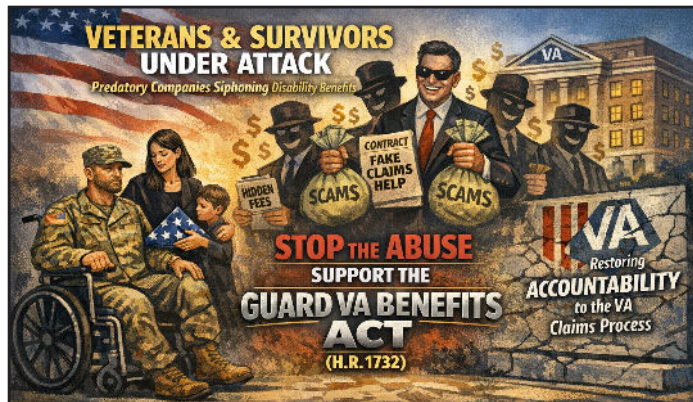
[\[TAKE ACTION: Urge Congress to Stop Predatory VA Claims Agents and Protect Veterans’ Earned Benefits\]](#)

A System Built on Trust

Federal law is clear: Only VA-accredited attorneys, claims agents, and veterans service organizations (VSOs) may assist veterans with disability claims in exchange for compensation, and no veteran can be charged when filing an initial claim, even by an accredited agent. The law clearly states that accreditation requires training, ethical compliance, continuing education, and fee oversight.

But in 2006, Congress repealed criminal penalties for unaccredited individuals who illegally charge veterans for claims assistance. That decision created a regulatory gap, one that predatory companies have spent nearly two decades exploiting.

VA’s only enforcement tool against these actors is a cease-and-desist letter, a measure that has proven to be largely ineffective. Over the past decade, the VA has issued more than 40 such letters, yet most of the companies that received warnings continue operating, advertising, and charging veterans thousands of dollars in unauthorized



fees.

A Perfect Storm for Exploitation

VA disability claims are complex and slow, leaving frustrated veterans searching for help. The passage of the MOAA-supported Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Honoring Our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act, a critical expansion of benefits for toxic-exposed veterans, dramatically increased the number of new and reopened claims, creating a larger pool of newly eligible veterans vulnerable to exploitation.

[\[RELATED: The Push for a More Perfect PACT Act\]](#)

More than 40 unaccredited companies now actively market themselves as “consultants” or “coaches,” claiming they can maximize ratings or speed decisions. Some charge contingency-style fees totaling tens of thousands of dollars. A veteran awarded a 100% rating can be charged nearly \$20,000 for assistance that is legally available for free through accredited VSOs. Other companies charge flat fees for consultations with medical examiners, nexus letters, and other supporting documentation.

These companies are not subject to VA oversight, ethical standards, or fee limits. Veterans report aggressive

data-targeted marketing, misleading contracts, and long-term payment obligations tied to future benefit increases ... even when the company does no additional work.

One retired Navy petty officer and longtime volunteer advocate described veterans being contacted almost immediately after filing claims by companies falsely implying VA affiliation

and armed with detailed, sensitive claim information. This erosion of trust underscores the urgent need for accountability.

Enforcement Works

States have begun stepping in where federal enforcement is lacking. Most recently, the Texas Attorney General successfully prosecuted Vet Claims Insiders, affirming that these practices harm veterans and violate consumer protection laws. But veterans should not have to rely on a patchwork of state actions to protect their federal benefits.

Congress created this enforcement gap, and Congress must work to close it.

What the Act Does

The GUARD VA Benefits Act restores the enforcement authority Congress originally intended by reinstating criminal penalties for unaccredited individuals who charge unauthorized fees. The bill does not limit veterans’ choices or access to help. Instead, it ensures assistance comes from qualified, accountable, and regulated professionals.

MOAA urges lawmakers to advance this legislation to protect service-earned benefits for veterans and survivors, and to restore integrity to the VA claims system.

Partial shutdown could mean no pay for some in uniform

By: Kevin Lilley

Coast Guard members and some U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps officers would not receive scheduled paychecks Feb. 27 if the Department of Homeland Security does not receive full funding – a ripple effect of a broken federal budget process, and an ongoing threat to readiness and retention in the all-volunteer force. While the bulk of uniformed servicemembers are finally covered by full-year funding after agreements reached last month, approximately 41,000 Coast Guard active duty and activated reserve personnel, as well as hundreds of USPHS members assigned to the Department of Homeland Security, continue their duties with no guarantee of compensation at month's end. The shutdown also means a stoppage in some training and maintenance programs, along with vessel inspections and routine patrols.

[\[TAKE ACTION: Ask Your Lawmakers to Protect Servicemember Pay During a Shutdown\]](#)

“Shutdowns cripple morale and directly harm our ability to recruit and retain the talented Americans we need to meet challenging demands,” Vice Adm. Thomas Allan, the Coast Guard's acting vice commandant, told House members in Feb. 11 testimony. “The work our Coast Guard crews perform every day is dangerous and challenging, often involving interactions with those who would do them and our way of life harm. Our people deserve to have the resources they need so they can perform their duties safely and efficiently.”

Others in uniform faced similar uncertainties last year during a record-setting 35-day federal shutdown, and as a result of previous funding lapses.



Ice rescue crew members assigned to USCGC Polar Star (WAGB-10) prepare to escort a team of Coast Guard Regional Dive Locker Pacific crew members to a National Science Foundation helicopter unit on the Ross Sea on Jan. 15 as part of Antarctic operations. (Photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Christopher Bokum/Coast Guard)

Lawmakers frequently scramble to ensure servicemembers receive paychecks during these periods, and last-minute solutions were reached during the 2025 funding lapse to ensure servicemembers were paid, but the resulting financial chaos weakens the force and adds stress to an already-stressful occupation. That's why MOAA supports the Shutdown Fairness Act (S. 3186), which would protect the pay of those in the armed services, to include National Guard and Reserve members, during a shutdown.

[\[RELATED: 3 Ways to Protect Servicemembers and Veterans From the Next Shutdown\]](#)

“Short-term solutions only provide temporary relief,” Allan told Congress. “No one in our military should be forced to live with this uncertainty, paycheck to paycheck.”

MOAA also is working with lawmakers to add the commissioned corps of the U.S. Public Health Service

and NOAA to the list of protected branches. There are over 700 USPHS members assigned to the Department of Homeland Security who could go without pay because of this lapse in appropriations.

Without these protections, and without a timely and complete federal budget, some or all of our servicemembers and their families must continue to make financial contingency plans, operating under threat of missing multiple paychecks throughout the year. Continuing resolutions may provide temporary fixes, but legislation like the Shutdown Fairness Act would give these members the ability to serve without distraction ... and show future members of the force that our nation will pay those in uniform what they've earned.

Lawmakers may be on recess this week, but that doesn't mean they won't be monitoring constituent feedback: Send a message today through our Legislative Action Center and lend your voice to this important cause.

Getting to know Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors

By: Cheryl Toland

[Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors \(TAPS\)](#) founder Bonnie Carroll accepts MOAA's Distinguished Service Award on behalf of her organization during a 2023 ceremony in Washington, D.C. (Photo by Sean Shanahan/for MOAA)

The Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS) directly supports all grieving the death of an active duty servicemember or veteran, regardless of the survivor's phase in their grief journey.

TAPS' team of experts, staff, compassionate volunteers, and peer-support network stand ready 24/7 to embrace bereaved families, friends, and battle buddies and connect them with immediate and lifelong tangible resources and emotional care. This includes casework and education assistance, community-based connections, in-person events, a thriving online community, and the National Military Survivor Helpline, (800) 959-TAPS (8277), which is answered by a knowledgeable, caring survivor care team member anytime, day or night.

[\[MORE MOAA RESOURCES: Surviving Spouses\]](#)

TAPS was founded in the wake of a military tragedy following a 1992 C-12 crash in Alaska that took the lives of eight soldiers.



Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS) founder Bonnie Carroll accepts MOAA's Distinguished Service Award on behalf of her organization during a 2023 ceremony in Washington, D.C. (Photo by Sean Shanahan/for MOAA)

Among the grieving family members was Bonnie Carroll, the widow of Brig. Gen. Tom Carroll, USA. After realizing that no support network was in place for the families of the fallen, Bonnie spent two years researching best practices while navigating her own grief alongside fellow survivors.

In 1994, TAPS officially opened its doors to military and veteran survivors. Today, Bonnie and the TAPS team have supported over 100,000 military and veteran survivors as they grieve, heal, and honor the life of their loved one.

Each day, an average of 26 new survivors connect with TAPS in search of support, resources, and community, such as:

- Programs. TAPS offers a

wide variety of programming, seminars, online groups, and workshops. Learn more at TAPS.org/programs.

- Advocacy. Efforts are dedicated to empowering survivors to use their voices to spark change while working closely with government leaders and lawmakers to advance policy and legislation that impacts life after unspeakable tragedy. Visit TAPS.org/advocacy.

- TAPS Magazine: This quarterly publication, mailed to members/survivors, is a comprehensive resource for grieving families. Visit TAPS.org/magazine.

- Facebook group. In this group, a survivor can share and receive support from other survivors, staff, and professionals. Learn more at Facebook.com/tapsorg.

TRICARE users: Scam could put personal health information at risk

By: Kevin Lilley

A fake website designed to resemble the MHS GENESIS Patient Portal may trick users into providing personal information to scammers, the Defense Health Agency (DHA) warned in a recent TRICARE.mil post.

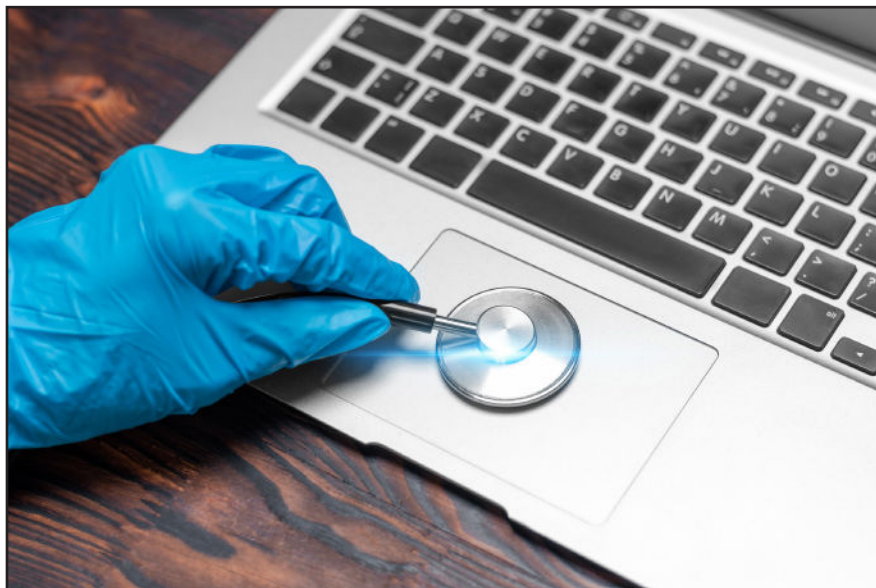
Such scam sites – the post does not note a specific site, or cite a specific fraud threat – may prompt users to provide their MHS GENESIS username and password, or other sensitive data such as their Social Security number or credit card information. The legitimate portal serves as the main tool for military health system (MHS) beneficiaries who use military hospitals or clinics for most of their care to manage appointments and connect with providers.

“These scams rely on realistic fake websites, trusted branding, and urgency to pressure individuals into sharing personal or health information,” said Ally Armeson, executive director of FightCybercrime.org. “Once information is captured, scammers attempt to reuse it during multiple fraud attempts – identity theft, account takeovers, financial scams, etc. Credential harvesting through impersonation is consistent with broader fraud trends.”

[\[RELATED: MOAA's Scam Prevention Resources\]](#)

FightCybercrime has not seen a spike in patient-portal complaints, Armeson said, but the warning “mirrors patterns we regularly see in impersonation and confidence frauds.” The organization’s outreach includes a Military and Veteran Program designed to help servicemembers, veterans, and families avoid all manner of online scams and fraud; MOAA has been a partner in the effort since 2021.

Portal Protections



Tips to protect yourself and your MHS GENESIS-related data:

- **Verify Websites.** The full MHS GENESIS Patient Portal URL is <https://myaccess.dmdc.osd.mil/identitymanagement/app/login>, though users may also access the portal from <https://my.mhsgenesis.health.mil> or <https://patientportal.mhsgenesis.health.mil>, which redirect to the main site.

- **Watch Access Points.** Do not attempt to access the portal via a link in an unsolicited text or email.

- **Look for Red Flags.** Scam sites may have misspellings in text or in the URL, may be missing the “.mil” tag, or may include unexpected pop-ups seeking urgent action.

“The DHA guidance ... is exactly the type of verification steps that help disrupt and catch these attacks early,” Armeson said.

‘Second Set of Eyes’

Older retirees who are less familiar with online procedures may be more susceptible to these types of scams. Along with encouraging retirees to “see verification and research as a habit” in their cyber-transactions, Armeson said

it’s important to connect with older relatives on these issues “without being dismissive or judgmental.”

“Encourage loved ones to involve a trusted second set of eyes before sharing information or sending money, especially when urgency is involved,” she said. “Helping a loved one establish simple verification routines, such as checking URLs together or confirming requests through official channels, can reduce risk and prevent them from getting overwhelmed.”

Many successful schemes go beyond tech tactics, Armeson stressed, with scammers taking advantage of a victim’s boredom or loneliness to develop trust.

“Staying socially connected offline can be just as important as practicing good cyber-hygiene,” Armeson said.

Those who believe they’ve been targeted by an MHS GENESIS portal-related scam can contact the TRICARE contactor for their region and report the scam to DHA. Those who may have provided personal data to a scammer through such a site are encouraged to change passwords immediately and file reports with DHA and the Federal Trade Commission.

Air Force projects early-2030s debut for Sentinel nuclear missile

Adapted and rewritten from reporting by Stephen Losey of Military Times

The U.S. Air Force now anticipates that its next-generation nuclear missile, the LGM-35A Sentinel, will achieve initial operational capability in the early 2030s, following a comprehensive restructuring of the troubled modernization effort.

The Sentinel program is designed to replace the aging Minuteman III intercontinental ballistic missile force, which has been in service for more than five decades and is operating well beyond its original lifespan. The new missile, being developed by Northrop Grumman, is a cornerstone of the Air Force's nuclear deterrence modernization strategy.

Originally estimated to cost about \$77.7 billion, the program's price tag grew dramatically, driven largely by escalating construction costs associated with rebuilding hundreds of missile silos and launch control facilities across the Great Plains. By early 2024, projected costs had climbed to roughly \$160 billion, triggering a critical Nunn-McCurdy breach, a statutory process that requires the Pentagon to reassess programs that significantly exceed cost estimates.

Along with rising costs, Sentinel's schedule also slipped. The missile had once been expected to reach initial capability by 2029, but that target moved first to 2030 and has since shifted further into the next decade.

Despite these setbacks, the Pentagon determined in mid-2024 that replacing Minuteman III was too vital to national security to abandon. Instead, the Department of Defense directed the Air Force to overhaul Sentinel's acquisition strategy and rein in costs. As part of that action, the program's Milestone B approval, originally granted in 2020 to begin



The LGM-35A Sentinel is expected to replace the Cold War-era Minuteman III program in the 2030s. (U.S. Air Force)

full engineering and manufacturing development, was rescinded pending a new review.

The Air Force now says the restructuring effort is expected to conclude by the end of 2026, at which point a new Milestone B decision will be made. Officials say progress made over the past year has enabled the service to adopt a streamlined acquisition approach aimed at accelerating delivery while improving oversight.

Air Force Secretary Troy Meink emphasized the importance of the effort in a public statement, calling nuclear modernization a top priority and describing Sentinel as essential to maintaining credible deterrence well into the future.

