

GREETINGS!

From the Vice President's Desk: Season's Greetings and a Call to Serve



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As we approach the close of another year, I want to extend my warmest wishes to each of you and your families for a joyful holiday season and a healthy, prosperous New Year. Whether you're celebrating with loved ones near or far, may this time bring peace, reflection, and gratitude for the service and camaraderie we share as members of the Tampa Chapter of MOAA.

Our chapter has functioned for the past few years because of the hard work and dedication of a small cadre of members who have spent countless hours serving on the board in multiple leadership positions. However, this is changing and has reached a critical juncture for the chapter. We are facing a critical challenge: WE NEED YOU! THE CHAPTER NEEDS YOU! The President, Vice President, Surviving Spouse Liaison, Assistant Treasurer positions will be vacant for 2026! We need volunteers to step forward. These roles are vital to our chapter's operations and future planning. If you've ever considered getting more involved, now is the time. No prior board experience is necessary—just a willingness to serve and collaborate with fellow officers. Please contact any current board member or email membership@moaatampa.org to learn more. We hope to fill these

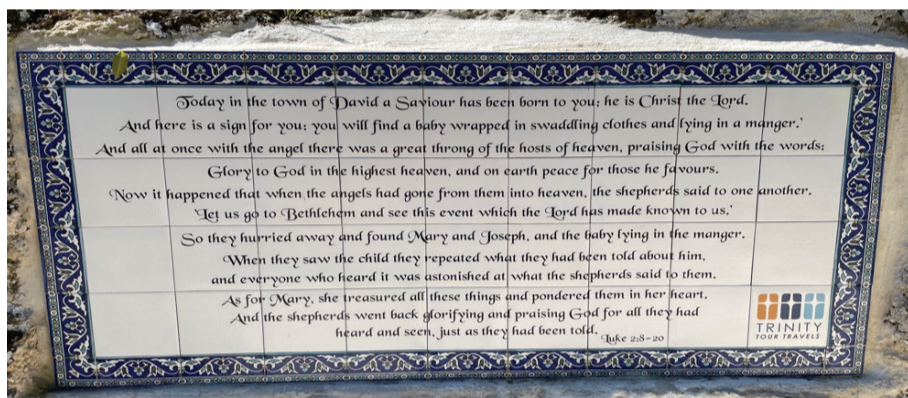
roles before our next quarterly meeting.

Additionally, a friendly reminder that dues for the 2026 membership year are now being collected. Timely renewal helps us plan events, support our initiatives, and maintain the strength of our chapter. Dues can be paid online via online, by mail, or in person at our next chapter luncheon. If you've already renewed—thank you!

Thank you for your continued support and engagement. Let's carry the spirit of service and fellowship into the new year with renewed energy and purpose.

Warm regards, Happy holidays, and Happy New Year!

Matt Mularoni
VP and Membership Chair
Tampa Chapter MOAA



—Photo credit Sara Marks



LEGISLATIVE LOWDOWN



BEN RITTER, SGT USMC
(FORMER)/HONORARY MBR

Capt NORM BILD,
USAF RET

On November 12, legislation ending the longest federal government shutdown in U.S. history passed the House 222-209 after clearing the Senate two days earlier, with a continuing resolution set to keep the government open through January 30. The president signed it into law late in the evening.

It's the first step in rebuilding a broken trust between lawmakers and the uniformed services and veteran communities. But it's far from the last. Here are three moves Congress should make to further that process:

1) Pass a Full Budget for FY 2026 ... and Beyond - This Congress' inability to pass a budget before the end of the fiscal year continues a pattern that's lasted decades. Lawmakers haven't passed a full slate of appropriations legislation on time since FY 1997, and the resulting continuing resolutions have lasted anywhere from a few days to a full year.

The latest continuance buys lawmakers a few weeks to get their house (and Senate) in order. Further extensions aren't the answer: Full funding for what's left of the fiscal year will

give servicemembers, veterans, and their families, caregivers, and survivors the certainty they need after months of doubt. The current shutdown-ending agreement moves the ball a bit forward on that process, including full-year funding bills for military construction and the VA; the Department of Agriculture and the Food and Drug Administration; and the legislative branch itself.

While MOAA and fellow advocacy groups have supported creative solutions and legislative workarounds to provide for our national defense and the servicemembers who make it possible, the true fix remains the simplest: Lawmakers should execute their own appropriations schedule rather than engage in brinkmanship throughout September (or longer).

2) Pass Protections for Those in Uniform - Passing a timely budget should be a top priority for all legislators, but seeing such a trend reversed in short order may be unlikely. That's why it's important for lawmakers to ensure servicemembers and their families are protected from future funding-lapse fall-outs – not through emergency bills introduced as the budget clock ticks down, but through bipartisan legislation passed outside the frenetic appropriations cycle.

As servicemembers have shown in recent weeks, and during past funding lapses, their duties don't stop even when their paychecks do. We know they will continue to serve, so they should know we will continue to pay them what they've earned through service and sacrifice.

This legislation should include all in uniform, not just the armed services – members of the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps missed checks while serving shoulder to shoulder with armed services personnel, and NOAA Commissioned Corps members missed checks while flying into hurricanes. They should not be neglected by lawmakers.

3) Change USPHS/NOAA Retirement Funding - Military and federal-service retirees saw their paychecks continue throughout the shutdown. Retired USPHS and NOAA Commissioned Corps members and survivors did not, even though they served honorably.

USPHS and NOAA Corps retirees receive their checks from the Coast Guard Pay and Personnel Center (PPC). During the recent shutdown, the PPC noted that these retirees would still receive pay slips, which are "automatically generated as part of the overall payroll process," but wouldn't get paid. Adding insult to injury, they also were instructed to coordinate with TRICARE and other insurance providers to make direct payments in lieu of allotments.

This isn't a simple oversight – this is a threat to the financial well-being of these retired servicemembers, many of whom live on fixed incomes. After the 2018-19 shutdown threatened Coast Guard retirees in the same fashion, Congress took action: The FY 2021 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) contained a provision moving that service's retirement pay under the Military Retirement Fund, ensuring it would continue during a shutdown. A similar move would protect the pay of current and future USPHS and NOAA officer retirees in the event of a funding lapse.

MOAA will continue to urge lawmakers to move forward in all three of these areas throughout this extended budget cycle and into the new year. Doing so is the definition of "supporting the troops" – words that ring hollow under the threat of missed paychecks, cuts to programs and services, last-second changes to orders and PCS schedules, and other annual budget-fueled problems.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Dec 3, 2025
Board of Directors Meeting
Virtual

Dec 11, 2025
Chapter Luncheon
11:30 AM – 12:00 PM Social
12:00 PM – 1:30 PM Lunch
Columbia Restaurant
([see page 9](#))

Jan 29-31, 2026
MOAA Florida Council of Chapters
Leadership Training Seminar &
49th Annual Convention
Rosen Center, Orlando, FL
<https://filmoaa.org/events/>



For all upcoming events click on the link to our website calendar:
<https://moaatampa.org/events/>

REMINDER:

SUBMISSION DEADLINE
FOR THE JANUARY 2026
ISSUE IS 20 DECEMBER 2025

Please submit articles in a Word Document and photos in JPEG
Email articles to
coms@moaatampa.org

NOTICE: If you have a change of address, please notify our membership team via email—Matt Mularoni at membership@moaatampa.org

LEGISLATIVE LOWDOWN *cont.*

National Family Caregivers Month: A Time to Reflect, Support, and Act – The year began with significant progress, but more work remains to help these unsung heroes. Celebrated every November, National Family Caregivers Month offers not only a time to honor those who care for our veterans, but to reflect on the progress made to provide the support they need ... and the work that still lies ahead.

The Senator Elizabeth Dole 21st Century Veterans Healthcare and Benefits Improvement Act marked a significant milestone in veteran and caregiver support. Signed into law Jan. 2, the Dole Act expands access to home and community-based services, strengthens VA's Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC), and launches pilot

programs to address workforce shortages in home care. These reforms will help veterans remain in their homes and communities, and will provide caregivers with better training, mental health support, and recognition for their vital role. MOAA continues to work closely with the VA and other stakeholders to ensure these provisions are implemented quickly and effectively.

