

IN MEMORIAM

*Brigadier General Scott Paul Van Cleef, USAF Retired
21 February 1950~18 July 2021*



*Oh! I have slipped the surly bonds of earth
And danced the skies on laughter-silvered wings
Sunward I have climbed, and joined the tumbling mirth
of sun split clouds, and done a hundred things
You have not dreamed of-
wheeled and soared and swung
high in the sunlight silence.
Hovering there,
I've chased the shouting wind along,
and flung
my eager craft through footless halls of air.
Up, up the long, delirious, burning blue
I've topped the winds swept heights
and with easy grace
where never lark or even eagle flew,
and, while with silent lifting mind,
I have trod the high
un-trespassed sanctity of space,
Put out my hand
and touched the face of God.*

President's Corner



On 2 June 2020, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Mark Milley, sent a memo to the heads of each branch of the ser-

vice. It was a reminder that every member of the U.S. military swears an oath to support and defend the Constitution. The memo was in response to, and anticipation of, civil unrest and the proper role of the active duty military in such circumstances. Mark Esper, then Secretary of Defense, agreed with Milley's position. Esper went on to say that he opposed any deployment of active duty troops to quell civil protests in the U.S. That differed from the President's position.

General Milley has been no stranger to controversy during his tenure as Joint Chiefs Chairman. However, by citing the Constitution, he was on solid ground. U.S. active duty military swear an oath to support and defend the Constitution and that oath makes no mention of obeying the orders of the U.S. President, although the Constitution creates the President as Commander in Chief of the active duty military.

In the drafting stages of our Constitution, James Madison was our foremost expert on the form of government that had been instituted through history. He and Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton,

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with help from others of the Founding Fathers, worked tirelessly in writing and rewriting a document that all those at the Constitutional Convention would sign onto.

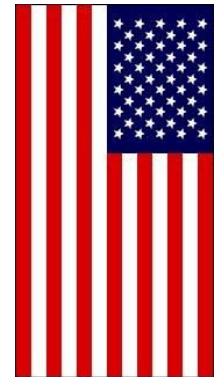
An aside. If you get the chance, visit Madison's home at Montpelier. You can stand in the room where the document that defines the U.S. was drafted and redrafted as you are surrounded by Madison's library of reference books where the history of government through the ages was recorded and available to our Constitution's primary creator. Madison chose what he believed to be the best parts of the governments defined in those books. Monarchies were vulnerable to numerous maladies, including the madness of the monarch, as had colored the history of this nation the founders were trying to create. George Washington feared a government controlled by the military, as well as the danger of a ruling dynasty and other forms of authoritarian government. All of the founders knew the strengths and weaknesses of a democracy yet believed there was no other form of government so strongly proposed to vest the governing power in the hands of the governed.

A military arm of government is not a democratic organization. The troops do not vote to start a war or end a war. They are clearly obligated to obey the lawful orders of the officers above them. Our military history is replete with well-known incidents in which individual officers lost that perspective.

Benedict Arnold was an early example. Robert E. Lee and other U.S military officers violated their oaths to the United States in the Civil War. Patton was moved to the sidelines by General Eisenhower for slapping a soldier during WWII. General MacArthur wanted to exceed the authority given to him in Korea and was fired. More recently, the CO of the USS Theodore Roosevelt, whose crew became infected with the coronavirus, was relieved for going around the chain of command. And last month, a Marine battalion commander was sacked for criticizing military leadership.

From what impulses did these officers act? Idealism? Ambition? Hubris? Ego? Overconfidence? It does not matter. Whatever the impulse or reason, there is little latitude for accepting it. An oath is an oath.

The first military oath in the history of this nation occurred even before the Constitution was adopted. That oath was to defend the colonies from King George III. After 1789, the oath was, and remains, to support and defend the Constitution. Our Constitution includes numerous references regarding the military, including the statement that the President is the Commander in Chief and a delineation of Congressional roles in regulating and disciplining the military. The chain of command may be clear but the right decision in challenging, difficult circumstances is not always easy. Yet we have been able to make it work and survived as a democratic nation for 250 years.



VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY

UNITED STATES ARMY ROTC HALL OF FAME

2021 HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE COL ROBERT “BOB” ARCHER, USA (RET)

The 2021 Hall of Fame inductee is Colonel Robert “Bob” Archer, USA (Ret). A 1969 Distinguished Military Graduate, Col. (R) Robert “Bob” Archer was commissioned into the Adjutant General Corps of the U.S. Army. His initial assignment was with the 82nd Airborne Division. He served in the Division HQ in the Administrative Services Division and, in addition to other duties, served as the Division Top Secret Control Officer. Later, he served in the Personnel Services Division, which manages all personnel records and actions for the Division. Between jumping from perfectly good aircraft, participating in joint service exercises, and taking part in two national civil disturbances, his experience was varied and prepared him for future military and civilian careers. Archer deployed to Vietnam in October 1971 and served as platoon leader and executive officer for the 544th Replacement Company, 22nd Replacement Battalion, Cam Ranh Bay, Vietnam until 1972. It was a serious and sobering experience, where he witnessed the impact on young Soldiers who were thrown into a war for 12 months with little unit integrity. In 1973, Archer left active duty and entered service with the U.S. Army Reserve, serving as Assistant Adjutant and Public Affairs Officer for the 2174th U.S. Army Garrison (U.S. Army Reserve Center), Salem, Virginia. The unit’s mission was to, when mobilized due to emergency, activate Fort Pickett located in Blackstone, Virginia in preparation for receiving new Soldiers for training. In 1983, Archer transferred to the Selective Service System which is a “stand-alone” agency that reports directly to the President of the United States. The primary mission of this agency is to register all 18-year-old males and conduct a fair and equitable draft in the event of a manpower need by the military due to a national emergency. Archer served in several positions with the Selective Service System, including Commander of Selective Service System Detachment 2-15. Although the mission was administrative in nature, it was and is critical to our nation’s safety and readiness in the event of a national emergency. During his service, Archer attained the rank of colonel. In 1999, he retired from the U.S. Army Reserves and the Selective Service System after 30 years of military service.



The ROTC Hall of Fame was established in 2016 as part of the ROTC Centennial celebration. The first class (2016) inducted 326 former ROTC Cadets who had distinguished themselves in their military or civilian career. The Hall of Fame honors graduates of the Army Reserve Officers’ Training Corps who have distinguished themselves in military or civilian pursuits. It provides a prestigious and tangible means of recognizing and honoring Army ROTC Alumni who have made lasting, significant contributions to the Nation, the Army and the history and traditions of the Army ROTC Program.



**2303 Williamson Road, NE
Roanoke, VA 24014**



MEMBER PROFILE

COL Jamie Cogbill was commissioned as an ROTC Distinguished Military Graduate from Georgetown University in May 1997. After completing the Military Intelligence (MI) Officer Basic Course, his first assignment was with the 1st Infantry Division in Germany. While there, he served as Assistant S2 for the 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry Regiment in Schweinfurt and during the battalion's 1998 deployment to Macedonia as part of the United Nations Preventive Deployment. He later served as Platoon Leader and Company Executive Officer in the 101st MI Battalion in Wurzburg, Germany, and deployed to Kosovo as part of Task Force Falcon in 1999.



Following attendance at the MI Captains Career Course, the Combined Arms and Services Staff School, and the Signals Intelligence Officer Course, COL Cogbill was assigned to the 319th MI Battalion at Fort Bragg, North Carolina as Assistant S3. In 2002 he deployed to Bagram, Afghanistan and served as Collection Manager for Combined Joint Task Force 180. He was later assigned as Battalion S4 then Company Commander for Headquarters Company, 319th MI Battalion. COL Cogbill deployed with his company to Iraq from 2004 to 2005 and was then assigned as Plans Officer for the 525th MI Brigade.

From 2006 to 2009, COL Cogbill served as a Joint Chiefs of Staff Intern, earning a Master's in Policy Management from Georgetown University followed by 2 years at the Pentagon. While there he served as a Military Assistant to the Department of Defense Executive Secretary and later as Chief of Biometrics for the Army G2.

After the Pentagon, COL Cogbill attended Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. In July 2010, he was assigned to the 66th MI Brigade in Wiesbaden, Germany as Analysis and Control Element Chief and later as Executive Officer for the 24th MI Battalion. From 2012 to 2013, he deployed to Afghanistan with V Corps, where he served as Deputy Chief, CJ2 Operations, for ISAF Joint Command in Kabul.

In July 2013, COL Cogbill served as the G2 for the Brigade Modernization Command at Fort Bliss, Texas, where he developed the intelligence architecture and threat scenario for operational tests of Army mission command systems, including the Distributed Common Ground System-Army.

From 2013 to 2015 he served as Commander of 205th MI Battalion at Fort Shafter, Hawaii, where he was responsible for providing intelligence analysis and production, counterintelligence, and human intelligence in support of U.S. Army Pacific. From 2017 to 2018 COL Cogbill served as Deputy G2 of XVIII Airborne Corps at Fort Bragg where he supported the Corps' worldwide contingency missions and planning. From 2018 to 2019, he completed his U.S. Army War College Fellowship at Duke University where he won first place in the CJCS National Strategy Essay Competition for his article focused on Morocco as exemplar for the U.S. National Counterterrorism Strategy.

Most recently COL Cogbill deployed to Afghanistan where he served for a year in the headquarters of the Resolute Support Mission as Director of Intelligence Operations.

His awards and decorations include the Bronze Star Medal, Defense Meritorious Service Medal with two oak leaf clusters, the Meritorious Service Medal with five oak leaf clusters, the Joint Service Commendation Medal, and the Senior Parachutist Badge, among others.

