



The Michigan Reservist

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

Louis Wilson, LTC, US Army, Retired, President

The ROA-Michigan Department started the 2024-2025 fiscal year with an EXCOM Meeting, at which we approved a Vision Statement that sets out our plan for the upcoming months' activities and events. The date for our State Conference is planned for Saturday, 26 April 2025 at the Selfridge ANG Base. The Conference details of theme and speakers are being developed and will be announced later. You can attend either onsite or by a Zoom connection. Since the EXCOM members are geographically dispersed, our monthly meetings are usually conducted via Zoom.



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Retired, President

Our September EXCOM Meeting had special guests from the University of Michigan's Army ROTC Wolverine Battalion. CPT Louis Goldstein, Military Science Prof., and Cadets Li and Wilmot explained their roles in the battalion and suggested ways in which the two groups might interact. They are planning a trip to Normandy, France in 2025 and doing studies of the WW-II D-Day landing of 6 June 1944. Our October EXCOM Meeting included a discussion of ideas on ways that the two groups can work together as career mentors, classroom resources, shared events, and more. Much of this can be facilitated utilizing Zoom meetings and phone calls. I have drafted a proposed plan and sent it out for comments and input from the EXCOM members and CPT Goldstein, and am awaiting their input. This plan is completely voluntary. It is hoped that working together on such worthwhile team projects will bring ROA and ROTC members closer together.

LtCOL Bronka is working with Jr ROTC and ROTC units throughout the State in coordinating the annual medal presentations held in the spring. He is seeking ROA members who are interested in being onsite presenters. It is a great opportunity to meet some of the impressive young men and women, who are entering the U.S. Officer Corps. If you live near a school or college that has an ROTC program, and would like to volunteer as a presenter or mentor, send an email to bronkaj@comcast.net, expressing your interest. LtCOL Bronka is also encouraging the ROTC units to write articles for our Michigan Reservist Newsletter describing their unit and its activities.



I encourage you to donate to our Buck-a-Year fund, and thank those of you who have generously done so. This greatly helps us to cover the expenses involved with publishing and distributing this newsletter, and in meeting the expenses of the Conference venue and Website. The majority of our members are Life members who, having paid their one-time Life membership fee, enjoy the benefits for life. If you are a Term member and subject to an annual fee, I encourage you continue your membership with your annual dues and consider becoming a Life member.



From the Army President

Louis Wilson, LTC, US Army Retired, President

Dragon Fire: Laser Directed Energy Weapon (LDEW) System

Dragon Fire is a new British laser directed-energy weapon (LDEW) technology demonstrator. It was first unveiled in 2017 at the Defense and Security Equipment International (DSEI) Conference in London. It is being developed by a partnership between the British Ministry of Defense (MOD) and private industry: MBDA UK, Leonardo UK, QinetiQ and the Defense Science and Technology Laboratory (DSTL). UK Dragon Fire is the result of contracts worth £100 million of which £30 million was awarded by the MOD's Chief Scientific Advisor's Research Program. As a technology demonstrator, it is used to assess laser directed-energy weapons and their potential applications within the British Armed Forces.

In early 2022, the prototype weapon was deployed in trials on the ranges in the Outer Hebrides Islands in Scotland. According to MBDA, the initial low-power trials successfully proved Dragon Fire's ability to track air and sea targets with exceptionally high accuracy. This was followed by high-power trials in November 2022, where the weapon engaged targets using its high-power laser in operationally representative scenarios. Dragon Fire engaged an airborne target in exercises in Scotland in 2024. The MOD stated: "The range of Dragon Fire is classified, but it is a direct line-of-sight weapon that can engage with any visible target. The precision required is equivalent to hitting a £1 coin (23 mm about the size of a US quarter) from a kilometer away." It can be fitted to a Wolfhound armored vehicle. The UK MOD claims that the firing of the weapon, for 10 seconds, only costs £10 per shot, significantly less than conventional ammunition and easier to handle logistically.

Dragon Fire uses UK-pioneered beam-combining technology to deliver a laser beam with increased power density, reduced defeat times and increased effective range. This is achieved using glass fibers. The full technical approach remains classified. The laser and its associated targeting systems, including an electro-optical camera and second lower-power laser for imaging and tracking, are mounted to a turret. The laser is in the 50-kw class and is designed to defend land and maritime targets from air threats such as: aircraft, drones, missiles and mortars. Its energy demands may be met by a Flywheel Energy Storage System (FESS), a joint UK-US innovation currently in development.