NOTE: When MOAA Speaks, Congress Listens – You can track MOAA's progress on these fronts and other key legislative priority areas, and help our cause by sending messages to your legislators, by registering at MOAA National's **Legislative Action Center**: <https://moaa.quorum.us/>

Surviving Spouse Corner: The Empty Chair

—Submitted by Sara Marks, CAPT NC USN (Ret)



Author: Darcie Sims

There's an empty chair in our house and I am not sure what to do with it. It's been empty a long time and although we've moved more than a few times since it became empty, we still haul it around with us. It's not a particularly classic chair or even a very pretty one, and it is empty...all the time. No one moves it; no one suggests putting it away. No one sits in it. It's just an empty chair.

As a military family, we are used to having members of the family in faraway places for long periods of time. My father would be gone for up to a year or even two. His chair was often empty at the table. My husband's military career took him away for many months at a time, and his chair was often empty. And then when our daughter was commissioned in the military we knew her chair would also be empty at times. So empty chairs at our house are not an uncommon thing, but this chair — this chair — should never have been empty.

As the holidays approach, I am always faced with the task of deciding what to do with our empty chair. Should we put it away for the season? Should we decorate it? Or should we just ignore it? One holiday season, we did decide to put it away. Even though it was an empty chair, it left an even bigger empty space.

We've tried to ignore it, but its emptiness is very loud and it is hard to miss an empty chair in a room filled with people sitting in all the other chairs. An empty chair is not invisible. One year we decided to include it in our holiday decorating scheme. That led to some interesting discussions. Should we put a special holiday pillow in it? What about tossing a colorful quilt or afghan over the back? Should we put something in the chair? But nothing we tried could fill the emptiness of that chair. It just sat silent like a sentinel,



waiting for something...or someone.

It took us many years of living day in and day out with that empty chair to finally figure out what to do with it. Our empty chair is pulled up to the table and a single rose is placed on the plate, a symbol of everlasting love. The empty chair represents all of those who are not with us for this occasion but who live within our hearts forever. For us it is not a sad sight because we know that empty chair represents a love we have known and shared. And with that gift, our family is forever blessed.

We join hands in thanksgiving, completing the circle with the empty chair within our family circle, for even though death may have come, love never goes away.

So, if your holiday table will have an empty chair this year, remember that it is not truly an empty space. That place is still occupied by the love and joy of the one who sat in it. Don't hide that chair away. You may not wish to bring it to the table as we do, but take time this holiday season to remember the laughter, the joy, the love, the light of those who are no longer within hug's reach but whose love still fills us with gratitude.

Join hands around your table, however small, and say a prayer of thanksgiving...for the love you have known and still hold deep within your heart. You are rich beyond measure for having had a chair filled. Don't let death rob you of the heart space that love keeps.

We are a family circle, some chairs filled and others not, broken by death, but mended by love.

—Source: <https://www.taps.org/articles/30-4/emptychair>

MEDICAL CORNER

—Submitted by Sara Marks, CAPT NC USN (Ret)

Texas researcher narrows path to finding root cause of Gulf War illness

—By ROSE L. THAYER, STARS AND STRIPES

An American service member tends a burn pit in the Saudi Arabian desert in 1991. (Vince Crawley/Stars and Stripes) A new medical study found that the wide-ranging symptoms of Gulf War illness appear to be caused by a failure of cells to produce adequate energy, bringing experts a step closer to finding the root cause and a treatment.

The study, released Thursday in the peer-reviewed journal "Scientific Reports," builds on 30 years' worth of research from project lead, Dr. Robert Haley, an epidemiologist at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas.

"This is an important clue because it narrows things down," Haley said Wednesday in a phone interview. "Now we're trying to find the sweet spot that we could treat ... and then we have a really good chance of finding a treatment."

Following the Gulf War, which ended in 1991, returning veterans began reporting a wide range of chronic symptoms, including fatigue, fever, night sweats, memory and concentration problems, difficulty finding words, diarrhea, sexual dysfunction and body pain. The illness affects more than 25% of the 700,000 military personnel involved in the war, according to the research report.

Since then, academic researchers and the Department of Veterans Affairs have been looking for the cause among the many toxic exposures that veterans faced, such as burning oil wells, pesticides, nerve gas and anti-nerve gas medication, and depleted uranium.

At one point, it was even believed that it was the stress of war that caused the symptoms, Haley said. However, his own research released in 2022 linked the onset of Gulf War illness to some veterans' exposure to sarin, a deadly nerve gas.

Sarin, which the military has confirmed was present during the war, is a toxic, synthetic nerve agent that was first developed as a pesticide. It has been used in chemical warfare, and its production was banned in 1997.



—An American service member tends a burn pit in the Saudi Arabian desert in 1991. (Vince Crawley/Stars and Stripes)

When people are exposed to either the liquid or gas form, sarin enters the body through the skin or airways and attacks the nervous system. High levels of exposure often result in death, but studies of survivors have revealed that lower-level sarin exposure can lead to long-term impairment of brain function, according to the Texas university's research.

Last month, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recognized Gulf War illness as a legitimate medical condition linked to military service and created a medical diagnostic code for it. This move enabled doctors and scientists to more effectively track, document and treat patients.

In this latest study, which was funded through the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Army, Haley's team looked at 39 specialized images of the brains of Gulf War veterans with the illness and 16 without it. The brain scans came from members of the Navy Reserve's 24th Naval Mobile Construction (Seabees) Battalion — a group that Haley has

followed since 1995. MRI experts Richard Briggs and Sergey Cheshkov worked on the study to evaluate the scans and collect data, and the team found that those veterans with Gulf War illness had dysfunctional mitochondria, the structures responsible for generating the energy cells need to function. They identified this dysfunction based on increased creatine levels, Haley said.

"These veterans don't have damaged neurons — which would be incurable — but an energy imbalance," he said. "That suggests their symptoms could respond to new treatments." Haley studied brain scans about 25 years ago, but technology wasn't advanced enough for him to pinpoint — as he has in this study — what exactly was going wrong in the brain cells. With this information now confirmed, he's focusing on moving upstream from the problem to find a root cause. That is where any future treatment would need to focus.

"That would be the Holy Grail of this 30-year-long quest. If we find that and can find a medication that can restore it to normal functioning, everything might just get better," he said.

—Original source Stars and Stripes (MOAA email article): <https://www.stripes.com/veterans/2025-11-20/researcher-root-cause-gulf-war-illness-19822934.html>

THE TAMPA CHAPTER OF THE
MILITARY OFFICERS ASSOCIATION
OF AMERICA (MOAA)



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(former)/HONORARY MEMBER



MOAA MISSION STATEMENT

The Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) is a nonprofit veterans' association dedicated to maintaining a strong national defense and ensuring our nation keeps its commitments to currently serving, retired, and former members of the uniformed services and their families and survivors. Membership is open to those who hold or have ever held a warrant or commission in any component of the Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, Coast Guard, Space Force, Public Health Service, or NOAA and their surviving spouses.



TAMPA CHAPTER MISSION:

To maintain a strong national defense and to ensure our nation keeps its commitments to currently serving, retired, and former members of the uniformed services and their families and survivors.

GENERAL CONTACT INFO:

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NRL-BUILT CAMERA PROVIDES VIEW INTO SUN’S POLAR REGIONS

—Submitted by Sara Marks, CAPT NC USN (Ret)

U.S. Naval Research Laboratory
Story by [Maria Estacion](#)

WASHINGTON — The Solar Orbiter mission will use a U.S. Naval Research Laboratory-designed and -built heliospheric camera, known as SoloHI, to provide unique perspectives and unprecedented views of the Sun’s North and South poles. The spacecraft, a NASA and European Space Agency collaboration, launched aboard an Atlas V rocket at Cape Canaveral, Florida, Feb. 9.

A number of other solar missions are currently studying the Sun’s impact on Earth. Those spacecraft, however, travel in the same plane Earth orbits the Sun while the Solar Orbiter circles at an angle off this ecliptic plane to provide views of each pole.

“The magnetic field at the Sun’s poles are controlling the overall magnetic structure of the inter-planetary magnetic field. We’re just embedded in the Sun’s magnetic field,” said NRL astrophysicist Robin Colaninno. “When solar storms occur, that’s the Earth’s magnetic field interacting with the Sun’s magnetic field. That’s what generates aurora borealis and similar events that have a great deal of effect here on Earth.”

An aurora is a light show caused by collisions between electrically charged particles released from the Sun that enter the Earth’s atmosphere and collide with gases such as oxygen and nitrogen. The Northern and Southern Hemispheres light up around the magnetic poles.