COL Cogbill has been married for 23 years to the former Carrie Snider of Richmond, Virginia, and they have two sons, Alex (age 18) and Will (age 13).

BRAIN INJURY SERVICES OF SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA
APPRECIATION EVENT CELEBRATING VETERANS,
BRAIN INJURY SURVIVORS AND THEIR FAMILIES

On Friday 27 August 2021 members of the Southwest Virginia Chapter were on the Host Committee and participated in an appreciation event at the Salem Memorial Baseball Stadium honoring veterans, brain injury survivors and their families. The price of admission included a game ticket, unlimited food buffet of ballpark eats (burgers & dogs etc) and open bar with soft drinks.



Please join the Host Committee

for an
**Appreciation Event Celebrating Veterans,
 Brain Injury Survivors and their Families**
 featuring
 Guest Speakers



Nathaniel L. Bishop, DMin
 Chief Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
 Officer for Carilion Clinic



Dave Trinkle, MD
 Associate Dean for Community
 and Culture at VTCSOM

SALEM MEMORIAL BASEBALL STADIUM
 Friday, August 27, 2021
 6:00 pm Reception • 7:05 pm Game Begins

PICNIC PAVILION



Please RSVP by August 24th
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Welcoming entrance to Salem Memorial
 Baseball Stadium



Mrs. Joan Washburn
 Event Coordinator



Attorney General Mark Herring
 CDR Lee Ensley, USN (Ret)



Guest speaker Nathaniel L. Bishop, DMin
 Chief Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
 Officer for Carilion Clinic



Guest Speaker Dave Trinkle, MD
 Associate Dean for Community and
 Culture at VTCSOM

Chapter members on the Host Committee: MGEN Jim Archer; LTC Dan Karnes;
 COL Tom Dalzell; LTC Steve & Brenda Jamison; LTC Robert Habermann; COL Bob
 Archer; CDR Lee Ensley; CDR David Points; CDR Michael Leigh

THE MILITARY FAMILY SUPPORT CENTER.

Our military service members represent only one percent of our population, but they carry the responsibility of protecting our entire country. But they do not do it alone. Their spouses, children, parents and other members of their family share in the duty and sacrifice of serving our country. We provide support for all of our remote military service men and women and their families. Many families are unfamiliar with where they can find information, due to the limited resources available at local military armories and reserve centers. This is where we bridge the gap by providing a place for service-specific military and general civilian information. We need your support both financially and as a volunteer. We are located at 1215 McNeil Drive SW Roanoke, Virginia 24014. Phone: (540) 983-1766. Facebook - Military Family Support Center @milfamily.org.

Contact: awilliams@milfamily.org



Salem Red Sox Military Appreciation Night Saturday, 18 September 2021

The Southwest Virginia Chapter of MOAA participated with the 29th Division Band, USAREC Color Guard, and the Massing of Colors of the Veteran and Military Service Organizations in our area in the Salem Red Sox Military Appreciation night. The Massing of colors ceremony was held before the baseball game. The Southwest Virginia Chapter was represented by Chapter President CDR Lee Ensley USN (Ret) and COL Thomas Dalzell, USMC (Ret) holding the MOAA banner. In addition the 229th Chemical Company set up a static display of military vehicles. Admission was free for all veterans and immediate family members. Everyone was asked to bring one or more canned goods for donation to the Military Family Support Center. Special meal vouchers were available. Chapter member COL John Miller USA (Ret) was responsible for organizing the event.



COL John Miller, CDR Lee Ensley, COL Tom Dalzell



CDR Lee Ensley and COL Roger Talmadge with the Military Family Support Center vehicle

Southwest Virginia Chapter Awarded the 2021 Five Star Chapter

Colonel Marvin J. Harris Communications Award



This award is based on the 2020 calendar year recognizing the chapter for its exemplary communication efforts, “newsletter”, in communicating with its members and community. Since 2014 the chapter has been awarded (6) Five Star Awards for newsletter and (5) Five Star Awards for Website. There

was no submission for the website award in 2019.

Southwest Virginia Chapter Awarded the 2021 Five Star Chapter

Level of Excellence Award



This award is based on the 2020 calendar year programs and events. Since 2010 the chapter has been awarded (6) Five Star awards and (5) Four Star Level of Excellence Awards. The award is a look back on the 2020 calendar year programs, initiatives and

successful experiences shared by chapter leaders.



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Roanoke, VA
540 989-5245

Seniors Lost Nearly \$1 Billion to Scams in 2020, New Fraud Report Shows



Fraud victims over 60 lost nearly \$1 billion to scams last year, according to a recent federal report, up nearly \$300 million from the previous year. The average victim over 60 lost nearly \$9,200, according to the FBI's Internet Crime Complaint Center (IC3), which released its [2020 Elder Fraud Report](#) in June. The largest jump came in tech-support scams, which rocketed past \$116 million in 2020 from less than \$38.5 million in 2019.

