

June 2026

RESERVE VOICE

Magazine



AMERICA 250

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ROA
RESERVE ORGANIZATION OF AMERICA

Organized in 1922. Incorporated under charter of
the Congress by Public Law 81-595.

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ON THE COVER
AI-generated digital artwork symbolizing ROA’s America 250 theme, “The Citizen Service Member: Then. Now. Tomorrow,,” and the enduring role of the citizen-warrior across 250 years of American history and into the future.

America's 250th

Honoring Our Past and Preparing for the Future

We are celebrating America's 250th Birthday this year, which has me thinking about my ancestor, David Chamberlain, a Revolutionary War soldier from Massachusetts. He served as a minuteman and drummer under the command of Paul Revere. I wish I knew more about him. What prompted his patriotism? What were the battles in which he participated? What was it like to serve under Paul Revere's leadership? Did he ever meet George Washington? Why was he so passionate about the ideals of freedom, democracy and self-determination? Why was he willing to give his life in support of a country that was not yet formed? David survived the Revolutionary War, married and lived to be 75 years old, dying in 1821.

I am proud of my family's legacy and role in the birth of our country just as I am passionate about the value of ROA to those who volunteer to wear the cloth of our great nation. Gen. Pershing was equally passionate about those who serve and equally concerned about the future of America and its historical unpreparedness for the next war when he led the formation of what was then called the Reserve Officers Association in 1922.

Pershing's concerns continue to be central to the reason why ROA has thrived for over 100 years and his concerns are just as relevant for us today as they were in the years following World War I:

- **Advocacy for Readiness:** Following the "drawdown" years post-WWI, Pershing feared that complacency and isolationism would weaken national defense. We are witnessing some of that today, following 20+ years of war in Iraq and Afghanistan. What will that mean for the future of the Reserve Components? How is America readying for the future? And what does it mean to be ready?
- **Supporting the Reserve Corps:** ROA was created to act as an advocate for the young Organized Reserve Corps, ensuring they had a voice in Washington to secure necessary training and resources. ROA continues to advocate on behalf of today's Reserve Components and their families. Today's Reserve is an operational force – but just what that means for the long term in terms of funding and programs has yet to be clearly defined and funded.
- **Preventing Future Unpreparedness:** Having witnessed the challenges of rapidly training an army, Pershing wanted a permanent institution that would promote the importance of a well-trained, available reserve force to ensure the nation's security. The same concerns are present today – as we are witnesses to how warfare has changed since Russia invaded Ukraine in

2022. The advent of drone warfare has changed much of warfare—including logistics and the concept of medical evacuation. The days of rapid return of our wounded to CONUS are over as, most likely, are the survival rates we witnessed in Iraq and Afghanistan. The medical community is concerned about the 'Walker Dip'—named after Vice Admiral Alisdair Walker, former Surgeon General of the British Armed Forces—where specialized combat casualty care skills, which peak during wartime due to high trauma exposure, decline during peacetime, requiring them to be painfully relearned at the start of the next conflict.

As Bob Dylan wrote in his song, *The Times They Are A-Changin'* (1964)

Your old road is rapidly agin'
Please get out of the new one
If you can't lend your hand
For the times they are a-changin'

So are the times changing for ROA—not in terms of who ROA is or what ROA stands for and does for America's Reservists and families—but rather on how ROA engages with all of its stakeholders. The goal is for ROA to remain the 'premier military service organization for the Reserve Components, their members and families'.

When I assumed the office as your 84th President, I vowed that ROA would remain **Relevant** and **Optimized** as we **Advocated** for the Reserve Components. Remaining relevant means we must change to meet the times.

Membership will look different as we move forward. Yes, we are and must continue to be a membership-based organization but the ways in which individuals engage will be increasingly dependent on what the individual needs and wants—and not based on what the organization wants. As an example, Gen X is pragmatic and seeks a results-oriented and independent involvement. They value direct, transparent communication, high-impact volunteer opportunities, and flexible engagement options that respect their time, often favoring peer-to-peer, skill-based, or leadership roles.

Conversely, we know that Gen Z views membership in professional organizations as 'digital-first' and prefer a values-driven engagement rather than a traditional, passive affiliation. They seek immediate ROI through networking, skill-building, and career growth and prioritize organizations that demonstrate authenticity, social responsibility, and flexible engagement, preferring online

communities over traditional, in-person committee structures. And the ‘Millennial’ generation is somewhere in between Gen X and Gen Z on what they seek when joining professional organizations.

It is up to ROA to build avenues for each of these generations to engage so that ROA can continue to be strong in our advocacy for our constituency and for the nation.

ROA is increasingly communicating in the digital world—as you can tell by reading this issue of the *Reserve Voice* online. Our digital presence is ramping up and soon ROA will be hosting podcasts as another way to reach our key stakeholders. The ROA Academy will be morphing into webinars that will be available 24/7 to aid chapter and department leaders in fulfilling their responsibilities.

ROA’s structure must morph as well. Departments and Chapters are already meeting virtually—so why not consider departments based on needs and interests of members? This could range from being organized around military occupations to shared interests, policy advocacy, or other topical interests. Likewise, voting in blocks by department will also need to be examined and modified.

While change is never easy, ROA must adapt so that we can fulfill our chartered mission, “to support and promote the development and execution of a military policy for the United States that will provide adequate national security”.

As General Shinseki once said, “If you don’t like change, you’re going to like irrelevance even less” (2001).

America is turning 250 years old this year because she both changed to meet the times, yet has held dear to her founding principles of *human liberty, equality, popular sovereignty, and limited government*.

Happy Birthday America!

Peggy Chamberlain Wilmoth,
PhD, MSS, RN, FAAN
Major General, USA (Ret.)
84th National President



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Citizen Warriors then, now, tomorrow

By Maj. Gen. John B. Hashem, USA (Ret.), ROA Chief Executive Officer/Executive Director



Happy 250th, America! This commemorative edition of ROA's *Reserve Voice* marks America's milestone with a clear purpose, bringing together the perspectives of Reserve Component (RC) and ROA senior leaders and framing them through the lens of the **Citizen-Warrior Then. Now. Tomorrow.** The articles reflect how the RC has evolved, operates today, and what will be required for future success.

America reached 250 by adapting when required while maintaining its strength. That standard applies directly to the RC and ROA; either evolve with purpose or lose relevance. Thomas Paine wrote, "We have it in our power to begin the world over again." This line matters because it places responsibility where it belongs. Every generation inherits the system and decides if and how to carry it forward.

Then began the Citizen Warrior. Regular folks stepped up to provide their skills, with a sense of purpose and duty. They built a model that connects civilian expertise to national security and keeps the military community based. That model still defines the RC as a proven way to generate capability that reflects the nation.

Throughout America's history, the Reserve served as a force in depth, with capacity built over time and brought forward when needed. That model depended on time to train, mobilize, and deploy—this no longer exists. The RC operates on the front edge of conflict, fully integrated into the Joint Force and delivering operational capability at the point of need. In Operation EPIC FURY, Reserve forces were integrated on day one, providing combat power, sustainment, and other critical capabilities.

Readiness cannot be built for later; it's required now and depends on trained personnel, properly aligned duty authorities, modern equipment, and integrated systems that move without delay. If any of these break, readiness breaks, with immediate consequences.

ROA aligned to this model with Vision 29 grounded in its pillars: stewardship, engagement, partnerships, awareness, and influence. Strategic imperatives drive integration across ROA: champion the Reserve, empower the member, strengthen the institution, and secure the future. Vision 29 is tied to impact and outcomes that affect RC conditions, readiness, and national security readiness.

Abraham Lincoln is credited with saying, "The best way to predict the future is to create it." So, we created it by shaping the conditions that determine RC success. ROA sets the standard with our newly published the RC Bill of Rights. The Rights set baseline conditions for the force to function and are foundational to readiness, not separate conditions.

The Bill of Rights provides ROA focus in the performance, reliability, and modernization of the RC as a force-generation system that must operate today while providing strategic depth when


required. This connects operational use, member experience, policy structure, legal protections, and employer interaction into a single system. From there, we can identify where the system breaks, define the conditions required for it to work, and drive the policy, legal, and employer changes needed to close those gaps.

ROA is building the tools. An annual RC Conditions Index National Security indicator will measure the conditions that enable or degrade the RC. It doesn't question the RC's proven ability to deploy and succeed; it focuses on the civilian, institutional, and operational factors that determine whether the RC can respond at scale, on time, and without friction. ROA's upcoming ReserveConnect is a digital backbone that links members, families, Veterans, and employers to resources and engagement. An evolved ROA Law Center will convert legal issues into actionable insight, and the Government Affairs RC Readiness Center will use data to inform policy and apply pressure where required. New programs will encircle and enable our tools.

The evolving ROA model from Vision 29 execution is data- and value-driven, but always human-centered. Data allows us to define reality and drive outcomes, but the focus is always on our people. Membership remains critical to strength, legitimacy, and scale, but it must adapt. Engagement today is flexible, digital, and value-driven. That means access cannot be limited. Participation in ROA should remain open to build reach and relevance, while offering pay-to-play items tied to specific value, services, or programs. The objective is to ensure our value translates into growth, participation, and impact.

Tomorrow keeps pressure on the system. Talent determines whether the force sustains itself, and service members remain only if service aligns with their professional and personal lives. Employer alignment directly affects readiness; quality of life drives retention and force stability; and force design will continue to evolve as the Reserve carries more operational responsibility and the threat changes, e.g., protection from drones.

ROA is building toward that future by leading with a value statement, not a mission statement. The value is straightforward: ensuring the RC is reliable, usable, and sustainable as a force-generation system. Value drives what we build, what we measure, and how we engage. It focuses effort on outcomes others rely on and aligns everything we do to support the force where it matters most.

The RC remains one of the nation's key advantages because it provides depth, expertise, and a direct connection to the society it defends. Still, that advantage requires deliberate support to sustain it. At 250 years, America continues to adapt while holding to its core principles. The RC must do the same, and this edition reflects how that work is being carried forward today and into the future. 

Kuleana

From the Garden Isle to Capitol Hill—a year of Reserve Component advocacy

By Matthew Schwartzman, ROA Director of Legislation and Military Policy

My trip began at Daniel K. Inouye International Airport in Honolulu—named for the Medal of Honor recipient and longest-serving sitting U.S. senator at his death, who lost his right arm fighting with the storied 442nd Regimental Combat Team in World War II.

Sen. Inouye was also the founding champion of the TriService Nursing Research Program (TSNRP), a lifelong commitment that, by his own account, traced back to the military nurses who saved his life on and after the battlefield. The story has been told often: at the field hospital, a surgeon shook his head at Inouye's bedside and was prepared to move on, until a nurse intervened with the words, "No, I think this one is going to make it." Inouye made it.

So did TSNRP, which he was instrumental in establishing in 1992 and in funding through every appropriations cycle until his death. Continued funding for TSNRP remains a standing ROA priority and had been the subject of meetings held just weeks prior to the trip. Before I had even reached Kaua'i, the work was already there to greet me.

From Honolulu, I flew on to the Garden Isle. Watching the Pacific roll into a crescent of green and gold, I found myself thinking (not for the first time on the trip) about Capitol Hill.

Hawaii has a way of doing that. (Rest assured, I also spent plenty of time enjoying the island. Island time, it turns out, is very real.) The islands invite reflection, and Kaua'i in particular pulls you out of the daily churn and asks you to consider the longer view. As I made my way along the Nā Pali Coast, through Waimea Canyon, and into the quiet corners of the island, I kept returning to a Hawaiian word I had only recently encountered: kuleana.

Kuleana has no precise English equivalent. It means responsibility, but more than that. It means a sacred duty bound



Matthew Schwartzman, ROA's Director of Legislation and Military Policy, poses for a picture at Waimea Canyon State Park, Hawaii.

up with privilege—the recognition that the work entrusted to you is not merely a job, but a charge.

For those of us who advocate on behalf of the Reserve Component, kuleana is the right word—and not, I think, by accident. The American Reserve tradition begins with the Minute Man: the citizen who keeps his musket above the mantle and answers when the alarm bell rings. That spirit lives in the hearts and minds of all Americans, and most concretely in the men and women of today's Reserve Components, who set down their civilian lives to serve when called. To advocate for them—to ensure the bureaucracy of their service does not betray the spirit of it—is itself a charge. A duty. A kuleana.

When I last wrote in these pages for the 2025 edition, I had just testified before the House and Senate Committees on Veterans' Affairs, and the 119th Congress was still finding its footing. What follows is an accounting of the time since—a year in which the Reserve Organization of America has helped move long-standing priorities from aspiration into law and laid the groundwork for more.

I'll structure what comes next around a few Hawaiian concepts that, the more I sat with them, seemed to describe what we have been doing all along.

Kuleana—sacred duty

Duty Status Reform Act introduced. In late March, Reps. Gil Cisneros (D-Calif.) and Jack Bergman (R-Mich.) introduced the bipartisan *Duty Status Reform Act*—the first codifiable legislation to consolidate the Reserve Component's roughly 30 duty statuses into four. Sens. Jerry Moran (R-Kan.) and Jacky Rosen (D-Nev.) are expected to lead the companion effort in the Senate.



Retired Army Maj. Gen. John B. Hashem, ROA's CEO, delivering remarks at the Duty Status Reform Act congressional press conference.

This may sound technical. It is not. The current duty status system is the reason two Reservists doing the same job, on the same orders, can come home with different pay, different TRICARE eligibility, and different GI Bill credit. It is the bureaucratic residue of half a century of patches, and it has cost the force in dignity, readiness, and trust.

ROA is a leading voice in a strong coalition behind this bill—alongside the National Guard Association of the United States (NGAUS), the Enlisted Association of the National Guard of the United States (EANGUS), the Air and Space Forces Association (AFA), and the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA). Our executive director, retired Army Maj. Gen. John B. Hashem raised the issue directly with the Secretary of War at a roundtable, and the Secretary has now gone on the record in support of it.

“Duty Status Reform replaces a burdensome maze of statutory authorities governing reserve service with a clear, predictable framework,” Hashem said when the bill was introduced. “It ensures uniform benefit accrual, reduces record disputes, and delivers equal DoD/W and VA benefits for identical service.”

Real obstacles remain. We have met with more than 30 congressional offices to date. The path from introduction to implementation is not clear. The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) has held a longstanding non-concurrence on duty status reform across multiple administrations. Conditions have continued to improve in our favor, however, and we are currently striving to successfully influence the current OMB to take the step its predecessors have not.

In the House, the bill’s referral to multiple committees presents a procedural complication for inclusion in the base text of the FY 2027 NDAA. The Senate path may be cleaner. However, we are working both. ROA is also preparing to unveil a comprehensive cosponsorship effort to broaden and maximize support across both chambers, going into the NDAA cycle and before this Congress closes. The goal is to stand in a strong position, should we need to revisit duty status reform in the 120th Congress.

Kuleana in legislative form. Two decades of effort have brought us to this point. We owe it to our servicemembers to finish the job.

Pono—doing what is right

Susan E. Lukas 9/11 Servicemember Fairness Act advances. Few Hawaiian concepts translate as cleanly as pono. To live pono is to do what is right—to keep the world in proper alignment.

On March 26, 2026, the House Veterans’ Affairs Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs unanimously approved the *Susan E. Lukas 9/11 Servicemember Fairness Act* (H.R. 5339), spearheaded by ROA and introduced by Rep. Suhas Subramanyam (D-Va.). The bill would extend the presumption of service connection under the PACT Act to servicemembers who



ROA Executive Director John Hashem, Life Member Susan Lukas, Director of Legislation and Military Policy Matthew Schwartzman, and former Policy Fellow Jake Fales meet with Rep. Subramanyam (VA-10) ahead of the Feb. 3 legislative hearing on ROA’s Susan E. Lukas 9/11 Servicemember Fairness Act. (February 2026)

reported for duty at the Pentagon between September 11 and November 19, 2001—the date the building was officially declared clear of toxicants.

These men and women breathed cement dust, asbestos, glass fibers, lead, and mold. They are currently excluded from the PACT Act presumption and from the World Trade Center Health Program available to other 9/11 first responders. The bill closes that gap.

It is named for retired Air Force Lt. Col. Susan E. Lukas, an ROA life member who was at the Pentagon on September 11 and returned to duty the very next day.

In February 2025, I testified before the House and Senate Committees on Veterans’ Affairs urging Congress to act and held up Lt. Col. Lukas’ story as emblematic of others. Less than a year later, the bill has been introduced and unanimously advanced through subcommittee—a pace worth noting in a town where the average bill takes eight years to reach a hearing, if it reaches one at all.

That is pono. That is what right looks like.

Major Richard Star Act. The same instinct animates ROA’s work on the Major Richard Star Act (H.R. 2102 / S. 1032), which would end the unjust offset that forces combat-injured medical retirees with fewer than 20 years of service to forfeit a portion of their earned retirement pay to receive their VA disability compensation. On April 15, I joined Rep. Gus Bilirakis (R-Fla.), Sen. Richard Blumenthal (D-Conn.), and the Veterans Justice Alliance at a House Triangle press conference urging passage.

“With American forces once again in combat, families across this country are asking a simple question: if our sons and daughters are wounded, will the nation take care of them?” I told the assembled



press. “*The Major Richard Star Act* is a test of whether this country keeps its word.”

I used the same press conference to draw a line between the Star Act and ROA’s parallel campaign to preserve Army Reserve MEDEVAC capability, which the Army Transformation Initiative has placed at risk. “The *Star Act* isn’t the only place we’re sending the wrong signal,” I said. “The Army is the Joint Force lead for MEDEVAC and the only service with organic MEDEVAC capability at scale—most of it in the Army Reserve. Walking away from that mission does not reassure families, and it does not reflect a nation committed to caring for its wounded.”

Two weeks later, at a Senate Armed Services Committee hearing on April 30, Secretary of War Pete Hegseth pledged the Department’s support for the Star Act. Roughly 54,000 combat-wounded veterans stand to benefit. The bill carries more than 300 House cosponsors and nearly 80 in the Senate.

Mālama—to protect

To mālama is to care for, to steward, to protect—most often used in Hawai‘i in connection with land, water, and people. Mālama ‘āina—care for the land. Mālama ‘ohana—care for the family.

The 442nd Fighter Wing preserved through 2030. The news reached me on Kaua‘i. On April 20, 2026, Secretary of the Air Force Troy E. Meink announced that the A-10 “Warthog” will remain in service through 2030—a decision that preserves the Reserve A-10 squadron at Whiteman Air Force Base, Missouri, home of the 442nd Fighter Wing. The announcement followed a year-long ROA-led advocacy campaign launched after our Board of Directors passed a time-sensitive resolution in April 2025 calling for the Wing’s preservation.

Operation Epic Fury—the recent surge of Reserve aviation in support of national missions—made undeniable what we have long

argued: the A-10 is operationally irreplaceable, and so are the experienced Reserve aviators who fly it.

Retired Air Force Lt. Col. Don Stockton of ROA’s Department of Missouri, retired Air Force Lt. Col. Susan Lukas, and I worked closely with the office of Sen. Eric Schmitt (R-Mo.) to shape the favorable A-10 language ultimately included in the FY 2026 NDAA—language that required the Air Force to maintain a minimum A-10 inventory, hold sustainment funding through September 30, 2026, and submit a recapitalization plan to Congress. That bridge made the April 2026 extension possible.

Our focus now turns to setting up a long-term future for the 442nd Fighter Wing. Whether that future is the continued operation of the A-10, or the identification of a follow-on mission on a more modern-generation platform, ROA will support it—and we will collaborate closely with the Pentagon and Congress to secure it. The experienced Reserve aviators in that wing are an institutional capability we cannot regenerate once lost.

Army Reserve MEDEVAC. The same instinct to mālama runs through ROA’s campaign to preserve Army Reserve MEDEVAC capability. ROA is actively supporting the RESCUE Act, championed by Sen. Ted Cruz (R-Texas), and coordinating with House Readiness Subcommittee staff and Rep. Morgan Luttrell (R-Texas) on parallel House language.

FY 2026 NDAA. Beyond the A-10 language, the FY 2026 National Defense Authorization Act—passed by the House 312-112 and cleared by the Senate before the holidays—extended the Army Tactical Wheeled Vehicle modernization strategy through FY 2027, maintained the C-130 fleet, raised the tanker fleet minimum, and required corrective action on KC-46 Category 1 deficiencies before further deliveries.

The Act also added flexibility to the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) by allowing Reservists to waive TAP requirements under certain conditions—the second consecutive year of progress on ROA’s five-step TAP improvement plan, and a reform on which ROA had testified before Congress on three separate occasions. It also required the War Department to evaluate and implement a standardized Aviation Incentive Pay framework by 2027, the product of a coalition letter ROA spearheaded with more than 24 organizations.

FY 2026 Defense Appropriations: \$2.2 billion secured for the Reserve Components. Congress passed the FY 2026 Defense Appropriations Act on February 3, ending the longest defense funding lapse in recent memory. For ROA, the bill represented a revitalized reengagement with the appropriations process—and produced concrete results.

The act delivered two major C-130 modernization wins: \$976 million for six C-130J aircraft for the Air National Guard, and \$500



million for four KC-130J aircraft for the Navy Reserve—recapitalizing aging fleets that the Services and ROA have flagged as urgent priorities for years. Combined with \$800 million for the National Guard and Reserve Equipment Account (NGREA), these line items totaled approximately \$2.2 billion in Reserve Component appropriations directly advanced by ROA's advocacy.

To get there, ROA spearheaded several coalition efforts, hosted press conferences with mission partners, and engaged relentlessly with key House and Senate leaders from both parties to end the shutdown. Among those efforts: a January 30 letter to Senate leadership urging the defense bill to advance as a standalone measure if broader negotiations stalled. They did. It did. More than 50 ROA members met with the office of House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries (D-N.Y.) during that advocacy window. They received a private tour of the Capitol—the kind of access that sustained engagement, not occasional outreach, makes possible.

Building toward the next shutdown—before there is one. ROA is now supporting the *Shutdown Fairness Act*, spearheaded by Sen. Ron Johnson (R-Wis.), which would ensure servicemembers continue to receive pay during future funding lapses. We have also drafted and are actively seeking a sponsor for complementary legislation that ensures the continued availability of appropriations for drill weekends, mandatory training, and Professional Military Education opportunities during a shutdown. Pay continuity addresses one part of the problem. Training continuity addresses the part that determines whether a Reservist can actually do the job.

This is the beginning, not the end, of ROA's reengagement with the appropriations process. We expect more wins to follow. These are the hard, unglamorous mechanics of *mālama*—protecting what matters by the appropriation, by the section, by the line.

Lōkahi—unity and harmony

Lōkahi—harmony, unity, the recognition that nothing meaningful is accomplished alone—runs through everything ROA has done this year.

