



Houston Area
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May 2021 Issue – Newsletter to Members

President's Message...

Dear MOAA HA Members,

Greetings, April was another great month in moving forward with getting things back to normal. As I said last month, I encourage all of you to get vaccinated as well as your families. The more the merrier as they say. I personally am looking forward to relegating the mask thing to a drawer somewhere. Last month, we were very fortunate to have Lorén Westerfield the Houston USO Director as our guest speaker. She spoke about the many services that the Houston USO provides to our area service members and their families. Please feel free to contact Lorén if you are interested in volunteer opportunities with the USO. The May newsletter has some really great Articles including an update on Arlington National Cemetery and a heartwarming story about the Army's oldest Ranger.



This month's Chapter meeting will be on May 22nd instead of the last Saturday because of the Memorial Day weekend. This will be a Zoom meeting; not necessarily because of the Virus but rather we thought that it would be a good idea to periodically have a monthly zoom meeting in the hopes that we will have more members join us in fellowship. Our featured speaker for this month's meeting will be Captain Dean Solomon from the Israeli Defense Forces. You can find his bio in this issue. Given the current situation in Israel, this should be a very interesting discussion.

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May...

Upcoming Chapter Events:

Saturday, May 22nd, 2021 @ noon

MOAA HA Chapter Meeting
 Virtual Chapter Meeting via Zoom
 Zoom Invite to Follow via Email

Tuesday, May 25th, 2021 @ noon

MOAA HA BOD Meeting
 Rudi Lechner's German Restaurant
 2503 S Gessner Rd
 Houston, TX 77063

Aircraft Carrier Gerald Ford Finishes Post-Delivery Tests and Trials

Diana Stancy Correll



A C-2A Greyhound powers down its engines on the flight deck of the aircraft carrier Gerald R. Ford in September 2020. Ford is on track to deploy in 2022. (MC3 Zack Guth/Navy) The aircraft carrier Gerald Ford has wrapped up its post-delivery test and trials.

The year-and-a-half-long trials, which commenced in October 2019, included certifying the flight deck, embarking the air wing and many other tasks, the Navy said.

The last stage — the combat systems qualification trials — involved a live-fire exercise in which the crew “destroyed rocket-propelled drones capable of speeds in excess of 600 miles per hour;

towed drone units that simulated incoming rockets; and remote-controlled, high-speed maneuvering surface targets,” according to a Navy news release.

RIM-116 missiles, Sea Sparrow missiles, and rounds from the Mk-15 Phalanx Close-In Weapon System were all engaged as part of the combat systems ship’s qualification trials, which the Navy said concluded in mid-April.

“Completing Gerald R. Ford’s Combat Systems Qualification is a significant milestone,” said Capt. Brian A. Metcalf, program manager for the Ford class. “It takes weeks of planning, combat scenario development, target coordination, onboard training, and live ammunition load-outs to ready the ship for operational testing that reflects a real-time, at-sea threat environment, during which the crew employs live weapons against live targets.”

Next up for the aircraft carrier are full ship shock trials that are slated for this summer, while a planned incremental availability is scheduled for September through February 2022.

Timeline Set to Get Troubled Flattop Ford to Sea

In a message last month to the fleet, the Acting SECNAV pushed for a renewed sense of urgency to deploy the carrier.

The shock trials are designed to examine the ability of the shipboard equipment and systems to operate following a shock event, the Navy said. While the sea service said it anticipates these shock events will lead to some damage to the ship’s systems and equipment, it also expects that these repairs will not threaten future operations. ★



Additionally, the Chapter's Go Fund Me application has been approved, so some time in the not-too-distant future we will launch a campaign to help raise funds which will assist us in supporting our efforts to support ROTC/JROTC programs in our community as well as other activities as appropriate.

Finally, Memorial Day weekend is approaching. Please pause, reflect and offer a prayer for all of our fallen brothers and sisters who made the ultimate sacrifice in the defense of our beloved country.