[DON'T BE SCAMMED: [MOAA's 3-Part Series](#)]

The report does not break out military- or veteran-specific fraud types. MOAA has outlined recent reports on increased activity in those sectors, to include veteran "[pension poaching](#)," VA [home loan scams](#), and [service-connected COVID-related fraud](#). However, the IC3 report does offer a look at the most common types of scams faced by those 60 and over, as well as some basics to avoid them:

- **Romance scams and "confidence fraud"** did the most damage, accounting for more than \$281 million in losses in 2020 among those over 60. These include scammers who impersonate loved ones and seek money for family emergencies, among other techniques. **Prevention tips:** Go slow, ask a lot of questions, and be suspicious of individuals who offer excuses or ask you to ignore advice from friends or family.
- **Investment fraud** topped \$98 million in losses in 2020 for those over 60, up from \$79 million in 2019. **Prevention tips:** Don't be suckered in by fancy websites, research any special offers (especially unsolicited ones), and keep the old saying in mind: If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.
- **Government impersonation fraud** cost over-60 victims nearly \$46 million in 2020. These scammers often pose as IRS or Social Security agents, claiming the victim is connected to a crime and seeking immediate payment to settle the matter. **Prevention tips:** Real government officials won't seek payments via a specific method (wire transfer, prepaid credit card, etc.), nor are they likely to contact you by phone or text unless you've initiated correspondence.

Other costly scam types for those over 60, per the report, include real estate and rental fraud (\$50 million in 2020), identity theft (\$39 million), and lottery or inheritance fraud (nearly \$39 million). Ransomware also saw a significant uptick, topping \$5 million in over-60 losses in 2020 compared with a little more than \$723,000 in 2019.

[FBI.GOV: [What Is Ransomware?](#)] MOAA Premium and Life members [can access *An Overview of Scams and Frauds*](#), a webinar by Lt. Col. Shane Ostrom, USAF (Ret), MOAA's program director for financial and benefits education/counseling, on avoiding common scam attempts. Get more financial news and guidance at [MOAA.org/finance](#). By: Kevin Lilley, MOAA's digital content manager - 4 August 2021

New Security Sign-In Option Offered for MyPay

Users of MyPay now can receive time-sensitive login information via an authenticator app instead of a text or email. The Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) added two-factor authentication to the myPay sign-in process in April. Users were required to set up a method to receive a one-time PIN for use when accessing their accounts. The new setup allows users to receive this information in their authenticator app. The DFAS website explains the advantage: "While both the text/email PIN and one provided by an authenticator serve the same purpose, authenticators don't rely on information making its way through email servers or cell networks to get the PIN to a user within the time required to complete MyPay logon."

[RELATED: [New Fraud Report Shows Seniors Lost Nearly \\$1 Billion to Scams in 2020](#)]

DFAS recommends researching available authenticator apps online to find "which ones provide the services each individual user needs or wants." Options vary and include products from name-brand providers such as Google and Microsoft. Step-by-step instructions for setting up an authenticator app are available in PDF format via DFAS. You'll have the option to make the authenticator the preferred method of receiving PINs or adding it to your account as a secondary option. If you haven't set up two-factor identification, you can also download a PDF for instructions on that process. *by Kevin Lilley 18 August 2021*

DoD Report Reveals ‘Hard Truths’ on Sexual Harassment, Assault



A July report from DoD’s [Independent Review Commission](#) (IRC) on Sexual Harassment and Assault offers 80 recommendations, largely accepted by lawmakers and DoD senior leaders, to improve administrative policy, address a lack of resources, change the Uniformed Code of Military Justice, and fix DoD’s investigative functions that have failed servicemembers.

The report, *Hard Truths and the Duty to Change*, does indeed reveal very hard truths for leaders to reconcile. One example: One in four female servicemembers were sexually harassed in 2018, and more than 20,000 servicemembers were victims of sexual assault that same year (13,000 women and 7,500 men), but “DoD received only 1,781 reports of sexual harassment in FY20,” the report found. “Military leadership has failed America’s daughters and sons, and the Service members know it,” the report states.

With an average investigation taking up to a year due to resourcing problems with investigators, legal capacity, and medical personnel, many female servicemembers have lost trust with their chain of command. The current system leaves the victim, the accused, and the commander in legal limbo. The accused remains in their formation and becomes painful evidence to other servicemembers that the system does not work and reporting a problem is not worth it.

MOAA and The Military Coalition (TMC), a group of organizations representing more than 5.5 million members of the uniformed services community, have advocated for improvement to accountability and resource enhancement of sexual harassment and assault prevention programs and administrative policy.

The report includes TMC’s goals to shorten investigation times and establish a time standard to drive a manpower study. The IRC also included the goal to authorize administrative separation actions for those with substantiated cases of harassment, similar to misconduct related to alcohol or drug incidents.

