



# U.S. PATENT & TRADEMARK OFFICE MILITARY ASSOCIATION



Spring 2025

## Messages from leadership

Greetings UMA,  
It is my honor and privilege to serve a second year in the role of President for this great organization. Several others who have previously served as UMA President have laid the foundation for our continued success.

As your servant leader, I will be your Chief Encouragement Officer (CEO). That means inspiring you to refine your own organizational, collaboration, and communication skills by leading one of the many UMA programs and projects. Together, we will continue to support our veteran community and educate others on the sacrifices and accomplishments of veterans. After all, that is the mission of the USPTO Military Association.



Robin Hylton,  
UMA President



It is an honor and privilege to serve the USPTO Military Association as the Vice President, just as it was to serve as the Southwest Regional Outreach Office representative last year. This year, I will incorporate the tools left to me by the previous VP, Michael Argüello and build upon that foundation. I am also grateful to UMA members for selecting me for this position.

In my role, I will do my best carry forward the agenda of building support and community with fellow veterans and those with an affinity for the military here at the USPTO. This may be done through office functions as well as reaching out to surrounding military veteran programs. No one should feel alone. It is my highest priority to make sure that no one does.

I will follow UMA President Robin Hylton's lead and collaborate with fellow board members. Together, the UMA board will build upon the excellent foundation laid before us and build toward even greater prosperity and connectedness among the veteran community. Again, it is my esteemed privilege to be a part of the UMA and my honor to serve with such talented board members.



Keith Delahoussaye,  
UMA Vice President

**“** *No one should feel alone. It is my highest priority to make sure that no one does.* **”** - Keith Delahoussaye

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Employee Assistance Program

Through [WorkLife4You](#), you can find resources to help you with personal and work-related issues, everything from legal and financial matters to childcare to anxiety and depression.

To find the information and resources you need, check out the website [<https://www.foh4you.com/>] or call 1-800-222-0364.

### Join our weekly virtual chat!

The weekly **UMA Coffee Break** is a virtual gathering that offers UMA members the chance to tell their story and connect. Coffee Breaks are every Tuesday morning at 9:30 a.m. Contact [uma@uspto.gov](mailto:uma@uspto.gov) if you are a member who is not receiving the invites.

### CONNECT WITH US

- [UMA website](#)
- [UMA SharePoint](#)
- [UMA Facebook Group](#)
- [UMA Facebook page](#)



## UMA member Angelica McKinney featured in national magazine

By Elizabeth Caraway, Scuttlebutt editor

When I approached Angelica at the end of last year about being interviewed for a feature in *Homeland* magazine, the response was an enthusiastic “yes!”

A strong advocate for both military service and the benefits of working as a patent examiner, Angelica was eager to share highlights from her experiences in the Navy, transitioning from military service, and finding her way to the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO).

One of Angelica’s favorite parts of military service was the opportunity to see the world and meet new people. At the USPTO, she still enjoys meeting new people and hearing about their experiences, but she has also gained a deep appreciation for the work she does and the impact she is making.

“I am happy to directly contribute to the advancement of innovation,” says Angelica.

Read the complete article in the [January 2025 issue of Homeland magazine](#).

Note: Special thanks to other USPTO Military Association members Olivia, Anhtuan, Phillip, Andre, Tommy, and Twyler, who are featured in the advertisement to the far right of the article.

### ALL ABOARD FOR INNOVATION: A SAILOR'S PATH TO CIVIL SERVICE

By Elizabeth Caraway  
United States Patent and Trademark Office  
[www.uspto.gov/jobs/veteran-hiring-program](http://www.uspto.gov/jobs/veteran-hiring-program)

Angelica McKinney admits it “might sound cliché,” but she was excited to join the military to see the world. Born and raised in South America, she moved from Cali, Colombia, to Houston, Texas, with her family as a teenager. She was living in Houston when she decided to enlist in the United States Navy, a decision she says led to her “gaining a deeper understanding and appreciation of the world and the people in it.”



McKinney served in the Navy for six years, first in auxiliary security forces, then as an operations specialist. Based at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii, she deployed to Japan, Korea, the Philippines, Papua, Guam, Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore, Bahrain, and the United Arab Emirates in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom.

“[In the military,] I met people from all over our country and worldwide. Traveling abroad allowed me to experience different cultures firsthand,” she says of her service. “I believe that’s the reason I am more open-minded, tolerant, and accepting of different ways of life.”

