

# Get Ready

Prioritizing combat readiness  
and mission execution





# Revolutionizing Association Voting: ROA Introduces Online Ballot Casting!

**E**xciting changes are here! The way ROA members vote on resolutions and elections has officially been modernized. For the first time, all members will have the power to cast their ballots online—directly through ROA's website!

## Empowering Every Member

This shift to online voting ensures that every eligible ROA member has a say in leadership elections and key resolutions. Greater accessibility means a stronger, more engaged organization—one where decisions truly reflect the collective voice of the membership.

## What's Changing?

- ✓ **Resolutions & Elections** – All members can now vote online via ROA's secure website.
- ✓ **Increased Accessibility** – No more travel restrictions or missed opportunities—vote from anywhere!
- ✓ **Faster Results** – Counting digital ballots and finalizing results will be quicker and more efficient.

## What's Staying the Same?

- ◆ **Amendments to ROA's Constitution & Bylaws (C&B)** – These will still be considered by delegates at the Annual Meeting, ensuring that structural changes receive the detailed deliberation they deserve.

## A New Era of Engagement

This transformation is more than convenience—it's about empowerment. The ability for every member to vote strengthens the democratic process within ROA, making it easier than ever for members to shape the future of the organization.

## How Should You Prepare for this Opportunity?

If you have never signed in to ROA's website before, take a moment to do so. Make a note of your password so you are ready on September 1. If you don't know your username and/or password, contact member services at [roainfo@roa.org](mailto:roainfo@roa.org).

If you need to vote by paper ballot, contact member services at [roainfo@roa.org](mailto:roainfo@roa.org) or call 202-646-7733 no later than August 1 to request a paper ballot. Mail-in paper ballots must be received by ROA HQ no later than September 20.

## Planning Calendar

Jun 3	<b>Resolutions:</b> New resolutions will be distributed to departments to allow time for feedback prior to the Town Hall.
Jun 4	<b>C&amp;B:</b> Department-sanctioned proposed C&B amendments are due to National HQ. <a href="mailto:dmarkham@roa.org">dmarkham@roa.org</a>
Jul 18	<b>Candidates:</b> Endorsement letters for national officer candidates are due to the voting officer. <a href="mailto:dmarkham@roa.org">dmarkham@roa.org</a>
Jul 19	<b>C&amp;B:</b> Proposed C&B amendments are sent to departments for review.
Aug 5	<b>Candidates:</b> Virtual Army Section Meeting – All Army members are invited to meet the candidates and vote for your service section's nomination.
Aug 6	<b>Candidates:</b> Virtual Naval Services Section Meeting – All Naval Services members (Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, PHS, NOAA) are invited to meet the candidates and vote for your service section's nomination.
Aug 7	<b>Candidates:</b> Virtual Air Force Section Meeting – All Air Force and Space Force members are invited to meet the candidates and vote for your service section's nomination.
Aug 13	<b>Resolutions:</b> Virtual Town Hall. All members are invited to attend to review and discuss proposed resolutions.
Aug 20	<b>C&amp;B:</b> Virtual Town Hall. Delegates will review and discuss proposed C&B Amendments.
Sep 1-30	<b>Candidates &amp; Resolutions:</b> Voting Period. An email will be sent to every member with an email address on file to announce the voting period for elections and resolutions.
Oct 17-19	<b>Annual Meeting:</b> Elections and resolutions voting results will be announced. Delegates will vote on proposed C&B amendments.

Keep an eye on ROA's website and communications to ensure you're ready to take part in this exciting new chapter!

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ROA  
RESERVE ORGANIZATION OF AMERICA

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Lt. Gen. Robert Harter, Chief of Army Reserve and Commanding General, U.S. Army Reserve Command, takes the Army Combat Fitness Test with Soldiers of the 9th Mission Support Command on Fort Shafter Flats, Hawaii, April 4, 2025. The Army Reserve maintains a global footprint, providing critical sustainment capabilities and enablers, enhancing interoperability, and increasing collective readiness. Photo by Cody Ford, 9th MSC Public Affairs

# Leadership is not a title—it's a legacy of influence

**L**eadership and followership are inherently interconnected. Great leaders are often great followers, understanding the dynamics of influence and collaboration. My journey into leadership began early in life, shaped by experiences such as participating in an Air Force Junior ROTC program during high school and observing my mother, who was thrust into a leadership role at a young age. These experiences instilled in me a deep appreciation for leadership, which I further developed as president of my fraternity, an elected member of the student congress at the University of Oklahoma, and ultimately as a commissioned officer of the United States.

One lesson has remained constant throughout my life: leadership is not defined by a title. My personal definition of leadership is the ability to influence people, regardless of the circumstances or reasons. History is replete with examples of leaders in positions of authority who failed to secure the trust and influence of those they led. Conversely, there are countless informal leaders—without titles or official recognition—whose personalities and character traits have inspired and influenced hundreds, if not thousands, of people.

This principle of leadership is exemplified by the hard work and dedication of your executive committee, the association's committees, and the staff of ROA. Together, they have demonstrated why ROA is not just an association but a leadership organization. General Phillips has provided invaluable historical context, highlighting how ROA filled a vacuum of national security leadership during its formation. While many think tanks, nonprofits, and trade associations have since emerged to address similar gaps, ROA remains unique in its unwavering advocacy for the combined Reserve Components.

Vision29, our strategic plan, serves as the blueprint for what it means to lead in our space—a space we own, not share. For example, while many organizations include the Reserve Component in their advocacy efforts on Capitol Hill, they often use the term “Veteran” broadly, overlooking the unique contributions of Reserve Component members who dedicated their careers in uniform but are not classified as veterans. ROA stands apart in its commitment to ensuring that RC members are recognized and represented. No other association is as committed to advocating for Title X members unless it serves their broader agenda. ROA is unique in advancing a reserve-centric agenda that lifts all RC boats—not just Title X—ensuring that every member of the Reserve Components is represented and supported.

While partnerships with other organizations can be valuable, as there is strength in numbers, it is not the quantity of members

or attendees that drives an agenda. True influence stems from the reputation and credibility of an organization. ROA's leadership is not defined by the size of its membership but by the impact of its advocacy and the respect it commands in its space.

Many of you joined ROA during a time when the association had a staff of over 30, occupied the entire Minute Man Building, and rented additional space in Arlington, Virginia. Conventions and leadership meetings drew thousands of attendees. It is easy to equate the size of these gatherings or membership numbers with influence. However, influence is not solely about quantity. Consider the digital creators whose subscribership reaches tens of millions, yet they never formally sign anyone up. Influence is about the ability to inspire action and shape outcomes, and ROA continues to excel in this regard.

As we move forward, let us remain focused on our mission of leadership and advocacy for the Reserve Components. Vision29 is our guide, ensuring that ROA continues to lead in its space with purpose and influence.

As we bid farewell to the Greatest Generation, we are navigating a pivotal transition in the workforce—from Baby Boomers and Gen-X to Millennials, Gen-Z, and the emerging Gen-A. ROA is not only adapting to this shift but leading the way forward with purpose and influence.

We lead. We are influential. And most importantly, we deliver.

It takes just one person to change the world, and ROA embodies that light and that change. We are born for this mission, and we embrace it with unwavering commitment.

As I reflect on our journey, I am reminded of the remarkable leadership of General Phillips. He has been the steadfast leader this association needed during times of turbulence, challenging terrain, and choppy seas. His legacy—both on me personally and on the association—is undeniable. Thank you, Jeff, for your vision, endurance, passion, and ownership. ROA is stronger today because of your direct impact on its mission.

To the team: we are just getting started. Our agenda is ambitious, and the road ahead is filled with opportunities to make a difference. Let us continue to engage and advocate for the needs of our comrades, ensuring parity and progress for all Reserve Components.

Layne R. Wroblewski, Lieutenant Colonel, USAF (Retired)  
83rd ROA National President



# The strongest advocate

**W**elcome to the new, budget-friendly format of *Reserve Voice Magazine!*

Your ROA continues its revitalization. Our legislative and military policy campaign is strong and influential! We are strengthening membership services with a revitalized ROA Academy that equips members with essential tools to enhance member engagement.

The newly enacted ballot voting for national office is enfranchising the voice of our members in an historic fashion. And our finances are stable — in fact we are “ahead of budget” and rebuilding our fiscal reserves. The decline in membership numbers is the one persistent problem. Some of us believe membership is dead. Some of us believe it is the soul of the association. Some of us see a hybrid.

I have championed membership and the “distributed organizations” — chapters and departments — that engender camaraderie, community visibility and service, and can wield political clout.

When someone intones that some circumstance “will change us forever” — COVID was an example: people would cease congregating, downtowns would die, and so forth — I suggest that circumstances change but human nature endures. We are social creatures.

In fact, we are seeing the resilience of human nature: chapters at Grissom Air Reserve Base and in Minnesota have been revitalized, and in Michigan the department president reports new and young members.

My new book, *Warrior Strategy: Achieve any Goal by Mastering this Battlefield ‘Secret’*, adapts the Army War College’s “ends, ways, means” strategy-development model for young managers.

If the end state of ROA is influence of law and policy for national security, we must explore all *ways* possible to attain that *end*. Traditional membership is one way.

We have bruited about another way — what I call the “participating advocate.” This person may not wish to be a member but wants to influence some law or policy. Maybe it’s health care for the Selected Reserve, or C-130 upgrades, or childcare . . .

ROA could facilitate the participating advocate’s engagement using ROA channels. I suspect that some participating advocates would become members once they understand us better.

And to understand ROA is to admire its work. As President Wroblewski wrote in his column, ROA’s leadership is defined “by the impact of its advocacy and the respect it commands . . . and ROA continues to excel in this regard.”

ROA makes a big impact. As we did with the Supreme Court victory in *Torres v. Texas Department of Public Safety*, ROA *again* influenced the Supreme Court’s decision April 30 in *Feliciano v. Department of Transportation*.

The court decided that a federal civilian employee, in this case Coast Guard Reserve petty officer Nick Feliciano who was also an FAA air traffic controller, when “called to active duty pursuant to ‘any other provision of law . . . during a national emergency’ is

entitled to differential pay without having to prove that his service was substantively connected in some particular way to some particular emergency.”

The Coast Guard called Petty Officer Feliciano to active duty in 2012, but the Department of Transportation refused to pay the differential between his civilian and military compensation. ROA filed an amicus “friend of the court” brief supporting his case. His win is a win for all federal employees serving in the reserve components.

So, along with human nature, ROA’s value endures: there are inequities to fight and to defeat!

As I write this, the search for a new executive director is in full swing and I depart May 31. My decade in stewardship of our great association has been deeply rewarding. Serving you, I have been accorded the privilege of serving our nation and those who choose the often hard and hazardous path of uniformed service.

I leave ROA grateful for the honor. When I arrived, I knew little about ROA and few among its leadership. I have since experienced how profoundly these patriots care for our association and its mission. They stuck with ROA when the future was uncertain. I offer my sincere appreciation to them all!

I’ll return to the business world, investing in and founding new ventures, exploring lobbying — advocacy by another word — and offering my services as a professional executive coach. I will always be a champion of our Reserve Components, their families, and veterans of Reserve Component service, the support of whom is ROA’s exclusive focus!

Your national staff is operating with efficiency and energy exceeded only by their dedication to our ROA. My gratitude for their performance for ROA (and patience with me) is boundless, and I shall greatly miss them.

Col. Ann Knabe interviewed me for the winter 2015 issue of *The Officer*. Entitled “Opening Shots,” it was my first address to the association. She asked, “Why did you want to be ROA’s executive director?”

“I saw an opportunity to serve an organization that I believe in,” I said. “ROA is the strongest advocate for the Reserve Components . . .”

With President-elect Peggy Wilmoth soon assuming leadership, building on Layne Wroblewski’s fruitful term and those of his predecessors in this, our second century of service to America, I am excited at our association’s prospects!

What I said in that interview ten years ago holds. Thank you for your part in that success. We move forward!



Jeffrey E. Phillips  
ROA Executive Director



ROA Photography by Henry Pimack

# Reaching the summit of the 118th Congress

By Matthew Schwartzman, ROA legislation and military policy director

**“Each new situation requires a new architecture.”**  
*Jean Nouvel*

In early December, ROA’s national president, retired Air Force Lt. Col. Layne Wroblewski, visited our headquarters for Hill meetings to secure funds for the U.S. Public Health Service Ready Reserve before the conclusion of the 118th Congress. Most of our meetings that day were in the Hart Senate Office Building, the newest of the three office structures serving the United States Senate.

At the heart of the atrium stands *Mountains and Clouds*, a sculpture installed in March 1986. The cloud portion, visible in the picture on the right, was removed in 2016 following a safety inspection and has yet to be replaced due to a lack of funding—a challenge ROA and the reserve components are all too familiar with).

One of the things I love most about working in Washington, D.C., is the architecture. I have always been drawn to neoclassical design, perhaps because of its deep ties to democracy. Inspired by the civic structures of ancient Greece and Rome, it embodies stability, order, and enduring principles.

While speaking with President Wroblewski, I remarked that contemporary architecture requires less hands-on craftsmanship than traditional styles, relying more on minimalism and industrial materials. In hindsight, I wonder if this perspective was connected to my initial reluctance to embrace Artificial Intelligence tools like ChatGPT. I resisted them, believing that outsourcing fundamental human skills, like writing, could weaken democratic societies, which rely on strong, effective communication to maintain a proper balance of power between government and citizens. While I have since adopted AI tools for operational efficiency, I still hold this belief.

However, a week or two later, after another round of meetings in Hart, I found myself staring at *Mountains and Clouds* once more. It occurred to me that before critiquing an artistic representation of mountains and clouds, I should spend time among the real ones. Perhaps then, my perspective would change.

Shortly after, I booked a trip to Shenandoah National Park. Nestled in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia, the park is a breathtaking expanse of rolling hills, cascading waterfalls, and dense forests. Spanning over 200,000 acres, it is best known for

Skyline Drive, a scenic roadway that winds along the mountain-tops, offering sweeping views of the Shenandoah Valley below.

Visiting Shenandoah in the winter gave me a new appreciation for how the season transforms the landscape and changes the hiking experience. The cold air, icy trails, and shorter daylight hours demanded more preparation, resilience, and persistence. Every step required careful footing and every mile, a bit more endurance. But with that challenge came a more profound sense of reward: the quiet beauty of the mountains, the clarity of the crisp winter air, and the reminder that effort brings perspective.

In many ways, advocacy is no different. Just as a hiker must prepare for the conditions ahead, an effective advocacy organization must anticipate obstacles, equip itself with the right tools, and remain persistent in pursuit of its goals.

At the top of Hawksbill Summit, the park’s highest peak, I had a FaceTime call with ROA life member Susan Lukas.

After our conversation ended, I took time to reflect on ROA’s path in the 118th Congress (emphasizing the Congress’ second session) and what lay ahead for the 119th. Standing there, surrounded by the vast, quiet landscape, the parallel between the advocacy challenges and the climb I had just completed felt especially fitting.

## Looking back at the 118th Congress

During my time at Shenandoah, two key pieces of legislation, heavily influenced by ROA, passed through Congress and were sent to the president’s desk for signature. Each bill contained several provisions supported by ROA, reflecting over a year of dedicated advocacy.

### ***The Senator Elizabeth Dole 21st Century Veterans Healthcare and Benefits Improvement Act***

In the 118th Congress, ROA focused on strengthening relationships with members and staff of the House Committee on Veterans’ Affairs. This was crucial as the Committee’s Economic Opportunity Subcommittee oversees the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act and has long shown a keen interest in advancing duty status reform, a key legislative priority for ROA. These efforts yielded tangible results, especially with the signing of the *Senator Elizabeth Dole 21st Century Veterans Healthcare and Benefits Improvement Act* (referred to as the Dole Act).

ROA's engagement with Subcommittee staff began in October 2022, when we met to discuss proposed USERRA reforms outlined in ROA's Law Review 15089, authored by retired Navy Capt. Samuel Wright. The Subcommittee was highly receptive to ROA's recommendations and expressed an interest in holding a hearing on the subject in the near future, with plans to move forward with an omnibus bill within the next year.

In February 2023, ROA was invited to testify before the Subcommittee. On March 9, 2023, retired Air Force Col. Gilbert Patton represented ROA at the hearing. As detailed in the March 2023 Reserve Voice E-Newsletter, ROA's testimony was "frank and unflattering of the Department of Labor's Veterans Employment and Training Service." Patton provided valuable insights on how to assess the effectiveness of current USERRA protections, modernize regulations governing USERRA enforcement, and ensure DOL VETS personnel are adequately resourced and trained to handle USERRA claims.

This engagement laid the groundwork for the introduction of H.R. 3943, the *Servicemember Employment Protection Act*, on June 9, 2023, by Rep. Scott Franklin (FL-18). Just five days after the bill's introduction, I testified before the Subcommittee, offering support for the legislation with a few minor amendments.

On July 26, 2023, the Servicemember Employment Protection Act underwent a markup in the full U.S. House Veterans Affairs Committee, where it was well-received. The legislation's passage, including the USERRA reforms championed by ROA, ultimately came to fruition within the Dole Act.

Although disagreements over unrelated provisions initially delayed the bill, Congress reached a compromise, and the bill passed the House on November 18. After further negotiation with the Senate, it passed both chambers of Congress on December 17 and was signed into law by the president on January 2, 2024.

Among the provisions in Sections 221 and 222 of the Dole Act were the following changes to USERRA spearheaded by ROA:

- Elimination of the term "noncareer" from USERRA's first statutory purpose, which ensures clearer judicial interpretation regarding permissible absences from civilian work for uniformed service.
- Increase in liquidated damages to the greater of \$50,000 or actual damages when an employer willfully violates USERRA.
- Prohibition on denying injunctive relief to plaintiffs on the grounds that an employee may be awarded "wages unearned" after unlawful termination.



