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April 2022 Issue – Newsletter to Members

President's Message...

Greetings Friends,

I trust that everyone is off to a great April spring month. The weather for the most part has been quite delightful. I wrote last month that we were putting the finishing touches on our new web site. It is completed and Kathy Frank, our newsletter editor, is getting trained and hopefully we will be able to show off our new website at the April lunch meeting. Last month, a team led by COL Wayne Marotto, the Director of Public Affairs for the III Armored Corps, treated the Chapter to a very informative and well received presentation about III Corps and Fort Hood. Thank you, COL Marotto.



The next Chapter meeting will be Saturday, April 30th at the GolfCrest Country Club. Our guest speaker will be Capt Erin Stone, JAGC USN (Ret). Captain Stone is the Senior Director, Council and Chapter Affairs. She will provide us with an update on MOAA National activities and programs, as well as being available for questions. I would urge as many members as possible to attend. This is our opportunity to interact with MOAA senior leadership.

And...as always if you are not current with your Chapter dues, help us out. Additionally, please tell your colleagues who may not be local members to check us out. The first lunch meeting is on us.

Respectfully,

Rob
 Robin P. Ritchie, COL, Infantry, USAR (Ret)



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April...Upcoming Chapter Events:

Tuesday, April 26th, 2022 @ noon
MOAA HA BOD Meeting

Rudi Lechner's German Restaurant
 2503 S Gessner Rd
 Houston, TX 77063

Saturday, April 30th, 2022 @ noon
MOAA HA Chapter Meeting

Golfcrest Country Club
 2509 Country Club Drive
 Pearland, TX 77581
 RSVP to Rob Ritchie
 Email: rpritchie@earthlink.net



Air Force Gen. Philip M. Breedlove, then NATO Supreme Allied Commander Europe and commander of U.S. European Command, speaks at a 2014 press conference in Gaziantep, Turkey. (Photo by Senior Airman Nicole Sikorski/Air Force)

MOAA Interview: Former NATO Supreme Allied Commander Talks War in Ukraine

By: Kipp Hanley
APRIL 05, 2022

With the Russian invasion of Ukraine in its second month, MOAA reached out to Gen. Philip M. Breedlove, USAF (Ret), a former NATO Supreme Allied Commander Europe, to get his thoughts on the conflict. Breedlove served in that capacity for NATO from 2013 to 2016 after serving as commander of U.S. Air Forces in Europe.

Breedlove now serves as a distinguished professor at the Sam Nunn School of International Affairs at Georgia Tech University and as chairman of the Frontier Europe Initiative for the Middle East Institute.

Some highlights from the April 5 interview:

Q. Should NATO or the U.S. be doing more to assist Ukraine in its conflict with Russia? If so, what?

A. There is a lot more we can do, and there is a lot more that we should do. The most important example is not a tangible thing. The most important thing we can do is break out of our current state of being deterred. In war, or preparation for war, you want to deter your enemy, not be deterred yourself. You want to seize the initiative rather than ceding the initiative to the enemy and being reactive to him.

Unfortunately, in this current conflict, we have failed at both. Mr. Putin has deterred us, and we have not deterred him. Before the conflict began, we were saying if he does this this, we will do that. ... Rather than telling [Putin] what we are not going to do, we need to tell him what we are going to do. I continue to advocate publicly for a humanitarian no-fly zone. ... That is something we could and should do, but that requires that we not take counsel of our peers and remained deterred.

Q. What are your thoughts on the massacre at Bucha, Ukraine?

A. Russia showed its true colors in Mariupol with the bombing of hospitals, bombing theaters with children in it, bombing indiscriminately into civilian territory. ... And now in Bucha, we see the complete depth and depravity of the Russian war machine. Before this fight ever started, the question we asked [was], "How many Ukrainians have to die?" Now, we are starting to see just how far things are going to go. We are starting to see how many and how horrifically Mr. Putin will kill civilians in Ukraine. The question now is, "Will our reply be inadequate to the task again?"

Q. During your time as NATO Supreme Allied Commander Europe, is there one thing you wish you could have done differently?

A. I would say that the U.S. Europe command staff developed a wonderful set of options for how to reply to the Russian invasion of Crimea and of the Donbas. I wish I had more success and had done better advocating for those options to our senior-most civilian leaders. There is more we should have done. ...

On the NATO side, at the Wales Conference [in 2014], we agreed to the most expansive changes in NATO readiness and force presentation in the history of NATO, but more should have been done. We see that very clearly now as the true stripes of Russia show through.

★★★★★★

Coast Guard Nominee Would Be First Woman Military Service Chief

APRIL 05, 2022

Adm. Linda Fagan, the Coast Guard's vice commandant and the service's most senior Marine Safety Officer, has been nominated to assume the post of Coast Guard commandant, the first woman to head any branch of the U.S. armed forces.

The announcement, first reported by USNI News, was acknowledged in a statement Tuesday from Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas.

"Adm. Fagan is a tremendous leader, trailblazer, and respected public servant who will lead the Coast Guard across its critical missions with honor," Mayorkas said in a statement. "Within the Coast Guard and across the Department of Homeland Security, Adm. Fagan is admired as a role model of the utmost integrity, and her historic nomination is sure to inspire the next generation of women who are considering careers in military service."