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**From watch shifts to watching innovation**

McKinney was first attracted to the patent examiner position at the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) due to its benefits—a special salary rate, non-competitive career ladder, flexible schedule, telework options, comprehensive health benefits, and a retirement plan.

She quickly discovered, though, that she found the work exciting and fulfilling. As America’s Innovation Agency, the USPTO is the federal agency responsible for granting U.S. patents and registering trademarks, protecting intellectual property and promoting invention and creativity.

“At the USPTO, you see products before they get to market, some of which will later become successful, some not,” she explains. “You constantly see people making attempts to improve existing technology, such as hearing aids, to make things better for people. I am happy to directly contribute to the advancement of innovation.”

McKinney was also able to leverage skills she developed in the Navy in her current role. The need for clarity in military reports is similar, she says, to the need for plain language when writing an office action to notify a patent applicant of their patentability determination. Conducting briefs and debriefs as an operations specialist built her confidence in providing persuasive analysis of technical content and patent regulations to fellow examiners and applicants.

**A culture of inclusion**

McKinney appreciates the inclusive culture she’s found at the USPTO, participating in multiple voluntary employee organizations like the USPTO Military Association, Caribbean Intellectual Property Association, and Latinos in Trademarks. She is also a board member of the Department of Commerce Women in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math.

“The USPTO promotes a culture of diversity, inclusion, and community engagement. Working in an agency with those values allows me to feel accepted and valued,” she says.

The USPTO values the skills of military veterans. Learn more about the [USPTO Veteran Hiring Program](#) or reach out to [HireVets@uspto.gov](mailto:HireVets@uspto.gov).



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## Who We Are

The USPTO Military Association (UMA) is a USPTO voluntary employee organization 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](mailto: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 through 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](mailto:uma@uspto.gov). We appreciate feedback as we strive to offer the best possible product to our members.*

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U.S. PATENT & TRADEMARK OFFICE MILITARY ASSOCIATION

## UMA invites new examiner participation

Some of our newest agency patent examiners were recently at the Alexandria campus for training and were able to attend a fair to learn about Voluntary Employee Organizations (VEOs).

VEOs offer examiners the opportunity to network, connect, and gain professional opportunities and learn about career growth. For example, the USPTO Military Association (UMA) has offered a group-specific mentoring program and a mock interview program in the past.

New USPTO employees can learn about [VEOs on the SharePoint site](#).

Learn more about the mock interview program in the [previous issue of Scuttlebutt](#).

**We're looking for volunteers to assist with planning our annual Memorial Day event!**

Contact [Angela Jenkins](#) to volunteer.



Members of various voluntary employee organizations meet with new patent examiners during a January 2025 event. (Upper left photo) Robin Hylton, USPTO Military Association (UMA) president, speaks with examiners interested in joining the UMA. (Photos by Alford Kindred, UMA)



## The 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion continues to inspire

By Ephraim Blair, UMA Youth Communications Apprentice

Recently, Netflix released the film *The Six Triple Eight* about the first female African-American battalion to serve overseas. Having never seen the movie, I cannot comment on its historical accuracy or entertainment value. However, I can share a bit about the history of this military unit that continues to inspire.

The 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion may have served in a seemingly mundane job (mail service), but their effort was crucial to supporting the war effort during the Second World War.

In late 1944 and early 1945, World War Two was coming to a close, and the Nazis were making their last stand.<sup>1</sup> America and the Allied Powers sincerely wished to end the war in Europe with a coup de grace to start rebuilding the war-torn continent. But, after many long years at war, morale was wavering. With millions of troops abroad fighting, certain vital organs of the war effort were understaffed and crushed by the demands of their wartime functions. One of those was the mail. Soldiers endured great suffering during the war and wanted to hear from their friends and loved ones back home. Letter writing was the main way families would communicate with their family members serving abroad.<sup>2</sup>

To fill this gap, there were additional efforts to enlist women to serve in non-combat roles such as mail-sorting. Additionally, civil rights activists and First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt urged for more opportunities for African-American women to serve their country in Europe. There were already women who were working at home sorting mail and others who were in training.<sup>3</sup> Quickly, women enlisted and joined the 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion, which was segregated like most of the military.



(Photos this page from 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion)

The Battalion was shipped to Glasgow, Scotland on the *île de France* in February 1945. During their voyage to the UK, they experienced rough seas and a harrowing incident. Before they arrived they had a close call with a German U-boat, where the “captain swerved to dodge” it, causing barrels and “heavy furniture” to slide along with people.