[RELATED: [DoD Faces Difficult Path Ahead in Fight Against Sexual Assault, Harassment](#)]

Current policy that requires initiating immediate separation actions for alcohol or drug incidents is an example of how DoD has changed its culture since the 1980s. MOAA and TMC will continue to advocate for the currently serving through improved standards and resources. You can learn more about these efforts [at this link](#).

As the DoD IRC concluded its 90-day effort, its director, Lynn Rosenthal, encouraged military and veterans service organizations to remain vigilant on implementation of the recommendations. Many of the resource changes will take years to complete, as DoD seeks to build specialized expertise with prosecutors and investigators of special victim crimes.

NDAA Proposals

Early versions of the FY 2022 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) include language designed to address these issues. While the text of the Senate’s version had not been released as of Aug. 4, [an executive summary](#) lists several proposed changes, including:

- Moving the decision to prosecute sexual assault cases from the chain of command and to military prosecutors.

- Allowing the [DoD Safe Helpline](#) to accept both unrestricted and restricted reports, and providing additional support to those making reports.

- Requiring multiple reviews of installations regarding command climate and sexual assault/harassment prevention programs.

[FROM MILITARY TIMES: [More Than Half of Women Soldiers Reporting Sexual Harassment Say It Is ‘Serious’ and ‘Persistent’: Study](#)]

What About the VA?

Concerns also remain over the VA as DoD’s own reports indicate a substantial number of those who have left the service without reporting military sexual trauma (MST).

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The VA needs to conduct their own Independent Review Commission," Rosenthal said. Barriers to receiving help exist, and treatment requires specialists trained in understanding trauma and revictimization. The VA has centralized MST-related rating claims to five locations, a move designed to "further improve benefits delivery to Veterans by enhancing the efficiency, accuracy, and timeliness by placing these cases in the hands of well-trained, experienced employees," wrote Thomas Murphy, VA's acting undersecretary for benefits, in a letter to veteran senior leaders.

The VA will continue to maintain [MST outreach coordinators](#) at each of its 56 regional offices, Murphy wrote. The grant rate for MST claims stands at 72%, per the letter, up from 50% in 2015, the result of "a concerted VA effort," Murphy wrote. Learn more about MST-related VA claims [at this link](#). By Mark Belinsky, LTC USA, (Ret) 4 August 2021

Retirees and Disabled Veterans Due for Record Raise Next Year

Military retirees and disabled veterans could see their monthly checks jump by hundreds of dollars each month in 2022, the largest increase since 1983. The annual inflation-based Cost of Living Adjustment, or COLA, soon will be determined by the government, and all the figures point to an increase of at least 6%, and maybe more, beginning in 2022.

UPDATED MONTHLY: MOAA's COLA Watch

That means that next year, military retirees will see their monthly retirement check increase, with the average monthly check going up by around \$160. Veterans receiving disability compensation from the Department of Veterans Affairs also will see their monthly disability payments increase, with the average monthly amount increasing by nearly \$100. According to the Defense Department, there are around 1.87 million military retirees, with an annual average retirement payment of \$30,265. The VA says nearly 5.1 million veterans receive disability compensation, with an annual benefit of \$18,549.

The annual COLA increase is based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI), which is measured by the Department of Labor. That agency measures the costs of a select group of goods and services and compares those costs to the previous year. If there is an increase, retirees and many others receiving government benefits see an increase in their monthly payments for the upcoming year. If those costs go down, the government payments will remain the same in the upcoming year.

RELATED: Why a COLA Spike Could Put Retirees' Pay Adjustment at Risk

In 2021, costs for most goods and services have gone up much faster than they have in the past. The most recent data from the Department of Labor is showing a 5.4% increase from last year, and there are two more months left in the current fiscal year, which ends on Sept. 30. So, unless there is a major turnaround of the economy, with prices dropping dramatically in the next month or so, next year's government payments should see a hefty increase. The CPI also is used to determine federal employee retirement and social security COLA adjustments as well as other federal benefit programs, so the CPI increase will affect over 50 million Americans. Next year's COLA is scheduled to be announced in early October. When it is, Military.com will have the latest information, including disability pay rates available to you. *by Jim Absher 18 August 2021*



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Clifton Forge: 540-862-5656

Dublin: 540-674-5100

Hollins: 540-777-1230

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Roanoke (Brambleton Ave): 540-989-5245

Roanoke (Williamson Rd): 540-362-1868

Salem: 540-380-4607

Vinton: 540-890-5010

Winston Salem: 336-768-3886

What's Next for VA's Troubled Electronic Health Records Program

The VA has finished its 12-week strategic review of the massive Cerner Millennium electronic health record modernization (EHRM) project, VA Secretary Denis McDonough announced June 30. Review completion came just in time for McDonough to answer concerned members of the Senate and House Committees on Veterans' Affairs about VA Office of Inspector General (OIG) and Government Accountability Office (GAO) reports discussing [problems surrounding the initial deployment](#) of the Cerner system in the Pacific Northwest nine months ago.

