The OWRC Briefing Board

The Newsletter of the Ohio Western Reserve Chapter, An affiliate of the Military Officers Association of America

November 2026 | Volume 26 Issue 11| OWRC.net and MOAA.org

OWRC-MOAA P.O. Box 4272 Copley OH 44321-0272

For questions contact the Chapter Webmaster at andy@andrewemanuele.com

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- 2026-2027 OWRC Calendar

OWRC Annual Christmas Party, Friday, 4 Dec, Arrive 6PM
4769 Belpar St NW, Canton OH
Social time, supper. Installation of new OWRC President

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President's Notes

Hey members!



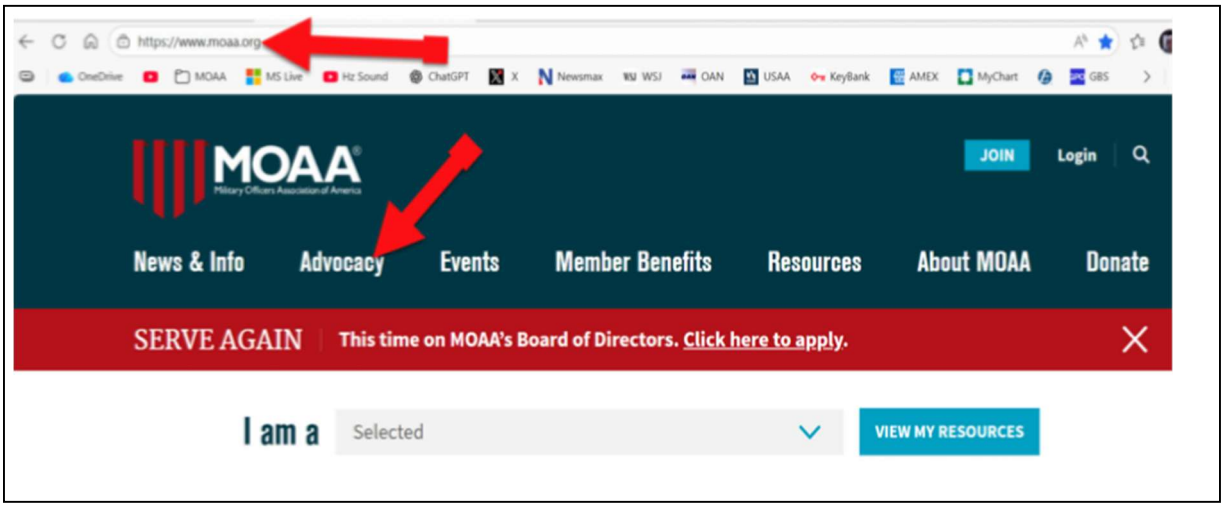
1) Tom Luczynsky is to call/email you about the Christmas Party. We are trying to get the sign-up information into the Nov Newsletter. He was to call the restaurant today to see if we can get a three-choice plated meal instead of ordering off the menu. You may have to wait until next Wednesday the 28th to print the December newsletter if he does not contact you by then

2) November Presidents Message
There is a Veterans Remembrance Ceremony at Kent State University on Tuesday 10 November. I graduated from there in 1967 and received my commission through the AFROTC program.
Wednesday, 11 November is Veterans Day, formerly called Armistice Day. If you attend a ceremony let me know so we can put it in our chapter newsletter for December.
There are Witness Tree events taking place in NE Ohio. The VFW in Cuyahoga Falls is

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hosting one.
We will have our Doughboy on Wednesday 18 November. Michael's A.M. at 11:30.
Thanksgiving will be on Thursday the 26th.
Switching to December, our annual Christmas Party is Friday 4 Dec at 18:00. It is at Lucias Steakhouse at 4769 Belpar St NW Canton OH. Get off I-77 at Everhard Rd, and go SW . Belpar St will be on your left as you travel on Everhard.
At the Ohio Council of Chapters on 17 October, we had a common concern on finding and signing up new members.
In our chapter, we need a 1st and 2nd Vice President to keep up an orderly succession of our chapter leadership. Duties: attend the quarterly chapter meetings, handle membership challenges, etc. Any takers?
I hope to see you at the Wednesday lunches.

William J. Maki
President, OWRC



You can click on the legislative items that have the word "Write" by them. You may have to fill out your name, street and city address, and other items. Once you do this, next time the areas may automatically fill in for you. So, it will be easier and faster the following months.
http://www.moaa.org/takeaction
There are also five areas on the bottom of the screen, like Currently Serving, Families and Survivors, Retirees and Veterans and more. You may click on those to see special legislative requests that MOAA is also advocating.
EVERY TIME YOU "VOTE" MOAA CAN TAKE THOSE VOTES TO OUR ELECTED MEMBERS. THIS SHOWS THEM THE ACTIVE AND RETIRED AND SURVIVING SPOUSES WANT ACTION!
So please, fellow members, do your part. Send in your requests each month.

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This is a copy of the invitation for the 2026 OWRC Christmas Party. It will be available on the OWRC web site tonight.

You are invited to attend the Ohio Western Reserve Chapter of MOAA, **Annual Membership Meeting , Christmas Party, and Cookie Exchange** scheduled for **Friday, 4 December 2026, 1730 - 2100 hrs.**

The venue is Lucia's Steakhouse, 4769 Belpar St NW, Canton, OH 44718
https://luciassteakhouse.com/

Meal Prices:

- 8 oz. Boston Strip, potato and vegetable and salad $55
- Lemon Cod, rice and vegetables and salad $42
- Chicken Parmigiana on Linguine and salad $44
- Veal Parmigiana on Linguine and salad $48
- Vegetarian Kabobs on Rice and salad $40

All meals include Chocolate Mousse for dessert and all non- alcoholic drinks (Coffee, Tea, Water, Soda)

Appetizers will be available and guests order own alcoholic drinks.

Please bring two dozen cookies for the exchange. You will leave with a mixture of a dozen fantastic cookies for the holidays.
Please make your reservations not later than Monday, 30 November 2026. OWRC members should either the link in this notice < *TBP* >or the Chapter web page.
Non-members can use the link or call, text, or email William Maki at 330-928-2735 or william_maki@att.net

Thank you,
William J. Maki
President, Ohio Western Reserve Chapter

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OWRC Legislative Report, November 2026

Rep. Miller Introduces Bill to Rename VA Clinic in Honor of Ohio Korean War Veteran

Sep 10, 2026
Veterans

WASHINGTON, D.C. September 1, 2026 — U.S. Representative Max Miller (R-OH-07) introduced legislation today to name the Department of Veterans Affairs Community-Based Outpatient Clinic in Medina County the **"Leland John Codding VA Clinic,"** honoring a Korean War veteran and lifelong public servant.