First-ever Air Force Reserve Advocacy Day. On Sept. 25, ROA hosted the first-ever Air Force Reserve Advocacy Day on Capitol Hill, in partnership with the Air Force Reserve Advisory Council and the U.S. Air Force Reserve. Thirty advocates—including more than

20 Airmen—met with congressional staff from more than 20 offices. Sen. Richard Blumenthal opened the day with remarks for the group and encouraged everyone to enjoy the event. We focused on four priorities: appropriations for drill weekend reimbursements, closing the “donut hole” in the Joint Travel Regulations to reimburse rental cars, extending TRICARE Reserve Select to dual-status technicians and federally employed Reservists, and strengthening the Transition Assistance Program.

Reserve Forces Travel Fairness Act. That last priority on rental cars—second on the list above—became the *Reserve Forces Travel Fairness Act* (H.R. 7593), which Rep. James Moylan (R-Guam) introduced shortly after Presidents Day. Drafted by ROA, the bill



The Reserve Advisory Council partnered with the AFRC Congressional Affairs team and the Reserve Organization of America for meetings on Capitol Hill on Sept. 25, 2025. Together, with 20 additional Airmen from the National Capital Region, they met with congressional staffers to share firsthand experiences from Reservists and advocate for the realities of today's Citizen Airmen (September 2025).

would amend the Joint Travel Regulations to allow reimbursement for rental cars for Reservists who travel more than 150 miles to mandatory training. I had first identified the issue during a visit to Seymour Johnson Air Force Base last summer. The Airmen we met during Advocacy Day surfaced it again. Now it is a bill, supported by NGAUS and EANGUS.

That is lōkahi. That is what coalition looks like when it works.

Excellence in Legislative Readiness Awards Reception. ROA opened its 2025 Annual Meeting with the first-ever Excellence in Legislative Readiness Awards Reception, celebrating leaders whose dedication, partnership, and vision have strengthened Reserve Component readiness and advanced the organization’s legislative mission.

Because of the ongoing government shutdown, no Members of Congress were able to attend in person—an irony not lost on those gathered, since a shutdown is, at its core, a failure of government to be legislatively ready. However, congressional staff attended in their place, which underscored the deep collaboration between ROA and the staff whose behind-the-scenes work shapes policy outcomes that directly impact Reservists, Guardsmen, and their families.

The award recognizes exceptional and sustained commitment to the readiness and well-being of the Reserve Component—through openness to collaboration with ROA, a record of action on ROA-spearheaded policies, and willingness to engage on the full range of Reserve Component challenges.

Rep. Derrick Van Orden (R-Wis.), Chairman of the House Veterans’ Affairs Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity, was honored for his leadership in strengthening the Transition Assistance Program and championing policies that support Reservists and their families. ROA recently met with the Chairman in his congressional office and was grateful that he accepted the award in person. In just over two years of partnership, Chairman Van Orden has secured a dedicated Reserve Component counseling pathway in TAP under the FY 2025 NDAA; an increase in paid military leave for Guardsmen and Reservists from 15 to 20 days per year; House passage of the *Montgomery GI Bill—Selected Reserves Tuition Fairness Act* on a bipartisan vote; FY 2026 NDAA language allowing Reservists to waive TAP requirements



under certain circumstances; subcommittee advancement of the *Guard and Reserve GI Bill Parity Act*; H.R. 6873, restoring Guard and Reserve members to the VA’s annual national suicide prevention report; and Sections 221 and 222 of the *Elizabeth Dole Act*, which incorporated approximately seven ROA-spearheaded reforms to USERRA.

At the in-person presentation, Hashem reflected on the partnership directly to the Chairman: “Congressman Van Orden has built one of the most substantive and consequential working relationships with ROA of any Member of Congress in recent memory. This award reflects what can be achieved when a Member of Congress engages as a genuine partner.”

Justin Vogt, Minority Staff Director for the Subcommittee, was recognized for his pivotal role in opening doors for ROA, fostering bipartisan cooperation, and shaping nearly every major veterans’ policy priority the organization has advanced.



Eric Johnson, Senior Defense Policy Advisor to Rep. Barry Loudermilk (R-Ga.), was honored for his instrumental work in securing more than 70 cosponsors for C-130 modernization and helping deliver billions in funding and NDAA provisions to strengthen airlift capability. His most recent C-130 letter for the current defense cycle—supported by ROA—has already drawn more than 80 cosponsors and sustained and continued growth in the months since the award. Accepting on his behalf at the reception was his colleague, Kayla Davidson.



Jake Fales and **Peter Donlon**, former ROA Policy Fellows, were recognized for their continued contributions to ROA’s mission and their commitment to developing the next generation of defense policy leaders.



The reception brought together congressional staff, ROA leadership, and advocates from across the country. It served both as recognition of excellence and as a reaffirmation of ROA’s premise: that sustained relationships, informed advocacy, and legislative readiness are the foundation of meaningful policy progress for the Reserve and National Guard.

Ho‘omau—to persevere

Ho‘omau—to continue, to persevere, to carry on. In Hawaiian thought, it is the recognition that the work is never finished, and that finishing is not the point.

FY 2027 NDAA and Appropriations. ROA has formally submitted its FY 2027 NDAA priorities to the House and Senate Armed Services Committees and its FY 2027 Defense Appropriations priorities to the House and Senate Appropriations Subcommittees on Defense. We have already met with nearly 20 offices on the authorization side, with more meetings on the appropriations side scheduled in the weeks ahead.

Our top three FY 2027 NDAA priorities are duty status reform; a clear and enforceable prohibition on any divestiture, transfer, or inactivation of dedicated Army Reserve MEDEVAC capability; and the *Reserve Forces Travel Fairness Act*.

Our top appropriations priorities include concurrent and proportional fielding of Reserve Component equipment; funding the National Guard and Reserve Equipment Appropriation at no less than \$1.3 billion; full C-130J recapitalization for the Navy Reserve, Air Force Reserve, and Air National Guard; \$200 million for Army National Guard and \$100 million for Army Reserve HMMWV modernization; a prohibition on funds for any divestiture of dedicated Army Reserve MEDEVAC capability; funding for a recurring, Joint-level mobilization exercise modeled on the 1978 Nifty Nugget series; continued funding for the TriService Nursing Research Program (TSNRP); and travel reimbursement for drilling Reservists.

Coast Guard and DHS. We submitted a Coast Guard and DHS budget statement to the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security, urging an end to the DHS funding lapse, full funding of the Coast Guard’s \$15.6 billion FY 2027 budget request to enable Force Design 2028, and resourcing of the Coast Guard Reserve to grow responsibly to 8,500 Selected Reserve billets. Shortly after our statement was submitted, the House passed the

FY 2026 DHS appropriations bill on April 30, 2026, ending the 76-day partial DHS shutdown for the Coast Guard and the agencies funded by the bill. The lapse is over; the work of securing the Coast Guard Reserve’s longer-term resourcing continues.

ROA’s congressional charter. We are also advancing changes to ROA’s congressional charter, introduced by Sens. Richard Blumenthal (D-Conn.) and Marsha Blackburn (R-Tenn.), with a House companion sought.

This is what ho‘omau requires.

Mahalo—with gratitude

On my last evening in Kaua‘i, I watched the sun fall into the Pacific from a quiet stretch of beach at Poipu. The light changed three or four times in the span of an hour—gold to pink to a strange, soft violet I cannot describe and have not seen since.

I thought about the men and women I have spent the year working for: the Reservists wading through a duty status system seemingly designed to thwart them; the families of the combat-injured waiting on a bill named for a man who didn’t live to see it pass; the Pentagon survivors who returned to work the next morning and breathed in the dust; the aviators of the 442nd, whose flying mission has been saved through 2030 but whose long-term future is still unwritten; and the military nurses whose research program a Hawaiian senator built and whose funding we are still fighting to maintain.


The work is not finished. Ho‘omau.

But the work has moved. Bills introduced. Bills marked up. Aircraft preserved. Awards presented. Coalitions built—statements filed. Champions identified. \$2.2 billion secured.

That is kuleana. That is pono. That is mālama. That is lōkahi.

To the Members of Congress, the staff, the partner organizations, and most of all the ROA membership who made this year possible:

Mahalo nui loa.

Thank you very much. The work continues. 

ROA Vision 2029: Building the Reserve Component Bill of Rights

By Steve Minyard, Sgt. Maj., USA (Ret.), ROA Director of Programs

Empowering our members to thrive in today and tomorrow's Reserve.

Since 1922, ROA has fought for holistic benefits that enable our current and former members of the Reserve Components to thrive. ROA's battles include successful campaigns for drill pay, a Reserve Component retirement system, and health care benefits such as TRICARE Reserve Select. Complementing ROA's advocacy are programs designed to complement these benefits or fill gaps that neither Congress nor the Pentagon will fix. "Administrative friction," a creaking, obsolete pay system, regulations and policies that ignore the nuances of Reserve life, and increasing demands for your time outside of drill all throw absurd barriers to successful service. ROA's Vision 2029 seeks to change that.

ROA's Vision 2029 supercharges our programs with one clear mission: empower our members to succeed. What does an "empowered" Reserve member and family have? To answer this question, ROA reviewed years of data collected from surveys, demographic reports, exit surveys from Reserve service, trends in litigation and Congressional action, and simple queries on social media from service members and families looking for help. We talked to veterans and service members and combined these with the centuries of experience within the ROA staff and membership. In short, we took a data-driven, people-focused approach. Some data surprised us, like the fact that thousands of Reserve Junior Enlisted members pay their entire drill pay, an average of \$500.00, for a weekend of child care, or that the average Reserve member spends nine hours a month without pay working unit business. Other data points were shocking but not at all surprising, like activated members waiting months in Poland for duty pay or an estimated 50% rate of underemployment for Reserve Enlisted members with bachelor's degrees.

"Empowered" means easy access to all the benefits of the service. Timely, accurate pay, after drill, after annual training, and after mobilization or deployment. Full employment, leveraging civilian and military skills, and armed with protections under the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA). Compensation for working hours each month outside of drill, or when sitting at home on a laptop completing online training. An empowered Reserve family doesn't spend their entire drill pay on childcare each month, or face sticker shock from the cost of TRICARE once they retire. Finally, veterans and retirees of the Reserve Components should have the full benefits of their service too, including a retirement health insurance system that rewards, not punishes, a Reservist's step into the Retired Reserve. They have ready access to resources to supercharge their education, health, family life, and employment, and strong advocacy on Capitol Hill and within the Pentagon, plus the know-how to join ROA in the fight. In short, they have what their service entitles them to—all in ROA's Reserve Component Bill of Rights.

These are not just words on a page; a battery of resources that ROA will deploy later this year backs them up, moving our Reserve Component members and families closer to the right's fulfillment. First, we are building an entire system, ReserveConnect, to plug current and former Reserve service members into the employment, health, family, and education resources they need to thrive. Artificial Intelligence tools for Reservists looking for employment, scholarships, and new partnerships with world-class universities that offer flexible, career-enhancing certificates and degrees; the first Reserve Component-focused transition program and Noncommissioned/Petty Officer Academy in history. Combined with world-class advocacy, ROA will sprint through 2026, ready to empower the next 250 years of America's Total Reserve!



RESERVE COMPONENT

BILL OF RIGHTS

America's independence began with Citizen-Soldiers, and 250 years later, every member of the Reserve Component and their families deserve the pay, benefits, and support they've earned while serving their country - with ROA there to support you on every step of your journey.

RELIABLE PAY & MODERN PERSONNEL SYSTEMS

Accurate, on-time pay and full reimbursement for all service-related expenses - including IDT travel, lodging, and meals - enabled by simple, reliable, and transparent personnel and pay systems that ensure no personal income loss to serve.

DUTY STATUS & SERVICE PREDICTABILITY

Duty status aligns to the mission - not administrative convenience; consistent authorities, pay, and benefits for the same work; and predictable orders and utilization to stabilize lives and employment.

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Access to meaningful civilian employment for members and spouses, including hiring pathways, career mobility, and employer engagement that supports long-term economic stability.

EMPLOYER PROTECTIONS & LEGAL SAFEGUARDS

Strong, enforceable employment protections before, during, and after qualifying service with rapid reemployment, no loss of career progression, clear recourse when rights are violated, and accountability for noncompliant employers.

HEALTH & WELLNESS

Resources to support physical, mental, financial, and spiritual health; immediate access to quality healthcare when serving; continuous, affordable coverage between periods of duty; and no gaps in care tied to duty status changes.

FAMILY STABILITY & SUPPORT

Families receive consistent support, especially during activations/mobilization and transitions; access to childcare, counseling, and financial support services; and reduced disruption to family life caused by service.

EDUCATION & CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Access to education and credentialing resources that translates to civilian careers, recognition of military skills in the civilian workforce, and clear pathways for professional growth inside and outside the force.

MODERN EQUIPMENT, TRAINING & UTILIZATION

Training and equipment that match assigned missions; readiness standards that match expectations; modernization based on mission use - not whether AC or RC - that is interoperable within the service and across the joint force; and utilization based on operational needs and strategic depth.

RETIREMENT & LONG-TERM SECURITY

Service career documented and veteran status granted appropriately; reliable retirement benefits that reflect a full career of service; affordable and accessible healthcare in retirement; and financial stability after service ends.

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The Reserve Component By the Numbers

Data drives ROA. Here's a window into today's Reserve force.

- 0: Number of TAP-like programs designed for the 78,533 Reserve Component members who leave active military service.
- 8%: Rate of Reserve Component spouse unemployment, double the national average.
- 9: Average number of hours Reserve Component members spend working unit business each month, without pay
- 30: Average age of an Enlisted member of the Reserve Component
- 40: Average age of an Officer in the Reserve Component
- 247: Space Force "Guardians on Non-Sustained Duty" (GNSD), the first Reserve members of the U.S. Space Force, accessed in April 2026
- \$310.51: Average loss in income, every month, to families with Reserve Component members working for free
- \$500: Average cost for weekend childcare, as well as the entire average drill pay for a Reserve E-4
- \$765.00: Annual enrollment fee for active-duty retirees in TRICARE Prime
- \$1,548.30: Monthly premium for TRICARE Retired Reserve for a Grey-Area Retiree and their family
- 24,000: Estimated number of Reserve Component service members unemployed and searching for civilian jobs
- 60,703: Single parents actively serving in the Reserve Components
- 78,533: Reserve Component members leaving service-going to fully civilian life, to the Retired Reserves, or transferring into the Individual Ready Reserve (IRR)
- 190,931: "Grey Area Retirees" awaiting payment for 20 years or more of Reserve Component service
- 887,107: Family members of Reserve Component service members
- \$6 billion: Annual costs, borne by Reserve Component members, for unpaid work and travel expenses related to their military duties.

The Reserve Enlisted Force

250 years securing America. Join ROA and build 250 more.

The roots of today's Reserve Enlisted force run deep. Before the founding of our Nation, before there was an Army or Navy, non-commissioned "private" service members stood ready, muskets in hand, to defend their communities. Our oldest Reserve force, the Army National Guard, traces its lineage over a hundred years before America's founding, and the first shots of the American Revolution came not from "regular Army" troops, but a Reserve militia force led by Captain John Parker, whose visage is on the seal of America's Army Reserve. Parker gets his due share of attention for actions on Lexington Green on April 19, 1775, but few know it was his sergeant, William Munroe, who brought Parker's company to the battlefield to face British troops.

Between daylight and sunrise, Capt. Thaddeus Bowman rode up and informed that the regulars were near. The drum was then ordered to the beat, and I was commanded by Capt. Parker to parade the company, which I accordingly did, in two ranks, a few rods northerly of the meeting-house.

—Testimony of Sergeant William Munroe, Middlesex, March 7, 1825

Elias Phinney, *History of the Battle at Lexington on the Morning of the 19th April, 1775*

Munroe then stood with Parker as the battle commenced—officer and NCO, together woven into a fight that led to our independence. If you wear stripes and serve our Reserve force, that moment lit the fire for progressively more pay, benefits, and opportunities for us all—a fire ROA continues to fan today.

An educated force-ready for more

Over 800,000 men and women serve in America's Reserve Enlisted force, over 83% of the total Reserve population. Army National Guard Specialists and Corporals (E-4s) make up the largest part of this force, nearly 100,00 Soldiers—a force larger than many nations' armies. The rarest Enlisted Reservist, as of the Pentagon's last report, was a single Seaman Recruit (E-1) in the Coast Guard Reserve. Since 2005, the Reserve Enlisted force has become more diverse, younger, and more educated year over year. As a percentage of the force, three times as many Enlisted members hold advanced degrees, for example, as they did in 2010. Today's Noncommissioned and Petty Officers have more education, firepower, and benefits than Orderly Sergeant Munroe could have dreamed of, but much work remains.

What we know

In the last publicly available Reserve Component Status of Forces Survey, Reserve members spent an average of nine hours, a full workday, a month on “unit business” without pay. For a Reserve Marine, Sailor, or Airman, that’s over \$200 in lost income. Moreover, some enlisted members pay their entire drill pay just for weekend childcare, or on travel during drill due to inane Joint Travel Regulation provisions. For years, the Pentagon has touted the success of its Transition Assistance Program (TAP), but for the 75,000 Reserve enlisted members who leave the force annually, there is no such program. Moreover, the underemployment rate of Reserve Enlisted members, where one unwillingly either works for less, in lower-skilled civilian jobs than they could, or works only part-time, could be as high as 50%. An estimated 24,000 Reserve members are unemployed. Most of these are enlisted members, with younger Reserve members having the highest unemployment rate of over 6%, much higher than the national average.


What we will do

ROA represents all the Reserve force, over one million service members, most of whom are enlisted. Through 2026, ROA will build several new programs under our ReserveConnect enterprise to fill gaps where we can and continue our advocacy with Congress, the White House, the Pentagon, and the Supreme Court to ensure the Reserve Enlisted force is empowered and thriving.

We are pursuing the United States’ joining, as full members, of the Interallied Confederation of Reserve Non-commissioned

Officers (CISOR), giving our Reserve Enlisted force a gateway to international education, competition, and training. We are building a Joint NCO/PO Academy, designed to provide a baseline of information every Reserve Enlisted member should know, including how to operate in both military and civilian worlds and get the benefits you’ve earned in service. This Academy will be augmented with a Reserve Transition course that will fill a massive gap in education and teach, among other topics, the importance of the new DD 214-1, employment/reemployment rights, TRICARE options, ROA-sponsored options for supplemental insurance, and the universe of benefits, whether retiring or simply leaving Reserve service. We are working with partners such as AI Ready Veteran and VetJobs to connect Reserve members with Reserve-friendly employers. We find it appalling that so many Reserve Enlisted members are giving all their drill pay to child care and are exploring how to help. Finally, to help supercharge the Enlisted force’s higher education, we are partnering with world-class universities such as the Johns Hopkins Carey Business School and Norwich University to offer scholarships and opportunities to collaborate on research.

Much work remains. Today’s Reserve Component Enlisted force is not simply a strategic reserve waiting for the drumbeat to arms. They are day-to-day architects of American security, bringing their hard-won skills and adaptability to every formation, business, classroom, and boardroom. They are, without question, the most capable and versatile Enlisted Reserve force in history.

It’s ROA’s honor to serve you at home and abroad. 

Army Reserve Medicine: A century of readiness, service, and innovation

By R. Reece Newsome, MD, FACR

The United States Army Reserve Medical Corps, a cornerstone of the nation's military medical system for more than a century, continues to evolve as global threats, technology, and the needs of service members change. Formally established in 1908, the Medical Corps has grown from a small group of civilian physicians into a complex, nationwide network of medical professionals who support combat operations, humanitarian missions, and domestic emergencies.

The Medical Corps today faces a rapidly shifting landscape shaped by new medical technologies, recruiting challenges, and the demands of large-scale operational readiness. The U.S. Army Reserve Medical Corps also plays an essential role in our country's ability to respond to crises at home and abroad.

The origins of the U.S. Army Reserve Medical Corps date to the early 1900s, when the United States sought to modernize its military medical capabilities following the Spanish-American War (1898), which exposed severe shortcomings in battlefield care. Five times as many soldiers died from disease as opposed to being killed by enemy action (U.S. Foundation for the Commemoration of the World Wars). Congress responded with the Medical Reserve Corps Act of 1908, creating a pool of civilian physicians who could be mobilized in wartime.

The new corps was designed to supplement the small active-duty Medical Corps, which lacked the manpower to support large-scale mobilization. The legislation allowed the Army to commission



Army Reserve Staff Sgt. Jennifer Liriano, a licensed practical nurse with the Richmond, Va. based 7457th Medical Operational Readiness Unit, checks the heart rate of a roleplayer patient during the culminating event of the Eastern Phoenix 2025 training exercise at the Dwight D. Eisenhower Army Medical Center in Fort Gordon, Ga., Aug. 7, 2025. Eastern Phoenix 2025 featured both the Active and Reserve Components of the U.S. Army to train and prepare Soldiers in their readiness and interoperability in a simulated large-scale combat operations environment. (U.S. Army Reserve photo by Sgt. 1st Class Christopher Hernandez)

civilian doctors as reserve officers, giving the service access to specialized expertise without maintaining a large standing medical force.

The Medical Reserve Corps quickly proved its value. When the United States entered World War I in 1917, the Army Medical Corps had a very small force, less than 1,000 active-duty physicians. Shortly after the start of WWI, 30,000 medical officers, nurses, and enlisted medics were mobilized, many of them reservists. They staffed field hospitals, evacuation units, and surgical teams across

Europe, helping reduce battlefield mortality rates and establishing the foundation for modern combat medicine.

By the time the United States entered World War II, the Medical Reserve Corps had become a critical component of the nation's mobilization strategy. Reserve physicians and surgeons staffed hospitals around the world, supporting millions of service members deployed across multiple theaters.

After the war, the 1948 Selective Service Act and subsequent legislation formalized the structure of the Army Reserve, integrating the medical corps into a broader system of reserve components. During the Korean War, Army Reserve medical units were again mobilized to provide surgical care, preventive medicine, and evacuation support in austere environments.

The Cold War era brought new missions. Reserve medical officers supported NATO exercises, trained for nuclear and chemical casualty scenarios, and helped develop the Army's growing aeromedical evacuation system. The introduction of helicopter evacuation and forward surgical teams reshaped battlefield medicine, and reservists played a central role in testing and refining these capabilities.

The post-9/11 era marked one of the most active periods in the history of the Army Reserve Medical Corps. Operations in Afghanistan and Iraq required sustained medical support. This resulted in the deployment of reserve physicians, nurses, dentists, behavioral health specialists, and medics repeatedly to combat zones.

