

UMA Newsletter

Quarterly Newsletter for USPTO Veterans and Families
June 1, 2013, Volume 1, Number 2



Not so long ago, UMA members served...

- ◆ **August 2, 1990:** First Gulf War began with limited introduction of U.S. forces into Northern Iraq.
- ◆ **July 2, 1992:** Operation PROVIDE PROMISE began. It was a humanitarian relief operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Operation ended in January 1996, making it the longest running humanitarian airlift in history.
- ◆ **June 10, 1999:** President Slobodan Milosevic agreed to pull his troops out of Kosovo. NATO peacekeepers were dispatched.
- ◆ **March 2003:** Operation Iraqi Freedom began in pursuit of peace, stability, and security in the Persian Gulf. In 2010, Secretary of State Robert Gates announced the change to "Operation New Dawn" to coincide with the reduction of American troops and transition to Iraqi authority.
- ◆ **August 2005:** Hurricane Katrina made landfall in Louisiana. Military units were mobilized to provide relief and search and rescue missions.

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UMA POC

President Joe Hirl

Vice President Brent Howard

Treasurer Aretha Grayson

Secretary April Blair

Representatives at Large:

Eric Atkisson

Stuart Snyder

Asghar Bilgrami

Kacy Verdi

Sieg Chencinski

Anhthuan Nguyen

USPTO Employees Honor Fallen Service Members in First Walk of Thankful Recognition

More than one hundred USPTO employees and guests honored fallen U.S. service members during the “Walk of Thankful Recognition” on **Thursday, May 23**. Veterans and civilians from many business units attended the event, which was the first of its kind at the agency.

A bugler, drummer, and pipers led participants from Dulany Gardens to Alexandria National Cemetery as local police directed traffic. USPTO Military Association (UMA) President Joe Hirl led a brief ceremony focused on the sacrifices made by fallen veterans on behalf of country, family, and ideals. Navy Chaplain David Malnar provided the invocation, and participants joined in the chorus as Aretha Grayson—director’s secretary for Technology Center 2400--sang “Battle Hymn of the Republic.” Hirl, Steve Fezler of the Veterans Administration, and USPTO Acting Director Teresa Stanek Rea spoke about the cost of freedom and the selfless sacrifices made by veterans.

Rea reminded listeners that the original patent office building had served as a hospital for Union soldiers during the Civil War, and that most of the agency was moved to Richmond during the Second World War to free up office space in Washington D.C. for the war effort.

“Today, the vindication of the sacrifices made in those wars and others—by men, and later women, who nobly served and died in defense of their nation—is everywhere around us,” said Rea. Her speech can be read on the [USPTO web site](#).

Each event program featured the name and burial site location of one of the veterans laid to rest at the cemetery. After the event concluded with drum rolls and the playing of “Taps,” participants slowly walked past the gravesites to pay their respects to the veterans named on their individual programs.

“Freedom is won though love of country, secured in giving and maintained through vigilance. We are what we are because of what those who lay here have given us,” said Hirl.

The Alexandria National Cemetery, just a few blocks east of the USPTO campus on the other side of Hooff’s Run creek, was designated in 1862 as a burial site for Union soldiers lost in the Civil War. Today it is the final resting place for more than 4,000 individuals, including four civilian employees of the Quartermaster Corps who drowned crossing the Potomac River in pursuit of John Wilkes Booth on April 24, 1865, as well as five African-American “Buffalo Soldiers.”



Acting Director Rea’s Memorial Day Remarks:

“Thank you, Joe. I appreciate the kind introduction. I also appreciate the great work that you and the USPTO Military Association (UMA) did to put this event together. If I am not mistaken, this is the first Memorial Day event of its kind we have ever held, which I think is a great testament to the work of the UMA and having so many veterans in our agency.

I also commend the choice of holding the ceremony here at the National Cemetery. To quote President Lincoln’s words at the Gettysburg Address, “It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.” Like the brave men who died at Gettysburg, their fellow soldiers and countrymen buried here died for a cause they believed in, to leave future generations a world better than the one they had inherited.