God bless all of you. ALL GAVE SOME. SOME GAVE ALL!

Respectfully,

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



Chaplain's Corner...

God, Country, Duty, Honor.

Words that demand response. The response to each of those has to begin with Faith.

Faith in God has to be the bedrock for all our values and motives. As our Creator, He instilled in every human some level of awareness of Himself if only the recognition of a power greater than ourselves. Then we have to admit there must be a proper response in subordinating ourselves to that power. That response is to seek ever greater knowledge of Him.

That response is Faith and needs to be nurtured and expanded to form the basis of all our other knowledge and judgments. Faith is what we believe. Religion is how we live out that Faith. Country is a human device to facilitate.

Peoples living together in mutual support. Countries are established by various methods. By ethnic groups or tribes, by geographic features, or commercial enterprise. To be successful the people of a country must have Faith in the country's founding principles, and Faith in each other. Our country is defined by geography and based on a Constitution that accommodates multiple ethnic groups and beliefs. Our country is both fragile and amazingly resilient. It has become history's most powerful nation with the highest standard of living in the world. So, now comes Duty. We in MOAA understand duty. At the bottom line, duty means putting others ahead of self. Its root is the commandment to love others. True love is self-sacrificing, exemplified by Jesus sacrificing Himself for us. Our military service taught us about Duty. And that obligation did not end when we were separated from active status. As our country enters a new chapter in our political history, the call to Duty is as strong as ever. Duty to God, Duty to Country, Duty to each other. Therein is the source of Honor. We learned this in military service. Some of us learned earlier in the Boy Scouts. "On my honor, I will do my best to do my duty to God and my country...to help other people at all times..." We ask God to continue to bless each of us, bless our country, and bless our service members and their families.

VA Health Care Services Expand for Veterans in the Community

By: René Campos
May 04, 2021

Prapass Pulsub/Getty Images

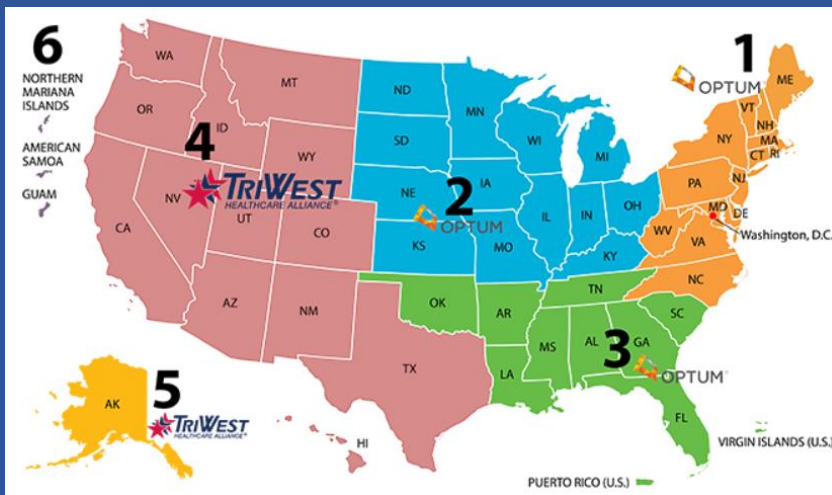


The VA's pioneering work to deliver health care to veterans through community partnerships is not widely known. In 1945, the department established a hometown program allowing community providers to treat returning World War II veterans for service-connected ailments at the government's expense, thereby preventing hospitalizations.

Today, the VA manages a sprawling network of community care providers because of the MISSION Act. The law further expands community care eligibility and provides a new urgent care benefit for veterans.

One provision of the act included a new Veterans Community Care Program (VCCP), established in June 2019. A component of the program is the VA Community Care Network (CCN). CCN is made up of six regional networks being deployed across all U.S. states and territories in a phased approach. CCN contractors TriWest Healthcare Alliance (TriWest) and OptumServe (called third-party administrators, or TPAs) are VA's direct link to community providers to ensure veterans receive timely, high-quality care as close to home as possible.