Once they got to Scotland they were quickly moved to process mail in Birmingham, England. They quickly started working 24/7 to make progress to a mail backlog of millions of letters, processing upwards of 65,000 letters every eight-hour shift. They also had to read letters to censor them if they contained any sensitive or classified information that could compromise the war effort. “In film footage from the era, the women of the Six Triple Eight look cheerful and energetic as they sort letters and packages into bins and cubes,” but they were often mistreated, and the warehouse where they worked could filled since they were still processing mail from Christmas that included “baked goods.” Eventually, they cleared “six airplane hangars filled to the brim” and then some.

After VE Day and the end of the Nazi regime, they were transferred and taken across the English Channel to deal with mail in Rouen, France, where Joan of Arc was executed. While there, they marched in a parade around the death site of Joan.

While in Europe, many in the 6888th Battalion found it liberating to adventure in Europe where most institutions

*Continued on next page*

"6888" continued from previous page



(Pvt. Ruth L. James on duty at the gate during a unit "open house," May 26, 1945. 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion, Rouen, France (National Archives photo)

were not segregated. Unfortunately, one of those excursions turned deadly when three members of the battalion died in a car crash. They were buried in Normandy American Cemetery, making them three of only four women to be buried among upwards of 9,000 slain men. Their military unit returned to the United States in 1946, largely unnoticed and unacknowledged for their efforts.

Despite not being recognized for their efforts at the time, members of the former 6888th Battalion returned to serve their families and communities outside the military. They were not recognized for their efforts until recently. In the past decade or so, plaques and monuments have been erected across the country to honor them, along with a 2019 documentary and the 2024 Netflix film mentioned earlier.

The 6888th Battalion was awarded the Congressional Gold Medal after unanimous votes in both chambers of Congress in 2022, but only a few of the members of the battalion were still alive. Romay Johnson Davis was the last surviving member of the 6888th Battalion and died in 2024 at the age of 104.<sup>4</sup>

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2. Alexander M. Bielakowski, Ethnic and Racial Minorities in the U.S. Military, Volume One (Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), p. 654.
3. Avis Thomas-Lester, "Neither Rain, Nor Racial Bias," The Washington Post, February 26, 2009. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/02/25/AR2009022503571.html>.
4. Jennie Rothenberg Gritz, "The Real Story Behind Netflix's 'The Six Triple Eight,' a New Tyler Perry Film About the Women of the 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion," Smithsonian Magazine, December 6, 2024. <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/real-story-behind-netflix-six-triple-eight-new-tyler-perry-film-about-women-6888th-central-postal-directory-battalion-180981540/>.



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.



## Military mail service support today

Chief Petty Officer Jusuf Jenkins, an administrative yeoman attached to the first-in-class fast-attack submarine USS Virginia (SSN 774), sorts mail while pierside at Naval Submarine Base New London in Groton, Connecticut, January 15, 2024. Virginia and crew operate under Submarine Squadron (SUBRON) 4, whose primary mission is to provide attack submarines that are ready, prepared, and committed to meet the unique challenges of undersea combat and deployed operations in unforgiving environments across the globe. (U.S. Navy photo by Chief Petty Officer Joshua Karsten)



## Photos from around the military services

ARMY



U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Brandon Quintanilla and Spc. Cameron Bryant, both Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear Specialists from the 172nd Chemical Company, 2nd Chemical Battalion, 48th Chemical Brigade, 20th Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, Explosives Command, based out of Fort Riley, Kansas, sort batteries at a homesite in Pacific Palisades, California, Feb. 16, 2025.

At the request of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, U.S. Northern Command deployed approximately 170 active-duty personnel to assist Environmental Protection Agency-led teams with cleanup of wildfire hazardous waste from the Eaton and Palisades fires in California. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Maj. Casey Nelsen)

NAVY



MAJURO, Republic of the Marshall Islands (Jan. 23, 2025) Republic of the Marshall Islands maritime security advisor Royal Australian Navy Lt. Cmdr. Lachlan Sommerville briefs Commander, Joint Task Force-Micronesia (JTF-M) Rear Adm. Greg Huffman on maritime operations at the port in Majuro, Jan. 23, 2025. Dedicated to promoting regional stability, JTF-M performs Homeland Defense, Defense Support to Civil Authorities, and Foreign Humanitarian Assistance through a whole of government approach within its assigned joint operations area. (U.S. Navy photo by Lt. Cmdr. Michelle Tucker)