Researchers can use SoloHI and the other nine instruments on Solar Orbiter to examine phenomena on the Sun like never before since the spacecraft looks down at the Sun, instead of viewing it from the side.

“We see an event at one point in the solar atmosphere. The question has always been, ‘does that instability occur in isolation or does it impact other regions as well,’” said SoloHI principal investigator Russ Howard. “Now, we will have a view of this whole region. If something goes off in one area, we’ll be able to see it propagating through the atmosphere.”

Solar Orbiter seeks to resolve the physics of the stream of charged particles from the Sun. SoloHI will image the variable solar wind as it leaves the Sun, and as it hits the spacecraft and heads to Earth.

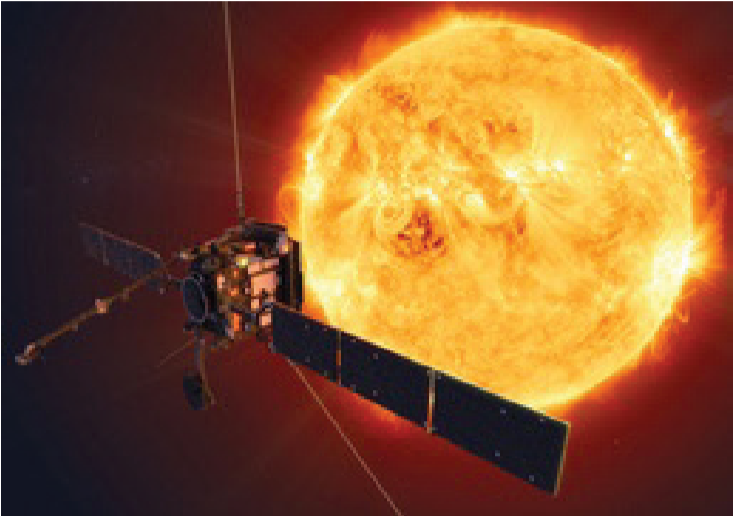
“We know that the interplanetary medium is filled with charged dust, but all the space weather models ignore this dust,” said Howard. “Solar Orbiter is putting the focus back on the processes that are involved in transporting material from the Sun to Earth.”

For the next seven years, scientists will look to Solar Orbiter to supplement results from other missions for a comprehensive look at this huge volume of space. Refined forecasts of solar storms, and other Sun-related disturbances, will improve satellite communications and spacecraft operations in the solar system.

About the U.S. Naval Research Laboratory

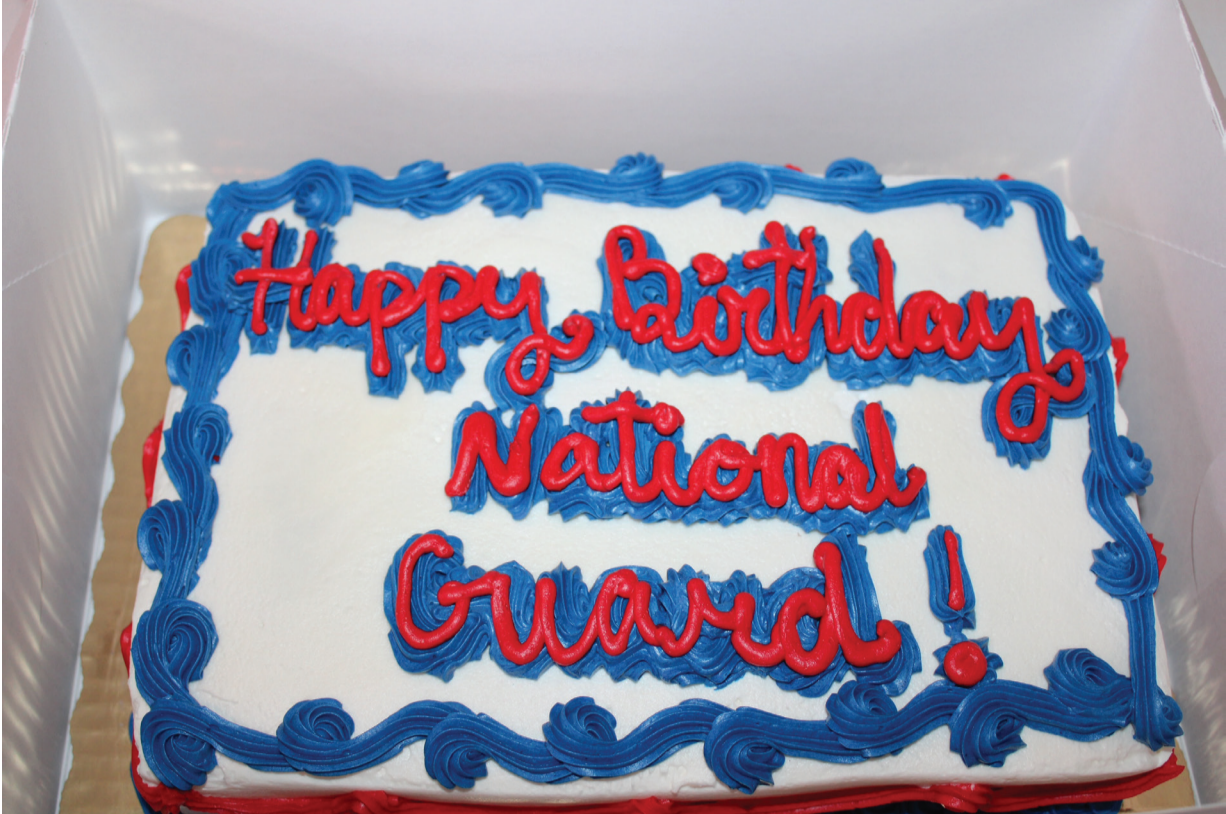
NRL is a scientific and engineering command dedicated to research that drives innovative advances for the Navy and Marine Corps from the seafloor to space and in the information domain. NRL headquarters is located in Washington, D.C., with major field sites in Stennis Space Center, Mississippi, Key West, Florida, and Monterey, California, and employs approximately 2,500 civilian scientists, engineers and support personnel.

—Source: <https://www.dvidshub.net/news/printable/362381>



CELEBRATION CAKES

—Photo credit Sara Marks



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Contact: Julie McRee, Director of Instructional Design & Online Learning
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TAKE COMMAND® Online Financial Readiness Program Expands College Accreditation Eligibility

FORT WORTH, TEXAS (February 2025) – First Command Educational Foundation (FCEF) announces expanded accreditation of its **TAKE COMMAND®** online financial readiness program by The American College of Financial Services. Now, all learners with a high school diploma (or equivalent) who meet admission requirements can earn college credits at no cost while strengthening their financial security.

Designed for service members (active, guard, reserves, veterans) and their families, TAKE COMMAND educates enrollees to make smart, informed financial decisions and effectively pursue long-term financial security from the time they enter military service until separation or retirement. Most courses take no more than an hour to complete and are accessible 24/7 via computer, smartphone, or tablet. Those successfully completing the program have an opportunity to earn up to three FREE college credit hours in consumer finance education. All TAKE COMMAND courses may be taken FREE of charge.

"Financial readiness is the basis for economic mobility. The American Dream is still alive and well, but only if you know the rules of the game. Programs like TAKE COMMAND provide so much more than just basic financial education, they empower individuals, families, and communities to achieve goals and unlock the lives they want to live," Timi Joy Jorgensen, PhD, Assistant Vice President, Financial Education & Wellbeing, The American College of Financial Services.

Tom Kuhar, CEO and President of FCEF shares, "Among the many challenges facing service members and their families, the need for foundational financial education is critical. TAKE COMMAND equips learners with the financial knowledge to shield them against uncertainties associated with a military career such as deployments, frequent relocations, changing pay and allowances, and other challenges. This knowledge helps them develop solid financial behaviors to propel them onto a path of financial security amid the rigors of military service."

For additional information on the news that is the subject of this release (or for course details, demo, or enrollment), contact Julie McRee or visit <https://fcef.com/military-financial-readiness/#take-command>. TAKE COMMAND is a registered service mark.

