



The Bugle

Central Virginia Chapter



Volume 54, Issue 5



May 2026

MOAA, including the Central Virginia Chapter, is a nonprofit nonpartisan veterans' association dedicated to maintaining a strong national defense and to preserving the earned entitlements of members of the uniformed services and their families and survivors. Membership is open to those who hold or have ever held a warrant or commission in any component of the U.S. Army, USMC, USN, USAF, USCG, USPHS, USSF or NOAA and their surviving spouse.

Michael Balazs: “What Ukraine has taught us about the future of war”

Dr. Michael A. Balazs served as the Technology Integrator (TI) for MITRE's Joint Staff, Combatant Commands, and Defense Intelligence programs. In this role, he coordinated research needs and technology transition between these programs and its sponsors. He co-coordinated a portfolio of small Unmanned Aerial System programs ranging from the commercial off-the-shelf Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) work program to the MITRE Challenge for Countering Unauthorized Aerial Systems. He presented a summary of lessons-learned from the drone warfare occurring between Ukraine and Russia and how both countries continue to adapt as the world watches.

Among the greatest lessons is that Ukraine is using inexpensive platforms that can be fabricated cheaply, quickly, and in huge numbers but remain fully adaptive, evolving as the nature of combat does. The drones are built with the expectation *that they will be lost – not preserved*, thereby fostering more aggressive and high risk tactics. Swarms of platforms provide persistent ISR and, “if a target can be seen, it can be engaged.” This approach contrasts with the US predilection for fewer and very expensive, highly complex aerial platforms, that drain away millions of dollars if destroyed and will take a very long time to replace.



(Above) Guest Speaker Dr. Michael Balazs and CVC MOAA member Larry Bouterie discuss their time together as former employees of MITRE

(Below) Michael provided ample time for attendees to ask questions regarding his highly relevant topic.





2026

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Contact Us: Central Virginia Chapter MOAA
P.O. Box 6455
Charlottesville, VA 22906-6455

Email: info@cvmoaa.org

Chapter Webpage: cvmoaa.org

The Bugle

2025 Col Marvin J. Harris 5-Star
Communications Award Winner

Editor: Brion C. Smith

Contributors:

John Warnecke – Printing & Distribution

Bugle Newsletter: <https://cvmoaa.org/Newsletter>



**Our May Speaker will be
Colonel Cary D. Mittelmark
Commander and Professor of
Air Science
UVA Air Force ROTC Detachment 890**



Colonel Cary Mittelmark took command of the UVA Air Force ROTC operations in August 2025 and is a product of ROTC himself. He joined ROTC while studying electrical engineering at the University of Portland in Oregon and opted for a military career. He has now been in the Air Force for 24 years and says "I've enjoyed every minute of it. My own ROTC instructors had a profound impact on my journey. That's one of the reasons I wanted this job in Charlottesville. UVA's reputation speaks for itself. Academic excellence, a student experience which centers on ethics and responsibility, and a commitment to creating public servants which I think is both incredibly important and pretty unique. It's a world-class institution and an ideal place to create future officers for the Air and Space Forces."

Community Calendar

Wednesday, 6 May at 1300 at the Club at Glenmore:
CVC MOAA Board of Directors Meeting (Optional lunch at 12:00 noon)

Thursday, 28 May: CVC MOAA Luncheon at The Club at Glenmore, Social hour starts at 11:00 and seating at 12:00 noon. Lunch will be followed by a presentation by Colonel Cary Mittelmark (Reservation form on page 9).

Join MOAA's Central Virginia Chapter

To learn more about the nationally recognized
Central Virginia Chapter
contact



**Membership Director
Carolyn Still**

Email: carolynmassie@hotmail.com

Phone: 540-221-0015



MOAA NATIONAL CORNER: Troops Would Get Up to 7% Pay Raise Under Proposed Defense Budget

April 08, 2026 (Originally appeared in *Military Times*)



(The digital version of this document contains active hyperlinks to primary sources)

The White House is requesting a pay raise for lower-ranked enlisted service members in its fiscal 2027 budget. In the [proposed budget](#) for the Department of Defense, released April 3, all troops ranked E-5 and below would receive a pay raise of 7%. The budget also allots 6% pay bumps for military personnel ranked E-6 and O-3, as well as 5% raises for those O-4 and above.

