

# THE CATAWBA VALLEY OFFICERS DISPATCH



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**MILITARY OFFICERS ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA, CATAWBA VALLEY CHAPTER**  
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**President: LTC Cliff Davenport**

**President's Comments:** It's most unfortunate that we had to cancel chapter meetings and dinners during the Coronavirus pandemic; hopefully, things will begin to normalize for us so we can all get together in the very near future. A premature Coronavirus after-action report from me probably wouldn't be well received by chapter members; we've all heard enough of that depressing saga that includes us all to some extent. However, the cumulative impact on those serving in uniform is worth a moment of contemplation. Consider the following:

- Cruise ship returnees were quarantined on military bases that house military families.
- Long duration lock-down was implemented on many military bases around the world.
- Military personnel and families were trapped overseas in virus-ravaged countries.
- Military personnel in compressed living and duty environments were subjected to great risk.
- Many thousands of Guardsman, Reservists and Retirees were called back to active duty.
- Recruitment, training and exercise activity was drastically reduced.
- Military "Blended Retirement System" 401K type investments were severely impacted.
- Separating and retiring military personnel transitioned into a hopeless job market.
- Monetary assistance to the civilian sector diverted resources needed for force modernization.

Despite all that, the military courageously provided massive support to the civilian population, leaving military families behind to fend for themselves during the pandemic! Our military quickly built scores of Coronavirus hospitals and care centers. They operated (flew) the nation-wide "Air Bridge" that transported critical medical equipment. And, they provided front-line medical staff in high-risk COVID-19 settings. While dealing with the pandemic—both internal to their own units and external in the civilian environment—they continued combat operations, ensured freedom of the seas, and maintained a strong national defense posture.

Naturally, lessons-learned from this experience may fade with the passage of time. Therefore, there are some blatantly obvious issues rising from the pandemic that must be addressed quickly: Stop letting China produce and control resources critical to the defense and health of our nation. Terminate the mandated purge of medical specialists from the military services. Fully train and equip our military to conduct operations in high-risk pandemic settings. Ensure that the Defense Budget stays a high priority in the midst of ongoing economic turmoil. And, waive Tricare mail-order copays during the COVID-19 pandemic! Those important issues are surfacing in the legislative domain; so, let's all step forward and "Take Action" via MOAA as that happens.

Here's one final aspect of the pandemic worth noting. Because we're living in the Information Age and because the virus didn't impact the Internet or TV broadcasting, the public had unprecedented visibility into much of what's outlined above. Thus, the civilian populace has surely developed great admiration and gratitude for the military's heroic and altruistic actions, and that includes members of the U.S. Public Health Service! Their response to this pandemic may constitute one of the all-time greatest manifestations of service before self!

**NC National Guard:** Its heritage traces back to the 1663 Carolina Charter granting authority to levy, muster, and train men. That conjures up images of citizen-soldiers with their muskets at port arms. Obviously, the Guard evolved into a strategic reserve force that mainly trained to be additive warfighters in the event of a major global conflict. While they remain ready for that strategic role, the Guard recently reorganized and transformed itself into what is now a modern, operational force that takes on a spectrum of tactical and humanitarian missions around the world. In fact, the NC Guard's 11,000 soldiers and airmen are now deployed to 14 countries, while simultaneously handling missions here in the U.S. Of course, the Guard's main visibility at the moment is providing logistical and engineering support during the COVID-19 crisis. Also, the NC Guard is slated to be a key element in the hosting of the Republican National Convention in Charlotte. Plus, the NC Guard's 30<sup>th</sup> Armored Brigade Combat Team that's deployed to the Middle East was just notified that it's being awarded the Presidential Unit Citation! Yes, the faded image of so-called "Weekend Warriors" has morphed into what is now a ready, reliable, responsive, AND highly relevant force!