Defense Secretary, Grant Shapp said: "This type of cutting-edge weaponry has the potential to revolutionize the battlespace by reducing the reliance on expensive ammunition, while also lowering the risk of collateral damage. Investments with industry partners in advanced technologies, like Dragon Fire, are crucial in a highly contested world, helping us maintain the battle-winning edge and keep the nation safe."

In April 2024, the MOD announced that new procurement rules had increased the rate of development of the weapon. As a result, it is expected to be in service onboard Royal Navy ships in 2027 or sooner. Defense Secretary Grant Shapps stated that an early version of the weapon could soon be used by Ukraine against Russia during the Russo-Ukrainian War. It is being deployed in South Korea. Its engine-burning laser will be able to zap North Korea's drones for \$1.45 a shot. The laser system will be used to fry North Korean drone engines and systems silently and precisely.

The UK envisions high-energy laser weapons, like Dragon Fire, onboard future Royal Navy warships, British Army armored vehicles and fighter aircraft of the Royal Air Force. Plans are to demonstrate these concepts on board a Type 23 frigate and a Wolfhound armored vehicle.



The Dragon Fire weapon System



ROTC / JROTC

Stephen R. Quintana, SMSgt, USAF (Retired)

Air Fore JROTC Unit MI-931, Anchor Bay High School

Air Force JROTC Unit MI-931 from Anchor Bay High School Fair Haven, Michigan boasts about 70 cadets this school year. They have been busy with many things to keep their cadets motivated and engaged in learning. Early in the year they went on their annual trip to Camp Covenant Hills Ropes Course which helps get them outside of their comfort zone, try new things and building bonds with their fellow cadets. During class this year they are learning about the Science of Flight, Leadership, Money Management and Physical Fitness. They recently hosted a Drill Competition where 4 other schools from Michigan, Ohio and Wisconsin came to compete against each other. They took home a 3rd Place Trophy in the Unarmed Division and 4 placements in the knockout competition.



MI-931 works with many local organizations with community service events. Two of which will be in December with the New Baltimore Goodfellows and the New Baltimore Wreaths Across America. We also partner with the local Civil Air Patrol unit that offers incentive flights to our cadets. MI-931 is always committed to the Air Force Core Values of Integrity First, Service Before Self and Excellence in all we do.



Pass the Elizabeth Dole 21st Century Veterans Healthcare and Benefits Improvement Act!

Call to Action

Join ROA's **Minute Man Movement** by urging Congress to pass the *Elizabeth Dole 21st Century Veterans Healthcare and Benefits Improvement Act*, with particular focus on Sections 221 and 222.

Contact your representatives NOW and urge them to support this critical legislation that strengthens USERRA protections for our nation's service members.

Background

Since the start of the 118th Congress, ROA has worked closely with the House and Senate Committees on Veterans Affairs to modernize the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act.

One key outcome of these efforts was the introduction of H.R. 3943, the *Servicemember Employment Protection Act*, which was inspired by law review articles written by ROA life member Sam Wright. ROA has testified before Congress twice on this legislation in the last year.

We are pleased to report that many provisions of H.R. 3943 have been included in the *Elizabeth Dole 21st Century Veterans Healthcare and Benefits Improvement Act*, which is set for a vote in the House of Representatives tonight.

The bill includes several provisions that enhance USERRA, including:

- **Encouraging service** in the uniformed services.
- **Expanding access to injunctive relief**, ensuring courts cannot deny motions for injunctive relief on the grounds that an employee may receive "wages unearned" following unlawful termination.
- **Increasing liquidated damages**, allowing courts to award plaintiffs the greater of \$50,000 or the actual damages incurred.
- **Incentivizing legitimate legal representation** by awarding attorney fees for USERRA cases heard by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit.
- **Requiring the Secretary of Labor** to review and revise, as necessary, the Department of Labor's Veterans' Employment and Training Service Investigation Manual.
- **Authorizing the Government Accountability Office** to report on how the intelligence community implements USERRA protections for uniformed service members.

For more information contact: Matthew Schwartzman, mschwartzman@roa.org





Navy, Marines, Coast Guard, Public Health Service, NOAA

Gary Andersons—Opinion Article

The Marine Corps Has Gone Off the Rails

Spetator.org—by Gary Anderson. The U.S. Marine Corps' Force Design 2030 has been a dismal failure.