"Leland Codding has dedicated his life to serving our country, our veterans, and the people of Medina County," said **Congressman Max Miller**. "From his service during the Korean War to his countless hours of volunteering at the Ohio Western Reserve National Cemetery and his decades of service in public safety, Leland embodies duty, sacrifice, and commitment to community. Naming this clinic in his honor is a fitting tribute to a man who has spent his life honoring those who served."

Codding served in the **U.S. Army's 89th Airborne Artillery Battalion from 1951 to 1952** during the Korean War. He later became an avid volunteer for the **Ohio Western Reserve National Cemetery**, working alongside fellow veteran Ralph Waite to secure its establishment in Medina County.

Codding also dedicated decades to public safety, joining the **Medina Fire Department in 1959** and becoming the city's first full-time Fire Chief in 1988. He has been a member of **American Legion Post 202 since 1957** and has dedicated more than **5,500 hours to the Honor Guard at the Ohio Western Reserve National Cemetery**.

The legislation would designate the VA Community-Based Outpatient Clinic at **6374 Alder Lane in Medina, Ohio**, as the **"Leland John Codding Department of Veterans Affairs Clinic,"** recognizing more than 70 years of service to his country, fellow veterans, and community. Read more at MaxMillerHouse.gov

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Fellow Council Members,

Please take a few minutes to review the Ohio MOAA Legislative Hub:
Ohio MOAA Legislative Hub

The hub brings together our chapter legislative activity, member action resources, Ohio veterans benefit information, and links to official election and ballot resources.

We have good work to recognize across the Council:
• **Ohio Western Reserve led the Ohio chapters listed in MOAA's report with 382 legislative actions from January 1 through September 30. Congratulations to Dick Calta and the chapter for encouraging members to take action.**
• Mahoning and Shenango Valleys followed closely with 381 actions over the same period. The chapter also met directly with Congressman Michael Rulli during Summer Advocacy in Action.
• Greater Cleveland's third-quarter report documents promotion of MOAA's Legislative Action Center and introduction of the Ohio OCC legislative site to its members. Thank you, Bart, for helping members put these resources to use.

Thank you to all of our chapters and legislative representatives for keeping members informed and engaged. Every chapter's participation matters, and the hub gives us a practical way to share what is working.

Please review your chapter's information, send me any corrections or additional accomplishments, and share the hub with your members. I would especially welcome ideas that other chapters can use to strengthen participation.

Respectfully,

Joe Mersol
Fmr. MAJ, USA
Mahoning and Shenango Valleys Chapter
First Vice-President

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OWRC Doughboy Breakfast

Wednesday 11 November 2026

Michael's A.M. Restaurant
1562 Akron Peninsula Rd
Akron, OH 44313

The Ohio Western Reserve Chapter (OWRC) of the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA)is pleased to welcome you to 2d Annual Doughboy Breakfast.

The meal commemorates the 11th of November 1918, when all fighting in WW I was to stop at the 11th hour of the 11th Day of the 11th month. Originally called Armistice Day, it is now called Veterans Day.

The typical military breakfast in WW I was oatmeal, pork sausages, fried potatoes, bread and butter, and coffee. Please order at least one of the items below, or more, in remembrance of all Veterans.

- Pork sausage, fried. Or tinned meat
- Bread and butter. Or biscuit. Jelly.
- Oatmeal or fried potatoes. Onions if available.
- One piece fruit, fresh or dried.
- Sultanas (golden raisins)
- Vegetables – boiled or dried
- Cheese – 3 oz. Coffee or tea,

You may order other items from the menu to please your palate.

$5.00 of each meal cost goes to the OWRC Charity fund. Please tip the Wait Staff

Please arrive by 1130 so the meals may be ordered. There will be a recital of the poem "Flanders Field" at the conclusion of the meal. Also come prepared to discuss why WW I American soldiers were call "Doughboys"

Thank You,

Respectfully,

William J. Maki
President, OWRC

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OWRC 2026 Calendar:

November
7th Museum Voices of Valor/1600, $25 Supper and program/1700-2000
10th Marine Corps Birthday
11th Veterans Day
13th – Veteran's Appreciation Luncheon Guest Speaker SAM Center/Stark County – see flyer page 21
18th Doughboy Breakfast and Annual Business Meeting at Michael's A.M. (select next year's officers)
26th Thanksgiving
Weekly Wednesday luncheons

December
4th Annual Christmas/Holiday Party at Lucia's in North Canton
4th VA Healthcare/Ancillary Benefits Lunch & Learn SAM Center/Stark County – **see flyer page 29**
25th Christmas
31st New Years Eve
Weekly Wednesday luncheons

TRICARE Open Season begins Monday, Nov. 9

By TRICARE Communications

FALLS CHURCH, Va. – TRICARE Open Season begins Monday, Nov. 9. If you're eligible for TRICARE, this is your chance to enroll in a health plan or change plans for coverage that starts Jan. 1, 2027. You can make eligible changes through Tuesday, Dec. 8.

USAA Driver Safety Information

USAA Can Help You REDUCE Your Auto Insurance Bill!
USAA has a cell phone app (program to me) that tracks your driving.
When you sign up/enroll you get 15% off on your auto insurance bill.
You have to have your phone on when you drive.
I am getting a power cord to plug into my phone. There was a warning
the phone battery could be "severely depleted" on long trips.
You receive reports on your driving. Speed, stops, acceleration, etc.
If your combined score - after a while - exceeds 87 (out of 100) you
could get a lower drivers insurance bill.
So try it out.
Bill Maki, President, OWRC

USAA Website

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VALUABLE MOAA RESOURCES

- [moaa.org] MOAA Home Page
- You don't have to Login but you have more access if you do
- Click on [Resources]
- Select [Surviving Spouse Corner]
    - Click on [Go Now}
- Here you will find monthly informational articles from the past 12 months plus archived articles from several years
- Go to [I am a] and select [Surviving Spouse]
    - Select [View My Resources] - Six green squares appear
        - Select [Survivor Publication from MOAA] You will see a list of all publications that are available to you from MOAA arranged by topic area. There are three that are specifically directed to Surviving Spouses
    - Use back arrow and return to the six green squares

Select [Surviving Spouse FAQs and More] You will find a list of frequently asked questions and answers. There is also an extensive list of MOAA LINKS that take you straight to website references on a plethora of topics. There is also a Suggested Reading list on several topics. Check out the other four squares as well as Chapter Membership information on this page.

-Information courtesy of Roy Yenchesky via Janet Oglesby



OWRC Table at the Veterans Resource Fair 2/3 October

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JOIN US AT THE EXCITING MOAA 2027 OHIO STATE CONVENTION!