OptumServe manages regions 1, 2, and 3, which include all states east of the Mississippi as well as Arkansas, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Oklahoma, and South Dakota, plus Puerto Rico. TriWest manages regions 4 and 5, covering the western states.



The regional networks that make up the VA's Community Care Network (image via VA.gov)

VA Health Care...*continued from previous page...*

Last October, MOAA reported the award of a new community care contract in Alaska to TriWest for Region 5. TriWest launched the new network on April 1 in Kodiak. The contract is expected to be fully implemented across the rest of the state by mid-June.

A community care contract for veterans living in Guam, American Samoa and Saipan will be covered under a separate, region 6 contract which has yet to be awarded. VA is currently working on modifying the region 4 CCN contract to cover Pacific Island veterans. Until the contract is awarded, veterans will continue to receive care from their current community providers in the region.

MOAA and our veterans and military service organization partners meet monthly with VA's Office of Community Care to receive updates on VCCP and CCN. This month's meeting included some good information for veterans and their families to better understand the community care process and what the VA is doing to improve care coordination.

VA Community Care in a Nutshell

Veterans enrolled in VA health care may receive care in the community based on their health care needs and preferences, and whether they meet certain eligibility criteria. Veterans always have the option to receive care in a VA facility if they so desire.

Understanding eligibility, access standards, and the overall process can be a little daunting to even the most seasoned veteran, and even more so for a newcomer using VA community care services.

The VA created a simple guide to understanding community care — [click here](#) for a PDF guide answering key questions for veterans, including:

- Am I eligible to see a community provider?
- What are the drive time access standards?
- What are the wait time standards?

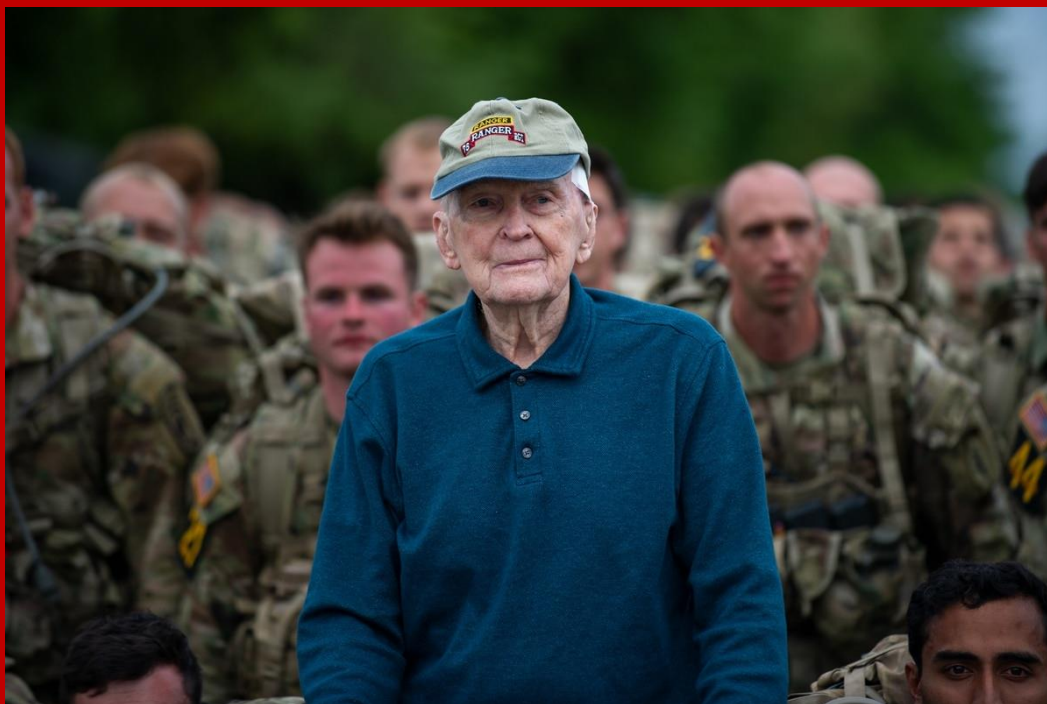
The VA developed another guide for veterans and their families to help them understand the community care process. This guide provides veterans and family members with a quick overview, and can also be used to document VA and TPA contacts and appointment information that veterans can post at home or elsewhere for quick reference.