Reserve medical units staffed combat support hospitals, forward surgical teams, and preventive medicine detachments. They also provided specialized care that the active-duty force could not fully supply, including neurology, orthopedics, radiology, and trauma surgery.

Remember that the Reserve medical force brings a unique advantage: most reservists work in civilian hospitals and clinics, giving them exposure to high-volume trauma centers, advanced surgical techniques, and emerging medical technologies. That civilian experience often translates into improved battlefield care.

Today, the Army Reserve Medical Corps includes thousands of officers across dozens of specialties, supported by enlisted medics, technicians, and administrative personnel. The force is organized into medical brigades, hospital units, dental companies, veterinary detachments, behavioral health teams, and other specialized elements. The Army Reserve supplies a significant portion of the Army's medical capability.

Despite its long record of service, the Army Reserve Medical Corps faces several challenges that could shape its future.

Recruiting and retention remain persistent concerns. Civilian medical professionals often face demanding schedules, high student debt, and competitive salaries, making reserve service difficult to balance. Some specialties — including surgeons, anesthesiologists, and behavioral health providers — are particularly hard to recruit.

Training and readiness also pose challenges. Medical reservists must maintain clinical proficiency in their civilian careers while meeting military training requirements. Ensuring that units are ready to deploy on short notice requires coordination across hospitals, clinics, and Army training centers.

Technological change is another factor. The Army is investing in telemedicine, artificial intelligence, autonomous evacuation platforms, and advanced diagnostics. Integrating these tools into reserve units — which often train less frequently than active-duty counterparts — requires new approaches to education and equipment fielding. The future of the Reserve Medical Corps will be shaped by modernization and partnerships.

One priority is strengthening trauma readiness. The Army is pursuing partnerships with civilian trauma centers to ensure reservists maintain hands-on experience with complex injuries. These partnerships also support research into hemorrhage control, prolonged field care, and damage-control surgery.


Another focus is on modernizing medical units for future conflicts. The Army is redesigning field hospitals to be more modular and mobile, enabling rapid deployment and operation in dispersed environments. Reserve units are expected to play a major role in staffing and sustaining these hospitals.

The Medical Corps is also investing in digital health technologies, including telemedicine platforms that allow specialists to consult on cases from anywhere in the world. These tools could help mitigate shortages in critical specialties and improve care in remote or contested environments.

Additionally, the Army Reserve is expanding its role in global health engagement, working with partner nations to strengthen medical systems, improve disaster response, and build interoperability. These missions support U.S. strategic objectives while giving reservists valuable experience.

Finally, the corps is preparing for domestic response missions, including natural disasters, pandemics, and homeland defense. The COVID-19 response demonstrated the value of reserve medical personnel in supporting civilian healthcare systems during national emergencies.

As it enters its second century, the United States Army Reserve Medical Corps remains a vital component of the nation's military medical system. From its origins as a small reserve of civilian physicians to its modern role in global operations, the corps has adapted to every era's challenges.

Its future will depend on its ability to recruit skilled professionals, integrate new technologies, and maintain readiness for missions ranging from combat operations to humanitarian relief. What began in 1908 as a modest effort to strengthen wartime medical capacity has grown into a sophisticated, flexible, and indispensable force. We are Army Strong! 

Five services, one mission: America's maritime defense at 250

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

As our Nation celebrates its 250th birthday, ROA's Naval Services Section celebrates the five Services we represent. Our three armed services and two uniformed services provide essential security and defense on land, at sea, and in the air. In addition, they provide healthcare and conduct atmospheric and oceanographic research for our nation.

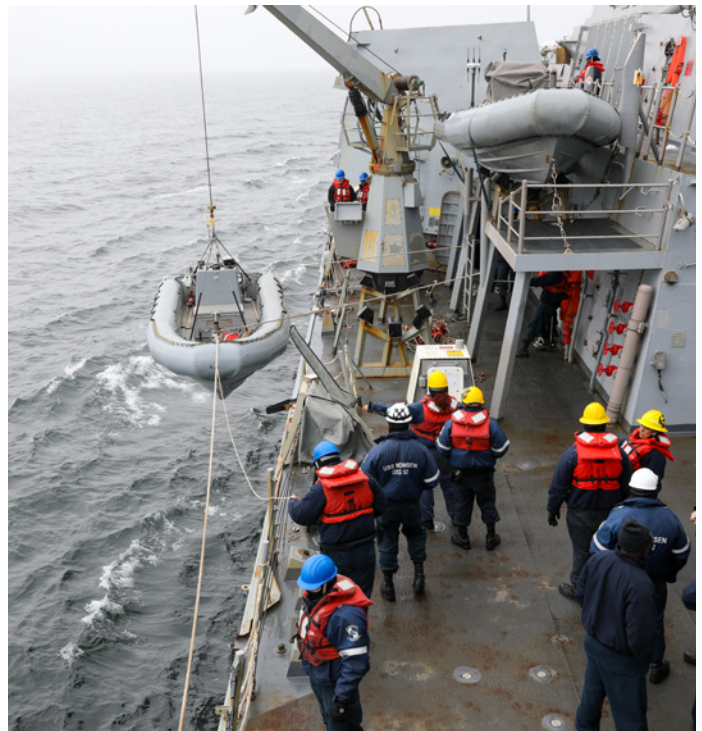
"Always ready!"

As the United States of America celebrates 250 years, the Navy Reserve is positioning itself to provide combat-ready capability on "Day One" of a major conflict. This capability dates back to our nation's independence, when privateers with letters of marque served as the militia of the sea, supplementing the Continental Navy. Before World War I, the United States recognized the need for a more structured way to employ Citizen Sailors and, in 1915, formed the then-titled Naval Reserve in anticipation of potential U.S. involvement in the war. The Navy Reserve has been a part of every major conflict since.

World events throughout history have taught the Navy Reserve that the innovation and expertise that Citizen Sailors bring to the fight remain relevant. Many were involved in tackling the U-boat threat in World War I, for example. Today, the Navy Reserve is preparing for a new peer-level conflict, focusing on the operational level of war while supporting efforts to develop counter-asymmetric measures against enemies employing low-cost drones. In short, the Navy Reserve remains relevant.

Today and on the horizon, the Navy Reserve adds value by being ready to fight when called. To do this, the Navy Reserve shifted from an individual augmentee model of support, heavily leveraged in the War on Terror, to a focus on units of action capable of mass activation from decentralized sites. These units specialize in areas where they are uniquely suited to support the Navy's overall mission, from logistics to command and control at the operational level¹ of war. With mass activation, the Navy Reserve has cut down processing times to mobilize approximately 50,000 Citizen Sailors in less than 30 days.

The Navy Reserve made several key changes to achieve this. Instead of Citizen Sailors primarily showing up for drill at a reserve



Sailors attached to the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Momsen (DDG 92) lower the rigid haul inflatable boat (RHIB) to the water during a man overboard drill in the Gulf of Alaska, May 6, 2023 in support of Exercise Northern Edge 2023. NE 23-1 is one in a series of U.S. India-Pacific Command exercises designed to sharpen the joint forces' skills; to practice tactics, techniques, and procedures; to improve command, control and communication relationships; and to develop cooperative plans and programs. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Paul Cox/Released)

center, the Navy Reserve is fully engaged in total force integration and paying for more drills with the active units Citizen Sailors would serve alongside when mobilized. This results in spending more than the typical two weeks per year with their active unit, training to become more effective in the jobs they would mobilize to perform. To ensure the Navy receives the expected value, there are metrics for units and personnel to maintain at least 80% warfighting readiness. Additionally, performance evaluations also emphasize this. For example, commanding officers of non-commissioned/readiness/

¹ The operational level of war is where the campaigns and major operations are managed, bridging tactical and unit engagements to national and theater strategic goals.

augment units are now evaluated by the commanding officer of the active command their unit supports. The Navy Reserve has once again adapted to the times.

In an era defined by great power competition, contested logistics, and rapidly evolving technology, the Navy Reserve's blend of civilian expertise and military readiness remains a strategic advantage. By integrating more closely with the active force and emphasizing operational readiness before conflict even begins, the Navy Reserve is continuing its long tradition of adaptation while preparing to contribute decisively on "Day One."

Submitted by: Cmdr. William Kozlowski, USN

"Relevant, ready, responsive"

Marine Forces Reserve is the headquarters command for approximately 32,500 Reserve Marines and more than 148 Reserve Training Centers located throughout the United States and Puerto Rico.

The United States Marine Corps Reserve was established when Congress passed the Naval Appropriations Act of Aug. 29, 1916, and is responsible for providing trained units and qualified individuals for mobilization to active duty in time of war, national emergency, or contingency operations.

On a day-to-day basis, Marine Forces Reserve (MARFORRES) has a talent pool of roughly 100,000 Marines to augment the Active Component in a myriad of ways; from support to training, to participation in bilateral exercises with our partner nations and allies, to service-level experimentation and refinement of new tactics, techniques, and procedures.

The Marine Corps Reserve team possesses capabilities across the full spectrum of military operations, from humanitarian assistance and disaster relief support to cyber operations to the most potent combat forces in the world.

Marine Forces Reserve, the largest command in the Corps, has four major subordinate commands: 4th Marine Division, 4th Marine Aircraft Wing, 4th Marine Logistics Group, and Force Headquarters Group.

Serving with great distinction in every clime and place, Reserve Marines have regularly operated alongside the active component in both World Wars, the Korean Conflict, the Vietnam War, Operations Desert Shield/Storm, Operation Enduring Freedom, and Operation Iraqi Freedom.

To maintain its fighting edge, Marine Forces Reserve units participate annually in numerous large exercises in places such as Norway, South Korea, the Balkans, South and Central America, Thailand, and Africa.

The vision for Marine Forces Reserve is to be the Nation's premier Reserve component, seamlessly integrating with the active forces, enhancing the operational reach and endurance of the Marine Corps... always capable of fighting and winning.

Marine Forces Reserve's motto, "Relevant, Ready, Responsive," articulates the necessary actions required to provide a sustainable force for the long-term defense of our Nation.

Ready in peace, essential in crisis

As a long-term member of the U.S. Coast Guard and the Reserve Organization of America (ROA), I want to thank you for your steadfast support of our nation during the subsequent furloughs experienced over the current fiscal year. Feel confident that ROA is representing you and having difficult conversations with your political representatives. From our Executive Director, full-time Legislation and Military policy director, and the ROA staff, I feel confident that you are receiving the proper representation.

The U.S. Coast Guard is one of the six core military branches of the United States Armed Forces, serving as America's oldest continuous maritime force. The U.S. Coast Guard initially began as the Revenue Cutter Service in 1790. Throughout our country's growth, the Revenue Cutter Service merged with the U.S. Life Saving Service, U.S. Lighthouse Service, and the Bureau of Navigation and Steamboat Inspection to form the current U.S. Coast Guard. The U.S. Coast Guard is unique in that it serves a multi-mission role supporting both the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of Defense, mainly during wartime. Some of its many responsibilities include coastal defense of the U.S. coastline and territorial waters, maritime law enforcement, port security, environmental response and protection, and various rescue missions. With 11 primary missions, the U.S. Coast Guard continues to be a force multiplier, responding to many emergencies and filling necessary gaps within our nation's military.

Making sure the U.S. Coast Guard Reserve is a top priority for ROA. Expanding the role of the Coast Guard in alignment with and support of Force Design 2028, and increasing benefits, pay, and asset support, remain key focus areas for ROA. Most recently, ROA is developing a Bill of Rights to be displayed on the ROA website that outlines the specific areas that demonstrate ROA's commitment to you and why you should remain and/or become a member of ROA.

As your representative, I remain committed to addressing your concerns regarding reserves. My contact information is: richardneimanjr@gmail.com. If you have any concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me. Thank you for your continued service and support!

Submitted by Capt. Rick Neiman, USCGR (Ret.), ROA National Director, Naval Services (Coast Guard, USPHS, NOAA)

Mission-driven science for a changing world

Residing within the Department of Commerce and NOAA, the NOAA Corps is a highly specialized technical leader responsible for NOAA's shipboard, aviation, and autonomous system operations in support of weather monitoring and environmental data collection

around the globe. Led by Director, Rear Admiral Chad Cary, NOAA Corps officers pilot aircraft that gather data in and around hurricanes to inform forecasts that protect lives in advance of the storms; command survey vessels that create charts for the Nation's ports for safe transit of ships carrying over \$2.3 trillion of cargo every year; and carry out numerous other critical environmental data gathering missions in support of our Nation.

The NOAA Corps authorized strength is 505 officers, while the current appropriation supports an onboard strength of roughly 330. Each year, NOAA enrolls prospective officer candidates who train alongside US Coast Guard colleagues at the US Coast Guard Academy in New London, Connecticut. New NOAA officers are commissioned with the rank of Ensign (O-1) and deploy to NOAA ships, aircraft facilities, or other NOAA laboratories and centers across the Nation.

NOAA's current budget seeks to recapitalize its fleet of ships and aircraft with two new ocean-going research vessels (Oceanographer and Discoverer) to be integrated into the operational fleet over the next two years, while two new G550 aircraft will be brought on board for hurricane surveillance missions. At the same time, NOAA is making a significant investment in autonomous systems to collect environmental data more cost-effectively, as well as in environments that are too dangerous for personnel (e.g., hurricane eyewalls).

In 2026, ROA supports NOAA's continuing recapitalization plan for ships and aircraft and their support facilities, the investment in autonomous technologies that advance environmental data acquisition, and the growth of onboard NOAA Corps officer strength to their authorization, commensurate with supporting their critical mission. With the extended government shutdowns in fiscal year 2026, ROA advocates ensuring pay continues during future shutdowns for NOAA Corps active-duty officers, retirees, and spouses of deceased retirees.

In our Nation's 250th Anniversary, it is only fitting that ROA continue to support the agency that traces its history and mission to the Survey of the Coast established by President Thomas Jefferson in 1807.


Submitted by: Joseph A. Pica, Cpt. (Ret.), NOAA Retired

Strengthening the foundation of the Ready Reserve

The Ready Reserve of the U.S. Public Health Service traces its origins back to 1918, though its modern structure differs significantly from its earlier form. Today, the Reserve component comprises highly specialized officers who provide critical support during public health emergencies and serve as a force multiplier when staffing

shortages affect the Regular Corps. Despite this mission, the Ready Reserve continues to face persistent structural and operational challenges that have limited its growth and effectiveness compared to other Federal Reserve components.

Much of the current instability stems from funding issues. As a result of the Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2023, operational funding for the USPHS Ready Reserve was eliminated because the component had relied on temporary appropriations provided through the CARES Act of 2020. Those emergency funds enabled the implementation of the modern Ready Reserve authorized under the Affordable Care Act of 2010. Since then, the Reserve has operated through a fiscal relationship with the Department of Homeland Security, a structure that has created additional administrative and operational complications. The impact on force sustainability has been significant. What once began as a substantially larger operational vision has now dwindled to a force of less than 90 officers. Despite these challenges, leadership has recently reopened applications with the stated intent of growing the Ready Reserve by hundreds of additional officers in the coming years. However, many Reservists remain concerned that expansion efforts are occurring without first addressing longstanding structural and operational deficiencies within the component.

While the Reserve has continued to welcome new officers into its ranks, longstanding disparities between the Reserve and Regular components remain unresolved. These issues include the lack of benefits and dedicated operational funding, inequities in seniority credit that affect commissioning rank, exclusion from leadership opportunities within internal PHS organizations, as well as the lack of having a Reservist-led component, persistent communication and administrative failures, unresolved pay issues, delayed DD-214 issuance, and the expectation that Reservists support mission-related activities without compensation. Reservists also continue to drill virtually, remain excluded from certain incentive pays, and frequently encounter policy interpretations that disadvantage the component. Underlying many of these concerns is a broader institutional issue: the perception that the Ready Reserve remains an afterthought within the Corps. Despite serving a unique operational purpose, the component is still often referred to as a "program" rather than a formal Reserve component, and morale continues to suffer from a perceived lack of investment, advocacy, and structural reform. Although solutions to many of these challenges exist and have been discussed for several years, meaningful change has been limited, leaving many Reservists uncertain whether the component will ever receive the support and recognition necessary to fully fulfill its intended mission. 

Beyond the Minuteman: Reservists and the future of warfare

Col. Donald C. Brown, USAF (Ret.)

I hope you have had the pleasure of being in the lobby of the Minuteman Building – the ROA headquarters in Washington, right behind the Capitol building. In the middle of the tall space, there is an awesome, large bronze statue of the classic Revolutionary-era Minuteman. Many service flags festoon the perimeter of the ceiling. The walls bear extensive names carved into the marble, all honoring those who have supported ROA over time. It is an impressive reminder of who we are and where we have come from. However, it does not forecast our future. Yet.

I'm like many of you. I served for many years both on active duty and in a reserve status. I loved the work and the people with whom I served. I am honored to be your ROA Vice President for the Air Force. During our service, we supported this country's critical need to deter conflict by being strong. We focused on the grind of being ready to deploy when called, which was often. We all know that without the reserve component, the active defense force tempo cannot be sustained. We know our value. Or what it used to be.

Those of you currently serving may have an inkling of what the future looks like. A few weeks ago, I was invited to participate in a multi-day, full-scale war game at the Air Force's primary war-gaming center, directed by the Doctrine Center at Air University in Maxwell AFB, AL. Our 4-star and senior commanders come here to practice. The support staff is top-tier. The attendees included senior active-duty players from combatant commands, the Air Staff, and AI leadership from across the USAF. Also, there—and this was important—were top representatives from almost all the current private software companies assisting the DOW with leading-edge AI and quantum computing expertise. It was breathtaking to see how these tools work today.


What did I learn?

Our young women and men serving today must be prepared to perform with extraordinary training and a broader imagination and

vision than their predecessors. The rate of change is accelerating due to digital tools. Of course, you know this, but unless you are currently immersed in today's warfighting world, you can't appreciate the phenomenal speed of available computational capacity. It has changed the game for both our significant adversaries and us. More aircraft will be uncrewed. Drones will be prolific. You all have seen the change in tactics in Ukraine and, more recently, in Iran. AI accelerates our decision-making drastically. Autonomous weapons will be used to a greater extent. A main debate is the extent to which a person will be in the loop.

An aircraft maintainer will likely see aircraft systems diagnosing problems on their own, and perhaps even repairing them if digital means are sufficient. The airman could oversee this process, but the interaction will be different. There may be a pilot in the aircraft, but the role will be to coordinate mission requirements across an integrated spectrum far beyond what we retirees have experienced.

A professor who teaches AI at the Air Force Academy said this: Use caution when using AI as a shortcut/substitute for judgment, rather than as a complement that truly augments the best parts of humans/warfighters. AI is capable when the data quality is high. Those cases can be automated. Of course, a human should be left in the loop to intervene as needed. The major question is the degree to which we depend on AI when the data is less certain, and when to require a human to be in the loop. The major challenge for the Air Force is to determine the right balance between autonomy and human intervention.

Our reservists can be ready to dovetail into the active force at a time of dramatic change. I am confident that they can be prepared. ROA is needed more than ever to help today's serving women and men stay ahead. When they join in and speak up, we are listening. 

Friendly Forces: The Reservists changing how industry treats hybrid service

By Eric Evans

Weekend Warriors no more. Today's Hybrid Warriors are deployed, mobilized, and woven into global U.S. military operations year-round, all while attempting to hold civilian jobs, raise families, and manage income swings and other challenges that most Americans never have to think about. Hybrid service members comprise close to 40% of the US military, and our national security depends on them far more than most people realize.


When a reservist gets orders, civilian pay often stops, and military pay rarely makes up the difference. Household bills keep coming, and often increase while they are gone. Layered on top of the physical and emotional weight of service, those financial pressures are real and recurring. Most employers genuinely want to support their people through it, but what has been missing is a practical, honest roadmap for how actually to do that well.

That is exactly the gap Friendly Forces was built to close. Founded and led by actively serving reservists and combat veterans, this is not another organization of retired brass writing policy papers from a comfortable distance. It is a small, driven team of people still in uniform who started Friendly Forces because they lived the problem firsthand: the struggle to find employers who genuinely accommodate military service, a corporate culture largely unprepared for what hybrid service actually demands, the near-total absence of resources for dual-career service members, and a credentialing landscape cluttered with largely meaningless military and veteran friendliness labels.

Where most military support organizations show up after a service member has already hit a wall, Friendly Forces gets to



work before that wall gets built. The focus is upstream: working directly with companies to build practical, durable support structures grounded in what reservists and their families actually need to serve. In doing so, Friendly Forces ties it all together, connecting the strongest talent the Reserve Component has to offer with employers who are genuinely prepared to support them. For companies, that partnership is not just the right thing to do, but a competitive advantage in recruiting and retaining an exceptionally skilled, connected, and disciplined workforce.

Friendly Forces is a grassroots 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that makes an immediate, tangible impact for a critical, but often overlooked audience. It is the charge for a new standard of civil-military partnership, driven by personal experience, genuine passion, and the conviction that getting this right matters for service members, their families, and our national security. 

**Nearly 40% of America's military is made up of Guard and Reserve.
They sustain this nation.
Their employers are still figuring out how to sustain them.**

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The National Guard—then, now, and tomorrow

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

The story of America is, in no small measure, the story of the National Guard. As the United States' 250th anniversary affords us the opportunity to reflect, we recognize the citizen-soldiers who stood as the first line of defense for our communities before there was a nation. They answered the call at Lexington and Concord, held the line on Long Island, and marched to Yorktown for the conflict's last bloody battle.

Today, they head off cyberattacks and rescue neighbors from floodwaters. They were in the skies, flying F-35s in the first moments of our nation's massive, overwhelming strike on Iran. Tomorrow, they will continue to be a community-based, globally-engaged elite force, ready to fight and win overwhelmingly during competition, through crisis, and in conflict if deterrence fails. This is the living tradition of American strength—the same tradition President Trump and Secretary of Defense Hegseth call upon in the 2026 National Defense Strategy: America First. Peace Through Strength. Common Sense. The National Guard embodies every word.

Then

Let me explain how the National Guard's story is America's story. In June 1775, the Continental Congress created the Continental Army. The only troops already in the field were the New England militia—the direct ancestors of today's National Guard. Without those citizen-soldiers, there would have been no Continental Army. Without the Continental Army, there would have been no United



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)

States. Of the U.S. Army's 34 units with Revolutionary War lineage, all but one still serve in the National Guard.

The Citizen Soldier model worked then, and it works today—389 years after the first militias formed in 1636.

Those early Guardsmen were farmers, blacksmiths, merchants, and teachers who left their plows and forges to defend their fellow citizens and win their freedom. For eight long years of war, 1775—1783, they fought for a chance to build a new nation, a new democracy. They established the precedent we still follow: serve at home when governors call, deploy abroad when the nation calls, and return to civilian life when the mission is done. That dual identity is not a compromise; it is our greatest strength. It

keeps us rooted in the communities we defend, and infuses the Joint Force with the ingenuity of the American private sector.