Registration Opens October 1, 2026--Visit www.cincymoaa.org



MAIN CONVENTION SITE: IRISH HERITAGE CENTER (FOR FRIDAY/SATURDAY PROGRAMS AND BANQUET WITH SPEAKER)

Our main convention site will be the Irish Heritage Center, with great spaces for programs, the banquet, (with a stage for presentations) and activities. The picture at right depicts the Theater and stage. Saturday night features a great speaker, musical entertainment including a fabulous "Andrews Sisters" tribute act, who perform professionally as the "Vocalitas" (seen on left).



THURSDAY OPENING CEREMONY:

The USS Cincinnati Memorial Site, Liberty Township. This fabulous new attraction honors the USS Cincinnati submarine, now completed and filled with great historical references and activities.



THURSDAY GOLF OUTING AND AWARDS AT FOUR BRIDGES COUNTRY CLUB

We are thrilled to be hosting our golf outing at this exclusive private country club, just a three-minute walk from the USS Cincinnati opening ceremony site.

FRIDAY PROGRAM, RIVERBOAT RIDE AND DINNER AT RIVER ROOM, MONTGOMERY INN BOATHOUSE



After morning registration and veterans' programs, enjoy a bonding time on a riverboat cruise with narration of significant history and nearby military events, followed by a sumptuous dinner served at Cincinnati's famous Montgomery Inn Boathouse in the fabulous River Room overlooking the Ohio (with a short program).



CONVENTION HOTEL: THE MARRIOTT SPRINGHILL SUITES IN MT. ADAMS, AN EIGHT MINUTE DRIVE TO THE IRISH HERITAGE CENTER (BREAKFAST INCLUDED, $109/NIGHT).

******ONLINE REGISTRATION OPENS******

OCTOBER 1, 2026

- ✓Convention registration
- ✓Hotel reservations
- ✓Program updates
- ✓Speaker announcements

For more information, or to volunteer to serve on one of our committees, contact Rob Croskery, State Convention Committee Chairman: Office phone 513-232-5297; or email rcroskery@croskerylaw.com.

STILL SERVING FOR FREEDOM

AN OHIO RIVER ADVENTURE



Oct 21-24, 2027-Cincinnati, Oh

MOAA State Convention

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MOAA's TRICARE Guide:

TRICARE For Life Marks 25-Year Milestone

By: Kate Horrell
OCTOBER 23, 2026



Morsa Images/Getty Images

Editor's Note: This article is part of MOAA's 2026-27 TRICARE Guide, brought to you by MOAA Insurance Plans, administered by Association Member Benefits Advisors (AMBA). A version of the guide appeared in the November 2026 issue of Military Officer magazine.

TRICARE For Life (TFL) is a valuable medical benefit for U.S. military retirees and their eligible family members, including survivors. This program works with Medicare to provide comprehensive coverage, saving the cost of a Medicare drug plan, eliminating the need for a TRICARE supplement, and paying most costs left over after Medicare. For many military retirees, TFL is a vital part of their overall military retirement benefits.

However, this important coverage didn't always exist.

As we reflect on the 25th anniversary of TFL, it is helpful to remember that the program exists largely because of one retired Air Force colonel. His fight over what happens to TRICARE coverage when a retiree or their family member turns 65 brought national attention to a real gap in military benefits, ultimately resulting in the program we have today.

The story starts in 1956, when Congress passed the Dependents' Medical Care Act of 1956. This law was intended to "create and maintain high morale throughout the uniformed services by providing an improved and uniform program of medical care for members of the uniformed services and their dependents."

Prior to this law, retirees and their dependents frequently received medical care from military treatment facilities (MTFs) on a space-available basis, but there was nothing requiring MTFs to treat anyone beyond active duty members. The act made this law, while also adding coverage for civilian care.

Nearly a decade later, the federal government established Medicare, followed by the creation of the Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Uniformed Services (CHAMPUS) to support civilian medical care for

retirees and dependents when they could not be accommodated within the military system. This fee-for-service option was not free, but it provided health care coverage for those who could not access MTFs due to availability or location.

CHAMPUS eventually evolved into TRICARE; however, neither of their coverage included Medicare-eligible retirees and family members.

For decades, beneficiaries lost their military medical coverage when they became eligible for Medicare, usually at age 65. Many of those retirees were angry, believing they had been promised health care for life by recruiters, and some felt the contract they had made with the military wasn't being honored.

Retiree groups rallied against this for years, but the person who turned that broken promise into a national reckoning was Col. George "Bud" Day. Day was a Medal of Honor recipient and a POW from the Vietnam War who spent more than five years in captivity alongside fellow POW John McCain. After retiring to Florida and becoming a lawyer, Day was turned away from the hospital at Eglin AFB due to his age. In 1996, he sued the federal government, arguing it had made a clear, binding offer of lifetime care that retirees accepted through their service, and that Congress had no right to renege on it after the fact.

The case was complicated. There were back-and-forth rulings for several years, and these court cases brought more attention to the issue.

While the case wound its way through the courts, Congress took action.

The FY 2001 National Defense Authorization Act created a new type of coverage, called TRICARE For Life. This plan works as a Medicare wraparound: Medicare pays first, and TFL covers the deductibles, coinsurance, and cost sharing required of Medicare recipients. This includes the large deductible for hospitalizations, and the 20% copayment for regular medical care.

TFL itself has no enrollment fees, premiums, deductibles, or copayments.

Importantly for many retirees, the program acts as primary coverage for care received overseas that is ineligible for Medicare payment.

To be eligible for TFL, the beneficiary must be enrolled in Medicare parts A and B. This includes paying the required Medicare premiums, even if they live outside of the U.S. and won't use it.

There is no enrollment or application for TFL. The coverage begins automatically when a beneficiary is eligible, though they will likely need to get a new military identification card after turning 65.

TFL represents a real value to military retirees and family members, reducing total out-of-pocket costs for health care through payments for deductibles, copayments, and overseas coverage.Many TFL members report paying little to no health care costs after both programs pay their share.

More than two decades after its creation, TFL remains largely untouched by the periodic overhauls to the rest of TRICARE. During this time, MOAA's sustained advocacy efforts have helped protect the program from changes that would increase costs for retirees, including the addition of enrollment fees.