[Click here](#) to learn more about the eight-step community care process:

- Step 1:** Consult Creation and Review
- Step 2:** Scheduling
- Step 3:** Authorization
- Step 4:** Community Care Visit
- Step 5:** Scheduling Additional Appointments
- Step 6:** Reauthorization
- Step 7:** Prescription and Durable Medical Equipment Pick-Up
- Step 8:** Receiving and Paying Your Bill

MOAA expects to hear more about VA's progress in rolling out regions 5 and 6 in the coming weeks and months, including other enhancements to improve veterans' experiences in accessing community care services. Stay tuned to upcoming MOAA newsletters for additional community care updates and advancements as VA implements other key provisions the MISSION Act. ★

Retired Ranger Col. Ralph Puckett, 94, to Receive Medal of Honor for Korean War Battle



Retired U.S. Army Col. Ralph Puckett stands alongside troops as they prepare to start a foot march during the 2021 David E. Grange Jr. Best Ranger Competition on Fort Benning, Ga., April 16. (Sgt. Henry Villarama/Army)

Retired Army **Col. Ralph Puckett** was a young lieutenant when he led 51 Rangers and nine Korean soldiers across 800 yards of frozen rice paddies to seize and hold a key hill overlooking the Chongchon River in what is now North Korea.

They lost four Rangers and one Korean in the assault, but another battle was still to come.

During the night that followed, Puckett's Rangers faced hundreds of Chinese forces counterattacking the hill. He would be wounded three times before ordering his men to leave him behind and retreat — a command they disobeyed.

Puckett previously received the Distinguished Service Cross for his actions during the battle for Hill 205 on Nov. 25, 1950. Seventy years later, that award is being upgraded to the Medal of Honor.

President Joe Biden spoke by phone with Puckett and his wife Friday to congratulate them, said John Lock, a retired Army officer who has been lobbying for the upgrade.

The phone call was first reported by the Washington Post.

The president also told Puckett that the administration would be coordinating with him this week to set a date for the ceremony, which is expected to be held at the White House, Lock told Army Times.

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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!

Surviving Spouse Corner

Judith Thomas

Surviving Spouse MOAA Liaison

jthomas482@aol.com



As a surviving spouse and a member of MOAA, you have access to a host of people who are there to guide you through any difficulties or questions you might have. MOAA exists to protect military benefits and to offer you resources which cannot be found elsewhere.

MOAA membership is 350,000 strong, of which 16% are surviving spouses. Experts in the Washington, D.C., area advocate for legislation benefiting our community; they are equally vigilant when fighting legislation that would harm our benefits.

You are encouraged to visit MOAA.org, where you can sign up to receive [The MOAA Newsletter](#) and choose areas of most interest to you, such health care and earned benefits, finance, and spouse and family.

On the homepage when you see the prompt "I AM A," scroll down and click on "Surviving Spouse," which will lead you to the [Surviving Spouse Page](#). This site provides information relevant to our community.

MOAA has a Surviving Spouse Advisory Council (SSAC) consisting of eight surviving spouses advocating for issues and concerns of interest to our community. Email SSACouncil@moaa.org with any questions or concerns you may have.