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Established in 1983, First Command Educational Foundation is a 501(c)(3) public charity that provides exceptional financial readiness programs and, with like-minded partner organizations, scholarships for our nation's service members (including federal civilian employees and veterans) and their families. FCEF does not endorse or favor any commercial supplier, product or service, or promote the services of a specific financial institution. All information provided is intended for educational purposes and is not to be considered financial advice. All personal information is kept strictly confidential. <https://fcef.com/>

DECEMBER LUNCHEON RAFFLE ITEM BUY YOUR TICKETS!!

—Photo credit Sara Marks



November Luncheon Photos

Photo Credit: Ben Ritter and Maryna Juman



ANTARCTICA: MY SEVENTH CONTINENT

—By Sara Marks, CAPT NC USN (Ret)



“For scientific leadership, give me Scott, for swift and efficient travel give me Amundsen. But when you are in a hopeless situation, when you are seeing no way out, get down on your knees and pray for Shackleton.” Sir Raymond Priestley, a member of the 1907-09 Nimrod Expedition.

This past month I made a trip to Argentina for the first time and then went on a 172 passenger ship through the Beagle Channel and the infamous Drake Passage to the Antarctic Peninsula and South Shetland Islands. There was a sense of excitement and nervousness of what to expect in the Great White Continent.

Antarctica is about the same size as the United States and Mexico combined. With all of its ice (90% of the world’s ice and 70% of its freshwater), Antarctica is the driest of all continents and the largest desert on Earth. Other interesting facts:

- No other continent has as high an average elevation as Antarctica.
- One of the biggest icebergs that ever broke off of the Antarctic ice shelf was 294.5 km (183 miles) long and 37 km (23 miles) wide.
- Antarctica has no official language, no capital and no currency.
- Antarctica has no permanent residents. The maximum population during the summer is around 4,000 people, reduced to 1,000 people in the winter,
- In June, during the long Antarctic winter, there is 24-hour darkness. And in December, in the short Antarctic summer, there is 24-hour daylight.
- Antarctica has no native population; before the 20th century nobody inhabited the continent.
- The first tourist ships left for Antarctic in the 1960s.
- The Grey-headed albatross, the Sooty albatross, the Fin whale, the Sei whale and the blue whale are some of the endangered Antarctic species.

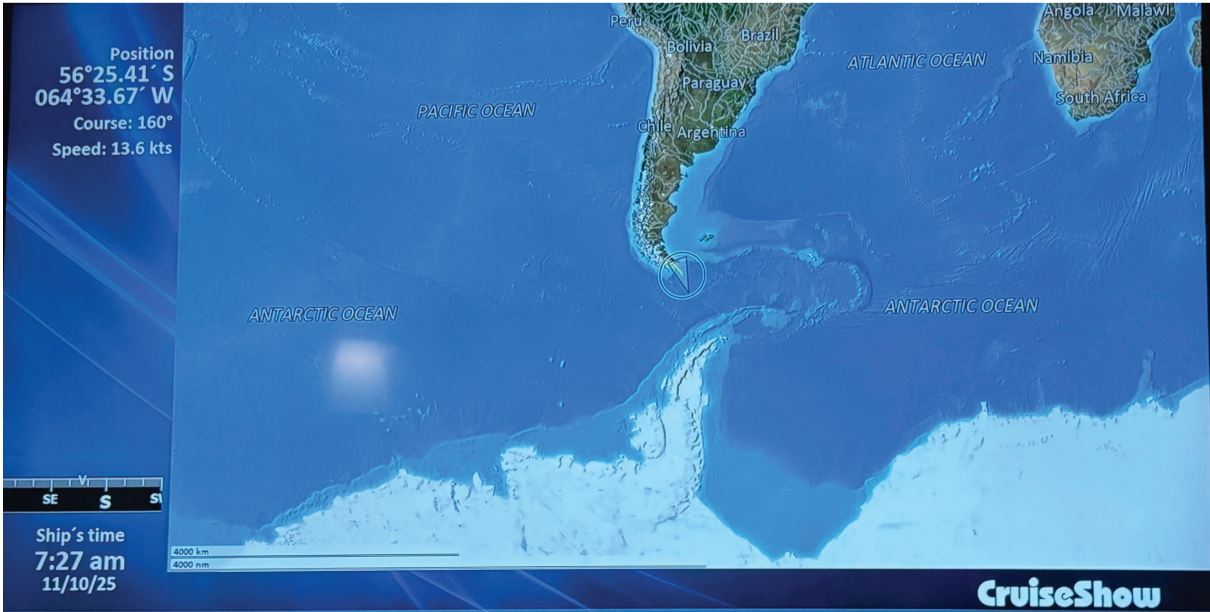
**Source: Aranda, Maria Cecilia, Antarctica Logbook – The Ultimate Journey/ Maria Celcila Aranda, Marta Cristina Velazquez; Adriana Beatriz Vilariño. 3a ed ampliada. Buenos Aires; Cóndor de Plata Ediciones, 2015.*

My trip included 2 continental landings (Portal Point and Neko Harbor), 3 landings on islands: Half Moon Island, Cuverville Island and Whaler’s Bay on Deception Island that is also an active caldera; 3 zodiac safaris in Charlotte Bay, Wilhemina Bay and Fort Point off of Geenwich Island and one can’t go to the Southern Seas and not take a dip in the water—yes, I did the polar plunge.

I heard 2 glaciers calve, saw many icebergs; 3 species of penguins: Adélie, Chinstrap and Gentoo penguins, 2 whale species: Humpback and Minke whales; 5 species of seals: Wed-dell, Crabeater, Elephant, Fur and Leopard seals; and many sea birds to include the Antarctic Tern, Blue-eyed Cormorant, South Polar Skua, Snowy Sheathbill and Snow Petral. Finally, I did actually see some krill. The looked like large pink tadpoles to me.

We had many lectures on the terrain, the birds, penguins, seals and whales in Antarctica. It was also important to learn about the explorers of the South Pole. I couldn’t help but wonder how they would marvel at the travel accommodations that my fellow travelers and I enjoyed, and at the same time thank them for paving the way.

It was an amazing adventure and to enjoy the pristine nature and absorb the beauty of God’s creation that, for me, seemed to calm my soul. I’m glad I went. There is so much more that I could say, but mostly I would say that I’m so thankful for the beauty of our Earth. It is a joy to explore nature and admire all of God’s creation—and by the way we are part of His creation.



Chinstrap penguin



Gentoo penguins



Lots of ice and penguins



Gentoo penguins



An elephant seal and Gentoo penguins.



A fur seal on Deception Island



Crabeater seal



A leopard seal resting on ice



Facts about Antarctica — Climate and geography

Coldest, driest, and windiest: It is the coldest location on Earth, holding the record for the lowest temperature ever recorded {-89.2° C or (-128.6° F). Due to low precipitation, it is also considered the world’s largest desert, larger than the Sahara.

Largest ice sheet: Antarctica’s ice sheet is up to 4.8 km (3 miles) thick and covers about 98% of the continent.

Sunlight: Because of the Earth’s tilt, the sun does not set during the summer and does not rise during the winter.

Lakes: Despite the cold, Antarctica has about 300 unfrozen lakes, including Deep Lake, which is so salty it can’t freeze.

—Source: Google

Notes from the Editor: CAPT Sara Marks, NC, USN (Ret)



November was a busy month for me with travel to my seventh continent, Antarctica. I've included a brief article on my adventure in the newsletter along with some pictures of some of my favorite penguins. More importantly I want to thank Bernie Lieving for so adeptly and gracefully filling in as the master of ceremonies at the November luncheon and for Maryna Juman and Ben Ritter for capturing such wonderful photos from the luncheon. I hope that each of you are planning to come to this December's luncheon. Take a peek at the Christmas raffle item that will be available.

In this edition of *The Retrospect*, I'd like to thank Fran Chancey for sharing her trip to Berlin with the Check Point Charlie Foundation and to Bob Sawallesh for his article about the history of the Operation Helping Hand logo. COL Allan Pedersen, the Chairman for the Coalition and Senior National Representative from Denmark thank you for this month's, Coalition Corner updates. In the Medical Corner there are new findings about the Gulf War Illness. These are just a few highlights of the articles in this edition of *The Retrospect*. Due to copyright issues, I'm not able to publish many articles without permission but have found links to several articles that I hope you'll take the time to "click" the links and read.

It's time to renew your membership no later than January 31, 2026. There is a renewal form in this newsletter, or you can click on the link that takes you to an online payment site. We're also looking for members to assist with various projects and for leadership positions.