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The Witness Tree

For the last several years OWRC has taken a larger part in supporting Warriors Journey Home and the Witness Tree program. OWRC will provide more information about the program as Veteran's Day approaches. In the meantime you can find out more about Warriors Journey Home at: https://share.google/2ucAvL2rpoIz8Mb8Z

Respectfully,
William Maki
President, OWRC

History and Significance

Several years ago, The Rev. Scott Hutchinson, founder of "Compass" in Perkasie, Pennsylvania modeled their veteran's ministry on Warriors Journey Home. One community awareness program Rev. Hutchinson developed was "The Witting Tree." Each day from November 1 – 11 he and a Viet Nam veteran placed 22 dog-tags on a tree at a main thoroughfare in their community. The point was to emphasize the daily 22 veteran suicides, raising awareness that many veterans were suffering. When Scott, a WJH board member, shared this ceremony with me, I thought; *We can do that here and name it The Witness Tree.*

Warriors Journey Home, Tallmadge, Ohio started the daily ceremony. Other communities in Ohio, Kentucky, and Wisconsin have adopted the Witness Tree Ceremony. Each day, from November 1 – 11, a brief meditation is read and 22 dog-tags are placed on the Witness Tree calling to mind the war is not over for our veterans. By November

11 the tree will hold 242 dog-tags, signifying of the loss. In Warriors Journey Home the suicide is considered a casualty of war, Killed After Action.

The community gathers at the tree to remember, and to bear testimony to the truth of war; the sacrifices made, the long suffering by those who bear the impact of violence. The focus is on the living, those who are "coming home" following their time in the military service, and our responsibility to bring them home.

Locations

Cuyahoga Falls, OH
Ralph Huff VFW Post 1062
1581 Main Street
Cuyahoga Falls, OH 44221
5:15pm daily
Facilitator: Keith Van Buskirk
keithmax.vanb@gmail.com

Fairlawn, OH
Bicentennial Park
3487 S Smith Road
Fairlawn, OH 44333
11:00am daily
Facilitator: Mike Soful
mike@thebizqb.com

Green, OH
John Torok Community & Senior Center
4224 Massillon Road
Green, OH 44720
Noon daily
Facilitator: Michael Day
michaeld@ibh.org

Kirtland, OH
Kirtland City Hall
9301 Chillicothe Rd
Kirtland, OH 44094
Noon daily
Facilitator: Keith McCrory
keithmccrory0114@gmail.com

Silver Lake, OH
Outside near Village Hall
2961 Kent Road
Silver Lake, OH 44224
11:00am daily
Facilitator: John Schluep
captainjms1951@gmail.com

Stark County Honor Court
Stark County Courthouse
115 Central Plaza N
Canton, OH 44702
Noon daily
Facilitator: Stan Nabors
stannabors@gmail.com

Streetsboro, OH
Evergreen Cemetery
Veterans Memorial Area
5:00pm daily
Facilitator: Aaron Hatzo
ahatzo@gmail.com

Summit County Courthouse
Courtyard
209 S. High Street
Akron, OH 44308
9:00am daily
Facilitator: Karl Nejdl
knejdl1371@icloud.com

Wadsworth, OH
Trinity United Church of Christ
215 High Street
Wadsworth, OH 44281
11:00am daily (11:30am on Sundays)
Facilitator: Peggy Hegbar
hegbarp353@gmail.com

Hartford, WI
Bernd Park, near 911 Memorial
115 N Rural Street
Hartford, WI 53027
9:00am daily
Facilitator: Jim Schlief
james.schleif@gmail.com

For questions about Witness Tree locations, please contact Elyse Kemmerline at ekemmerlineWJH@gmail.com.

Witness Tree in the News:
Trees bear witness to tragedy of veteran suicides
Veteran hangs 22 dog tags on tree in Ohio every day for mental health awareness

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What is Starshield, SpaceX's military version of Starlink?

By Reuters/Military Times
Friday, Oct 16, 2026



A Ukrainian service member prepares a Starlink satellite internet system at his position near Avdiivka.
(Inna Varenytsia/Reuters)

Ukraine said on Wednesday that Elon Musk's SpaceX had restricted "military-grade" Starlink services, hampering Ukrainian drone strike missions and air defenses.

The complaint has drawn renewed attention to the distinction between Starlink, SpaceX's commercial satellite internet service, and Starshield, a military version developed for the Pentagon.

While Musk has said the two systems are separate, in many cases they share the same underlying satellite technology.

"Starshield systems are owned and controlled by the U.S. government," Musk said on Wednesday in a post on X, adding that any limits on speed or usage are decided by the U.S. military or the president. "Starlink is a commercial service owned and controlled by SpaceX. Usage of Starlink is limited to civilian or defensive activities and cannot be used for offensive military action, as doing so would be inappropriate for a commercial company."

WHAT IS STARLINK?

Starlink, the main profit engine of SpaceX, is a satellite internet network of more than 11,000 satellites that beam broadband service directly to user terminals about the size of a folded newspaper. Its roughly 13 million subscribers range from households and hikers to shipping companies and major airlines.

Since launching its first Starlink satellites in 2019 aboard reusable SpaceX rockets, the company has built a vast low-Earth-orbit constellation that blankets much of the planet, delivering faster connections than traditional communications satellites, which typically operate much farther from Earth and in far smaller numbers.

Starlink gave Ukraine a critical communications advantage early in the war, reshaping how militaries operate on the battlefield. But Musk has restricted Starlink for certain military uses while highlighting Starshield, a more secure network developed for government and military missions.

WHAT IS STARSHIELD?

Starshield is a SpaceX business unit that develops military and intelligence satellite systems for the Pentagon.

While its missions are separate from Starlink's commercial broadband service, the distinction is not always clear-cut: Starshield's secure communications services use enhanced encryption and dedicated terminals, but rely on the vast Starlink constellation as their backbone.

Starshield leverages the technology, engineering and operational experiences of Starlink, according to SpaceX. In addition to secure communications, the company says the militarized version can also provide users with Earth observation and the ability to integrate sensors or other payloads.

The Pentagon, Starshield's largest customer, has spent billions of dollars on both Starlink and Starshield services. It has also bought dedicated Starshield satellites, including communications spacecraft for missile-warning missions and a spy constellation for the National Reconnaissance Office, Reuters reported in 2024.

Questions over the relationship between Starlink and Starshield have persisted since Russia threatened Western satellites supporting Ukraine in 2022. SpaceX unveiled Starshield later that year, but the secrecy surrounding national security space programs has left the precise boundaries between the two systems opaque.

Those distinctions became a point of contention earlier this year when the Pentagon clashed with SpaceX over higher prices for satellite services used by military drones during the Iran conflict, Reuters reported.

SpaceX argued that some customers paying roughly $5,000 per terminal for Starlink should instead have been using a Starshield service costing about $25,000 per terminal.

Britain has also adopted Starshield. Under that arrangement, the service uses the same satellite constellation, ground stations and terrestrial infrastructure as Starlink, but operates through dedicated terminals and separate network gateways, Britain's defense ministry has told Reuters.

Other U.S. partners are evaluating the system as well. New Zealand is doing a trial of Starshield to assess its usefulness for military operations, the New Zealand Defence Force previously told Reuters.

Read More at: What is Starshield?