Schwartzman (left) and ROA national president Layne Wroblewski (right) outside the office of Sen. Markwayne Mullin (OK), after a meeting on ROA's public health service priorities for the 118th Congress. Dec. 2024.

- Mandatory award of reasonable attorney fees, expert witness fees, and other litigation expenses to plaintiffs in cases before the Merit Systems Protection Board.
- GAO report requirement to assess how the Secretary of Labor processes USERRA relief actions, including identifying errors in dismissed actions, referrals to the Department of Justice, and trends.
- GAO report requirement to evaluate USERRA compliance within certain federal intelligence agencies.
- Review by the Secretary of Labor of the Veterans' Employment and Training Service Investigations Manual, with necessary updates followed by a report to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs.

### ***The Servicemember Quality of Life Improvement Act and National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2025***

Throughout the 118th Congress, ROA made a focused effort to increase its engagement with congressional committees by submitting statements for the record more frequently. This strategy aimed to strengthen relationships with both committee members and their staff.

One of ROA's nine statements was submitted to the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense, addressing the FY 2025 budget request for the National Guard and Reserve forces. A key priority outlined in the statement was the urgent need for sufficient funding to modernize equipment for the reserve components. These priorities echoed the concerns raised by the reserve chiefs during an April 30 congressional hearing and were also highlighted in the National Guard and Reserve Equipment Report. The hearing itself was convened only after ROA sent a letter on March 1, 2024, requesting its organization.

Interestingly, a flagship provision championed by ROA and included in the annual defense bill originated with members and staff of the Veterans Affairs Committee: the creation of a reserve component track within the Transition Assistance Program.

### **ROA's fight for improving TAP**

ROA first unveiled its proposal to improve the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) at a roundtable discussion hosted by Democratic Leader Hakeem Jeffries (NY-08) in November 2023. The roundtable focused on tackling veterans' homelessness and suicide—issues that have seen significant funding increases, amounting to billions of dollars in the VA's budget over the past decade.

At the event, I discussed how ensuring a successful transition into civilian life for separating and retiring servicemembers could alleviate the strain on these programs, which have yet to make a substantial impact. I also highlighted how TAP's failure to meet the needs of reserve components was becoming increasingly evident, as confirmed by a recent RAND report.

Ahead of the roundtable, I sent ROA's TAP improvement plan, known as the *Delivering Reservist Integration and Veterans Education (DRIVE) Plan*, to congressional staff across both parties. The plan, a sixteen-page draft bill developed by ROA, proposed the following key measures:

- Establishing an interagency task force on benefits and resources for reserve component servicemembers, veterans, and their families.
- Expanding access to preseparation counseling through TAP, allowing reserve component members with 180 days of active service (including drills and annual training) to participate.
- Adding additional elements to the preseparation counseling checklist that address the unique battle rhythm of reserve component service.
- Creating a separate reserve component curriculum track within TAP.
- Allowing reserve component members to waive certain TAP requirements in specific circumstances.
- Integrating military spouses into their service member's TAP experience.

TAP, along with USERRA, was a priority for the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, particularly for Economic Opportunity Subcommittee Chairman Derrick Van Orden (WI-03) and Ranking Member Mike Levin (CA-49).

As a result of the *DRIVE Plan*, ROA was invited to testify on ways to improve TAP on March 20, 2024. The primary TAP bill featured at the hearing was H.R. 7723, the *Enhancing the Transitioning Servicemember's Experience (ETS) Act*.

While the *ETS Act* showed great promise, ROA could not support it in its current form and, ahead of the hearing, offered recommendations for improvement. One of these was to remove a provision that would have prohibited the issuance of DD Form 214s to certain members who did not complete preseparation counseling. This provision would have unreasonably restricted access to vital documentation and created unintended consequences, such as delaying a reserve component member's return to civilian employment. Thanks to ROA's advocacy, the provision was not moved forward.

During the hearing, Ranking Member Levin asked me to elaborate on ROA's proposed improvements to TAP, particularly the need to establish a dedicated curriculum track within the program. Less than two months later, Reps. Jennifer McClellan (VA-04) and

Trent Kelly (MS-01) sponsored legislation that would accomplish just that. Despite a jurisdictional conflict between the Committees on Veterans Affairs and Armed Services, the "light touch" legislative language was successfully included in the final version of the FY 2025 NDAA.

However, the challenge remains in ensuring that the language's implementation aligns with congressional intent and meets ROA's expectations. On February 18, 2025, ROA sent a letter to the secretaries responsible for implementing TAP, outlining our vision for the program and advocating for a seat at the table during the implementation process.

## Recognizing congressional staff

While ROA's expertise, advocacy, and influence were pivotal in securing the codification of these provisions, the critical role of congressional staff in this process often goes unrecognized. Yet, it is essential to acknowledge their behind-the-scenes contributions, which are key in shaping and refining legislative efforts. Their work ensures that proposals are not only viable but also aligned with broader legislative goals.

With this in mind, ROA recognized the primary staff leaders driving our USERRA and TAP reforms: Chase Bergerson and Christopher Bennett (pictured below). Their dedication was vital in translating ROA's priorities into actionable legislative language and advancing it through the process. Also present at the recognition were House Committee on Veterans' Affairs Chairman Mike Bost (IL-12) and Ranking Member Mike Levin, whose support further emphasized the importance of this collaborative effort.



ROA's Matthew Schwartzman and director of operations Trey Criner (back left) at the March 20, 2024, hearing on the Transition Assistance Program and pending legislation. March 2024. Source: Screenshot of hearing video feed.

## 118th Congress list of accomplishments

While I've highlighted a few of ROA's legislative accomplishments from the 118th Congress, there are many more.

Here's the full list, including the ones mentioned:

- Extended TRICARE Reserve Select coverage for reserve component survivors from six months to three years.
- Secured parental leave parity across all branches of the Armed Forces, including the U.S. Coast Guard Reserve.
- Allocated approximately \$1 billion for the National Guard and Reserve Equipment Appropriation in consecutive years.
- Expanded the Secretary of Defense's authority to provide pay parity with the active component for all Special and Incentive Pays.
- Influenced the promotion of more than 400 general and flag officers across the services.
- Advocated for the grounding of the CV-22 Osprey following fatal crashes, prioritizing safety improvements.
- Doubled the accession bonus for reserve component nurses to address critical workforce shortages in the medical field.
- Extended dual Basic Allowance for Housing for single reserve component members on Active Duty for Training from 140 days to fewer than 365.
- Established a reserve component curriculum track within TAP.
- Prohibited the retirement of F-15E aircraft and the reduction of KC-135 aircraft in the U.S. Air Force Reserve.
- Advocated for the recapitalization of tactical fighter aircraft in the U.S. Navy Reserve.
- Removed the term "noncareer" from USERRA's first statutory purpose to ensure clearer judicial interpretation regarding permissible absences from civilian work for uniformed service.
- Increased liquidated damages to the greater of \$50,000 or actual damages when an employer willfully violated USERRA.
- Prohibited denying injunctive relief to plaintiffs on the grounds that an employee may have been awarded "wages unearned" after unlawful termination.
- Mandated the award of reasonable attorney fees, expert witness fees, and other litigation expenses to plaintiffs in cases before the Merit Systems Protection Board.
- Required a GAO report to assess how the Secretary of Labor processed USERRA relief actions, including identifying errors in dismissed actions, referrals to the Department of Justice, and trends.
- Mandated a GAO report to evaluate USERRA compliance within certain federal intelligence agencies.
- Directed the Secretary of Labor to review the Veterans' Employment and Training Service Investigations Manual,

updated it as necessary, and submitted a report to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs.

## Looking forward to the 119th Congress

The start of the 119th Congress has been a whirlwind, to say the least, especially after my trip to Shenandoah. To kick things off, ROA welcomed back policy fellows Jake Fales and Peter Donlon, both of whom have now earned the title "Senior" to reflect their expanded experience and responsibilities. Jake leads ROA's veterans' portfolio, while Peter co-leads the armed services portfolio alongside me.

Additionally, ROA welcomed Hannah Miller as our third policy fellow. While Hannah will officially join the team this summer, she has already provided invaluable support. The vision for ROA's policy fellow (legislative intern) program is to be the premier professional education and development opportunity for individuals



Chairman Mike Bost (left), Chase Bergerson (middle), and Matthew Schwartzman (right) for the presentation of ROA's 118th Congress Excellence in Legislative Readiness Award on the balcony of the Cannon House Office Building. Oct. 2024.



Rep. Mike Levin (left), Christopher Bennett (middle), and Matthew Schwartzman (right) for the presentation of ROA's 118th Congress Excellence in Legislative Readiness Award in the Cannon House Office Building. Oct. 2024.

passionate about national security, defense, and veterans' advocacy. Through mentorship and hands-on experience, these fellows (interns) gain crucial insights into legislative advocacy while contributing to ROA's mission.

On January 10, I had the privilege of presenting ROA's defense policy priorities for the 119th Congress to the Reserve Forces Policy Board. These priorities include:

- Implementing duty status reform.
- Increasing total defense spending to at least 5% of GDP.
- Ensuring adequate federal reserve representation within the Department of Defense, including the Joint Chiefs of Staff.
- Providing continuity of TRICARE medical and dental coverage to reserve component members, regardless of duty status.
- Budgeting for modernized equipment in the reserve components.
- Modernizing the Joint Travel Regulations.

Shortly after the confirmation of Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth, the president and the Department of Defense took a significant step in realizing one of ROA's defense priorities from the 118th Congress. Specifically, they announced the reinstatement of military members dismissed for inability to comply with the COVID-19 vaccine mandate, along with back pay. In January 2023, ROA wrote to President Biden urging the reinstatement of all servicemembers discharged for not receiving the vaccine, with full back pay.

As ROA's executive director, retired U.S. Army Maj. Gen. Jeff Phillips, wrote, "We cannot afford the dismissal of 8,400 trained and qualified service members who have sworn to serve their country." ROA believed that reinstating these patriots would not only enhance readiness but also demonstrate that America stands by its military. ROA was the only military or veterans service organization to publicly call for reinstatement and back pay at the time.

On February 25, I presented ROA's veterans' priorities during a joint hearing before the House and Senate Committees on Veterans' Affairs. Concurrently, ROA held its second-ever Advocacy Day, providing members and partners with a direct opportunity to engage with elected officials and congressional staff.

Attendees, including ROA's president-elect and retired Army Maj. Gen. Peggy Wilmoth met with:

- Sen. Angus King (ME)
- Sen. Kevin Cramer (ND)
- Sen. Maggie Hassan (NH)
- Sen. Patty Murray (WA)
- Sen. Tammy Duckworth (IL)
- Sen. Thom Tillis (NC)
- Rep. Morgan McGarvey (KY-03)
- Rep. Sheila Cherfilus-McCormick (FL-20)
- Rep. Mariannette Miller-Meeks (IA-01)

- Rep. Delia C. Ramirez (IL-03)
- Rep. Chris Pappas (NH-01)

Looking ahead, ROA is excited to build on this momentum during our 2025 National Council and Leaders Conference.

Following our congressional breakfast on Friday, March 14, at 0800, we once again engaged key legislators on Capitol Hill.

The journey of advocacy, much like hiking in the mountains, demands preparation, persistence, and a clear vision of the path ahead. Just as the terrain of Shenandoah National Park requires careful planning and resilience, the work of an advocacy organization requires the same qualities in navigating the complexities of policy.

Whether it is advocating for resources for the U.S. Public Health Service Ready Reserve, as we did in the 118th Congress, or reflecting on the challenges faced by the reserve components, each step forward takes effort, strategy, and determination. The mountains, both literal and metaphorical, remind us that success is not found solely in reaching the summit but in the preparation, persistence, and vision that guide us there.

As Harry Truman wisely said, "The only thing new in the world is the history you do not know." With this in mind, we will build upon ROA's rich history, using our past successes as the foundation for future victories. 



Matthew Schwartzman (left), senior policy fellow Peter Donlon (center left), policy fellow Hannah Miller (center), president-elect Peggy Wilmoth (center right), and senior policy fellow Jake Fales (right) pose outside ROA's Minute Man Memorial Building before the Feb. 25 Joint Committee on Veterans' Affairs hearing on ROA's veterans' priorities for the 119th Congress.

# Revitalization in action: Grissom and Flying Viking chapters set the standard for ROA excellence

By Trey Criner

The revitalization of the Grissom Chapter (Chapter 63, Department of Indiana) and the Flying Viking Chapter (Chapter 30, Department of Minnesota) exemplify how grassroots leadership, strategic planning, and intentional engagement can breathe new life into ROA chapters. These two chapters have emerged as dynamic hubs of activity, demonstrating what's possible when local leaders align their efforts around a shared mission.

The revitalization of the Grissom Chapter began in earnest in May and June 2024 under the strategic leadership of Col. David Borden, USAFR. The campaign's momentum culminated in a successful icebreaker event on June 6, the chapter's first major gathering since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. The tireless groundwork of the dedicated team of Maj. Chad Nickson, Master Sgt. Elizabeth Majors, and Master Sgt. Ben Mota were indispensable in reaching this milestone.

Today, Chapter 63 holds regular meetings on Grissom Air Reserve Base, enjoys active participation from base leadership, and continues to grow thanks to strong command support and grassroots enthusiasm.

The stories of Chapters 63 and 30 exemplify a consistent strategy focused on three foundational principles: visibility, engagement, and value. Both revitalization efforts leaned heavily into drill weekends—maximizing time with service members and ensuring ROA's mission and benefits were clearly communicated.

These efforts were not merely about recruitment; they were about connection. Both chapters' work ensured that every interaction with ROA felt meaningful, that professional development opportunities were available, and that service members knew their voices mattered.

Under the leadership of Col. Gia Wilson-Mackey, USAF, the Flying Viking Chapter soared to new heights. Through consistent engagement with all reserve squadrons on base, ROA members ensured that airmen at the 934th Airlift Wing had the opportunity to learn about ROA's mission and member benefits.

Two marquee events in August 2023 and August 2024—held in conjunction with the 934th AW's Family Day—highlighted the chapter's creativity and community spirit. These events featured ROA information tables, school supply kit giveaways, and exciting raffles, including a C-130 model, and a Viking axe, bridging tradition with fun. Chapter 30 hosted two professional development



August 3, 2024 – Family Day event at 934th Airlift Wing, Minneapolis, MN. Front L to R: Marilyn Chambers, Col. Gia Wilson-Mackey, Flying Viking ROA Chapter President; Back L to R: Ann Jones, Paul and Anne Groskreutz

sessions that gave airmen valuable career-building insights, deepening the chapter's value proposition.

The success of these two chapters is rooted in local effort and support from ROA's national leadership. ROA's Department and Chapter Development Committee, led by Col. Scott Russell, continues to provide strategic direction to chapters nationwide. Meanwhile, ROA Director of Operations Trey Criner has provided hands-on support, building connections during drill weekends and ensuring chapters have the tools to thrive.

The revitalization of the Grissom and Flying Viking Chapters is a blueprint for renewal and growth. When chapters focus on being present, offering meaningful value, and fostering authentic relationships, they can reignite participation and create a lasting impact.

As ROA celebrates its legacy and looks toward its future, these chapters remind us that the heart of the organization beats strongest at the local level—where members come together in fellowship, advocacy, and service.

Let their example inspire us all. 

# A year of transition

By Col. Monti G. Zimmerman, USA (Ret.)

I want to thank Col. Anthony K. Atlas, Sr., USA (Ret.), for his service as the National Vice President, Army this past year. I am honored and humbled to serve as the National Vice President, Army, for the Reserve Organization of America for the year from October 2024 through October 2025. I became a life member of ROA in January of 2006 and served on the National Legislative Committee, the EXCOM twice, the Department of Virginia Board, and as Department President.

We are going through a year of major change for our organization to ensure we have a bright future of serving the needs of those who serve the United States in our Reserve Components. We have reviewed our Charter and Bylaws and are considering changes to make our governance stronger and more agile. Implementing ballot voting at the October National Meeting and restructuring our national leadership will allow us to better serve our members and the Reserve Components. Our efforts are aimed at making the ROA more resilient. We are a vital part of the future and will be engaged on Capitol Hill in the coming months, advocating for strong national security. You will hear more to come at our Leadership Conference in March.

I had the wonderful opportunity to share the Inauguration Day at the Top of the Hill in our beloved building with Army Medal of Honor recipients Col. (Ret.) Paris D. Davis and Col. Gordon R. Roberts. The ROA has traditionally hosted a breakfast for the Medal of Honor recipients who attend various activities tied to the transition of our Presidency. This year, as the Inauguration was moved indoors due to the bone-chilling cold, the recipients had a choice of attending the ceremony without their family and friends due to space limitations or of staying at the Top of the Hill for the morning. I was delighted to spend the morning with them both.

The breakfast exemplifies how your ROA serves in ways you may not have been aware of. I will let you know how we



Col. Gordon R. Roberts, a friend of Col. Davis, Paris D. Davis, Col. Zimmerman

continue to move forward with our governance and legislative priorities. Our Army Executive Committee remains fully staffed and actively engaged and I thank Col. Stanley Remer, Maj. Reece Newsome, Master Sgt. Kevin Hollinger, and Junior Vice President Capt. Nina Kazibwe for their continued service. I would also like to thank Maj. Gen. (Ret.) Jeff Phillips for his service and friendship as he looks forward to moving on to other ways to serve this summer. 

# Agility and readiness in a complex and changing environment

Submitted by Capt. Henry E. Plimack, USCGR (Ret.)

**R**OA's Naval Service Section—our most diverse Section representing the Navy Reserve, Coast Guard Reserve, Marine Corps Reserve, and the Public Health Service and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Corps—is experiencing significant changes.