Finally, and urgently, I know that many of you have noticed changes in our chapter leadership and other changes to come. Paula Stewart resigned as our chapter President due to her medical condition but has very graciously stayed on as our Immediate Past President. Charles Dalcourt, after five years serving as our chapter President, has stepped down from the board of directors due to work commitments. We will also be losing Matt Mularoni as Vice President due to his work commitments, but he will remain as our membership chair. Matt, thank you for maintaining that role and for your interim leadership. Finally, Kiley Stinson will be

stepping down as our chapter secretary due to his work commitments. It is painfully obvious that we will need each of you to step up in some way to help us move through this rough patch. I challenge each of you to contact either me or our treasure Lewis VanDyke to help us with a way ahead.

Chapter Members, this is your newsletter and your chapter so please share your talent and the leadership you displayed while on active duty and help MOAA Tampa Chapter continue to lead the way to a promising and adventurous future, especially for our JROTC students who look to us for our leadership and all we serve with scholarship funding and for supporting each other during and after our active duty service time.

It is always my pleasure and honor to serve as your Editor for *The Retrospect* and work on our chapter's website. My role as your editor continues to be an enriching and rewarding learning experience, but one that I don't do alone. In the meantime, I'll continue to share my travel adventures and would love to hear about your travels as well as your community involvement. Please send your stories to my MOAA Tampa email: coms@moaatampa.org.

Know your MOAA Tampa Leadership is working hard to keep our chapter involved in our many endeavors, and that we need each and every one of you to help our chapter continue its vibrant programs. Will you be the leaders to help MOAA Tampa? Finally, to quote Sir Raymond Priestley, who was a member of the 1907-09 Nimrod Expedition to the South Pole: *"For scientific leadership, give me Scott, for swift efficient travel give me Amundsen. But when you are in a hopeless situation, when you are seeing no way out, get down on your knees and pray for Shackleton."* I wonder who among our chapter will rise to the challenge of keeping our chapter strong. Are you the one that makes sure everyone returns from the South Pole? Come to the December luncheon and I'll share a bit about these brave men with you and my favorite explorer, Earnest Shackleton.

Let us never forget. - NEVER STOP SERVING! Sara Marks, CAPT NC USN (Ret)

THE RETROSPECT is published monthly by the Tampa Chapter of the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA), P.O. Box 6383, MacDill Air Force Base, FL 33608-0383. The Tampa Chapter is a 501(c)(19) tax exempt veterans' organization not associated with the Department of Defense and is an affiliate of the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA).

OUR EDITORIAL POLICY:
MOAA National, the Florida Council of Chapters, and the Tampa Chapter are non-partisan organizations. The views expressed in individually signed articles and the advertisements that appear in this publication/website do not reflect an endorsement by MOAA or this affiliate. Articles in the newsletter/website are the opinions solely of the individual authors and do not necessarily express the policy or opinions of the newsletter's editor or publisher, nor do they reflect an endorsement by the Tampa Chapter or the National organization of the Military Officers Association of America, unless so indicated. The views expressed in individually signed articles do not necessarily reflect Chapter policy. MOAA National, the Florida Council of Chapters, and the Tampa Chapter are nonpartisan organizations. Our chapter membership is open to all Military officers (Commissioned and warrant), including Active Duty, National Guard, Reserve, former officers, and spouses/surviving spouses of military officers.

Our luncheon meetings are held 1130 hours every second Thursday of each month at the Columbia Restaurant in Ybor City.

ON THE WEB:
Tampa Chapter <https://moaatampa.org>
Communications directed to specific board members listed in the main menu ABOUT US then LEADERSHIP may be made by emailing secretary@moaatampa.org or going to the main menu to CONTACT and email us using the form provided.
FACEBOOK: [MOAA Tampa Chapter](https://www.facebook.com/moaa.tampa)
INSTAGRAM: https://www.instagram.com/moaa_tampa

A password protected MOAA Tampa MEMBERSHIP DIRECTORY is posted on the website under the "MEMBERSHIP" category.
FL COUNCIL of CHAPTERS: <https://flmoaa.org/>

MOAA NATIONAL: www.moaa.org

OPERATION HELPING HAND: www.operationhelpinghandtampa.com

TAKE ACTION: <https://moaa.quorum.us/>

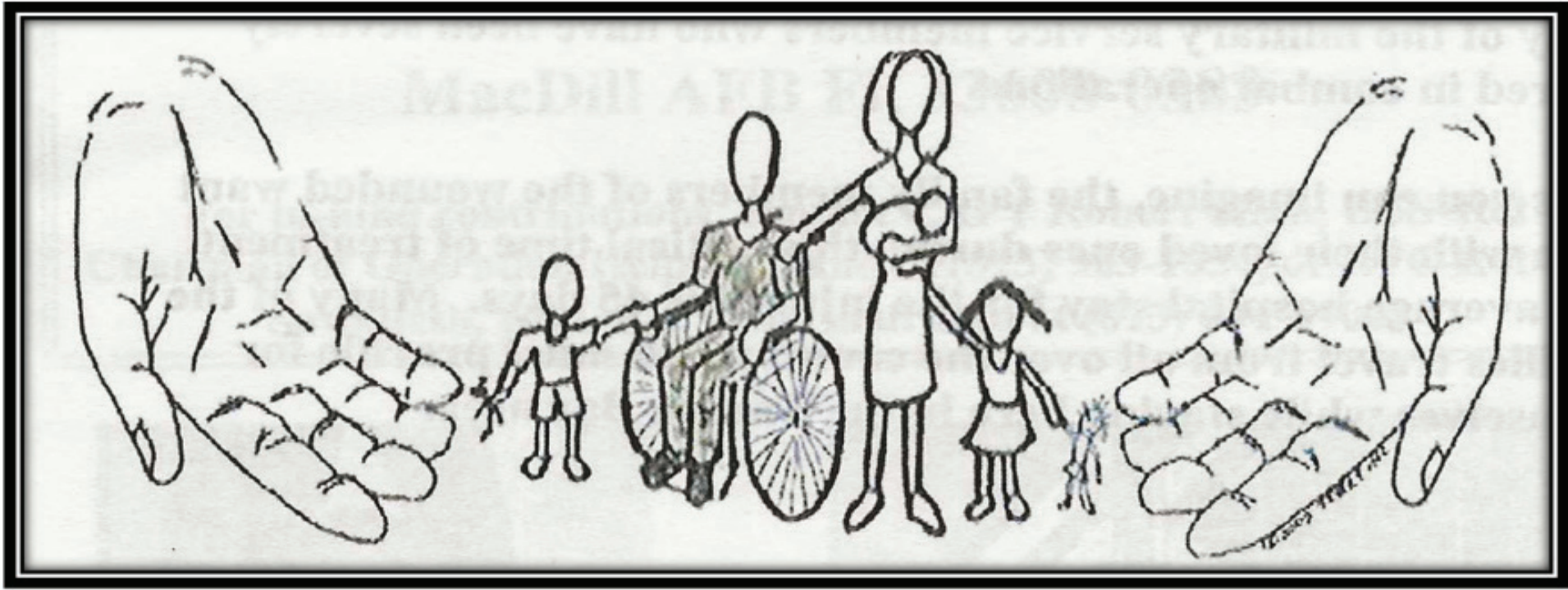
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As a member of MOAA, you are entitled to exclusive member benefits and discounts. Find out more about our member-only services and offers or explore the topics that most interest you.



History of the Operation Helping Hand logo

—Submitted by LTC Robert F. Sawallesh, US Army, Retired



Steven R. Terry

by LTC Robert F. Sawallesh, US Army, Retired

Operation Helping Hand, an Initiative of the Tampa Chapter of the Military Officers Association of America was formed in 2004 to assist the wounded and injured from the Iraq War and their families at the James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital in Tampa Florida.

The late Captain Robert J. Silah, USN, Retired, Chairman of Op HH stated in 2004 that we need an Op HH logo.


I mentioned that my son-in-law, Steven R. Terry, was a Fire Fighter and Medic with the Spring Hill, FL Fire Department and the Florida Army National Guard. And that he was an outstanding artist.

With in a week it only took my son-in-law a few minutes to draw the above Op HH logo. He drew one hand and my daughter, Jennie Terry Cook, an ARNP put the drawings on a computer and hence set up the Op HH logo.

First Sergeant Steven R. Terry, Florida Army National Guard, Retired, passed away in 2017. He was a veteran of the Iraq War in which he was awarded the Combat Action Badge.