Oversight of the program has also been tightened through the creation of a Direct Reporting Portfolio Manager (DRPM) position for the Air Force's most critical weapon systems. The role, established by Defense

Secretary Pete Hegseth, is intended to bypass bureaucratic delays and speed decision-making on high-priority programs such as Sentinel, the B-21 Raider, and the Air Force's future fighter.

Gen. Dale White, who serves in the DRPM role, said the new structure allows leadership to resolve tradeoffs quickly while maintaining strict discipline appropriate for nuclear deterrence missions. Following an in-depth review led by White and the Sentinel team, the Air Force concluded the program remains viable and capable of delivering initial capability in the early 2030s.

A revised cost estimate has not yet been released. However, Pentagon officials previously indicated that under a restructured acquisition approach, Sentinel's total cost could come in at approximately \$140.9 billion, pending an independent evaluation by the Office of Cost Assessment and Program Evaluation.

Air Force Academy Board recommends cadet expansion, Space Force facilities

Article is rewritten and original summary based on reporting by Greg Hadley in Air & Space Forces Magazine

A congressionally appointed oversight panel is urging the U.S. Air Force Academy (USAFA) to increase its cadet population and modernize aging facilities, including the creation of a dedicated on-campus center for the U.S. Space Force, according to a newly released report.

The Academy's Board of Visitors presented its findings to Air Force Secretary Troy E. Meink on Feb. 5, calling for a roughly 10 percent increase in the cadet wing and significant infrastructure investments. Rather than establishing a separate service academy for the Space Force, the board recommends expanding USAFA's role to support both services.

Board Chair Rep. August Pfluger (R-Texas), a graduate of USAFA's Class of 2000, said the report emphasizes the need for a "generational investment" across all military service academies to ensure they remain capable of developing future leaders for increasingly complex conflicts.

Much of the board's concern centers on USAFA's infrastructure, much of which dates back to the 1950s. The report highlights widespread



Basic cadet candidates from the Class of 2029 and cadet cadre participate in the annual Swearing-In Ceremony held on Stillman Field at the U.S. Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colo., June 26, 2025. U.S. Air Force photo by Dylan Smith

deterioration and urges modernization to address safety, health, and operational limitations. Among its key proposals is the construction of a new Air, Space, and Cyber Education Center, envisioned as a three-building complex designed to foster collaboration across disciplines.

The board hopes the recommendations will be incorporated into the fiscal year 2027 defense budget, which will be submitted to Congress later this year.

In a statement, Pfluger said the report outlines concrete steps to strengthen the Academy's mission at a time when air, space, and cyber capabilities are

central to national defense. He said the board looks forward to working with Pentagon leadership to translate the recommendations into long-term improvements benefiting both the Air Force and the Space Force.

Cadet Numbers and Space Force Demand

USAFA's cadet wing has averaged around 4,000 cadets in recent years, down from more than 4,300 a decade ago and consistently smaller than the corps at the U.S. Naval Academy and the U.S. Military Academy. The board attributes the decline primarily to sequestration-era budget cuts rather than reduced

(Continued on next page)

(Continued from previous page) interest among applicants.

The issue has become more pressing since USAFA began commissioning officers into the Space Force. The board argues that restoring the cadet wing to about 4,400 cadets is essential to maintain Air Force officer production while meeting the Space Force's growing needs.

Over the past four years, roughly 10 percent of USAFA graduates have entered the Space Force—a figure that closely matches the board's proposed increase. By comparison, the Naval Academy commissions about a quarter of its graduates into the Marine Corps.

Although some lawmakers previously floated the idea of a separate Space Force academy, the board concluded that such a move would be prohibitively expensive. Instead, it recommends leveraging USAFA's existing campus to provide Space Force cadets—known as Guardians—with a permanent institutional home at a fraction of the cost.

Proposed New Facilities

The board's report outlines three primary components for the proposed complex:

- A Space Force hub to support professional development and foster service identity and esprit de corps
- An Unmanned Aerial Systems Center of Excellence, intended to position USAFA as a leader in drone research and operational concepts,

particularly given its access to expansive airspace

- A multi-domain operations environment that physically integrates air, space, and cyber disciplines to encourage joint thinking and innovation

Rep. Don Davis (D-N.C.) said restoring cadet strength, addressing infrastructure shortfalls, and providing a permanent Space Force presence at USAFA are essential to maintaining U.S. leadership in air and space power.

Staffing, Leadership, and Infrastructure Challenges

Expanding the cadet wing and constructing new facilities would not be without challenges. Faculty reductions following sequestration contributed to lower admissions in the past, and USAFA recently experienced another period of disruption after faculty departures linked to the Department of Government Efficiency's Deferred Resignation Program.

The Academy is also undergoing a major leadership transition this year, with the planned retirements of Superintendent Lt. Gen. Tony Bauernfeind and Commandant of Cadets Brig. Gen. Gavin Marks, as well as the appointment of a new dean of faculty.

The board has called for a review by the Air Force Manpower Analysis Center to determine the appropriate mix of civilian and military

instructors, particularly if cadet numbers increase.

Infrastructure concerns remain urgent. The report notes that many facilities have exceeded their intended lifespan, creating safety risks and contributing to health incidents among cadets. The board urged Congress to prioritize sustained funding for USAFA improvements beginning with the 2027 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA).

More broadly, the report argues that reinvesting in all U.S. service academies should be a central theme of the 2027 NDAA, similar to past legislative focuses on acquisition reform or quality of life. It also recommends the creation of a congressional commission to study admissions, accreditation, athletics, and other systemic issues across the academies.

Additional Recommendations

The board also called for:

- A review of cadet discipline procedures to address concerns about transparency and due process.
- Improved communication and support between Academy leadership, the Pentagon, and the Board of Visitors.
- Funding for multiple board-led focus groups to examine major challenges facing USAFA.

Board of Visitors Membership

The USAFA Board of Visitors includes members appointed by the President and Congress, representing both parties and multiple perspectives.

Army tests new Apache ammunition designed to counter drone swarms

This article is an original rewrite based on reporting by Nicholas Slayton of Task & Purpose

The U.S. Army has taken another step toward expanding its counter-drone capabilities by successfully testing a new type of 30mm airburst ammunition on the AH-64 Apache attack helicopter.

During live-fire trials conducted in December at Yuma Proving Grounds, Arizona, Army aviators fired the XM1225 30x113mm Aviation Proximity Explosive round at multiple types of small unmanned aerial systems. The ammunition is designed to detonate near airborne targets, allowing it to destroy drones without requiring a direct hit.

Army officials say the goal is to give Apaches an effective counter-UAS role using their existing 30mm cannons, turning a platform traditionally focused on close air support into a capable drone-defense asset. Although the Army revealed the new ammunition publicly in October, details of the December testing were released only recently.

One of the key advantages of the XM1225 round is its proximity fuze, which triggers an explosion when the projectile comes close to a target. This feature is particularly useful against dense or fast-moving drone swarms, where precise targeting can be difficult.

According to an Army test pilot involved in the evaluation, another benefit of the new round



An AH-64E Apache prepares to engage during aerial gunnery training at Grafenwoehr Training Area, Germany, Oct. 2, 2025. Army photo by Spc. Josefina Garcia.

is that it can be employed without extensive additional training for Apache pilots or maintainers, making it easier to integrate into existing units.

The ammunition can be used against other aerial targets, but it was developed primarily as a cost-effective counter-drone solution. As drones become increasingly common on the battlefield, the U.S. military has been searching for alternatives to expensive interceptor missiles that are difficult to replenish quickly.

The Army has explored several approaches to the drone threat, including directed-energy systems and electronic warfare tools. While laser and jammer technologies show promise, leaders have also emphasized the need for kinetic options that can be fielded rapidly and mounted on platforms already in service.

Defending against hostile

drones has become a major concern across the Department of Defense. Army units, including those working under Joint Inter-Agency Task Force 401, have been training with a range of counter-UAS weapons, from jammers and lasers to conventional munitions. A recent Department of Defense Inspector General report highlighted ongoing shortfalls in base defense against drone threats.

Last fall, the Army announced it was developing new 25mm and 30mm ammunition for both the Bradley Fighting Vehicle and the Apache helicopter. While no specific timeline was initially provided, the Army's latest update on the Apache test indicates the program is being accelerated to support urgent fielding, suggesting the new round could reach operational units in the near future.