*NC NG Staff Sgt. Feimster moving medical supplies*

Shopping at [www.smile.amazon.com](http://www.smile.amazon.com)  
 Supports: **MOAA Military Family Initiative**



*U.S. Army 1943 individual "combat food" K-ration*

**Combat Dining:** A Union soldier's standard one-day ration during the Civil War was three-quarters of a pound of meat, a pound of flour, some vegetables, vinegar and molasses. During WWII, the K-Ration provided a nutritional and lightweight meal that included chocolate and cigarettes. Then, in the 1940's, came canned wet C-Rations; they also included cigarettes until 1975. In 1981, C-Rations were replaced by Meals Ready to Eat (MRE) for consumption in combat settings. MREs can be parachuted down from 1,250 feet or directly dropped from 98 feet. Amazingly, reenactors will pay \$350 for an unused WWII K-Ration, but a fresh MRE pack sells for just \$7.25 a meal. Obviously, mobile field kitchens provide hot and nutritious meals in the tactical setting; they're rooted in the chuck wagons of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. In longer conflicts, mess halls are established in the "Friendly Rear Area." Traditionally, the Air Force quickly airlifts ice cream machines to mess halls on tactical airbases. And, in the spirit of one-upmanship, Naval officers enjoy fine dining—on china—in the officers' wardroom aboard ship; indeed, stewards often serve them strawberries!

**Taps:** It is with deep regret that we announce that Commander (USN, Ret.) Edward L. Bleynat passed away on February 24<sup>th</sup>, 2020. While in the Navy, Ed flew huge Submarine Hunter aircraft on long missions over the ocean; after retiring from the Navy, he became an Economics Professor. Ed was a Board Member in many local organizations and was an ordained Elder Deacon in the Waldensian Presbyterian Church. Commander Bleynat was a “bigger-than-life” military officer, always emanating a positive and warm spirit. He will be sorely missed.

**Quest for Quality On-Base Housing:** The Secretary of Defense and the Service Secretaries recently signed the Military Housing Privatization Initiative Tenant Bill of Rights. This commits the DoD to ensuring that residents in privatized military housing are fairly treated by Military Housing contractors that operate and maintain the privatized housing. That’s certainly a laudable initiative; however, victory has not yet been fully achieved. The DoD is still working with owners of privatized military housing and with Congress to ensure that housing tenants have access to maintenance history, a process for dispute resolution, and the ability to withhold rent until disputes are resolved. Victory can only be declared once those three tenant rights are guaranteed.

**Air Force Song Changes:** Albeit ten years later than a similar initiative by both the Army and Navy, the Air Force recently changed the lyrics of the “Air Force Song” to make it more gender inclusive. The changes were made to the third verse. The third line of that verse had the words “...of his brother men who fly” but now reads: “To a friend we send a message of the brave who serve on high.” The last line of that verse had the words “...of men we boast” but now reads: “A toast to the host of those we boast, the U.S. Air Force!”

**Express-Scripts Continuity:** As you may have noticed during the Coronavirus pandemic, MOAA National took steps to get the DoD to waive Express Scripts’ re-order wait time for prescription refills so that subscribers could have greater quantities of on-hand medications. That prompts the question: Who in the family orders prescriptions via the Internet; how do they do place orders, and what if they’re no longer around? It’s important that, for each family member, a sheet listing prescriptions and the prescribing doctor be kept available in the home so that any family member can continue ordering prescriptions for a surviving spouse. Info should also include: Express-Scripts website address, user ID, password, and the current or suggested method of payment.

**VA Debt and Claims Flexibility:** The VA recently announced a number of actions to provide Veterans with financial, benefits and claims help amid VA's COVID-19 response. VA Secretary Robert Wilkie said, “...we’re taking action to give those with pending debts, claims and appeals greater flexibility during these challenging times.” The financial relief actions include the following until further notice: suspending all actions on Veteran debts under the jurisdiction of the Treasury Department and suspending collection action or extending repayment terms on preexisting VA debts, as the Veteran prefers. The benefits and claims relief actions allow Veterans the option to submit their paperwork late for the following actions: perfecting claims, challenging adverse decisions, submitting Notices of Disagreement, submitting Substantive Appeals, and responding to Supplemental Statements of the Case. Those with questions may call the VA at: 1-800-827-1000.

**Financial Protection During COVID-19:** Active-duty service members and members of the National Guard and Reserve have stepped up to shoulder the demands of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Servicemembers Civil Relief Act, enacted in 2003, is a federal law designed to ease financial burdens on service members during periods of military service. It covers issues such as rental agreements and evictions, credit card interest rates, mortgage interest rates and foreclosures, automobile leases, life insurance, health insurance, income tax payments, etc. All active duty military members are covered by the act, including those in the Coast Guard, Reserves and National Guard. Commissioned officers in active service of the USPHS and NOAA are also covered. Plus, the act provides certain benefits and protections to the families of those on active duty.