Jennie Terry Cook



DECEMBER LUNCHEON MEETING

EVENT: Chapter Monthly Luncheon Meeting

DATE: Thursday, 11 December **TIME:** Social time 1130 hours, Meeting time 12 noon – 1330 hours

LOCATION: Columbia Centennial Museum, 2029 E 7th Ave, Ybor City

RESERVATIONS: Reservations must be made by NOON Friday, 7 November. Call 321-258-7388 OR via email to LunchReservations@moaatampa.org. Reservations are limited to 60. A Reservation Made is a Reservation Paid.

CANCELLATIONS: Cancellations must be made by NOON Monday, 10 November, by calling 321-258-7388 OR via email to LunchReservations@moaatampa.org.

COST: Event cost is \$35 payable by check or cash, \$36 by credit card (includes service charge).


MASKS: Masks are optional.

DRESS CODE: Proper attire is business casual for all (i.e., for men, slacks/collared shirts). Military uniforms are always appropriate.

MENU: 1905 Salad, Cuban Bread and butter, Roast Pork, Arroz con Pollo, Seasonal Fresh Vegetables, Platanos Maduros, Fresh Green Beans, Coffee, Iced Tea, Soft Drinks and a Celebration Cake for the National Guard and the Space Force

PARKING: Across the street from the Columbia Restaurant and behind the Columbia Restaurant

Luncheon reminders are sent via email. If you are not receiving the reminders, please call 321-258-7388 or send an email to LunchReservations@moaatampa.org to be added to the distribution list.



BULLETIN BOARD

CARING FOR OUR “SHUT-IN” MEMBERS

Our Chapter wants to become aware of members who are hospitalized, homebound, in care facilities or just plain sick and has provided a way for you to inform us. Please contact Lt Col Kiley Stinson, USAF Ret, Sick Call Chairman 813-957-1127 so that he may call or send cards to let them know they are missed.

Alternatively, you may send an e-mail to: Secretary@moaatampa.org

VETERANS TREATMENT COURT

Norm Bild is the MOAA Tampa contact for the highly successful Veterans Treatment Court in Hillsborough County. Contact him at (813) 205-1476 if you are interested in being a veteran mentor. He will also serve as an escort if you want to attend court sessions as an observer.

VOLUNTEER POSITIONS AVAILABLE

You'll hear the Chapter President frequently mention “Never Stop Serving,” and you'll see it sprinkled throughout this newsletter. This Chapter depends on that volunteer spirit from you its members to accomplish so many great things.

Everything the Chapter does is accomplished by volunteers, and there are currently several volunteer positions open, including: Surviving Spouse Liaison, Director of Outreach, Assistant Editor for the chapter newsletter *The Retrospect*, Assistant Secretary, Assistant Membership, Historian/Archivist, Public Affairs, Guard and Reserve Liaison, Scholarship Committee, Buddy Calls, Photographer, Fundraising and Advertising, 6th Medical Group Liaison, and VA Hospital Liaison.

If you would like to volunteer for or learn more about any of these positions, please contact the Secretary at Secretary@MOAATampa.org.

Keep Your MOAA Contact Updated

Please email any email address changes to “membership@moaatampa.org” or go to your account at moaa.org and update mailing address, phone number, email address under the “Profile Info” once logged into your account.


Florida Veteran’s Benefit Guide for 2025 Link:

<https://www.flipsnack.com/qcausamagazine/fdva-benefits-guide-2025/full-view.html>

IMPORTANT DATES IN DECEMBER



- 1 Civil Air Patrol (USAF Auxiliary) Birthday
- 2 Giving Tuesday after Thanksgiving
- 7 National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day
- 13 US National Guard Birthday
- 13 National Wreaths Across America
- 14-22 Hanukkah begins
- 20 Space Force Birthday
- 25 Christmas
- 26 Dec – 1 Jan 2026 Kwanza
- 31 New Year’s Eve



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Florida Veteran’s Benefit Guide for 2025 Link:

<https://www.flipsnack.com/qcausamagazine/fdva-benefits-guide-2025/full-view.html>

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED



Buddy Call Program

Let’s check on our chapter members over the holidays. Volunteers need to assist making calls!

Please contact CAPT Angie Nimmo, NC USN RET at **(760) 401-9718**

In Memorium

Surviving Spouse: Ms. Evelyn W. Bopp, age 101, passed away of natural causes on September 18th, 2025, at her home in Tampa, Florida. Her husband was Major Edward L. Bopp. <https://www.dignitymemorial.com/obituaries/tampa-fl/evelyn-bopp-12527706>

Former chapter member: Captain William “Bill” Lawrence Pray, USN (Ret.), 92 of Tampa, Florida passed away peacefully on November 5, 2025, in the presence of loving family. <https://www.dignitymemorial.com/obituaries/tampa-fl/william-pray-12598700>



OCS CONNECT

A PATH TO SOLUTIONS

OCS Connect was developed to support the families of high school seniors enlisting in the military by providing timely, reliable, and emotionally-grounded resources. We have built a trusted platform that bridges the communication gap between civilian families and the military structure, helping loved ones feel more informed and less alone during the enlistment journey.

To view upcoming Events & Podcasts: <https://www.ourcommunitysalutes.org/ocs-connect>

6th Medical Group, MacDill wants YOU!

WHAT: Red Cross Volunteer(s) to man the front entrance information desk at the 6th Medical Group.

WHEN: M-F, 0700-1630. Several individuals could make this very doable.

WHY: Currently Active Duty troops are manning the desk which means they are not available for other clinic duties.

POINT OF CONTACT: Diana Pagan - 813-827-9785



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2024-2025



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The

RETROSPECT

TAMPA CHAPTER — A FIVE STAR CHAPTER OF MOAA NATIONAL




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This award-winning, informative monthly newsletter, The Retrospect, is available on-line at www.MOAA Tampa.org and published on the MOAA Tampa FaceBook site. This publication is packed with information addressing our community based projects and updates readers on the national and local initiatives that improve the quality of life for all servicemembers, their families, and survivors. It also includes myriad non-political articles that are of interest to both military and civilian communities.

DIGITAL PUBLISHING			
Ad Deadline	Inserts	Advertising	Cost
Dec. 20 (2024)	Jan. 1	Half page (12.95" wide x 9.75" tall)	\$1,000.00
Jan. 20	Feb. 1	Quarter page (6.5" wide x 6.25" tall)	\$500.00
Feb. 21	Mar. 1	1/8 page (6.5" wide x 3.5" tall)	\$250.00
Mar. 21	April 1	DIGITAL AD FORMAT: Digital ads must be submitted in PDF, JPEG or EPS formats.	
April 20	May 1	NEED HELP? If you do not have a digital ad, we can create one for you. See chart above for pricing based on desired ad size.	
May 20	June 1	DEADLINE: See Digital Publishing table.	
Jun. 20	July 1	ADs are for 12 months. We can discuss pro-rating for shorter periods.	
July 20	Aug. 1		
Aug. 19	Sept. 1		
Sept. 20	Oct. 1		
Oct. 20	Nov. 1		
Nov. 21	Dec. 1		

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Volunteers Urgently Needed in the Following Areas at MacDill AFB:

Coping with Deployment Facilitator

Help provide skills to help military families cope with military life, especially deployments.
Must be mental health professional, holding a current license

MacDill AFB Clinic

Provide assistance with tasks in a clinical setting such as surgical prep; runner; charting; reception; prepare patients for treatment and administrative tasks.

MacDill Clinic Professional Volunteer

Provide assistance with a specific service or treatment to designated clients in an urgent care, outpatient/inpatient unit, or other health care settings.

MacDill AFB Pharmacy


Provide assistance with tasks in a clinical setting as well as support staff in a variety of direct and indirect patient care activities.