It is also worth noting that at the same time these men were fighting and dying, the original Patent Office in D.C.—“that noblest of Washington buildings” as the celebrated poet Walt Whitman called it—served as a hospital for Union soldiers. And during the Second World War, most of the Patent Office was relocated to a tobacco warehouse in Richmond, to provide more office space in D.C. for the massive war effort. Today, the vindication of the sacrifices made in those wars and others—by men, and later women, who nobly served and died in defense of their nation—is everywhere around us.

Just across the street I am facing, there was once a slave market, and across the stream to my left there was once a cluster of villages where poor freedmen lived. Today, instead, surrounding this cemetery are modern buildings, thriving commerce, and citizens of all colors, existing in peace and pursuing their dreams in freedom. We owe that first and foremost to the men and women who gave the last full measure of devotion to make it possible, and to those countless millions of others who made the best use of the freedom so dearly purchased to contribute to the betterment of the world.

Our agency has a small part to play in that noble experiment, as the shepherds of American innovation. And so indeed it is “altogether fitting and proper” that we come here today and pay our respects to the fallen who made it possible. May we always make the most of their sacrifices and never forget them. Thank you.

HR Veterans Benefits Corner

Know the facts before you deploy.....

The Office of Human Resources (OHR), Compensation and Benefits Division (CBD) has a one-stop shop for Reservists and National Guard members called to active duty (voluntarily or involuntarily) and the transitioning of employees back into the federal workforce. CBD offers appointment-based counseling sessions to discuss military leave, entitlements, and benefits in accordance with the Uniformed Services Employment Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) of 1994.

During the counseling session, we determine possible entitlement to additional military leave and/or reservist differential based on your military orders. Additionally, topics such as existing payroll deductions, benefits, SF-52 personnel action(s) required to document deployment/reemployment, and the process for employees returning back to the federal workforce from active duty will be discussed.

If you receive orders for active duty (voluntarily or involuntarily), your supervisor will need to initiate an SF-52 and send to OHR along with your military orders, so we can document your military LWOP in the database.

The Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA)

The Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) of 1994 protects members of the U.S. Armed Forces against discrimination or job loss, whether they enlist voluntarily or are called to active duty involuntarily.

COVERAGE AND APPLICABILITY

Uniformed service is defined under USERRA as:

- All service, voluntary or involuntary, with the armed forces (including active duty, active duty for training, initial active duty for training, and absence for service fitness examination).
- National Guard when engaged in federal active duty for training, inactive duty training, or full-time guard duty.

- Commissioned Corps of the Public Health Service.
- Emergency service or required training as a member of the National Disaster Medical System.
- Other groups designated by the President in time of war or emergency.

BASIC PROTECTIONS

USERRA provides the following basic protections:

- Prohibits discrimination in initial employment, reemployment, retention in employment, promotion, or any benefit of employment due in any part to a person's past, present, or future military service, status, or obligations;
- Prohibits discrimination or retaliation in employment against any person because such person (1) has taken an action to enforce a USERRA protection, (2) has testified or otherwise made a statement in or in connection with any USERRA proceeding, (3) has assisted or otherwise participated in a USERRA investigation, or (4) has exercised a USERRA right;
- Provides benefits during the performance of military service such as health plan coverage and other non-seniority benefits (e.g. life insurance);
- Provides for prompt restoration to employment with the pre-service employer as well as restoration of seniority-based benefits.

EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBILITIES

Under USERRA employee obligations include:

- Providing advance notice to employer of upcoming uniformed service.
- Timely returning to work or applying for reemployment following service (based on length of service).
- For a period of service more than 30 days, providing documentation upon request of the agency that establishes the timeliness of the reemployment application, and the length and character of service.