Fagan, a 1985 graduate of the U.S. Coast Guard Academy, became the service's first female four-star last June when she assumed the duties of vice commandant, five years after the post became a four-star billet. She also became the third woman to serve as vice commandant, following Vice Adms. Vivien Crea and Sally Brice-O'Hara.



Vice Adm. Linda Fagan is promoted to the rank of admiral during a ceremony at Coast Guard Headquarters on June 18, 2021. Fagan is the Coast Guard's first woman to serve as a four-star admiral. (Photo by Lt. j.g. Pamela Manns/Coast Guard) Editor's note: This article by Patricia Kime originally appeared on Military.com, a leading source of news for the military and veteran community.

She rose through the ranks as a Marine Safety Officer, responsible for investigating maritime accidents, as well as monitoring merchant vessels and marine facilities, licensing mariners and overseeing safety programs.

[RELATED: MOAA Interview: Meet the First Woman Chief of the Army Reserve]

Throughout her nearly 40-year career, Fagan worked more than 15 years as a marine inspector and has served aboard the heavy icebreaker Polar Star.

Her command assignments include overseeing Sector New York and serving as Captain of the Port of New York; leading the service's First District; and heading Coast Guard Pacific Area, from 2018 to 2021, where she was responsible for all operations from the Rocky Mountains to Asia, a job she held before being named vice commandant.

Shortly after her promotion to admiral, Fagan laid out the service's priorities to "CBS This Morning," saying that the Coast Guard is committed to homeland security, maintaining a global presence, supporting and training the coast guards of other countries, enforcing drug laws and fishing regulations, and protecting the supply chain.

"We are globally deployed. That is probably a misconception -- 'Well, you're the Coast Guard, shouldn't you just be along the coast?' ... Homeland security. It's about presence and law enforcement, much more than about lethality, like our Navy counterparts talk about," Fagan said during an interview.

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Coast Guard Nominee... (Continued from previous page...)

[RELATED: [Trailblazing WWII 'Six Triple Eight' Unit to Receive Congressional Gold Medal](#)]

During the same interview, she stated her commitment to continuing changes within the Coast Guard to attract and retain women -- one of her daughters, Aileen, is a Coast Guard lieutenant -- and increasing recruitment of racial minorities.

"We are looking at some of the policy changes that are helping us retain women, the focus on diversity and inclusion, so we better represent the public that we serve," Fagan said. "We've made a lot of progress in the junior ranks; we need to keep making progress."

While Fagan will be the first woman to become a service chief if she is confirmed by the Senate, she will not be the first to serve on the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The Coast Guard commandant is a de facto member of the panel, lacking full voting rights.

Last year, Reps. Charlie Crist, D-Fla., and Steven Palazzo, R-Miss., sponsored a bill that would give the Coast Guard commandant full voting rights on the Joint Chiefs, but the legislation has not made it through the House Armed Services Committee.

The Coast Guard's current commandant, Adm. Karl Schultz, a 1983 graduate of the Coast Guard Academy, is set to retire in May. During Fagan's promotion ceremony last year, he called her a "top performer and a trailblazer."

"Vice Adm. Fagan is an outstanding leader with 36 years of Coast Guard operations, policymaking, joint service and interagency experience," Schultz said. "As the Coast Guard's first female four-star admiral, and ... the Coast Guard's 32nd vice commandant, Adm. Fagan will be instrumental in moving the service forward at a critical juncture in our history."

The White House also has nominated Vice Adm. Steven Poulin, current commander of Coast Guard Atlantic Area, to serve as vice commandant. Poulin, a graduate of the University of Miami School of Law, has previously served as the service's Judge Advocate General and Chief Counsel of the Coast Guard. He graduated in 1984 from the Coast Guard Academy. ★

From MOAA's President: Your Critical Role in This Year's Advocacy in Action Campaign



Photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Colby Mothershead/Navy.
Illustration by John Harman/MOAA

By: Dana Atkins
MARCH 30, 2022

This image may be familiar to members who've already received their April issue of *Military Officer* – it's a fitting backdrop for MOAA's 2022 Advocacy in Action campaign, and a reminder of the teamwork it takes to accomplish challenging tasks.

Changing laws on Capitol Hill is arduous work. Legislation addressing critical issues can remain stuck in subcommittees through an entire two-year congressional session. Other bills can advance through committees only to lose momentum and die before reaching a floor vote. MOAA members can move these changes forward, but only if we're all pulling in the same direction.

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From MOAA's President: Your Critical Role in This Year's Advocacy in Action Campaign...

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That's where Advocacy in Action comes in.

[ACT NOW: Send a Message to Your Lawmakers Supporting MOAA's Advocacy in Action Priorities]

I encourage all MOAA members to take part in this campaign throughout April. Click the link above to send letters to your legislators, preparing them for calls from MOAA's state leaders and other volunteers who will be arranging meetings online and in person. Special focus will be put on interacting with these lawmakers during their state and district work period (April 11-22), when they will be more accessible to their constituents.

Watch for updates and future calls to action via *The MOAA Newsletter*, MOAA's [Advocacy News page](#), and [MOAA.org/AiA](#). We aim to reach 535 congressional offices with our AiA message, and we can't do it without your support.

