



The Clarion

*The Military Officers Association of America
Heritage Hunt Chapter*



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April 2026

MOAA, including the Heritage Hunt 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, their families and survivors. Membership is open to those who hold or have ever held a warrant or commission in any component of the Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, Space Force, Coast Guard, PHS, NOAA, their surviving spouses and honorary members.

April Social

In addition to reporting on the event, this article includes material from the Virginia Department of Veterans Services Puller Veterans Care Center website (<https://www.dvs.virginia.gov/healthcare/veteran-skilled-nursing-facilities-state-veterans-homes/fauquier-county-puller-veterans-care-center#ad-image-0>) and the Center's Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/p/Puller-Veterans-Care-Center-61563063094182/>).

Thirty-nine chapter members, guests and visitors from the community gathered in the Heritage Hunt ballroom on the afternoon of Thursday, April 23, for a "coffee, tea and cookies social" and to learn more about the newly opened Puller Veterans Care Center at Vint Hill, Va.

We were honored to have Mary Tietjen, the director of admissions and marketing for the center, attend and introduce us to the center. In the spirit of "cut to the chase," her key messages were:

- The most important thing you can do is spread the word and encourage veterans to call for information.
- To volunteer your time for visits and other support, call (540) 680-5200 and ask for the Life Enrichment Department. Spending time with the residents is rewarding for them and for you!
- Prepare! Do your research! There is a waiting list for admission. If you are a veteran and foresee needing nursing care or know of a veteran needing care, start now to learn what's required to get care. It's not always a simple task and time can be of the essence. Due to our partnership with the VA, there are additional documents and forms to complete and the delay with them could mean a delay in care.
- Donations are welcome, however please be sure to call in and inquire about what items are needed at that time. PVCC is a large building, however we don't have a lot of storage space. We also want to make sure that what we are accepting, we can utilize with the residents.



See **April Social** on page 3.

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Vacant

The Clarion

**Bernie Ziegler, Editor
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Editor's Notes

We kick off this issue with a recap of a presentation about the newly-opened Puller Veterans Care Center on the grounds of the former Vint Hill Station.

Next up is an introduction to our newest chapter member. The article provides insights into what a full career in the National Guard might be like and what it might be like to serve as both an enlisted airman and a general officer.

As our need grows for personal affairs support, chapter director Pete Wright comes to the rescue with a recap of such support available to our members.

Finally, I include a reprint of a MOAA topical article of broad interest on the 2026 outlook for our uniformed services - Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, Air Force, Space Force, NOAA, PHS.

While we all enjoy the many benefits of MOAA membership, we also have an obligation to support MOAA's efforts on our behalf. The MOAA legislative action center is an extremely easy and convenient way to stay abreast of legislative issues and to participate in influencing the issues for our benefit. Take a moment to check it out at <http://takeaction.moaa.org/?5>.

This newsletter is distributed electronically to all chapter members. If you know of a member not receiving *The Clarion*, please contact the editor. This newsletter is also available electronically at <https://www.hhmoaa.org/newsletter>.

As always, please tell your eligible neighbors and friends about MOAA membership and either pass along the membership application at the end of this newsletter or encourage them to contact Mary Jo Howarth as shown here.

Join MOAA's Heritage Hunt Chapter

To learn more about the nationally recognized Heritage Hunt Chapter or how to join, see the last page of this newsletter or contact membership director Mary Jo Howarth, at 703-899-1582, or email her at mjhowarth4@comcast.net.

April Social from page 1

Mary has a Bachelor of Science degree from George Mason University in Health Administration and Policy. She has extensive experience in the health care industry, and her passion has been to ensure seniors have the care they need and deserve. It was her dream come true for employment at PVCC as much of her inspiration to serve veterans stems from having many family members that have served. This is especially true for her grandmother who served as a Navy nurse during WWII and lived to be almost 104. As a professional she has served nearly 15 years in giving care, marketing and sales, resident relations and as a supervisor all within senior care. Going on two years at PVCC in her current position she has been a key part of getting the Puller Center up and running.



The center is of unique design unlike traditional nursing homes. It consists of eight households, four of each on either side of the administration center. Each household consists of 16 single private (with bath) rooms and a shared living and dining area. The final landscaped area (a little larger than this photo

depicts) includes walking/nature paths. Future planning for the outdoor space is underway with many community volunteers and their donations.