Army nearly finished on Korean communications network upgrade

This article is an original rewrite based on reporting by Alejandro Carrasquel of Stars and Stripes.

A wide-ranging modernization of the U.S. Army's digital communications infrastructure in South Korea is approaching completion, marking a significant step forward in speed, reliability, and cybersecurity for forces stationed on the peninsula.

The roughly \$27 million project, known as Army Transport Edge, has been underway for nearly 18 months and focuses on upgrading the backbone that carries voice, video, and data traffic across 52 Army sites. Soldiers and civilian specialists from the 1st Signal Brigade have led the effort to ensure the network can meet operational demands during both peacetime and potential conflict.

According to Maj. Scott Tanaka, senior network engineer for the brigade, the project replaces aging hardware with a modern network architecture that simplifies management of routing, bandwidth, and connectivity throughout South Korea. Tanaka said the improvements are especially critical in a theater where commanders rely on uninterrupted communications.

Cybersecurity is a major component of the upgrade. Tanaka said the new system strengthens the Army's ability to operate in the cyber domain while delivering information



U.S. Army Brig. Gen. Kevin Meisler, 311th Signal Command Commander, rappels down a communication tower at Camp Humphreys, South Korea, Aug. 22, 2023. (Minjo Cheo/U.S. Army)

more efficiently to key systems and users.

Work on Army Transport Edge began in late 2023 as part of a broader modernization push across U.S. Forces Korea. The effort concentrates on the Army's transport layer—the digital foundation that enables all communications traffic to move across the network.

The project also supports the Army's transition toward a zero trust security model, which requires continuous verification of users and devices before granting access. Alan Krall, deputy director of the 41st Signal Battalion, said the redesigned network embeds security at every level, addressing vulnerabilities inherent in older systems.

One of the biggest challenges, Krall noted, has been upgrading

the infrastructure while keeping the legacy network operational. Army officials aim to fully shut down the old system later this year, with a tentative target date in late September, though that timeline depends on successful completion of remaining tasks.

The modernized network is expected to provide faster speeds, improved reliability, and greater flexibility during large-scale exercises or emergency operations, particularly when additional forces deploy to South Korea on short notice.

While the new network is already functioning across the peninsula, some advanced capabilities—such as automated failover and rapid recovery features—are still being tested and refined as the project enters its final stages.

Navy chief calls for more agile, risk-tolerant force to avoid ‘Brittle’ responses

This article is rewritten based on an article by Gary Warner, Stars and Stripes

The U.S. Navy must become faster, more flexible, and more willing to accept calculated risk if it hopes to succeed in future conflicts, according to Adm. Daryl Caudle, who outlined his vision this week at a major defense conference in San Diego.

Speaking to more than 1,000 military leaders, defense contractors, and analysts at the West 2026 conference, Caudle introduced what he calls the Navy’s new “Fighting Instructions,” a strategic framework aimed at moving the service away from rigid, one-size-fits-all responses to global crises.

“The goal is readiness — not for the last war, but for the one ahead,” Caudle said during his keynote address.

Rethinking Carrier-Centric Responses

Caudle argued that for too long, U.S. military decision-makers have leaned heavily on aircraft carrier strike groups as the default response to international flashpoints. While carriers remain essential, he said they are not always the most appropriate or efficient option.

Recent deployments highlight that tension. The USS Gerald R. Ford and its strike group were sent to the Caribbean late last year and later supported operations tied to the capture of Venezuelan leader Nicolás Maduro. More recently, the USS Abraham Lincoln was redirected from the South China Sea to the Middle East amid rising friction with Iran.

In interviews conducted ahead of the conference, Caudle suggested that some missions — such as monitoring



Adm. Daryl Caudle, the Chief of Naval Operations, gives a speech during the Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy change of office ceremony at the United

shipping lanes or interdicting sanction-evading vessels — do not require the presence of a carrier strike group. Smaller surface ships, naval helicopters, and cooperation with the U.S. Coast Guard could accomplish those objectives more efficiently, he said.

A “Hedge Strategy” for Global Crises

At the heart of Caudle’s approach is what he described as a “hedge strategy” — deploying tailored combinations of ships, aircraft, and personnel based on the specific demands of each situation.

Attempting to build a fleet capable of dominating every possible scenario, he warned, is neither affordable nor effective. Such an approach risks creating forces that are either oversized for day-to-day missions or insufficient for high-end conflict.

The hedge strategy, Caudle said, is designed to prevent the Navy from becoming a brittle force — one optimized for a narrow range of missions and vulnerable when conditions change.

Warfare Is Getting Cheaper — and Faster

Caudle also emphasized how advances in technology have lowered the barrier to entry for modern

warfare. Relatively inexpensive drones — operating in the air, on the surface, and underwater — now allow smaller or less-resourced adversaries to challenge major naval powers.

As a result, speed and decision-making matter more than ever.

“We are operating in a world with other great powers,” Caudle said, noting that delays in response can be costly. Smaller, rapidly deployed forces can often project U.S. sea power more effectively than larger formations that require lengthy preparation.

That approach, he acknowledged, involves risk.

Future conflicts, Caudle warned, will likely feature disrupted communications, contested cyber and space domains, and adversaries actively attempting to sever U.S. command-and-control networks. In such an environment, he said, the Navy cannot afford to wait for perfect conditions or centralized permission before acting.

Sailors Remain the Navy’s Core Strength

While uncrewed systems are expected to play a growing role in naval operations, Caudle stressed that people remain the Navy’s most important asset.

“The sailor is still at the center of everything we do,” he said, calling service members the Navy’s most enduring strategic advantage and its primary weapon system.

Much of the fleet, Caudle added, is already engaged daily in deterrence — shaping adversary behavior simply through its presence. For that deterrence to remain credible, the Navy must be adaptable, scalable, and ready to act decisively when called upon.

Navy seeks ship-launched strike drones to expand firepower

This article is rewritten based on reporting by Michael Peck for Defense News

The U.S. Navy is exploring new ways to deliver long-range strike power from a wider range of warships, including destroyers and other surface combatants that lack large flight decks. According to a recent solicitation issued by the Pentagon's Defense Innovation Unit (DIU), the service is interested in armed, reusable drones that could be launched from smaller ships or austere expeditionary locations.

The effort reflects growing concern within the Navy about sustaining combat power during a prolonged conflict against an adversary equipped with long-range anti-ship missiles. With a limited number of aircraft carriers, aircraft, and missile inventories available, Navy planners are looking for alternatives that reduce reliance on single-use weapons and vulnerable infrastructure.

DIU notes that today's surface combatants depend heavily on missiles that cannot be easily replenished at sea, restricting their ability to conduct extended strike operations. Existing long-range strike options often require runways or ships with large flight decks—assets that are both scarce and highly contested in wartime.

To address those limitations, the Navy is pursuing a concept known as Runway Independent Maritime and Expeditionary Strike (RIMES). The idea centers on reusable unmanned aircraft capable of carrying standard munitions and operating with minimal support. These drones would be designed to launch from ships without large flight decks, providing greater flexibility and persistence in maritime operations.

Potential host platforms include



Civilian contractors embarked with the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit prepare to conduct a V-BAT drone flight aboard the amphibious dock landing ship USS Rushmore in the Philippine Sea, Aug. 9, 2022. (Cpl.

Arleigh Burke-class destroyers, littoral combat ships, and the future FF(X) frigate, which is based on the Coast Guard's Legend-class cutter. While these ships can operate helicopters, they are not configured for traditional fixed-wing aircraft.

Despite their smaller operating footprint, the drones would be expected to deliver significant firepower. The solicitation envisions compatibility with existing 1,000-pound bombs already used by Navy fighter aircraft such as the F/A-18 and F-35C, as well as palletized munitions.

Performance requirements also call for substantial range. DIU specifies a one-way distance of at least 1,400 nautical miles, enabling an operational radius of roughly 600 nautical miles. While no exact speed requirement is listed, the drone should cruise at speeds comparable to current long-range strike systems.