We'll rally behind these three issues:

- **Concurrent Receipt for Combat-Injured Servicemembers:** The Major Richard Star Act (H.R. 1242, S. 344) would fix a longstanding injustice by allowing tens of thousands of combat-injured veterans to receive full retired pay and disability pay. The act has amassed 205 House co-sponsors, adding 54 since January, and is at a critical point as lawmakers draft the FY 2023 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA).
- **Affordable mental health for TRICARE beneficiaries.** The Stop Copay Overpay Act (H.R. 4824) would overturn the doubling of TRICARE copays for mental health care in recent years. The bipartisan bill has only four co-sponsors, but additional momentum from your AiA efforts would improve chances of inclusion in the FY 2023 NDAA.
- **A 4.6% military pay raise.** This raise applies to all eight of our uniformed services; the percentage is linked to the Employment Cost Index (ECI) by statute. It remains one of MOAA's annual priorities to ensure the raise is not reduced to fund other programs or pay table overhauls – cumulative reductions over a recent three-year span (2014-2016) left servicemembers 2.6% below what they should have received.

[RELATED: Troops Would See 4.6% Pay Raise Next Year Under White House Budget Plan]

We cannot contact every one of the 535 lawmaker offices on Capitol Hill without your help. Your legislators want to hear from you, by any method.

MOAA is no stranger to success in these efforts. Many of you participated in our decades-long effort to repeal the "widows tax," which ended with success in the FY 2020 NDAA, or in letter-writing campaigns to help MOAA overturn "COLA minus 1 percent" and restore the full cost-of-living adjustment for retirees via legislation passed in 2014.

Our renowned advocacy work ranges from events on Capitol Hill to in-person meetings in your hometown with your legislators. Through both our national and local efforts, MOAA has been recognized for the 15th year in a row as a Top Lobbyist by *The Hill*, a *highly respected publication* in the competitive Washington, D.C., environment.

We can move mountains if we never stop serving. Thank you for being a part of this next chapter of success.★

How VA's Budget Matches Up With MOAA's Priority List

By: René Campos
APRIL 06, 2022

Secretary of Veterans Affairs

Secretary of Veterans Affairs Denis McDonough delivers remarks at the Resource Connection of Tarrant County in Fort Worth, Texas, on March 8 as part of a visit to the region with President Joe Biden. (Photo by Nicholas Kamm/AFP via Getty Images)



While the administration's [March 28 release](#) of its FY 2023 VA budget proposal didn't include all the details, it is clear the VA continues to gain support for modernization and necessary systems improvements over multiple administrations.

"This budget delivers critical resources to help VA serve veterans, their families, caregivers, and survivors as well as they have served this country," Secretary of Veterans Affairs Denis McDonough said in a press release announcing the budget, "and it will allow VA to continue providing more care, more services, and more benefits to more veterans than any time in history."

The proposed topline budget of more than \$300 billion reflects a [growth trend](#) across the enterprise dating back to 1995, when the VA was funded at only \$37 billion. The rate of growth between veterans' health care and benefits spending has remained similar over the years, even with rapidly rising health care costs across the country.

The FY 2023 budget requests over \$139 billion in discretionary funding, the majority of which is for health care. The Veterans Health Administration's (VHA) budget is a little over 41% of VA's total budget and covers medical services, medical community care, staffing, facilities, and other technology and administrative costs. About 9.2 million veterans are enrolled in VA health care, although only two-thirds use the VHA health system.

The administration has also requested a little over \$132 billion in FY 2024 advanced appropriations for medical care – a 7.7% increase over 2023. Advanced appropriations provide continuity of health care between fiscal years in the event of a government shutdown or other situation that prevents funding of annual budgets.

A large segment of health care spending in recent years is a result of the VA MISSION Act, enacted in 2018 to modernize and expand veterans' access to health care services within the VA direct care system and through its community care provider network. The VHA budget has increased \$104 billion, or 53%, since [the act became law](#).

Other factors driving up medical costs in this year's budget proposal include projected sector-wide health care inflation, along with increased veteran enrollments and demand for care. The pandemic has caused many veterans to delay their care; with COVID-19 cases declining in the U.S., the VHA expects high pent-up demand for routine and specialty care. It also expects the health impacts of the pandemic on veterans to be longer lasting.

VA Budget Proposal vs. MOAA's Priorities

MOAA is grateful to the administration and the VA for their commitment to serving veterans and for reflecting many of [our priorities](#) in the budget request. Here is how that request addresses some of MOAA's key issues.

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How VA's Budget Matches Up With MOAA's Priority List... *(Continued from previous page)*

1. Prioritizing and accelerating access to caregiving support, as well as long-term and extended care programs and services.

The VA covers a spectrum of geriatric, extended care, and caregiver support services in a variety institutional and non-institutional settings. Many veterans prefer living at home as long as possible. The VA also provides a range of home- and community-based long-term care programs to meet veterans' needs over time.

The department is requesting over \$20 million for institutional VA and community nursing home care, and another almost \$16 million for non-institutional care like adult day health care, telehealth, home-based primary care, purchased skilled home care, and other services. Some of the proposed funding covers VHA's expansion of existing long-term extended care and other geriatric programs like palliative and hospice care.

Another \$1.8 billion is proposed for VHA's Caregivers Support program, which includes the Program of General Caregiver Support Services and the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC). The figure reflects a \$433 million increase from FY 2022.

The PCAFC has been fraught with problems since expansion of the program was congressionally mandated in the MISSION Act. Long delays in implementation, high denial rates, and lack of consistency in how the VA is implementing the regulations have resulted in a number of pauses in program operations.