The Center is named after three members of the Puller family. Lt. Gen. Lewis B. “Chesty” Puller, one of the most decorated Marines in history; his son, First Lt. Lewis B. Puller, Jr., severely injured in Vietnam but a William & Mary Law graduate who worked as an attorney for the Department of Veterans affairs and a Pulitzer Prize winner for his autobiography “Fortunate Son;” and his wife Linda T. “Toddy” Puller a graduate of Mary Washington College and a Virginia House delegate and Virginia senator who fought successfully for the creation of several veterans programs in Virginia. Her father was an Army officer.

Mary noted that the Center is a residential nursing facility that provides short-term rehabilitation, long-term nursing care and memory care. She added that the admission requirements are that the veteran must have been honorably discharged, a resident of Virginia or had entered service from Virginia and have a medical need for nursing home care. As the director of admissions, she said one of the factors she values highly is the safety of the veteran, some of them need a safer living environment and it has been gratifying seeing the veterans thrive at PVCC. Staffing ratio will be one nurse and two certified nursing assistants for every 16 residents.

The Center opened in December 2025 with two veterans and as of the end of April 2025 there will be 24 veterans including the first female veteran! Admissions will halt for the time being as the Center awaits certification by the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) during May. Once PVCC receives certification from the VA, PVCC will be able to receive reimbursement.



The Center has a medical director (medical doctor) on site. X-rays and routine blood work are done in-house and sent out for evaluation. For residents who need to be seen by a specialist, transportation may be provided. However as PVCC grows, families are encouraged to help with transportation as it is not guaranteed.

PVCC accepts private pay, payment from private insurances, Medicare, and Medicaid. Most veterans also qualify for the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) per-diem facility credit.

If you have questions, please call (540) 680-5200 and ask for the Admissions Department.

Mary's excellent presentation was followed by about 45 minutes of questions and answers, many of which are included above. However, if you have other questions, Mary said she's available at the Center (540-680-5200) or by emailing pvccadmissions@dvs.virginia.gov and would love to hear from you.

Following the questions and answers, some of the members and guests took the opportunity to compare impressions of the Center and simply visit. Others simply "attacked" the remaining cookies!

New Member Introduction

Brig. Gen. Paul Jacobs, USAF (Ret.) and Teresa Jacobs. Paul was born in Bridgeport, Ala., and raised in Athens, Ala., where he graduated from Athens High School. He graduated from the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa in 1976.

Paul served more than 38 years in the Alabama Air National Guard. Twenty-five of those were as a full-time Title 32 military technician, meaning he was a dual-status federal employee serving the Alabama ANG but wore his USAF uniform rather than civilian attire. The other 13 years he served in the more traditional National Guard role of serving part-time on weekends and when activated for deployments and special duty.

Following graduation from college in 1976, Paul began a career in the family sales agency, serving as a manufacturer's representative. He continued in the family business until 1990 when he began serving full time in the Guard.

Paul actually began his military career in 1979 by enlisting in the 187th Tactical Reconnaissance Group (RF-4C), where he served as



an imagery interpretation specialist. He continued serving in this role until October 1981 when he graduated from the Academy of Military Science at the Air National Guard Training and Education Center and was commissioned a Second Lieutenant in the Air Force.

Jacobs' assignments at Dannelly Field, Ala. ANG Base were with the 187th Tactical Reconnaissance Group until 1983 when the group was realigned and converted to the 187th Fighter Wing after gaining the multi-purpose fighter mission with the F-4D and later the F-16. These assignments include intelligence officer, chief of intelligence, wing executive officer, communications flight commander, mission support flight commander, mission support group deputy commander, and mission support group commander.

Paul participated in two contingency operations, including Operation Provide Comfort II, where he served as an intelligence officer at Incirlik Air Base in Turkey, and Operation Iraqi Freedom, where he served as deputy commander, 332d Expeditionary Mission Support Group, Balad Air Base, Iraq.

In 2012, Gen. Jacobs was selected as the director of staff - Air, Joint Force Headquarters, Alabama National Guard, and served in that capacity until April 2013. Paul then served as the assistant adjutant general of the Alabama Air National Guard, being promoted to brigadier general in February 2014. Beginning in December 2015, he also served as the Air National Guard assistant to the commander of Air University at Maxwell AFB, Ala. He retired in November 2017.

His 30+ awards and decorations include the Distinguished Service Medal, Legion of Merit, and the Meritorious Service Medal (with four Bronze Oak Leaf Clusters). He is a graduate of the Air War College and earned a Master of Science degree in Strategic Studies from the Air University.



Jacobs said some of the highlights of his career included many of the CONUS exercises including Red Flag, Green Flag, Maple Flag (Cold Lake AB, Canada), and Border Star, along with Cold War deployments to Germany, England, and South Korea for participation in exercises and war games (Crest Eagle, WINTEX, Cope Jade, Tandem Challenge), and the above contingency operations.