Autonomy is another key factor. The Navy wants a system capable of

operating in contested environments where GPS signals may be disrupted and electronic jamming is likely. As a result, the drone must be able to execute missions with limited external control.

Cost and survivability are both under consideration. The solicitation emphasizes affordability but also calls for designs that can function in hostile airspace, whether through survivability features or by being inexpensive enough to accept losses.

Additional requirements include the ability to launch and recover in rough seas, minimal support equipment and personnel, rapid transition from storage to flight, and an open-systems architecture that allows for future upgrades. In keeping with the Pentagon's emphasis on speed, DIU is seeking proposals that can move into large-scale prototyping within a year. Submissions are due by Feb. 27.

Marine Corps exploring new medium-range tactical drone

This article is an original rewrite based on reporting by Drew F. Lawrence of DefenseScoop

The U.S. Marine Corps is evaluating options for a new medium-range tactical (MRT) unmanned aerial system as it continues to expand and modernize its small drone capabilities for expeditionary operations.

In a recent request for information (RFI), Marine Corps officials outlined interest in a lightweight, man-portable drone weighing less than 20 pounds that can be operated by no more than two Marines. The service is seeking a system that is semi-autonomous, capable of vertical takeoff and landing, and able to operate from both fixed and mobile platforms—including amphibious ships.

The potential new drone would eventually supplement or replace the RQ-20B Puma, a hand-launched reconnaissance system that has been in service for nearly two decades. While still effective, Marine Corps leaders are looking to industry for newer technologies that can provide real-time intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance in austere and contested environments.

The push comes as the Corps invests heavily in unmanned systems across the force. Over the past year, Marines have expanded small UAS certification programs and tested emerging technologies while preparing to acquire thousands of first-person-view drones. These efforts align with the Corps' broader Force Design reorganization, which emphasizes mobility, survivability, and adaptability in high-end conflict.

The Marine Corps' newly released



U.S. Marine Corps Cpl. Brian Kimani, a Kenya native, and a crew chief with Alpha Company, 2nd Assault Amphibian Battalion, 2nd Marine Division, launches a RQ-20B Puma unmanned aircraft system during a gunnery qualification range on Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, North Carolina,

aviation plan also underscores the growing importance of small drones, calling for their aggressive integration into future operations.

According to Gregg Skinner, small UAS program manager at Naval Air Systems Command, the ideal MRT drone would be easy to deploy and recover in remote environments, securely share data across networks, and integrate smoothly with existing command-and-control systems. He said the RFI reflects an ongoing effort to assess evolving technologies and identify modular, multi-mission platforms capable of meeting changing operational demands.

The RFI also highlights interest in autonomous or semi-autonomous launch and recovery, a feature intended to reduce workload on Marines and increase operational

flexibility. Endurance is another priority, with officials seeking systems capable of flying for more than 2.5 hours and carrying multiple sensor payloads, including full-motion video and infrared for day-and-night reconnaissance.

As potential adversaries increasingly target fixed infrastructure, military services—including the Marine Corps—are placing greater emphasis on drones with short or vertical takeoff and landing capabilities, allowing forces to operate without relying on runways or established launch sites.

Skinner said a new MRT drone would significantly enhance Marines' ability to collect and distribute actionable intelligence, improving effectiveness and survivability during complex and contested missions.

Coast Guard emphasizes port security role in Indo-Pacific conflict scenarios

This article is rewritten based on reporting by Aaron-Matthew Lariosa, USNI News

The U.S. Coast Guard is preparing to defend critical ports and maritime supply routes from emerging threats such as drones and cyberattacks in the event of a major conflict in the Indo-Pacific, according to the service's senior leader in the region.

Speaking during a panel discussion at WEST 2026, Rear Adm. Joseph Buzzella, acting commander of the Coast Guard's Pacific Area, underscored the importance of keeping ports operational during wartime. He noted that vulnerable or disabled ports could quickly become weak points in any large-scale military operation.

While other military services focus on countering adversary anti-access strategies and defending strategic chokepoints across the first island chain, Buzzella said the Coast Guard's mission centers on safeguarding maritime infrastructure. This includes protecting ports, supply lines, and coastal facilities from both physical and digital attacks.

The Coast Guard Pacific Area covers an enormous operational footprint, spanning six continents, more than 70 nations, and roughly 74 million square miles of ocean. That responsibility, Buzzella said, requires the service to plan for rapid recovery when ports are damaged or disrupted during conflict.

In a contested environment, he explained, ports are likely to suffer degradation. The key challenge then becomes restoring operations quickly so weapons, personnel, and supplies can continue moving to forward forces.

Buzzella added that strengthening port defenses contributes directly to U.S. deterrence by ensuring Navy and Marine Corps forces can sustain operations despite enemy efforts to disrupt logistics. He highlighted growing concerns over unmanned aerial systems, noting that commercial



Coast Guard servicemembers aboard assets from Port Security Unit (PSU) 311, Maritime Safety and Security Team (MSST) 91107 and Coast Guard Station Honolulu provide a safety escort of Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF) LST-4003 JS Kunisaki into Naval Station Pearl Harbor, Honolulu, July 29, 2024, during Exercise Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) 2024. US Coast Guard photo

ports already face drone activity and that the threat would intensify during wartime.

The Coast Guard has expanded its counter-drone focus in response to lessons learned from recent conflicts, including drone activity observed in Ukraine and the Red Sea. In 2024, the service conducted joint training with the Indian Coast Guard near the Malacca Strait to practice intercepting unmanned systems.

Cybersecurity remains another major concern. Buzzella said port resilience depends heavily on protecting digital infrastructure, pointing to threats such as GPS spoofing and network intrusions that could cripple commercial port operations without a single shot being fired.

He also called attention to the need to restore the Coast Guard's highest-level naval escort capabilities, which were reduced in recent years due to funding constraints. These armed

escorts are used to protect Navy ships and other high-interest vessels as they transit into port.

Recent combat operations overseas have shown how unmanned air and surface vehicles can be used to swarm ships near harbors, Buzzella said, warning that similar tactics could be employed against U.S. forces in the Indo-Pacific.

Beyond port security, the Coast Guard's Pacific Area is also responsible for maintaining safe transit through the Panama Canal, a strategic passageway critical for moving U.S. forces between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. Without access to the canal, ships would be forced to take weeks-long routes around South America.

Buzzella emphasized that keeping the canal operational is essential to joint force readiness and said the Coast Guard stands ready to operate alongside Navy and Marine Corps forces in any future conflict.

NATO forces test large-scale artillery coordination in US-led exercise

This article is rewritten based on reporting by Elisabeth Gosselin-Malo for Defense News

U.S. and allied forces recently completed a major multinational artillery exercise designed to test how effectively NATO armies can combine their firepower across borders during a large-scale conflict. The drill took place as part of Dynamic Front, a U.S.-led exercise conducted from Jan. 26 to Feb. 13 across five countries and nine training locations.

The exercise brought together forces from 23 nations with a central goal: improving artillery interoperability. Participants focused on how quickly different national systems could be linked and how efficiently targeting information could be shared to enable coordinated long-range strikes throughout the alliance.

U.S. Army officials said the scenario deliberately mirrored the scale and intensity of combat seen in Ukraine. Allied units were challenged to plan and execute up to 1,500 artillery strikes per day while simultaneously countering between 600 and



1,200 simulated aerial threats in a high-end European conflict environment.

During a press briefing reported by Stars and Stripes, Brig. Gen. Steven Carpenter, commander of the 56th Multi-Domain Command-Europe, said the purpose of massed artillery fires is to generate a powerful deterrent effect. The objective, he explained, is to demonstrate an ability to deliver sustained and overwhelming firepower that would discourage any potential adversary from

initiating an attack.

According to Stars and Stripes, participating forces were able to establish the command-and-control architecture needed to synchronize multinational fires in roughly one-sixth of the time required during previous iterations of the exercise—an indication of growing proficiency and system integration.

A key enabler of that progress was NATO's Artillery Systems Cooperation Activities software, known as ASCA. The encrypted system allows different nations' artillery and command platforms to communicate using a shared digital framework, enabling precise

coordination of fires and real-time sharing of targeting data—even when forces are operating in separate countries.