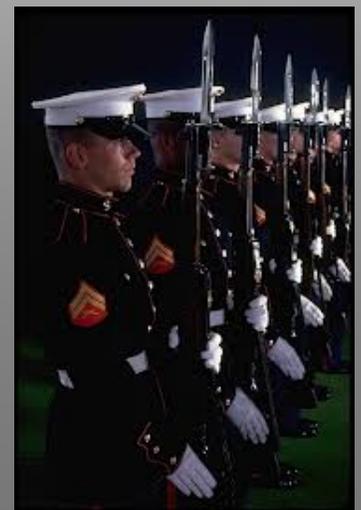
HR Point of Contact

HR Representative for UMA and all USPTO Veterans:

Anthony Henderson 571-272-6160

Anthony.henderson@uspto.gov

HR Compensation and Benefits Division 571-272-6209





Family Group POC

April Blair 571-270-1014

April.Blair@USPTO.GOV

Margaret Squalls

Margaret.Squalls@uspto.gov

Know the facts before you deploy (continued)

REEMPLOYMENT ELIGIBILITY

Under USERRA, to have restoration rights, the employee must:

- Have left his/her job to perform uniformed service.
- Have given the agency advance verbal or written notice of uniformed service.
- Not have been released from the military with a disqualifying discharge.
- Serve no more than a cumulative of five years in the uniformed service while employed by the federal government (exceptions may apply).
- Apply for restoration within appropriate time limits.

If you have received active duty military orders, are planning to deploy in the upcoming months, or have any questions regarding military deployment and reemployment related to USERRA please send an e-mail to MDRP@uspto.gov.



TIME LIMITS FOR RESTORATION

Employees who served...

- Less than 31 days (or who leave to take a fitness exam for service) must report for civilian duty at the beginning of the next regularly scheduled work day following their release from service plus the expiration of eight hours after a time for safe transportation back to the employee's residence.
- More than 30 but less than 181 days must apply for reemployment within 14 days of release from uniformed service.
- More than 180 days have 90 days after completion of uniformed service to apply for restoration.



Did you know

Memorial Day originated in 1868 when Union General John A. Logan designated a day in which the graves of Civil War Soldiers would be decorated. Known as Decoration day, the holiday was changed to Memorial Day within twenty years, becoming a holiday dedicated to the memory of the fallen and became federal holiday in 1971

UMA Fitness

We stay fit. If you would like to join us, here is a good starting point:

Scuba Diving and Softball — POC Albert Gagliardi

Gym Workouts, Basketball/pick up games — POC Marta Dulko and Margaret Squalls

Tough Mudder run — POC Marta Dulko and Kat Wyrozewski

Sky Diving, Kayaking, and other exhilarating special events — POC Brent Howard

Game/sports watching events — Basketball, Soccer, College Football, and Monday Night NFL football if anyone is interested — POC Brent Howard

Fitness challenge — Gym workout team challenges you to attend total body conditioning class with Drew on Mondays at 4 p.m. It is a good preparation for Tough Mudder. Can you outlast Kat and Marta?



Current Events

Wounded Warrior Events for Soldiers in local Hospitals

The UMA is in the process of organizing small volunteer pizza parties and events for wounded soldiers who are currently located at Fort Belvoir and Bethesda military hospitals. If you are interested in participating in one of these future events, please notify Brent Howard of your desire to join this team at UMA@uspto.gov. Dates of events will be TBD until the teams are formed.

Career Q&A for Veterans and their families at USPTO

Last Q&A session was a success. These are to be quarterly sessions, so if you have a topic you would like to see UMA present please contact us at UMA@uspto.gov.

Fundraisers and volunteer programs

Pizza Party or Ice Cream Social at Walter Reed /Bethesda Hospital! We are looking for a few more volunteers to help serve food to wounded warrior patients and their families. Please send e-mail to Brent.Howard1@uspto.gov to volunteer for events like this.

Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) External Outreach

UMA members volunteer with ESGR in organizing H2H Events that teach current Veterans how to write effective resumes and how to gain proper interview skills. For more information, please contact Kat Wyrozebski or Lawana Hixon.

Classifieds

Photo contest: Please submit any photos you have of you and your family with a military theme. Top 3 winners to be included in the next issue of the newsletter. If you would like to post classifieds, please write to UMA@uspto.gov

Editors

Editor-In-Chief, Kat Wyrozebski
Asst. Editor, Eric Atkisson
Asst. Editor, Brent Howard

Looking for newsletter co-editors. If you would like to consider writing for the UMA Newsletter, please email us at UMA@uspto.gov.