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US Air Strikes Keep Blowing up Cocaine-Laden Boats, but the Drugs Keep Flowing

The U.S. military campaign against the alleged "narco-terrorists" manning these vessels has faded from headlines since the first attack was launched.

By Nathan Jaccard and Cesar Molinares/Military.com



This image from video provided by U.S. South Command, shows a vessel accused of trafficking drugs in the eastern Pacific Ocean shortly before it was destroyed by the U.S. military, killing two and injuring one, on Jan. 23, 2026. (U.S. Southern Command via AP)
Originally published by Miami Herald

First, you hear the high-pitched whine of drones overhead. Next comes the boom of explosions.

"And then in the following days, the sea brings in a jerrycan, pieces of a boat, drugs, people too," says Alberto, a local businessman living in the remote Colombian peninsula of La Guajira.

This grim sequence of events has become familiar for those based along this arid strip of desert, whose shores are lapped by a part of the Caribbean that has been the site of 21 U.S strikes on speedboats over the past year.

The U.S. military campaign against the alleged "narco-terrorists" manning these vessels, known as Operation Southern Spear, has faded from headline news since the first attack was launched just over a year ago on Sept. 2.

Yet it continues to destroy small boats in the Caribbean and eastern Pacific — with at least 238 dead in a total of 70 strikes so far — in the face of heavy criticism from legal experts and rights groups, who call it an ineffective program of what are essentially extrajudicial murders.

President Donald Trump's administration has defended the campaign as justified and lawful, with the president claiming in March that it had helped eliminate nearly all drug trafficking into the U.S. by sea.

Locals on the ground, however, tell a different story. Journalists from OCCRP, the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project, and 360-grados.co traveled to La Guajira, which sits at the northernmost point of South America, to learn more about how the strikes have affected the cocaine trade in this historic smuggling hub.

The residents, officials and trafficking experts who spoke — mostly on condition of anonymity for security reasons — said the strikes had failed to curb boat departures from this impoverished region, where a complex ecosystem of criminal groups control the cocaine trade, and smuggling remains one of the few reliable ways to earn a living.

When the drug-running boatmen — known here as lancheros or choferes, chauffeurs — are arrested or die, the traffickers who coordinate the business simply "get new ones," said a longtime state official who travels frequently around La Guajira.

"Only the families of the dead feel it," she said. "The rest do not."

The official said she has seen no let-up in the flow of speedboats from the peninsula over the past year — an observation echoed by many others. Read more at Speed Boats.

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Trump Ordered a Major Change to Veterans Benefits. MOAA's Brian Kelly Says It Could Fix a Longstanding Problem

MOAA's Brian Kelly wants the government to become proactive about connecting veterans with benefits. A new executive order moves in that direction.

By Douglas Lindsay/Miliary.com



MOAA President and CEO Lt. Gen. Brian T. Kelly, USAF (Ret), testifies before House and Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee members during a joint hearing Feb. 24 in Washington, D.C. (Mike Morones/MOAA)

For most of his Air Force career, retired Lt. Gen. Brian Kelly thought about how to get the right people into uniform, develop them and keep them there.

Today, as president and CEO of the Military Officers Association of America, he spends much of his time thinking about what happens to those people after they leave.

Increasingly, Kelly sees those as parts of the same continuum.

I believe strong national defense comes from strong people, Kelly told Military.com in a recent interview.

And for Kelly, taking care of those people shouldn't suddenly become more complicated when they take off the uniform.

His vision is straightforward: When a service member becomes a veteran, the federal government should already know who that person is, have access to the records documenting that service and be prepared to help connect the new veteran with the benefits he or she may have earned.

Instead of forcing veterans to figure out a new system on their own, Kelly believes technology and greater cooperation between the Defense Department and Department of Veterans Affairs could eventually allow the government to come to them.

And a new executive order suggests that system may be getting closer.

Making the Handoff Seamless

President Donald Trump signed an executive order Sept. 8 directing the Defense Department and VA to overhaul how military personnel and medical records are shared between the departments.

Read more at: Major Change to Benefits.

Ohio Department of Veterans Affairs

Women Veterans Advisory Committee Meeting - Oct. 2026

October 30, 2026, 1:00 PM - 2:30 PM
Register

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Hybrid Vern Riffe Center (31st Floor, North Board Room) 77 S. High St., Columbus, OH 43215

Get directions



We will be holding a hybrid meeting of the Ohio Women Veterans Advisory Committee on October 30, 2026 at 1:00 p.m. The in-person location for the meeting will be on the 31st Floor of the Vern Riffe Center (77 S. High Street, Columbus), in the North Board Room. The Vern Riffe Center is located between Broad Street and State Street. Please arrive early to allow time to find parking on the street, or at a nearby downtown garage or surface lot. Also, please note that you will need to pass through a security checkpoint once you enter the building.

Optional remote login details for the meeting

Join Online

Access the Microsoft Teams
at https://teams.microsoft.com/meet/275301872514286?p=3VquMsHDMAoOTlxA2D.
Meeting ID: 275 301 872 514 286
Passcode: 9Qx6Pm2z

Dial in by Phone

Call (614) 721-2972
Phone conference ID: 567 658 775#

Join on a Video Conferencing Device

Tenant key: 682042763@t.plcm.vc
Video ID: 114 878 184 3

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More information at: Women's Advisory Committee

MOAA/OWRC Chapter Member Recognized in *Bath Country Journal*

As part of celebrating 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, *Bath Country Journal* is writing articles highlighting war veterans in Bath Township. This article is about Colonel Dick Calta which appeared in the October 1st 2026 edition. Read the article at: Colonel Calta

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COMMUNITY NEWS

MOAA gives grant to AFR

Staff report

VIENNA — The Military Officers Association of America-Mahoning and Shenango Valleys Chapter supported the U.S. Air Force Reserve's 910th Airlift Family and Readiness (AFR) in early August and mid-September with an MOAA Foundation Community Outreach Grant of $2,500 and plenty of manpower.

Chapter treasurer Bruce Bille led the project by presenting $1,500 in GetGo cards to AFR Director Kelly Turner prior to an Aug. 1 Welcome Home event at the Youngstown Air Reserve Station in Vienna. The cards can be used at GetGo gas stations and Markets and Giant Eagle grocery stores, making them ideal for 910th Airlift Wing reservists, who travel great distances, including outside the state, to attend drill periods and make their deployments and returns.

In addition to the cards, the chapter manned an information table and distributed snacks and beverages to returning airmen and their families, while others led arts and crafts projects as parents received post-deployment briefings from 910th personnel.

The chapter returned to the YARS for the 910th Airlift Wing's Family Day on Sept. 12, with additional beverages and snacks, but the rain put a damper on planned outdoor activities and games for the children of 910th personnel. Chapter member Esther Gartland nonetheless kept the children's attention with puzzles, games and craft kits.