U.S. officers have previously told Defense News that ASCA continues to evolve based on lessons learned during exercises like Dynamic Front. More than a dozen NATO nations have now integrated the system into their command-and-control networks, reflecting its growing role in alliance-wide artillery operations.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Cape Coral MOAA Board Meeting

10 a.m.

Thursday, March 12

**Cape Royal
Golf Club**

All members are welcome



About CCMOAA

**Serving All Military,
Veterans, & their families
in the Cape Coral area
... and beyond!**

Members of the Cape Coral Chapter of the Military Officers Association of America, P.O. Box 100508, Cape Coral, FL 33910-0508, publish the Cape Coral Communicator monthly, except June, July and August. The Chapter is a non-profit, non-partisan, and tax-exempt IRS 501(c)(3) and a 501(c)(19) organization, affiliated with National MOAA and the Florida Chapter of Councils, MOAA, not associated with the Department of Defense. The views expressed do not necessarily reflect the views of MOAA, the Florida Council of Chapters, this Chapter, or DOD.

MARCH Calendar of Events

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT
1	2	3 <i>Navy Reserve Birthday (1915)</i>	4 <i>National Hug a G.I. Day</i>	5 <i>Seabee Birthday (1942)</i>	6 <i>World Day of Prayer</i>	7
8 <i>Daylight Savings Time Begins (Spring Ahead)</i>	9	10	11	12 <i>CCMOAA Board Meeting 10 a.m.</i>	13 <i>K-9 Veterans Day</i>	14 <i>CCMOAA Breakfast Meeting 10 a.m.</i>
15 <i>American Legion Birthday (1919)</i>	16	17 <i>St. Patrick's Day</i>	18	19	20 <i>Spring Equinox</i>	21
22	23	24	25 <i>Medal of Honor Day</i>	26	27	28
29 <i>National Vietnam War Veterans Day</i>	30	31				

VA health system reorganization expected to cost hundreds of millions

This article is an original rewrite based on reporting by Patricia Kime of Military Times

A major reorganization of the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) is expected to carry a significant price tag, with projected costs of at least \$312 million over five years and an up-front investment exceeding \$500 million, according to information disclosed during a recent congressional hearing.

The restructuring effort, formally known as the Restructure for Impact and Sustainability Effort (RISE), is scheduled to begin this year. Department officials say the initiative is intended to streamline administrative layers while improving hospital operations and clinical care for veterans.

During testimony before the House Veterans Affairs Committee, Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz (D-Fla.), the senior Democrat on the appropriations subcommittee overseeing VA funding, said lawmakers were initially told the plan would not require additional resources. Subsequent briefings, however, revealed far higher costs than previously disclosed.

Wasserman Schultz said the VA now estimates an initial investment of roughly \$521 million, which would be partially offset by savings over time, reducing the net cost to about \$312 million over five years. She pressed VA Secretary Doug Collins on how the department intends to pay for the overhaul, particularly since the fiscal year 2026 budget has already been set.

Collins told lawmakers the department believes it can absorb the costs within its existing appro-



priations and does not anticipate submitting a formal reprogramming request to Congress. He said the reorganization would largely involve shifting personnel and resources internally.

That assertion drew skepticism from lawmakers, particularly in light of a recent funding transfer that bypassed congressional approval. Earlier this year, the VA shifted \$343 million from administrative and contract accounts to cover outside medical care costs without seeking prior authorization. Although the department notified Congress afterward, the move angered lawmakers from both parties.

House Appropriations Committee Chairman Rep. Tom Cole (R-Okla.) said at the time that such transfers should have been formally submitted for review and approval. Wasserman Schultz echoed that concern, stating that any internal transfers tied to the RISE initiative fall under the jurisdiction of the appropriations subcommittees and require congressional oversight.

She said she expects a detailed report from the VA outlining the full scope, costs, and justifications for the reorganization, as required

by law.

For the first time, Wasserman Schultz also disclosed that the VA projects \$1.7 billion in savings from personnel-related actions tied to the restructuring. Under the plan, the VA would reduce the number of Veterans Integrated Service Networks (VISNs) from 18 to five and create new Health Service Areas focused more directly on local medical centers and community care.

The VA has already seen a sharp reduction in staffing, losing approximately 30,000 employees over the past year due to retirements, resignations, and attrition. Officials have also announced plans to eliminate an additional 24,000 positions, many of which were created during the COVID-19 pandemic and have remained vacant.

Time constraints prevented lawmakers from fully questioning Collins about how those staffing reductions factor into projected savings. The hearing was marked by tense exchanges, particularly over the department's response to the death of Alex Pretti, a nurse at the Minneapolis VA Medical Center. Several Democrats criticized Collins for declining to comment on the case or the ongoing investigation.

Collins defended his position, citing his military service and stating he would not address the matter during the hearing.

The administration has yet to release its proposed fiscal year 2027 budget, which was due earlier this month. Collins told lawmakers that updated cost estimates for the RISE initiative will be included once the budget is submitted to Congress.

Veterans Administration amends insurance and the accelerated benefit option

The Veterans Administration has announced an amendment to the Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance (SGLI), Family SGLI (FSGLI), and Veterans' Group Life Insurance (VGLI) Accelerated Benefit Option (ABO) regulation.

This update allows an alternate applicant to apply for an ABO on a member's behalf, such as when a member is medically incapacitated. With accelerated benefits, you can get up to 50% of the face value of your coverage in increments of \$5,000—paid to you before death.

This change will:

- Allow an alternate applicant to apply for the ABO on behalf of a terminally ill member, who is medically incapacitated.
- Authorize a member to apply for the ABO when their insured spouse is terminally ill.
- Ensure that stepchildren and children, who are 18-22 and in school, are included in FSGLI dependent child coverage.

This change comes as an update to the ABO that's been in effect since 1998 when only the member could apply. Visit VA benefits for more information, or to apply.

VETERANS ADMINISTRATION ANNOUNCES UPDATE TO ACCELERATED BENEFIT OPTION

★ SGLI ★ Family SGLI (FSGLI) ★ Veterans' Group Life Insurance (VGLI) ★

Accelerated Benefit Option (ABO) Regulation

NEW UPDATE:

✓ Allows an alternate applicant to apply for an ABO on a member's behalf, such as when a member is medically incapacitated.

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Eligibility for advanced benefits requires a terminal illness with a life expectancy of 9 months or less.

