



U.S. PATENT & TRADEMARK OFFICE MILITARY ASSOCIATION



Winter 2024 - 2025

USPTO awarded two veteran-friendly designations

By Elizabeth Caraway, *UMA Secretary*

It was apt timing that during the month of Veterans Day, the USPTO was awarded two veteran-friendly designations.

First, the agency was named a [2024 U.S. Veterans Magazine Top Veteran-Friendly Government Agency](#). Some of the information that was taken into consideration included percentages of veterans/women veterans/C-suite veterans, retention rates, presence of a veteran hiring coordinator, affinity group, military outreach, and veteran career development opportunities.

"U.S. Veterans Magazine presents a compilation of esteemed agencies that have received recognition for their exceptional dedication to fostering inclusion and equality for our veteran community. These agencies have exemplified excellence in cultivating an inclusive workplace culture and have achieved significant advancements in promoting equal opportunity and equity within their organizations. We take great pride in showcasing these industry leaders and emphasizing their unwavering commitment to championing equality and creating a more inclusive workplace for veterans."

Next, the USPTO is one of only two federal agencies (Customs and Border Protection is the other) selected for the [Military.com Top 25 Veteran Employers for the 2025](#) list. Although our workforce percentage of veterans is lower than some others on the list, we were selected due to our strong employee experience and robust military outreach.

Included in the write-up for the agency is a section about the **USPTO Military Association**: "The agency's robust veteran and military spouse hiring program is complemented by a 280+ member military association, which offers mentorship, career growth opportunities and a sense of community. The agency also hosts panels and summits on topics such as PTSD, Hispanics in the military and service branch celebrations and organizes annual Memorial Day and Veterans Day programming. Weekly virtual 'coffee chats' further foster connections among veteran employees."

We're proud of our agency's engagement and growing positive reputation within the military community.



ANNOUNCEMENTS

Get fit in the New Year!

The PTO Fitness Center is running a membership promotion until January: FREE for military, first responders, and USPTO security. When you sign up, reference the UMA so we can track referrals.

Join our weekly virtual chat!

The weekly **UMA Coffee Break** is a virtual gathering that offers UMA members the chance to tell their story, hear about veteran organizations, and ask questions. Coffee Breaks are every Tuesday morning at 9:30 a.m. Contact uma@uspto.gov if you are a member who is not receiving the invites.

Want to see the topics of the past quarter's coffee chats? See page 14.

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UMA hosts Veterans Day celebration

By Elizabeth Caraway, *UMA Secretary*

Our USPTO Military Association (UMA) hosted a Veterans Day program at the Alexandria campus on November 7th to honor America’s veterans for their willingness to serve and make sacrifices for the nation. Joined by the Patentees, the USPTO chorus, as well as a jazz ensemble from a local school, our colleagues offered their thanks for those who have served in our armed forces.

UMA Executive Sponsor and agency Chief Administrative Officer Fred Steckler opened by sharing a brief history of the UMA and veteran hiring at the USPTO. The veteran workforce at the agency now numbers over 1,000. He emphasized the UMA’s impact cannot be understated.

“It’s not enough to simply hire veterans; you have to create a

community for them,” he said.

Added USPTO Deputy Director Derrick Brent: “The UMA is a shining organization in the agency. [Veterans] have shaped our society both in and out of uniform.”

Veteran contributions were also emphasized by the program guest speaker, retired Army Lt. Gen. Leslie Smith, who offered a keynote address about organizational trust.

“The trust that veterans bring to organizations is so critical [...] we must not only encourage it, but require it,” he said. “That’s what veterans bring to the table...a legacy of loyalty and service.”



Clockwise from upper left: Retired Army Lt. Gen. Leslie Smith offers a keynote address at the USPTO Veterans Day program November 7th at the Alexandria campus. The Patentees perform a medley of service branch songs at the program. Mr. Simmons and the Stuart-Hobson Middle School Jazz ensemble perform a series of songs, showcasing soloists. Jennifer Engelmann, USPTO Health Care Unit and Air Force veteran, performs the National Anthem. (Photos by Jay Premack, USPTO)

Clockwise from top left: Antonio Brown, program emcee, stands for the National Anthem. Deputy Director Derrick Brent (far right) shakes the hand of guest speaker Retired Lt. Gen. Leslie Smith. USPTO Chief Administrative Office and UMA Executive Sponsor Fred Steckler offers remarks. New UMA swag this season includes these popular uniformed rubber ducks. USPTO veteran attendees pose after the program. (Photos by Jay Premack, USPTO)



Who We Are

The USPTO Military Association (UMA) is a USPTO affinity group and 501(c)(3) non-profit charity with a mission to provide **fellowship, mentorship, and support** for military veterans working at the USPTO and to help educate others on the important contributions that veterans have made—and continue to make—to the workforce and our nation. Membership is open to everyone and prior military service is not required. Contact the UMA for more information or to join (it only takes one short form) at uma@uspto.gov.