Jacobs said he was honored to serve both as an airman basic (E-1) and as a brigadier general (O-7), as well as the intervening grades. He said the highlight of his career was "working with so many outstanding Americans who volunteered to serve their country and the opportunity to make a difference in their lives," and his only disappointment was "that I couldn't serve longer!"

Paul and Teresa, his wife of 41 years, moved to Heritage Hunt in December 2025. He enjoys hiking, golf, reading, and family. He and Teresa have one son, Jake, and two grandchildren ages three and five months. They share their home with Jackie, a super mutt rescue.

Please welcome Teresa and Paul to the chapter and to the community.

Personal Affairs Support Available

Pete Wright

Recently, there were questions about what chapter resources may be available regarding personal affairs. Our Personal Affairs Committee—chaired by Pete Wright—can assist chapter members and their spouses by providing basic information regarding military benefits, entitlements, notifications, and claims and when death and serious illness occur.

The committee also maintains relevant web links on the chapter's website (<https://www.hhmoaa.org/Personal-Affairs>). Chapter members are highly encouraged to complete end-of-life planning on behalf of their family members and heirs. The national [MOAA Website](#) also includes such information and handy publications, guides and checklists that may be conveniently downloaded free of charge to MOAA members (<https://www.moaa.org/content/publications-and-media/moaa-publications/moaa-publications/>).

If you have any questions or need some help, please contact Pete Wright at 703-743-1352 or p.wright@comcast.net.

2026 Outlook: What's Ahead for the Uniformed Services (and Your Benefits) in the New Year

(This article by Hope Hodge Seck originally appeared in the January 2026 issue of Military Officer, a magazine available to all MOAA Premium and Life members. It is being reprinted in part in this edition of The Clarion because of broad interest.)

The new year brings a focus on priorities for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the U.S. Public Health Service (USPHS). Here's a look at what's ahead for the uniformed services in the coming year.

'Department of War'

"Restoring the name 'Department of War' will sharpen the focus of this department on our national interests and signal to adversaries America's readiness to wage war to secure its interests," White House officials have said.

Standards and Training Review

In a historic in-person address to all active general and flag officers in Quantico, Va., Secretary Pete Hegseth warned that military training is paramount and those in uniform who couldn't meet standards would be shown the door. Top military leaders have been considering the results of a 60-day review of training standards ordered by Hegseth in a memo and requiring leaders to report any changes to standards since 1990, with an eye to restoring any rigor that has been lost.

Other memos issued at the same time call for a validation of physical fitness tests, new guidance on performance as well as height and weight standards, and reduction of mandatory computer-based training requirements in order to spend more time on readiness.

Hazing Rules Get New Look

Decisions were also forthcoming on a review of rules around how terms including "hazing, bullying, and harassment" are defined. In his speech, Hegseth described a desire "to empower leaders to enforce standards without fear of retribution and second-guessing."

Former basic training mainstays, including "putting hands on recruits" and swearing, would be restored, he said, to make training "scary, tough, and disciplined." Rules would remain in place, he added, to prevent recklessness.

Golden Dome Takes Shape

Major moves are coming in 2026 for President Trump's Golden Dome national missile defense shield concept. In 2025, Golden Dome received \$24.4 billion in funding through the One Big Beautiful Bill reconciliation package and received a dedicated czar in Space Force Gen. Michael Guetlein. With announced plans to make the shield operational by 2029, this year will be critical for the Pentagon to award major contracts and implement the "objective architecture" Guetlein was ordered to create for the program by fall 2025.

The first major test of the yet-to-be-created Golden Dome intercept system has been scheduled to take place before the 2028 elections.

Modest Pay Bump

The FY 2026 National Defense Authorization Act is set to include a 3.8% pay raise. The bump, which stays in line with civilian wage growth calculations, continues the trend since 2017 of raising troop pay at least 2% every year.

COLA Increase

While the government shutdown delayed an announcement from the Social Security Administration, officials in late October finally confirmed the cost-of-living adjustment affecting veterans with a disability rating of 10% or higher. At 2.8%, the COLA is a slight increase from the modest 2.5% adjustment delivered last year, which was itself the smallest COLA bump since 2021.

Separation Allowance Might Expand

Family separation allowance — pay troops receive when duty separates them from their dependents for more than a month — might see a sizable jump.

The House version of the defense budget bill would require the Pentagon to raise this allowance from \$250 per month to \$400, the first increase in more than 20 years. Last year's budget bill included language to allow the Pentagon to increase the stipend, but the military has yet to take action on it.