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March 26, 2026

Please submit articles in a Word Document and photos in JPEG format

Email to: publisherlarry@gmail.com

VA moves to improve dental care access for eligible veterans

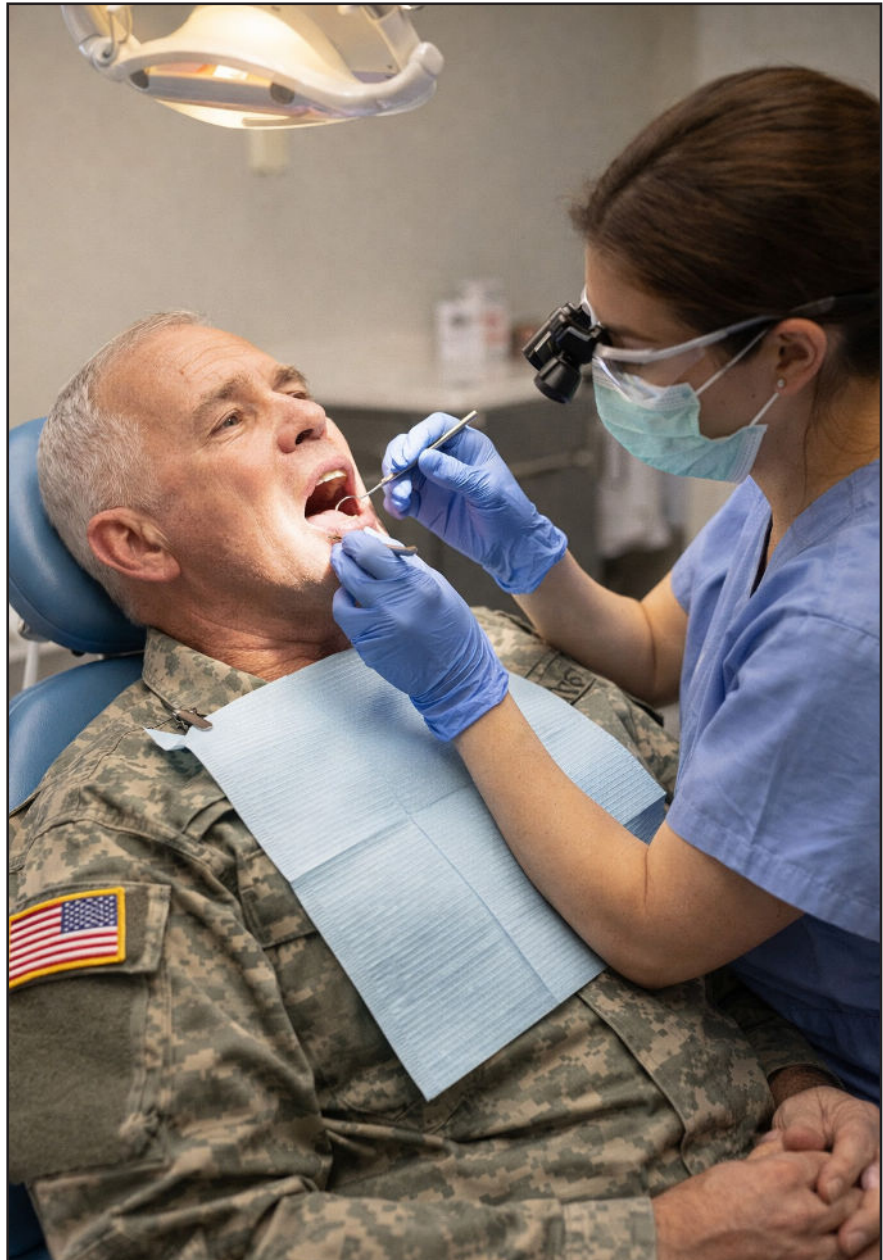
The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs has released a request for proposals for a new dental care administrator to operate the department's next generation network of community care dental providers.

The goal is to contract with a vendor that will support the department in building and maintaining a robust national network of licensed dental providers and practitioners. The network will include general and specialty dental care, preventive dental services, and pharmacy support.

Through this new contract, VA aims to improve and standardize dental care delivery, ensuring Veterans receive the preventive and restorative dental services they need to maintain their health.

VA's community care program enables Veterans to access health care from non-VA medical providers at the department's expense. Community care has been an integral part of caring for Veterans since the World War II era. In 2018, President Trump enshrined this right for Veterans by signing the bipartisan MISSION Act. Today, about 40% of all VA care is provided through community care.

Of the nearly nine million Veterans enrolled in VA health care, approximately 26% are eligible for dental care. In fiscal year 2025 alone, 888,051 Veterans



received dental care through VA, with more than 3.5 million dental procedures delivered through community care.

“Dental health is a critical component of overall well-being,” said VA Secretary Doug Collins. “This RFP will result in a contract

that dramatically improves our ability to provide quality dental care to eligible Veterans while ensuring they can choose the provider that's best for them.”

Interested companies have until March 16 to submit proposals.

Veterans Administration moves to speed delivery of survivor benefits

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Feb. 13 announced a new regulation that will lead to faster decisions and quicker payments for certain types of survivors' claims.

Previously, VA was required to address claims for Dependency and Indemnity Compensation and Survivors Pension separately, resulting in a longer claims process, as a formal decision was required for both benefits.

With this change, effective Feb. 23, VA will pay the higher of the two benefits, which is generally DIC — without delaying the process to develop the lesser benefit.

“This commonsense change streamlines the survivors claims process, reduces administrative burdens, and delivers quicker decisions to beneficiaries during challenging times,” said VA Secretary Doug Collins.

DIC is a tax-free monthly monetary benefit paid to eligible surviving spouses, children and parents of a service member who died in the line of duty or Veterans who died from service-connected injuries or illnesses. Survivors Pension offers tax-free monthly payments to qualified surviving spouses and unmarried dependent children of wartime Veterans who meet certain income and net worth limits set by Congress.

In most instances, DIC provides a greater economic benefit than Survivors Pension. This is not the case if all the following conditions are met:

- The claimant is the Veteran's

BETTER SUPPORT FOR SURVIVORS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

FEBRUARY 13: NEW REGULATION ANNOUNCED

FASTER DECISIONS & QUICKER PAYMENTS FOR SURVIVOR CLAIMS

- ✓ Streamlined Claims
- ✓ Reduced Paperwork & Wait Times

SWIFTER PROCESSING OF:

- ✓ Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC)
- ✓ Accrued Benefits
- ✓ Survivors Pension

GET HELP WHEN YOU NEED IT

surviving spouse,

- Has no dependents,
- Is residing in a nursing home,
- Has applied for or is currently receiving Medicaid.

If all these criteria are met, Survivors Pension ? rather than

DIC ? will be awarded, and the DIC claim will not be further developed.

For more information, contact the VA benefits hotline on 800-827-1000.

VA undoes decades-old wrong and protects veterans 2nd Amendment rights

Source: VA

The Department of Veterans Affairs on Feb. 17 announced a major new step to protect Veterans' Second Amendment rights. Effective immediately, VA will not report Veterans to the Federal Bureau of Investigation's National Instant Criminal Background Check System as "prohibited persons" only because they need help from a fiduciary in managing their VA benefits.

This corrects a three-decade-old wrong that deprived many thousands of Veterans in VA's Fiduciary Program of their constitutional right to own a firearm without a legal basis.

After a thorough review, VA recognized that many Veterans had been deprived of their Second Amendment rights without hearings or adequate determinations that they posed a sufficient risk of danger to themselves or others. In consultation with the Department of Justice, VA has determined this practice violates both the Gun Control Act and Veterans' Second Amendment rights. According to federal law, a decision by a judicial or quasi-judicial body is needed



before someone can be reported to NICS.

A determination by the VA that a fiduciary is needed to help manage a Veteran's VA benefits falls far short of this legal standard.

In addition to immediately stopping the reporting of VA Fiduciary Program participants to NICS, the department is working with the FBI to remove all past VA reporting from NICS, so no Veterans are unfairly deprived

of their Second Amendment rights based solely on participation in VA's Fiduciary Program.

"Many Americans struggle with managing their finances, and Veterans' Second Amendment rights shouldn't be stripped just because they need help in this area. But for too long, Veterans who needed the services of a VA fiduciary were deprived of their right to bear arms," said VA Secretary Doug Collins. "Under the leadership of President Trump, we're correcting this injustice and ensuring Veterans get the same due-process and constitutional rights as all Americans."

The Department of Justice supports this action.

"It is both unlawful and unacceptable for Veterans who serve our

country to have their constitutional rights threatened," said Attorney General Pamela Bondi. "It has been my pleasure to partner with Secretary Collins on this project, and I am directing the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms to review its regulations and propose changes that will prevent current and future violations of our Veterans' Second Amendment rights."

U.S. Navy Reserve Birthday

Franklin D. Roosevelt urges congress to create the U.S. Navy Reserve

From US Navy Reserve

The history of the Navy Reserve is a proud legacy forged by dedicated men and women who, when duty called, were willing to leave their homes, put civilian careers on hold, and serve in defense of our Nation.

At the beginning of World War I, a young Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Franklin D. Roosevelt, anticipated the need for a federal maritime reserve force and began to urge Congress to enact legislation to accomplish this goal. On March 3, 1915 the United States Naval Reserve was officially established, and by the war's end, over 250,000 Reserve Sailors were serving. During World War II, 84% of the 3.4 million Sailors serving on active duty came from the Navy Reserve — including five future U.S. Presidents.

From Korea to Vietnam, the Gulf War to Iraq and Afghanistan, and



humanitarian missions like Katrina and Haiti, Reserve Sailors have continued to answer our nation's call, providing strategic depth and critical expertise to the Navy, Marine Corps and Joint Force.

For the past 105 year history, Navy Reserve Citizen Sailors have set aside civilian lives to proudly serve in defense of the country. They've manned the rails in service to their nation — creating and maintaining a proud heritage and history built on the Navy core values of Honor, Courage and Commitment.