The chapter is also delivering a $4,250 MOAA grant to the Youngstown Blue Coats, based in Hubbard, this year to provide warm weather clothing and outdoor shelters to homeless veterans in northeast Ohio and western Pennsylvania.



Submitted photo / David DiTallo

Military Officers Association of America-Mahoning and Shenango Valleys Chapter members Bob Allen, seated at left, and Ralph DeLucia, standing at right, chat with 910th Airlift Wing personnel at the unit's Sept. 12 Family Day at YARS.



Submitted photo

The Military Officers Association of America-Mahoning and Shenango Valleys Chapter Treasurer Bruce Bille, right, presents the first of $1,500 in GetGo cards to 910th Airlift Wing Airman and Family Readiness Director Kelly Turner prior to an Aug. 1 Welcome Home event for deployed personnel at YARS.



Photos courtesy of Tashandra Poullard

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I Was a Homeless Woman Veteran. The Programs Meant to Help Weren't Built for Survivors Like Me

I assumed it would be easy to find a lifeline from a veterans' assistance program. I was wrong.
BY TASHANDRA POULLARD OCTOBER 8, 2026

I SPENT too many restless nights in a hot, wood-paneled room in my parents' double-wide, taking self-soothing shots of five-buck Paul Masson brandy, and wondering how in the hell I ended up there.

My financial stability took a hit when I walked away from six years of workplace bullying in 2013. Soon after, I lost everything. I went from being a Navy crypto technician to making about $80K as a cybersecurity contractor to the unemployment line.

Homelessness for me wasn't sleeping on a sidewalk or living in a makeshift tent in the woods. It was couch-surfing after I was denied housing assistance. Or failing to find gender-specific transitional facilities, which forced me to choose between living in fear at homeless shelters or sleeping in my car.

Tashandra Poullard on the USS Fletcher in 1999. She served in the Navy for nearly a decade and later worked as a defense contractor before facing homelessness. (Photo courtesy of the author)

Of course, I never planned to be homeless. When the money and options ran out, I assumed it would be easy to find a lifeline in the sea of homeless assistance programs for veterans. But I ran aground in a system of homeless triage that was not designed with women veterans in mind.

Once, I contemplated panhandling in front of the Piggly Wiggly supermarket, crying as I looked at a cup on the sidewalk while I rehearsed my speech: "Hello. I am a U.S. Navy veteran and I'm in need of assistance right now. Is there any way you could spare some money so I could buy some food?"

I rethought my strategy after recalling the countless times I was mistaken for a veteran's spouse at the Department of Veterans Affairs. I never forgot the shrinking feeling of being asked, "What branch did your husband serve in?" followed by a feeling of embarrassed anger toward people who refused to believe I served on a Navy ship.

Yes, I served. But past experiences had taught me that I, a Black woman who served honorably, still risked being accused of stolen valor if I played up my veteran status.

Tashandra Poullard is passionate about theater and cinema. In 2020, she landed the role of Hecate in a production of "Steampunk Macbeth." Unfortunately, the show was canceled due to the Covid pandemic. (Photo courtesy of the author)

I served in the Navy for a decade before working as a defense contractor. Afterward, I found a job related to video on demand streaming services and worked there a year and half before the company slashed its workforce by a third in 2014. That left me unemployed and facing eviction.

When my unemployment benefits expired and I failed to qualify for government assistance, I slept on an air mattress in the back of a friend's studio until their landlord found out I was staying there.

With nowhere else to go, I had no choice but to move back to Texas with my parents.

Two weeks of living with my family reminded me of why I left home at 18. My ability to shower daily was restricted, reducing me to taking bird baths in the sink. I had to wash my underwear by hand because I was prohibited from using the washer and dryer.

To feel some level of safety, I locked myself in that hot, wood-paneled room, drinking rot-gut liquor. The isolation made me relapse into the depression I experienced after surviving sexual trauma in the Navy.

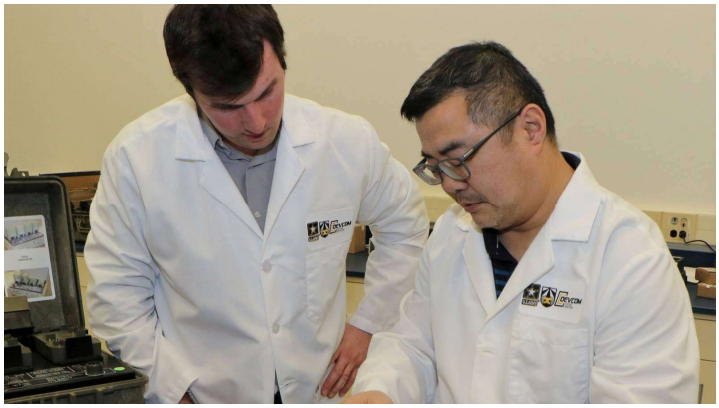
To read more: I Was a Homeless Woman Veteran.

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Army Lost Nearly 800 Workers at One Research Center as It Pushes New Weapons Technology

At AUSA 2026, an Army research director acknowledged losing scientists and engineers as the service accelerates autonomous warfare development.

By Ryan Thomas LaBee/Military.com



C5ISR Center power and energy experts are continually researching batteries to develop improved performance. Engineers Yuk Chan and David Shoemaker are part of the tactical power team, which reaches into capabilities for dismounted Soldiers, ground vehicles and aircraft. (Daniel Lafontaine, DVIDS)

WASHINGTON — One of the Army's major technology research centers has lost experienced scientists and engineers over the past two years, its director acknowledged Wednesday, raising questions about staffing as the service moves to accelerate development of autonomous military systems.

Beth Ferry, director of the Army's Combat Capabilities Development Command C5ISR Center, discussed the workforce losses during a media roundtable at the Association of the United States Army's annual meeting in Washington, which Military.com attended.

Ferry said the center's civilian workforce had taken a hit over approximately the past 18 months to two years, costing the organization talented scientists and engineers. She welcomed the recent restoration of civilian hiring authority, saying the center could begin filling critical positions again.

Beth Ferry, director of the Army's DEVCOM C5ISR Center, speaks during the DEVCOM STAR Challenge at Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland, April 14, 2025. Ferry acknowledged losses of experienced civilian scientists and engineers during an Oct. 14, 2026, media roundtable at AUSA. (U.S. Army photo by Greg Newswanger/DVIDS)

Her comments came one day after the Army announced a significant restructuring of its research and modernization organizations under the new Futures and Autonomous Systems Command, or FASCOM.

The planned reorganization is intended to accelerate the development of autonomous technology, including systems that could fundamentally change how soldiers operate on the battlefield. The staffing concerns are not isolated to Ferry's organization.