The March 23 pause prevented thousands of caregivers and their veterans from being terminated from the program and losing their health care and stipend payments. The VA will continue providing benefits to caregivers and resources during the moratorium. The budget proposal provides the VA with the resources to continue assessing legacy applications and processing new applications.

Funding also covers the program's expansion – it's now open to those who joined service before May 7, 1975, and to those who joined after Sept. 11, 2001, with plans to incorporate those who served between those dates beginning Oct. 1 of this year.

2. Eliminating disparities faced by women, minority, and underserved veterans, and expanding access and services to ensure equitable delivery of health and benefits among all veteran populations.

The number of women veterans using VA services has more than tripled since 2001 – from 159,810 to over 600,000 – and will continue to grow in the coming years. MOAA has pressed the VA and Congress to ensure women, minority, and underserved veterans have access to timely, high quality, specialized health care services to the same extent as their peers. The department also must provide a safe, welcoming, and harassment-free environment at all its health care facilities.

Though specifics on health care for this segment of the veteran population are not broken out in the VA's budget request, the department has indicated it is increasing all women's health care by \$9.8 billion, up \$756 million from FY 2022. VHA expects to spend about \$767 million in support of gender-specific care and women's health programs.

The proposal "supports investments in comprehensive specialty medical and surgical services for women veterans," according to the budget document, and would "increase access to infertility counseling and assisted reproductive technology (ART) and to eliminate copayments for contraceptive coverage."

The ART provisions, including in vitro fertilization and adaption reimbursements, and copays for contraception-related health care services will require Congress to provide the VA the legislative authority for the reproductive technology changes.

The VA has also committed to ensuring sufficient funding for prosthetic research specifically for women veterans and implementing a zero-tolerance policy for sexual harassment and assault at VA facilities.

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How VA's Budget Matches Up With MOAA's Priority List... *(Continued from previous page)*

3. Ensuring the VA continues executing enacted legislation to improve access and delivery of behavioral health and suicide prevention services.

MOAA is encouraged by the VA's commitment to keeping veterans' mental health and suicide prevention programs and services a top priority as indicated in its budget submission.

The administration has taken a government-wide approach in increasing health care access and lowering costs, with initiatives outlined in budget request from the VA, DoD, and Department of Health and Human Services. The VA is requesting \$13.9 billion for improvements and increased access to mental health care services, and is seeking legislative change to lower veterans' out-of-pocket costs for that care.

The department is also requesting \$497 million to implement grants for community-based suicide prevention efforts and funding to transition to a new 988 universal telephone number for a National Suicide Prevention Lifeline to be implemented later this year. Another \$663 million is to support opioid and substance abuse prevention and treatment programs, and \$2.7 billion is set to fund for homeless programs, which include access to high-quality health care and services to prevent and end veteran homelessness.

4. Stabilizing and modernizing the VHA health care workforce and support systems.

Sustainment of VHA's workforce and modernizing its human resource policies and practices has long been of concern to MOAA.

Medical staff are the backbone of the VA health system. Surveys continue to show veterans prefer their care from the VA, with trust in the system on the rise. MOAA believes it is essential our country prioritizes its investment in VA health care in support of its foundational missions — clinical, education, research, and national emergency response.

This too is a priority for Secretary McDonough -- he announced a Human Infrastructure plan Feb. 9 outlining the importance and urgency of investing in VA's workforce and plans for making the department a model employer where employees will want to work.

The VA's budget submission reflects growth in VHA and human resource staff and services to support personnel recruiting, retention, and personnel support programs. The budget request supports the recent passage of the VA Nurse and Physician Assistance RAISE Act included in the Consolidated Appropriations Act and signed into law on March 15 to fund the federal government for this fiscal year. The provision will provide pay raises for advanced practice registered nurses and physician assistants at the VA. Lifting the existing pay cap for these positions will help the VA remain competitive with other health care systems.

MOAA has urged current and future secretaries to commit to carrying out the plan, and has sought congressional support for investing in employees' wages and other workforce incentives outlined in the secretary's plan.

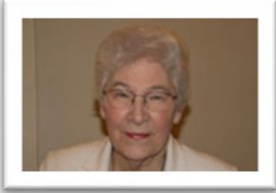
Other Priorities

It is difficult to assess how the budget will address other MOAA priorities of predictable funding for the VA and oversight and accountability for the department. However, VA's FY 2022-28 Strategic Plan, released at the same time as its budget request, highlights four strategic goals that attempt to address MOAA priorities. The plan states the VA will:

- “Consistently communicate with our customers and partners to assess and maximize performance, evaluate needs and build long-term relationships and trust.”
- “Deliver timely, accessible, high-quality benefits, care and services to meet the unique needs of veterans and all those we serve.”
- “Build and maintain trust with veterans, their families, caregivers and survivors — as well as employees and partners — through proven stewardship, transparency and accountability.”
- “Strive toward excellence in business operations — including governance, systems, data and management — to improve experiences, satisfaction rates, accountability and security for veterans.”

More details on the VA's health care budget are expected in the coming weeks as the department releases additional information and VA officials provide their rationale in upcoming hearing with the House and Senate veterans' committee.