MARINE CORPS



A U.S. Marine with Combat Logistics Battalion 2, Combat Logistics Regiment 2, 2nd Marine Logistics Group participates in an ice break-through drill during cold weather training in preparation of Exercise Joint Viking 25 in Setermoen, Norway, Feb. 15, 2025. This exercise demonstrates the Marine Corps' unique ability to rapidly deploy during a crisis and aims to enhance interoperability between the U.S. Marine Corps and NATO allies and partners. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Cpl. Alfonso Livrieri)

AIR FORCE



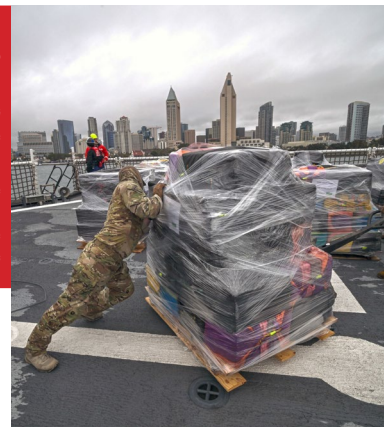
LANGLEY AIR FORCE BASE, Va. - Aircraft from the 1st Fighter Wing conducted an Elephant Walk at Langley Air Force Base, Virginia, Jan. 31, 2025, showcasing the wing's readiness and operational agility. This demonstration highlighted the wing's capability to mobilize forces rapidly in high-stress scenarios. The wing's fleet includes F-22 Raptors and T-38 Talons. As Air Combat Command's lead wing, the 1 FW maintains unparalleled combat readiness to ensure national defense at a moment's notice. (U.S. Air Force photo by Tech Sgt. Matthew Coleman-Foster)

SPACE FORCE



A Falcon 9 rocket carrying the SpainSat NG-1 mission launches from Launch Complex 39A at Kennedy Space Center, Florida, on Jan. 29, 2025. This mission will support secure communications capabilities for military and government operations. (U.S. Space Force photo by Robert Mason)

COAST GUARD



U.S. Coast Guard servicemembers offload more than \$275 million worth of illegal cocaine during a drug offload event in San Diego, Feb. 13, 2025. The drugs were seized during a three-month deployment in the Eastern Pacific. Multiple U.S. agencies, including the Departments of Defense, Justice, and Homeland Security, collaborate in the effort to combat transnational organized crime. (U.S. Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 3rd Class Austin Wiley.)

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

## USPTO Chief Patent Statistician describes role

By Elizabeth Caraway, *Scuttlebutt* editor

UMA members received a crash course in the role of statisticians and data-driven decision making at a February coffee chat. Martin “Marty” Rater, USPTO Chief Patent Statistician (and 2023 USPTO Supervisor of the Year), conducts statistical research on primary and secondary data to explore and test potential impacts on patent examination quality. He develops statistical sampling procedures and data collection methods for employee experience, and patent examination behaviors.



Martin “Marty” Rater, USPTO Chief Patent Statistician

“People want predictability, consistency, and transparency. If you satisfy these three things, that’s where you’ll see the results.”

“We try to help and make things better and support data-driven decisions,” Marty said. “Our role is to defend a lot of statistics, [...] everything from validating or verifying blog articles with data to high-level reporting.”

At the forefront of this project is a dedicated Research and Development (R&D) patent examination unit that focuses on the development and testing of new processes and procedures to generate evidence to support policy and decision making related to agency goals and objectives.

### Focus on being data-driven

Data Inspired	Data Informed	Data Driven
Using data to <b>observe a general behavior</b>	Using data to answer a specific question with purpose of <b>understanding past performance</b> and informing new tactical strategies	Using data to answer a specific question with a defensible, credible, and definitive number for purposes of <b>informing a decision</b>
Done by managers, customers, and employees	Done by data analysts	Done by statisticians
Leverages summarized data that has already been shared or reported	Leverages data that is readily accessible to contextualize strategies in terms of success or failure	Leverages statistical methods and custom data collection strategies to determine acceptance or rejection of hypotheses

“The real value [of the R&D unit] is to encourage people to be critical thinkers and problem solvers. I think that’s a task for everybody,” he explained. “People want predictability, consistency, and transparency. If you satisfy these three things, that’s where you’ll see the results.”