MOAA's Surviving Spouse Virtual Chapter meets once a month and is open to all MOAA surviving spouses and surviving spouse liaisons. Speakers cover important information regarding issues and concerns one month and the next is an open forum meeting taking questions and hearing concerns of attendees. [Learn more about the chapter, including how to join.](#)

Additionally, [MOAA's Surviving Spouses and Friends](#) Facebook group provides information, answers questions, and offers an opportunity to interact with others traveling the same course. Although not sponsored by MOAA, another Facebook group, [DIC Surviving Spouses & Friends](#), is open to all surviving spouses who receive or who have questions regarding Dependency and Indemnity Compensation.

[RELATED AT MOAA.ORG: [Dependency and Indemnity Compensation](#)]

Check out your [local MOAA chapter](#) where you can meet new people and other surviving spouses. Some of our events have speakers on a variety of subjects that might interest or concern you, with some other events providing entertainment. Most chapters have a surviving spouse liaison who is there to assist you with any issues or concerns you might have or just to provide some comfort or a sounding board. ★



As Space Dwindles, Final Rules on Burial Eligibility for Arlington Cemetery Expected This Fall

Leo Shane III

Soldiers from the 3rd Infantry Regiment, also called the "Old Guard," place U.S. flags in front of every grave site at Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, Va., on May 21, 2020, ahead of Memorial Day weekend. (Chip Somodevilla/Getty Images)

Army officials expect to unveil their final rule changes for burial eligibility at Arlington National Cemetery sometime this fall, after they finish sorting through significant public feedback on plans to restrict which veterans can choose the site as their final resting place.

In testimony before the House Appropriations Committee on Wednesday, Karen Durham-Aguilera, executive director of Army National Military Cemeteries and Arlington National Cemetery, said she expects revisions to those rules in coming months, but would not say whether that would tighten or loosen the proposed eligibility restrictions.

"We continue to explore all viable options to ensure Arlington National Cemetery continues to honor our nation's heroes for generations to come," she said.

"It's really an impossible problem for us. The eligible population is more than 22 million ... currently today, we have less than 85,000 spaces."



New Eligibility Rules for Arlington Cemetery Would Exclude Most Non-Combat Veterans

Army officials in late 2019 proposed restricting all below-ground burial sites to combat heroes, battle casualties and a small pool of notable dignitaries. Other veterans would be eligible for placement of cremated remains in above-ground structures at the cemetery.

But numerous veterans groups have opposed that move, saying it could upset numerous families' end-of-life plans and risks the perception that

certain military experiences are more valuable than other service. Nearly 2,000 individuals and advocacy groups submitted public comments on the eligibility rule changes last fall.

The 157-year-old cemetery, originally established as an overflow site for mounting Civil War casualties, has become one of the most hallowed military sites in America. Before the pandemic, about 3 million visitors traveled to the site annually. ★

Retired Ranger Col. Ralph Puckett

The 2021 defense policy bill urged the president to award the Medal of Honor to Puckett and three other service members. Decisions by the president have not been announced for the other three: **Dwight W. Birdwell, Alwyn C. Cashe and Earl D. Plumlee.**

The battle for Hill 205 was part of a counteroffensive that marked the Chinese entrance into the Korean War, destroyed the Eighth Army's right flank and triggered a massive U.S. retreat.

The sheer number of Chinese forces surprised the Americans, including those sitting on Hill 205. A day before the battle, Puckett was briefed that there were 25,000 Chinese troops in his division's sector.

"Well, I knew that violated our doctrine," Puckett recalled for an [oral history project](#). "When the United States Army made an assault or made an attack, the doctrine was to outnumber the enemy 2:1 or preferably 3:1. Well, they [the Chinese] outnumbered us 3:2, so I knew something was wrong."

Retired Army Col. Ralph Puckett, a Korean War and Vietnam War veteran, will receive the Medal of Honor for his actions in Korea. The president phoned him April 30 to congratulate him. (Wikipedia Commons)

After initially taking Hill 205, which was laid with bunkers, the Rangers set up a perimeter and prepared their rocket launchers and machine guns for nightfall. The closest U.S. Army ground unit was more than a mile away.