## Navy Reserve Force

On Thursday, August 2, 1990, Saddam Hussein's Iraq invaded and occupied Kuwait and threatened Saudi Arabia. President George H.W. Bush, our 41st President, drew "a line in the sand" and announced that he would use military force, if necessary, to protect Saudi Arabia and to liberate Kuwait. As part of his forceful response to aggression, President Bush ordered the call-up of multiple Reserve Component (RC) units in the first major RC mobilization since the Korean War ended in July 1953. The RC call-up that started in August 1990 was the first step in the transformation of the RC from the "strategic reserve" (available only for World War III) to the "operational reserve" (routinely called up for intermediate military operations like Operation Desert Storm, Operation Enduring Freedom, and Operation Iraqi Freedom).

On the terrible Tuesday morning of September 11, 2001, 19 terrorists hijacked four airliners and crashed them into three buildings and a field, killing almost 3,000 Americans. After that "date which will live in infamy" for our time, President George W. Bush, our 43rd President, expedited the transformation of the Strategic Reserve to the Operational Reserve.

The terminology changed after this major shift in focus. Our "Naval Reserve Centers" became "Naval Operational Support Centers." The full-time officers and enlisted personnel who were "TARS" (Training and Administration of Reserves) became "Full-Time Support" or "FTS" personnel.

In recent years, the focus has changed back to preparation for a major war with a near-peer competitor like the People's Republic of China (PRC). Our "Naval Operational Support Centers" have gone back to being "Naval Reserve Centers." Our "FTS" officers and enlisted personnel have returned to being "TARs."

This does not mean we are returning to the "good old days" of "one weekend per month and two weeks in the summer." Now, more than ever, our nation depends on the Navy Reserve and the other Reserve Components. The "good old days" of 1953 to 1990 are gone forever.

Today, our national debt has ballooned to \$36 trillion. It has increased from \$34 trillion to \$36 trillion in just 14 months, from

January 2024 until March 2025. Each year, the federal government spends more on interest on the national debt than national defense.

For more than a century, ROA has advocated for increased reliance on the Navy Reserve and the other Reserve Components, including the Army National Guard and Air National Guard, as a cost-effective way to provide national defense readiness. Our advocacy is important and relevant now more than ever.

Submitted by Capt. Sam F. Wright, USN (Ret.)

## Marine Corps Forces Reserve

Following the Commandant's Planning Guidance (CPG), Marine Forces Reserve (MARFORRES) has been tasked with the mission to provide the Total Force with combat-ready reserve forces capable of seamlessly reinforcing and augmenting the Active Component. MARFORRES must maintain an agile posture to meet emerging threats while sustaining a lethal and responsive force in a dynamic and contested global environment.

- Commander's intent: The current uncertain environment requires our force to support the Total Force today, while preparing for tomorrow. We must achieve a high level of readiness now and sustain readiness over time to provide units and capabilities for any crisis or contingency challenging our nation. MARFORRES will be a force that delivers decisive capabilities when needed most.
- Vision: MARFORRES will achieve and sustain superiority through readiness, agility, and integration to deliver operational capabilities that achieve Total Force Optimization.
- Strategic Context: The global security landscape demands a force that is resilient and adaptive to rapidly changing threats. The balance of providing available Reserve Forces against competing requirements while maintaining readiness in preparation for large-scale activation defines the environment MARFORRES must operate.
- Operational principles:
  - *One Team:* MARFORRES will operate as a cohesive element with the Total Force.
  - *Empower Our Talent:* Focus on personal and professional development to cultivate leaders at every level - Marines, Sailors, and civilians alike.
  - *Persistent Agility:* Anticipate and adapt to the operational environment with speed and precision. Think differently.

- o *Risk-Informed Operations*: Balance readiness and resource allocation to achieve mission success without compromising long-term capabilities.

MARFORRES is committed to sustaining an agile and ready force that enhances the Total Force's ability to deter and, if necessary, defeat our adversaries. By focusing on readiness, talent, and integration, MARFORRES will continue to serve as a critical component of the Marine Corps' strategic advantage.

Submitted by Col. Will L. Holahan, USMC (Ret.)

## Coast Guard, Public Health Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

It has been 80 years since our combined Sea Services rallied to achieve a decisive global victory in World War II. Now, as unified Naval Services, we must prepare to ensure that we rise again to meet the challenges of the changing international order in the 21st century.

In 2024, staffing and recruiting shortages, plus the pressures of operating as individual reservists rather than strategic reserve components, continued to impede the multiple missions of the United States' three non-DOD uniformed sea services. Since the 1993 post-Cold War downsizing era, USCG, USPHS, and NOAA forces have remained significantly below authorized strength, under-structured, and underfunded to plan for and effectively respond to emerging all-hazard contingency mobilization challenges at home and around the globe.

One significant change in 2025 is that the USCG, USPHS, and NOAA Corps are no longer led by female flag officers, with acting male service chiefs taking their places. However, to rise and meet the emerging global challenges of this decade, each naval component must continue to recruit, add force structure, and significantly increase its total force strength. Significant challenges ahead are China's fast-growing naval power, Russia's aggressive behavior, persistent pandemic disease effects, the consequences of climate change, and international disaster response preparedness.

ROA will lead reserve advocacy for The Military Coalition in 2025, dedicated to advancing resolutions to Congress in support of reserve mission excellence as a loud voice for every member of the uniformed Sea Services and their families.

## U.S. Coast Guard

In 2022, Admiral Linda Fagan's Commandant's Intent sought to transform the total USCG workforce to meet the complex demands of 21st-century personnel management with the tagline "Tomorrow looks different—so will we!" In 2023-2024 that goal was advanced by the *Coast Guard Reserve Component Action Plan*, in which the USCG establishes three lines of effort (supported by ROA) to update the force structure and strengthen

the professionalism, proficiency, capabilities, and readiness of the Coast Guard Reserve by 2026:

- 1) Modernize Reserve Recruiting, Talent Management, and Benefits,
- 2) Maximize Effect of the Capabilities, and
- 3) Enhance Reserve Deployability and Resilience.

Since September 11, 2001, like many Navy and Marine Corps reservists, the 6,500 members of the Coast Guard Reserve Component have trained as Individual Mobilization Augmentees (IMA), prepared to support active-duty units by filling critical DOD and DHS operational gaps with quick supplemental personnel staffing. However, the USCG 'Deepwater' acquisition program is finally bringing long-overdue modern cutters, aircraft, and homeland security equipment into the 21st-century Coast Guard. Crewing and operating these advanced new assets will require upskilled active-duty staff, plus a growing reserve force of 8,000-12,000 members, trained to mobilize together as teams in unit detachments with the latest information technology, cybersecurity, air and seamanship, and maritime homeland security skills.

In 2025, all Naval Service Reserve Components, vigorously supported by ROA, will expand efforts to recruit reservists, train them in groups of detachments for incident response, and prepare them to mobilize on land, sea, or air as full reserve teams. Coast Guard Reserve units must prepare to respond to any 21st-century U.S. border surge, contingency, incident, or global hazard, with the watchwords that a Ready Reserve equals a ready Coast Guard!

## U.S. Public Health Service

The 6,000 Commissioned Corp officers of the U.S. Public Health Service (USPHS) work on the front lines of public health, providing care for USCG, NOAA, Native American Indians, Merchant Mariners, and many other citizens in need. Currently, the acting Health and Human Services (HHS) Assistant Secretary of Health (a 4-star position) is Navy veteran Dr Leith States, MD, HHS Chief Medical Officer. Active commissioned USPHS officers fight disease, conduct research, and care for patients in underserved communities nationwide and worldwide. USPHS officers serve in diverse roles as medical physicians, mental health counselors, nurses, dentists, veterinarians, health scientists, and engineering professionals.

After four decades of ROA support for PHS, passage of the CARES Act in 2020 finally established a true USPHS Ready Reserve Corps. In 2024, ROA resolved to support the bicameral 'Parity for Public Health Service Ready Reserve Act.' This bill will improve response capabilities for public health emergencies by providing the new USPHS Ready Reserve Corps with the same rights, benefits, privileges, and structure afforded to all other Armed Forces Ready Reserve components. The new USPHS RRC is growing slowly, with 400 officers currently authorized and plans

to reach a future strength goal of several thousand ready reserve corps health professionals.

In 2025, ROA's mission is to advocate for continued recruiting, growth, and enhancement of USPHS health emergency mobilization readiness, including improved funding, strength, and organizational structure of the USPHS Ready Reserve Component.

### NOAA Corps

An agency of the Department of Commerce, National Oceanic, and Atmospheric Administration Corps officers are NOAA's technical leaders for shipboard and aviation operations in support of U.S. earth science research and weather monitoring conducted around the globe. In 2025, new Director Rear Admiral Chad Cary will lead the NOAA Corps, which has an authorized strength of 500 maritime officers. Each year, NOAA enrolls 15-20 prospective officer candidates who train alongside USCG Reserve Officers at the U.S. Coast Guard Academy in New London, Connecticut. New NOAA officers are commissioned with the rank of Ensign (O-1) and deploy to NOAA survey ships, air stations, or weather facilities on the Atlantic and Pacific coasts.

Since 2001, NOAA's budget has markedly declined in real dollars. It has completely failed to keep pace with the expanding mission tempo that climate change research, extreme weather events, navigational charting, fisheries monitoring, and ocean data surveys have placed on aging NOAA ships, aircraft, and base facilities. NOAA Corps officer strength is down to about 330 officers, and the NOAA fleet has also significantly declined from 21 to 15 ships.

In 2025, ROA supports protecting NOAA's capabilities, growing NOAA Corps officer strength, and invigorating NOAA's detailed recapitalization plan for new ships, aircraft, and facilities. With strong existing USCG-NOAA partnerships in maritime mobility and global environmental security, ROA is encouraging U.S. national leaders to consider organizational efficiency proposals for NOAA's service to America's citizens. A better operational location for the agency's 12,000 civilians and officers may be to transfer NOAA from the Department of Commerce into the Department of Homeland Security.

*Submitted by Cmdr. John N. Leonard, USCGR (Ret.)*

## ROA Academy: Shaping the future through education and engagement

By Trey Criner

The ROA Academy has returned—it's better, smarter, and more accessible than ever. With a fresh format, a renewed mission, and strategic use of technology, the academy is becoming a cornerstone of member education and engagement across all levels of ROA.

### A legacy reimaged

Years ago, the ROA Academy was a one-day course during ROA's annual convention. While the intent was sound—to educate and empower ROA members with tools for chapter and national success—the format had its drawbacks. Many found the sessions overwhelming, too densely packed with content for a single day. Members who couldn't attend the convention missed out entirely. Attendance dwindled, and the academy faded.

### A new format, a new future

The idea of reviving the academy surfaced again during the 2023 Department and Chapter Development Committee meeting at ROA's Annual Meeting. The ROA Academy had to be accessible, concise, and impactful. In January 2024, the new ROA Academy adopted a more manageable format that would reach members nationwide, removing barriers to broader participation.

ROA leveraged multiple digital platforms. The ROA Academy webpage offered easy access to schedules, registration, and recordings. Email announcements and QR codes made signing up effortless. Promotions on ROA.org helped spread the word. What began as a modest effort with 12 attendees in January 2024 has grown fivefold in just a year, with 60 members registering for the January 2025 session.

Beyond participation, the academy delivers real value. The sessions provide practical guidance on chapter and department operations, tips for member engagement, and insights into key events like Yellow Ribbon programs and Family Days. Members can access recorded sessions and PowerPoint presentations anytime through the Academy webpage.

### Building momentum for the future

The ROA Academy reflects ROA's commitment to empowering its members with tools, insights, and connections that help them succeed at every level of involvement. It also underscores the value of member feedback and the power of smart adaptation in a fast-changing world.

The ROA Academy is poised to become a cornerstone of professional development and organizational strength, shaping the future of ROA—one session at a time. The future of ROA is informed, engaged, and connected. ROA Academy will serve a vital role in realizing that vision. 

# A lifetime of service

By Lt. Col. Susan E. Lukas, USAF (Ret.)

**I**t is with a sad heart that I write about the passing of Lt. Gen. James "Jimmy" Sherrard on March 14, 2025, but it is also my honor to celebrate his life and recognize his dedicated support of reservists and their families, and how his affiliation helped in that regard. Sherrard became a ROA life member on January 1, 1972, going on to give ROA support for 53 years as a member.

My career first crossed paths with Gen. Sherrard when he became the Vice Commander Air Force Reserve Command in 1996. I continued to work for him when in September 1998 he was selected as the Chief of Air Force Reserve, Headquarters U.S. Air Force, Washington, D.C., and Commander, Air Force Reserve Command, Robins AFB, Ga.

During this time, ROA fought to get legislation passed to provide a 3-star billet for the Reserve Components. This finally passed in 2000, and General Sherrard became the first Lieutenant General for the Air Force Reserve in 2001.

General Sherrard understood the expanding role of reservists serving in operational missions and intended for their service to be more reflective of active-duty members. To help with recruitment and retention, ROA supported this approach and during General Sherrard's tenure he saw an increase in commissary benefits and health-care options. He also pushed to increase promotion opportunities and enlistment and re-enlistment bonuses on par with active-duty members.

ROA selected him as ROA's Minuteman of the Year in 2003 to recognize his achievements, but his achievements continued. Before retiring in June 2004, he oversaw the largest mobilization of Air Force reservists since the Korean War in support of combat operations in Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan, and Iraq.



Lt. Gen. James "Jimmy" Sherrard

Upon his retirement, Senator Saxby Chamblis recognized additional accomplishment with his efforts to improve the Montgomery G.I. Bill Kicker, extending lodging reimbursements and include hostile fire and imminent danger pay for reservists on inactive duty.

When asked about his career at his retirement interview, he did not reflect on his accomplishments but rather praised the members of the Air Force Reserve when he said, "One of the key things I am most proud of is having the opportunity to work with such great people over the years," he said. "In particular, the NCO corps in the Air Force Reserve is phenomenal. Our NCOs have so much talent and experience. To just have the chance to watch them do what they do is an honor."

He answered the call for service once again from 2005 until 2008 when he was selected to serve on the Commission on the National Guard and Reserves along with Lieutenant Colonel Don Stockton, also a longtime supporter of ROA. The Commission resulted in almost 100 recommendations to position the reserve for the 21st century.

General Sherrard stepped up once again when he joined the Reserve Forces Policy Board (RFPB) in 2013. This board is crucial to the reserves because as an independent advisor to the Secretary of Defense on strategies, policies, and practices of the Reserve Components. While on the board, he was on the Subcommittee on Ensuring a Ready, Capable, Available, and Sustainable Operational Reserve and helped to defining the term Operational Reserve, which was presented before the end of his term in December 2015.

When I came back to ROA in 2014, our paths crossed once again whenever I attended an RFPB meeting and I was able to present ROA's legislative initiatives to his subcommittee. Even though it had been some time since I had the opportunity to work with him, he had not changed from the warm and caring person I had known back in the early 1990s. He still cared about reservists, but I could also see how happy he was to be living in Florida and have time for his family. 

# Readiness of the Selected Reserve

Ronald T. Keohane, Former Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs

**"Total Force is no longer a "concept." It is now the Total Force Policy which integrates the Active, Guard, and Reserve forces into a homogeneous whole."**

– *J.T. Schlesinger,  
Secretary of Defense,  
August 23, 1973*

Over 50 years ago, the Department of Defense (DoD) initiated two significant transformations within the U.S. military. First, it transitioned from relying on conscription for manpower to establishing the All-Volunteer Force (AVF). Second, it introduced the "Total Force Policy," aiming to integrate Guard and Reserve units into a cohesive force, fully equipped, trained, and prepared to deploy alongside active-duty personnel. In the last half-century, there have been notable improvements in policies and benefits supporting the readiness and professionalism of the Reserve Component. However, there is still work to be done to achieve a truly integrated Total Force, particularly as we face a difficult recruiting landscape and evolving security threats.

The mission of the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs (ASD(M&RA)) is to support the Total Force and their families while ensuring the nation maintains the most formidable fighting force in the world. A key aspect of our work is ensuring that Reserve Component interests are fully integrated into DoD policies, meeting both the security demands of our nation and the evolving needs of our military personnel and their families. The M&RA team, in collaboration with various partners—such as Service leadership, Reserve Component Chiefs, Senior Enlisted Advisors, the Reserve Forces Policy Board (RFPB),

the Joint Staff, and Congress—is actively working on initiatives to enhance the Reserve Components through 2025 and beyond.

The Department is currently implementing an RFPB recommendation to update the Total Force Policy. The previous update in 2007 focused on the use of the Total Force during the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. The new direction, “Total Force Optimization for Strategic Competition,” aligns with today’s vastly different operational environment. The Reserve Integration (RI) team is collaborating across components and Combatant Commands to identify challenges and develop policies that will optimize the Reserve Components to meet national security priorities. We are grateful for the RFPB’s foundational work in setting the stage for this vital effort.

Another issue the Department faces is America’s increasingly distant connection to its military. The AVF was established in 1973, less than three decades after World War II, when there was a much larger military presence across the country. With the closing of military bases under Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) and the downsizing of forces, the visibility of the active-duty military has diminished. Surveys by DoD’s Joint Advertising Market Research & Studies (JAMRS) show a significant lack of familiarity among today’s youth—aged 16-21—with the military and even less understanding of the Guard and Reserve. Many young people don’t see themselves in uniform despite the vast opportunities for training, education, and career advancement within the Reserve Components.

To bridge this gap, Reserve and Guard members, as well as veterans and military service organizations (MSO), need to take an active role in their communities by sharing their stories. The Reserve Components have remarkable stories to tell, from peacetime service to combat operations, with a rich history that dates back to before the nation’s founding. Sharing these stories in communities can inspire others to consider the invaluable experience and leadership the military offers.

As these stories are shared, our collective responsibility—both within the Department of Defense and as private sector leaders—is to amplify them. Part of that effort involves highlighting the contributions that Reserve Component members make through lesser-known but important activities like Innovative Readiness Training (IRT) events, which provide essential services such as disaster response, medical care, construction, transportation, and cybersecurity support to communities. These programs also enhance deployment readiness.