Scuttlebutt Editorial Staff

Executive Sponsor: Fred Steckler
UMA President: Robin Hylton
Editor-in-Chief: Elizabeth Caraway
Copy Editing: Robin Hylton

The Scuttlebutt is produced with volunteer hours and may include stories, links, and references not directly connected to the USPTO Military Association, but which may be of interest to our veteran community. If you have questions or comments about any of the newsletter content, please contact us at uma@uspto.gov. We appreciate feedback as we strive to offer the best possible product to our members.



NSBE & UMA mock interview program contributes to promotion success

By Ephraim Blair, *UMA Youth Communications Apprentice*

The interview is one of the most nerve-wracking parts of the job application process. Even seasoned professionals with impressive credentials can become nervous when put on the spot, formulating responses, remembering to maintain eye contact, avoiding filler words, and more. Longtime USPTO Military Association (UMA) member Valentin Neacsu conquered those nerves and earned a promotion this year thanks to a Voluntary Employee Organization mock interview initiative.

Neacsu served as a patent examiner in Technology Center (TC) 3700 for nearly a decade before pursuing a position as a Supervisory Patent Examiner (SPE) in another TC. "Having been advised by several of my friends and mentors that interview practice was extremely important, I enthusiastically embraced the opportunity to participate in the Mock Interview Program... as soon as it was announced," he said.

Most people do not have a regimented way to practice or simulate the interview process, leaving even the most qualified applicants with impressive resumé's to flounder in such a stressful environment. To combat this problem, the National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE) - USPTO Chapter partnered with the UMA to form the NSBE & UMA Mock Interview Initiative in 2023. The initiative was founded to help make any USPTO colleague a stronger interviewee and applicant for any position they apply for, supporting the agency's focus on professional development and career growth. Neacsu has made professional growth a central goal and priority throughout his career.

Neacsu was born and raised in Romania. After graduating a military high school, he attended the Romanian Military Technical Academy (MTA). He served as a military instructor and manager of a small research lab at the MTA and eventually was honorably discharged from the military as a first lieutenant and was admitted into a graduate program at the University of Delaware in the early 2000s. Neacsu graduated with a Ph.D. in Mechanical Engineering and then worked as an engineer at a defense contractor in Massachusetts. He said it "proved to be an outstanding learning opportunity."

Eventually, Neacsu moved with his family to Northern Virginia, where he learned about the USPTO and has served here ever since.



Valentin Neacsu discusses his career journey during the hybrid Citizenship Day UMA event in Sep. 2024. (Screenshot from virtual broadcast)

"After I became a Primary Examiner, I realized how much I enjoyed training other examiners, which is why I signed up for career development details," Neacsu explained. "The same realization made me pursue a managerial position, given that the main responsibilities of a Supervisory Patent Examiner include coaching and mentoring and training in the most general sense."

Early on as a patent examiner, Neacsu had "an interesting conversation" with Sieg Chencinski in the Madison Atrium. This interaction led him to join the UMA soon after joining the PTO:

Sieg was an honorary UMA board member, happy to talk with anyone about the association and recruit new members. Sieg and I found out that we shared several things in common: though in different centuries and under different conditions, Sieg and I were both born in the same Eastern European country and immigrated to the United States. We both served in the military in our youths: his military service with the US Air Force extended for many years, mine with the Romanian military was much shorter. So I call Sieg my UMA sponsor, because he's the one who invited me to join, which I did right away.

Ever since then, Neacsu has been an enthusiastic member of the UMA, participating in various events and programs, such as the mock interview program.

During each mock interview, three panelists ask the

Continued on next page

“Mock interview program” continued from previous page

interviewee questions and judge their responses. Each session typically consists of three general, important interview questions that are pulled from different lists and resources. After all three questions are answered, the interviewee is given the chance to ask a question or make a comment about the panelists, as would happen in a real interview.

The intention is to provide participants with a structured format that feels like a real interview while keeping them on their toes. All mock interviews are conducted virtually, and the USPTO Digital Media Service video records them, letting the participant see their performance. Additionally, all three panelists give constructive feedback to the interviewee afterward using a rubric that gauges appearance, communication, body language, and question responses, allowing the participant to view the video recording and compare it to the panelists’ comments. Applicants can and are encouraged to sign up for three interview sessions, allowing them to improve and build confidence with every subsequent one.