The secretary announced the strategic review of the EHRM within days of taking office Feb. 9 because of major issues swirling after the new system went live at Mann-Grandstaff VA Medical Center (VAMC) in Spokane, Wash. There have been mounting concerns over the \$16 billion project because of its cost and massive scope. Senate committee chair Jon Tester (D-Mont.) and ranking member Jerry Moran (R-Kansas) didn't hide their frustration about these recent developments and the project itself during a July 14 hearing. "I for one am fed up with the amount of taxpayer dollars we're spending on this program without any demonstrated benefits to veterans or VA medical staff," Tester said. "We have literally been working on this for my entire time in Congress, almost 15 years." While the discrepancies and under-reporting of project cost estimates of more than \$5 billion highlighted in one of the VA OIG reports were frustrating, "the issue was more about caring for veterans and them seeing the benefits of the system at some point in their lifetime," said Moran.

[RELATED: [Proposed VBA Budget Reflects MOAA-Backed Benefit Improvements](#)]

At a follow-on hearing held last week by the House Veterans' Subcommittee on Technology Modernization, which oversees the EHRM initiative, full committee chair Rep. Mark Takano (D-Calif.) told members he had his own misgivings when then-VA secretary Dr. David Shulkin announced in 2017 his decision to award a sole-source contract with Cerner. The move, which became official with an [eight-figure contract award a year later](#), came after Shulkin determined the VistA system (VA's in-house version of the EHR) would not meet interoperability and other congressional mandates. "I'm glad former committee chair Rep. Phil Roe (R-Tenn.) was adamant in standing up the Technology Modernization Subcommittee to conduct oversight on the EHRM and other VA technology programs," Takano told lawmakers. Recurring themes have emerged over the years with the implementation of the VA's EHR. The recent strategic review, audits, and hearings conducted to get at the root causes of the problems divulged similar themes. *What was resoundingly evident? Substantiated evidence of a series of systematic failures and long-standing challenges continue to be significant problems in the Veterans Health Administration's (VHA) efforts to deploy its EHRM program.*

What Went Wrong?

GAO Findings. In [testimony](#) July 2 before the House Subcommittee on Technology Modernization, GAO highlighted several long-standing challenges facing VA in system modernization, cybersecurity, and information technology (IT) management, including its EHRM. "Over many years VA has experienced challenges in managing its IT projects and programs, raising questions about the efficiency and effectiveness of the Office of Information and Technology and its ability to deliver intended outcomes needed to help achieve the department's mission," per the testimony. GAO reported on challenges the department has faced with its three previous unsuccessful attempts to modernize VistA over the past 20 years. Researchers did acknowledge progress in VA's fourth effort to implement the system at Mann-Grandstaff VAMC in an earlier report this year but warned the department is at risk of system failure if all material and systemic weaknesses are not properly addressed before future deployments.

VA OIG Findings. The OIG produced five reports and offered 38 recommendations between April 2020 and July 2021. Investigators' oversight of the EHRM program were focused primarily on VA's efforts to deploy the system at Mann-Grandstaff VAMC in recent reports. However, more issues surfaced once the system was deployed in the fall. Investigators made recommendations to address deficiencies and to mitigate risks before deployment to future sites. David Case, the deputy inspector general, told lawmakers at both the [Senate](#) and [House](#) hearings the OIG "repeatedly found unreliable and incomplete estimates for upgrades and costs, inadequate reporting affecting transparency to Congress, and stove-piped governance with decision making that does not appropriately engage VHA personnel who are the end users of the new EHR system." Not addressing these concerns put the VA "at risk for cascading failures, breakdowns, delays, and poor health care when deploying the new EHR system nationwide," Case said.

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Organizations (VSOs), VA employees, and members of Congress revealed ongoing concerns with the project" early in his tenure. "Reports from the GAO and VA OIG reflected a range of issues, many of which have also been reflected in the press, and it troubled me that multiple stakeholders were citing a perceived lack of transparency on this project as a longstanding issue," he said. "On this basis, I directed a top-to-bottom strategic review of the EHRM program." McDonough's review highlighted similar findings and concerns voiced by outside stakeholders. He acknowledged the Mann-Grandstaff VAMC implementation of the Cerner system "did not live up to expectations." However, the strategic review proved to him the technology was basically sound: "I've said publicly, I don't intend to change the contract," he told lawmakers. "Now it's really a matter of governance, management, and execution, and that's on us to fix."

The Rest of the Story

For over a decade, many VSOs like MOAA, lawmakers, and particularly veterans and their families have patiently been awaiting the implementation of a seamless, interoperable EHR system between the VA and DoD for what seems like a lifetime. While the VA has been one of the early pioneers in establishing an EHR, beginning its shift from a paper-based system to an electronic-based system in the 1980s, the shift has not been without costly mistakes and problems along the way.