Surviving Spouse Corner

Judith Thomas
Surviving Spouse MOAA Liaison
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Surviving Spouse Corner: Reflections of a Surviving Spouse Liaison

**By: Barbara Smith
APRIL 04, 2022**



MOAA Surviving Spouse Advisory Council First Vice Chair Barbara Smith, center, poses with then-MOAA Board Chairman Adm. Walter Doran, USN (Ret), left, and Sen. James Inhofe (R-Okla.) during a 2019 office visit in Washington, D.C. (Photo by Stephen Barrett/MOAA)

Serving for the past six years as my chapter's surviving spouse liaison has been a learning experience. When I first started in the role, I discovered there wasn't any information or description for this undertaking. The chapter had over 60 surviving spouses (then called auxiliary members), but we didn't have a separate list of them. That became my first job. I wrote a letter introducing myself and letting them know I was available for any assistance they might need. I also shared what I hoped to accomplish in the coming year (which at that time wasn't much).

In 2016, I was honored to receive national MOAA's Surviving Spouse Liaison Excellence Award. At the ceremony, I met the most fascinating group of ladies, the [Surviving Spouse Advisory Committee \(now Council\)](#). One of the members, Pat Farnsworth, became my mentor. She has always been available to me and has given me the confidence I needed to do this job.

Over the years, I have tried to include surviving spouses in the chapter's monthly meetings. Every May, we have a surviving spouse/spouse appreciation luncheon at our regular chapter meeting with a program designed for them. I didn't feel that was enough, so now we have a quarterly luncheon for surviving spouses/spouses with emphasis on issues and problems that are of interest to them.

At the end of the year, I send out a letter sharing what we have accomplished concerning surviving spouse issues and share what MOAA has on their legislative agenda for us. I try to attend all funerals to let spouses know I'm here for them.

[RELATED: [More Council and Chapter News and Information From MOAA](#)]

Four years after being appointed to this position, I was elected to the chapter board. This allows me to vote, which I believe is a very important step forward.

I was honored in 2018 to become a member of national MOAA's Surviving Spouse Advisory Council. This has been an incredible experience. I have learned so much, which I have shared with my local chapter. I have also joined the [MOAA Surviving Spouse Virtual Chapter](#), which is open to all surviving spouses and surviving spouse liaisons.

It has been my privilege to fill this position. I have met some inspiring women, shared some wonderful stories, and made memories and some dear friends.

I am beginning my seventh and final year as surviving spouse liaison. It is my hope that someone will step forward and bring a new look and fresh ideas to our chapter. ★



Expect the Unexpected Read Luke 23:13-35 The Road to Emmaus

This is a very special season in our religious calendars. Easter, Passover and Ramadan are all part of the Spring calendar, as are many special events in other religions. Easter celebrates the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Passover celebrates the Angel of Death sparing the Jewish families in Egypt who showed their faith by painting the blood of the Passover lamb on their doorposts. Ramadan celebrates the time of introspection, fasting and prayer when the prophet Mohammad received his prophecies from Allah.

Each of these celebrations calls us to reflect on what God would have us to remember of His power and presence in our lives. The passage from Luke, listed above, tells us of Jesus joining two of His mourners on the road to Emmaus from Jerusalem. They were discussing the events in Jerusalem of Jesus' execution, but, as Scripture states, "they were kept from recognizing him." Introductions were not made but the two asked him, "Are you only a visitor to Jerusalem and do not know the things that have happened there in these days?" It was Jesus...and he didn't tell them...He heard their summary explaining his execution and the disappearance of his body from the tomb. He then explained how they missed all the prophecies and fulfillments of Scripture as he walked with them. They didn't understand until the next day that Jesus was alive and walking with them. Christians believe that the Holy Spirit had hidden his identity from the trekkers.

Since the beginning of the Ukrainian invasion, I have invited others to pray specifically to hide the Ukrainians from the Russian bombs, bullets and soldiers. I believe that God answered that prayer this week when the Russian battleship Moskva sank. There was a storm which prevented the ship from being towed back to port for repairs. I believe the deadly war game of hide and seek being fought in Ukraine needs our prayers. We pray for peace but often we are divided on how to accomplish that peaceful end. Some are afraid to give Congress the opportunity to hold a vote on a military move forward. Freedom involves risk. Congress involves debate. Our faith involves belief, truth and understanding. Sometimes that faith may seem naive but God is always true to his promises. Circumstances and doubts do get in the way of our faith.

The men on the road to Emmaus didn't understand that Jesus was walking with them. The name Immanuel means "God with us." God is holy, righteous and just. He walks with us and wants us to understand who he is. Easter celebrates a risen Christ whose Holy Spirit guides us in the right direction. We seek to understand truth, righteousness and the free gift that God gave us through His son's sacrifice on the cross. God's love was shown to us on the cross. His power is shown to us in His resurrection and in our lives. It is our responsibility to understand that even in a world that is evil, God is walking with us now and going forward. The Ukrainians may be understanding and questioning much of this. We will keep praying and acting for peace.

~ David Essells, USAR, MAJ, RET

Cold Front: What Does a Warming Arctic Region Mean for the Military?

FEBRUARY 16, 2022

(This article by Christopher P. Cavas originally appeared in the February 2022 issue of *Military Officer*, a magazine available to all MOAA Premium and Life members. Learn more about the magazine [here](#); learn more about joining MOAA [here](#).)

The most lethal strike fighter fleet in the U.S. has been growing, bit by bit, at the rate of about two per month.

Air Force F-35A Lightning II Joint Strike Fighters have been headed north since April 2020, often straight from the Lockheed Martin factory that built them in Fort Worth, Texas. Their destination: Eielson Air Force Base in Alaska, home of the 354th Fighter Wing.