Neacsu recently became a supervisory patent examiner. To get the position, he had to endure two rigorous interviews with tough panelists and judges, and says he’s thankful he prepared through the mock interview program first.

Neacsu said he thought the mock interview program “was absolutely outstanding, a lot more than what I had hoped for.” He participated in “three separate mock interviews on three different dates,” and he was interviewed by many

qualified and experienced people from the UMA and NSBE.

“After each interview, each panelist shared their opinions and made specific recommendations of what I could do to improve my performance in future interviews,” Neacsu said. “The feedback was offered in a friendly, honest, and professional way, and addressed a range of aspects from structure/content of my answers to form and overall demeanor. These suggestions were very valuable, as they captured details that were impossible for me to become aware of on my own.”

Neacsu said that having to go through a realistic simulation of the job interviewing process prepared him well for his actual interviews. He said, “I am immensely grateful to the volunteers who participated in this program, as I credit their collective insight with my improvements in presentation skills, and with my being eventually selected for a new SPE position.”



UMA Youth Communications Apprentice Ephraim Blair, son of April and Jeffrey Blair, is a high school freshman in Bethesda, Md. Ephraim was born in Walter Reed Military Hospital and his father was a Navy active duty medical officer. He is interested in history, politics, and economics. He loves activities such as reading, writing, debating, and playing golf. He is planning on pursuing a career in law and politics.

Forget the sleigh...



Santa arrived in an unconventional fashion this year. More than 450 members of the District of Columbia National Guard, Maryland National Guard, Virginia National Guard, National Guard Bureau (NGB), various DoD partners, D.C. Government Operations-DCNG, Mayor’s Office of Veterans Affairs, and ROTC programs participated in a 5-mile holiday toy ruck march in partnership with Children’s National Hospital, in Washington, D.C., Dec. 7, 2024. Participants were asked to bring a toy or purchase one. Santa also made an appearance. Toys were later presented to children who will spend the holidays at the Children’s National Hospital. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Allen Griffith)



Photos from around the military services

ARMY



A U.S. Army M2A3 Bradley Fighting Vehicle assigned to Charlie "Wildcards" Company, 2nd Battalion, 12th Regiment, 1st Armored Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, executes a wet gap crossing alongside Polish soldiers from the 16th Mechanized Division during Tumak 24 at Bemowo Piskie Training Area (BPTA), Poland, Nov. 27, 2024. A wet gap crossing involves overcoming natural obstacles such as rivers or bodies of water swiftly and effectively. Tumak 24 is a multinational combined arms live fire exercise (CALFEX) and wet gap crossing (WGX) to enhance interoperability, security and warfighting capabilities. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Trevor Wilson)

MARINE CORPS



U.S. Marine Corps Cpl. Leonardo Hinojosa, a bulk fuel specialist and native of Corpus Christi, Texas, prepares a shape charge during a demolition range in support of exercise Freezing Winds 24 in Syndalen, Finland, Nov. 26, 2024. Freezing Winds is an annual Finnish-led maritime exercise involving U.S. Marines assigned to Marine Rotational Force - Europe and serves as a venue to increase Finnish Naval readiness and interoperability between NATO partners and allies in and around the Baltic Sea. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Lance Cpl. Christian Salazar)

SPACE FORCE



An unarmed Minuteman III Intercontinental Ballistic Missile launches during an operational test at 11:01 p.m. Pacific Time Nov. 5, 2024, at Vandenberg Space Force Base, Calif. ICBM test launches demonstrate that the U.S. ICBM fleet is ready, reliable and effective in leveraging dominance in an era of strategic competition. (U.S. Space Force photo by Airman 1st Class Olga Houtsma)

NAVY



Sailors prepare to conduct maintenance on an E-2D Hawkeye, attached to Airborne Command & Control Squadron (VAW) 117, on the flight deck aboard the Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72). Abraham Lincoln, flagship of Carrier Strike Group Three, is underway conducting routine operations in the U.S. 7th Fleet area of operations. U.S. 7th Fleet is the U.S. Navy's largest forward-deployed numbered fleet, and routinely interacts and operates with allies and partners in preserving a free and open Indo-Pacific region. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Sheryssa Dodard)

COAST GUARD



Petty Officer Second Class Jacob Weaver passes over a bale of contraband to bring onto U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Munro (WMSL 755) via the rescue station door as Petty Officer First Class Mason Knudtson maneuvers the Over-the-Horizon small boat alongside the cutter. Munro interdicted a total of 11 vessels suspected of narcotics smuggling in the Eastern Pacific Ocean, resulting in the seizure of over 30,000 lbs. of cocaine, worth an estimated \$440 million in wholesale value. (U.S. Coast Guard photo by Lt. j.g. Samika Lewis.)