[RELATED: [VA Asks Female Veterans to Enroll in World's Largest Medical Research Biobank](#)]

So many VA technology modernization projects including recent upgrades to its financial and acquisition systems, GI bill education program, and claims processing systems have been fraught with many of the same systemic issues seen in the EHRM program. For more than seven years, MOAA has voiced support and concerns with the EHRM system and other VA technology programs in testimony before key lawmakers:

2014: MOAA highlights disappointment in the inability of the VA and DoD to develop and implement a truly interoperable joint EHR.

2016: MOAA notes the two departments essentially abandoning a single system, choosing instead to maintain and invest in individual technology systems for their EHRM. Such a path will continue to disadvantage veterans.

2017: MOAA believes successful transformation will only occur once VA and DoD have fully implemented and achieved an interoperable and integrated EHR.

2018: MOAA continues to press for major VA health care system reform by supporting and investing in modernizing VHA technology, finance, infrastructure, electronic health records, and human resource systems.

2019: MOAA suggests major reforms such as achieving interoperability between VA and DoD, while necessary and innovative, significantly challenges the status quo and will likely bring to the forefront several other underlying systemic issues plaguing the department, reported by the GAO for years in its high-risk area series on federal agencies.

2020: MOAA urges the committees to continue investing in the modernization of VHA clinical, technology, electronic health records, financial, infrastructure, and human resource systems necessary to realize true transformation, including benefit system technology improvements.

2021: MOAA highlights an emerging technology issue related to the transferability of GI bill benefits. Technology problems led to reserve servicemembers separating or retiring believing they completed the required service obligation to allow dependents to use transferred benefits. Years later, they find out that is not the case and owe tens of thousands of dollars to the VA.

What Happens Next?

With less than two weeks into the job, the new deputy secretary Donald Remy inherits all the progress and challenges associated with the EHRM.

[RELATED: [Senate Approves Army Veteran as VA's Deputy Secretary](#)]

Takano emphasized during the House hearing the importance of transparency and communication between VA and Congress. "Now that the strategic review is over, it is up to deputy secretary Remy to right the ship," he said. The VA already has taken steps to set in place a unified enterprise governance structure to assist the deputy secretary in his oversight duties. The department is also shifting from a site-by-site approach to an enterprise-wide readiness approach for future deployments. According to the VA, deployments will not happen until there is evidence of each site's readiness with training and preparation to ensure

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success to the maximum extent possible. Problems in management and training presented significant challenges to employees' understanding of their new roles within the system. VA teams are designing role-based change management and training strategy to ensure end user adoption and to prevent workflow disruptions. VA is undertaking a lifecycle cost estimate to clearly identify total costs associated with the EHR project. This will include all infrastructure costs related to the project, both physical and IT infrastructure costs, a major discrepancy highlighted by the OIG.

McDonough hopes to have a new schedule of go-live sites by the end of the year. In the meantime, he promised to be early and transparent with Congress on changes going forward. MOAA, like the committee members, are grateful to the men and women who serve in the VA for their dedication to veterans and their families and employees' ongoing commitment to the successful implementation of the EHRM program. Our association will continue to be a partner in supporting the secretary and Congress in this project to ensure full implementation by the 2028 deadline.

LETTER TO MARINES FROM GENERAL DAVID BERGER AND SERGEANT MAJOR ON THE CURRENT SITUATION IN AFGANISTAN

18 August 2021



Marines,

As each of us tries to comprehend the speed and scope of events in Afghanistan this week, some may be struggling with a simple question: "Was it all worth it?" We see videos and photos, we read stories that bring back memories for some of us, and it becomes intensely personal. We value human life and we want to believe that what Marines have done in Afghanistan made a difference. While Sergeant Major Black and I don't presume to speak for you or your family, we would like to offer our thoughts so you know where your senior leaders stand.

We both believe – without question – that your service was meaningful, powerful, and important. You answered the call to serve, proudly carrying the torch of so many generations of Marines before you. You put the good of others before yourself. You fought to defend your country, your family, your friends, and your neighbors. You fought to prevent terror from returning to our shores. You fought for the liberty of young Afghan girls, women, boys, and men who want the same individual freedoms we enjoy as Americans. You fought for the Marine to your left and the Marine to your right. You never let them down. You never, ever gave up. You lived with purpose, with intention. Whether you realize it or not, you set an example for subsequent generations of Marines – and Americans – by living our core values of Honor, Courage, and Commitment. Was it worth it? Yes. Does it still hurt? Yes.

Since 2001, Marines have served honorably and courageously to bring peace to the people of Afghanistan. You should take pride in your service – it gives meaning to the sacrifice of all Marines who served, including those whose sacrifice was ultimate.

Over the coming days and weeks, we encourage you to connect with your fellow Marines and their families – particularly those you served with overseas. This is a time to come together and give further meaning to our motto, Semper Fidelis. Let us remain faithful to our fellow Marines, faithful to our Marine families, and faithful to the memories of all who have sacrificed.