“The Administration recognizes the importance of America’s warfighters and their families,” the budget request reads. Junior enlisted service members typically serve in pay grades E-1 to E-4 for their first enlistment term, which usually lasts four years. Mid-level noncommissioned officers include those E-5 to E-7, but the proposed budget only lists those ranked E-5 and E-6 to receive pay boosts. Across the military, troops received a [3.8% pay increase](#) in fiscal 2026. Traditionally, the annual pay raise for troops ranges from roughly 3% to 5%. But in 2025, junior enlisted service members saw a large [14.5% pay hike](#), adding between \$3,000 to \$6,000 to their basic pay. Prior to that increase, the annual base pay for junior enlisted service members could be less than \$30,000, but with the raise, it brings the base pay to around that figure before housing stipends and other pay incentives.

As of September 2025, there are around 540,000 active-duty junior enlisted service members E-4 and below across the branches, making up 50% of the enlisted military, according to a [2026 Congress Defense Primer](#). There were approximately 378,000 personnel ranked E-5 and E-6 across the military in September 2025, per Congress’ report. “This enduring investment, far above the standard annual military pay raise, builds on the President’s recruiting and retention success, by doubling down on the Administration’s goal to restore America’s fighting force,” the proposal says.

The White House proposed the fiscal 2027 budget on April 3, outlining the Trump administration’s requests to Congress for federal spending beginning on Oct. 1, 2026. President Donald Trump is requesting \$1.5 trillion for the Defense Department in fiscal 2027, a 44% increase from the already historic amount of nearly \$1 trillion requested in fiscal 2026, per the proposal. The budget allocates \$1.1 trillion in “base discretionary budget authority” for the DOD, the proposal says.

Before the upcoming fiscal year, presidents are required to submit their budget recommendations no later than the first Monday in February, but usually that deadline is missed. Congress then works to pass its own budget resolution after hearings. That can prove to be a challenge, as past stalemates in federal funding negotiations have led to government shutdowns. If approved, the new budget, including the pay raises for lower-ranked service members, would begin Jan. 1, 2027.

Remember: This and previous editions of The Bugle are available at
<https://cvmoaa.org/Newsletter>

Legislative Review...



The Chapter's Legislative Committee
is chaired by
Dan Moy

For up-to-date information about legislative issues that
affect you, go to the MOAA website
<http://www.moaa.org/takeaction>

This month's report provided by John Down, VCOC JLC Representative

1. **The 2026 General Assembly has ended**, and a special session now follows to address the budget. Brief final status of the initiatives follows:

a. **JLC 2026-01** Secure the Virginia Military Survivors & Dependents Education Program (VMSDEP). Sponsored by the Wounded Warrior Project. Objective: to save and secure the program indefinitely. No Chief Patron in House or Senate; no Bill. Seeking to confirm program is funded for next two fiscal years at about \$85M/year.

b. **JLC 2026-02** Stop Unscrupulous Firms ("Claim Sharks") from Exploiting Veterans. Sponsored by the VFW; additional assistance from MOAA. HB1268 continued to the next session (2027) addresses what we are asking for. HB398/SB315 passed and signed by the Governor addresses (regulates) but does not prohibit claim sharks from operating in Virginia.

c. **JLC 2026-03** Veteran Suicide Death Information Access. Sponsored by the Air Force Sergeants Association. Seeks to ensure that suicide data can be used to identify and determine veterans most at risk. HB529 passed both chambers unanimously and bill signed by the Governor.

d. **JLC 2026-04** Veteran Textbook Support Grant. Sponsored by the Student Veterans of America. Initiative did not find support in either the House or Senate. Subsequently withdrawn to enable focus on VMSDEP. Initiative had requested \$11M per year.

e. **JLC 2026-05** Exempt Veterans Service Organizations (VSO's) from Limits on

Use of Proceeds from Charitable Gaming. Sponsored by the American Legion. HB1407 projected a General Fund impact of \$419K per year through FY2031. Bill was left in Committee on General Laws, e.g., bill failed.

f. **JLC 2026-06** Inclusion of USPHS and NOAA Retirees in Income Tax Exclusion. Sponsored by MOAA. Seeks to extend eligibility to these "Uniformed Services" for income tax exclusion currently offered to "Armed Forces/Services" up to \$40K of income. HB47 was left in the House Appropriations subcommittee and failed. SB148 was continued to 2027 session in Senate Finance and Appropriations Committee.

2. **Remarks made by the Commissioner**, Department of Veterans Services (DVS), John Maxwell, at the April 14th JLC Legislative Committee meeting.

a. **In reiteration of comments made by both Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs** Tim Williams and himself, Commissioner Maxwell

stated the Governor's "Three Pillars": Healthcare, Affordability, and Education. The implication is that JLC initiatives going forward should take that into account.

b. **There are "six lines of effort"** for military and their families, including veterans:

i. **Economic Stability** – Community Care

ii. **Access to Healthcare** – Behavior Health; the VA may be limited; reliance on local providers.

iii. **Homelessness and Housing** – pervasive for both singles and families

iv. **Digital Experience** – Virginia Veterans Network (VVN) -DVS needs to improve capacity to serve efficiently.

v. **Stability for Military Families**

vi. **Honoring the Legacy** of those who have served – veterans care centers, the War Memorial, and veterans cemeteries.

c. **The JLC needs to bring state senators and delegates into advocacy now.** Present our ideas, aim for a collaborative process. JLC acts as one voice.