"We were always alone, and tonight was to be no different," Puckett said.

Waves of Chinese attacks came throughout the night. The assaults started with whistles from the Chinese lines, followed by mortar barrages, automatic weapons fire and hand grenades. Four Chinese attacks were repelled, thanks to close artillery strikes called in by Puckett.

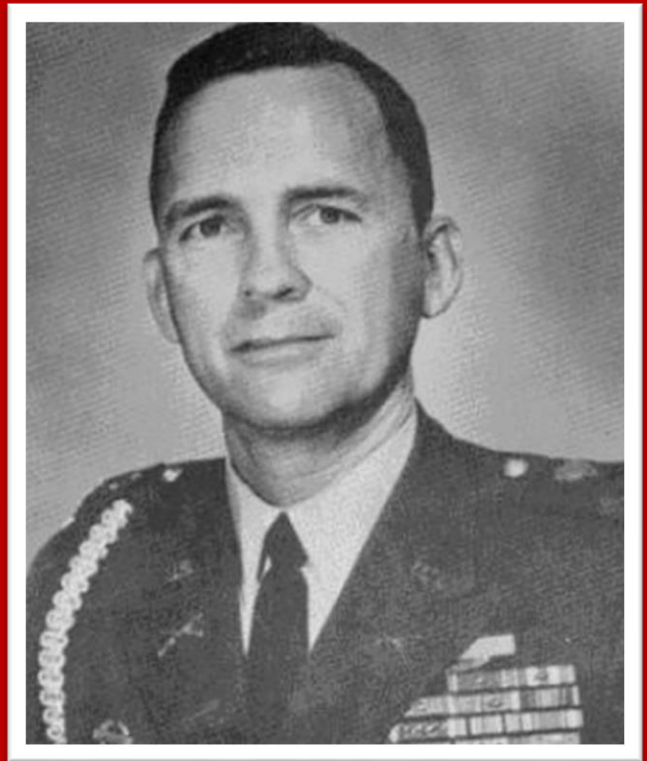
"At about 0200-0230 in the morning, we heard the Chinese blowing their whistles, bugles, always the same thing," Puckett said. He once again got on the radio to call artillery, but the cannons were busy supporting another unit and could not help.

"We are under great pressure, we're crumbling, we're being overrun, I just gave my unit the word to withdraw," Puckett recalled telling the artillery crews by radio.

Throughout the assault, Puckett had repeatedly left the safety of his foxhole to observe the Chinese troop movements and to direct artillery fire, exposing himself to small-arms and mortar fire, [according to his award citation](#).

By the time Chinese troops massed for their final assault, Puckett was wounded so seriously that he was unable to move, the citation stated.

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"I had been wounded three times by then, and I was lying there in the foxhole unable to do anything," Puckett said. "I could see three Chinese about 15 yards away from me, and they were bayonetting or shooting some of my wounded Rangers."

Two privates first class, **Billy G. Walls and David L. Pollock**, charged back up the hill, shot the three Chinese troops and carried Puckett down the steep mountain face, through brush and back to the American lines.