Additionally, we have long been proud to support initiatives like the National Guard’s Youth ChalleNGe academies, which instill leadership, discipline, and life skills in at-risk youth, helping build future leaders while honing essential military skills.

Many are excited about the launch of the Defense Innovation Unit’s (DIU) GigEagle platform at GigEagle, a tool built by Reserve Component members for Reserve Component members.

GigEagle seeks to revolutionize the way the Department of Defense matches short-term assignments with the talent pool in the Reserve Components. At M&RA, we were focused on removing barriers to movement between components, making it easier for Reserve Component members to transition into and out of active duty, and reducing the administrative burdens that many service members and their families face. In addition, we developed a new pay scale for Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) instructors—who are currently serving in the Selected Reserve—recognizing the valuable leadership and technical skills they bring to this important role in 3,484 schools nationwide.

M&RA has also been working hard with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to address disparities in the approval rates of disability claims for Reserve and National Guard members. A recent study by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) showed that RC members had approval rates for initial disability compensation claims that were 11-20 percent lower than those for active-duty members. The study highlighted two primary challenges: the difficulty RC members and units face in reporting and documenting health conditions incurred during service, and the challenges VA claims processors encounter in locating the necessary documentation to support claims. Reserve Component members deserve a fair and equitable system in which they can receive the support they need.

The Military Community and Family Policy (MC&FP) team recently revamped Military OneSource (<https://www.militaryonesource.mil/>) by adding a new “I am a...” tab, which helps direct users to Reserve Component-specific content. By selecting “I am a Reservist,” users can access helpful resources on Tricare Reserve Select, the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) program, and additional support services like counseling and tax preparation available to all RC members.

Finally, the Military Personnel Policy (MPP) team is excited about the upcoming implementation of the new DD 214-1 form, which will provide newly separated Reserve Component members with a single document detailing their active and inactive duty service, creditable service for retirement, and a detailed record of all activations throughout their career. This data will also be shared electronically with the VA and the Department of Labor, further streamlining the transition process for Service members.

It may be hard to imagine today, but during World War I and World War II, Reserve forces mobilized without the benefits of inactive duty training pay or non-regular retirement, both of which were introduced in 1948. As we continue to support our Citizen Warriors who are defending our nation and training alongside our allies, the goal is to ensure the DoD provides them with the policies, benefits, and recognition they have earned. Today’s Reserve Component members are playing an essential role in safeguarding our borders, strengthening deterrence, and providing invaluable support to our nation’s defense. 



Competitors at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, New Jersey, Aug. 31, 2024, after completing grenade drill at an annual competition that brings together the best Soldiers and squads from across the U.S. Army Reserve to earn the title of "Best Warrior" and "Best Squad" among their peers. (Photo by Spc. Dominique Ford)

## ARMY RESERVE PROFILE:

# Lt. Gen. Robert Harter

## Chief of Army Reserve and Commanding General, U.S. Army Reserve Command

Faced with a complex national security environment in a rapidly changing world, Lt. Gen. Robert Harter is taking a hard look at what it's going to take to ensure the Army Reserve is prepared to deliver combat ready Soldiers and formations, at time of need, when the Army and the Nation calls it to arms.

It is the purpose he continues to drive on since assuming the role of Chief of Army Reserve and commanding general, U.S. Army Reserve Command in August. "It's why we exist," he said. His message to the Army is, "if you go, we go."

"Under the current Army structure—with the bulk of its enabling capabilities residing in Compo 3—there is no Large Scale Combat Operations scenario that doesn't involve the Army Reserve," Harter said.

The Army Reserve provides around 50% of Total Army Maneuver Support Forces and over 90% of some key theater-level enablers in the areas of Sustainment, Engineer, Medical Support,

and Signal—and many of those Soldiers and formations will be needed early in the fight.

Ensuring more than 174,000 Warrior Citizens and 11,000 civilians are prepared for large-scale conflict is a significant task—particularly with 85% of personnel operating in a part-time capacity—so Harter is focusing on what can be done internally, and working with Army leadership as needed.

Within his four specified lines of effort—build combat-ready formations; mobilize and deploy; adapt, transform, & modernize; and invest in Soldiers, civilians, & families—some challenges stand out.

At the top of the list: manning. The Army Reserve continues to struggle to meet end-strength requirements due in large part to recruiting shortfalls. USAREC recruits for the Army Reserve and has not made the Reserve mission for the last eight years. The Army Reserve has committed 1,500 AGR recruiters to the effort

and is working with USAREC to better leverage our AGR recruiters to target Reserve recruiting, Harter said.

“Additionally, my team at USARC implemented “Objective P,” a personnel initiative focused on centralized management of our TPU [part-time] population to fill openings in some of our higher priority units—and we’re already seeing measurable improvements.”

Harter is also directing leaders at echelon to take a more active role in manning their formations. By coordinating with Army Reserve Careers Group counselors and local recruiters, sponsoring and attending our Recruiting and Partnership Councils, “MSC commanders are establishing a battle rhythm that drives on manning and personnel readiness.”

Another issue is limited collective training time. Manning shortfalls, geographic dispersion, and limited access to training facilities all hinder the Army Reserve’s ability to build combat readiness across its Warrior Citizen force. With an average of just 39 days each year to train and maintain individual and collective readiness, Harter is again looking to leadership to maximize limited training opportunities, with a robust focus on unit ability to shoot, move, and communicate.

“It’s easy to get distracted,” Harter said. “But with fiscal and time constraints, leaders at every level need to take an exacting approach to the application of resources—with a focus on prioritizing combat readiness and mission execution.”

To empower commanders at echelon and increase accountability, Harter is setting aside time for commander-to-commander dialogue with subordinate commands. Additionally, integrated staff updates confirm that USARC’s “man, equip, train” mission is regularly synchronized with—and supported by—the plans, policies, programs, budget, and force structure that OCAR oversees.

Among the Army Reserve’s training priorities is a focus on collective training partnerships with active duty and National Guard forces to ensure the Army is integrated across components. One example is Operation Mojave Falcon, a training event designed to enhance the operational readiness of maneuver support and sustainment forces across all echelons in a realistic environment that replicates the scale and scope of a modern battlefield.

Mojave Falcon sets the standard by replicating a doctrinally sound, multi-echelon, and geographically dispersed operational environment, simulating the complexities of 24/7 operations, including critical port operations. This comprehensive approach ensures units and Soldiers are equipped with the necessary skills and experience to operate effectively across the full spectrum of conflict.

“The world is a crazy place, with plenty of challenges, threats, and emerging requirements,” said Harter. “I tell my leaders to

put the rigor into planning and drive on execution because the training they provide their Soldiers at any given battle assembly or training exercise could be the last they receive before showing up on the battlefield.”

Equipment management across the Army Reserve’s dispersed footprint presents another challenge. Nearly 80% of Reserve equipment is stored and consolidated in equipment sites, but those sites are resourced to just 50% of the actual manpower requirement (mechanics). As a result, equipment is rarely maintained to standard. With more than 2.4 million pieces of equipment assigned, the Army Reserve has its work cut out.

To get after this problem set, the Army Reserve is exploring options to forward-position critical equipment and fleets in the theaters where it will be needed and can be better maintained.

Additionally, in partnership with Army Materiel Command, the Army Reserve is divesting excess, inoperable, and outdated equipment. The effort has led to thousands of pieces of equipment turned in for repairs and upgrades, with thousands more slated for

divestment. As the force prepares for LSCO, the equipment concentration sites are being refocused toward major collective training locations, and other key areas to ensure equipment is ready to go when needed.

Finally, the Army Reserve is looking for ways to transform structure, facilities and stationing to position itself to meet the needs of the Army and the nation. A campaign plan based on Harter’s initial assessment of the Army Reserve is in the works. Staff is also working on out-of-the-box solutions—analyzing structure, organization, posture, and resourcing solutions—to enhance combat readiness in support of the Army and Joint Force.

“For years, the Army Reserve has been doing the same thing for years but expecting different results,” Harter said. That’s not working. If we want meaningful results, we need to make some bold changes.”

Today’s Warrior Citizens are leaning forward, engaged in missions around the world and bringing specialized capabilities to the Joint Force wherever they are needed. Highly advanced fields such as medical, legal, engineering, and cyber are concentrated in the Army Reserve, making it an essential component of the future fight.

Ultimately, the Army Reserve is tasked with meeting the same challenges as the Army and the nation itself: ensuring a lethal, combat-ready force is capable and ready to meet and defeat any enemy that would confront us.

In a complex and constantly evolving security environment, Harter’s message to his troops is decidedly simple.

“Get ready.” 



## 5 Questions for Lt. Gen. Harter

*For our audience members who are just getting to know you, can you share some background that isn't in your bio?*

My family has a big tradition of military service. My dad, who retired as a lieutenant colonel, is a two-time Purple Heart recipient. I have three awesome children. My middle son is a lieutenant in the 11th Airborne Division in Alaska.

I'd also want folks to know that the only reason I'm still doing this is because of the young men and women in the Army Reserve. Less than 1% of America raises their right hand, so those Warrior Citizens are that 1%. They're awesome patriots. Not that the other 99% aren't awesome patriots, but these 1% said hey, on America's worst day, I'll be ready. So, it's a tremendous honor.

*What is your leadership philosophy—and what advice would you give to your Soldiers?*

- Presence matters. My advice is, get in the dirt with your Soldiers—they will walk through fire if they know you're there with them.
- Lead by example; take the hard jobs.
- Be intellectually curious; be bold.
- Be an Action Officer, not a note-taker.

Soldiers from the 336th Military Police Battalion, the 363rd Military Police Company, and the 372nd MP Co. combined their strengths to support a wet gap security mission for a wet gap bridge crossing during Army Reserve Combat Support Training Exercise 86-23-02 on August 18, 2023, at Fort McCoy, Wisconsin. (Photo by Sgt. Khylee Woodford)

*Family is clearly a priority for you. What are some things your leadership teams are doing to help Warrior Citizens maintain that important balance between service, work, and life at home?*

The biggest thing is communication—there are so many resources out there. It takes engaged brigade and battalion commanders making sure leaders and family readiness groups are letting Soldiers and family members know how to access all that information. A couple of examples are the Army Reserve's Private Public Partnership Office (P3) and Holistic Health and Fitness (H2F).

P3O works to provide Soldiers with meaningful and gainful employment, improving their financial well-being and overall readiness. They currently have a nationwide network of over 300 partners in multiple industries that offer our Soldiers, veterans,

and family members employment and training opportunities aligned with their military experience.

P3O is also leveraging an Active Component to Reserve Component (AC2RC) program to help retain experienced Soldiers by guiding them to transition from active duty into the Army Reserve, helping them explore career options and connecting with relevant employment or education opportunities while continuing their military service.

Additionally, healthy habits need to be maintained, and we rely on our Warrior Citizens to stay on top of their fitness in between training and battle assemblies. So, we're taking an innovative approach to investing in our Soldiers by leveraging the H2F program. Full implementation of H2F involves cultural changes to how we communicate prevention, health, and performance at every echelon, from the home to the battlefield.

*The United States Army Reserve Culinary Arts Team earned a gold medal at the 2024 annual Joint Culinary Training Exercises. ROA's Reserve Voice Magazine featured these award-winning soldier-chefs. Yet the Army is moving away from staffing its dining facilities with MOS 92G Culinary Specialists and increasingly staffing DFACs with civilian contracted cooks. Army Culinary Specialists would train and maintain in garrison, and be relegated to essentially heating Unitized Group Ration-Heat & Serve (UGR) meals in the field and while deployed, but do less of what they enlisted for: cooking real food for fellow Soldiers. As opportunities to manage food services decline, is it possible that leadership development opportunities for 92G noncommissioned officers would be decreased.*

Army Reserve Culinary Specialists, MOS 92G, are as important today as they have ever been. As the Active Army reduces the 92G end-strength, growth and restructuring of Army Field Feeding

Teams has created hundreds of new leadership opportunities for NCOs. Today's 92Gs are masters of their culinary craft in both garrison and the field. Additionally, they are also exceptional warfighters and Soldiers. Army Reserve cooks may be asked to backfill garrison dining facilities, or to successfully operate on the battlefield.

The Unitized Group Ration-Heat & Serve (UGR-H&S) is the current operational ration for field and wartime use. However, they are far more than just a heat and serve ration. Army Reserve cooks are trained to identify the ingredients in each meal and to develop entirely new entrees and sides using those ingredients. While competing in the Joint Culinary Training Exercise, Army Chefs prepare gourmet meals using field equipment, and the Food Service Excellence Award program recognizes innovative menus and imaginative techniques applied in the field. Recently, during the Philip A. Connelly Food Service Excellence Award competition, Soldiers were treated to pork sliders served on freshly baked rolls, grilled sweet potatoes, chicken/rice/vegetable soup, cheddar biscuits, and rolled chocolate brownies with cherry icing—all made by creative culinarians using UGR-H&S ingredients.

*Is the Army Reserve involved reevaluating and revising Army Emergency Relief policies that restrict AER loans to Army Reserve Soldiers who are on continuous Title 10 orders for 30 or more days?* Army Reserve staff is working closely with AER to expand eligibility for Army Reserve Soldiers to include those on Title 10 active-duty orders for more than 30 consecutive days. The goal is to make sure all Soldiers have equal access to the AER loans across the Army. To this point, AER has supported only Army Reserve Soldiers specifically affected by natural disasters but not those in an active duty (30 or more consecutive days) status.



**Lt. Gen. Robert D. Harter, 35th Chief of Army Reserve and 10th Commanding General, U.S. Army Reserve Command:** Lt. Gen. Robert D. Harter was confirmed by the U.S. Senate on August 1, 2024, and assumed the dual role of Chief of Army Reserve and Commanding General, U.S. Army Reserve Command. As the Chief of Army Reserve, LTG Harter is the principal advisor on Army Reserve matters to the Secretary of the Army and the Chief of Staff of the Army. As Commanding General of U.S. Army Reserve Command, he leads a community-based force of more than 174,000 Citizen Soldiers and 11,000 Civilians—with a footprint that encompasses all 50 states, five U.S. territories, and more than 23 countries across the globe. His previous General Officer assignments include Commanding General of the 81st Readiness Division, Deputy Chief of Army Reserve, Chief of Staff for Army Material Command, and Commanding General, 316th Expeditionary Sustainment Command (deployed in support of Operation Enduring Freedom).

After graduating from Virginia Tech in 1988 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in communication, LTG Harter received his Active Duty commission as a Field Artillery Officer. He also holds a Master of Science degree in National Security Strategy from the National War College.

# National Guard Bureau

National Guard Bureau

## The National Guard: stronger together, stronger tomorrow

By Gen. Steve Nordhaus, Chief, National Guard Bureau, Joint Chiefs of Staff

**I**t is an honor to serve as the 30th Chief of our 430,000-strong National Guard. I continue to be amazed by the selfless spirit of our National Guard Soldiers and Airmen as we engage in key missions across our National Guard triad: Warfight, Homeland, and Partnerships. At 20 percent of the Joint Force and over 30% of the Army and Air Force's close combat power, the National Guard is a critical component of the nation's warfighting capabilities and response force.

As our commander in chief has underscored, we must remain laser-focused on maintaining peace through strength. The National Guard has answered the call to service and the call to action since 1636 as the nation's longest-standing military organization. For the last 388 years, our organization has improved and become stronger every day. We are proud to stand today as a highly trained and experienced elite and lethal warfighting force. We remain always ready to meet our primary mission as a combat force, always there for our communities and our nation.

As George Washington said in his 1793 Address to Congress, "If we desire to secure peace, it must be known that we are at all times ready for War." Our readiness is the foundation of the deterrence



Air Force Gen. Steve Nordhaus, 30th Chief of the National Guard Bureau, speaks to Texas National Guardsmen, Camp Mabry, Austin, Texas, March 8, 2025. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by John Thibodeau)

President Washington described. As we face a new era of competition and conflict, we must redouble our efforts, retool, and accelerate innovation as we meet Department of Defense commitments to restoring the warrior ethos, rebuilding the military, and reestablishing deterrence.

### People

At the heart of the National Guard—and the center of my focus—is the Minuteman. Our Citizen-Soldiers and -Airmen are the foundation of this great

organization. To paraphrase Gen. George S. Patton, wars may be fought with weapons, but they are won by people. Continued investment in our warfighters and their families is the essential ingredient of our success as we continue to deter our adversaries and defend our homeland. On my second day as CNGB #30, I traveled to North Carolina and Florida, where I witnessed the tremendous efforts of our Guardsmen responding to hurricanes Helene and Milton. They worked around the clock to rescue citizens, clear roads, and restore vital community lifelines. Since then, I have visited Guardsmen across the nation as they selflessly put themselves in harm's way—securing our borders and skies, defending the United States in our ballistic missile defense role,

# National Guard Bureau



Air Force Gen. Steve Nordhaus, 30th Chief of the National Guard Bureau, speaks to Texas National Guardsmen, Camp Mabry, Austin, Texas, March 8, 2025. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by John Thibodeau)

stemming the flow of illegal narcotics, fighting fires, providing critical security to communities, and rescuing citizens from floods, landslides, and mountaintops.

## **Readiness**

Our unique, dual-use role in serving our communities and our nation both at home and abroad, in crisis or conflict—is the essential ingredient to our nation's readiness. From muskets to microchips across 388 years, the National Guard continues to leverage the asymmetric advantage of our Citizen-Soldiers and -Airmen. Our Guardsmen amplify success—on the battlefield and in the skies. Most serve in uniform part-time, enabling them to bring unique skills, industry experience, and innovative ideas to every

fight and every response. They are decentralized—embedded in every ZIP code across more than 2,500 communities, in every combatant command. They are multi-capable warfighters—recognized as best sniper champs, U.S. Army tank crew, U.S. Air Force F-35 William Tell winners, and SANS Services Cup cyber defense champions four of the last five years, to name just a few. They operate the nation's only survivable and durable strategic missile warning and nuclear detection capability, conduct the military's only LC-130 arctic and Antarctic resupply missions, and man the nation's air defense sectors, 93 percent of the nation's fighter alert sites, and the first-ever cyber-enabled air superiority wing. The National Guard is mission-focused and improving our readiness every day.