**Double 5-Star Awards:** National MOAA holds an annual communications award contest to recognize chapters that do an outstanding job communicating with their members and community. The award is named after Colonel Marvin J. Harris, USAF (Ret), formerly MOAA’s Director of Public Relations. MOAA just announced that our chapter won annual Colonel Marvin J. Harris 5-Star Awards for both our newsletter and the website!

## - NEWS FROM THE BLUE FORCE TRACKER -

ARMY: Researches developed a propeller-driven drone and a glider drone that are fired out of 40 mm grenade launchers. The propeller variant has a 2-kilometer range, a 90-minute endurance, and flies at 2,000 feet up.

NAVY: Naval Research Lab just upgraded its fleet of slow moving underwater “gliders” that survey ocean waters; the system upgrade was coupled with a new method that uses teams of gliders to improve accuracy.

MARINES: A newly upgraded MAGTAF tablet computer allows marines to plot and share locations that are displayed on a moving map, showing positions of both friendly and enemy forces in the battlespace.

AIR FORCE: Air National Guard units at Truax Field in Wisconsin and Dannelly Field in Alabama were just notified that they’ll receive squadrons of F-35-A Lightning II aircraft; the new jets will be delivered in 2023.

**2020 Calendar:** *Board Meetings:* 25 Jun, 22 Oct, and 17 Dec.

*General Membership:* 28 May cancelled, 24 Sep, and 3 Dec.

**Benevolent Fund:** Our designated charities are: MOAA American Patriot Scholarship Program (**MOAA-APS**), Purple Heart Homes (**PHH**) and Welcome Home Veterans (**WHV**). Donate by sending a charity-specific (any or all three) annotated check to Treasurer: CDR Dave Olson, 485 26<sup>th</sup> Ave NE (Unit A), Hickory, NC 28601.

**Treasury:** Our chapter has sufficient operating and reserve funds to cover anticipated 2020 operating expenses.

### ———— CHAPTER PRINCIPALS, DIRECTORS AND STAFF ————

Chapter President: LTC “Davy” Davenport

1<sup>st</sup> Vice President: *Vacant*

2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President: LTC James Cole

Treasurer: Commander Dave Olson

Secretary: Major Dennis McClish

Chaplain: Reverend (WO3) Robert Herron

Programs Chairman: *Vacant!*

1<sup>st</sup> Past President & Director: Colonel Gemeinhardt

Director: Colonel (Dr.) Don Gemeinhardt

Director: Captain Allen Stewart

Director: Colonel Joe Cansler

Legislative Liaison: Colonel (Dr.) Dana Tucker

Membership Chair: *Vacant!*

JROTC Coordinator: Lt Col G. Jane Harmon

Personal Affairs & TOPS: Lt Col Ted Hayes

Newsletter/Website: Colonel John Liburdi

**About This MOAA Chapter:** 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, including their families and survivors. MOAA and its affiliated chapters and councils are nonpartisan, without any political party affiliation, bias, or designation. Membership is open to those who hold or have ever held a warrant or commission in any component of the Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, Space Force, Coast Guard, U.S. Public Health Service or the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. The MOAA Catawba Valley Chapter covers six counties: Alexander, Burke, Caldwell, Catawba, Iredell and Lincoln. Our chapter is active in the community through its Benevolent Fund (explained above) and JROTC support. The chapter also engages in ad hoc charitable support and activity, with emphasis on homeless Veterans. A one-page membership application form is posted on the “Join Chapter” button on our chapter website homepage; the mailing address for the application is shown right on the form itself. **Please join our chapter!** Our chapter website is at: [www.moaacvc.org](http://www.moaacvc.org)

**NOTE:** *Our chapter’s General Membership meeting/dinner scheduled for May 28<sup>th</sup> has been cancelled due to CDC guidance and State Government restrictions on restaurant operation. If there’s a change in the guidance and Lake Hickory Country Club can accommodate, then a separate e-mail announcement and reservation slip for the event will be sent to our members.*

**Our Chapter website:** [www.moaacvc.org](http://www.moaacvc.org)

**MOAA Take Action:** <http://takeaction.moa.org>