As he approaches his retirement, Marty encourages everyone to continue personal growth.

“Don’t stop learning and find those passion projects.”

(Graphic to left: Marty explained how statisticians use data differently than data analysts, managers, customers, and employees)

### Trivia Time

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

1. What is an “elephant walk” in the Air Force?
2. How many women are buried at Normandy American Cemetery?
3. What’s the difference between data-informed and data-driven?
4. What is WorkLife4You?
5. What is the name of the Army’s retiree newsletter?



## Meet a teammate: Jennifer Crick

By Elizabeth Caraway, *Scuttlebutt* editor

After more than 20 years of Army life—active-duty, National Guard, spouse, and civil servant – Jennifer found a new career home at the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO).

### Dedication to education through time in uniform

This Ohio native originally planned on serving four years in the Army before returning home for college. Instead, her enlistment vastly impacted her career and education plans. Jennifer served on active duty as a record telecommunications operator for six years, taking classes toward her associates degree during assignments in Camp Humphreys, Korea; Ft. Huachuca, Arizona.; and Ft. Knox, Kentucky. She didn't degree plan prior to beginning coursework, so it took her "six years to complete a two-year degree."

After active duty, Jennifer enrolled at the University of Louisville as a full-time student, working at a community correction center for convicted offenders who were transitioning back into the community. Concurrently, she joined the Kentucky National Guard, saying, "I enjoyed my military time, and figured that being a part-time Soldier would be easier than active duty. I chose the 223rd Military Police Co because I wanted to 'do something different' than working in an office. Little did I know how much I would end up not sitting behind a desk at all."

After deployments to Bosnia and Iraq, her final assignment was conducting drill weekends for high schoolers heading to basic training. Due to her deployment schedule, it took Jennifer another six years to finish her bachelor's degree in justice administration.



"I thought I was going to become a federal probation and parole officer, as I was most interested in supervising those offenders who were returning to society to hopefully help them make changes to be successful upon their incarceration release. However, that plan changed when I married an active-duty soldier," she says.



### Military spouse life

Although it's not the case for everyone, for Jennifer, "becoming a military spouse essentially put my career on hold for some time. The service member absolutely has to put the military first. That leaves the spouse to put the family first. Adding in a career takes almost superpowers to pull off and requires some sort of support network." Jennifer focused on raising her children through three subsequent spousal deployments that entailed moves to Georgia, New York, and Hawaii.

### Reentering the workforce

Following their final move to Ft. Belvoir, Va., Jennifer decided to return to paid employment, targeting federal jobs so she could buy back her military time.

Jennifer advises fellow veterans and military spouses interested in civil service to not sell themselves short.

"Apply for everything you are qualified for. And apply for things at a higher level than you think you might qualify for. I actually had more responses when I started applying for GS-9 positions versus GS-5 positions," she notes. She also encourages military spouses to pursue all possible pipelines for positions. With a large career gap on her resume, it wasn't until she enrolled in the Military Spouse Preference Program that she was able to secure a position. She credits the program with getting her resume in front of hiring managers.

Jennifer accepted a role as an executive assistant at the Army Audit Agency. Her new supervisor told her she had "absolutely sold her in the interview on how military experience translated into the role."

*Continued on next page*



“Jennifer Crick” continued from previous page

Some of those skills, says Jennifer, include “working with team members with different skill sets, problem solving, and expecting a plan to change.” She adds that military members know how to “expect and navigate chaos.” As an executive assistant, she does a lot of “organizing chaos.”

“By nature, I’m a planner — organization makes me happy at home and at work. When major calendar changes come down due to competing priorities, I love finding the solution.”

**Joining America’s Innovation Agency**

After spending her entire career supporting the Army, a position as an executive assistant to the Under Secretary of Commerce for Intellectual Property (IP) and Director of the USPTO caught Jennifer’s eye on USAJOBS.gov. The increase in pace and responsibilities that would come with working for a political appointee at a larger agency appealed to her.



After she was selected for the position, Jennifer immediately began organizing the director’s workday and meeting new people across the agency. Since the USPTO drives American innovation by granting U.S. patents and registering trademarks, Jennifer says it feels good to know she’s still “supporting an important mission.”



“I’ve been impressed by the part the USPTO plays in supporting inventors.”

The people are her favorite part of the job, especially the team that supports the director’s busy meeting and event schedule. She also joined the active USPTO Military Association, which has almost 300 members.