Now

The need for the Citizen Soldier did not stop after American independence. In the past two years, the National Guard met the changing needs of our nation as it continues to shape its history. On June 22, 2025, the world watched as U.S. forces struck Iranian nuclear sites at Fordow, Natanz, and Isfahan in the largest B-2 operational strike ever. What the headlines frequently missed was the Missouri National Guard's 131st Bomb Wing flying alongside active-component crews and delivering 14 massive ordnance penetrators—bombs only the B-2 can carry. Years of integrated training in Missouri translated into global reach and global power on short

notice. Did I mention we had pilots on all those B-2 aircraft, and many others piloting KC-135 refuelers, F-22s, and F-35s fighters? That's the power of the Citizen Soldier.

Six months later, Operation Absolute Resolve unfolded with breathtaking precision: more than 150 aircraft launching across the Western Hemisphere, converging in time and space to extract an interdiction force into downtown Caracas while preserving tactical surprise. The failure of any single component would have endangered the entire mission. The National Guard's inclusion in this operation ensured a successful mission.

And again, on February 28, 2026, the National Guard was integral to America's rapid projection of power. The Vermont National Guard's F-35s were there, just months after supporting Operation Absolute Resolve. They took their F-35s across the Atlantic instead of going home, stepping out of their civilian jobs to respond decisively.

At home, the Guard is equally decisive. When Hurricane Milton slammed Florida in late 2024—just one week after I became Chief—21,000 Guardsmen from 43 states answered the call; saving lives, restoring order, and proving once more that we are “Always Ready, Always There.”

In California, approximately 5,000 Guardsmen formed a partnership with dozens of state, federal, and private organizations to bring cutting-edge technologies and a military mindset to battling historic wildfires. Along the southern border, thousands of Guardsmen augmented law enforcement. Nationwide, the Guard contributed one million man-days of law enforcement support in a single year and activated more than 400 cyber professionals to counter real-world network intrusions.

Recruiting surged past end-strength by 103% in 2025. We completed two Combat Training Center rotations, two eXportable Combat Training Capability rotations with 7,000 soldiers, and two Division Warfighter Exercises. Our snipers took first place at Winston P. Wilson and third internationally; our mortar crews placed second; our cyber teams claimed the SANS Institute championship for the fifth time in six years. In the first-ever Army Best Drone Warfighter Competition, a team from the Pennsylvania National Guard won the best innovation category.

Our time-tested international partnership framework, the State Partnership Program, set the standard for burden-sharing in collective defense. We conducted 1,770 events and added nine new partners, bringing the total to 116 nations—60 percent of the world's countries now linked to America through long-term (many lasting two and three decades), trust-based relationships built by the Guardsmen living and working in over 2,500 communities.

These achievements are the direct result of more than 435,000 citizen-soldiers and airmen who bring civilian expertise—cyber-professionals, teachers, mechanics, business leaders—into uniform and turn every mission into training for the next. I think of it this way: You might think an army military police company is one military occupational company, but in the National Guard, one MP company probably has 70 or 80 civilian specialties...experts in education, business, engineering, software, cyber, logistics...bringing cross-functional know-how to every job.

Tomorrow

What our nation needs will change in the future, and we've been quickly adapting for over 389 years. One thing we know will not change—the National Guard will be ready. Our heritage proves this. The National Guard will be an elite, lethal organization ready to fight and win America's wars and protect the homeland. We will deter our adversaries through strength—not confrontation—through increase burden-sharing with allies and partners, and supercharge the defense industrial base. The National Guard is uniquely positioned to deliver on every line.

We already modernize at the speed of relevance. Our strategic plan charts an AI-First Warfighting Force. We are fielding new radios, secure wireless, cloud applications, and open-system enclaves that seamlessly connect F-16s, F-35s, and F-15EXs. Through programs like ARCWERX in Tucson and partnerships with Oklahoma State University on dual-use UAS and counter-UAS, we prototype, test, and field solutions faster and cheaper than traditional acquisition. The National Guard Reserve Equipment Account remains an innovation accelerator, delivering capabilities that outpace bureaucracy.

We are a long way from the Minutemen who brought their household muskets to the fight. We are modernizing alongside our parent services. When the army transforms, and the air force recapitalizes fighters and stands up Deployable Combat Wings, the Guard is there—providing 42 percent of total army operational forces and 30 percent of total air force operational forces with a cost-effective model that provides incredible solutions to our services.

Our State Partnership Program will continue to expand, turning partners into capable, interoperable allies who shoulder their fair share of the burden. You cannot surge trust in a crisis, so we build trust over decades with our State Partners through Guardsmen training, exercising, and living alongside their counterparts. In a world of competitors, those relationships create dilemmas for adversaries and options for American civilian and military leaders.

Above all, we will invest in our people—our most critical asset. Soldiers and airmen are not interchangeable parts; they are the

reason we win. We will recruit and retain the best by offering meaningful service, competitive pay and benefits, quality health care, and the chance to wear the uniform patches passed down from history in assignments that stretch them to their full potential. As our new vice chief, Gen. Thomas Carden of the great state of Georgia said recently, “I’d rather hurt your feelings than go to your funeral.” High standards, tough love, common sense, and genuine care are non-negotiable.

This is Secretary Hegseth’s Arsenal of Freedom in practice: wartime speed, disruptive mindset, fail-fast prototyping, and bottom-up innovation. When we unleash our companies, we win. When we compete, we win. When we innovate, we win. When we go fast, we win.


Stronger together; stronger tomorrow

For over 389 years, the National Guard has helped shape our nation’s future. The National Guard does not ask for special treatment. We ask only for the resources to remain the most cost-effective, experienced, and accessible operational force in the world—20 percent of the Joint Force at less than four percent of the budget. Properly and

consistently resourced, we will continue to defend the homeland, deter great-power war, and stand ready to fight and win if forced to confrontation.

To every Guardsman, every family member, every employer who supports us: you are the heart of our force. To our governors, congressional leaders, and the American people: Thank you for entrusting us with your safety and your freedom.

As we mark America’s 250th birthday, let us recommit to the Citizen Soldier ideal that helped birth this great nation and sustain it through every trial. Let us carry forward the optimism that turns challenges into opportunities and the passion that fuels unrelenting service. Let us ensure we listen to Gen Giulio Douhet’s quote, “that victory continues to smile upon those who anticipate change in the character of war, rather than those who wait to adapt after the changes occur.”

The story of America is the story of the citizen-soldier. Every day, we answer the call. Through the power of soldiers and airmen and the communities that support them, we remain, “Always ready, Always there.” 

The National Guard—then, now, and tomorrow; an enlisted perspective

By John T. Raines III, Senior Enlisted Advisor to the Chief, National Guard Bureau

The strength of the National Guard has never lived in titles or headquarters buildings. It lives in the men and women who lace up their boots before dawn, leave their civilian jobs and families behind, and turn national strategy into decisive action.

After reading Chief of the National Guard Bureau, General Steven Nordhaus’ reflection on where the Guard has been and where it is going, I felt immense pride—not just in our history, but in the force that continues to write that history every day. As the Senior Enlisted Advisor of the National Guard, I want to offer a perspective from the ground level: the grit, ingenuity, and quiet professionalism of the enlisted force who transform broad strategy into real-world results.

Then: Ordinary Americans, extraordinary resolve

Our story begins in 1636, when colonial militias formed to defend their communities. They were farmers, tradesmen, and neighbors—citizens first—who stood ready when danger threatened their homes.

That tradition was tested at Lexington Green in April 1775, when citizen-soldiers defied the world’s most powerful military force. They were not professional warriors. They were Americans defending their homes, their families, and the radical idea of liberty.

Five years later, at the Battle of Kings Mountain, frontier riflemen climbed steep terrain under heavy fire and overwhelmed Loyalist forces in one of the Revolutionary War’s most decisive victories.

Their success came from grit, marksmanship, and a shared belief that the cause of freedom was worth defending.

The victory at Kings Mountain helped shift momentum in the Southern Campaign and paved the way for eventual success at Yorktown. It also reinforced a truth that would echo through American history: when ordinary Americans are called to serve, they rise to extraordinary challenges.

That legacy lives on today. Of the Army's 34 units with lineage tracing back to the Revolutionary War, 33 are in the National Guard. That lineage is not ceremonial—it is cultural. It reflects a tradition of resilience, adaptability, and determination passed from one generation of Guardsmen to the next.

As Teddy Roosevelt famously said, “The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena,” and that’s us, the Guardsmen who have always been there, muddy, determined, and building America’s strength from the ground up. From the earliest militias to the modern National Guard, citizen-soldiers have stood at the intersection of community and national defense. They have served governors at home and the nation abroad, proving time and again that military excellence does not require separation from civilian life. In fact, it is strengthened by it.

Now: Ready at home and abroad

In June 2025, Operation Midnight Hammer showcased the Guard’s global reach. Airmen from Missouri’s 131st Bomb Wing helped prepare B-2 bombers for one of the longest operational missions in the aircraft’s history. Many of the maintainers responsible for those aircraft also work civilian jobs as engineers, mechanics, and technicians. Their expertise—and their ability to innovate under pressure—ensured that those bombers remained mission-ready.

Then came Operation Absolute Resolve in Caracas, where more than 150 aircraft converged for a high-risk extraction. Guard members from across 54 states and territories handled refueling, communications, and tactical support, ensuring no component failed. Their seamless integration with active-duty forces proved that the total force concept works because of our people. Across the globe and across the homeland, Guardsmen continue to prove the value of the Total Force.

When hurricanes, floods, and wildfires strike, the National Guard is often the first military force on the scene. In late 2024, more than 21,000 Guardsmen from 43 states mobilized to respond to Hurricane Milton. I was serving as the Army’s National Guard Command Sergeant Major for that response. I witnessed Soldiers and airmen wading through floodwaters to rescue families, clear debris, and distribute emergency supplies. Over the course of the response, they delivered more than 2.4 million hours of direct support to affected communities.

1st Sgt. Pedro Montero of the Florida National Guard said, “These aren’t just strangers; they’re our neighbors.”

Our partnerships with local agencies are ever-present. In California, thousands partnered with first responders during devastating wildfires. Along the southern border, 1,500 Guardsmen augmented law enforcement, with Texas Guard drone operators providing aerial overwatch. Nationwide, we logged 1 million manning days supporting state and federal police agencies, with 3,800 members in 19 states, handling administrative and logistical tasks.

The Guard’s impact is just as significant in emerging domains. More than 400 Guard cyberprofessionals were activated in 2025 to counter network intrusions and defend critical systems. Their effectiveness comes from a unique advantage: many of them work in cybersecurity or information technology in their civilian careers. They bring that civilian expertise directly into uniform. In Massachusetts, Senior Master Sgt. Taylor Gow invented the Agile Cyber Training Environment (ACTE). This portable, backpack-sized platform allows cyber teams to train anywhere, without costly infrastructure. That kind of innovation is not the exception in the Guard. It’s what happens every single day.

Training and readiness tell the same story. Recruiting exceeded end-strength goals, hitting 103% in 2025. We aced two Combat Training Center rotations, exportable exercises with 7,000 Soldiers, and Division Warfighters. Pennsylvania Guard snipers topped the Winston P. Wilson; mortar crews placed second; cyber teams won SANS for the fifth time in six years; and a Pennsylvania team innovated to win the Army’s first Best Drone Warfighter Competition.

Recently, I visited Puerto Rico’s Best Warrior competition, where competitors showed grit and grueling endurance in events that balanced federal missions with leader development training. Competitions like this take place all over the country every year. In Minnesota, at -30 degrees, I met with senior enlisted leaders at Camp Ripley, who focused on readiness and leadership. In Colorado, Guardsmen executed homeland defense around the clock. These examples are just a few of the extraordinary ways in which our force is establishing deterrence, strengthening readiness, and expanding warfighting capabilities while defending the homeland.

Today, the National Guard represents roughly 20% of the Joint Force while receiving only about 4% of the defense budget. Yet the force consistently delivers capabilities that far exceed that proportion.

The reason is simple: the Guard is powered by people whose civilian expertise strengthens military readiness. In a single unit, you might find engineers, teachers, business owners, elected officials, logistics professionals, first responders, and cybersecurity specialists. Together, they bring an unmatched breadth of experience to every mission. As Colin Powell once said, “Leadership is all about people.

National Guard Bureau

It is not about organizations. It is not about plans. It is not about strategies. It is all about people—motivating people to get the job done. You have to be people-centered.”

That idea—simple but profound—captures the enduring strength of the National Guard. Our history, our present, and our future are defined not by institutions but by citizens who choose to serve.

Tomorrow: Innovation and readiness

As the strategic environment evolves, the National Guard is preparing for the challenges ahead. The 2026 National Defense Strategy emphasizes speed, integration, and an AI-enabled force. Guardsmen are already helping lead that transformation.

Programs like ARCWERX connect Airmen with industry partners to rapidly prototype solutions to operational challenges. Meanwhile, the National Guard State Partnership Program continues expanding global relationships between Guardsmen and partner nations. The State Partnership Program (SPP) expanded to 116 nations—60% of the world—through 1,770 events in 2025.

Guardsmen built trust through exercises such as Justified Accord 2026 in Kenya and Brave Band in Poland, sharing skills with partners, including Qatar’s forces, to support Scouting America security. The State Partnership program will continue expanding, deepening alliances that complicate adversary decision-making and strengthen collective defense. Trust built over decades becomes a strategic advantage in a moment of crisis.

At home, Guard units are modernizing alongside the active components, integrating advanced aviation platforms, cyber capabilities, and data-driven systems that will shape the future battlefield. Like Oregon’s Staff Sgt. Kenneth Fritz, who invented jet maintenance tools, or Connecticut’s repair depot, sustained aviation readiness. We are 42% of the Army’s operational forces and 30% of the Air Force, providing cost-effective depth and innovation to warfighters across our formations.

As the United States approaches its 250th anniversary, the National Guard stands ready to continue that tradition. We will remain ready at home, prepared to defend communities in times of disaster and crisis. We will stand ready abroad, deterring aggression and strengthening alliances. We will continue to innovate—drawing on the talent, creativity, and commitment of the Citizen Soldiers and Airmen who make this force unique. We will anticipate change, we will prepare relentlessly, and when called, we will be there.

From the farmers who stood on Lexington Green to the men and women of today mastering their military specialties, the story of the National Guard has always been a story about people. People who step forward when their nation calls. People who serve their communities with pride. People who carry forward a legacy nearly four centuries in the making.


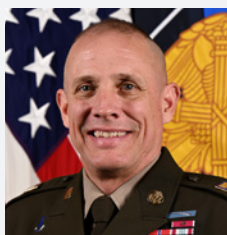
To the Guardsmen serving today, to the families who support them, and to those who served before them: you are the heart of the National Guard. Then and now, we are Stronger Together, Stronger Tomorrow. 

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.



Senior Enlisted Advisor (SEA) **John T. Raines III** serves as the 7th Senior Enlisted Advisor to the Chief of the National Guard Bureau, stationed at the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. In this capacity, he acts as the Chief’s principal military advisor on all enlisted matters, encompassing training, operations, force health, and enlisted professional development. As the highest enlisted leader, SEA Raines provides strategic direction for the enlisted force and advocates for their interests.

SEA Raines’ deployments include participation in Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, and Operation Iraqi Freedom. He was also activated in support of Operation Noble Eagle and served in the Republic of Korea. Throughout his career, he has deployed across Asia and the Pacific, where he has coached and mentored Joint U.S. forces and numerous international partners within the United States Indo-Pacific Command region.

Ready, relevant, and always faithful: The Marine Corps Reserve's roadmap to comprehensive readiness

By Lt. Gen. Leonard F. Anderson IV and Sgt. Maj. Edwin A. Mota

We have the distinct and profound honor of leading the United States Marine Corps Reserve, a command that we believe represents the very best of our nation. It is a privilege we do not hold lightly, especially as we mark 250 years of American independence, borne through battle during the Revolutionary War, which included our founders, the Continental Marines.

We are fortunate to serve alongside a unique and remarkable cadre of Americans: the Citizen Marines. They are the warfighters of today—ready and able to deploy to any clime at any time. They are the high school history teacher who spends his weekends teaching machine gunnery, the trauma surgeon who drills on mass casualty evacuation procedures, the software architect who dedicates her analytical prowess to defending our networks, and the tradesman who leads a unit of infantrymen. They are remarkable Americans who walk in two worlds simultaneously, who on any given Friday afternoon might trade a business suit, a pair of work boots, or a doctor's stethoscope for the Eagle, Globe, and Anchor, ready to answer the nation's call. They masterfully balance civilian careers, demanding family lives, and vital community leadership with an unbreakable, unwavering commitment to our Corps and country.

As the senior stewards of this sacred trust, we wish to provide a comprehensive and deeply personal perspective on the state of your Marine Corps Reserve as framed entirely through the lens of the definitive roadmap that guided our every action, our every decision, and our every dollar this past year and into the future: The Marine Forces Reserve Campaign Plan for Comprehensive Readiness.

This plan was not conceived in an academic vacuum or a quiet staff college seminar. It was forged through a clear-eyed, sober assessment of a volatile and increasingly complex global security landscape. As the plan itself notes, we live in an era of renewed great power competition, facing pacing threats from the People's Republic of China, an acute threat from a belligerent Russia, and persistent dangers from Iran, North Korea, and violent terrorist organizations. It is an environment that demands more, not less, from every component of our military. It was this stark reality that drove the creation of our Campaign Plan and established its central theme, our unwavering North Star, and our single, non-negotiable metric: our readiness is our relevance.



A U.S. Marine with 2nd Battalion, 23rd Marines, forward deployed with 4th Marine Regiment, 3d Marine Division as part of the Unit Deployment Program, identifies targets to a Republic of Korea Marine to coordinate suppressive fires on a simulated enemy positions during the Korean Marine Exercise Program 25.2 in Pohang, South Korea, August 5, 2025. KMEP is conducted regularly between the ROK and U.S. Marine Corps to increase their combined capabilities through realistic training geared towards deterrence and maintaining peace in the Indo-Pacific. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Lance Cpl. Van Hoang)

With this simple yet powerful declaration as our guiding principle, we embarked on a deliberate and institution-wide reorientation of our efforts to achieve, measure, and sustain comprehensive readiness across the entire force. The following is not just a report on our progress; it is the detailed story of how we translated the strategic imperatives of the Campaign Plan into the tangible, impactful results the nation expects and deserves from its Marine Corps, now and in the future.

At the very heart of our Campaign Plan, and thus at the core of our every effort this past year, is the formal and enthusiastic embrace of our evolved, dual identity. We remain the nation's ultimate strategic hedge. This is our foundational, bedrock responsibility—the critical “break-glass-in-case-of-war” force that provides the essential depth of force and scalable mass required for a large-scale, high-intensity conflict. We are the promise to the American people

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U.S. Marine with 2nd Battalion, 25th Marine Regiment, 4th Marine Division, repel down a mountainside during Mountain Training Exercise 4-24 at Marine Corps Mountain Warfare Training Center, Bridgeport, California, June 15, 2024. Marines traversed steep inclines and rocky outcrops to build their mountaineering proficiency in high-altitude maneuvers and navigation. MTX includes a variety of scenarios to test the Marines' adaptability and resilience, simulating real-world environmental challenges they might face. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Lance Cpl. David Intriago)

that in their moment of greatest peril, a vast reservoir of trained and ready Marine formations stands ready to mobilize, deploy, and fight. Layered upon this bedrock, however, is our concurrent and continuous role as an operational Reserve. We are an indispensable, fully integrated component of the Total Force, actively and meaningfully engaged in global missions every single day.

These two roles are not in tension; they are symbiotic. Our operational deployments sharpen the skills and season the leaders that

make us a more formidable strategic force. The constant churn of supporting real-world missions prevents institutional atrophy that can afflict a force held purely in reserve. This dual role demands that our ultimate goal be absolute interchangeability, ensuring that when a Reserve unit integrates with an active command, whether for a six-month security cooperation deployment or a full-scale mobilization for war, there is no discernible difference in lethality, professionalism, or warfighting prowess. Our past year was a

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testament to our steadfast commitment to fulfilling this dual role, an effort executed through the five main Lines of Effort that form the unshakeable pillars of our Campaign Plan.

First and foremost, we focused our collective energy and leadership attention on Efficient Mission-Essential Task (MET)-Based Training. Our Campaign Plan acknowledges a stark and unforgiving reality: our most precious, most limited, and most jealously guarded commodity is time. With our commanders having, on average, a mere 39 days per year to train our Citizen Marines into an elite, cohesive, and lethal fighting force, we directed and aggressively enforced a ruthless pursuit of efficiency in all we do. This past year, this meant a fundamental shift in our approach to training. We systematically reviewed our training schedules and methodologies, challenging every long-held assumption and eliminating any activity, exercise, or administrative requirement that does not directly and demonstrably contribute to advancing a unit's core METs.

These METs are not bureaucratic checklist items; they are the fundamental, must-do warfighting functions a unit must be able to perform to be considered combat-ready (e.g., conducting an amphibious landing, defending a key installation, executing a mass casualty evacuation). To achieve this, we ceased participating in any exercise that does not advance a unit's core readiness. The days of irrelevant training or generalized familiarization are over. Every drill weekend, every annual training event, was a deliberate, calculated step toward building a more capable, more lethal, and more confident force. This means a rifle company spends its time on the range and in the field, not in a classroom receiving redundant briefs. It means a maintenance platoon spends its time with wrenches in hand, working on its assigned equipment, not performing administrative tasks that can be handled during the week.

This disciplined focus is the foundational reason Reserve Marines, when called upon, perform with the degree of excellence the nation expects. This efficiency is now being institutionalized through the predictable, repeatable, and budgeted triennial training model outlined in our plan. This cycle allows a unit to progressively build and certify its capabilities over a 36-month period, moving logically from individual Marine skills to squad, platoon, company, and ultimately battalion-level collective proficiency sustainably and predictably.

Second, we made enormous and quantifiable strides in Optimizing Force Generation and Mobilization. Our plan prioritizes unwavering support to Combatant Commanders' global requirements, and this year, we met that priority head-on with unprecedented and historic results. In a clear and powerful demonstration of our operational relevance, Reserve Marines constituted approximately 15 percent of all Marine Corps forces deployed.