In early 2022, a total of 54 Lightning IIs will call Alaska their home. Together with a similar number of F-22A Raptors, there will be more than 100 combat-coded fifth-generation fighters in the state, the most anywhere in the U.S.

The arrival of the JSF in the far north is an example of the increased level of attention being paid to the Arctic as the gradual warming of the region opens the area up to economic development and competition.

This means more access to raw minerals like nickel, copper and platinum, oil, and natural gas. Longer ice-free periods of navigation in shipping routes through previously frozen waters mean more access to rich fishing waters and increased tourism, resulting in more countries and industries looking to exploit the region.

And as competition increases, the potential for conflict is an ever-present byproduct.



USS Toledo (SSN-769) arrives at Ice Camp Seadragon on the Arctic Ocean on March 4, 2020, kicking off Ice Exercise (ICEX) 2020. (Photo by MC1 Michael B. Zingaro/Navy)



“Our adversaries are increasing their activity in the region in part through the enabling factor of their own climate changes,” said Michael McEleney, senior advisor to the Department of Energy’s Arctic Energy Office and a former Arctic analyst for the Navy. “Longer shipping seasons, greater investment in resource extraction to accelerate their resource extraction efforts. All of it is turning the Arctic into a much more dynamic region for the U.S. government to take into account.”

Those are just some of the reasons there seems to be constant discussion about the Arctic. Barely a week goes by without a new strategy, study, or position paper being released. Defense groups, military services, academic organizations, environmental and economic entities hold streams of conferences focusing entirely or in part on the region. “What are we doing in the Arctic?” is a routine question raised by senators and congressional representatives in multiple hearings in Washington, D.C. But the answers are rarely simple enough for a quick sound bite.

A view from above of the Arctic Circle. (Department of the Air Force Arctic Strategy; Rachel Barth/MOAA Staff; [click here](#) for larger image) w from above of the Arctic Circle. (Department of the Air Force Arctic Strategy; Rachel Barth/MOAA Staff; [click here](#) for larger image)

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Cold Front *(Continued from previous page...)*

“It’s a complex story at the top of the world today, made more complex by global media, because to them it’s all about tension, resource wars, whether we go to war with the Russians or Chinese at the top of the world,” said Capt. Lawson Brigham, USCG (Ret), distinguished professor of geography and Arctic policy at the University of Alaska Fairbanks and a former Coast Guard icebreaker captain.

“There isn’t a single message,” he said. “This place is peaceful. It’s stable, and it’s cooperative.”

A recent example of that cooperation was the October 2020 adoption by the Arctic Council of an international agreement to prevent unregulated fishing in the high seas of the Central Arctic Ocean. The agreement pledges each signatory nation to not allow its vessels to engage in commercial fishing in the ocean, which is surrounded entirely by the economic exclusion zones (EEZs) of the council’s member states.

The center of international relationships in the far north is the Arctic Council, an independent entity whose eight permanent members are those with sovereign territory within the Arctic Circle: Canada, Denmark (by virtue of Greenland), Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden, and the U.S., along with Arctic indigenous peoples.

Thirteen nations take part as observer members, with no voting rights: Germany, the Netherlands, Poland, the United Kingdom, France, Spain, China, India, Italy, Japan, South Korea, Singapore, and Switzerland. Applications are pending for the European Union and Turkey.

Established in 1996, the council has been a key entity in managing the region as development and changes continue in the region.

A Russian nuclear-powered icebreaker operates in the Arctic region. (Per Breihagen/Getty Images)



‘An Entirely New Coast’

At the forefront of development are the Russians — unsurprisingly, given their vast, 15,000-mile-long Arctic coastline, by far the longest continuous coastline of any single country. Stretching from the border with Norway, the Russian Arctic coast continues to the northwest Pacific, where it meets North Korea and nears the Japanese home islands.

More than 4 million people live above the Arctic Circle, and more than half of them live in Russia.

“From a Russian perspective, they’re having an entirely new coast” due to Arctic warming, noted McEleney. “That is a dramatic change in their perceived security environment. Imagine adding a new coast in an area where their defenses have run down after the Cold War. Their rush to increase the surveillance and military coverage of their Arctic coast is driven in part by climate change. By effectively having a new ocean in their backyard, they feel the need to guard against other activity, whether merited or not.”

Russian efforts to develop new infrastructure include construction of a deep-water port at Sabetta on the Yamal Peninsula in western Siberia. The multinationally funded work, which began in 2012, features a new liquified natural gas (LNG) production facility with deep-draft channels dredged by a Belgian firm. The port is being built with Chinese-made modules carried aboard Chinese-built heavy-lift ice-capable vessels operated by the Dutch company Red Box Energy Services.

Over the past several years, a large fleet of 15 80,000-deadweight-ton, ice-breaking LNG tankers has been built in South Korea designed by a Finnish firm. One of those ships is owned in Russia, but the other 14 are owned elsewhere, including Japan, China, and two multinational corporations. And while

Russia has contributed 50.1% of the funding for the Sabetta project, the rest comes from France and China.

Russia is also developing and reactivating an entire security structure to protect Arctic coast investments. New icebreakers are being added to the existing fleet of about 50 ships, including some of the world’s largest and most powerful

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Cold Front *(Continued from previous page...)*

icebreakers, six of them nuclear-powered. The Russian navy is building Project 23550-class icebreaking patrol ships, 8,500-ton ships of which the first, *Ivan Papanin*, is expected to enter service in 2023.