AIR FORCE



U.S. Airmen assigned to the 20th Expeditionary Bomber Squadron step to a U.S. Air Force B-52H Stratofortress during Bomber Task Force 25-1 at RAF Fairford, England, Nov. 25, 2024. BTF 25-1 demonstrates the U.S.' extended deterrent commitment to Allies and partners to enhance regional security. (U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Emily Farnsworth)

*All photos this page are courtesy of the Defense Visual Information Distribution Service ([DVIDS](#))

USPTO at the Military Influencer Conference

In early October, the USPTO participated in the Military Influencer Conference (MIC) for the second year in a row. MIC is a three-day event that unites the military-connected community, creating unique opportunities to exchange ideas, foster growth, and encourage collaboration. In addition to conducting presentations on trademarks, the USPTO participated in a hiring fair, and Director Kathi Vidal moderated a discussion between Retired Lt. Col. Robert Schaefer, co-founder and master distiller of Horse Soldier Bourbon, and Misty Stutsman Fox, Director of Entrepreneurship & Small Business, Syracuse University D'Aniello Institute for Veterans & Military Families.



USPTO Director Kathi Vidal and agency staff members pose in front of their booth at the Military Influencer's Conference (MIC) in Atlanta, Georgia. USPTO staff connected with hundreds of innovators and entrepreneurs looking to protect their intellectual property. Teams from the Office of Public Engagement (OPE), USPTO Military Association (UMA), Office of Human Resources (OHR), Patent and Trademark Resource Center (PTRC) program, and Digital Media Services (DMS) joined over 2,000 attendees from the military community. (USPTO photo by Michael Cleveland)



UMA President Robin Hylton (right) exchanged challenge coins with Retired Lt. Col. Robert W. Schaefer (former Green Beret), co-founder and master distiller of Horse Soldier Bourbon, at the 2024 Military Influencer Conference (MIC). (USPTO photo by Michael Cleveland)



Performance group joins UMA for game night

On October 3, UMA and a fellow Voluntary Employee Organization, Network of Executive Women (NEW), hosted a special performance from interactive theater company Verbal Gymnastics.

Verbal Gymnastics is based out of Washington, D.C. and was founded by John Johnson, a native Washingtonian. They describe their performance style as “storytelling meets community”: “We believe that our stories embody who we are just like human DNA. Through the use of live interactive storytelling called Playback Theatre, the community shares stories with one another and birth stronger community connections.”

The performance was followed by attendee board games.



(Photos courtesy Angela Jenkins, UMA)



What is improv?

Improvisational theatre, often called improvisation or improv, is the form of theatre, often comedy, in which most or all of what is performed is unplanned or unscripted, created spontaneously by the performers.

Trivia Time

Can you answer these questions? (Hint: The answers are all in this issue of Scuttlebutt!)

1. How many veterans are in the USPTO workforce?
2. What is the U.S. Navy's largest forward-deployed numbered fleet?
3. What does NSBE stand for, and on what notable initiative did UMA partner with them?

Meet your 2025 USPTO Military Association Board members

President: Robin Hylton

Robin Hylton is a Special Program Examiner in International Patent Legal Administration (IPLA), a division of the Office of International Patent Cooperation (OIPC), and a former primary patent examiner. She has served as UMA secretary for three different administrations. An active member of several USPTO Voluntary Employee organizations (VEOs) and non-profit organizations, Robin has honed her communication and leadership skills.



Additionally, Robin has participated in the USPTO Enterprise mentoring program and served details in the Office of the Commissioner for Patents as a writer/editor and the Eastern Regional Outreach Office as an assistant outreach coordinator.

Although she did not actively serve in the U.S. military, Robin is married (30 years) to a U.S. Navy veteran. A proud alumna of Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, she earned a bachelor of science degree in civil engineering and worked in industry prior to coming to the USPTO. She lives the University's motto - *Ut Prosim* (That I may serve).

Vice President: Keith G. Delahoussaye Jr.