U.S. Marines with Marine Forces Reserve board a U.S. Marine Corps UH-1Y Venom utility helicopter during a field exercise on Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center, Mississippi, March 12, 2025. MARFORRES Marines conducted the exercise to maintain proficiency in warfighting, communication and leadership skills common to all Marines. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Lance Cpl. Van Hoang)

This incredible statistic, with more than a fourfold increase from the previous year, was not the result of happenstance. It was the deliberate outcome of proactively identifying units for Global Force Management sourcing, streamlining our activation processes, and ensuring those units were trained and ready long before the call ever came. Our Reserve Marines served with distinction on every continent, supporting missions from deterrence patrols in the tense waters of the Indo-Pacific to security cooperation and training missions in Africa and vital crisis response support in Europe and the Middle East. They do not just participate; they lead.

Simultaneously, we embraced the plan's stark and urgent warning about mobilization timelines. We recognized and planned for the uncomfortable fact that a future great-power conflict may not afford us the 60-day mobilization window our nation enjoyed during the Gulf War. A peer adversary will not pause their advance to allow us a leisurely ramp-up to war. To that end, this past year, we conducted a demanding series of focused Mobilization Exercises at every echelon of command. These were not theoretical, tabletop drills conducted over coffee. These were high-fidelity, boots-on-the-ground rehearsals that tested every single link in the mobilization chain. We will test everything from the individual Marine receiving a recall notification on their smartphone to the unit drawing weapons and equipment from its armory, to the immense logistical challenge of moving an entire battalion with all its gear to a designated

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mobilization site. Through this process, we are identifying critical friction points in administrative processing, medical screening, and transportation logistics. We are systematically refining our procedures to build the institutional muscle memory needed to activate the entirety of our strategic depth at a moment's notice.

Third, we dedicated immense energy, leadership focus, and critical resources to Developing and Retaining High-Quality Marines. Our Campaign Plan identifies our personnel strength as the primary detractor to our readiness. A unit cannot achieve its METs if it lacks the requisite number of Marines with the right skills. An empty seat in a vehicle, a rifle team missing its automatic gunner, or a maintenance bay without a qualified diesel mechanic creates a direct, immediate, and unacceptable degradation of combat power. We are attacking this fundamental challenge on multiple fronts with renewed urgency. We are proud to report that the demand for our service in the Corps remains strong, and as a result of a concerted team effort, the Selected Reserve is exceeding its authorized end strength of 32,500.

But as our plan emphasizes, recruitment is only half the battle. Retention is paramount. Consequently, this year we implemented key initiatives aimed directly at keeping our exceptional Marines in the fold. We established formal mentorship programs across the force, pairing seasoned staff NCOs and officers with our junior Marines to provide them with the guidance they need to navigate the unique challenges of balancing a civilian career with the demands of Reserve duty. We completely revamped our onboarding processes, ensuring that the new Marines' first few drill weekends are engaging, meaningful, and affirming, rather than a disorienting and demoralizing gauntlet of paperwork and waiting.

We worked tirelessly and collaboratively with our Prior Service Recruiting partners to fill our most critical billets with experienced, proven leaders who bring invaluable fleet experience back into our formations. Furthermore, we understand we cannot expect Marines to remain fully engaged if we do not recognize and leverage the



U.S. Marine Corps Staff Sgt. Louis Bain III, a chief engineer instructor with the Tactical Training and Exercise Control Group, 4th Combat Engineer Battalion, 4th Marine Division, instructs a class on anti-personnel breaching systems during Integrated Training Exercise 3-25 (ITX 3-25), Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center, Twentynine Palms, California, June 5th, 2025. ITX is part of the Service-Level Training Exercise Program provided by the MAGTF Command element reinforcing unit readiness within the MAGTF. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Lance Cpl. Edward Spears)

incredible skills they bring from their civilian lives. We are therefore actively working to align their civilian expertise with their military roles, championing talent-matching platforms like GigEagle to ensure we have the right Marine with the right skills in the right billet at the right time, maximizing value for both the Marine and the Marine Corps.

Fourth, we vigorously and enthusiastically executed Enhancing Interoperability and Partnerships. The modern battlefield is, and will continue to be, a team sport. Victory will not go to the force with the most exquisite technology, but to the most cohesive and integrated force. This past year was a landmark for our integration efforts. More than 10,000 of our Marines, which is nearly a third of our entire force, participated in 58 distinct exercises, operating in 25 different countries. They trained shoulder-to-shoulder with their counterparts from the Active Component, the Joint Force, and a broad spectrum of our international allies and partners. This was a deliberate and focused execution of our Campaign Plan's directive to cultivate deep


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and lasting relationships at every level. From our Major Subordinate Commands coordinating with theater-level staffs on complex logistical plans down to our individual rifle squads clearing rooms and sharing tactics with servicemembers from allied nations, we ensured our forces are deeply practiced in the complex art of coalition warfare long before the first shots of a crisis are fired. This constant interaction builds trust, shared understanding, and technical connectivity that are the very currency of combined operations. It ensures that when we meet on the battlefield, we are already a team.

Finally, we made significant progress in Embracing Innovation and Modernization. As a fully integrated operational Reserve, we are an active and essential partner in the Marine Corps' broader, generational Force Design modernization. By reliably assuming critical operational missions with our existing legacy capabilities, we provide the Active Component with the crucial time and strategic space to divest old systems, experiment with new concepts, and field the next generation of warfighting equipment.

Concurrently, we are pursuing our own tailored modernization efforts designed to enhance the lethality of the Total Force. The establishment of our Littoral Craft Companies and the critical upgrades to our F-5 adversary air fleet are tangible, combat-relevant results of this effort. These initiatives provide cost-effective, niche capabilities that directly support the future fight in contested

maritime environments. Furthermore, as directed by our Campaign Plan, we moved beyond discussion and are actively exploring how to responsibly harness the power of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and other emerging technologies. We are prototyping AI tools to streamline our staff processes, optimize our limited resources, and accelerate our decision-making cycles, ensuring we can think and act faster than our adversaries.

In closing, the state of our Marine Corps Reserve is strong. It is strong not by chance, but by design. It is strong because it is guided by a comprehensive, detailed, and actionable plan that focuses our efforts and disciplines our initiatives. Our institutional strength is not immutable; it is forged anew each and every day through the quiet, consistent dedication of our Citizen Marines and through the disciplined, collective execution of the Campaign Plan for Comprehensive Readiness. We are a proven operational force, an indispensable partner in modernization, and a prudent, audited steward of the public trust. We are meeting the complex challenges of today while deliberately preparing our formations for the unforgiving conflicts of tomorrow. With your continued support, we will continue to execute this plan with vigor and precision, honor the towering legacy of those who have gone before us, and ensure that the United States Marine Corps Reserve goes into the future as it has always been: *Semper Fidelis—Always Faithful.* 



Lt. Gen. 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.

Lt. Gen. 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.

America's strategic advantage: the Army Reserve

By Lt. Gen. Robert D. Harter, Chief of Army Reserve and Commanding General United States Army Reserve Command, Command Sgt. Maj. Gregory Betty, Command Sergeant Major of the Army Reserve, and Command Chief Warrant Officer 5 LaShon P. White, Command Chief Warrant Officer, U.S. Army Reserve Command

The Army Reserve traces its lineage to the first Warrior Citizens of the Revolutionary War, Americans who balanced civilian lives with military service long before the term “Total Force” existed. The model of citizen-based military service—patriots with deep ties across communities—was formalized in 1908 with the creation of the Medical Reserve Corps. That small group of medical professionals addressed a critical wartime shortage by rapidly mobilizing specialized civilian expertise. It worked. Within five years, the Army's capacity to care for the wounded had quadrupled, and that formula of leveraging specialized civilian sector talent has defined the Army Reserve ever since.

Through two World Wars, Korea, and Vietnam, the Army Reserve has expanded the Army's depth and resilience, providing combat-ready units and unique capabilities that could not be maintained efficiently in the active force alone. The shift to Total Force Policy in the 1970s—and later refinements—cemented the Army Reserve not as a strategic backup, but as an operational necessity. Over decades of sustained conflict, the Army Reserve transformed to mobilize at scale, integrate seamlessly, and deliver critical capabilities overseas and at home.

That reality defines the present

The unmatched adaptability of the Army Reserve, enhanced by the specialized civilian skills our Soldiers bring to the fight, remains its greatest strength. America's Army Reserve has evolved into a force with deep regional ties and global reach, providing capabilities not found elsewhere in the Total Army or Joint Force.



Sgt. Ratu Komaisavai, a sniper assigned to the 100th Infantry Battalion, roleplaying as opposing forces as part of the Joint Pacific Multinational Readiness Center-Exportable exercise at Fort Magsaysay, Philippines. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Thomas Moeger)

Today, approximately 172,000 Warrior Citizens and 10,000 Army Reserve Civilians operate in 25 countries, all 50 states, and five U.S. territories. The vast majority of today's Army Reserve is composed of capabilities essential to major combat operations, such as theater-level transportation and sustainment. The Army Reserve constitutes nearly 20% of the Total Army's personnel. It provides over half of its Maneuver Support Forces and a quarter of its Mobilization Capacity—all for just 6% of the overall Army budget.

In Large-Scale Combat Operations, the Army's ability to fight beyond the opening weeks largely depends on military occupational specialties that reside overwhelmingly in the Army Reserve. With over 85% of our force serving part-time, this dependence carries inherent risk.

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The Army Reserve is confronting this risk directly through four lines of effort:

- Build Combat Ready Formations
- Mobilize and Deploy
- Adapt, Transform, and Modernize
- Invest in our Soldiers, Civilians, and Families

Our commitment to the Army remains straightforward: “You go, we go.” To deliver on this promise, we are transforming from a force structure built for predictable deployments to a geographic model that better enables readiness and meets the demands of modern warfare.

This shift to Geographic Mission Command shrinks the distances between higher headquarters and their formations, empowering and resourcing leaders at echelon to build readiness. Additionally, this regional focus aligns better with U.S. Army Recruiting Command’s geographic model, bringing Army Reserve leaders and units together with Army recruiting brigades and battalions operating in the same regions.

The Army Reserve is transforming how it trains and fights

The Army Reserve remains focused on building combat-ready Soldiers and formations. More than 200 units and approximately 9,000 Soldiers are mobilized in support of Army and Joint Force requirements. This includes most of the logistics capability support to U.S. Army Central, with more than 4,000 Soldiers managing theater sustainment across the entire U.S. Central Command area of responsibility.

We are building combat lethality through integrated, multi-component exercises. The cornerstone of this effort is Operation Sentinel Justice (OSJ). This large-scale exercise brings together 11,000 Army Reserve and National Guard Soldiers to validate interoperability and test next-generation technologies, such as robotics and counter-drone systems, against a near-peer threat.

OSJ is part of a broader global effort. Currently, more than 3,000 Army Reserve Soldiers are participating in over 80 exercises as part of the Joint Exercise Program, with thousands more preparing to support dozens of additional exercises in the priority U.S. Indo-Pacific Command and U.S. European Command theaters.

At home, the Army Reserve is placing increased emphasis on the Western Hemisphere, with hundreds of Warrior Citizens supporting the Army and the Department of Homeland Security on our Southern Border. Across the U.S., approximately 2,000 troops are scheduled for training exercises. We are also building readiness at home through Innovative Readiness Training, where our Soldiers



Spc. Ashlyn Jelinek, a bridge builder crewmember with the 652nd Engineer Company, secures a boat to the improved ribbon bridge at Camp Ripley. (Photo by Spc. Elizabeth Hackbarth)

gain critical skills by leveraging their talents in support of communities across America. Upcoming missions include Tropic Care on Hawaii’s Big Island and Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands Wellness, a joint exercise to provide medical services in Saipan, Tinian, and Rota. This not only delivers vital infrastructural support but underscores our commitment to increased engagement throughout the Indo-Pacific region.

Driving readiness through innovation

The Army Reserve is driving transformation by integrating new ideas and technologies directly into our formations. We are

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streamlining our training enterprise by merging the 108th and 80th Training Commands into a single point of excellence for both Initial Entry Training (IET) and The Army School System (TASS). Meanwhile, the 75th Innovation Command is spearheading our tactical evolution by developing a comprehensive drone strategy and testing over 20 cutting-edge technologies at exercises such as Northern Strike and Sentinel Justice.

We are also transforming how we sustain the fight. Our Multi-Component Support Brigade pilot program aligns an Army Reserve sustainment brigade—the 300th, in Grand Prairie, Texas—directly with an active-duty command—the 13th Expeditionary Sustainment Command, located on Fort Hood. This model is proving the immense value of integrated logistics, enhancing readiness for the entire team. How we have fought throughout history is how we will fight—and win—in the future.

To ensure we can respond at a moment's notice, we are strategically placing mission-ready equipment sets in Europe and the Pacific. This Forward Positioning of Equipment pilot program enables our Soldiers to deploy faster, train more effectively with our theater allies, and reduce our reliance on stateside equipment, all while building a more agile and responsive force.

The new Army Reserve Center at Camp Williams, Utah, is a prime example of our innovative and fiscally responsible approach to military construction. Through a strategic partnership with the State of Utah, we delivered a new \$127M Army Reserve Center, saving over \$100M in Military Construction funds and providing modern facilities for 1,800 Soldiers in proximity to National Guard ranges and barracks.



Soldiers from the 351st Ordnance Company provide smoke coverage as engineers construct a multi-role bridge to cross a wet gap at Global Strike 2025 during the Combat Support Training Exercise at Fort McCoy, Wisconsin. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Philip Ribas)

Soldiers and families

When the Nation and its allies face their worst days, our Warrior Citizens are part of the 1% who step forward and say, “I’m ready.” It is an honor for Command Sgt. Maj. Betty, Command Chief Warrant Officer 5 White, and me to lead these awesome patriots.

We are deeply proud of our Soldiers and mindful that our responsibility goes beyond readiness—we must look after their best interests and keep faith with the American public. That trust depends on the support of families, employers, communities, and service organizations who stand behind those who serve.

To uphold that trust, we invest in programs that strengthen readiness and care for our people. Initiatives like the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program, Holistic Health and Fitness (H2F), and the Private Public Partnership (P3) program ensure our Soldiers, civilians, and families are supported across all domains—physical, mental, and professional.

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Through H2F, we improve readiness and quality of life by focusing on total wellness. Through P3, we connect Soldiers and families to meaningful employment opportunities, reinforcing long-term stability and success.

We remain committed to leading by example, caring for our people, and honoring the trust placed in us by the American people.

Looking ahead, transformation accelerates

From the first Warrior Citizens to the complex battlefields of tomorrow, the Army Reserve has always adapted to meet the Nation's call. Today is no different. In an era of accelerated transformation, we are forging a more lethal and agile force through innovation and strategic integration to deliver combat-ready Soldiers and formations at time of need.

Through our geographic command structure, we are placing leadership where it matters most—across the communities we recruit from and alongside our active-duty and National Guard partners. Through innovation, we are putting next-generation technologies such as advanced drones and robotics into the hands of our Soldiers. And through integrated programs, such as our Multi-Component Support Brigade and forward-positioned equipment, we are ensuring we can deploy faster and sustain the fight longer.

This is not a distant concept; it is happening now, ensuring the critical enabling capabilities the Army and Joint Force depend on are ready at the moment of need. The Army Reserve is transforming to deliver on its purpose. We will be ready.

Twice the Citizen, Combat Ready—This We'll Defend. 



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, Lt. Gen. 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.

Lt. Gen. Harter then transferred from Active Duty to the Active Guard and Reserve (AGR) program in 1999. His AGR assignments include Support Operations Officer, 55th Sustainment Brigade, Distribution Management Center Chief, 316th Expeditionary Sustainment Command (deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom), and Assistant Chief of Staff, Office of Chief of Army Reserve.



As the 15th Command Sgt. Maj. of the U.S. Army Reserve Command, Betty is the principal enlisted advisor to the Commanding General, U.S. Army Reserve Command, and other senior Army leaders on regulations, policies and quality of life issues related to nearly 178,000 Army Reserve Soldiers. Throughout his military career, **Command Sgt. Maj. Gregory Betty** has served in every enlisted leadership position, from Team Leader to Command Sergeant Major. He has also served as Senior Logistics NCO, First Sergeant, and Operations Sergeant.



Chief Warrant Officer 5 LaShon P. White currently serves as the 9th Command Chief Warrant Officer of the United States Army Reserve. He holds the position as the principal advisor to the Commanding General on Warrant Officer matters. Committed to enhancing individual Soldier and unit readiness, he leads a comprehensive Warrant Officer mentorship program aimed at developing leaders at all levels. Mr. White's Warrant Officer assignments include roles such as Allied Trades Warrant Officer, Battalion Maintenance Officer, and Senior Ordnance Ground Maintenance Warrant Officer, among others. He has deployed multiple times in support of combat and humanitarian operations.

Forging the future: the U.S. Navy Reserve's warfighting-ready transformation

By Rear Adm. Richard S. Lofgren, Acting Chief of Navy Reserve and Acting Commander, Navy Reserve Force

The U.S. Navy Reserve stands at the forefront of a historic transformation, a deliberate and calculated reformation designed to meet the complex demands of a more globally contested battlespace. Its multi-year journey is not merely a dynamic change but a call to action, fundamentally reshaping its role from a traditional support element into an agile, responsive, and warfighting-ready force, fully integrated and essential to securing America's maritime dominance. This profound evolution ensures that when the nation calls, the Navy Reserve is ready to deliver decisive combat power from Day One.

In an era defined by the rapid acceleration of technology and the resurgence of strategic competition, this shift is not just an option; it is an absolute necessity. The guiding principle behind every modernization step, every new unit, and every training evolution is simple but urgent: Does this make us more effective warfighters on Day One of conflict?

A new strategic imperative

For more than a century, the Navy Reserve provided critical operational support and strategic depth, serving as a valuable yet often narrowly used strategic backstop.

The onset of multi-domain warfare and shifting tides of global power have compelled a reassessment of capabilities, prompting a significant shift in posture. Guided by a recognition of burgeoning global challenges, the Navy Reserve's transformation is underpinned by the 34th Chief of Naval Operations, Adm. Daryl Caudle's key strategic documents. The U.S. Navy Fighting Instructions, released



A Fleet Logistics Support Squadron 64 (VR-64) KC-130T Hercules conducts dual-hose aerial refueling testing at Naval Air Station Patuxent River. (U.S. Navy photo)

by the CNO in 2026, prioritizes readiness to respond to competition, crisis, and conflict. This directive is further solidified by the "Navy Warfighting Concept" and a new "Navy Deterrence Concept," which act as a paired set to guide the Fleet's operational posture.

Central to this new direction is the "Hedge Strategy," a plan that promotes a more flexible and adaptable fleet by complementing the core force with specialized "hedge forces" that provide unique, asymmetric capabilities. As part of this strategy, the CNO recognized that the Navy Reserve is 100% part of the Navy's hedge force, signifying a monumental shift from the legacy reserve force as a contingency plan to an integrated force multiplier.

The Navy Reserve's role is no longer simply to provide a general pool of Sailors and Marines; it must deliver specific, high-end

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capabilities that enhance deterrence and provide a decision advantage for commanders. This new reality has fundamentally changed the meaning of “strategic depth.” It has evolved from a collection of individual augmentees to a combat-surge-ready force, with certified units ready to deploy from day one. This pivot to the Operational Level of War (OLW) is the connective tissue between national strategy and frontline tactics. The OLW is where multiple domains — surface, subsurface, air, cyber, and space—are fused into a synchronized plan, supported by logistics orchestrated under contested conditions, intelligence integrated, and command-and-control relationships managed across vast theaters. A single well-prepared team at the OLW can elevate an entire campaign, just as an unprepared one can derail it. This strategic focus ensures the Navy Reserve is not just an augmentation force but a seamless partner in the Total Force, ready to fight and win.

Building a combat-surge-ready force

At the heart of this transformation is an unambiguous focus on warfighting readiness as a North Star. This single, unifying vision is coupled with the goal to increase the Navy Reserve’s capacity and capability to mobilize 50,000 sailors in 30 days and achieve 80% warfighting readiness. This target guides every decision, from training methods to equipment modernization. To achieve this, the mobilization process is undergoing a bottom-up review, with a bias toward leveraging modern technology to maximize efficiency.

A cornerstone of this effort is the multi-year “MOB-to-billet” approach that began under the 15th Chief of Navy Reserve, Vice Adm. John Mustin. This model ensures that every sailor is warfighting-ready for their specific duties, moving away from generalized training toward a tailored, billet-specific approach. It shifts training to align skills directly with unit-defined roles, maximizing operational effectiveness and ensuring a direct return on investment for every training dollar. A purpose-built program known as “T-Ready” underpins this effort, allowing leaders to track unique, billet-based training requirements and providing the information needed to support sailors from the moment they enter the Reserve. This visibility and aggregation of readiness data ensures the force is always tracking toward its warfighting goals while keeping sailors aligned with the resources needed for career advancement. The ultimate goal is to deliver predictable readiness for the fleet and a credible combat surge capacity.

Real-world readiness demands real-world practice. To ensure the Navy Reserve meets its readiness goals, the MAKO and MARLIN event series were instituted, enabling participants to “train like they fight.” These immersive, multi-domain scenarios push Reservists to apply their OLW training in authentic, high-stress environments.



Master-at-Arms 2nd Class Ryan Clem, a Sailor assigned to Naval Air Station (NAS) Joint Reserve Base (JRB) Fort Worth, communicates over a radio during Citadel Shield-Solid Curtain 2026 onboard NAS JRB Fort Worth Feb. 4, 2026. NAS JRB Fort Worth is the first and finest joint reserve base, known for training and equipping air crews and aviation ground support personnel, while supporting missions such as airlift, aerial refueling, and global mobility, making it an integral part of national defense infrastructure. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Luke Cunningham)

Each training event simulates the rapid pace of maritime conflict, forcing participants to adapt quickly across air, surface, subsurface, and cyber domains. These events bring together fleet planners and Maritime Operations Center (MOC) watch standers to practice their craft, maintain proficiency, and increase Active-Reserve integration. By honing both individual watch-floor skills and collective

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readiness, Reservists are fully equipped to step into ongoing fleet operations, embodying the very definition of Day One Readiness.

A significant investment aligns with this focus on readiness on modern platforms to keep the force agile across every domain. After more than three decades operating the C/KC-130T, the Navy's only organic intra-theater lift, the Navy Reserve is laser-focused on continuing to provide reliable and flexible global airlift. As the workhorse of distributed logistics operations, the C/KC-130T executes critical resupply, rearm, repair, refuel, and revive missions for the fleet. Its global reach and ability to access unprepared airfields make it uniquely valuable for the time-critical delivery of repair parts to quickly redeploy ships, as well as for life-saving medical evacuations. In a recent Navy Reserve win, the Minutemen of VR-55 completed the first VR KC-130T dual-hose operation, where inflight refueling was performed with two hoses simultaneously, reducing tanker loiter and receiver time on wing. KC-130J recapitalization remains the number one equipment priority and is vital for sustained operations in contested environments.