# National Guard Bureau

## Partnerships

When it comes to readiness and resilience at home, no one understands homeland defense and homeland response like our 54 adjutants general. They provide critical linkages between state leadership and military capability across 50 states, three territories, and the District of Columbia. Around the globe, the National Guard uses less than one percent of the nation's Security Cooperation budget to maintain 115 partnerships across 105 nations through the State Partnership Program. These partnerships build vital relationships and interoperability across the globe, deterring our adversaries and building peace through strength. Our National Guard investment in partnerships, local to global, is a cost-effective and formidable force multiplier.

## Modernization

To effectively deter and, if necessary, win our nation's wars, we must also rapidly accelerate and integrate the modernization of our warfighting capabilities and concepts to decisively defeat 21st-century threats. Concurrent and proportional modernization and recapitalization of the National Guard's dual-use warfighting and response capabilities are essential for our deployability, interoperability, and survivability. The National Guard's ability to seize the advantage through innovation—leveraging creative talent to increase our lethality—is inspired in large part by our part-time Soldiers and Airmen. These Guardsmen make up over

two-thirds of our cost-effective warfighting capability and bring civilian talent, training, leadership, and high levels of experience from a multitude of professions across the nation. The National Guard innovates across test centers, training centers, centers of excellence, and within our communities. We innovate through our interagency and international partnerships. We strive for force structure commonality with our active components to ensure rapid combat mobilization and seamless battlefield interoperability with our services, the joint force, our allies, and partners.

## Strength

To keep our National Guard promise to the nation—to be “always ready, always there,” we must continue to out-smart, outperform, and out-innovate our competitors every day. As our Commander in Chief and our Secretary have made clear, we cannot fail. We will maintain our National Guard strength as an operational force with strategic depth through a laser focus on improving our lethality, meritocracy, accountability, standards, and readiness every day. The source of our strength is the fearsome deterrence of our warfighter talent—the men and women of the National Guard.

I look forward to serving our 430,000-strong National Guard as the 30th Chief. My wife Shannon and I thank you for the sacrifices you and your families make in service to our great Nation. Together, we truly are “Stronger Together, Stronger Tomorrow.” 

Photo by: Eric R. Dietrich



**Gen. Steve Nordhaus** serves as the 30th Chief of the National Guard Bureau and as a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. In this capacity, he serves as a military adviser to the president, Secretary of Defense, and National Security Council, and is the Department of Defense's official channel of communication to the governors and state adjutants general on all matters pertaining to the National Guard. He is responsible for ensuring the 430,000 Army and Air National Guard Soldiers and Airmen are accessible, capable, and ready to protect the homeland and provide combat-ready resources to the Army and Air Force. He previously served as commander, Continental U.S. North American Aerospace Defense Command Region and commander of 1st Air Force. Nordhaus graduated from the U.S. Air Force Academy and is a command pilot with more than 3,000 flying hours, including combat missions in operations Southern Watch, Vigilant Warrior, Northern Watch, Iraqi Freedom, and Enduring Freedom.

## Marine Forces Reserve

# State of the Marine Corps Reserve: ready, agile, and integrated

By Lt. Gen. Leonard F. Anderson IV, Commander, U.S. Marine Corps Forces South and  
Sgt. Maj. Edwin A. Mota, Command Senior Enlisted Leader, U.S. Marine Corps Forces South

**A**s the U.S. Marine Corps reflects on our 250th anniversary this year, it's an opportune time to highlight the state of the Marine Corps Reserve and our path forward, providing strategic and operational support to the Service and Joint Forces. The Marine Corps Reserve has consistently provided operational capabilities to support the Total Force and the operational depth to respond swiftly in crisis since its inception on August 29, 1916. As the leaders of Marine Forces Reserve, we are committed to building a Reserve force that is guided by a clear vision: to achieve and sustain superiority through readiness, agility, and integration. These attributes will create lethality in warfighting.

This vision is built on five command imperatives: readiness, agility and flexibility, preparing for large-scale activation, integration and collaboration, and innovation and modernization. These imperatives are mutually supporting, and success in one enhances success in the others. Our Reserve forces are focused on maintaining exceptionally lethal warfighting proficiency and combat readiness, enabling them to rapidly activate when needed. We are also committed to building a culture that values operational principles, including operating as a cohesive team, empowering talent, and anticipating and adapting to the operational environment.

Our role is that of an operational and strategic Reserve force to the Marine Corps' Total Force while supporting Joint Forces. We are an operational Reserve when we provide a consistently



Service members with the U.S. Marine Corps and U.S. Air Force load snowmobiles and gear onto a KC-130J Super Hercules at an airfield in Kotzebue, Alaska, Dec. 13, 2024. Marines with Detachment Delta Company, 4th Law Enforcement Battalion, Force Headquarters Group, Marine Forces Reserve, and with Marine Aerial Refueler Transport Squadron 153, Marine Aircraft Group 24, 1st Marine Aircraft Wing joined by Airmen, loaded the aircraft for transport to Utqiagvik, Alaska to continue this year's Alaskan Toys for Tots operation. The Toys for Tots mission exemplifies the Marine Corps spirit in the Last Frontier, strengthening community ties while sharpening the Marines' readiness for Arctic operations. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Sgt. Ethan M. LeBlanc)

# Marine Forces Reserve



U.S. Marines execute a platoon supported urban raid during an adversary force exercise at Marine Corps Air-Ground Combat Center, Twentynine Palms, California, Dec. 6, 2024. The AFX is the primary readiness-building event prior to Echo Company, 2nd Battalion, 23rd Marine Regiment's upcoming deployment to Okinawa, Japan, in support of the Marine Corps' Unit Deployment Program. The exercise serves as an opportunity to receive training across all warfighting functions in a realistic and fully resourced environment. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Lance Cpl. Orion Stpierre)

high percentage of individual augments to high-demand billets globally. We are an operational Reserve when we mobilize infantry battalions, starting with 2nd Battalion, 23rd Marine Regiment, to the Unit Deployment Program in Okinawa, Japan, in the early spring 2025. We are a strategic Reserve when we prepare for large-scale activations that we have seen in conflicts such as Korea or the surges in the Global War on Terror. Seamless augmentation and integration of Reserve Marines and Sailors into the active component means we must be agile, responsive, and lethal in a contested global environment.

Integration is critical to our success, and we must operate with our active-component counterparts as well as with our Allies and partners. This demands we enhance our interoperability, ensuring we can communicate and operate effectively across different systems and platforms. We must also continuously innovate, incorporating cutting-edge technology and modernized training to maximize the resource of time.

Agility and flexibility are equally essential to our success. The Marine Corps Reserve must be able to reimagine its force structures and processes to enable swift activation for crisis response.

# Marine Forces Reserve

This means maintaining a high level of readiness and providing flexible force employment options to the Service. It also requires that we foster deep integration and collaboration with the active component, leveraging our unique Reserve strengths to support Total Force training opportunities and operational requirements.

One example from the past year of our successful commitment to readiness is the Innovative Readiness Training program. The IRT program provides valuable training opportunities for Reserve Marines and Sailors while also delivering critical services to local communities. Recently, Reserve Marines from the 6th Engineer Support Battalion, based in Portland, Oregon, participated in an IRT project in Cordova, Alaska, constructing an access road linking the city to the future site of the Shepard Point Oil Spill Response Facility. This project not only provided critical infrastructure improvement to the local community, it enhanced the battalion's readiness by allowing combat engineers to blast a mobility corridor outside of a training range.

Another example of our commitment to readiness is the Dallas-headquartered 4th Dental Battalion's participation in IRT Arctic Care 2024 in Kodiak, Alaska. Led by Navy Lt. Cmdr. Kurt Langenderfer, the battalion directed all dental operations and trained 41 dental personnel from all branches of service, including the Public Health Service. Reserve Sailors provided oral health care services, including extractions, fillings, cleanings, and oral hygiene, to 738 patients, performing 2,391 dental procedures and delivering a total fair market value of \$281,869 in dental services to the community.

The IRT program is a prime example of how Reserve Marines and Sailors can make a positive impact on local communities while also enhancing their own skills and readiness. By providing critical services such as engineering, medical and dental care, Reserve Marines and Sailors build relationships with local communities and demonstrate the Navy-Marine Corps team's value to the American people.

Although not traditionally thought of as a way to sharpen war-fighting planning skills, the December 2024 Toys For Tots Alaska delivery mission did just that. A small contingent of Marines from 4th Law Enforcement Battalion sent teams to multiple remote villages across Alaska mounted on snowmobiles delivered from a Marine Aerial Refueler Transport Squadron's C-130 aircraft. The Marines delivered toys in Arctic conditions, but they just as easily could have been conducting a resupply mission to distributed expeditionary advanced bases.

The Marine Corps Reserve has undergone significant transformations in recent years driven by the 38th Commandant of the Marine Corps Gen. David H. Berger's vision that emphasizes

returning to the Marine Corps' amphibious roots with a focus on Naval integration and operations within littoral environments. The current Marine Corps Commandant, Gen. Eric M. Smith, has built upon this vision, highlighting the need for the Marine Corps to remain organically mobile, survivable and sustainable within the littorals. In line with this vision, the Marine Corps Reserve has worked to develop its capabilities in the maritime domain, with a particular focus on littoral maneuver, mobility and distribution capacity.

One key development in this area is the transition of two Reserve Component Assault Amphibian companies to Littoral Craft Companies. This move will help enable the Marine Corps to continue to train and operate in the maritime domain while also supporting the development of Service-level littoral maneuver concepts. The Littoral Craft Companies will be equipped with small craft, which will allow them to develop operational expertise and proficiency in littoral transportation and unit-level employment considerations. This capability will be a component of the Marine Corps' ability to operate in the littorals across a future family of craft.

The establishment of the Littoral Craft Companies is also expected to have a positive impact on talent management and retention within the Marine Corps Reserve. By providing Reserve Marines with a novel, rewarding method to serve, the Littoral Craft Companies will help to keep them engaged and motivated. Initial data indicates the new mission and capability have already led to increased recruiting and retention rates, which is a key priority for the Commandant. Furthermore, the Littoral Craft Companies will be able to take advantage of the unique maritime skill sets that many Reserve Marines possess, particularly those living and working along the Gulf Coast.

The Marine Corps Reserve's development of its littoral capabilities is also expected to have a broader impact on the Service's overall ability to operate in the maritime domain. The Littoral Craft Companies can work closely with other units and commands, such as Marine Forces South, to develop and refine littoral maneuver concepts and tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs). This will help to inform Service-level littoral warfare initiatives and ensure the Marine Corps is well-equipped to operate in the littorals. Additionally, the Littoral Craft Companies will be able to participate in security cooperation activities and multilateral exercises, promoting interoperability with partner nations and enhancing the Marine Corps' ability to operate in a Joint and coalition environment.

As the Marine Corps Reserve looks to the future, we must continue to adapt and innovate to stay ahead of the evolving

# Marine Forces Reserve

global security landscape. This will require us to be proactive and forward-thinking, leveraging new technologies and strategies to enhance our readiness and capabilities. We see significant potential for growth and innovation in areas such as cybersecurity and expeditionary warfare.

In the realm of cybersecurity, we must be equipped with the skills and knowledge to operate effectively in this environment and to defend against cyber threats and attacks. This will require us to invest in cutting-edge training and technology and to work closely with our active-component counterparts and other stakeholders to stay ahead of the threat.

In the realm of expeditionary warfare, we must be prepared to operate in a wide range of environments and contexts, from the deserts of the Middle East to the jungles of the Pacific. We must be equipped with the skills and knowledge to operate effectively in these environments and to adapt quickly to changing circumstances. This will require us to invest in advanced training and equipment and to work closely with our active-component counterparts and other stakeholders to develop new strategies and tactics.

In addition to these areas, we must also continue to focus on building strong relationships with our local communities. We are an integral part of these communities, and we must work to

build trust and understanding between the Marine Corps and the American people. This will require us to be proactive and engaged, leveraging opportunities such as the IRT program to demonstrate the value of the Marine Corps and to build relationships with local leaders and stakeholders.

As we move forward into the future, we must also continue to prioritize the well-being and success of our Reserve Marines. This will require us to invest in programs and initiatives that support their health, wellness, and career development and to work closely with our active-component counterparts and other stakeholders to ensure that they have the resources and support they need to succeed. We must also continue to build a culture that creates an environment where all Marines, whether non-prior service or prior service, can thrive and reach their full potential.

The future of Marine Forces Reserve is bright, and we are proud to be a part of it. We are committed to building a force that is ready, agile, and integrated, and we are excited to see the impact that our Reserve Marines will make in the years to come. As the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps celebrate their 250th anniversary, we are reminded of our rich history and our proud tradition of service. We are honored to be a part of this legacy and are committed to upholding the highest standards of excellence and professionalism as we move forward into the future. Fight's On! 



**Lieutenant General Leonard F. Anderson IV** was commissioned in 1993 upon graduation from the Illinois Institute of Technology. He was designated a naval aviator in October of 1995 and selected to fly the F/A-18 Hornet. LtGen Anderson's previous assignments as a General Officer include Commanding General, 4th Marine Aircraft Wing; Deputy Commanding General, Marine Corps Forces Cyberspace Command; and Deputy Commander, Joint Task Force-ARES.

LtGen Anderson is a graduate of the Weapons and Tactics Instructor Course, the Navy Fighter Weapons School (TOPGUN), Command and Staff College, Air War College, Advanced Joint PME, Senior Joint Information Operations Application Course, Harvard Kennedy School's Cybersecurity: The Intersection of Policy and Technology, and the Combined Force Air Component Commander Course.



**Sgt. Maj. Edwin A. Mota** attended recruit training at Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island, S.C. in June of 1995. Throughout his career, Sergeant Major Mota has been assigned numerous duties and served many deployments, to include Operation MOUNTAIN STORM in 2004, Operation IRAQI FREEDOM 4-6 in 2006, Operation ENDURING FREEDOM in 2010. From 2018 to 2020, as the 31st MEU SgtMaj, he deployed and participated in several Theater Security Cooperation exercises throughout the Indo-Pacific Command Area of Responsibility. In April of 2020, Sgt. Maj. Mota assumed the responsibility as Sergeant Major for Marine Corps Forces, South. From August 2021 until June 2023, He served as Sergeant Major for Marine Corps Recruit Depot and Eastern Recruiting Region, Parris Island, South Carolina. Sgt. Maj. Mota holds a Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration with a focus in Human Resource Management and is a graduate of the Key Stone Course for Senior Enlisted Leaders held at the National Defense University.

## Navy Reserve

# Warfighting at the operational level of war: transforming the Navy Reserve for day-one readiness

Reorganizing, modernizing, and strengthening the force for the high-end fight

By Vice Adm. Nancy Lacore, Chief of Navy Reserve

**W**hen I became the Navy's 16th Chief of Navy Reserve (CNR), our century-old force was in the midst of the most sweeping transformation in its history—an effort begun in 2020 to better align with the realities of modern warfare. My guiding principle has been simple but urgent: warfighting readiness is priority one. Every modernization step we take, every unit we stand up (or stand down), and every training evolution we create has to answer one question: *Does this make us more effective warfighters on Day One of a conflict?*

At the core of this shift is a renewed emphasis on the Operational Level of War (OLW). It's the connective tissue between national strategy and frontline tactics, where you fuse multiple domains—surface, subsurface, air, cyber, and more—into a synchronized plan. It's also where you orchestrate logistics under contested conditions, integrate near-real-time intelligence, and manage command-and-control relationships across vast theaters. If you're looking for the most decisive place to apply resources, OLW is it. A single well-prepared team can elevate an entire campaign; an unprepared staff can just as easily derail it.



The Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS *Carl Vinson* (CVN 70) leads a group sail, July 22, off the coast of Hawaii during Exercise Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) 2024. Twenty-nine nations, 40 surface ships, three submarines, 14 national land forces, more than 150 aircraft and 25,000 personnel are participating in RIMPAC in and around the Hawaiian Islands, June 27 to Aug. 1. The world's largest international maritime exercise, RIMPAC provides a unique training opportunity while fostering and sustaining cooperative relationships among participants critical to ensuring the safety of sea lanes and security on the world's oceans. RIMPAC 2024 is the 29th exercise in the series that began in 1971. (U.S. Air Force photo by Master Sgt. Corban Lundborg)

## Harnessing our citizen sailors at OLW

A significant advantage of the Reserve is the civilian expertise our members bring to the table—software developers, engineers, commercial pilots, cybersecurity analysts, and more. At OLW, where success can hinge on real-time data analysis, imaginative solutions to logistics, or advanced planning tools, these dual-skilled Reservists become force multipliers.

One example is Cmdr. Spencer Allen, who leverages his civilian expertise as an instructor pilot to transform naval aviation training. As the officer-in-charge of the Navy Contract Operated Pilot Training – Rotary (COPT-R) program, he applies best practices from civilian aviation to accelerate the training pipeline, reducing costs and producing skilled aviators seven months faster than their peers—all with zero attrition among its 80 students to date. Allen’s innovation in military training reflects the strategic advantage we bring at OLW: optimizing force generation, sustainment, and warfighting capability in contested environments.

Similarly, Construction Mechanic 2nd Class Gerould Scot brings his civilian expertise as a Master Mechanic to the Navy Reserve, where it proves invaluable in an operational setting. While training in Rota, Spain, with NMCB ONE he restored critical heavy equipment—two mission-essential 12K forklifts.

“The 12K is our most efficient method of material handling equipment and is crucial in completing our current mission,” said Construction Mechanic 1st Class Michael Grant, NMCB 1 cost control maintenance supervisor. “During his two weeks, CM2 Scot was able to increase our mission capability by almost two hundred percent.”