A new Congressional Research Service report brings harsh scrutiny to the Marine Corps' Force Design 2030, with many in Congress and the Department of Defense reportedly having buyer's remorse. What they thought was a modernization effort has rapidly become an embarrassment — with the Marine Corps' preparedness hanging in the balance.

When former Commandant of the Marine Corps Gen. David Berger unveiled his radical new vision for the Corps in 2019, many in the administration and Congress hailed it as a bold step toward confronting China. Berger's Force Design vision was to place small groups of Marines armed with anti-ship missiles on islets and shoals in the South China Sea where Malaysia, Vietnam, and the Philippines have territory. The same territory is now claimed by China.

The commandant believed that the U.S. Marine Corps had wandered from its traditional mission and legal directive to conduct amphibious operations in support of naval campaigns. Berger was concerned that 20 years of land warfare in Iraq and Afghanistan had reintroduced the "second land army" stigma that followed the Corps after World War II and Vietnam. He wanted to get the Marines back to their naval roots and prepared for conflict on small islands in the Indo-Pacific region.

In order to pay for the anti-ship missiles and associated sensors needed to implement Force Design, Berger divested the Marine Corps of all its tanks, heavy engineering equipment, much of its cannon artillery, and numerous combat aviation capabilities. In addition, Berger dropped the number of amphibious ships the Navy was required to maintain from 38 to 31, reducing the fleet by nearly 20 percent.

In a perfect world, this might still be enough to keep a nimble, sea-based presence in the three most dangerous global hotspots — the Mediterranean, the Persian Gulf, and the Western Pacific — but this is not a perfect world.

Military leadership is not solely responsible for this mess. Ultimately, Congress and the president have oversight. Civilian control of the military assumes that the civilians should know something about the military, or at least hire people that do. As with Afghanistan and naval readiness, the Biden administration and Congress have failed in that basic function. If you are a member of Congress from East Cupcake, Indiana, with no knowledge of military affairs, and are told by a service chief that he will reduce his force structure, save money, and still confront the Chinese, what's not to like?

In the half decade since the launch of Force Design, not one Marine Corps missile unit is operational and not a single Landing Ship Medium has been launched. Essentially, the nation has lost its emergency response force and traded it for no additional gains in capability elsewhere. If Congress acted today to repair the Navy and Marine Corps and return it back to 2018 capabilities, it would take at least a decade to recover. Our civilian leaders were sold snake oil, and the rubes bought it.

Gary Anderson is a retired Marine Corps Colonel. He retired as Chief of Staff of the Marine Corps Warfighting Lab and served as a Special Advisor to the Deputy Secretary of Defense





From the Army President

Louis Wilson, LTC, US Army Retired

The US Air Force Replaces A-10s with Modern Fighters

As a strategic modernization initiative, the U.S. Air Force plans to retire its A-10 Thunderbolt II aircraft in South Korea by the end of fiscal year 2025. This change, aligned with a defense enhancement program in the Indo-Pacific, will see the integration of upgraded fighters to bolster deterrence. Developed by Fairchild Republic for the USAF, it has been in service since 1977. It is named after the Republic P-47 Thunderbolt in honor of the WW-II fighter aircraft, but is commonly referred to as the "Warthog."



The Thunderbolt II's airframe was designed around the high-power 30 mm GAU-8 Avenger rotary autocannon. The airframe was designed for durability, with measures such as 1,200 pounds (540 kg) of titanium armor to protect the cockpit and aircraft redundant systems, enabling it to absorb damage and continue flying. The A-10 Thunderbolt IIs, were also assigned to the 107th Fighter Squadron of the Michigan Air National Guard, at Selfridge ANGB.

This is a step toward improving aerial combat readiness amid growing regional threats. By replacing the A-10s, known for their close air support role, with upgraded F-16 Fighting Falcons, F-35 Lightning IIs, and F-15EX Eagle IIs, the U.S. Air Force aims to enhance air superiority in the Indo-Pacific Theater.

The F-35's stealth and detection capabilities will enhance situational awareness and strike precision, while the advanced avionics and payload capacity of the F-15EX will optimize effectiveness in air-to-air and air-to-ground combat. This modernization effort reflects the U.S. Air Force's commitment to maintaining a robust force posture in the Indo-Pacific, aiming to deter adversaries and reassure allies through technological superiority and operational adaptability.