Key modernization efforts also include a full shift from the P-3C Orion to the P-8A Poseidon, the Navy's premier broad-area anti-submarine and reconnaissance aircraft, thereby adding another upgraded capability for global maritime patrols. Reserve squadrons now join the active force, providing continuous deployed presence, integrated fires, and cutting-edge ISR capabilities.

The Navy Reserve is already providing a significant return on investment through this integrated approach. Reserve pilots and aircrew from squadrons like HSM-60, VP-62, VP-69, and VAQ-209 are fully integrated into deployment rotations, flying helicopter, P-8, and EA-18G missions in critical regions. The Navy Reserve is also responsible for 20% of student production in the Chief of Naval Air Training (CNATRA) command, a testament to the value of retaining the skills of prior-service Naval Aviators to train our future air crews.

People and technology: the twin engines of transformation

Sustaining long-term excellence requires strengthening the force's technological and warfighting capabilities while prioritizing talent acquisition and retention. The Navy Reserve is leveraging advanced technological platforms and embracing the potential of artificial intelligence (AI) to improve workflows and eliminate inefficient processes. This technological leap forward is creating new career paths for sailors, allowing them to focus on training and warfighting readiness rather than bureaucratic hurdles.

This commitment to modernization is complemented by the Nautilus Virtual Desktop (NVD), a cloud-based solution that



Search and Rescue (SAR) swimmers assigned to the Commander, Naval Surface Forces (SURFOR) Reserve component provide Sailors assigned to the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Paul Hamilton (DDG 60) with hands-on training for the SAR litter at Naval Base San Diego Oct. 28. During the scenario, SURFOR conducted a cumulative SAR event and provided participants with training on the SAR litter and other rescue apparatus. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Sara L. Eshleman)

provides remote access to a secure environment from personal or government devices, extending the operational workspace beyond traditional boundaries. It delivers easier access to the tools and information the force needs, meaning less time waiting and more time working on what is important.

This technological evolution has created the need for new skill sets, and the Navy Reserve has responded by introducing new ratings and designators to build a team with deep expertise in rapidly advancing technologies. These include the Robotics Warfare Specialist (RW), designed to oversee the operation and maintenance of autonomous systems; Maritime Cyber Warfare Officers (MCWO), who focus on cyberspace operations to gain an advantage in the information environment; and Maritime Space Officers (MSO), who integrate joint space capabilities into maritime plans and operations, enhancing the Navy's capacity across all domains.

A significant and unique advantage of the Reserve is the civilian expertise its members bring to the table. Software developers, engineers, commercial pilots, and cybersecurity analysts become force multipliers at the OLV, where success can hinge on real-time data analysis and imaginative solutions. To harness this talent, the Navy Reserve is leveraging the unique civilian skillsets of the force. As part of this, sailors with specialized skills can now volunteer for assignments outside their rate by completing the civilian skills information (CSI) tab in the Navy Standard Integrated Personnel System (NSIPS), allowing the Navy to tap into this deep well of experience for future opportunities.

Beyond ships and aircraft, the Reserve plays a decisive role in the information environment. In today's competitive landscape, the struggle over information is as important as traditional military power. Reserve Information Warfare (IW) units help develop and evaluate information that shapes commanders' decisions, providing depth to the Navy and Joint Force during sustained operations. Through consistent training and integration with active-duty commands, these citizen-sailors sustain the high readiness required to rapidly transition to operational support. Their preparation enables expanded capacity and capability across the Fleet, ensuring that when the Navy requires an information advantage, Reserve IW sailors are ready to fight and win.

This push for technological superiority is matched by a renewed focus on recruiting and retaining the best and brightest. The Navy Reserve professionalized its talent acquisition efforts by establishing a new full-time officer designator, the Permanent Professional Recruiter, and has established Reserve Talent Acquisition Groups (RTAGs) whose primary mission is to recruit highly skilled individuals, including prior-service sailors with desired warfighting skill sets.

Creating an environment for success


A ready and optimized force can only exist in an environment that fosters support and provides peace of mind for its citizen-sailors. To ensure the highest quality of service and enhance sailors' professional and personal lives, the Reserve has expanded the benefits that directly support them. This includes targeted and larger affiliation and re-enlistment bonuses as a direct financial incentive to retain top-tier talent. By providing Tuition Assistance to Selected Reserve sailors for the first time, the Navy is investing in their education and developing critical skills that benefit both their military and civilian careers.

Recognizing that civilian careers are a vital part of a Reservist's life, outreach to employers through programs such as the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) is a cornerstone of this effort. Through initiatives like the Navy Employer Recognition Event (NERE), the Reserve recognizes employers who go above and beyond to support their citizen-sailors, fostering a crucial partnership that allows for a mutually supportive military and civilian life. This collaboration is essential for maintaining a resilient and ready force.

The well-being of sailors' families is paramount. A robust network of support ensures that families have the resources they need to thrive. This includes access to Weekend Drill Child Care (WDCC), now available at 24 locations in 17 states, which removes barriers for Reservists with families and allows them to train worry-free. Furthermore, new policy changes have expanded parental leave benefits to 12 weeks for all eligible Reservists under the revised Reserve Component Maternity Leave (RCML) and Inactive Duty Parental Leave (IDPL) policies. For Reservists returning from deployment, the Navy Reserve Returning Warrior Workshop (RWW) provides critical reintegration support, strengthening family resilience and personal well-being—key pillars of sustained readiness for future missions.

A force forged for the future

The U.S. Navy Reserve's transformation is a testament to its adaptability and unwavering dedication to maintaining America's maritime dominance. This is a fundamental shift, moving investments from legacy support functions directly into operational warfighting capabilities. By focusing on profound optimization and creating an environment where every sailor can thrive, the Reserve is building a more lethal and integrated Total Force. Our commitment remains unshakeable. We will keep refining this blueprint so that no matter where or when the nation calls, the Navy Reserve stands prepared to deliver operational excellence.

Looking forward, the Reserve will continue to expand the breadth of its force, harnessing the specialized skill sets of its Citizen Sailors and identifying America's greatest innovators who bring new ideas from industry. The Navy Reserve is more than a strategic backup; it is an operational force, fully integrated with the active component, and essential to the nation's defense. It is a force forged by a legacy of service, prepared to meet today's challenges, and ready for a future of continued excellence. Make no mistake, we are warfighters, and when called upon, our job is to fight and win wars. Ready Day One. 

Set conditions for success

Character, technical competence, and the enlisted foundation of a battle-ready navy reserve

By Force Master Chief Nicole C. Rios, Navy Reserve (FORCM #18)

The 34th Chief of Naval Operations, Adm. Daryl Caudle, opened his Fighting Instructions with two words that carry the full weight of naval doctrine and personal conviction: Sailors First. While advanced platforms, logistics, and infrastructure are essential to naval power, the Sailor is the decisive enabler who makes all of it matter. The lifeblood of the Navy, in Admiral Caudle's words, is the Sailor who is well-trained, connected, supported, and fit to fight. That is not an aspiration. It is a standard. And it is the standard against which everything I do as Force Master Chief of the Navy Reserve must be measured.

My role in this force is to ensure that every one of our 57,000 Selected Reserve (SELRES) and Training and Administration of the Reserve (TAR) Sailors is ready to answer the CNO's call. Every single Sailor. To do that, I have organized my priorities around two imperatives that are as old as the Chief Petty Officer Mess and as current as the Fighting Instructions: Hone the technical competence of every Sailor, and develop their character. Together, they set conditions for success.

Then: The enlisted backbone and the standard that holds

The Chief Petty Officer Mess was formally established in 1893, codifying what the Navy had long understood: that technical mastery and moral authority, held together in the same pair of hands, constitute the most powerful leadership combination the sea service possesses. The chief is not merely a technical expert. The chief is the keeper of the standard. The chief is the one who looks a junior Sailor in the eye and says, without flinching: "This is who we are, and this is how we do things". That transmission of standards, that deckplate presence that holds culture accountable, is what has kept the Navy ready across 250 years.

In the Reserve, that transmission is harder. Chiefs see their Sailors one weekend a month, two weeks a year. The opportunities to observe, coach, correct, and develop are compressed. The temptation to accept minimum compliance in place of genuine readiness is real. The chiefs who have resisted that temptation across the 111-year history of the Navy Reserve are the reason this force



Navy Reserve Force Master Chief Nicole C. Rios speaks with Senior Enlisted Academy Class 287 about the importance of the Reserve Force and how integration with the active-duty component is vital to warfighting success. (U.S. Navy photo by Senior Chief Gas Turbine Systems Technician (Electrical) Martin Garabedian)

can mobilize and fight. They are the reason Reserve Sailors have been deployed to every major conflict since 1915, with skills the Fleet could use. They built readiness in the margins, with less time and fewer resources, and they held the standard anyway. That is the heritage we carry, and the obligation we owe to every Sailor now in our charge.

Now: Setting conditions across every level of leadership

The first target is Development and Investment. Professional and personal development at every level of leadership, sustained across a continuous training continuum, is the foundation of technical competence in this force. Sailor 360 is the framework I expect leaders to use, and I expect them to use it with genuine intent, not as a compliance exercise. The Culture of Excellence and Total Sailor initiatives are not programs layered on top of the mission. They are how we build the kind of Sailors the mission requires. Fit to Fight means

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exactly that: physical readiness, mental health, and personal resilience are not peripheral concerns. They are readiness conditions.

The second target is Management and Transitions. The right Sailor in the right billet at the right time is not a slogan. It is the operational definition of talent management in a reserve component. Every gapped billet is a readiness gap. Every Sailor who leaves because the transition process was broken, or because a career path was invisible, or because the system treated their expertise as interchangeable with someone else's is a failure of the institution, not the individual. We are working to improve permeability between SELRES, TAR, and the active component, to strengthen onboarding so new Sailors understand their purpose from the first day they arrive, and to build deliberate career paths that make the connection between civilian expertise and naval warfighting mission explicit and navigable.

The third target is Sustainment and Recognition, which I frame as a simple equation: Quality of Service equals Quality of Life plus Quality of Work. Quality of Life means healthcare that works for members and families, weekend child care that allows a Sailor to attend drill without choosing between service and parenthood, and support services like the Returning Warrior Workshop and the Navy Reserve Mentorship Network that are funded and accessible, not merely listed in a catalog. Quality of Work means evaluations that are continuous and meaningful, a new CPO evaluation process that accurately reflects Chief Petty Officer performance, and a recognition culture that names excellence at every level, from the Sailor of the Year to the civilian activity of the year.

Character is the harder half of the equation, and for that reason, it is the half most often deferred. I will not defer it. The Navy Reserve Force Orders are professionalism, combat readiness, safety, leadership, and teamwork. They describe the character we expect every Sailor to embody, in that order, every day. Military bearing matters. Good order and discipline matter. Standards matter. The force lens I apply to every leadership decision asks three questions: What is the risk to force? What is the risk to mission? What is the risk to the individual? Those questions are simultaneous, not sequential, and they require a leader whose judgment has been deliberately built, not assumed.

The Chief Petty Officer Mess is where that building happens. The work we are doing on initiation standards, training plans, funding, and execution of heritage events, and non-participation accountability is not administrative maintenance of a tradition. It is the active cultivation of the force's most important leadership multiplier. What we invest in the mess today will appear in the readiness of the force a decade from now. Collaborative learning across professional military training, professional personal education,



Navy Reserve Force Master Chief Nicole C. Rios, retired U.S. Army Chief Warrant Officer 5 Phillip M. Brashear, and Rear Adm. Jonathan R. Townsend lead 70 chief selectees across the Benjamin Franklin Bridge during the "Bridge Run" at Big J Heritage Academy. The annual tradition honors the Navy's proud heritage and the collective strength of the Total Force Chiefs' Mess. (U.S. Navy photo by Senior Chief Mass Communication Specialist Timothy Aguirre)

character and leadership development is how we get there; not in sequence, not selectively, but together, at every level, from the most junior Sailor to the most senior Master Chief in the force.

Tomorrow: The human requirements of the Hedge Strategy

Each of the CNO's four strategic imperatives — hedge aggressively, innovate continuously, fight distributively, command with clarity — describes the same underlying human requirement: a Sailor developed well enough to exercise sound judgment under pressure, without waiting for instruction. A platform or a program does not produce that Sailor; they are built by leaders who hold the standard at the deckplate, year after year, drill weekend after drill weekend.

The Enhanced Mission Command Framework that guides Hedge Strategy implementation makes this connection explicit. Delegated autonomy levels are tied to the authority granted to a unit's demonstrated ability to sense, assess, and synthesize the operational environment. That ability is not a function of platform capability alone. It is a function of the people operating the platform: their training, their judgment, and their character under pressure. It cannot manufacture that development on demand. The work of building battle-ready sailors for a distributed maritime operations environment starts at the deckplate, with a Chief Petty Officer who holds the standard and a junior Sailor who rises to meet it.

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Looking ahead, the emerging capabilities that define the Hedge Strategy's tailored offsets, including robotic and autonomous systems, AI-enabled decision advantage, advanced manufacturing in contested logistics environments, and directed energy for terminal defense, are areas where the Navy Reserve's civilian talent pipeline represents a genuine strategic advantage. Our Sailors work on these technologies in their civilian careers. The Reserve's obligation is to develop that expertise into warfighting competence through deliberate career paths, operationally grounded training, and joint qualification requirements that connect civilian mastery to military mission.

The standard we keep

The CNO has said there is no secret to success: just resources, attention, and hard work. I would add one more element that makes resources, attention, and hard work sustainable across a force as complex as ours—character. A force whose leaders have character will find the resources it needs, apply the attention the mission

demands, and do the hard work whether or not anyone is watching. A force whose leaders lack it will fail at all three, regardless of what the budget provides or what the instructions say.

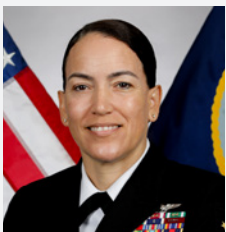
The MCPON's guidance, the CNO's Fighting Instructions, and 133 years of Chief Petty Officer Mess tradition all arrive at the same conclusion: the quality of this Navy's enlisted force is the quality of its senior enlisted leadership. Every chief who holds the standard, mentors the junior Sailor, and refuses to accept average is doing the work that no platform procurement can substitute. A force built to that same standard—across 57,000 billets spanning every warfare domain—is setting conditions under which the Hedge Strategy can succeed.

That is my commitment to this force. Hone the technical competence. Develop the character. Set conditions for success. Not for some Sailors; for every Sailor—every watch, every drill weekend, every deployment, every day. 



Rear Adm. Richard S. Lofgren is a third-generation Naval Officer and a 1993 graduate of The University of Texas at Austin, where he earned a Bachelor of Arts in History and received his commission through the NROTC program. A qualified Surface Warfare Officer, his initial assignment was aboard USS WASP (LHD-1) after completing Surface Warfare Officer School. He is a graduate of the Navy Senior Leader Seminar at the Naval Postgraduate School and completed his Joint Professional Military Education at the Naval War College's Command and Staff College.

Affiliating with the Navy Reserve on September 11, 2001, Rear Adm. Lofgren has held numerous leadership and command assignments, including command of Inshore Boat Unit FIFTEEN, Maritime Civil Affairs and Security Training Squadron ONE, Coastal Riverine Squadron EIGHT, and NR U.S. Fourth Fleet (C4F/USNAVSOUTH). In his initial flag assignment, he served as Vice Commander, C4F/USNAVSOUTH, and assumed the role of Acting Chief of Navy Reserve and Acting Commander, Navy Reserve Force on September 2, 2025. He is authorized to wear the Command at Sea, Command Ashore, and Small Craft Officer-in-Charge of combatant craft insignias.



Force Master Chief Nicole C. Rios, a native of Springfield, Massachusetts, serves as the Senior Enlisted Advisor to the Chief of Navy Reserve, focusing on the well-being and readiness of 59,000 Reserve Component personnel supporting the Navy, Marine Corps and joint Force. She holds a bachelor's degree in Business Administration and is a graduate of the Senior Enlisted Academy; Naval Leadership and Ethics Center Command Master Chief/Chief of the Boat Course; Executive Leadership Symposium; Navy Senior Leader Seminar; Keystone Course; New Flag and Senior Executive Training Symposium; and Flag and Executive Leader Implementation Course. She is designated Master Training Specialist, Aviation Warfare, Expeditionary Warfare, and Information Warfare Specialist. Her decorations include the Legion of Merit, Meritorious Service Medal (three awards), Navy Commendation Medals (three awards), Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medals (five awards) and various unit and campaign awards.

The Reserve advantage: From Minuteman to modern Reserve Airman

By Lt. Gen. John P. Healy, Chief of Air Force Reserve and Chief Master Sgt. Israel Nuñez

This year, as our nation celebrates its 250th anniversary, we are reminded of a core principle of our republic: a nation defended by its citizens. That principle defines the character of today's Reserve Airman, one of innovation, perseverance, and the selfless desire to serve. That legacy, combined with the lessons observed over 25 years of continuous combat operations, forged our capability and combat-proven experience. This has evolved into what we call the Reserve Advantage, a strategic edge with five core pillars: Fly, Fix, Fight, Warrior Culture, Surge Capacity, Strategic Depth, and Force Mix Optimization. These pillars of the Reserve Advantage were foundational then, are indispensable now, and will be decisive tomorrow.

Then: The origin of our advantage was from a strategic choice made at our nation's founding. The model of a professional military augmented by a part-time citizen force was our country's first and most enduring force mix. It was a deliberate design born of necessity, built to provide efficiency, strategic depth and surge capacity to execute in response to crisis at a moment's notice. As our full-time support responsibilities increase to meet today's operational reality, we must optimize our force without sacrificing the part-time structure that is the very source of our experience and strategic depth. I'm talking about the Air Reserve Technician (ART) program, which is valuable for its technical continuity but lacks the flexibility and agility we need in a potential fight-tonight scenario. We must shift our full-time status to match today's warfighting requirements by increasing our Active Guard Reserve (AGR) end strength. To execute, we need congressional support for relief from the current ART floor and the current AGR grade ceilings and end-strength limitations, making this one of our top legislative priorities.

From the enlisted perspective, the character of our Reserve Airmen is defined by the values that have been passed down through the NCO corps for 250 years: perseverance in the face of overwhelming odds, integrity when no one is looking, and the grit to see the mission through. Adhering to these values is what makes the difference between a job and a calling. Our enlisted members answer that call, and they prove it through the relentless reps and sets of training and development to be the most competent leaders our Airmen deserve. That deliberate choice to serve, to be ready



1948, 10AF Reserve NCO records files

at a moment's notice while balancing two demanding careers, is the foundation of our professionalism. This deep commitment to the mission is why so many of our Airmen choose to stay, some even serve an entire career in one unit. They become the source of our strategic depth, routinely training new generations of aero-medical evacuation operators, mentoring Airmen in our smaller communication flights, and managing the complex, high-stakes flow of cargo and passengers in our busy aerial port squadrons. It is a legacy our enlisted force proudly carries forward into the future fight.

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Now: The Reserve Advantage is defined by our role as a fully operational force, providing daily combat capability to meet global demands. We saw this in real time during the recent crises that triggered Operations MIDNIGHT HAMMER and EPIC FURY, where our Reserve airlift and tanker crews were airborne within 72 hours, providing critical surge capacity. This operational reality places us at the center of the Air Force's primary strategic challenge: balancing readiness today with the modernization required for tomorrow. Our advantage is what makes navigating this tension possible. It is the efficiency of our force structure, like a Reserve F-16 unit that operates at \$12 million less per year with pilots who are three times more experienced, that frees up resources for modernization. At the same time, it is the strategic depth of our Airmen that preserves our lethality. A prime example comes from our 960th Cyberspace Wing. Our combat communications professionals are at the cutting edge of the counter-unmanned aerial systems fight. They recently proved this by successfully implementing a \$46M Combined Defense Operations Center for Operations FREEDOM SENTINEL and JUNIPER SHIELD. This highlights the core dilemma: we have some of the most experienced operators in the joint force, but their effectiveness is limited by the tools we give them. That is why we must make hard, deliberate trade-offs to modernize. This is not just about aircraft such as the KC-46, F-35, and B-21. It is also about investing in the advanced expeditionary command-and-control capabilities our warfighting communicators need. These are the tools we need to sharpen the Reserve Advantage



U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Joshua Werho, 55th Combat Communication Squadron radio frequency transmission systems technician, and Senior Airman Jesse Severns, 35th CBCS cyber security technician, check operations on a Ranger 2400 Flyaway Multi-Band Terminal during EXERCISE AGILE BLIZZARD-UNIFIED VISION 2023 near Comox, British Columbia, Canada, June 19, 2023. The satellite dish allows for quick setup satellite communications which is necessary when operating in a semi-austere location where communications are limited. (U.S. Air Force photo by Tech. Sgt. Betty R. Chevalier)

across every domain, and they are how we stop preparing for the last war and start winning the next one.

Our enlisted force not only executes the mission to the same Fly, Fix, Fight standard as the Regular Air Force, they go beyond it. The fact that many of our Reservists are part-time does not mean half as good, and what sets us apart is our experience, our depth, continuity, and technical competency that we bring from our civilian occupations into military service. This expertise translates into innovation that helps us solve some of the Air Force's most pressing parts-availability and supply chain problems. Just recently, Reserve maintainers at the 349th Maintenance Group at Travis Air Force Base took action when critical C-17 parts failed due to heat-induced warping. Their in-house team designed, prototyped, and printed a durable replacement that, after a six-month evaluation, showed

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zero defects and is now implemented fleet-wide. We see that same experience and judgement at work when they have the opportunity to live the commercial that they joined us for in high-impact, real-world missions whether its operating a boom and refueling a fighter over the Pacific from a KC-46, performing life-saving rescues as part of a Guardian Angel team or setting up a communications suite from scratch in a bare field less than 72 hours from leaving their homes and civilian careers. These are just a few examples of the experience and commitment that does not exist outside the Reserve, and our Airmen prove day in, day out that they are ready, they are force multipliers, and they are an advantage.