His ability to diagnose and repair heavy equipment enhanced NMCB 1’s logistical readiness, ensuring uninterrupted operations. Integrated seamlessly into military operations, this technical proficiency exemplifies how Reserve Sailors provide a force-multiplying advantage at OLW, sustaining warfighting effectiveness in dynamic environments.

As we expand into emerging domains—such as artificial intelligence, unmanned systems, and advanced imagery analysis—many of our Sailors are already at the cutting edge in their civilian careers. By channeling that expertise into maritime operations centers (MOCs) and distributed warfighting commands, we bring a creative spark that sets us apart from our competitors.

## From “break glass” to day-one readiness

For decades, the Navy Reserve served as a valuable—but often narrowly used—strategic reserve. We trained for extended mobilizations, stepping in when active forces needed extra capacity. Yet today’s environment demands a new mindset. Near-peer

competitors can operate at speed and scale across multiple domains. Conflicts can erupt or escalate before a traditional, months-long mobilization process can even begin. We must be ready not just to augment the fight but to join it at a moment’s notice.

A pivotal concept in our transformation is Day-One Readiness, a far cry from the old “break glass in case of emergency” mindset. We’re now forging a Reserve Force that’s not just an augmentation but a seamless partner in the Total Force, ready to fight and win from the first hour. That requires:

- 1. Force Structure:** Over the past several years, we’ve reorganized and merged units, cutting those less tied to warfighting so we could repurpose those billets into mission-critical areas like OLW. Our work is not done, though. The next step is to designate OLW readiness units as “units of action,” so they are positioned for rapid mobilization.
- 2. Adaptive Mobilization:** We’ve implemented a decentralized, billet-focused approach, allowing us to mobilize warfighting-ready Reservists within 30 days. Six regional Readiness and Mobilization Commands (REDCOMs) now handle critical screening and preparation so that a Sailor shows up ready to integrate into their mobilization billet immediately.
- 3. OLW Training Continuum:** We’ve introduced a three-phase roadmap—Foundation (100-level), Intermediate (200-level), and Advanced (300-level)—that teaches Sailors everything from basic MOC structures and cross-functional planning to culminating watch-floor qualifications in real or simulated high-tempo operations.
- 4. Units of Action:** Instead of piecing together ad hoc teams after a crisis erupts, we’ve organized specialized detachments that train together year-round. These “units of action” are prepared to respond immediately, confident in their roles, and collectively fluent in OLW tasks.

## MAKO: High-fidelity training for the operational fight

Real-world readiness demands real-world practice. That’s why the Navy Reserve runs the MAKO exercise series—immersive, multi-domain scenarios that push Reservists to apply their OLW training in authentic, high-stress environments. Each MAKO event simulates the rapid pace of maritime conflict, forcing participants to adapt quickly across air, surface, subsurface, and cyber domains.

This year, the U.S. 6th Fleet hosted MAKO Challenge 2025, where Reserve Sailors put their training into practice, establishing

# Navy Reserve



VALPARAISO, Chile (September 6, 2024) U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command/U.S. 4th Fleet Reserve Vice Commander Rear Adm. Richard S. Lofgren (center) gives guidance after an in-scenario situational awareness brief for multinational forces in the Chilean Navy Operations Headquarters in Valparaíso, Chile, during UNITAS LXV (65) on September 6, 2024. UNITAS is the longest-running multinational maritime exercise in the world, focused on enhanced interoperability in maritime and amphibious operations in order to build on existing regional partnerships and to create new relationships that will promote peace, stability, and prosperity. U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command/U.S. 4th Fleet is the maritime component of U.S. Southern Command and the trusted maritime partner for Caribbean, Central and South America maritime forces leading to improved unity, security and stability. (U.S. Navy Photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Mitch Meppelink)

and operating maritime operations centers to support decision-making in crisis situations.

“MAKO Challenge will provide Reserve Sailors with the experience and skills necessary to establish and operate an MOC in the event of a crisis or large-scale conflict,” said Rear Adm. Jason ‘PADI’ Naidyhorski, vice commander, U.S. Sixth Fleet. “Given the threats we face... our Reserve Sailors must be ready on Day One to step into scenarios like this at a moment’s notice.”

MAKO events hone both individual watch-floor skills and collective readiness. By the end of each evolution, Reservists return home fully equipped to step into ongoing fleet operations with minimal spin-up—embodying the very definition of Day-One Readiness.

## Modern platforms for multi-domain lethality

Being ready on Day One also depends on modern platforms that align with our warfighting demands to deliver multi-domain lethality and reinforce deterrence. These investments ensure the Reserve Force contributes directly to the Navy’s combat power:

**1. KC-130J Recapitalization:** Recapitalizing the aging C/KC-130T fleet with KC-130Js is our number-one equipment priority for contested logistics. The KC-130J brings higher

mission-capable rates, integrated defensive systems, aerial refueling capacity, and lower operating costs—vital for distributed maritime operations, particularly in the Indo-Pacific.

- 2. Maritime Expeditionary Security Force (MESF):** Central to port security and harbor defense, our MESF units are replacing older 34-foot patrol boats with more capable 40-foot variants featuring advanced sensors and protection systems. This modernization strengthens the Department of Defense’s only dedicated force for global port security.
- 3. P-8A Poseidon Transition:** We’ve completed the shift from the P-3C Orion to the P-8A Poseidon, the Navy’s broad-area anti-submarine and reconnaissance aircraft. Reserve squadrons now join the active force in global maritime patrol roles, providing continuous deployed presence, integrated fires, and cutting-edge ISR capabilities directly feeding into OLW planning.

## Supporting the warfighter: quality of service

No strategic transformation can succeed if our Sailors aren’t set up for success. That’s why we’ve intensified our focus on Quality of

Service (QoS), ensuring our Sailors and their families thrive, ready to answer the call:

- **Deployment Readiness Training (DRT):** Tailored to prepare Sailors and their families for the demands of mobilization, DRT ensures our force is mentally and logistically ready to deploy at a moment's notice, enhancing overall warfighting capability.
- **Weekend Drill Childcare (WDCC):** Expanded to locations nationwide, WDCC removes barriers for Reservists with families, letting them train consistently and worry-free.
- **Tuition Assistance and Career Flexibility:** Investing in our personnel's education not only boosts their individual prospects but also enhances the collective expertise we bring to the Fleet.
- **Psychological Health Outreach:** Suicide prevention, mental health resources, and tele-counseling programs ensure our Sailors can ask for help anytime, preserving readiness and well-being.
- **Navy Returning Warrior Workshop (RWW):** For Reservists returning from deployment, RWW provides critical reintegration support, strengthening family resilience and personal well-being—key pillars of sustained readiness for future missions.

These initiatives are *not* luxuries. They're strategic investments in the people who will man the watch floors and command centers—people who must think critically, adapt quickly, and thrive under pressure from the start.

## A call to action: sustain and accelerate

Ultimately, our pivot to the Operational Level of War and a day-one focus is a bet on the future. As adversaries become more

capable, technologies evolve, and crises emerge with little warning, the Navy Reserve must stay nimble and integrated with the Total Force. We can't wait for the proverbial "break glass" moment. Our success hinges on the following:

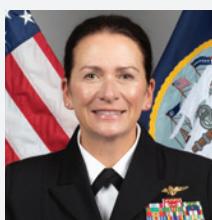
1. Retaining and recruiting top-tier talent by offering real opportunities for growth, flexible career paths, and unwavering support for their well-being and families.
2. Ensuring every Reserve Sailor can step into an operational role the moment a crisis arises—fully trained, appropriately equipped, and mentally prepared.
3. Continued investment in maritime patrol, contested logistics aircraft, advanced patrol boats, and robust training programs that keep us agile across every domain.

## The way forward

The Navy Reserve has stood watch for over a century, providing strategic depth to history's most powerful maritime force. But being "ready" is no longer enough. We must be *immediately* relevant—capable of merging seamlessly with fleet operations in the first hours of a conflict. That's what OLW is all about. It's the lever that lets us apply our unique blend of civilian and military expertise to shape the course of naval campaigns.

We've reorganized our force structure, launched a cohesive OLW training continuum, introduced adaptive mobilization, modernized key platforms, and enriched QoS for our Sailors. All of it fuels a single outcome: to be warfighting-ready from day one.

Our commitment is unshakeable. We will keep refining this blueprint so that no matter where or when the nation calls, the Navy Reserve stands prepared to deliver the operational excellence our security demands. 



**Vice Adm. Nancy Lacore**, a native of Albany, New York, is a graduate of the College of the Holy Cross, where she earned a Bachelor of Arts and her commission from the Reserve Officer Training Corps program. She earned a Master of Arts from San Diego State University and is a graduate of the Air Command and Staff College and the National Defense University at the Joint Forces Staff College. She was designated a Naval Aviator in 1993.

Her reserve command tours include Commander Destroyer Squadron 40 Headquarters, Naval Forces Europe / Africa / U.S. SIXTH Fleet Maritime Partnership Program Detachment 413 and U.S. Fleet Forces Command Maritime and Air Operations Headquarters. She was mobilized to serve as commanding officer, Camp Lemonnier, Djibouti. Lacore's Flag assignments include Vice Commander, U.S. SIXTH Fleet, Chief of Staff, U.S. Naval Forces Europe / U.S. Naval Forces Africa, and Commandant, Naval District Washington. Lacore became the 16th Chief of Navy Reserve on 23 August 2024. As Commander, Navy Reserve Force, she leads approximately 59,000 Reserve Component personnel who support the Navy, Marine Corps and joint forces.

Air Force Reserve

## Reserve lethality through readiness and transformation

By Lt. Gen. John P. Healy, Chief of Air Force Reserve

Since taking on the role of Chief of the Air Force Reserve three years ago, I set two priorities, 'Ready Now!' and 'Transforming for the Future.' I chose these priorities because, in today's strategic environment and fiscal constraints, we must navigate hard choices by prioritizing and aligning limited resources to meet operational demand across all Department of the Air Force (DAF) mission areas and in line with SecDef priorities. I released three TASKORDs that detail my expectations for every Airman to own their individual and family readiness with an eye to future mission requirements.



The sun sets behind a C-17 Globemaster III at Joint Base Balad, Iraq, as Soldiers wait in line to board Nov. 17. C-17s can carry payloads up to 169,000 pounds and can land on small airfields. The C-17 is deployed from the 437th Airlift Wing at Charleston Air Force Base, S.C. (Photo by Tech. Sgt. Erik Gudmundson)

### Ready now

The Air Force Reserve (AFR) construct enables us to provide surge capacity and strategic depth as a combat-ready force against a peer competitor. Building toward future requirements has not diminished our ability to rapidly respond to present-day conflicts, most recently during mobilizations in support of Levant operations. During Operation SPARTAN SHIELD, we aided in the release of 110 hostages and flew 179 missions to deliver 3,320 tons of humanitarian aid in the Middle East. Last year, our Combat and Mobility operations crews flew over 92,000 hours supporting seven Combatant Commands, conducting kinetic strikes, moving passengers and cargo, and providing Aeromedical Evacuation. Our Airmen supported 58 exercises around the globe, a significant number taking into account that almost seventy percent of our force is

part-time. We will continue to provide a cost-effective solution to meet both emerging and future national security demands.

Joint Force warfighting requirements necessitate continually aligning with our force presentation model. Evolving how we deploy creates predictability and stability for our Airmen, families, and employers. In my most recent TASKORD, I challenged the AFR to become the definitive experts in designing, implementing, and executing combat wings within the Air Force Force Generation (AFFORGEN) model. We are preparing to offer two deployable combat wings in FY27, so we must act swiftly and efficiently. Reserve warfighters have the same readiness, training and certification requirements as our regular component counterparts, but with less time to accomplish. For those Airmen projected for

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deployment, there are 19 UTA weekends until that deadline. Opportunities to train at speed and scale are limited. Therefore, we are building certification events and exercises where none currently exist to demonstrate our warrior ethos and mission-first mindset.

Our adversaries can interfere across the full spectrum of operations—diplomatic, information, military, and economic domains so we must be ready. Exercises are an important tool to maintain this readiness. Like doing reps at the gym, they help create the muscle memory to sustain a successful battle rhythm within today's dynamic and ever-shifting environment while deterring our adversaries through power projection.

Recent exercises such as STEEL KNIGHT and NEXUS FORGE are great examples of what we are already doing in the AFR to train and certify for multi-domain operations.

During Exercise STEEL KNIGHT, multiple fixed and rotary wing aircraft from three Reserve wings participated in a three-phased, combined arms operation in a simulated conflict against a peer adversary. Air Force Reserve participants exercised with U.S. Navy and Marine forces along with allies and partners from the Philippines, Australia, Singapore, Mexico, and Peru. We employed new methods to generate more efficient, integrated training opportunities for Airmen to exercise together before deploying as a team. The exercise began with simulated contingency deployments to locations in Arizona and California with follow-on combat operations at Darwin, Australia. Alongside our joint and international partners, we practiced evolving tactics, techniques, and procedures across a wide range of missions—dynamic rescue, expeditionary medical procedures, search and rescue, targeting, and theater ingress within an Expeditionary Advanced Basing Operation.

Then, in February this year, we kicked off Exercise NEXUS FORGE, a Reserve-led, multi-theater, multi-domain, and multi-national exercise. Our goal was to certify the first of our Reserve



U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Dylan Golden, 707th Maintenance Squadron crew chief, prepares the bomb bay of a B-52H Stratofortress prior to a mission, Feb. 25, 2025 at March Air Reserve Base, California during Exercise SOUTHERN EDGE 25. The Air Force Reserve-led exercise focused on interoperability with special operations ground forces from allied nations and the U.S. Marines. (U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Kate Bragg)

expeditionary air base wings for combat operations. Exercise operations commenced from dispersed locations in Hawaii and Guam with representation from each of the Reserve's Numbered Air Forces, including ten Reserve wings that contributed airlift and tanker support. In all, more than 850 participants including U.S. Soldiers and Marines, completed this event, demonstrating successful joint and international interoperability. Our goal is for NEXUS FORGE and similar certification exercises to nest within larger DAF and DoD events. This is an important step for us in building even larger, globally integrated joint events by focusing on combatant commander and higher authority requirements.

One lesson from Exercise NEXUS FORGE is simple: if you want an installation where there is none, you have to build it. A 400-person team landed in Hawaii expecting to use other DoD facilities for the aeromedical evacuation portion of the exercise. However, the approval to use those facilities was rescinded as our aircraft were landing. Security Forces participants were deploying in from multiple bases to conduct drone dispersion with no established base camp. So, our Airmen immediately faced a challenge: if they wanted to sleep under shelter, they would have to build it from the ground up. None of this was in the exercise script, but

# Air Force Reserve

the team excelled in breaking a lot of paradigms and norms. There were tasks we thought we could do well, but we discovered they needed improvement. There were tasks we thought might execute poorly, yet we excelled. It all comes down to leveraging experiences, figuring out how to do the job well, and reinvigorating that readiness muscle memory. The lessons identified from NEXUS FORGE are helping the DAF in planning for this summer's Return of Forces to the Pacific, or REFORPAC Exercise.

## Transforming for the future

My second priority, Transforming for the Future, requires staff and leadership at all levels to focus on rapid reform. This empowers and enables us to answer the SecDef priorities of restoring the warrior ethos, rebuilding our military, and reestablishing deterrence head-on. Recently, the CSAF Gen Alvin called for more Air Force to not only meet these priorities but to generate more tooth to tail. More Air Force is not more of the same, but an efficient, agile force of Airmen focused on peer threats when we need them. He described operational surge capacity and strategic depth, the core tenets of the Air Force Reserve. As a largely part-time force, we can focus more Airmen on the mission at a fraction of the cost of our active component counterparts. Breaking down our cost-effective value further, an operational reservist costs 32 cents on the dollar, while a strategic reservist only costs 28 cents on the dollar. Our members tend to serve longer than twenty years, reducing their pension costs to the taxpayer by 37 percent. In terms of efficiency, 28 days a month, we operate 37 wings on only 25 percent of our population on the installations we own. Through the lens of our national defense priorities, we continue to analyze and adjust our Reserve force to ensure we are prioritizing limited resources, driving modernization, and building the most lethal force in the world.

Transformative change comes with risk. Risk to mission, equipment, and even relevance. In a peacetime environment, we should not risk aircraft damage, injury, or personal safety. During conflict, the acceptable level of risk increases in line with the commander's intent and requirements for mission success. Building a culture that normalizes risk management while training builds a resilient, more lethal force that can make informed decisions at the speed of relevance. We will achieve this by getting back to basics. Training starts with an understanding of the national defense and national military strategies as our foundational documents. Then, identifying operational boundaries, practicing operational discipline, and building trust at all levels empowers leaders to accept risk at the lowest appropriate level and unleash their innovative potential. The Department of Defense needs Airmen who are critical thinkers and can make timely decisions regardless of the environment. This is foundational and creates strength and unity within our formations.

Accountability is key to the successful execution of both priorities, Ready Now and Transforming for the Future. We hold airmen accountable for maintaining basic readiness with strict adherence to standards and orders, and my commanders are responsible for resource prioritization and mission execution. Loss of currency or proficiency is unacceptable as it wastes two valuable resources — time and funding. Moreover, I challenged every Reserve Airman to understand and leverage all tools and resources available. This encourages Airmen to learn, understand, and apply Commanders' intent to accomplish decentralized mission execution. Our nation demands every Airman own their personal readiness and work diligently to be an effective warfighting element.

We are an efficient, effective, accessible, and experienced force organized, trained and equipped to deter conflict and prevail against any adversary. Our commitment to high standards is unwavering. We are a proud member of the strongest and most lethal Air Force in the world. 