The Russian military has also reactivated and upgraded a number of facilities shut down after the end of the Cold War.



Members of the Alaska National Guard participate in exercise Arctic Eagle 2020. (Photo by Spc. Kyle Odum/Alaska National Guard)

U.S. Military Strategies

By contrast, the U.S. has about 1,500 nautical miles of Arctic coastline, all in Alaska, and there is no deep draft port north of the Arctic Circle. Brigham has long supported development of Nome, Alaska, as a deep-water port, and some money is coming for the Army's Corps of Engineers to dredge the small harbor to a depth of 35 feet and construct an improved breakwater. But even then, the land infrastructure — roads and railroads — would need to be developed to take advantage of the port. That would require much more money, and the concept faces stiff opposition from those opposed to such development.

"The question," Brigham said, "is if the regional Arctic deep-water port is a high priority item for the Defense Department in the mix of other issues."

While every U.S. military service has issued some sort of Arctic strategy, each service has different features. Here's a quick breakdown:

Navy

In recent years, the Navy has made several forays above the Arctic Circle, the first such operational cruises by surface ships since the last century. The cruises have become more frequent as the Navy seeks to restore experience operating in rough, freezing northern waters.

The focus of the Navy's Arctic efforts, though, is not surface ships — it is submarines. Ever since the famous undersea voyage of the USS *Nautilus* to the North Pole in 1958, U.S. subs have routinely used the Arctic for a variety of purposes, not the least of which is that the voyage across the top of Canada is a shorter way for subs to transit between the Atlantic and Pacific theaters.

The public highlight of U.S. Arctic submarine operations is the Ice Exercise, or ICEX, held every other year. Usually featuring two subs that surface through the ice cap, sailors and scientists set up a temporary ice camp — Camp Seadragon — and for three weeks conduct scientific experiments and surveys. The exercise also provides VIPs with the chance to venture to the far north and see the challenging conditions there, as well as glimpse some of the changes.

But ICEX also has an operational side.

"What we want to do is make sure, one, that we maintain access to the Arctic and sustain our readiness of the submarine forces to traverse underneath the ice," Rear Adm. Leonard "Butch" Dollaga, then commander of the Undersea Warfighting Development Center, said during ICEX in March 2020.



A sailor aboard the submarine USS Hartford (SSN-768) during ICEX 2018 (Photo by MC2 Michael H. Lee/Navy)

"We want to make sure we can continue to gain access to the Arctic as it becomes more of an imperative to operate in this arena," he added. "We want to make sure the Arctic remains a stable region where U.S. national interests are safeguarded, where the U.S. homeland is defended, and we can work together with our partner nations to maintain stability in this Arctic region."

Arctic expert Brigham also noted the value of the ICEX exercises.

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“We have a submarine force that is very capable,” he said. “And every other year we pop up at the North Pole for good reason — and those pictures go around the world for good reason, to remind everybody in the world we can do this.”

Marine Corps

The Marine Corps also maintains a continuous presence in the Arctic — but not in Alaska.

The Marine Rotational Force-Europe routinely deploys to northern Norway, where prepositioned equipment is stored in specially built caves packed with vehicles and gear.

The Marines ended their year-round presence in Norway in 2020 in an effort to widen the scope of training and exercise elsewhere, but they regularly exercise with Norwegian military forces, often in the harsh conditions of the Norwegian winter.



Crew members of USCGC Polar Star (WAGB 10) enjoys brief ice liberty on the frozen Bering Sea in below freezing temperatures on Jan. 30, 2021. (Photo by PO1 Cynthia Oldham/Coast Guard)

Coast Guard

The Coast Guard is the lead federal agency for homeland security, safety, and environmental stewardship in the Arctic, but it does so with thinly stretched resources. While the service’s large national security cutters were designed to maintain a year-round presence in the Bering Sea, they are not ice-capable ships.

There are only two operational icebreakers: USCGC *Polar Star* (WAGB-10) and *Healy* (WAGB-20), both based in Seattle. The heavy icebreaker *Polar Star* dates from the 1970s and is maintained using spare parts from decommissioned sister ship *Polar Sea* (WAGB-11), and the ships are in dire need of replacement. *Healy* is a medium-sized ship, half icebreaker and half science research ship, not

suitable for the kinds of missions carried out by larger ships, although it carried out a northwest passage in the summer and fall of 2021, leaving Seattle in July and reaching Boston in mid-October.

The service pins its Arctic hopes on the new polar security cutter, a large, advanced, \$746 million ship set to begin construction at Halter Marine in Pascagoula, Miss. Early funding has also been issued for a second ship, and the plan is to build three, with deliveries in 2024, 2025, and 2027. A planned three-ship class of medium polar cutters is also in the works, but no funding is as yet forthcoming.

The Coast Guard supports search-and-rescue operations, EEZ patrols, and aids-to-navigation work from its primary base at Kodiak Island on the south coast of Alaska.

Coast Guard Arctic operations also suffer from a serious communications gap, a situation affecting all government organizations in the region. According to the service’s strategy document, the high latitudes suffer from poor propagation of radio signals, geomagnetic interference, scant landside infrastructure, and limited satellite coverage and bandwidth. Even cellphone coverage is limited.