Military Pilot Cancer

A bill signed by Trump in May 2025 will fund a long-range research effort into links between a dozen different kinds of cancers and military fixed-wing aircrew members who were exposed to various chemicals and toxins in the course of their duty. The law, supported by MOAA, requires a study on the "prevalence and mortality" of these cancers to be conducted by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine in partnership with the VA.

The law follows a 2023 Pentagon study that found outsized and concerning incidence of certain cancers for pilots who served between 1992 and 2017.

Army

National Guard missions expand: Following a year that saw more than 2,000 National Guard troops deployed to Washington, D.C., to support municipal crime-fighting and beautification efforts, and hundreds more sent to places like Los Angeles and Portland, Ore., in response to protests, interest in using the Guard to address domestic problems seems to be increasing. In his address to generals, Trump said he'd told Hegseth to use "dangerous" American cities as training grounds for the Guard, beginning with Chicago.

Meanwhile, National Guard deployments to the nation's southern border continue as the White House emphasizes the need to focus national security efforts on the homeland.

Drone-fighting mission launches: Under orders from the Pentagon and the White House to "unleash drone dominance," the Army is leading the charge to develop and field weapons to the military and U.S. agencies to defeat enemy uncrewed systems. Joint Interagency Task Force 401, established in August, puts the Army

secretary in charge of efforts to counter the growing drone threat and lead information-sharing with military and civilian partners.

With an implementation plan already designed and delivered, 2026 will see the emergence of a dedicated test range for counter-drone technology along with rapid fielding of systems that promise to build out a multilevel arsenal for drone defense.

Marine Corps

New attack drones: As the Marine Corps leans into using drones as battlefield weapons with the Attack Drone Team of experts it created in 2025, it's also distributing these systems throughout the fighting force. In early 2026, two battalions of Marines will receive new loitering munitions for testing, including during upcoming deployments, service officials said in April. The goal is to field the drones "at scale" before the end of the year. Known as Organic Precision Fires-Light, the drone systems, carried by rifle squads, will help these units to spot and attack the enemy.

Barracks overhaul gets underway: A nearly \$11 billion strategy to transform enlisted on-base housing and improve living conditions for Marines is set to begin in earnest in 2026. The Barracks 2030 initiative is set to kick off a 10-year housing refresh cycle, replacing the former 30-year version, and establish accountability and reporting mechanisms to address cases of squalor and dilapidation that have surfaced through watchdog reporting. Set for completion by 2037, the effort will update and improve common areas and provide "well-deserving sergeants" an allowance to live off-base.

Navy

Caribbean missions intensify: As the White House declared war on South American drug trafficking operations, more ships and personnel headed to the Caribbean region. As of mid-November, approximately 15,000 U.S. troops had arrived in the area, many onboard Navy warships including the service's largest aircraft carrier, USS *Gerald R. Ford* (CVN-78) and its strike group, and the three-ship Iwo Jima Amphibious Ready Group.

Next Generation fighter gets green light: After nearly two decades of speculation and deliberation, the Navy's future fighter jet is about to take shape. In October, the Pentagon agreed to plans for what has long been dubbed the F/A-XX, clearing the way for a manufacturer to be selected and design work on the jet to begin.

Like its predecessor, the F/A-18 Super Hornet, the sixth-generation F/A-XX will be carrier-based. A crewed fighter, the future jet is expected to have roughly 25% more range than the Super Hornet, sport stealthy characteristics, and be capable of operating in collaboration with uncrewed platforms.

Air Force

Expanded bonuses enroute: As the Air Force works to fill mission-critical job fields with talented troops, it plans to make big investments in financial incentives.

Its spending plan for 2026 included a request for \$141 million in enlistment bonuses — nearly triple the amount for 2025 — with plans to award them to more than five times as many airmen. Those eligible for the bonuses will commit to serving four to six years and will likely be designated for the hardest-to-fill military specialties, including cybersecurity and missile and space systems. The Space Force, which has no problem meeting enlistment targets but competes for talent against high-paying civilian employers, is requesting similar expansions in bonus funding and troop eligibility.

New physical fitness test: In keeping with an intensified Pentagon-wide focus on physical fitness, the Air Force will roll out a new and more exacting physical fitness assessment (PFA) in 2026. The new test, which will begin in March as an adjustment period and will be officially scored beginning in September, adds a 2-mile run and requires all airmen to take the test semiannually.

A body composition assessment, which was removed from the PFA in 2021 amid COVID-19 restrictions, will also return in the new test. To help airmen prepare, the service in September released *The Warfighter's Fitness Playbook*, a manual for building muscle, preventing injury, and fueling for performance.