An Army report published Dec. 31, 2025, revealed that the DEVCOM Aviation & Missile Center at Redstone Arsenal, Alabama, finished the year with 2,550 civilian employees, down from 3,338. That represented a loss of 788 workers, or nearly 24% of its civilian workforce.

Although Ferry did not provide comparable numbers for the C5ISR Center, the losses at its sister organization illustrate the personnel challenges confronting the Army's research community.

Army Research Centers Face Workforce Reductions

The broader Pentagon civilian workforce has undergone substantial reductions since early 2025. Military leaders had previously warned Congress about the consequences of civilian workforce reductions, including potential disruptions to military readiness and essential support services.

A May 29 Government Accountability Office report found that the Defense Department's civilian workforce declined by 78,375 employees between January 2025 and January 2026, a reduction of approximately 9.9%. Read more at: Army Lost Nearly 800 Workers.

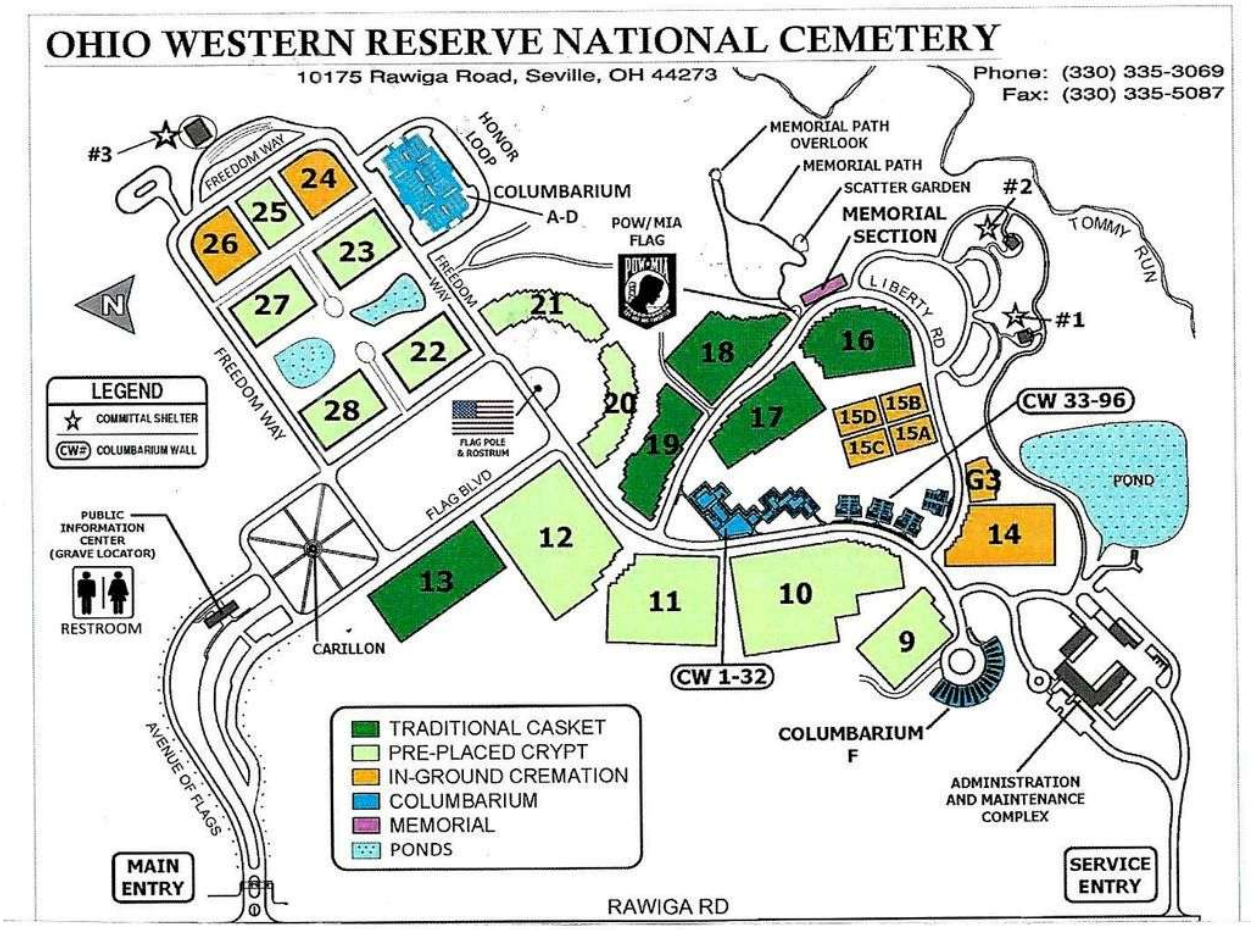
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Information for Veterans

If you are a Veteran or family member interested in learning more about VA Burial and Memorial benefits, use this reference to help guide the journey, either while planning in advance or at the time of need. Applying for a Pre-need Burial Eligibility assessment can help ease the burial planning process for you and your loved ones.

Across the country, Veterans from every era and every conflict rest in dignity, honor, and respect in VA national cemeteries. Memorial services at VA national cemeteries are provided at no charge to eligible Veterans and their families. These benefits can provide peace of mind and reduce the financial burden of burial costs to families.

To our Veterans and their families from a grateful nation... caring for you and your loved ones is our sacred trust to you.

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VA benefits include:

- Plot or columbarium (for cremated remains)
- Grave liner
- Opening and closing of the grave
- Headstone or marker
- Burial flag
- Presidential Memorial Certificate(s)
- Perpetual (ongoing) care of the gravesite

For further information: Ohio Western Reserve National Cemetery

MOAA's Surviving Spouse Virtual Chapter

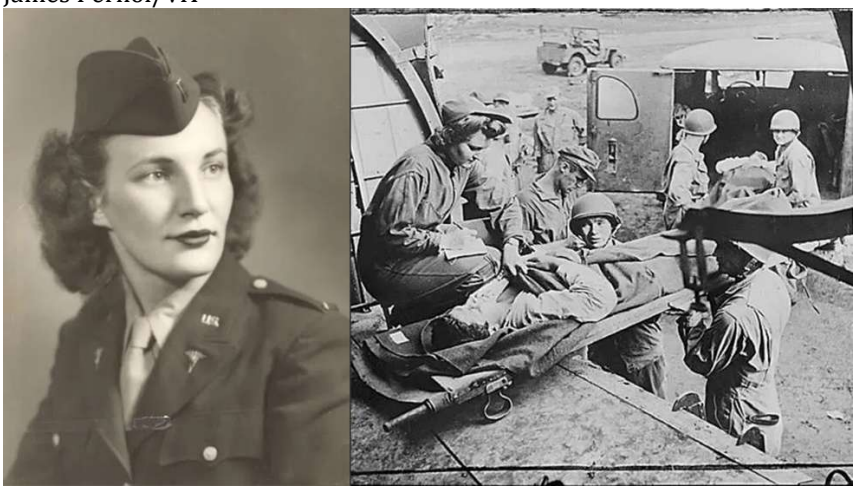
Join us in MOAA's Surviving Spouse Virtual Chapter—you don't have to be a surviving spouse to join. (You can belong to as many chapters as you like.) The chapter offers a welcoming community where you can learn about survivor benefits, planning ahead, and navigating the loss of a loved one. Whether you're preparing your own family for the future or gathering information to share with your local chapter, you'll find valuable resources, meaningful connections, and opportunities to support others.
moaasurvivingspousevirtualchapter.org when you click "Join the Virtual Chapter" an application will download. Directions on the bottom of the application.