Addressing the comms gap is an issue facing all federal agencies, including North American Aerospace Defense Command and U.S. Northern Command.

Army

As the service with primary responsibility for the defense of the homeland, the Army maintains ballistic missile defense systems in Alaska, but those strategic systems are not directly related to new challenges in the Arctic.

Under its new Arctic strategy released in January 2021, the Army is increasing the number of units training in the far north and broadening those exercises.

A primary goal of the new strategy is to regain experience in operating in the region’s harsh conditions. For example, the Army introduced its Arctic Warrior exercise in February 2021 in Alaska.

Air Force

The Air Force takes the lion’s share of the annual U.S. defense spending in the Arctic — a steady 80%.

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Aircraft of the Air Force's 354th Fighter Wing and the Alaska Air National Guard's 168th Wing line up at Eielson Air Force Base, Alaska. (Photo by Senior Airman Keith Holcomb/Air Force)



Iris Ferguson, the Air Force's top Arctic security expert who authored the service's first Arctic strategy, ticked off some of the extensive activities in the far north.

"Our footprint is pretty heavy, but the missions are so large. A lot of the architecture for homeland defense comes from the Air Force," Ferguson said.

Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson in Alaska has F-22s, C-17s, C-130s, and the Rescue Coordination Center, she said. Eielson AFB has F-16s and F-35s.

"We're also adding additional KC-135s to the fleet already there," she said.

Also, Ferguson added, there are the huge training grounds at Joint Pacific Alaskan Range Complex (JPARC), the Space Situational Awareness assets at Clear Air Force Station, Alaska, and Thule Air Base in Greenland, and radar sites across Alaska and Canada through the North Warning System.

The Air Force also responds to incursions into the U.S. Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ), something the Russians have been regularly poking at. And Ferguson notes that as Russia further develops its Arctic regions, it is only natural to want to protect them.

"Russia is showing increasing investment in their coastline, rebuilding their infrastructure from the Cold War era. In some ways, it's in their self-interest to protect the 25% of their gross domestic product that comes from the region," she noted. "What gives us pause is the possibility that these defenses can become offensive in nature. Or when we see them creating potentially restrictive roles that are counter to international norms of freedom of air and sea movement. Those kinds of actions make us wonder what the real motivators are for developing the Arctic region."

But Ferguson also cautioned not to look at the Arctic as a military competition.

"The media often tries to paint the Arctic region as a kind of zero-sum game, going into conflict. And at least right now it's not really that kind of region, and we certainly don't want it to be that kind of region. The whole idea is to prevent conflict.

"Going to war in the Arctic would be terrible. It would be very hard," Ferguson said. "Our posture there is deterrence. Trying to prevent conflict is most important for us."

Christopher P. Cavas is a defense journalist in the Washington, D.C., area. He is on Twitter [@cavasships](https://twitter.com/cavasships).



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*We need YOU...
to remain a
MOAA HA Member!*



Debating whether to renew your chapter membership?

Talking to a potential new member?

Benefits to belonging to a chapter:

- Camaraderie and Connections: when you attend chapter functions, actively serve on a committee, or take a prominent leadership role, you forge lasting ties with other MOAA members.
- Community Involvement: Membership provide opportunities to contribute to your community in a variety of ways, from providing scholarships to local students, to supporting causes that support wounded warriors and their families.
- Legislative Advocacy: We advocate for the entire military community-all ranks. Members play a critical role in advancing legislation in both Austin and Washington, D.C. This grassroots advocacy is key to MOAA achieving its legislative goals.

Chapter dues reminders will be emailed/sent out in November to those members needing renewal. We are on a calendar year for our chapter dues.

Annual renewal is \$30 for one year, \$20 for each additional year paid with renewal. Surviving Spouse \$15 initial membership; \$10 annual renewal.

Membership Application on the last page!

MOAA HA Chapter Luncheon Saturday, March 26, 2022



COL Marotto



Major Brian Burns



**COL Marotto, Guest Speaker
and Rob Ritchie**



Mike Martin



Rob Ritchie



Judith Thomas



Janice Nickie-Green



Red O'Laughlin



**Carol, Guest of
Andy Parsons**



Stancie Chamberlain



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Carolyn Schmidt



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MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION / RENEWAL FORM

MOAA's Core Mission

The Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) is the country's leading organization protecting the rights of uniformed servicemembers and their families. MOAA's constituents proudly hail from every branch of the uniformed services. To them, we have made the same promise that they have made to their country: Never Stop Serving.

MOAA's greatest mission is to improve the lives of those who serve and their families, which is achieved largely through the tireless advocacy efforts taking place in our nation's capital. For more than 90 years, MOAA has supported legislation that benefits the uniformed services community and has remained equally vigilant when fighting to stop legislation that threatens our livelihood. The larger our numbers, the greater our voice. For more detailed legislative actions see [MOAA | Take Action Center \(quorum.us\)](http://MOAA | Take Action Center (quorum.us))

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Dues: Regular Membership – \$30 first year; annual renewal \$30 (Discount for multiple years if paid with renewal: \$20 for each add'l. year **paid with renewal**)
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Make check payable to MOAA-HA and mail to:

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For more information, call COL Robin Ritchie, 713-818-0408

**If not a MOAA national member, another benefit of chapter membership is the opportunity to become a national MOAA member at the BASIC LEVEL for free! If you would like to do so, please indicate here:*

YES NO

Signature: _____