Keith Delahoussaye is a Retired Master Sergeant from the United States Air Force Reserve (1998-2018). He served 12 of his 20 years of service as an Air Reserve Technician. During this time, he was able to serve in various roles of leadership and management. While serving, Keith earned a Master's degree of Science in Advanced Materials Engineering and a Master's degree of Science in Management of Technology from the University of Texas at San Antonio, in 2014 and 2015, respectively. Currently, Keith is a Primary Patent Examiner in Art Unit 2875 (optical illumination, January 2016-present) and is also a member of the Research and Development Art Unit (RD00, March 2023-present). Some of the roles of RD00 are to find ways to improve the customer experience of applicants and improve the work experience for patent examiners.



Secretary: April Blair

April Blair was one of the founding Board Directors of UMA. She has served as a Supervisory Patent Examiner (SPE) at TC 2100 for over a decade. While her husband was an active-duty Navy Medical officer, she and her family traveled throughout the country. She witnessed men and women in uniform who dedicated their lives to the service of our



nation. She fully comprehends the significance of the phrase "freedom is not free". In her spare time, she enjoys reading, cooking, music, watching NBA games, running, volunteering, and spending quality time with family and friends. She is passionate about transforming people's perspective on and implementing healing and connection through narrative and storytelling.

Treasurer: Angela Jenkins

Angela has worked at the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) since 2015 as a Paralegal Specialist. Angela recently retired from the United States Army Reserve with 35 years of honorable service, reaching the rank of Sergeant Major and has extensive experience and training as a Leader. Angela is also the Co-Founder of Lighthouse Empowerment Center Inc., (Chief Operating Officer, COO) and the Treasurer for Judge Advocate General's Association of Legal Paraprofessionals (JAGALP).



Angela's background as a Paralegal and as a Human Resource Technician has afforded her the opportunity to work at many different companies. Angela has helped several entrepreneur businesses launch and is ready to serve.

Representatives-at-Large:

Elizabeth Caraway

Liz Caraway has served on the UMA board for the past year as secretary and is concluding a detail as the agency Senior Military Advisor. An Air Force veteran, Liz served in both active-duty (6 years) and the reserves (3 years) as a public affairs officer. She also taught English at the Air Force Academy. A couple of Liz's other roles have included co-owning a defense small business and serving as editor of publications for HQ Army Retirement Services. She currently oversees UMA social media, website updates, and the UMA newsletter, *Scuttlebutt*. Liz lives in Sterling, VA, with her software engineer husband (also an Air Force veteran) and two daughters.



Jordan Landes

Jordan Landes is an International Patent Administrative Specialist on the Office of International Patent Cooperation team at the USPTO. He began his full-time role in September 2023 after completing a Skillbridge Internship



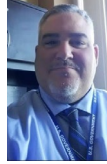


“Board members” continued from previous page

in the same position. Before joining the USPTO, Jordan served 12 years in the Air Force, where he held various roles: starting as a Spanish Linguist in San Antonio, then as a Flight Attendant in Omaha, and ultimately as an Operations NCO for the Defense Attaché in Afghanistan, Uganda, and Tunisia. Originally from California, he enlisted while living in Arizona and now resides in Northern Virginia, where his husband serves in the Army at the National Guard Bureau.

Eduardo Carballo

In his role as an Innovation Outreach Specialist for National Programs, Ed developed and executed national outreach programs targeting independent inventors and small business owners, emphasizing underserved communities to increase intellectual property (IP) awareness and resources utilization across the country, including Veterans Innovation & Entrepreneurship program, Together In Innovation, InventionCon.



Ed also played a critical role in the Unleashing American Innovators Act of 2022 (UAIA) selection committee, advising the USPTO Director on optimal locations for the Southeast Regional Office (SERO) and the Northern New England Community Outreach Office (NNECOO), based on congressional mandates, to open new USPTO offices around the country.

Ed expanded USPTO’s military outreach by partnering with the Military Influencer Conference (MIC) to engage 3,700+ veterans, active-duty, guard, reserve, and military spouses. This led to dozens of new military contacts, training, and outreach events, including a fireside chat with Director Vidal and LTC Robert Shaefer, retired Green Beret and founding member of Horse Soldier Bourbon.

Ed identified and secured Haley McClain Hill, CEO & Founder of TORCH Warrior-wear, as a panelist for the “Women Entrepreneurs (WE)” program at MIC in November 2023. Three months later, Haley appeared on “Shark Tank” and received a deal from a “Shark”.

Abdhesh Jha

Abdhesh Jha is a Primary Examiner in Art Unit 3668, examining in the Vehicle Controls, Display, and Navigation field.



Before joining USPTO, Mr. Jha was a Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO) in the United States Army, where he served as an assistant facility manager. In this capacity, he shouldered the responsibility of overseeing the well-being of 450 personnel, managing real estate assets

valued more than \$100 million, and ensuring the quality and habitability of these properties for incoming US Soldiers, all in adherence to the stringent guidelines of US Army Quality and Standard while stationed in Germany.