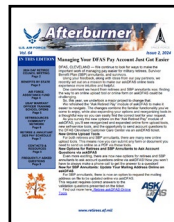
“I’m a very social person, so meeting many people across the agency is a bonus,” she says, adding that as she improves processes and solve problems in her role, she sees how her career is moving to the next level.



**Military Retiree Newsletters**



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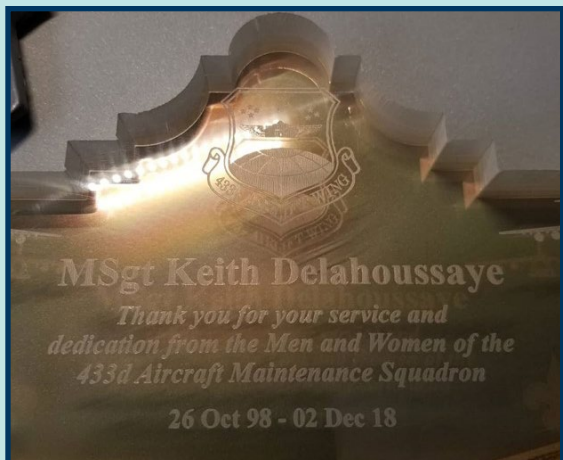


[DFAS newsletter](#)



## There I was...

Please email your, or your family member's, veteran, civil service, or patriotic high-resolution photos, original art, or short poetry to [uma@uspto.gov](mailto:uma@uspto.gov). Note that submission constitutes your approval for UMA to share the content in the newsletter and on social media and the editorial team reserves the right to approve or deny content. Have A LOT of creativity to share? Consider contributing to [Veterans' Voices](#), which publishes veteran prose, poetry, and art.



- (Clockwise from upper left):
- Award presented at Master Sgt. Delahoussaye's Air Force retirement ceremony.
  - "Meditating" at technical school.
  - Cutting the cake with his wife at the retirement ceremony.
  - Saluting during his retirement ceremony.

(Courtesy photos from Keith Delahoussaye)

**Keith Delahoussaye**



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>.

## Headline highlights: A look at news affecting veterans

**VA processes one million disability claims faster than ever before:** The Department of Veterans Affairs announced today it has processed more than a million disability claims in Fiscal Year 2025, reaching the milestone nearly two weeks faster than it did in FY24. Despite receiving 15.6% more claims than last year, the department completed its one millionth FY25 claim Feb. 20 — faster than at any point in the department's history.

**VA makes several cancers presumptive for service connection:** the Department of Veterans Affairs announced that it is making acute and chronic leukemias, multiple myelomas, myelodysplastic syndromes, myelofibrosis, urinary bladder, ureter, and related genitourinary cancers presumptive for service-connection for Gulf War and Post-9/11 veterans.

**Retiring in 2025? Take action to keep TRICARE coverage:** When you retire from active duty or the National Guard or Reserve, you'll experience a TRICARE Qualifying Life Event. A QLE gives you 90 days in which to enroll in a TRICARE health plan. You'll still have access to the same coverage under your new plan. Unlike during your military service, though, you need to choose your plan in retirement.

**Use "Where's My Refund?" tool to track tax refund status:** As millions of people file their 2024 tax returns, the Internal Revenue Service today reminded taxpayers to use the Where's My Refund? tool on IRS.gov to confirm receipt of their return and track a refund. Taxpayers who file electronically can typically use the Where's My Refund? tool to check the status of a tax refund within 24 hours of filing. It takes about four weeks for the same information to be available for those filing paper returns.

**VA expands access to GI Bill benefits for veterans who served multiple service periods:** The Department of Veterans Affairs announced that — following the 2024 Supreme Court decision — it has updated the process for awarding GI Bill benefits. This change means that many Veterans who served multiple periods of military service (for example, Veterans who reenlisted) will be eligible for up to an additional 12 months of education benefits.

## Veteran resources and contacts

USPTO Veteran Hiring Program Manager: [HireVets@uspto.gov](mailto:HireVets@uspto.gov)

USPTO OHR Military Service Time Buy Back Contact: [HumanResources\\_USPTO@uspto.gov](mailto:HumanResources_USPTO@uspto.gov)

Benefits questions for current Reservists: [BenefitsTeam@uspto.gov](mailto:BenefitsTeam@uspto.gov)

Pay questions for current Reservists: [OHR-CB@uspto.gov](mailto:OHR-CB@uspto.gov)

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