Lt General Iverson emphasized the role of these advanced aircraft in supporting the South Korea-U.S. alliance. "The progress made in upgrading our F-16s, and the ongoing super squadron tests at Osan, demonstrate our dedication to evolving and adapting our forces to meet 21st-century demands," he added. "This modernization ensures we can deliver unmatched combat airpower, safeguarding peace and security in the Indo-Pacific."

As the U.S. Air Force completes this transition, the deployment of modernized aircraft reaffirms its unwavering commitment to regional stability, providing a flexible and formidable response to emerging threats. This strategic upgrade underscores the U.S. resolve to strengthen defense capabilities in line with the needs of the South Korea-U.S. alliance, thereby consolidating peace and security on the Korean peninsula.





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New Leaders Elected at ROA National Meeting

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- On Oct. 6, a new group of leaders was sworn in during the Reserve Organization of America's annual meeting at its Minute Man Memorial Headquarters building on Capitol Hill, including the association's president-elect.

"I am honored and humbled to serve as the eighty-fourth national president of ROA, and more importantly, to advocate for those who have volunteered to serve in the reserve components of our uniformed services, their families, and their employers," said retired Army Maj. Gen. Peggy Wilmoth, on her election to lead the 102-year-old organization.

"I look forward to partnering with ROA members and key stakeholders as we charge forward in ensuring ROA's relevance in its second century of service to the nation."

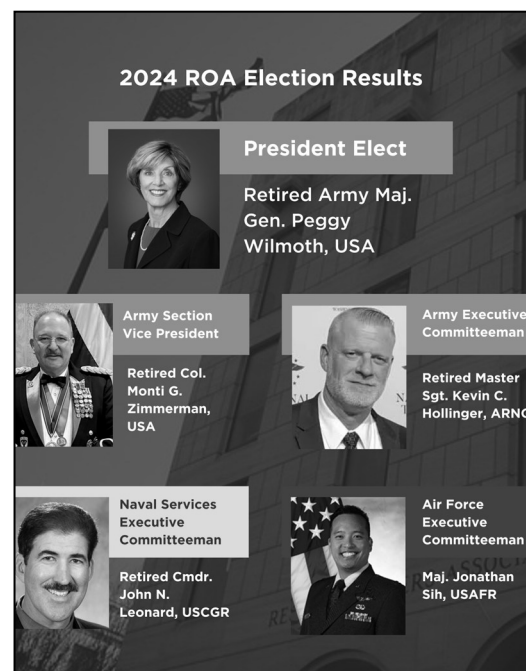
Wilmoth, a life member of ROA, will officially assume the presidency at the 2025 annual meeting, scheduled Oct. 17-19. She retired from the Army in May 2017 after a distinguished 35½-year career, culminating as deputy surgeon general of the Army Reserve. She holds a doctorate in nursing from the University of Pennsylvania and a Master of Strategic Studies from the United States Army War College.

She is a professor of nursing at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where she has served as executive vice dean and associate dean for Academic Affairs in the School of Nursing. She was also the 2023-2024 distinguished nurse scholar-in-residence at the National Academy of Medicine and is a fellow of the American Academy of Nursing. Additionally, she is an alum of the Robert Wood Johnson Health Policy Fellowship and has published over 60 works in print and electronic media.

As a major general, Wilmoth served in the Army's Office of the Surgeon General as the deputy surgeon general for the USAR. She was the first nurse to hold this position in the Army Reserve's 104-year history.

Wilmoth's accolades include the Distinguished Service Medal, the Defense Superior Service Medal, the Legion of Merit, the Meritorious Service Medal with four Oak Leaf Clusters, and the Expert Field Medical Badge. She also holds the '9A' Proficiency Designator in Medical-Surgical Nursing awarded by the U.S Army Surgeon General.

Also elected to national office during the annual meeting were Col. Monti G. Zimmerman, USA (Ret.), Army Vice President; retired Master Sgt. Kevin C. Hollinger, ARNG, Army Executive Committeeman; retired Cmdr. John N. Leonard, USCGR, Naval Services Executive Committeeman; and Maj. Jonathan Sih, USAFR, Air Force Executive Committeeman.



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The Michigan Reservist

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