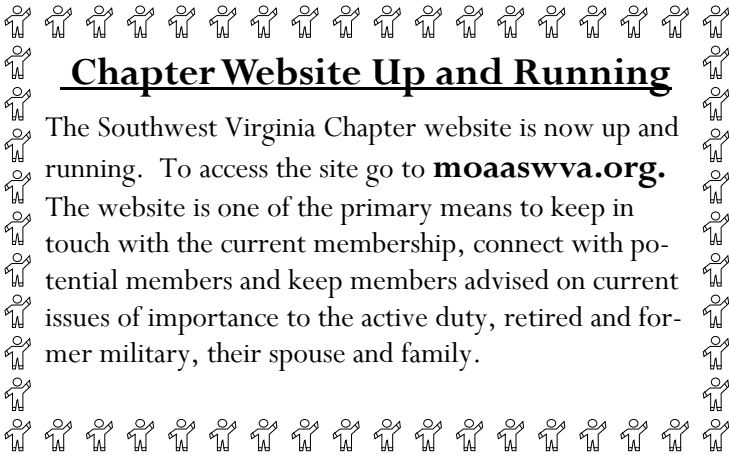
We are intensely proud to serve alongside you as your Commandant and Sergeant Major.

Semper Fidelis,

David H. Berger

General, U.S. Marine Corps Commandant of the Marine Corps

Troy E. Black



Chapter Website Up and Running

The Southwest Virginia Chapter website is now up and running. To access the site go to **moaaswva.org**. The website is one of the primary means to keep in touch with the current membership, connect with potential members and keep members advised on current issues of importance to the active duty, retired and former military, their spouse and family.

WANT TO KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON AT

MOAA

- Legislative Accomplishments?
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Log on to MOAA.org

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The Southwest Virginia Chapter (SWVC) of the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) is a nonprofit veterans' association dedicated to maintaining a strong national defense and ensuring our nation keeps its commitments to currently serving, retired, and former members of the uniformed services and their families and survivors. Membership is open to those who hold or have ever held a warrant or commission in any component of the Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, Coast Guard, Public Health Service, or National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and their surviving spouses.

UPCOMING MEMBERSHIP PROGRAMS

- **16 September 2021** – Board of Directors Zoom meeting. Zoom program by Edward F. Palm, Ph.D. Major, USMC (Ret.) Author of “Tiger Papa Three: Memoir of a Combined Action Marine in Vietnam”.
- **1 October 2021** – Membership Zoom meeting. Zoom program Major General Fullhart USAF on status VT Corps of Cadets
- **18 November 2021** – Board of Directors Zoom meeting. Zoom program – Mr. Edward Triesler, Director of Education Virginia War Memorial Richmond Virginia
- **16 December 2021** – Board of Directors Zoom meeting. Zoom program - MOAA update and installation of Officers and Board of Directors for 2022.



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Southwest Virginia Chapter Honors the Memory of Chapter Member and Chapter Treasurer BGEN Scott Van Cleef, USAF (Ret)

The Southwest Virginia Chapter made a \$500 donation to the Air Force Association Education Fund in honor of and in memory of BGEN Scott Van Cleef, USAF, (Ret). BGEN Scott Van Cleef served as treasurer and Board member of the Southwest Virginia Chapter for many years and was an inspiration and mentor to all chapter members. He will be missed.



CHAPTER MEMBERSHIP as of 30 September 2021

Regular Members 112
Surviving Spouses 11
Total Members 123
Talk to a fellow officer about joining the Southwest Virginia Chapter!

JOIN THE CHAPTER

Looking to join the Southwest Virginia Chapter? Want more information on how to join and become involved? Check us out on the chapter website at moaswva.org or on face book at [moaswva](https://www.facebook.com/moaswva) then Contact COL Bob Brown, USA (Ret), Chapter Membership Chair at (540) 904-2810 or email at rbbrown68@gmail.com.



**MILITARY OFFICERS ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA
SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA CHAPTER - ENROLLMENT/RENEWAL FORM**

Name (First ,Middle, Last, Rank) _____
Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Home Phone _____ Cell Phone _____ Email Address _____
Branch of Service _____ Retired _____ Active Duty _____ NG _____ Former Officer _____
Date of Birth _____ Spouse Name _____ MOAA Membership ID No. _____

Annual Chapter Dues are \$30.00. Widows (ers) dues are \$15.00. Dues for those entering MOAA between 1 July and 31 December are \$20.00. Please mail dues payment to: **MOAA, Southwest Virginia Chapter, P.O. Box 3090, Roanoke, VA 24015-1090**

Note: The Communiqué is now published quarterly. The next issue will be published December 2021.

Featured in this Issue
In Memoriam BGEN Scott Van Cleef USAF (Ret)
Presidents Reflection On The Constitution
COL Robert "Bob" Archer USA (Ret) Honored
Member profile - Col Jamie Cogbill USA
Brain Injury Services/Veterans Appreciation Night
Red Sox Military Appreciation Night

**Bring a fellow officer
and their spouse to
our next meeting.**



NEVER STOP SERVING.

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