Additional security clearance may be required in compliance with government regulations

**Some positions such as clinic professional volunteer require a valid and current license in their field.


To learn more, visit redcross.org or contact:

Molly Gallagher, Senior Volunteer Recruitment Specialist
molly.gallagher@redcross.org



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*Discount is only applicable to new residents of a Brookdale independent living, assisted living, or memory care community admitting under an executed residency agreement. Discount applies only to the monthly fee/basic service rate, excluding care costs and other fees and is calculated based on the initial monthly fee/basic service rate.
**Discount is only applicable to new clients of personal assistance services by a Brookdale agency under an executed service agreement.
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Articles of Interest Found on the Web

—Submitted by Sara Marks, CAPT NC USN (Ret)



1. After 84 years the USS Arizona's unknowns may soon be identified.
<https://www.navytimes.com/veterans/military-history/2025/11/24/after-84-years-uss-arizonas-unknowns-may-soon-be-identified>
2. Meet the youngest Medal of Honor recipient since the Civil War
<https://www.navytimes.com/veterans/military-history/2025/11/21/meet-the-youngest-medal-of-honor-recipient-since-the-civil-war/>
3. Projecting Power from the Tower in Ramstein AFB
<https://www.war.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/4343524/projecting-power-from-the-tower/>
4. First unmanned surface vessel completes fastest transatlantic crossing
<https://www.war.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/4338641/success-at-sea-unmanned-surface-vessel-completes-fastest-transatlantic-crossing/>
5. How new tax laws may impact your charitable giving in 2025
<https://www.moa.org/content/publications-and-media/news-articles/2025-news-articles/finance/how-new-tax-laws-may-impact-your-charitable-giving/>

Support for All Who Serve

The Military Crisis Line is a free, confidential resource for all service members, including members of the National Guard and Reserve, and Veterans, even if they're not enrolled in VA benefits or health care.

Website: <https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/get-help-now/military-crisis-line/>



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In Afghanistan

Call [00 1 800 273 8255](tel:0018002738255) or DSN 111
In the Philippines

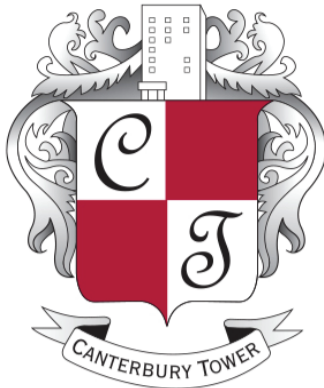
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Coalition Corner



Dear MOAA members,

This month I will elaborate a bit about the coalition and it's future.

There has always been an exchange of liaison officers at various military headquarters. At US CENTCOM the same applies, and at least since the Gulf War in 1990-1991 that has been the case. This accelerated after 9-11 in 2001 where the NATO article V (the oath of musketeers) came in use for the first time ever, supporting the USA against the terrorist attacks. Rather

quickly a coalition formed as the fight was taken to Afghanistan and Al Qaida. Shortly after the second Gulf War in 2003 was a reality, and the Coalition grew bigger and stronger. This continued with large troop deployments to both Iraq and Afghanistan. Later in 2014 ISIS emerged in Syria and Iraq and a political coalition was formed: The Global Coalition against ISIS. This coalition consists of more than 80 countries and still meets on a regular basis led by the US.

The coalition initiated a military coalition as well, known as the Combined Joint Task Force Operation Inherent Resolve. This smaller military coalition or unit only consists of 20-some countries today. Predominantly from the western democracies and with the motto: One mission, many nations. Over the last couple of years, the mission success in Iraq has seen a shrinking Coalition and as of September this year the Coalition has ceased operations in Federal Iraq and most of the troops has redeployed to the city of Erbil in the Kurdish region of Iraq where operations to defeat ISIS in Syria continues.

However, with the fall of Assad in Syria it has opened for some new opportunities to finish off ISIS. It is still early days for this, but the new Syrian Government seems to be saying the right things and seems keen on keeping Syria as stable as possible. The official recognition of the new Syrian Government is still awaiting the international community, but the lift of sanctions and willingness to cooperate with the West is a very positive sign. As opposed to more Russian and Iranian influence.

During my tenure at US CENTCOM, I have come to realize a distinct difference from the European model and the US model of employing military forces. In the USA, the Combatant Commands are very powerful and with a direct link to the Secretary of War and the President surpassing the State Department sometimes. In the European countries it is the other way around. The Ministries of Foreign Affairs are deciding where to project military power case by case.

US CENTCOM priorities are to defend the homeland, deter conflict in the region and compete with China.

As you probably note from all the events, the fight against ISIS in Iraq and Syria seems to be the least of all the problems in the region. The coalition members do though have a wish to ensure that ISIS will not emerge again with external ambitions to conduct attacks against our countries. But right now, we are getting close to a crossroad or a decision line, as we call it in the military. The coalition as we know it will evolve into something new over the next few years. We don't know for sure which way it will go, but the fight against ISIS is coming to an end.

Due to the US national priorities to pivot towards competition with China, US CENTCOM will need to only employ the number of troops needed for keeping a lid on the region. Everything else will be needed elsewhere. The same goes for the US troops in Europe. We as Europeans do indeed understand this, and we are ramping up the defense expenditures. However, as we as Europeans look towards either Russia or Africa (illegal migration) and the US looks at either the Homeland or China that might leave the Middle East in a peril.

Most likely both the US and the Europeans will have to be present in the Middle East, but we must also make sure that on one hand the regional countries trust each other, and on the other hand are strong enough (and willing) to address their internal problems themselves, without inviting Russia, Iran or China into the region as the partner of choice. And this might be where the coalition gets into play in a new role in that specific region.

This is no easy feat, and I do not have the answers to this possible strategic dilemma of balancing the efforts against these three actors. But I do know that the military is not the only solution. It takes a whole of government approach, and it takes unity of the western world to address this.

Naturally, the coalition is a diverse group regarding languages and cultures. We must take national priorities into account and messages does not necessarily resonate well with all of us. But if we all dare to share, if we dare to include each other the communication can elevate both the breadth and the depth of our mutual understanding as well as the operational plans. If we dare to invest the time and energy in the engagements and try to understand the differences, then we will all benefit from this.

The coalition is our comparative advantage.

Regards,
Allan Pedersen
Colonel, Senior National Representative for Denmark and Chairman of the Coalition

Check Point Charlie Foundation “Welcome Home Tour Nov 2025”

—By Fran Chancey, LTC USA (Ret)

On the 36th anniversary since the fall of the Berlin Wall, I along with eight other American veterans, who were stationed in West Berlin during the Cold War, were invited back on a “Welcome Home Tour” by the Check Point Charlie Foundation (<https://www.cc-stiftung.de>) to visit the city we helped defend. The last time that I arrived in Berlin was in 1975 after graduating as a Morse Code Intercept Operator assigned to the US Army Security Agency Field Station Teufelsberg (The Hill.)

As a 21 year old soldier, arriving in a city completely surrounded with an imposing wall manned by armed guards of the GDR and USSR, I got to see firsthand what life without Freedom was like for those living in East Berlin. Today, after almost 50 years, I was able to stand on the opposite side of the Brandenburg Gate.

Our presence in West Berlin served as a deterrent to Soviet Aggression and ensured the freedom of the people living there. On the “Hill” our mission along with British Forces was to intercept communications and locate and track the movements of the opposing forces.

During this tour I was able to learn about the role our other US Forces played in protecting not only the “Hill” but the city and its inhabitants. We visited parts of the city that I was never permitted to see when assigned there and learned details I didn't know about the history of the Cold War.

On the first day of the weeklong program, we took a tour of West Berlin. The tour included visiting the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church, the Schoeneberg City Hall where President John F. Kennedy made his famous speech in 1963 as well as the German Defense Ministry and the German Resistance Memorial Center where they executed leaders of the July 1944 plot to assassinate Hitler.



We also had a chance to see how the Potsdamer Platz square that once straddled the Wall as a “No Man's Land” has been restored as a bustling center for commerce in the heart of the city.

Our journey took us to parts of former East Berlin including the Soviet War Memorial at Treptow Park and the Museum Berlin-Karlsborst where the German military surrendered on May 8, 1945.

The highlight for me was visiting the remnants of the former Army Security Agency Field Station Teufelsberg where I was a Morse Code Intercept Operator from 1975 to 1978 listening to the Russian Spetsnaz. Tempelhof Airport is another historic site we visited where the airlift and flight of thousands from the Soviet Sector took place.

The Foundation generously arranged for a private tour of the Reichstag, home of the German Parliament as well as lunch with Gunter Grassler, a former GDR Staatssicherheit and author of Doppelnullagent Nr. 7 OST. To round out this special experience we visited the Hohenschonhausen Memorial sometimes referred to as a Stasi Prison.

On this whirlwind homecoming, we had the opportunity to stand at the Brandenburg Gate where President Reagan challenged Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev saying “Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!” on June 13, 1987.