- d. **We need to be aware:** Because of financial impacts on local governments, there is a growing resentment of veterans programs which may take away resources from other programs. (In evidence in Fairfax County – is the resentment pervasive in other localities in the state?)
 - e. **When looking to formulate initiatives for 2027,** focus on those for which there is not a significant budget impact, if at all. The sense that there will be limited funds to support initiatives with budgetary implications. For 2027, we should focus on near-term goals, then on 2028 and beyond.
 - f. **About half of veterans who leave active service in Virginia stay in Virginia.** For women, this is highest rate in the country.
 - g. **The Transition Assistance Program (TAP) is federally funded.** Building relationships with base and fort transition coordinators is desired to encourage more who are leaving active duty to stay and work in Virginia.
 - h. **The Commissioner maintains that VMSDEP remains a top priority.** (This was affirmed by the Secretary at the 1st Quarter JLC meeting held in March.)
3. In no particular order, **although VMSDEP was discussed first, here are the initiative ideas received prior to the April 14th meeting:**
- a. **VSMDEP Protection and Stabilization.** Committee meeting(s) to address. Wounded Warrior Project and JLC leadership currently on the committee. Focus will be on aligning with the Executive Branch. (Lead – Mike Flanagan)
 - b. **Include the USPHS and NOAA retirees in the income tax exclusion** up to \$40K of income. John Down/MOAA to work with Del. Reid to strategize approaches.
 - c. **Resubmit Banning of Claim Sharks from operating in Virginia.** VFW Rick Raskin as Lead, with support from John Down/MOAA and Monti Zimmerman/ROA.
- d. **Re-write the potential gaming legislation to protect 501(c)(19) VSO's** who provide charitable gaming. (Lead – Bill Aramony/American Legion and JLC Chair)
 - e. **A No or Low-Cost Pilot Study to address the Commonwealth's midlife healthcare gap for Women Veterans.** (Note that a Commission on Women's Health was established in 2025 by HB2617.) Sponsor: Nova Veterans Association/Angela McConnell.
 - f. **Reducing Transportation Barriers Statewide for Veterans accessing facilities for medical appointments.** A no or low-cost interagency workgroup to map current service capacity, identify barriers like cross-jurisdictional travel limits and lack of same-day access, then outline where a pilot program could be most impactful. Sponsor: Nova Veterans Association/Angela McConnell.
 - g. **To fully accept license requirements from other states for spouses of active duty service members moving into Virginia for all occupations requiring a license.** Transfer that license immediately to eliminate loss of income due to delays obtaining a new license in Virginia. Sponsor: Glenn Yarborough/AUSA and JLC Legislative Chair.
4. **We are to start working with state legislators right away using position support available. Next JLC Meeting is June 10th. We can accept new initiative ideas up to that date.**



Central Virginia Chapter of MOAA

State: VA

City: Charlottesville

CVC MOAA in the Community

(Below) From Right Clockwise: Chapter President John Warnecke joins the Fife and Drum contingent of the Army 3rd Division Old Guard for a photo at Monticello; the University of Virginia Rotunda in Charlottesville with its founder, Thomas Jefferson, in the foreground; and John Warnecke places the CVC MOAA Wreath on the grave of President Jefferson on 12 April



(Above) MOAA ROTC Leadership Award (l to r): Col (ret) Steven Hiss, Chapter ROTC Liaison, Midshipman Brogan Hurt, USMC (UVA), Cadet Coleson Herron, USAF (LU), Cadet Carter Hudson, USAF (UVA), Cadet Evan Hempe, USA (LU), Cadet John Catalano, USA (UVA)



(Above) MOAA Southside Legacy Scholarship (l to r): Col (ret) Steven Hiss, Chapter ROTC Liaison, Cadet Tyler Gray, USAF, Cadet Claire Toia, USSF, Midshipman Jacob Worthen, USN, Midshipman Peyton Dean, USMC, Cadet Hannah Dillon, USA

April Luncheon attendees gather to hear Michael Balazs and catch-up with each other at the Glenmore Clubhouse



Glenmore Staff, Enrique and Vicente



Drs Mike and son, Paul McKee



Drs Lucy Johnson and Carolyn Still



Eleanor Adams checks-in with the Shackelford Family



George Moore, Larry Bouterie and Bill Adams



Trish Sifka with Marilyn and Paul LeBrie

Surviving Spouse Corner: Strengthening Emotional Well-Being

By: Roy Yenchesky

The death of a military spouse reshapes emotional well-being in ways that reach far beyond grief itself. It is a loss that touches identity, daily rhythm, and the quiet sense of safety that comes from sharing life with someone who understood both the burdens and the pride of service.