Mr. Jha earned his Bachelor of Science degree in Mechanical Engineering from the University of South Alabama in Mobile, AL. Originally hailing from Kathmandu, Nepal, he embarked on his journey to the United States in 2006 to pursue his undergraduate education. Currently, Mr. Jha resides in Raleigh, NC, with his wife and two sons.

Joan Goodbody

I have a diverse background and have worked many jobs. I have been at USPTO for 17 years, 4 as a contractor/search specialist and 13 for the government – first 4 1/2 as examiner (Business methods), then over 7+ as a Classifier and now for the past 1 ½ as an examiner (Navigation and Autonomous vehicles). For 12 years prior to that, I was a reference person/librarian, specializing in Government Documents at two different major universities (TA&M, MTU). I do not have a direct connection to the military, except that my father served in WWII. I have over the years worked with active duty and veterans. I taught history at a technical college in Charleston, SC during base closures; taught veterans with disabilities canoeing and kayaking in both Charleston and NOVA. I have been a member of UMA since the early days when Sieg recruited me.



Christopher Baker

Chris was born in Monroe, NC and grew up with a strong work ethic and a deep respect for community values. He has a degree in political science from Troy University.



He served honorably in the Air Force for 24 years, including service as a Gulf War veteran in support of Desert Shield/Storm and Iraqi/Enduring Freedom conflicts. Chris has been selected to work in special positions at the White House under the Bush and Obama administrations.

Chris currently serves on numerous neighborhood, industry, and community councils. He is an active member of the River East Emerging Leaders, Toastmaster’s and Bank of America’s Advisory Panel. He is a volunteer driver for Meals on Wheels.

Chris is a dad, veteran, coach, author, podcaster, and avid sports fan whose hobbies include fantasy sports, poker, and golf.

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Gregory Mosely

Greg is a primary examiner in 3681, Health Care Business Methods. He was raised in Illinois, and after high school, he joined the Navy. In the Navy he completed the Nuclear Power training in Charleston, SC and Ballston Spa, NY. Afterwards, he served as an Engineering Lab Technician on the USS Connecticut in New London, CT. After leaving the Navy, he attended undergraduate and law school at Southern Illinois University. He was hired at the USPTO in Jan. 2016, and has been with the Southwest Regional Outreach Office since that time.



USPTO, Jesse was at the NSA and served in space systems cybersecurity and also reviewed patents for secrecy orders under 35. U.S.C. § 181. Jesse has a PhD in Electrical and Computer Engineering from the University of Delaware, a Juris Doctor from Widener University Delaware Law School, and is barred in MD, PA, and NY. He also holds 10 cybersecurity certifications. He is also a volunteer firefighter and EMT, and holds multiple fire service credentials.



Luke Almendinger

Luke Almendinger is a Marine Corps veteran and the Director of the Insider Threat Program (InTP). Luke grew up in Columbus, Ohio. He served in the Marine Corps on active-duty for 10 years, and he is currently serving in the Marine Corps Reserves.



As is related to UMA, Jesse is currently the only U.S. Public Health Service Ready Reservist in the USPTO. In that capacity, he is an Assistant Engineer Officer (just promoted to Lieutenant!). Jesse also served in the Army Reserve previously as an officer in Transportation. In addition to his assigned duties as a Reservist, Jesse continually advocates for his fellow Reservists for parity within their own service and the sister services.

Luke is a Judge Advocate (lawyer) that started his career in military justice. He was a prosecutor at Camp Lejeune, NC, criminal defense attorney in Okinawa, Japan, and then a Victims’ Legal Counsel in Okinawa, Japan. From 2016 to 2018, he served as an Operational Law Attorney at the Staff Judge Advocate to the Commandant’s (SJA to CMC) Office in the Pentagon with different deployments throughout the CENTCOM AOR. From 2018 to 2020, he served as the Command Judge Advocate to the Marine Corps Intelligence Activity (MCIA).

Luke joined the USPTO in 2020 and began serving as the Intelligence Law Advisor to the SJA to CMC in a reserve capacity where he currently serves today. Luke is married to his wife, Ashlee, of 13 years and lives in Virginia. Additionally, they have a daughter, Sloane, and are expecting their second daughter in February 2025.