Tomorrow: We will win by deliberately shaping a more lethal, agile, and interoperable force. We are moving out along two main lines of effort: transitioning to the new Air Expeditionary Wing (AEW) 2.0 and strengthening our alliances abroad with the Reserve Allies and Partner Program (RAPP). As an inherently mission-focused and efficient force, the Air Force Reserve is already structured to present Units of Action AEW 2.0 rapidly. This model emphasizes small, adaptable teams that can generate combat power from a network of dispersed, survivable locations, anytime, anywhere. Through our second line of effort, RAPP, we are turning handshakes into partnerships. We have moved from initial engagements to signing formal agreements with both the United Kingdom and France, and another bilateral agreement for the Netherlands is on the way and currently under legal review. Courses like the Base Defense Leadership Course will become a common standard for coalition forces, not an exception. Future exercises like STEADFAST




Guardian Angel Airmen on board an HC-130P/N King fixed-wing aircraft from the 920th Rescue Wing were part of concerted rescue effort of approximately 80 wing personnel and four wing aircraft that rescued two German citizens in distress at sea July 7, 2017 and into July 8. The victim's vessel caught fire approximately 500 nautical miles off the east coast of southern Florida. At the request of the U.S. Coast Guard's Seventh District in Miami, the 920th RQW was alerted by the Air Force Rescue Coordination Center at Tyndall Air Force Base, Florida, to assist in the long-range search and rescue. Approximately 80 wing Citizen Airmen and four wing aircraft helped execute the rescue mission to include, maintenance, operations and support personnel. (U.S. Air Force photo by Master Sgt. Mark Borosch)

DEFENDER and PATRIOT MEDIC will see even deeper integration, testing our combined forces against the most demanding future scenarios. By building partner capacity and increasing tactical interoperability, we are not just sharing the burden; we are multiplying our combat power.

A future force is only as strong as its people, and advanced platforms are only as effective as the professional, combat-ready Airmen who operate them. Our focus is on investing in you, our greatest advantage, through a deliberate talent management strategy that honors your commitment and unleashes your full potential. First, we are breaking down rigid career-field stovepipes to create broader, more adaptable Airmen ready for the complexities of the future fight. Second, we are re-engineering our promotion system to be transparent, repeatable, and defensible, ensuring we elevate the right leaders for their leadership and competencies. And finally, we

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are clearing a path to a commission for our highest-performing enlisted members, because we cannot afford to lose our next generation of leaders to bureaucracy. All these efforts are underpinned by our commitment to building a stronger community of support.

The lesson of our nation's 250th anniversary is clear: the complex readiness and modernization challenges we face demand we build the agile, lethal, and combat-credible force we need for tomorrow. This model is about people, the Reserve Airmen who have made the conscious choice to serve. That choice, the personal commitment to balance a civilian life with the defense of our nation, is the source of our discipline and our professionalism. That choice is the source of our true Reserve Advantage. We have the responsibility to honor that choice by ensuring they are equipped with the best training, resources, and modern tools to win in the decades to come. 



Lt. Gen. Dominique Tardif, left, Vice Chief of the French Air and Space Force, and Lt. Gen. John Healy, right, Chief of the Air Force Reserve and Commander of Air Force Reserve Command, convened in Paris, France, on Friday, September 12, 2025. During the meeting, the leaders signed Terms of Reference between the French Air and Space Force and the United States Air Force Reserve, formalizing their commitment to bilateral cooperation and reflecting shared values, priorities, and operational goals. (U.S. Airforce photo by Master Sgt. Nicole King)



As Chief of Air Force Reserve, **Lt. Gen. 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.



Chief Master Sgt. Israel Nuñez is the Senior Enlisted Advisor to the Chief of Air Force Reserve, Pentagon, Washington D.C., and Command Chief Master Sergeant of Air Force Reserve Command, Robins Air Force Base, Georgia. As the Senior Enlisted Advisor, Chief Nuñez represents the highest level of enlisted leadership in the United States Air Force Reserve. He provides direction to the enlisted force and represents the interest of more than 70,000 total force Airmen at all levels of government. As the Command Chief Master Sergeant of Air Force Reserve Command, Chief Nuñez is the principal advisor to the commander of Air Force Reserve Command. In this capacity, he is the commander's primary advisor regarding the welfare, morale, discipline, proper utilization, operational readiness, and war-fighting capability of enlisted U.S. Air Force Reserve personnel stationed worldwide.

State of the Coast Guard Reserve: An enduring force for a new era

Built on a legacy of service, the Coast Guard Reserve is delivering readiness today while transforming for the challenges of tomorrow.

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

As the United States prepares to commemorate its 250th anniversary, the Coast Guard Reserve stands at a pivotal intersection of its own history and the nation's future. For 85 years, this force of Citizen Warriors has answered the call, providing trained and ready personnel for critical missions in times of national need. This founding purpose is more relevant today than ever. The maritime domain is more contested, the demand for Coast Guard forces is at an all-time high, and the need for a modern, mobilized, and ready Reserve has never been clearer.

Then: A legacy of service to the nation

The story of the Coast Guard Reserve is a story of service. It is rooted in the uniquely American Citizen Warrior tradition, created by an act of Congress in 1941 to provide a surge force in times of crisis. For generations, reservists have balanced civilian careers and family responsibilities with the profound commitment to remain always ready—Semper Paratus—to mobilize when the nation calls. This legacy of devotion to constitutional duty is not just our history; it is the bedrock of our value to the Coast Guard and the Nation today.

From the shores of Normandy to the response following the September 11th attacks, the Reserve has consistently proven its worth as an indispensable component of the Total Force. This is not a force that waits; it is a force that trains, integrates, and prepares alongside its active-duty counterparts, ensuring seamless interoperability when the call comes. Our history demonstrates that the Reserve's value is twofold: providing critical capacity during large-scale national emergencies, and offering specialized, mission-ready skills that augment daily Coast Guard operations. As an integral part of the Total Force, the Reserve extends the Coast Guard's unique value as a military service, a law enforcement agency, a first responder, and a guardian of the nation's economic prosperity.

Now: Readiness and operational impact

Today's operating environment is defined by strategic competition, pressure on our maritime borders, and the persistent threat of crisis with little warning. In January 2026, Commandant Adm. Kevin



A Transportable Port Security Boat (TPSB) highlights the Coast Guard Reserve's expeditionary maritime security capability. In Fiscal Year 2025, Port Security Units continued to generate mission-ready security forces worldwide, including embarked security teams that protected forward-deployed U.S. military vessels and strengthened joint force readiness in the INDOPA-CIFIC. (U.S. Coast Guard photo by Lt. j.g. Joseph Rutledge)

Lunday articulated the Service's path forward in three powerful words: Ready, Fight, Navigate. He made clear that readiness begins with the entire force: Active, Reserve, Civilian, and Auxiliary.

For the Reserve, this is our call to action. We are translating the Commandant's intent into decisive outcomes through the Coast

Coast Guard Reserve

Guard's generational transformation: Force Design 2028 (FD28). Under FD28, the Reserve is being deliberately repositioned to sharpen readiness, strengthen mobilization capacity, and align our force with the Service's most critical missions: border control, flow of commerce, and contingency response.

This is not just a future goal; it is happening now. In 2025, we reaffirmed contingency mobilization as the Reserve's primary mandate, codifying four mission types: Defense Operations, Maritime Security, Marine Environmental Response, and Emergency Management to improve clarity and strengthen training priorities. Our relevance is not theoretical; it is proven daily. Over the past year, more than 400 reservists mobilized to support border security operations like Vigilant Sentry, River Wall, and Border Trident, directly contributing to the security of our southern maritime approaches. In the Indo-Pacific, our Port Security Units (PSUs) deployed with the U.S. Navy, providing security for critical sea lanes essential to the global flow of commerce. These expeditionary units are a premier example of Reserve integration, bringing a vital capability to the Joint Force that does not exist in the active component.

Just as important as what we are doing is how we are preparing. A 2025 Readiness Sprint produced a 31% overall improvement in Reserve Component readiness, adding over 600 members to the pool of personnel fully prepared for short-notice contingency deployment. This success was not an accident; it was the result of a deliberate, data-driven effort to identify and remove the administrative barriers that hinder a reservist's ability to serve. This achievement led directly to the establishment of the permanent Reserve Readiness Program, a formal system to ensure we can mobilize at speed and scale. This relentless focus on readiness is our core purpose. It's about ensuring that when the worst day comes, the Coast Guard Reserve will be at its best.

Tomorrow: A transformed force for the future

If our past is defined by a legacy of service and our present by operational readiness, our future will be defined by how we modernize for the demands ahead. FD28 is the roadmap for that future, and



Coast Guard reservists conduct boat operations in support of maritime safety and security inside the nation's port environment. Across the entire year, reservists expanded operational presence to strengthen the Marine Transportation System, increase maritime domain awareness, and reinforce port security during periods of heightened demand. (U.S. Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 1st Class Rachael Greene)

its direction is crystal clear. The FD28 Executive Report explicitly directs the Coast Guard to, "...revitalize the Coast Guard Reserve and refocus it on preparation for full-scale mobilization in time of war, national emergency, or major contingency."

This is a fundamental shift, moving beyond a model of individual augmentation to building a Reserve force that is predictable, integrated, and relentlessly focused on mission-aligned training. This transformation into a strategic mobilization asset is already underway, guided by three key lines of effort:

1. A Mobilization-Focused Force: We are redesigning our force structure to ensure every billet and every training dollar is aligned with creating mobilization readiness. This means prioritizing the skills and units most needed in a major contingency, from port security to marine casualty response.


Coast Guard Reserve

2. **A Mission-Ready Force:** We are overhauling our training and readiness programs to ensure reservists are not just qualified, but proficient. This includes more integrated training exercises with active-duty and joint partners and leveraging technology to make training more accessible and effective.
3. **A Supported and Sustainable Force:** We recognize that our people are our greatest strategic advantage. We are committed to improving talent management, from recruiting and retention to creating a system that honors a reservist's commitment by making it easier to serve.

Talent management is central to this effort. While the Coast Guard exceeded its combined recruiting goal, bringing in over 5,000 new members in FY25, with Reserve enlisted recruiting reaching 104% of its mission, success is about more than numbers. It is about retaining skilled people and ensuring they can serve in a system that values their contribution. That is why initiatives like the Inactive Duty Training-Travel Reimbursement Program, which helps offset costs for the 25% of our reservists who live more than

150 miles from their unit, are essential readiness issues. They ensure we can recruit and retain the best talent, regardless of geography.

The future also demands that we evolve to meet emerging threats. To that end, the Reserve has established two new cyberunits: Coast Guard Reserve Unit U.S. Cyber Command and the 1941 Cyber Protection Team, bringing industry-leading expertise to protect \$5.4 trillion in economic activity sustained by our Marine Transportation System. Our reservists in these units are cyber professionals in their civilian lives, offering a level of experience that would be difficult to replicate in the active force. This is the future of the maritime fight, and the Reserve is expanding into the mission spaces that will define it.

As America reflects on 250 years of service and sacrifice, the Coast Guard Reserve exemplifies an enduring commitment to the nation. We are a force built on a proud history, tested by today's demands, and being transformed for the future. Honoring our legacy means preparing for what comes next: a future where readiness is paramount, mobilization is central, and our nation's maritime security requires a Coast Guard Reserve that, as always, is ready for the call. 



Rear Adm. Tiffany Danko is currently assigned as the Director of the Coast Guard Reserve and is the Assistant Commandant for Coast Guard Reserve. Rear Adm. 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 Adm. Danko is also an Adjunct Professor with the University of Southern California Bovard College.

Rear Adm. 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



Master Chief Petty Officer Will 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.

Shaped by science: NOAA Corps

By Rear Adm. Chad M. Cary

For more than 200 years, the service now known as the NOAA Commissioned Officer Corps has provided the nation with environmental intelligence to arm decision-makers and the public with credible data. The data collected is used to better inform policy creation, supercharge the economy, and provide warfighters with a decision advantage. It is used by those responsible for managing natural resources, for a better understanding of our Earth systems, and for providing scientific leadership.

The NOAA Corps is administered under the Department of Commerce. Its 366 officers have STEM backgrounds and are either mariners or aviators, operating the agency's fleet of 15 research ships and 10 aircraft. The officers provide technical and operational expertise, as well as rapid response capacity for national emergencies.

Then: The start of NOAA Corps

In the years following the Louisiana Purchase, President Thomas Jefferson determined that it was necessary to explore and map the land and coast. In 1807, he signed a bill creating the "Survey of the Coast" to provide nautical charts to the maritime community for safe passage into American ports and along our extensive coastline.

After several years as part of the Department of the Navy, the civilian U.S. Coast Survey was established in 1832, with Ferdinand Hassler as superintendent. Coast Survey has been the nation's chart-maker ever since.

In the ensuing years, the young agency tackled additional responsibilities. In addition to conducting hydrographic surveys and producing nautical charts, the U.S. Coast Survey conducted the first systematic study of the Gulf Stream and designed tidal prediction machines. It established the geodetic connection between the Atlantic and Pacific coasts. They also mapped the coastline to aid Union forces during the Civil War.

The agency's name later changed to the U.S. Coast & Geodetic Survey, which then established its Commissioned Corps. The officers continued to add value to the daily lives of Americans and were integral in several historic events. During the height of the Great Depression, the Coast and Geodetic Survey organized surveying parties and field offices that employed over 10,000 people, including many out-of-work engineers. In World War II, more than half

of the officers were transferred to bolster other services. They served as hydrographers, artillery surveyors, cartographers, army engineers, intelligence officers, and geophysicists in all theaters of the war. Civilians on the home front produced more than 100 million maps and charts for the Allied Forces. Ultimately, 11 members of the Coast and Geodetic Survey gave their lives during the war.

Once NOAA was created in 1970, the U.S. Coast & Geodetic Survey Commissioned Corps became the NOAA Corps. Today, the NOAA Corps is the smallest of the country's eight uniformed services, but its mission is larger than ever before.

Now: Acquiring environmental data to support America's economy

Creating and maintaining the nation's nautical charts remains a cornerstone of the NOAA Corps mission. Today, the agency supports nearly \$5.4 trillion in economic activity generated by U.S. ports each year. Ensuring safe, efficient navigation remains a central focus, and NOAA nautical charts contribute \$2-3.4 billion to the U.S. economy each year.



To Rear Admiral H. Arnold Karo, USCG-96 - with best wishes and great appreciation of the assistance of the U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey in making possible the above scene. -C.W. Nimitz, Fleet Admiral, U.S. Navy.

"To Rear Admiral H. Arnold Karo, USCG&S - with best wishes and great appreciation of the assistance of the U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey in making possible the above scene. -C.W. Nimitz, Fleet Admiral, U.S. Navy"



NOAA Ship *Rainier* returns to homeport in Newport, Oregon after spending several months on mission in the Pacific. Credit: NOAA Marine and Aviation Operations/LCDR Terril Efirid

Modern cargo ships operate on increasingly narrow margins of error to navigate safely through ports and waterways, down to inches. Add to that a seafloor that is constantly changing due to storms, currents, and infrastructure projects. Yet 44% of U.S. waters are not mapped to modern standards.

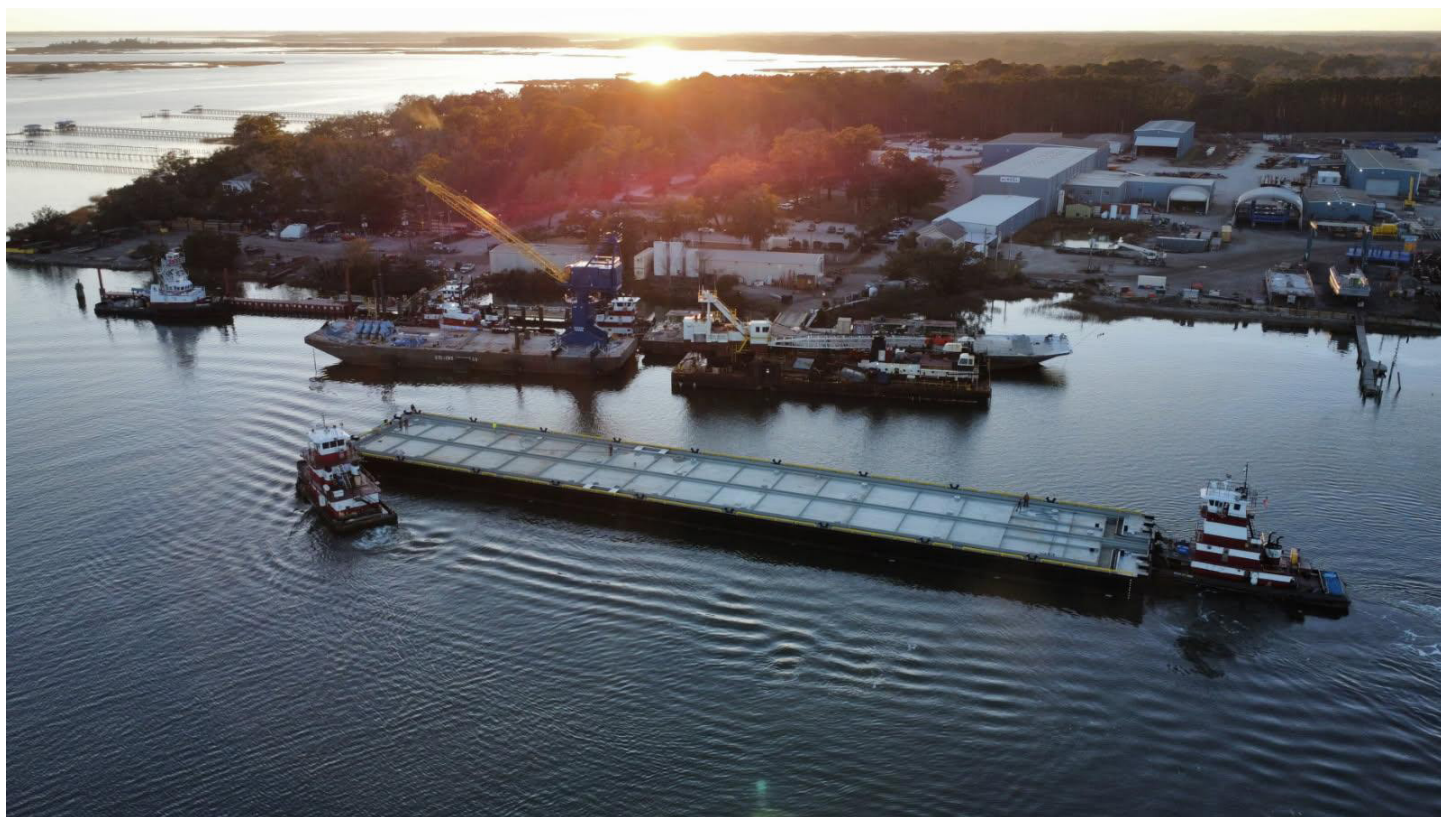
A NOAA-led federal task force calls for U.S. waters to be fully mapped by 2040, as part of the Seabed 2030 project. NOAA Corps officers, primarily working from NOAA's fleet of research vessels, map the ocean throughout the year. This summer, a focused effort is underway in the Great Lakes, including in Western Lake Erie, one of the shallowest areas in the Great Lakes. Despite being a highly trafficked area by commercial and recreational vessels, it has not been surveyed since the 1940s.

Enabling safe maritime commerce is not the only way that NOAA data supports the country's Blue Economy — goods and services dependent on the ocean and coastal waters. In 2023, U.S. commercial and recreational fisheries generated \$319 billion in sales and supported 2.1 million jobs. NOAA Corps officers and crew on our fisheries research vessels support collecting data that facilitates science-based conservation and management for sustainable

fisheries and aquaculture, marine mammals, endangered species, and their habitats.

The work of NOAA Corps officers is not just on the water. NOAA's Hurricane Hunter aircraft are integral to saving lives and property during tropical storms. NOAA's Hurricane Hunter aircraft collect data that improves hurricane track and intensity forecasts by as much as 20%. Better forecasts mean people and communities save money on storm preparation and potential evacuations. Outside of hurricane season, NOAA aircraft are tasked with collecting data to better understand and forecast atmospheric rivers, survey marine mammal populations, map the country's changing coastline, and monitor snow and water levels.

Uncrewed systems are increasingly being used as data collection tools. Integrating them into more traditional operations can build capacity during data collection, operating for longer periods, and in hard-to-reach locations. They are also being used as force multipliers, collecting complementary data. For example, NOAA's Lockheed Orion WP-3Ds have been operating for 50 years, but last hurricane season was the first time NOAA sent an uncrewed marine system into a hurricane from the water.



A state-of-the-art floating pier was successfully launched and precisely positioned at NOAA's facility in Charleston, South Carolina. This marked a significant milestone in NOAA's investment in mission-ready maritime infrastructure.

Tomorrow: People, platforms & missions, performance

NOAA Marine and Aviation Operations has historically operated as a lean and high-performing team. We continue to be mission-focused and dedicated to service excellence in both operational and shoreside activities. We are committed to strategic staffing for the NOAA Corps, professional mariners, and civilian shoreside complements. We are focused on providing challenging assignments, career progression pathways, critical training, and development to build professional and technical competence, and on fostering a culture of safety and respect.

Our people are key to our success. Reliably meeting NOAA's science missions also requires functional and innovative platforms—vessels, aircraft, and uncrewed systems. NOAA is undergoing the most significant modernization of ships, aircraft, and uncrewed systems in its history.

In the next two years, we anticipate adding a new oceanographic research vessel and an aircraft to the fleet. Currently, four vessels

are under construction for NOAA: *Oceanographer* (anticipated in 2027) and *Discoverer* (2028) are oceanographic vessels, and *Surveyor* (2028) and *Navigator* (2029) will support the agency's charting and mapping mission. These vessels are being built specifically for NOAA's missions and incorporate cutting-edge technology. *Surveyor* and *Navigator* are being built from the keel up to incorporate uncrewed systems, including a hangar bay, space for command and control, and infrastructure to maintain and service the uncrewed systems.

NOAA awarded a contract in 2019 to Gulfstream Aerospace Corp. for the purchase of a new Gulfstream G550 aircraft with an option to procure a second. The first of two G550s is expected to join the fleet in early 2027. The pair of G550s will replace NOAA's existing Gulfstream IV-SP high-altitude jet, which has flown above and around hurricanes to support accurate track and intensity forecasts since 1996. The two jets will be the most advanced scientific aircraft in the world, delivering missions and projects that support NOAA's operations and research, and are expected to do so for the


next 30 years. NOAA also awarded a contract in 2024 to build a NOAA-specific C-130J Super Hercules, which will eventually replace the two P-3s.

NOAA is also building waterfront facilities that support marine operations. In recent years, NOAA Marine and Aviation Operations has completed construction on a port facility in Ketchikan, Alaska. Two other facilities are nearing completion—a pier facility in Charleston, South Carolina, and a new marine operations center in Newport, Rhode Island.

The longevity of the NOAA Corps depends on adapting traditional agency missions and incorporating our expertise into the country's current needs and priorities. NOAA is investing in research that supports sustainable deep-sea mining practices and helps partners better understand their marine environments. This year, NOAA Ship Rainier is surveying areas of the Pacific that have never been mapped to modern standards to help identify critical mineral deposits and update nautical charts. NOAA Ship Okeanos

Explorer will map, explore, and characterize the deep waters of the Cook Islands in partnership with the Cook Islands Seabed Minerals Authority.