For more details, please contact Kat at 571-272-1127 or Katarzyna.wyrozebski@uspto.gov

USPTO Military Association Newsletter

Editor -in-Chief, Kat Wyrozebski
Katarzyna.wyrozebski@uspto.gov
400 Dulany
Alexandria, VA 22306

UMA@uspto.gov



Veteran Profile: Lt. Col. Eric Atkisson, ARNG

Eric Atkisson, a public affairs specialist in the Office of the Chief Communications Officer (OCCO), has been a member of the Army's reserve component his entire adult life.

"I joined the Army Reserve when I was 17," said Atkisson, now 41. "It felt like a family tradition. My father, who died when I was young, had been an officer in the Army Reserve before I was born, and my older brother had served as an Army officer in Vietnam. Both had been enlisted first. I wanted to follow their example, and I knew it would help pay for college."

Then a resident of Green Bay, Wis., Atkisson was assigned to the 395th Ordnance Company of Appleton. The day he completed his advanced individual training, Aug. 2, 1990, he watched Iraq's invasion of Kuwait on CNN from the airport in Huntsville, Ala.

"It meant nothing to me at the time. I had never heard of Kuwait and wasn't even sure where it was," he said. But he found out soon enough, when his unit was mobilized for active duty and deployed to Saudi Arabia a week before the war started in January 1991.

"Probably the scariest night of my life was the second night of the war. We were wearing all of our chemical protective gear, listening to air raid sirens and the firing of Patriot missile batteries, while the radio told us, erroneously, as it turned out, that Israel had been hit with chemical warheads. I was just 18, and I thought I was at Ground Zero for World War III."

He returned from the war and resumed his studies at Ripon College in the fall of 1991. He graduated Phi Beta Kappa in May, 1994 with a bachelor of arts in history and a commission as an infantry officer in the Wisconsin National Guard. Later that year he moved to Texas, where he eventually transferred to a public affairs unit and performed missions in El Salvador, South Korea, and Poland. In 2002 he took command of a personnel services detachment, just in time to receive orders for deployment to Kuwait. His unit arrived in country a couple of hours before Operation Iraqi Freedom commenced.

"It was surreal, being back there again and having to put on chemical protective gear while air raid sirens wailed. I remember driving up a highway near Kuwait City and recognizing it from 1991. It was the 'Highway of Death', except all of the destroyed vehicles from the first Gulf War had long since been removed."

Atkisson went on to serve as a public affairs officer for U.S. Army South, in San Antonio, and then as deputy public affairs officer for the Austin-based 36th Infantry Division of the Texas National Guard. In 2008 he toured battlefields in Italy with a WWII veteran of the division and won an award for his Army Magazine article, "Recollections of Italy, 65 Years Later." From 2009-10 he served as U.S. Army South's liaison to the Pentagon, and in late 2010 he returned to the Middle East for a third time, serving as the 36th Division's public affairs officer in Basrah, Iraq, as the U.S. mission wound to a close.

"When we were preparing for that deployment at Joint Base Lewis-McCord in Washington State," he said, "I was promoted to lieutenant colonel within a few hundred yards of where my father was commissioned a second lieutenant in 1950. And after my brother passed away near the end of my deployment, we interred his remains in Arlington National Cemetery, near my father's. Military service is a part of my family's history, and it's a part of me. It has not always been fun or easy, but it was worth every minute of it."

Atkisson started working at the USPTO in November, 2011, a few months after returning from Iraq, and performs a wide variety of duties for OCCO, including speechwriting for Acting Director Teresa Stanek Rea. During 2012 he was Managing Editor of USPTO Weekly. He transferred to the Virginia National Guard last year and serves as the public affairs chief of the Virginia Joint Force Headquarters in Sandston. His wife Jianying is a patent examiner.

If you are a veteran and want to share some of your military experiences with the USPTO community, contact April Blair at 571-270-1014. For more information about the USPTO Military Association, contact April Blair or Joseph Hirl at 571-272-3865. or email us at UMA@uspto.gov

Editor -in-Chief, Kat Wyrozowski
Katarzyna.wyrozowski@uspto.gov
400 Dulany
Alexandria, VA 22306

UMA@uspto.gov

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