Jesse Samluk

Jesse Samluk is a patent examiner in Art Unit 2475 in the Multiplex Area. Jesse joined USPTO in January 2023. Before



Visitors attend the 71st National Veterans Day Observance at Arlington National Cemetery, Arlington, Virginia, Nov. 11, 2024. (U.S. Army photo by Elizabeth Fraser, Arlington National Cemetery)

Join our Facebook group: USPTO Military Association Mess

Now that more members of the UMA are teleworking, it can be more difficult to ask questions, share accomplishments, and get to know one another. Our new unofficial Facebook group, [USPTO Military Association Mess](#), seeks to provide a place to do that. The tongue-in-cheek name refers both to the “beautiful mess” that is everyday life, as well as a military mess, a designated area where military personnel socialize and eat.

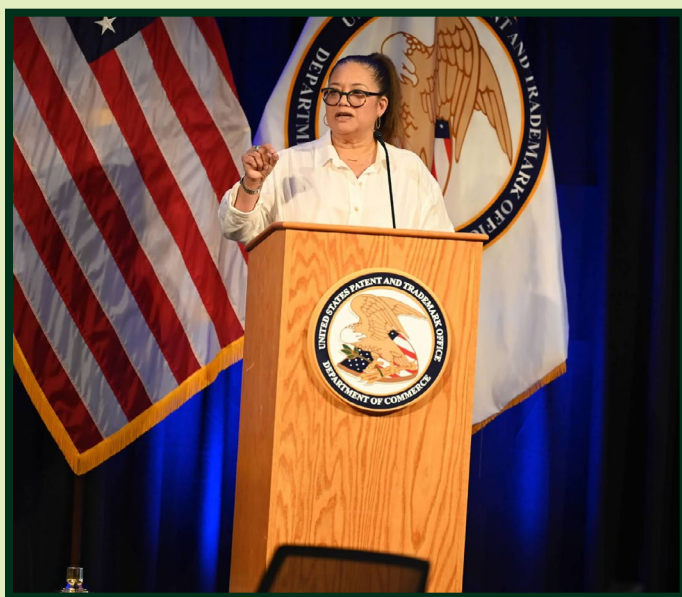
Fun fact: the root of the word “mess” is the Old French word “mes,” meaning a “portion of food.”



VEO Summer Bash celebrates diverse, inclusive workforce

The 2024 annual Voluntary Employee Organization (VEO) Summer Bash was held August 28 at the Alexandria headquarters. The red, white, and blue event featured remarks from guest speakers, music from a DJ, instructor-led dancing, games, a 360 photo booth, and barbecue.

The USPTO has 31 officially recognized VEOs. These organizations champion the principles of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility (DEIA) by creating opportunities for information sharing, learning, cultural and intellectual exchange, and open dialogue. These agency-recognized, employee-led, voluntary peer organizations are open to all employees and are formed around a shared cultural background or interest. They each provide a unique opportunity for employees to engage with one another and with leaders across the USPTO.



Clockwise from top left: Valencia Martin-Wallace offers remarks. Kanessa Walker and Alford Kindred check people into the event. USPTO Deputy Director Derrick Brent offers remarks. Attendees listen to the guest speakers. (All photos courtesy Charles Rones)

UMA highlights colleagues on Citizenship Day

By Elizabeth Caraway, UMA Secretary

In September, the USPTO Military Association (UMA) celebrated our colleagues who made the decision to become U.S. citizens as well as those who served in the Air Force.

At the Citizenship Day panel, hosted by the UMA and Patent and Trademark Office Society (PTOS) Education Committee, USPTO teammates -- including two virtual panelists -- shared their citizenship experiences.

"We're fortunate to have such a diverse group of colleagues at the USPTO. Hearing about their journeys to becoming U.S. citizens was an honor today. We thank them for sharing their stories with us," said Robin Hylton, UMA president.

UMA Executive Sponsor Fred Steckler offered remarks about what it means to be a citizen.

A cake cutting following the panel celebrated the 77th birthday of the U.S. Air Force. The oldest and youngest U.S. Air Force veteran attendees, Sieg Chencinski and Corrinne Callins, cut the cake together.



Clockwise from top: UMA members pose with the official UMA flag following the program. Katarzyna and AJ joined as virtual panelists. Fred Steckler offers remarks at the start of the program. Sieg and Corrinne cut the cake in honor of the Air Force birthday.



Looking for physical locations of veteran resources or information about state-specific benefits for areas like taxes, education, health insurance, and more? Check the benefit library tab at either <https://www.myairforcebenefits.us.af.mil> or <https://myarmybenefits.us.army.mil>.



Third annual VEO Holiday Soiree brings heartfelt connection

By Elizabeth Caraway, *UMA Secretary*

The USPTO Diversity Program, in collaboration with the agency's 31 Voluntary Employee Organizations (VEOs) celebrated the season at the agency's 3rd annual holiday soiree, Dec. 2 at the Alexandria headquarters.