Investing in emerging technology can make us more efficient and increase the reliability of the storm data we collect. Better forecasts mean better community preparedness, which means saving money—and more importantly, lives and property.

Because of the unique skill sets and expertise of NOAA Corps officers and OMAO staff, we are often called upon to help when disaster strikes. It also means anticipating solutions for potential challenges—using our ocean mapping experience in the Arctic as navigable waters increase, supporting other branches of service in collecting environmental data to make informed decisions, and maximizing the return on investment for the nation. I am very proud to serve beside the talented NOAA Corps officers and team, leading, supporting, and delivering NOAA's missions of service, science, and stewardship. 



Rear Adm. Chad M. Cary serves as the 20th director of NOAA Commissioned Officer Corps and assistant administrator for NOAA's Office of Marine and Aviation Operations (OMAO).

In addition to leading the NOAA Corps — one of the nation's eight uniformed services — Rear Adm. 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-dollar 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 as deputy director for operations of NOAA Marine and Aviation Operations. In that capacity, he oversaw the day-to-day operations of marine, aviation, and uncrewed systems operations, as well as the office's health and cyber services.

Rear Adm. 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 NOAA Fisheries, National Weather Service, and NOAA headquarters.

Rear Adm. 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.

He is accompanied on this adventure by his wife, Dayna, and their three children.



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Strengthening the shield: ROA, UPORFA, and the future of the Citizen Soldier

By Dr. Irene Zoppi, Brig. Gen. USA (Ret)

In an era of shifting global security landscapes, the role of the military reservist has never been more critical. The Western Hemisphere stands as a unique bastion of shared democratic values and collective security, but that strength does not sustain itself. It is built and reinforced through deliberate cooperation, and at the center of that effort sits the partnership between the Reserve Officers Association (ROA) and the Unión Panamericana de Oficiales de Reserva de las Fuerzas Armadas (UPORFA). Together, they form a pan-American network that connects citizen-soldiers across North, Central, and South America and turns that connection into real capability.

UPORFA serves as a vital bridge between nations, fostering cooperation, democratic values, and the professional integration of reserve forces across the hemisphere. This is not a passive forum. It functions as an engine for interoperability. By bringing together reserve officers from across the Americas, it ensures that citizen-soldiers are not treated as a secondary force, but as a modernized, highly capable component of national defense. ROA, as the U.S. representative to UPORFA, extends its mission beyond domestic advocacy to this broader hemispheric framework, ensuring American reservists remain connected to a broader operational and professional ecosystem.

The strategic importance of this relationship sits in plain view. The Western Hemisphere is more than geography. It is an interconnected system of economies, cultures, and security interests that directly impact U.S. prosperity and stability. ROA's mission to support America's Reserve and Guard components extends through UPORFA into democratic nations from Canada to Chile and across the Caribbean. That reach strengthens collective defense, improves disaster response, and enhances efforts to counter narcotics trafficking and other transnational threats. Reservists bring flexibility, civilian-acquired expertise, and local understanding that active forces alone cannot replicate. When aligned across nations, that capability multiplies.

ROA's legacy, defined by a century of service to America, reinforces this effort through advocacy in Congress and engagement with the Department of Defense. That advocacy ensures policies match the reality of how reserve forces operate today. At the same time, UPORFA builds the relationships and shared understanding that make those policies executable across borders. The result is a system in which strategy, policy, and operational capability reinforce one another rather than competing for attention.

The Citizen Soldier model sits at the core of this system. ROA members and their UPORFA counterparts embody the "twice the



UPORFA in Lima, Peru, 2024 (Photo courtesy Dr. Zoppi)

citizens" concept, maintaining civilian careers while serving in uniform. That dual role strengthens the bond between the military and the society it serves. It embeds democratic principles directly into the force and reinforces the requirement that militaries remain subordinate to elected leadership. UPORFA expands that effect across the hemisphere by disseminating knowledge on reserve development, training, and professional networking. It allows reservists to share skills across borders, build trust, and return to their home units more capable than when they left.

The impact shows up in three areas that matter. Security cooperation improves as nations develop the ability to operate together during humanitarian crises and regional contingencies. Democratic stability strengthens as the principle of civilian control remains embedded across partner nations. Professional development accelerates as training and best practices spread across domains ranging from tactical medicine to cybersecurity. Each of these outcomes contributes directly to readiness.

That trajectory continues with the XXVI UPORFA International Congress, scheduled for September 2 to 5, 2026, in Buenos Aires, Argentina. This event places a deliberate focus on multi-domain operations and the integration of reserve forces into that fight. The modern battlefield does not operate in isolated domains. Land, sea, air, and digital environments function as a single system. Reserve

forces must integrate into that system without delay, and this Congress addresses that requirement directly.


The gathering will bring together senior military leaders, academic experts, and reservists to confront the realities of modern warfare. Discussions will center on current capabilities, future challenges, and the structural adjustments required to make reserve forces immediately usable in complex operations. The inclusion of a Tactical Emergency Casualty Care course underscores the event's practical nature. Training that saves lives in high-risk environments represents a baseline requirement, not a niche skill set.

Participation in this congress delivers clear value. It builds professional networks that extend across the hemisphere. It exposes participants to emerging technologies, including the integration of artificial intelligence into reserve operations. It provides access to high-level certification opportunities rarely available in a single venue. Most importantly, it strengthens the collective capacity of the reserve force by aligning perspectives and capabilities across nations.

ROA's role in this effort connects its members directly to these opportunities. Membership does more than support advocacy.

It places individuals within a network spanning the hemisphere and provides access to the relationships, training, and knowledge required to operate effectively in today's environment. The connection between ROA and UPORFA ensures that American reservists do not operate in isolation but as part of a broader, integrated force.

The event will take place in Buenos Aires from September 2–5, 2026, with registration closing ahead of the event window. Registration for the congress is open at <https://roa.org/event/uporfa2026/>. This is not a passive event. It is a working forum where relationships are built, ideas are tested, and capability is strengthened.

A single nation or a single component will not write the future of defense in the Western Hemisphere. It will be shaped by networks of capable, connected Citizen Soldiers who understand both their national responsibilities and their role in a larger system. ROA and UPORFA provide the structure to make that possible. The responsibility now sits with those who serve to engage, contribute, and strengthen that system before the next crisis demands it. 



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ROA expands leadership role in NATO advocacy reserve organizations

By Lt. Col. Peter Powell Jr., U.S. CIOR Delegation Assistant Secretary General

The Reserve Organization of America (ROA) is strengthening its leadership and influence within the Interallied Confederation of Reserve Officers, commonly known by its French acronym (CIOR) (Confédération Interalliée des Officiers de Réserve), by reinforcing the United States' commitment to North Atlantic Treaty Organizing's (NATO) reserve community and advancing the readiness, interoperability, and professional development of American reservists on the international stage.

As the official U.S.-designated member association in CIOR, ROA represents reservists from all branches of the U.S. Armed Forces. Through its active participation, ROA ensures that American reserve perspectives, operational experience, and policy priorities are fully integrated into CIOR's multinational work.

Founded in 1948, CIOR is the world's largest organization representing military reservists, comprising 34 NATO and partner nations and approximately one million reservists throughout the Alliance. It is designated in the new NATO Military Policy as an Advocacy Reserve Organization (ARO), along with the Interallied Confederation of Reserve Medical Officers (CIOMR) and the Interallied Confederation of Reserve Non-commissioned Officers (CISOR). ROA serves as the United States' voice within CIOR, and its engagement ensures that American reservists remain connected to global best practices, aligned with NATO priorities, and prepared to operate seamlessly alongside our allies. The United States is not currently a full member of CISOR, but in March 2026, ROA engaged the CISOR Secretary General to begin the process of full membership. As of April 2026, ROA is awaiting formal endorsement of the move from our Reserve friends in the Pentagon; our Non-commissioned officers are motivated and ready to learn and train with their Alliance counterparts.

ROA delegates play a central role across CIOR's specialized committees, which address critical issues such as mobilization, strategic communication, civil military cooperation, legal protections for reservists, and the evolving demands of modern defense. ROA members contribute expertise to CIOR's Defense Attitudes and Security Issues Committee (DEFSEC), Civil Military Cooperation Committee (CIMIC), Strategic Communication Committee

(STRATCOM), Legal Committee, and the Young Reserve Officers Committee (YRO), among others. Their participation helps shape NATO's understanding of reserve capabilities and informs policy discussions at the highest levels.

There are two primary CIOR meetings held each year, which feature informative presentations aligned with the theme selected by the CIOR Presidency, while also providing time for the CIOR committees to meet and conduct their work in person. The Summer Congress is held in conjunction with CIOMR and CISOR, usually in late July/early August. In 2025, the Summer Congress was held in Madrid, Spain, while in 2026 it will be held in Bucharest, Romania.

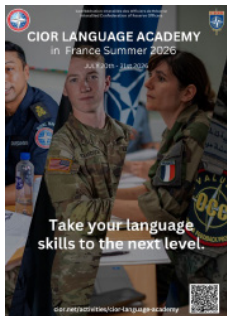
The Winter Meeting is normally held in late January at NATO Headquarters in Brussels, Belgium, however, due to the new NATO Policy on Reserves, which emphasizes close cooperation between CIOR/CIOMR/CISOR and the NATO Committee on Reserves (NCR), it was decided at the Summer Congress in Madrid that the Winter Meeting would be held in Norfolk, VA in January 2026 in conjunction with NCR. Within a very short lead-time, several ROA members from both CIOR and CIOMR played key roles in successfully leading the planning and execution of a very successful Winter Meeting featuring visits to NATO Allied Command Transformation (ACT), a ship tour of the USS Arlington, and numerous high profile speakers, including the Chief of the Air Force Reserve, the Chief of Canadian Reserve, and the Deputy Supreme Allied Commander Transformation.

One of the most visible contributions of the U.S. Reserve Components is its support for U.S. participation in the CIOR Military Competition (MILCOMP). This internationally recognized military pentathlon tests marksmanship, endurance, navigation, and core infantry skills, with a battlefield medical exercise and Law of War test. Each year, U.S. teams compete alongside more than 250 reservists from across the Alliance. The three day event includes pistol and rifle shooting, a demanding land obstacle course, a water obstacle course, and a 12–14 km orienteering challenge with additional military tasks. MILCOMP strengthens U.S. interoperability with NATO partners and showcases the professionalism and resilience of American reservists.

Participants in the CIOR military competition

Beyond competition, ROA supports U.S. involvement in CIOR's professional development programs, including the CIOR Language Academy (CLA), which provides intensive English and French language training. CLA is an established training program that brings together reservists and active-duty personnel from across NATO and partner nations in a focused, multinational learning environment. Its core purpose is to enhance English and French language proficiency within a military context, aligned with NATO STANAG standards, while simultaneously strengthening the foundations for effective cooperation in international settings. Combining classroom instruction with practical, scenario-based training, participants develop the linguistic capabilities required for staff work, briefings, and professional military communication in multinational headquarters and operational

environments. Particular emphasis is placed on applying language skills in realistic contexts, enabling attendees to communicate clearly, precisely, and confidently under conditions that reflect actual NATO procedures and dynamics. In 2026, the CIOR Language Academy will take place from 19 July to 1 August at the French Air Force Academy (École de l'air et de l'espace) in Salon-de-Provence, France. The two-week course is open to reservists and active-duty personnel of all ranks and services, offering training in English or French up to STANAG level 3333 within a fully immersive, international environment.



COL (FRA) Stanislas de Magnienville, CLA director addresses the last CLA graduating class

CIOR's Young Reserve Officers (YRO) Program develops the next generation of multinational reserve leaders. YROW has been prioritized as the most important deliverable of CIOR, and the workshop course development has been a focus to ensure a succession of reservists who can cooperate and participate in NATO operations.

YROW is a professional development program conducted concurrently with the annual CIOR Summer Congress. This week-long workshop is designed to be a junior reserve officer's first exposure to a multi-national environment and to colleagues from NATO and PfP nations. Junior reserve officers up to the rank of OF-2: Captain (Army/Air Force) or Lieutenant (Navy) work together for a week in an intense international setting. It constitutes a unique professional development opportunity for approximately 60 junior reserve officers annually.

The Interallied Confederation of Medical Reserve Officers (CIOMR) is an umbrella organization that unites the national associations of multi-professional reserve medical services of the NATO



member states and their affiliates. Biannual in-person meetings have increased significantly in recent years, with the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 revitalizing interest in CIOMR, initially chartered after WWII, with ROA as the original and continued sponsor, to drive interoperability for U.S. Forces. The organization recently celebrated 75 years of cooperation across the alliance among medical reserve officers, and the relevance and impact of CIOMR is as high as it's ever been. Any NATO alliance conflict will be inherently multinational, and any combat trauma system must be multinational as well. Most medical forces in NATO nations are

reserve, so CIOMR provides the ideal forum for the medical community to prepare for alliance combat medical support. CIOMR is an official observer of the NATO Medical Committee (COMEDS) and provides support to several military medicine committees through reserve talent with deep military and civilian expertise. CIOMR recently introduced the developmental Junior Medical Reserve Officer Workshop (JMROW). This program has become the “jewel in the crown” for CIOMR, and for the U.S., JMROW is the only joint, combined reserve medical training opportunity for junior officers. In 2026, at the summer Congress in Bucharest, Romania, CIOMR will deliver the inaugural Reserve Officers’ Workshop (ROW). ROW is a mid-career course intended to build on previous NATO experience and training. This more advanced course will include a wargame delivered by the U.S. Army War College, negotiation training, NATO strategic foresight analysis, executive communication training, and more. In the future, ROW

will be a combined program with CIOR. Collaboration between CIOR and CIOMR, with the support of ROA leadership, enabled the first major gathering of reserve NATO leaders in the U.S. at the Mid-Winter meeting in Norfolk, VA, in January, 2026. Over 250 senior reserve leaders from across the alliance, including NATO Committee on Reserves (NCR) delegates, shared lessons learned from the numerous reserve modernization efforts ongoing in many NATO nations.

Through its sustained engagement, ROA enhances the United States’ influence in NATO reserve affairs, strengthens transatlantic cooperation, and reinforces the essential role of American reservists in collective defense. For more information on ROA International Programs and CIOR, go to: <https://roa.org/internationalprograms/> and for the summer CIOR/CIOMR/CISOR Summer Congress information:

<https://roa.org/event/cior-ciomr-cisor-summer-congress/> 

Capt. Robert H. Carmack, USCGR (Ret.) is the U.S. CIOR Vice President and Head of Delegation. He retired from the U.S. Coast Guard Reserve in 2013 after a 30 years career and served as ROA National President from 2021-2023.

Lt. Col. Peter Powell Jr., USA is the U.S. CIOR Delegation Assistant Secretary General.

Col. Pete Olsen is the elected VP (U.S.) and International VP Transformation for the Interallied Confederation of Medical Reserve Officers (CIOMR). He is assigned to Headquarters Department of the Army as the Director, Health Affairs, in the Office of the Chief of Army Reserve. Pete has over 25 years of experience in operational military medicine, policy, resourcing, and strategy in both the Regular Army and the USAR including three deployments to Afghanistan and Iraq.

1st Lt. Leon Bender, German Army Reserves, has served for 10 years in the Airborne Ranger Regiment in southern Germany. In his civilian career, he works within the defense AI sector as a Business Development Manager at 21strategies, where he focuses on advancing the effective implementation of artificial intelligence within the armed forces.

Col. Steve Patarcity, USAR (Ret.), retired from uniformed service in 2010 after 35 years in both the active Army and Army Reserve, which included military police, armor, force development and strategy assignments in the U.S., Kuwait and Iraq. As an Army civilian, his last position in the Department of Defense was International Programs Lead for the Office of the Chief of Army Reserve at the Pentagon from 2010 to 2025.

Trust at work: why it matters

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

Trust at work is not just a feel-good idea. It's evident in performance numbers, turnover rates, and employee morale. Army Doctrine Publication 6-22 says, "trust builds over time through mutual respect, shared understanding, and common experiences. Communication contributes to trust by keeping others informed, establishing expectations, providing feedback, and developing commitment."

What trust means at work

In plain terms, trust is choosing to rely on someone else when there is something at stake. Organizational scholars such as Roger Mayer describe it as a willingness to be vulnerable to another person based on what you believe about that person's ability, integrity, and benevolence, a definition that has shaped much of the later research on workplace trust. Put differently, trust grows when you think someone can do the job, will be honest, and actually cares about doing right by others. You see it when an employee shares bad news with a supervisor, when a squad follows an order into danger, or when a colleague admits a mistake and expects a fair hearing.

Many practitioners talk about trust as having two main sides. One side is about competence: Do you believe the person knows what they are doing and can deliver? The other side is about character: Do you believe they will act honestly and keep others' interests in mind, not just their own? Research shows that people pay attention to both who you are and what you do when deciding whether to trust you.

In workplaces where trust is high, employees tend to be more engaged, take fewer unnecessary sick days, and stay longer, according to reports from professional groups such as the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology and articles in MIT Sloan Management Review. They speak up with ideas, raise concerns earlier, and put in extra effort when it counts. In low-trust environments, studies show that communication declines, people play it safe, and organizations pay the price through higher turnover, more errors, and stalled initiatives. Some management writers describe high-trust cultures as moving "at the speed of trust," with less friction and bureaucracy, while low-trust cultures pay a hidden "trust tax" in the form of delays, extra controls, and constant second-guessing.

How the military talks about trust

Military leaders do not treat trust as optional. The Army's core leadership doctrine (ADP 6-22, Army Leadership) calls mutual trust a foundation of command and says commanders must build

cohesive teams through mutual trust if they want units that can adapt quickly and operate with disciplined initiative. From ADP 6-22, "trust encompasses reliance upon others, confidence in their abilities, and consistency in behavior." Other essays emphasize that leaders build this trust by being honest, competent, and consistent, especially under stress. The core idea is simple: When Soldiers trust their leaders and one another, they will carry out intent even as conditions change.

Trust runs in several directions. Subordinates have to trust that leaders will use them well, tell them the truth, and protect them from unnecessary harm. Leaders have to trust that subordinates will execute orders, report honestly, and uphold standards even when no one is watching. Peers need to trust that teammates will do their jobs and not leave others exposed when any of these links break; cohesion and mission effectiveness suffer.

When you don't trust your boss but can't leave

Almost everyone will work for a boss they don't fully trust at some point. First, get specific. Instead of telling yourself, "I just don't trust them," list the specific actions that concern you. Next, reduce unnecessary risk. Confirm key instructions in email or meeting notes, avoid overpromising, and give realistic estimates you can keep. Until you have better options, focus on professionalism, performance, and your reputation with others.

How leaders can build trust

Leaders at every level, from squad leaders and platoon sergeants to department heads and CEOs, build or damage trust through their daily choices. Research on authentic leadership finds that people trust leaders who are consistent, self-aware, and open about their values and decisions. Other leadership studies show that trust grows when people see both solid character and solid competence—leaders who try to do the right thing and deliver results.

Consistency starts with matching words and actions. Army doctrine and business case studies alike stress basics: show up on time, enforce standards fairly, and avoid public favoritism. When you make a promise, follow through; when you can't, say so and explain why. Over time, people notice whether your behavior lines up with your stated intent and values, and their trust rises or falls accordingly.

Competence is important. In the field or in the office, people watch whether leaders understand the work and prepare for it. Leaders don't have to be the smartest person in the room, but they

do need to know enough to ask good questions, set clear priorities, and make informed calls. Research suggests that admitting what you don't know and seeking expert input actually strengthens trust, because it shows humility and focus on the mission rather than ego.

Candid communication ties it together. Articles in MIT Sloan and other management journals show that employees respond better when leaders share the “why” behind decisions, acknowledge tradeoffs, and tell hard truths early. It's not always possible to share every detail, especially in sensitive operations or confidential deals, but even a simple “Here's what I can tell you, and here's what I can't,” does more for trust than silence or spin.

Respect shapes how this communication lands. Studies of trust and workplace culture show that leaders build respect by listening, inviting dissenting views, and handling conflict without humiliation. The Army's leadership doctrine links mutual respect and trust directly to a leader's ability to influence subordinates and maintain effective command and control.

Finally, leaders build trust by empowering their people. That means pushing decisions down to the lowest level that can responsibly make them, providing the resources needed, and then stepping back. Leadership research finds that when people experience real autonomy and see that initiative is rewarded rather than punished, their trust and performance rise together. In practice, for a company or a battalion, that can mean issuing a clear commander's intent or strategic direction and then giving teams room to execute, learn, and adjust.

How co-workers can build trust

Trust is not only a leadership issue. Co-workers often determine whether a workplace feels safe and collaborative or political and guarded. Surveys on workplace trust show that employees quickly judge peers based on reliability, openness, and whether they act for the team or mainly for themselves.

The basics are straightforward. Do what you say you will do, meet your deadlines, or give early warning if you can't, show up prepared, and own your mistakes without excuses. These small acts add up to a reputation that colleagues talk about when you're not in the room.

Communication matters here, too. High-trust workplaces are marked by colleagues who keep each other in the loop, surface

issues early, and speak candidly without taking cheap shots. When you ask for input, acknowledge others' expertise, or accept feedback without getting defensive, you make it safer for others to rely on you. Over time, those informal networks of peer trust often become the real backbone of resilience, especially if formal leadership falls short.

Wrapping up

The Army R2 Performance Center puts it well – “Trust is the foundation of any successful organization. In the Army, it is essential for mission success, unit cohesion, and effective leadership. A strong culture of trust ensures that Soldiers operate with integrity, communicate openly, and hold one another accountable to high standards. When properly cultivated, it leads to increased morale, operational efficiency, and unit effectiveness.” Make building trust an explicit goal in all aspects of your life.


Further reading:

ADP 6-22, Army Leadership — Army doctrine on leadership, including the broader leadership foundation that supports trust, cohesion, and mission execution. https://www.ciu.edu/armyrotc/docs/adp6_22.pdf

Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman (1995), An Integrative Model of Organizational Trust. A scholarly article on trust in organizations. https://makinggood.ac.nz/media/1270/mayeretal_1995_organizationaltrust.pdf

Ready & Resilient. Ready and Resilient is the Army's strategy for strengthening individual and unit personal readiness and fostering a culture of trust. R2 provides training and resources to the Army Family to enhance resilience and optimize performance. <https://www.armyresilience.army.mil/ard/R2-home.html>

About SARCA

SARCA was organized in 1949 to serve as the professional association of Army Reserve senior leaders. Through the years, SARCA has played an important role advocating for the Army Reserve, serving as a key resource for the Chief of the Army Reserve, and mentoring future general officers. You can contact SARCA at sarcamembership@gmail.com 

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