Space Command and Space Force

Space Command moves: The combatant command responsible for military missions in space is relocating to Rocket City. The move of Space Command from Peterson AFB, Colo., to the Army's Redstone Arsenal in Huntsville, Ala., comes as the command takes on a leading role in developing the Golden Dome missile defense shield concept.

While Trump has said the move would result in 30,000 new Alabama jobs, it's not yet clear how many Space Command employees will relocate from Colorado. Space Command has set another challenge: It's working with the Space Force to close loopholes and integrate classified systems into the service's command-and-control architecture by 2026 in an effort to be "ready for contested space," officials have said.

Dress uniforms arrive: In a milestone for the newest service branch, the Space Force will field new dress uniforms, designed by and for Guardians, in 2026.

"Our service dress uniform represents the unique identity of Guardians, blending heritage with a modern design that reflects our unity and mission," Chief of Space Operations Gen. Chance Saltzman said.

The uniforms, which have undergone tailoring and design changes based on early feedback, are made from a polyester-wool blend with Lycra, featuring a distinctive asymmetric button line on the jackets, a high collar, and silver trim.

Coast Guard

Construction to begin on six icebreakers: After years of struggling to make do with a limping pair of old icebreakers, the Coast Guard might finally get the Arctic-capable fleet its leaders have long sought. In October, the White House announced Louisiana-based Bollinger Shipyards would lead a team to build six multipurpose icebreakers using an established commercial design.

In partnership with Finland through the Icebreaker Collaboration Effort Pact signed in 2024, the Coast Guard now has a path to acquire up to 11 "Arctic security cutters," with five planned to be delivered as soon as 2028. In 2025, the service christened its first icebreaker in a quarter-century: the Alaska-based *Storis*.

Budget boost buys ships, helicopters: A \$25 billion allocation in the One Big Beautiful Bill reconciliation package will help the service fund its Force Design 2028 modernization strategy. In what Adm. Kevin Lunday, then the Coast Guard's acting commandant, referred to as the start of "a new era for the Coast Guard," the service plans to buy more than 40 new MH-60 helicopters, six HC-130J aircraft, and nine offshore patrol cutters, as well as invest \$4.4 billion in infrastructure, training facilities, and home ports.

U.S. Public Health Service

Expanded leave benefits: A legislative move to grant USPHS officers equal leave benefits as military servicemembers has been gaining momentum. The Uniformed Services Leave Parity Act, introduced by bipartisan groups of military veterans in the House and Senate, would include the 6,000-plus USPHS officers in military leave policies. Supported by MOAA, the bill passed the Senate in October, clearing the way for its consideration in the House.

"When disease or disaster threatens our public safety, PHS officers are on the front lines helping keep the American people healthy and out of harm's way," Sen. Tammy Duckworth (D-Ill.) said of the bill. "There's no reason they shouldn't have the same leave benefits that officers of the Army, Navy, or any of our other uniformed services do."

NOAA

New leader sets priorities: Confirmed in October to lead the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, meteorologist Neil Jacobs is in his second term at the organization's helm. In confirmation hearings, Jacobs said he'd make filling staffing gaps at the National Weather Service (NWS) a "top priority."

Hit hard by deep staffing cuts that saw the departure of some 600 employees out of about 4,300, NWS reportedly resorted to double shifts and has seen some centers cut back on services. In a statement provided to the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, Jacobs also said he'd work to embrace new NOAA partnerships for cloud-based data sharing, "return the United States to the world's leader in global weather forecast modeling capability," and reduce the seafood trade deficit.



New Application and Renewal for membership in MOAA Heritage Hunt Chapter.

Call Mary Jo Howarth for more information at 703-899-1582

New members: please print this page, fill out the form and mail the form along and check to the below address.

Renewal: print this page, fill out name and updated information only, mail the form and check to the below address.

Name _____
Last First (e.g. James) Initial Suffix Call Name (e.g. Jim)

Address _____
Street City Zip

Email Telephone MOAA ID Life member Y/N

Rank Service Dates of Service (entered – separated, by ddmmyyyy)

University/College Year commissioned

Spouse 1st Name (e.g. Susan) Initial Last Name Call name (e.g. Sue)

Spouse Phone Spouse Email

Status: Retired / Former Officer / Surviving spouse Resident of Heritage Hunt? Yes / No

Annual Dues: \$20 for Regular members, \$10 for Surviving Spouses

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We recommend a membership in National MOAA

Signature Date

Web page for Heritage Hunt Chapter of MOAA <http://hhmoaa.org/Home>

Please mail this form and check to: **Mary Jo Howarth, Membership
9010 Roaring Spring Loop
Bristow, VA 20136**

January 28, 2026