For many, the brain responds to this kind of profound disruption with a mix of numbness, hypervigilance, and deep fatigue — natural reactions to a heart trying to make sense of a world suddenly changed. Yet within that upheaval, emotional well-being becomes not just a hope but a necessity: a steadying force that helps the mind process sorrow, rebuild resilience, and slowly rediscover moments of connection, purpose, and peace. This journey is neither quick nor linear, but it reflects the same courage and endurance that military families have always carried. Emotional well-being and brain health are deeply interconnected, shaping how we think, cope, and experience daily life. Strong emotional balance supports healthier brain function, while a well-nourished brain strengthens our ability to manage stress, build relationships, and maintain resilience. Research shows that chronic stress can harm key brain regions involved in emotional control, memory, and decision-making, including the prefrontal cortex, amygdala, and hippocampus. When these areas are disrupted, people might experience anxiety, irritability, or difficulty concentrating.

How Emotions Shape the Brain

Positive emotional states — such as purpose, connection, and calm — help regulate stress hormones and support cognitive performance. People who report higher emotional stability and life satisfaction tend to support stronger memory and decision-making abilities as they age. Conversely, chronic stress elevates cortisol, which can shrink the hippocampus and overactivate the amygdala, making emotional regulation more difficult and increasing vulnerability to depression or anxiety.

The Brain–Body Connection

The brain communicates constantly with the body through neural pathways and chemical messengers. Neurotransmitters like serotonin, dopamine, and norepinephrine influence mood, motivation, and focus. When these systems are imbalanced, emotional well-being can suffer. Physical factors such as sleep, inflammation, and fatigue also affect how the brain processes emotions, reinforcing the need for whole-body care.

Strengthening Emotional and Brain Health

Several habits support both emotional balance and neurological resilience:

Regular physical activity boosts serotonin and dopamine, improving mood and cognitive flexibility.

Quality sleep helps the brain detoxify and consolidate memories.

Social connection reduces stress responses and protects cognitive health.

Mindfulness and gratitude practices calm the nervous system and enhance emotional regulation.

Balanced nutrition, especially omega-3s and antioxidants, supports neural communication.

Together, these practices create a reinforcing cycle: A healthier brain supports stronger emotional well-being, and emotional well-being protects the brain.

Suggested reading: [Dial Down: Holistic Strategies to Move from Chaos to Calm](#) by Lt. Col. Raquel Durden, USA (Ret), a transformative guide offering simple, actionable wellness practices, interwoven with real-life stories.

LUNCHEON MEETING RESERVATION FORM
Thursday, 28 May 2026

11:00 a.m. Social Hour, 12:00 Noon Lunch
The Club at Glenmore

Guest Speaker: Colonel Cary D. Mittelmark,
Commander Air Force ROTC Detachment 890 (UVA)

Directions from Charlottesville: Route 250 East. One mile past Shadwell turn right into Glenmore. Turn right on Piper Way. If you are not a resident, please tell the gate guard that you are attending the MOAA luncheon. Proceed on Piper Way. The Club is on the right just past the tennis courts. Attire for men is suit/sport coat and tie or military uniform.



Menu Selections

Gazpacho

Choice of entrée:

A. Pan Roasted Flounder

or

B. Grilled Flank Steak

or

C. Eggplant Parmesan

Mediterranean Quinoa

Sautéed Squash and Zucchini

New York Cheesecake



Please Circle Entrée Selection

Member Name: _____ **A B C**

Guest Name(s): _____ **A B C**

_____ **A B C**

_____ **A B C**

Please make reservations for ____ @ \$35.00 each.

My current email address (if changed) is: _____

Please remit with check payable to CVC MOAA. Reservations must be received
NO LATER THAN Friday, 22 May 2026.

CVC MOAA
P.O. Box 6455
Charlottesville, VA 22906-6455

Due to mail uncertainties and a need to ensure a timely head count, please confirm your attendance numbers and meal selection with John Warnecke by 22 May 2026 via email (warnecke@comcast.net) or phone (434) 981-8554.



Central Virginia Chapter
P.O. Box 6455
Charlottesville, VA 22906-6455

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