Participants enjoyed live music from the Patentees chorus, a DJ, homemade dessert contest, visits with Santa, remarks from USPTO Director Kathi Vidal, USPTO Deputy Director Derrick Brent, and Office of Equal Employment Opportunity and Diversity (OEEOD) Director Bismarck Myrick. Service member representatives from Toys for Tots also shared the initiative.

During the event, the Office of Equal Employment Opportunity and Diversity presented USPTO Director Kathi Vidal and Deputy Director Derrick Brent with challenge coins for their exceptional focus on people and community at the agency.

(All photos courtesy of Michael Cleveland, USPTO)



UMA Weekly Coffee Break recap

- SEP 11:** Members shared memories of 9/11
- SEP 17:** Members shared career lessons learned
- SEP 24:** "Favorite fall activities"
- OCT 1:** Members discussed agency retention
- OCT 8:** Robin Hylton shared Military Influencer Conference experiences
- OCT 15:** Jennifer Crick shared her military career story
- OCT 22:** Luke Almendinger shared his military career story
- OCT 29:** Keith Delahoussaye shared the Patents R & D mission
- NOV 5:** Michael Hart, OHR, presented on Employee Experience
- NOV 12:** Logan Phillips and the Military Memoir Project

NOV 19: UMA 2025 Board Candidates Forum

NOV 26: John Schneider presented on military inventions

DEC 3: Members discuss holiday plans

The weekly **UMA Coffee Break** is a virtual gathering that offers UMA members the chance to tell their story, hear about veteran organizations, and ask questions. Coffee Breaks are every Tuesday morning at 9:30 a.m. Contact uma@uspto.gov if you are a member who is not receiving the invites.



Military Retiree Newsletters



[Army Echoes](#)



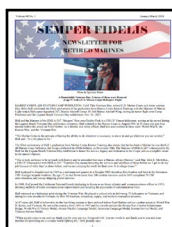
[Air Force Afterburner](#)



[Coast Guard The Long Blue Line](#)



[Navy Shift Colors](#)



[Marine Corps Semper Fidelis](#)



[DFAS newsletter](#)



Headline highlights: A look at news affecting veterans

VA proposes rule to expand access to its Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers: The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs announced its intent to expand access to its Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC) — a program that provides family caregivers of eligible veterans access to services and supports, including training and education, financial assistance, health care coverage, beneficiary travel, peer support, and more.

VA funds first study on psychedelic-assisted therapy for veterans: VA will fund a study on Methylendioxyamphetamine-assisted, or MDMA-assisted, therapy for post-traumatic stress disorder and alcohol use disorder among veterans.

Veteran homelessness reaches record low, decreasing by 7.5% since 2023: VA and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, and the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness announced results of the 2024 Point-in-Time (PIT) Count, which show a record low in Veteran homelessness since measurement began in 2009 and a 7.5% decrease since 2023.

TRICARE Regions Are Changing Jan. 1, 2025: Jan. 1, 2025, marks the start of health care delivery under TRICARE’s new regional contracts. There will be changes to the TRICARE regions in the U.S. as part of the new contracts. While there will still be two TRICARE regions, six states currently in the East Region (Arkansas, Illinois, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Texas, Wisconsin) will move to the West Region.

SBA’s Interagency Task Force to Address Veteran Small Business Development at Dec. 11 Public Meeting: The IATF Advisory Committee independently offers advice and recommends policy related to veteran-owned small business development to the SBA Administrator, the Assistant Administrator for SBA’s Office of Veterans Business Development, Congress, the President, and other U.S. policymakers.

Veteran resources and contacts

USPTO Veteran Hiring Program Manager: HireVets@uspto.gov

USPTO OHR Military Service Time Buy Back Contact: HumanResources_USPTO@uspto.gov

Benefits questions for current Reservists: BenefitsTeam@uspto.gov

Pay questions for current Reservists: OHR-CB@uspto.gov

[Veterans Affairs \(VA\) Information](#)

[GI Bill](#)

[Defense Finance and Accounting Service](#)

[TRICARE](#)

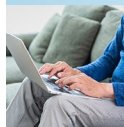
[Combat-Related Special Compensation](#)

[Veterans Service Records](#)

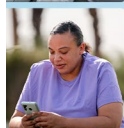
[Veterans Crisis Line: Dial 988 then Press 1, or Text 838255](#)



CALL Dial 988 then Press 1



CHAT VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat



TEXT 838255