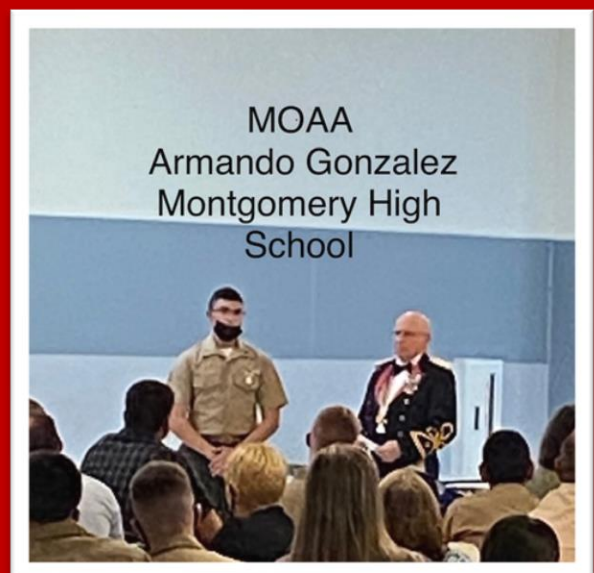
Puckett, a 1949 West Point graduate, retired from the Army in 1971 after also serving in the Vietnam War. During his time there, Puckett, then a lieutenant colonel, was awarded a second Distinguished Service Cross, two **Silvers Stars**, and three **Legion of Merit** decorations.

He was inducted into the Ranger Hall of Fame in 1992.

Puckett was born in Tifton, Georgia, and now lives near Fort Benning, where he maintains close ties to the 75th Ranger Regiment. In April, he visited and offered words of encouragement to Rangers participating in the annual Best Ranger Competition at the Army post. ★

MOAA HA Members In Action

The MOAA HA Chapter actively supports the MOAA award program at seven Houston-area ROTC detachments and 110 JROTC high school programs. The Houston Chapter purchases the MOAA medals and MOAA HA members personally present the awards at the school-sponsored ceremonies. In April, LTC Rollins Collins, USA (Ret.) presented MOAA JROTC awards to Houston-area high school students.





CID Overhaul: A Civilian Director Will Oversee Criminal Probes; Officers to Become Special Agents

Kyle Rempfer

Army CID special agents train on Fort Belvoir, Virginia, in September 2017. (Master Sgt. Michel Sauret/Army)

The Army will put a high-ranking civilian with investigative experience in charge of Criminal Investigation Command, known by the older

acronym CID, as well as create an officer special agent career field.

The changes split the duties currently assigned to just one general and redesigns Army CID's command structure to mirror the criminal investigative arms of the Air Force and Navy, according to Maj. Gen. Donna Martin, the provost marshal general, who oversaw the planning process.

"We have not done this in a vacuum," Martin said by phone Thursday morning. "We did a lot of coordination and research with our other law enforcement partners, to include the Office of Special Investigations with the Air Force and Naval Criminal Investigative Service."

The provost marshal general of the Army will remain in charge of military police, but will no longer oversee CID. The new civilian director of CID will report to the undersecretary of the Army, while the provost marshal general will report to the service's chief of staff.

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May MOAA HA Guest Speaker...

Captain Dean Soloman
Home Front Command, Israeli Defence Forces

When: Saturday, May 22nd, 2021 at Noon
Where: Virtual Chapter Meeting via Zoom
Zoom Invite to follow via Email



Our May guest speaker is Capt. Dean Solomon from the Israeli Defense Forces. Dean is a Disaster Risk Reduction and emergency management expert, a group facilitator, and an educator. He began his military service in the IDF in 2008 and is qualified for urban search & rescue, chemical warfare response, urban combat, and emergency management. He has participated in operations Cast Lead (2008), Pillar of Defense (2012) and Protective Edge (2014).

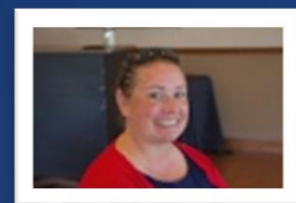
Capt. Solomon will talk to the chapter about his own personal experience in the IDF, as well as providing an overview of the IDF roles and missions. ★

April Chapter Luncheon: USO Houston Director Speaks to the MOAA HA Chapter



On April 24th, the MOAA HA Chapter met at the Golfcrest Country Club in Pearland, TX for our April luncheon. We had a great turnout, a tasty lunch, and welcomed Ms. Lorén Westerfield, the USO Houston Director, as our guest speaker.