Anyone who served in West Berlin during the Cold War wishing to attend in 2026 should contact the Berlin US Military Veterans Association (#BUSMVA) <https://berlinveterans.com/>



How We Help and Why You Should Join!

The TAMPA CHAPTER-MOAA, one of the largest and recognized as one of the top chapters in the Nation, has a very basic and focused approach for all officers on Active duty, Reserve, National Guard, and retired officers–WE’VE GOT YOUR BACK!

Some of the local community outreach our Tampa MOAA chapter members are involved with include: Veterans Treatment Court, Operation Helping Hand, funding local MOAA Scholarships, Transition support from military life, coordinating with our MacDill AFB Coalition partners with chapter activities, our Chapter Buddy Check initiative, and supporting the local ROTC/JROTC.

NEVER STOP SERVING!



The Tampa Chapter of the Military Officers Association of America, Inc.

P.O. Box 6383
Tampa, FL 33608-0383



MOAA Tampa Chapter Dues Renewal Form

Deadline for renewing your membership is January 31, 2026

Name _____

Rank_____ Service_____ Status_____ (AD, Retired, Former)

Check here if there are no changes_____

----- Please complete the form below only if there are changes from last year. -----

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Visit <http://www.moaatampa.org/> to make these changes online and to see all that MOAA has to offer.

There are 3 ways to pay your dues:

1.

Online at <https://my.cheddarup.com/c/tampa-chapter/>
2.

Paying in person at the monthly member luncheons (2nd Thursday of every month)
3.

Mailing this dues renewal form

Please consider donating to our chapter scholarship fund and other charities - JROTC leadership camp Thriving After Military Service Program, Tampa Veterans Treatment Court.

Amount enclosed:

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\$ 30.00

Additional Contribution

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I give my permission: signature: _____

Wartime Service: Please circle applicable information and provide dates of service:

World War II _____ Korean War _____ Vietnam Era: _____ Vietnam (in country) _____

Gulf War (Desert Shield/Storm) _____ Lebanon, Grenada, Panama _____

Iraq/Syria (OIF/New Dawn/OIR) _____ Afghanistan (OEF/ORS/OFS) _____

OR check No service during any of these periods of time _____

Tampa Chapter Annual Dues: \$30.00; ----- No fee for Active Duty or Surviving Spouses.-----

You may bring the completed form to any Chapter event, or you can mail it with your check (payable to **MOAA Tampa Chapter**) to: **Matt Mularoni, C/O MOAA Tampa, PO Box 6383, Tampa, FL 33608-0383.**

Email questions to: membership@moaatampa.org

*** The Chapter has my permission to list only my name and rank as a new member in our Chapter Newsletter, *The Retrospect*". **YES** _____ **No** _____

CHAPLAIN’S CORNER

—By Sara Marks, CAPT NC USN (Ret) —Photo credit Sara Marks

The Greatest Love Story Ever Told and the Most Amazing Rescue Operation Ever Conducted

As we approach the holiday season and Christmas in particular, I can’t help but to reflect on my time in Bethlehem in January 2020 and in March 2023. I learned that in Hebrew Bethlehem means “house of bread.” How interesting that Jesus said, “I am the bread of life” John 6:48. The Christian population is dwindling in Bethlehem, but the Church of the Nativity is still an active Parish. The Church of the Nativity is over 1700 years old and was commissioned by Constantine the Great a short time after his mother Helena’s visit to Jerusalem and Bethlehem in 325-326 AD on the site traditionally considered to be the birthplace of Jesus (Wikipedia 28 Nov 2025).

I also visited the Shepard’s Fields. The angels appeared to the Shepards to announce the birth of Jesus. Note that the fields are on the way to Jerusalem where the Temple is located (all that remains now is the Western Wall). It was required to bring a perfect lamb to offer as a sacrifice when going to the Temple, so these Shepards had very special lambs under their care. It was so interesting to me how close things are in the Holy Land. Jerusalem is only about 5 or 6 miles from Bethlehem and can be seen from afar. I was able to see a likely simulation of where the Holy Family stayed in Bethlehem in the Shepard’s Field. A family’s

animals were not far from the home and even on the lower floor. A manger was actually a stone and was used as a trough to hold food or water for the animals.

I have to admit it’s a bit daunting to attempt to write something for the Chaplain’s Corner. I am obviously not a chaplain or even a member of a lay religious order, but I am a very devout Christian of the Catholic tradition, very much in love with Jesus and absolutely adore studying the Bible as well as recalling my precious time in the Holy Land. So aside from sharing my pictures and some very brief explanations of two of the sites in Bethlehem, The Church of the Nativity and The Shepard’s Field, I pray that as we approach Advent, a season of preparation for Christmas that lasts 4 weeks, I hope that each person takes time to reflect on the upcoming Christmas season no matter what your faith tradition.

I can say with great certainty that Christmas is the beginning of the greatest love story ever told, and with Jesus coming as a vulnerable baby, also the greatest rescue operation ever completed. Who knew that he would infiltrate the Roman Empire as a baby and condescend to live among us. And a spoiler alert, 33 years later He overcame death and completed our rescue. We just need to do our part. So let us reflect on His great gift of His mercy and grace as we celebrate the joy of this season.

Peace and joy to you and your family and friends



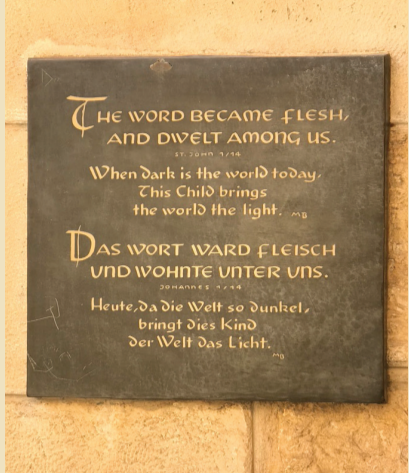
A tiled image of a pregnant Mary with her spouse Joseph entering Bethlehem.



Church of the Nativity. Notice the low entrance to the Church of the Nativity. One must humble themselves when entering.



Inside the Church of the Nativity. The original stones and many mosaics have been preserved.



The spot that is believed to be where the baby Jesus lay in a manger in the Church of the Nativity.



Exiting the site of where the baby Jesus is believed to have been born in Bethlehem in the Church of the Nativity.



The entrance to the Shepard's Field in Bethlehem.



HAVE YOU VISITED OUR WEBSITE AND ‘LIKED’ OUR FACEBOOK PAGE?

WWW.MOAAATAMPA.ORG and Facebook: [MOAA Tampa Chapter](https://www.facebook.com/moaa.tampa)

The MOAA Tampa website is a comprehensive and valuable tool that you can use to make the most of your MOAA Membership. Some of the things you can find on our website include:

Events Calendar: We have a new “Events” page where you will find an updated calendar, displaying our upcoming MOAA events. Click on our [Events Page](#) to check it out!

Photo Gallery of Events: This is our photo gallery, where you will see all of the photos during our luncheons, special meetings, conventions and more! If you’ve had your picture taken at our events, you can likely find it by scrolling through our [Photo Gallery](#)!

Newsletters: Here you will find the latest volume of *The Retrospect*, our award winning Tampa Chapter Newsletter. You can also access archived versions of *The Retrospect* for reference and research. In addition, you can find archived versions of the Military Spouse Newsletter, which has been merged into *The Retrospect* starting in August 2019. Visit [The Retrospect](#) page to read on!

Member Directory: You can access an electronic version of our Member Directory on our website. The list is password protected for safety of our private information, but MOAA Tampa Chapter Members can be provided the pass-word to access. You can also download an Excel version of the list once permitted into the page. Check out the [Member Directory](#) now!

Facebook: Visit us on Facebook at [“MOAA Tampa Chapter”](#) where you can scroll through our photo albums, like and share our posts, and stay up to date on Tampa Chapter news and events.

Check out our NEW Instagram account!
https://www.instagram.com/moaa_tampa/



THE TAMPA CHAPTER RATED FIVE STARS 2003, 2005-2010, 2012-2017, 2019-2024

5 Star MOAA Chapter
2003 • 2005 - 2010
2012 - 2017 • 2019 - 2024

TAMPA
MOAA

2020 - 2024 Recipient of the
5 Star Col. Marvin J. Harris
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“NEVER STOP SERVING”