As Chief of Air Force Reserve, Lieutenant General John Healy serves as principal adviser on reserve matters to the Secretary of the Air Force and the Air Force Chief of Staff. As Commander of Air Force Reserve Command, he has full responsibility for the supervision of all U.S. Air Force Reserve units around the world.

Gen. Healy was commissioned in 1989 as a graduate of the ROTC program at the University of Connecticut. He was part of the initial cadre for the C-17 Globemaster III program and has more than 5,000 flying hours, including 402 combat hours. The general has commanded at the squadron, Vice Wing, and Numbered Air Force level. Prior to his current assignment, he was the Deputy to the Chief of Air Force Reserve.

Gen. Healy has earned numerous major awards and decorations, including the Distinguished Service Medal, the Defense Superior Service Medal, the Legion of Merit, and the Defense Meritorious Service Medal. He has a bachelor's degree from the University of Connecticut and a MA from Webster University.

## Coast Guard Reserve

# State of the Coast Guard Reserve: Postured for contingency response

By Rear Adm. Tiffany Danko, Director Coast Guard of Reserve  
and Master Chief Petty Officer Will Adams, 9th Master Chief Petty Officer, Coast Guard Reserve

For more than eight decades, the Coast Guard Reserve has been a crucial element in the Coast Guard's integrated total force, and we are both honored and humbled to be leading this incredible organization. Today, the Coast Guard Reserve is ready for the challenges of the future because we're equipped with one significant advantage: our people. As members of the Coast Guard Reserve, our people have proven that they excel in any situation and that their talents, skills, and abilities will enable them to rise to meet any challenge. Our main focus now is twofold; we will prioritize critical contingency response capabilities to support the Coast Guard's highest priority missions, and we will seek improved ways to support those who carry out those essential missions.

### Mission support

Our all-volunteer force is ready to deploy to areas of need; they are trained in national defense, boat forces operations, law enforcement, maritime disaster response, and other essential Coast Guard missions. The question is not if but when they will be recalled. Each month, Coast Guard Reservists drill as if that opportunity were their last before a recall.

Representing just one and a half percent of the Coast Guard Operations and Support (O&S) appropriation, the entire Reserve training budget is a relatively small cost for the opportunity to increase the Service's end-strength by an extra 12% capacity within 48 hours.

Last year, more than a third of these dedicated patriots left their families and civilian jobs and reported to active duty, contributing over 28,000 duty days to support the nation's call in both contingency and non-contingency activations. Coast Guard reservists were essential to the response efforts for the Francis Scott Key Bridge collapse in Baltimore, Maryland. The Coast Guard utilized



A Port Security Unit boat crew practices offensive maneuvers at Special Missions Training Center at Camp LeJeune, North Carolina. (U. S. Coast Guard Photo)

86 reservists for public safety, investigation, and restoring the Marine Transportation System fundamental to the area's economic prosperity.

The Port Security community adopted an adaptive force package model, creating Embarked Security Teams, to enable critical military operations in support of national defense maritime missions in the Pacific. Over 300 reservists supported Operation Vigilant Sentry, a Department of Homeland Security effort to curtail illegal migration and secure our Southern Border in the Caribbean. Coast Guard Reserve members continue to support our communities and the nation in natural disasters, providing critical emergency management capabilities in the wake of hurricanes such as Helene and Milton and fires in Maui. The demand for our Coast Guard Reserve members has only increased over the past few years, from 1,963 reservists activated in 2022 to 2,364 reservists activated in 2024 out of an NDAA of only 7,000. In every one of these operations, our reservists have proven daily how they enable the success of the world's best Coast Guard.

# Coast Guard Reserve



A Coast Guard boat assesses the Francis Scott Key Bridge collapse in Baltimore, Maryland, March 29, 2024. The Key Bridge was struck by the Singapore-flagged cargo ship Dali early morning on March 26, 2024. Reservists were among the responding groups, bringing experience, talent and local knowledge to help contribute to the Unified Command's goals and the city of Baltimore at large. (U. S. Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 1st Class Brandon Giles)

While we've stood the watch on the nation's waters, harbors, and ports, we've also increased our capabilities in the newest battlespace: cyber. Last year, we stood up two new cyber units, Coast Guard Reserve Unit U.S. Cyber Command and the 1941 Cyber Protection Team. The addition of these new units provides our Service with industry-trained professionals who possess cutting-edge knowledge and skillsets—a level of experience that's difficult to acquire and retain. We are applying these skilled reservists to the protection of the Marine Transportation System and, subsequently, the \$5 trillion in economic activity that flows through our ports each year.

The cyber domain is a challenging operating environment, but it's just one more location where our talented people are making a difference. Their expertise and professionalism are why the Reserve Component is called upon in times of need. It is because of their stamina and talent that we can complete our day-to-day missions and still be prepared for a major crisis or contingency operation.

The Coast Guard is the only military service with an integrated Reserve Component; our reservists train and execute missions right alongside their active-duty counterparts at units across the country. That unique, integrated structure allows our people to obtain the needed skillsets for steady-state and contingency

operations at home and abroad while enabling the Coast Guard to carry out its critical missions.

## People-focused initiatives

The Coast Guard is focusing our mission priorities on meeting the challenges of the future and making improvements to how we promote, advance, and retain members to enable their success.

One way we do this is through the establishment of the Inactive Duty Training—Travel Reimbursement Program (IDT-TRP)—which provides funding for critically understaffed ranks to be reimbursed for travel expenses. Over 25% of our Coast Guard reservists live more than 150 miles from their assigned duty station, and IDT-TRP has helped cover some of those travel costs incurred as part of serving. This bears witness to the commitment of reservists who commute long distances for duty; this program supports these members and advances benefits parity with our DoD counterparts. We implemented this highly successful benefit last year for all eligible E-6 and below members, but current Coast Guard budget constraints limit any further expansion in IDT-TRP participation.

We're also helping to expand the Service itself. Recruiting and retention continue to top the list of strategic priorities as we work

# Coast Guard Reserve

to get the Component up to our NDAA-authorized end strength of 7,000. But for the first time in years, the Coast Guard exceeded its combined recruiting goal, bringing on more than 5,000 new service members, both active duty and reserve. Reservists have also been a key part of that recruiting effort, leading the incident management team responsible for new recruiting incentives, initiatives and strategic lines of effort.

Our members are a vital part of building a resilient, cohesive crew that the Coast Guard can depend upon. These future shipmates will be part of the crews who save lives, control the U.S. maritime border and approaches, assure the operation and defense of U.S. maritime critical infrastructure in physical and cyberspace, and safeguard navigation and marine resources.

## Eyes on the horizon

The history of the Coast Guard Reserve began 84 years ago, born out of a need to protect our homeland. Our roots are in national defense, but our agility and flexibility continue to be the key to our operational relevance and success in all our missions as we protect our complex maritime domain and secure national prosperity.

For more than 234 years, the Coast Guard has provided an enduring value in service to the American people. We are part of the DHS team protecting our nation and are at all times a military service and part of the joint force defending it. We are in greater demand now than ever before.

Looking over the horizon and into the future, our direction is clear. We see the need for the Coast Guard Reserve to continue to evolve into an agile, contingency-based workforce to meet new demands and evolving threats within our mission areas. Our people confront the challenging threats along our maritime borders while global strategic competition continues to increase.

As always, the steadfast devotion to duty displayed by our reservists demonstrates their unrelenting commitment to responding at a moment's notice to serve our nation. Together, we have risen above challenges with a strong sense of professionalism and purpose, and the Coast Guard Reserve remains a ready and capable workforce of dedicated professionals.

Our Coast Guard Reserve will maintain its legacy of unmatched professionalism, patriotism, and preparedness, supporting our multi-mission portfolio and continue to provide tremendous value to the American people as we continue the tradition of mission excellence in a legacy of service. 



**Rear Admiral Tiffany Danko** is currently assigned as the Director of the Coast Guard Reserve and is the Assistant Commandant for Coast Guard Reserve. Rear Admiral Danko's career has encompassed numerous operational tours. She began her career as a plank owner on the USCGC Juniper (WLB-201). Other tours CONUS and OCONUS included SWO aboard USS O'Brien (DD-975) in Yokosuka, Japan; at the USCG Intelligence Coordination Center in Washington, D.C.; with Harbor Defense Command 110 in San Diego, CA; and at USCG Activities Far East in Yokota, Japan. She served on the staff of U.S. Southern Command in Miami, FL, as well as the Senior Reserve Officer for USCG Sector Jacksonville, FL. Rear Admiral Danko is also an Adjunct Professor with the University of Southern California Bovard College.

Rear Admiral Danko holds a Doctorate in Organizational Leadership from Northeastern University, is a 2015 Joint Forces Staff College Joint Combined Warfighting School graduate, and a 2013 U.S. Naval War College Command and Staff Program graduate. She earned a Master of Arts Degree from San Diego State University and is a 1995 graduate of the U.S. Coast Guard Academy. Her personal awards include the Defense Superior Service Medal, the Defense Meritorious Service Medal, Meritorious Service Medals, Joint Commendation Medal, Coast Guard Commendation Medal, Coast Guard and Navy/Marine Corps Commendation Medals, and other personal and unit awards



**MCPO Adams** is a graduate of the Chief Petty Officer Academy Reserve class XXXVI, and the Senior Enlisted Leadership Course 99 in New London, Conn. In addition, he's graduated from the Senior Enlisted Joint Professional Military Education (SEJPME) courses I and II, a certified Master Training Specialist, firearms instructor, and completed Chiefs Call to Initiation in the spring of 2013. He is a certified Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training member and the former Chief of the Mess at Special Missions Training Center.

Some of MCPO Adams awards during his distinguished career include the Coast Guard Commendation Medal, Joint Service Achievement Medal, Coast Guard Achievement Medal with "O" device, Navy/Marine corps Achievement Medal, and Army Achievement Medal.

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Commissioned Officer Corps

## NOAA Corps legacy of service, science, and security

By Rear Adm. Chad Cary



Ensign Iris Ekmanis navigates a survey launch from NOAA Ship Fairweather towards survey grounds near John Hopkins Glacier in Alaska. (NOAA Marine and Aviation Operations photo by LT Jessica Spruill)

**A**ssuming responsibility as the 20th Director of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Commissioned Officer Corps during a period of tremendous change is both humbling and inspiring. We are recapitalizing a quarter of our ship fleet and a third of our aircraft fleet. Our highly

capable, STEM-focused uniformed service is strengthening to meet the evolving environmental intelligence needs of the nation. For the first time, three basic officer training classes will be held in 2025, increasing the service's accession capacity. All of this growth allows our service to better serve the American people.



*Discoverer*, the second of two ships being built for NOAA, will support a wide variety of NOAA missions, ranging from oceanographic research and exploration to studying marine life, climate and ocean ecosystems. (NOAA Marine and Aviation Operations photo by LCDR Kell Bliss)

Advancing efficient science and technology alongside our partners is an essential function, and our NOAA Corps officers are uniquely qualified to do just that. All NOAA Corps officers have academic backgrounds in science, technology, engineering, or mathematics with more than half holding advanced degrees. All are operational experts in NOAA's fleet of 15 ships and 10 aircraft and are selected for their leadership potential and trained to develop it. Afloat, in the air, and ashore, the NOAA Corps's exceptional blend of operational proficiency, technical expertise, and leadership acumen provides vital support for NOAA's science mission. They are integral to enhancing the nation's safety, preparedness, and prosperity.

As one of the nation's eight uniformed services, the NOAA Corps traces its roots back to 1807 when President Thomas Jefferson signed into law the Survey of the Coast. Eventually, the Corps was established in 1917 to provide critical mapping, positioning, and charting expertise to the nation both in times of war and peace. The demand for these services is no less crucial today than they were in 1807 or 1917, and the NOAA Corps's mission has grown. Today, the missions that drive the demand for the NOAA Corps continue as our economy, security, and environments evolve.

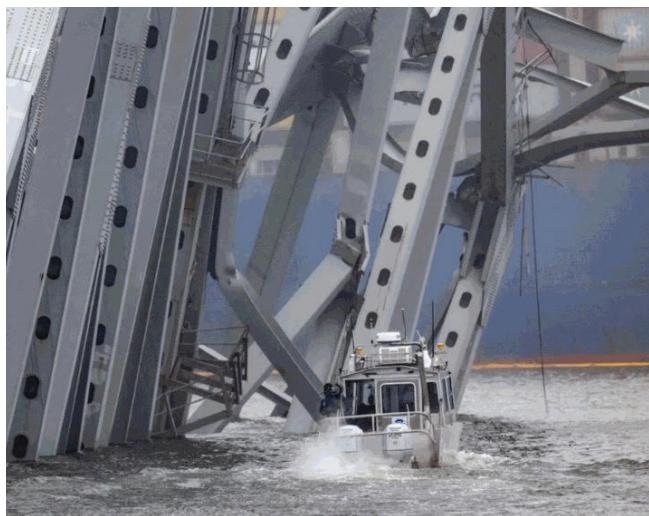
The NOAA Corps leads a wide spectrum of collection efforts with resultant data used to inform commercial and recreational fishing, update nautical charts, and provide weather alerts that

keep mariners safe and commerce moving. Their work also leads to finding never-before-seen species found deep in the ocean and ensuring reliable shipping routes so ports can reopen following a storm. These important products would not have been possible without the ships and aircraft used by NOAA scientists, experts, and partners. Critical environmental intelligence is an integral part of the nation's economy and security.

## When science meets safety

In the last year, NOAA Corps officers have been called upon for their expertise as part of several disasters. When the Francis Scott Key bridge collapsed in Baltimore, all shipping activity in one of the nation's busiest ports stopped. In the days following the incident, as the focus shifted from emergency response to restoring vessel traffic, NOAA Corps officers were on the water and in the air, working to rapidly reopen the port. In addition to the tragic loss of six lives, there was an estimated loss of \$190 million in daily economic activity for the area due to this incident. A NOAA Office of Coast Survey navigation response team, led by NOAA Corps officers, quickly established three alternate routes to bypass the inaccessible part of the main channel. In the following days, the data collected allowed the NOAA team to find underwater obstructions and ensure those objects were depicted appropriately on navigation products.

In January 2025, while on an annual survey to monitor and understand the West Coast marine ecosystem, NOAA Corps officers and scientists aboard NOAA Ship *Reuben Lasker* began seeing



One of NOAA's navigation response teams works near the wreckage of Francis Scott Key Bridge wreckage in Baltimore. (NOAA photo)

ash from the California wildfires in the water samples they were collecting and in the air while they were working. The water samples were taken from a plankton tow net, which captures the uppermost surface layers of the ocean, and were collected between 4-60 miles off the coast, near Santa Monica. This prompted several scientists to begin researching how the fires may be impacting the marine environment. At the same time, a NOAA King Air aircraft under the command of a NOAA Corps flight crew was deployed to collect aerial images with onboard high-resolution cameras in order to map out the areas impacted by the fire. This information was critical in the response effort by helping first responders direct and prioritize their efforts.

A few weeks later, following the aircraft collision over the Potomac River near Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport, a NOAA Twin Otter conducted LIDAR (light detection and ranging) survey flights over the crash site to support NOAA's National Ocean Service response and recovery efforts. During the flights, coastal mapping experts from NOAA's National Geodetic Survey used laser pulses to accurately measure distances to objects, creating detailed three-dimensional models of surfaces. Additionally, NOAA's navigation response teams, which included civilian hydrographers and NOAA Corps officers, worked alongside local and federal agencies to survey both the river's main channel and surrounding debris field. Using this data, NOAA provided a detailed sonar map of the wreckage to a GIS-based dashboard. The survey helped identify more than 50 possible targets for divers, guiding them to key wreckage locations for retrieval.

## **Staying the course, under the radar**

It's not only these high-profile events where NOAA Corps officers demonstrate their expertise. The work that NOAA Corps officers support every day and out of the spotlight provides the foundation for the country's maritime economy.



NOAA Corps officer candidates during the 12-week basic officer training class held at the U.S. Coast Guard Academy in New London, Connecticut. (NOAA Marine and Aviation Operations photo by LCDR Dylan Kosten)

On most days, you can find NOAA Corps officers navigating the country's waters to collect data from our marine environment. Frequently, that means mapping the ocean floor to improve safe navigation and efficient maritime commerce, characterizing our nation's submerged resources, supporting exploration, and strengthening our national security.

Ashore, NOAA Corps officers lead NOAA's Office of Coast Survey and are responsible for mapping and charting all U.S. waters. Using the data collected at sea, NOAA creates and maintains more than 3,000 nautical charts covering 95,000 miles of shoreline and 3.4 million square nautical miles of water. The value of NOAA's electronic navigation charts alone—just one of the many products and services we provide to the public—is estimated to be between \$2 and \$3.5 billion annually.

The officers commanding NOAA's ships also support the collection of data essential to ensuring the United States has productive and sustainable fisheries and safe sources of seafood, as well as informing the recovery and conservation of protected resources. NOAA's living marine resource surveys inform U.S. fisheries management, an industry that 1.7 million commercial and recreational fishing-related jobs depend on, and one that generates \$253 billion in sales and \$117 billion in commercial and recreational value-added impacts.

Slicing through the eyewall of a hurricane, buffeted by howling winds, blinding rain, and violent updrafts and downdrafts, may not sound like a “regular” day at the office. For the NOAA Corps officers who lead our aircraft operations, this is just part of what they do. Data collected by the agency’s high-flying meteorological stations help forecasters make accurate predictions during a hurricane and help hurricane researchers achieve a better understanding of storm processes. Why does it matter? When aircraft data are available, hurricane track forecasts are improved by 15-20%, and hurricane intensity forecasts are improved by 10-15%. Accurate 2020 hurricane forecasts informed by NOAA’s aircraft saved more than \$991 million in evacuation costs. Longer lead times for tropical cyclone forecasts are more critical than ever as coastal populations and infrastructure continue to grow and evacuation decision times increase. When it’s not hurricane season, these same aircraft and their crews can be found collecting data on atmospheric rivers, tornadoes, and other extreme weather events.