Lorén spoke to the chapter about the current mission of USO Houston, as well as the numerous USO programs that support Houston-area military servicemembers and their families. As the director of the USO Houston, Lorén is responsible for the four USO Centers located at Houston Intercontinental Airport, Hobby Airport, Ellington Field, and the Houston Military Entrance Processing Station. If you are interested in volunteer opportunities with USO Houston, please email Lorén at lwesterfield@uso.org.



Lorén Westerfield
Director Houston USO



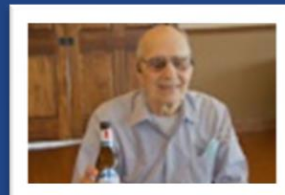
Dan Gutierrez



Sveltiana Willoughby



Dennis O'Driscoll



Joe Brodack



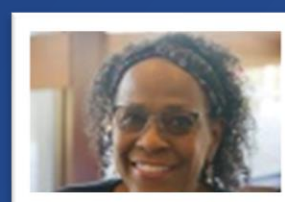
Carol Hebert



Ken Tamberg



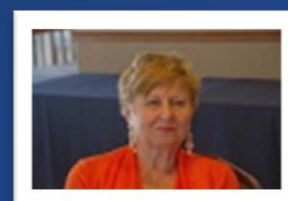
Mike Martin



Dr. Janice Nickie-Green



Joe Willoughby



Stacie Chamberlain



Friend of Rhee Haun



Rhee Haun



Rick Miller

CID Overhaul: *Continued from Page 12...*

Army Times first reported that CID was undergoing a massive redesign in March. CID special agents have long been concerned that their organization is managed by military police officers who are not criminal investigators by trade and therefore do not understand special agent priorities. That dynamic is now changing.

Under the redesign, a new officer special agent career field will be created to lead enlisted special agents, and the military police officers who supervise them now will be replaced as those new officer agents mature.

“The officer corps that we’re going to introduce into CID over the long term, they will attend the same courses, they will attain the same skill-set as our current credentialed agents,” Martin said. “This is much like what the Air Force does with their commissioned officers. ... They will grow inside of the CID organization, learning the exact same things the agents do, and then they will attain those leadership positions.”

Martin is expected to be replaced by her deputy, Brig. Gen. Duane Miller, as the provost marshal general. She said her next position has not yet been announced. The hiring process for CID’s civilian director, who will be a member of the Senior Executive Service, is underway.

The Army plans to implement the CID redesign in phases, beginning at Fort Hood, Texas; Fort Bragg, North Carolina; and Fort Carson, Colorado. Those posts were chosen because of their “large populations and the mixture of units that are assigned there,” Martin noted.

The redesign was triggered by a review of Fort Hood’s CID detachment, where civilian inspectors said personnel shortages and overworked agents led to poorly handled criminal cases. Those **problems exist at other large installations across the force** as well, agents have told Army Times. ★



CID special agents assigned to protective details escort their "principal" during a training event at Quantico, Virginia. (Army)

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION / RENEWAL FORM

Military Officers Association of America – Houston Area

Membership is available to Officers who have held a Federal Warrant or Commission in any of the seven uniformed services of the United States or to the surviving spouse of such a person. Please use this form for application for membership, renewal or changes to the current directory of members. Additionally, The Chapter always welcomes donations to assist the Chapter's operating expenses and supporting our ROTC and JROTC programs.

Name: _____
(Please print) Last First Initial Rank

Branch _____ Status _____ MOAA Nat'l ID _____ *

Spouse's First Name: _____ Tel. for Directory _____

Home Address: _____

Email: _____

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**)

Surviving Spouse – \$15 first year; annual renewal \$10 (same discount for multiple years)

Chapter Assistance Fund

\$100.00 \$50.00 \$25.00 Other _____

Make check payable to MOAA-HA and mail to:

MOAA-HA
PO Box 1082
Houston, TX 77251-1082



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: _____