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Elsie S. Ott and the birth of aeromedical evacuation

October 18, 2026

James Pernol/VA



How one World War II nurse reshaped medical transport

When wounded service members needed faster transport home during World War II, one Army nurse helped prove that the skies could become a lifeline. Elsie S. Ott made history in 1943 as the first woman to receive the Air Medal, forever changing military medicine in the process.

A mission no one had attempted before

In January 1943, while stationed in Karachi, India, Ott was given just 24 hours' notice: she would escort five seriously ill and wounded soldiers on what would become the first intercontinental aeromedical evacuation flight to the United States.

There was one complication: She had never flown before.

The journey, which would have taken three months by sea, lasted roughly a week by air. Along the way, Ott cared for patients suffering from paralysis, tuberculosis and psychiatric illness, managing their conditions mid-flight across multiple continents and refueling stops before arriving at Walter Reed Hospital in Washington, D.C.

Despite minimal supplies and no formal flight nurse training, Ott documented everything, from oxygen needs to cabin temperature concerns, creating practical guidance that would shape future aeromedical protocols.

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The first woman to earn the Air Medal

On March 26, 1943, Ott became the first woman in Army history to receive the Air Medal for her actions during the aerial mission. The recognition signaled a turning point not only for women in uniform, but for military medicine itself.

Her mission demonstrated that air evacuation was not only possible, it was superior. The success of that flight accelerated development of a formal flight nurse program within the Army Air Forces, laying the groundwork for modern aeromedical evacuation systems used by both the military and civilian sectors today.

Ott's mission proved that air evacuation could save time, and lives.

A lasting impact on military medicine

Following her historic flight, Ott completed formal flight nurse training and continued serving overseas. She eventually rose to the rank of captain before leaving active duty in 1946.

In 1965, the first military aircraft specifically designed for medical evacuation, the McDonnell Douglas C-9 Nightingale, was named in her honor, recognizing her foundational role in aeromedical transport.

Today, every medevac flight that transports injured service members follows the standards first tested under her care.

As we recognize pioneers in military and Veterans healthcare, Ott's story reminds us that progress often begins with one person willing to step into the unknown, even if it means boarding a plane for the very first time.

Learn more about the history of Veteran care, and the women whose compassion, leadership and advocacy shaped it at every level.

MAPS AIR MUSEUM
Where History Takes Flight!

2026 Calendar

Nov 1 **Ham Radio "Ham Fest"**

Nov 7	Veteran's Day Program Voices of Valor at 1600, $25 supper and Program 1700-2000
Dec 6	Santa "Fly In"

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MILITARY OFFICER MAGAZINE



Behind the Blackened Canteen

OCT 23, 2026

This U.S.-Japan ceremony dates back more than 80 years.

READ MORE

MILITARY OFFICER MAGAZINE



Fit to Fight: How the Services Are Meeting the New Fitness Mandate

OCT 23, 2026

Strict standards are reshaping the all-volunteer force.

READ MORE

MILITARY OFFICER MAGAZINE



These Mobile Apps Can Keep You Connected

OCT 23, 2026

From legislation to benefit updates and much more, find some must-haves for your phone.

READ MORE

OWRC's regional coverage includes: Summit, Stark, Portage, Medina, and Wayne Counties.

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Name:_____ Military Status: _____ Spouse Name: _____

Component:_____ Branch of Service:_____Rank: _____Applicant DOB:_____Spouse DOB: _____

☐ Regular Member (Retired, Former, Active officer of the eight uniformed US Services **Membership $35/year**

☐ Widow(er)-Surviving Spouse membership is available for surviving spouse of officers **Membership $15/year**

Address: _____

_____

Primary Phone: _____ Secondary Phone: _____

email: _____

Chapter Member Dues = $35/yr January 1 to December 31, Annually.

Make check Payable to OWRC-MOAA

Mail to: OWRC-MOAA P.O. Box 4272 Copley, OH 44321.

or go to OWRC Website https://OWRC.net for application and pay via credit card or PayPal.

Donation to (check one)

_____ Stand Down

_____ ROTC/JROTC Scholarship

_____ Fisher house (Wade Park VA)

Enclosed is a check for: _____

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OWRC Purpose and Mission Statement

To support the purposes and objectives of the Military Officers Association of America; promote camaraderie among the officers (retired, active and former) within the OWRC region and relationships with other veteran organizations; and support projects for those pursuing military service (ROTC programs) and assisting veterans (wounded, jobless and homeless).

Legislative Contacts:

MOAA Legislative Update MOAA | Legislative Action Center (quorum.us) .

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Senator Jon A. Husted (R) U.S. Senate SR-198 Russell Senate Office Building Washington, DC 20510 Phone:(202)224-3353 https://www.husted.senate.gov/

Representative Mike Rulli (R) U.S. Congressional ***OH District 6*** 4137 Boardman-Canfield Road, Suite 106 Canfield, OH 44406 Phone: (330) 967-7312 rulli.house.gov/contact, or Washington, D.C. Office 421 Cannon House Office Building Washington, DC 20515Phone: (202) 225-5705 Clairsville Office 101 North Market Street, St Clairsville OH 43950 (740) 338-3738

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12931 Stonecreek Drive, Pickerington, OH 43147 (614)523-2555

Representative Emilia Sykes (D) U.S. Congressional ***OH District 13***. 1217 Longworth House Office Building Washington, DC 20515 Tel: (202)225-6265 Congresswoman Emilia Sykes (house.gov)
121 South Main St Suite 107 Akron, OH 44308 (330)400-5350

Representative David P. Joyce (R) U.S. Congressional ***OH District 14*** 2065 Rayburn House Office Building Washington, DC, 20515-3514 Phone: (202) 225-5731 www.joyce.house.gov or 8500 Station Street Mentor, OH 44060 (440) 352-3939