## Stepping boldly into the future

Every year, more than 1,000 NOAA scientists and partners embark on NOAA vessels providing data to hundreds of laboratories, program offices, and research organizations. New ships and

aircraft are a core component of keeping NOAA and the nation competitively and successfully securing environmental intelligence data to support a robust economy.

Currently, four new ships are being constructed for NOAA. These will replace vessels in the fleet that are a half-century old. NOAA is expanding the Hurricane Hunter fleet with two new Gulfstream G550 high-altitude jets, and at least two specialized C-130J Hercules aircraft will replace the WP-3D Orions after 50 years of service. As new uncrewed technologies emerge, NOAA will continue developing and investing in these cutting-edge observational assets.

Investing in people is just as critical as investing in platforms. Applications to become a NOAA Corps officer are up 600%, marking a period of unprecedented interest. In addition, by holding three basic officer training classes in 2025, the annual number of incoming officers will increase by 50%.

Our work touches the lives of every single American every single day. We keep communities safe, protect critical environmental resources, and ensure the nation’s economic well-being. Whether conducting hurricane reconnaissance and research, assessing the health of our oceans, or performing emergency surveys for navigation hazards that help ports reopen quickly, our work leads to greater security, efficiency, and prosperity. 



**Rear Admiral Chad M. Cary** serves as the 20th director of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Commissioned Officer Corps (NOAA Corps) and the NOAA Office of Marine and Aviation Operations (OMAO).

In addition to leading the NOAA Corps — one of the nation’s eight uniformed services — RADM Cary oversees NOAA’s fleet of 15 research and survey ships and 10 specialized aircraft, including the agency’s “hurricane hunters,” all of which are operated, managed, and maintained by a combination of NOAA Corps officers and civilians in support of NOAA’s science, service, and stewardship mission. He is also responsible for the multi-billion recapitalization of these platforms.

A NOAA Corps officer since 2001, he has served in many operational and management assignments with NOAA, most recently as deputy director of the NOAA Corps and OMAO’s deputy director for operations. In that capacity, he oversaw the day-to-day operations of OMAO’s marine, aviation, and uncrewed systems operations, as well as OMAO’s health and cyber services. RADM Cary’s experience as a NOAA mariner has taken him from the Bering Sea to Georges Bank. He has held command positions aboard NOAA ships *Reuben Lasker*, *Henry B. Bigelow*, *Nancy Foster*, and *John N. Cobb*. He has also served as the Director of the NOAA Corps Commissioned Personnel Center, and applied his at-sea and shoreside operational experience to support the National Marine Fisheries Service, National Weather Service and NOAA headquarters.

RADM Cary was born and raised in Alaska. He earned a bachelor’s degree in environmental science with an emphasis in marine sciences from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill before joining the NOAA Corps. He also holds a master’s degree in geography from Portland State University and a graduate certificate in legislative studies from Georgetown University.



## Department of Michigan

Lt. Col. Louis Wilson, U.S. Army (Ret.)

Lt. Col. Louis Wilson, AR, U.S. Army (Ret.), President, ROA-MI

**T**he ROA-Michigan Department has remained busy. Our main projects are planning for the annual ROA-MI State Conference and starting a new program with the University of Michigan, Army ROTC Wolverine BN.

Our Conference will be on 26 April 2025 at the Selfridge ANGB, MI. The theme will be "Chinese and Russian: Arctic Incursions." The EXCOM is putting together a dynamic team of speakers to address this important issue. These incursions into US zones off Alaska are increasing. Russian and Chinese ships are also operating off the European coast, where undersea communications cables have been cut. The strategic position on the globe of Alaska, Canada, and our northern European Allies gives the US advantages in the Arctic, which warrant protection. It promises to be a timely and insightful conference. The presentations will be offered onsite and by ZOOM. Those attending in person will be able to enjoy lunch with friends. The presentations will be offered via ZOOM.

The ROA & ROTC Working Together Program is new. It was developed with the cooperation of Cpt. Louis Goldstein, Army ROTC, UM-Ann Arbor, and Ltc. (Ret.) Louis Wilson, ROA-MI, starting in Sept. 2025. This is a new program that benefits both the cadets and officers by bringing them together. Starting with a basic idea of bridging a communications gap, we are developing a process to operate and recruit participants. This is a cadet-driven program focused on their interests. CPT Goldstein identified two cadet leaders and points of contact. They went to work with the 50+ Army cadets. Ltc. (Ret.) Wilson reached out to military friends to describe this new program and recruit them as participants. The officers are valuable resources that can be utilized as career mentors, classroom resources, award presenters, write reference letters, recommend books, and more. The cadets are very enthusiastic and enjoyed the Jan. 2025 meeting, with more scheduled. Wilson was pleasantly surprised by the positive results in ROA officer involvement, with 7 Army generals among the volunteering officers. It is rewarding to give back.

## Where can I get career guidance?

Col. Tony Kanellis (Ret.), Executive Director, SARCA

**H**ave you ever asked yourself these questions — Can I take that staff job for a few years? Can I transfer to the IRR without worrying about damaging my career? Will I be competitive for Senior Service College if I do not have a battalion command? Where do you go, or who do you turn to for answers to these and other career questions? If you don't know, you are not alone.

Managing your career in the Reserve Components (RC) can be far more challenging than it is in the Active Component. For starters, RC units are usually geographically separated from their higher headquarters, sometimes by hundreds of miles. The practical implication is that you have far fewer opportunities for casual conversations with senior officers than you would on an Active Component installation. It is often through these informal discussions that you get insights and tips that might be helpful as you progress in your career. Even with access to senior officers, it is good to seek advice, tips, and ideas from others as well. You want to have as much information as possible as you make potentially life-changing decisions.

Associations such as the Reserve Organization of America (ROA), the Senior Army Reserve Commanders Association

(SARCA), and others provide opportunities for service members at all ranks to have career-related discussions during in-person meetings. These organizations are focused on serving Reserve Component Service members and their Families and can address the unique challenges facing Citizen Warriors as they manage both a civilian career and a military career.

At SARCA, we tap into our membership of Generals and Colonels to develop career information based on the actual experiences of Army Reserve senior officers and provide opportunities to connect with potential mentors. Senior leaders will answer the questions and go in-depth to offer ideas and options to consider as you balance life's challenges and responsibilities. We want you to be well-informed and successful.

To get the word out, we have started a distribution list to send out information on topics to answer the questions above, as well as provide updates on career management, mentoring and coaching, and other insights that may be helpful. There will also be opportunities to connect with a mentor if desired. This is a free resource, and you can sign up on the Google form using this link — <https://forms.gle/83utKJFWhcALGm286>. If you have any questions, send us a note to [sarcacareer@gmail.com](mailto:sarcacareer@gmail.com).

# ROA's Communications and Marketing Committee, two missions enhancing our second century of service

By Capt. Henry E. Plimack, USCGR (Ret.)

The Communications and Marketing Committee's eighteen dedicated members serve as the eyes and ears of ROA. We provide internal and external communications and marketing and are responsible for outreach, partnering, and visibility, and recruiting opportunities for our Association. This enables ROA to continue the nation's efforts to ensure the Reserve Components are strong and ready and their family members are well cared for.

Our committee's first mission is internally focused—supporting our member's grassroots strength by monitoring social media platforms and recognizing Department and Chapter efforts to share information and promote ROA.

To do that, we first scour X, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and other social media sites, as well as governmental and association websites, and share appropriate content so leaders and members have current, relevant information to make informed decisions.

We also want to help Departments and Chapters be successful in their communications by providing guidance through our Publications Guidelines booklet. This periodically updated document provides information on best practices for your publications and online products.

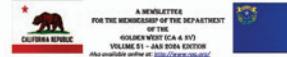
Annually, we review department and chapter newsletters and their websites in an effort to recognize those that effectively keep their members informed. They provide good information, and we appreciate their efforts.

We are currently evaluating newsletters for the Sword and Pen Award and the Ben Franklin Award, presented at the Annual Meeting. Here are a few excellent examples from Departments and Chapters.

Editors are eligible for both recognitions if they fulfill the requirements cited in the Publication Guidelines. Websites are also judged. Their recognition is the Sword and Screen Award and the Brigadier General Sarnoff Award. An excellent example of a website is from the Department of Missouri: Fred Lydic Webmaster, with their "MOROA Transmitter" Editor, Richard



## THE RESERVE ORGANIZATION OF AMERICA DEPARTMENT OF THE CALIFORNIA WEST "SENTINEL"



The communications chapter select and diverse of the Reserve Organization of America: "To support a membership that is strong, vibrant, and provides adequate national security and personal development and execution thereof."

2023-2025 DEPARTMENT PRESIDENT  
Col David Thompson, USMC (Ret)  
Email: [cmroa@comcast.net](mailto:cmroa@comcast.net)

President's Message  
As the President, I would like to thank you as our Department President, it is an honor to serve in this position. I hope you all can attend our Department Meeting on May 18th in San Diego. Also, I would like to thank all the members for visiting the website and sign up for the Reserve Voice emails (if you haven't already) to stay informed of what is going on with the Reserve members to join ROA. Thank you for your service, both to ROA and to our Country.

The 18th is the Department Convention in San Diego at the Marriott Town Center near the airport.

Looking for Service VPs and volunteers to attend Fleet Week in Los Angeles and local Veterans Ribbon events.

Looking at Recruiting - Internal to fill vacancies and external to provide growth and development.

God Bless America

2024-2025 DEPARTMENT PRESIDENT-ELECT  
To be elected at Dept Meeting May 18th in San Diego, CA.

THE GOLDEN WEST "SENTINEL" NEWSLETTER - VOLUME 51 - JAN 2024 - EDITION 1



## NAN BREKET WITH A BANG News

The Benjamin Franklin Award for Journalism, Awarded in 1966, 2004, 2009, 2013, the Fifth in 2018  
The Sword and Pen Award for Outstanding Achievement, 20th Award in 2019  
The Ben Franklin Award for Outstanding Achievement, 21st Award in 2020  
HONOR • COURAGE • COMMITMENT • SELFLESSNESS  
<https://www.swo.org>

Number 1-22

President's Message

CAPT Steve Hales  
USN (Ret)

Wishing everyone a happy new year!

I hope everyone is having a great year so far!

The Benjamin Franklin Award at the ROA's

awards ceremony on December 9, 2023, was

well received by all.

ROA members are very proud of the

recipients of the awards.

The ROA has been busy presenting awards to

ROA's high school and college students.

ROA's Department of Government and School in

12 Capes last month, here is a picture.

We still have awards available for a presentation.

That spirit is why I enjoy ROA Chapter

gatherings so much. My ROA friendships only go

back to my first year in college.

My ROA friendships are still strong, and the challenges I face in my life are still the same.

But, nonetheless, I have developed several close friendships with people I have never met in person.

written in our Chapter, Department, and at the

National Convention.

What about, I will say that I belong and am

active in ROA. I can continue serving my country

and my family in the military.

It's true, but I am also here for the comradery.

And the fun!

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Kallemeier completing this professional communications team (missouri.org):



Our committee's second mission is externally focused - raise awareness of ROA's numerous achievements and legislative success stories, such as spotlighting our public policy priorities for the 119th Congress. We inform Congress, the Uniformed Services (especially the Reserve Components), the public, partners, and potential donors. This requires assistance from professional organizations that have access to each of these demographics. It is essential that they know each audience and how to reach them. An example of ROA's legislative effort can be found at ([www.youtube.com/watch?v=eIsovnnK05k](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eIsovnnK05k))

To accomplish this, we must go outside of our membership and reach our target audiences: Congress, the uniformed services (especially the Reserve Components), the public, partners, and potential donors. Such an effort requires assistance from professional organizations that have access to each of these demographics. It is essential that we know each audience and how to reach them. That process is being considered.

At its core, marketing is the strategic methodology of promoting our association, requiring market research and

advertising. The goal is to attract prospective members while simultaneously fostering a sense of loyalty among current members.

ROA's marketing initiatives, in development, will include:

- Crafting compelling membership packages that highlight the value of joining.
- Identifying and targeting our niche audience with tailored messages
- Utilizing data-driven insights to personalize member experiences and outreach.
- Employing content marketing to share our association's accomplishments.
- Leveraging social media and email campaigns to reach outside our membership.
- Organizing events and webinars that address the professional and personal needs of the Reservists.

Effective communication is the lifeblood of ROA, enhancing our reputation, trustworthiness, value, and impact. To do that, we use strategic communication (STRATCOM) to inform, educate, and build relationships with stakeholders, including members, partners, the Services, potential donors, and the public.

For ROA leaders, understanding the nuanced roles and interplay of marketing and communications is crucial for crafting a sustainable and successful strategy. This dynamic interplay is not just about broadcasting messages but about building relationships and creating spaces where members feel heard, valued, and motivated to engage. It's not a choice between marketing and communications; it's about the art of harmonizing them to achieve a collective vision.

If you are a photographer, writer, journalist, videographer, or media guru, consider joining ROA's Communications and Marketing Team! If you have any questions about the Committee or this article, feel free to contact us at: [roainfo@roa.org](mailto:roainfo@roa.org) 

# Interallied Confederation of Reserve Officers (CIOR)

By Capt. Robert H. Carmack, U.S. Coast Guard (Ret.), CIOR U.S. Vice President and ROA Past National President

**C**IOR is the Interallied Confederation of Reserve Officers or, in French, Confédération Interalliée des Officiers de Réserve, and was founded in 1948 by the reserve officer associations of Belgium, France, and the Netherlands, with ROA joining in 1958. CIOR represents the interests of more than one million reserve personnel across 29 active member nations, including three associate member nations, with Ukraine being the most recent addition as an associate member.

In late July 2024, the CIOR Summer Congress was held in beautiful Tallinn, Estonia, capping the productive 2022-2024 Estonian Presidency. The Summer Congress featured a successful Military Competition (MILCOMP) and very productive committee meetings and work products, including the Defense Attitudes and Security Issues (DEFSEC) Committee's Strategic Planning Guidance receiving CIOR Council approval and the Civil-Military Cooperation (CIMIC) Committee's exercise focusing on hybrid warfare issues. At the CIOR Council level, the highlight was approving the new CIOR VZW (Belgian non-profit entity) Constitution and By-laws (C&BL).

The approval of the CIOR VZW C&BL culminated a multi-year endeavor that required significant effort from the Estonian Presidency, the CIOR Legal Committee, as well as commercial Belgian legal experts, modernizing and bringing CIOR into full compliance with current Belgian non-profit regulations. At the Congress Gala, concluding the Summer Congress, the Estonia Presidency passed the torch to the Nordic Presidency, headed by Colonel Jørn Buø from Norway, who will serve as President from 2024-2026. The leadership of the Nordic presidency also includes Secretary Generals from Finland and Sweden.

Denmark will assume its two-year presidency at the 2026 Summer Congress. A highlight for the USA delegation at the Congress Gala was the presentation of the ROA International Medal to two very deserving, long-serving CIOR members: Wing Commander Graham Banks, Royal Air Force, (Ret.) for his many years of exemplary service to CIOMR, and Lt. Col. Toomas Luman, Estonian Defense Forces, for his outstanding leadership as International CIOR President from 2022-2024.

In October 2024, the NATO Military Committee approved the new NATO Policy on Reserves (MC 0441/3), which provides NATO's vision for the utilization of Reserves based on five principles: Augment Deterrence and Defense; Enhance Interoperability; Enable Strategic Depth; Support Crisis Response; and Enhance Societal Resilience and Alliance Cohesion.

It further strongly encouraged the NATO Committee on Reserves (NCR), formerly the National Reserve Forces Committee (NRFC), and the Associated Reserve Organizations (AROs), which includes CIOR, the Interallied Confederation of Medical



(L-R: Capt. Robert Carmack, US CIOR VP; Col. Peter Olsen, US CIOMR; Wg. Cdr. Graham Banks; Lt. Col. Toomas Luman; Col. James Sweeney, ROA International Programs Officer; Lt. Col. Peter Powell, US CIOR ASG)

Reserve Officers (CIOMR), and the Interallied Confederation of Reserve Non-Commissioned Officers (CISOR), to strive to have a strong cooperative relationship to provide the NATO Military Committee with complete and comprehensive advice regarding Reserves. CIOR played a key role in creating this new policy by actively participating in the working group's document development.

Since the 2024 Summer Congress, CIOR has held an In Between Meeting (IBM) in Palma de Mallorca, Spain, from October 31 – November 2, 2024, and a Mid-Winter meeting at NATO Headquarters in Brussels, Belgium, from January 29-31, 2025. Highlights of the Mid-Winter meeting included presentations from NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte, and newly installed Chairman of the NATO Military Committee Admiral Giuseppe Cavo Dragone, who both spoke eloquently on the vital importance of reservists to fulfill NATO's mission requirements. Additionally, CIOR welcomed back Lithuania as a full member of CIOR and Ukraine as an associate member.

Still to come is an IBM from May 8-10, 2025, in Oslo, Norway, followed by the Summer Congress that will be held in Madrid, Spain, from July 28 – August 1, 2025. The Military Competition will be held separately from the Summer Congress in Helsinki, Finland, from June 24-29, 2025. Details on all CIOR events can be found on ROA's website ([https://www.roa.org/events/event\\_list.asp](https://www.roa.org/events/event_list.asp)).

If you have any questions about CIOR or want to know more about how to participate, please visit CIOR's website (<https://www.cior.net>) or contact [info@roa.org](mailto:info@roa.org). 

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## THE CALL . . .

There is no limit to what a dedicated group of people can accomplish when they band together with One Voice in One Fight. One Voice with one message and One Fight with one goal — position ROA to best serve past, present, and future reservists and their families into the next 100 years.

Our freedoms depend on the citizen-warriors who stand ready when called. Our nation's future is in their hands; supporting them is in ours.

**ONE  
VOICE,  
ONE  
FIGHT.**