The Navy Reserve is a

force of highly experienced Sailors who come from all walks of life. They include teachers, engineers, business owners, medical professionals, construction workers, pilots and police officers. Their specialized knowledge and skills complement and enhance the ability of the Navy to successfully execute its mission, making the Navy

Reserve a key element of America's maritime defense strategy.

As the Navy Reserve continues to sail into its second century of service, its mission to support the Navy remains vital. Whether mobilizing for overseas contingency operations, providing humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, or supporting the fleet's forward presence requirements, Reserve Sailors are trained and ready — anytime and anywhere our country needs them.

Seabees Birthday

United States Navy Seabees officially established on March 5, 1942

AI generated history

The United States Navy Seabees, officially established on March 5, 1942, are the military's premier construction force, known for their ability to build and fight in every major U.S. conflict since World War II. Their nickname is derived from the first initials of "Construction Battalion" (C.B.), and their motto is "Construimus, Batuimus" (We Build, We Fight).

Origins and World War II

The Seabees were conceived after the attack on Pearl Harbor, when the Navy realized civilian contractors could not legally defend themselves in combat zones without being classified as guerrillas.

- **Founding:** Rear Adm. Ben Moreell, the "Father of the Seabees," received authority to form the first units in January 1942.

- **Recruitment:** Unlike typical recruits, the first Seabees were seasoned tradesmen—carpenters, electricians, and plumbers—often older than the average sailor, with physical standards waived up to age 50.

- **Key Feats:**
 - Pacific Theater: They built over 300 bases, including



the massive B-29 airbase on Tinian used for the atomic bomb missions.

- European Theater: Seabees were among the first ashore at Normandy on D-Day, using specialized pontoon causeways to land thousands of vehicles.

- **Integration:** Seabee units were among the first fully integrated units in the Navy; over 12,500 Black service members served in Seabee battalions during the war.

Post-War and Modern Era

Following WWII, the Seabees became a permanent fixture of the Navy's fighting force.

- **Korean War:** They provided vital pontoon causeways during the Inchon landings.

- **Vietnam War:** At their peak, 25,000 Seabees were

deployed, building runways, hospitals, and schools. Marvin Glenn Shields became the first and only Seabee to receive the Medal of Honor for his heroism at Dong Xoai.

- **Antarctica:** Beginning in 1955 with Operation Deep Freeze, Seabees built and maintained scientific research bases, including the Amundsen-Scott South Pole Station.

- **Modern Conflicts:** They provided tactical construction support in Iraq and Afghanistan, building forward operating bases and infrastructure under fire.

Ongoing Missions

Today, the Seabees continue to support global operations through:

- **Disaster Relief:** Providing immediate aid after disasters like Hurricane Katrina and the Haiti earthquake.

- **Civic Action:** Building infrastructure in underdeveloped nations to foster regional stability.

- **Special Assignments:** Maintaining Camp David and providing support for the State Department at embassies worldwide.

To learn more, you can visit the U.S. Navy Seabee Museum in Port Hueneme, California, which preserves their extensive unit histories and artifacts.

K-9 Veterans Day honors service of military working canines

This article is adapted and rewritten from an original piece by Nicole Cosgrove published on Dogster.com.

Each year on March 13, Americans pause to recognize a group of veterans whose service often goes unheralded—military working dogs. Known as K-9 Veterans Day, the observance honors the loyalty, bravery, and sacrifice of dogs that have served alongside U.S. military personnel in combat zones, on bases, and in specialized missions around the world.

While images of disciplined German Shepherds or Belgian Malinois wearing tactical gear may come to mind, the story of military dogs stretches far beyond modern battlefields. These animals have played vital roles for more than a century and continue to serve today.

A Long History of Canine Service

The organized training of dogs for security and military purposes dates back to 1899, when one of the earliest known canine training centers was established in Ghent, Belgium. The idea soon crossed the Atlantic. In the early 1900s, American law enforcement agencies experimented with imported Belgian sheepdogs, hoping to replicate European success.

Those early efforts were



uneven, and K-9 programs in the United States struggled to gain traction for several decades. Dogs were used sporadically in law enforcement, while their more consistent and impactful roles emerged within military operations—particularly during times of war.

From Experiment to Essential Asset

Following World War II, interest in K-9 programs resurfaced. During the 1950s, private companies began employing trained dogs for security work, and police departments revisited the concept. Some programs faltered due to limited need or lack of resources, but the groundwork was being laid for a resurgence.

A major turning point came in 1956, when the Baltimore City Police Department implemented a modernized K-9 unit. This effort proved successful and

helped establish K-9 teams as a permanent and respected component of American policing and military operations.

Today, working dogs are trained for tasks ranging from explosives and narcotics detection to patrol, search-and-rescue, and combat tracking. They are trusted partners, often placing themselves in harm's way to protect human lives.

Why March 13 Matters

K-9 Veterans Day was created by Joseph White, a retired military working dog trainer who spent his career alongside these animals. The date—March 13—marks the founding of the U.S. Army K-9 Corps in 1942, when dogs were formally recognized as part of the U.S. military during World War II.

Though not a federal holiday, K-9 Veterans Day has grown in recognition as veterans' organizations, law enforcement agencies, and communities take time to acknowledge the enduring contributions of these four-legged service members.

Remembering Their Legacy

Military working dogs are more than symbols or mascots—they are trained professionals whose courage and dedication have saved countless lives. K-9 Veterans Day serves as a reminder that service comes in many forms, and that some of our most faithful veterans answered the call on four paws.

Event recognizes veterans who served in military during Vietnam

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

National Vietnam War Veterans Day is observed annually on March 29 in the United States. It is a national observance that recognizes veterans who served in the US military during the Vietnam War.

History

March 29 was chosen as National Vietnam War Veterans Day because on March 29, 1973, Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV) was disbanded and the last U.S. combat troops departed the

Republic of Vietnam. The last unit was elements of MACV's Infantry Security Force (Special Guard), actually special couriers.

On March 29, 2012, President Barack Obama proclaimed March 29, 2012, as Vietnam Veterans Day. The proclamation called "upon all Americans to observe this day with appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities that commemorate the 50 year anniversary of the Vietnam War."

On December 26, 2016, the Vietnam Veterans Day Coalition of States Council presented a letter to President Elect Donald

Trump and Congressional leadership outlining the history and timeline of cause to establish March 29 as Vietnam War Veterans Day and requesting that it be one of the first legislations passed and signed into law during the 115 Congress.

On March 28, 2017, President Trump signed the Vietnam War Veterans Recognition Act of 2017. This act officially recognizes March 29 as National Vietnam War Veterans Day. The Act also includes the day among those days on which the US flag should especially be displayed.



Florida Veteran Affairs



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STEP 5: After your immediate needs are met, your Hope Navigator helps you map out and implement a strategic plan to achieve long-term goals of prosperity, economic self-sufficiency, and hope.

GIVE HELP

STEP 1: Scan QR code or visit hopeflorida.com and click "Give Help."



STEP 2: Complete sign-up form to give help through Hope Florida.

STEP 3: A member of the Hope Florida team will reach out to answer any questions and provide information.

STEP 4: Receive real-time alerts from Hope Navigators, either directly or through CarePortal, for ways to meet needs in your community.

STEP 5: Establish a personal connection with Floridians in need to provide meaningful support.

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INCREASE THE FUN FACTOR — Being surrounded by like-minded people offers you the chance to share experiences and make new memories together. Group travel can give you the chance to meet people and make new friends. You'll meet individuals who are also passionate about travel and have experiences that are similar to your own. With shared military backgrounds and values, camaraderie forms naturally and often leads to lasting friendships.

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All correspondence from the chapter will come from this address only.

If you have any questions, please contact our membership chair: Col Gary Nolan

Email: capecoralmoaa@gmail.com

Phone: 618-407-6945

Websites

Cape Coral MOAA
www.capecoralmoaa.org

FCoC
www.moaafl.org

MOAA National
www.moaa.org

Legislative Action Center
www.moaa.org/takeaction

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