

**MARYLAND MILITARY INSTALLATION COUNCIL**  
**Monday, 26 March 2026; 0830-1145**  
**Meeting Minutes**

The first MMIC meeting of 2026 was conducted in-person at the Maryland Department of Transportation building at 7201 Corporate Center Dr, Hanover, MD. The session included introductory remarks, briefings on Mission Strong, the Blue Star Families annual survey, the outlook for defense budgets in coming years, plus updates from the Maryland installation and base commanders, from the military alliance presidents, and from state agency members of the MMIC. Representative Sarah Elfreth (MD-3) presented the findings of her 2025 Maryland Defense Report. Total attendance was 74.

**Opening Comments**

**Lisa Swoboda, Executive Director of the MMIC, and Senior Director of the Maryland Commerce Office of Military & Federal Affairs** welcomed attendees to the meeting, provided opening remarks with a review of the agenda, and recognized the MMIC cabinet members in attendance. Ms. Swoboda made announcements regarding personnel changes. BG Dean Ertwine (Ret.) has formally retired from the Office of Military and Federal Affairs effective December 31, 2025, but remains a member of the MMIC, and Delegate Andre Johnson (District 34A, Harford County) has been appointed to the council by the Speaker of the Maryland House of Delegates.

**Topical Briefs**

**1. Mission Strong - Building a Community of Support (Deputy Secretary Dana Burl, Maryland Department of Veterans and Military Families)**

The Department of Veterans and Military Families (DVMF) (renamed in 2024) is focusing on the entire life cycle of service members and their families. To that end, the Maryland Joining Forces program was established in 2023 to bring together non-profit organizations to harness their energy and coordinate support for veteran and military families. A key component of this program is to convene "Mission Strong" summits to deepen collaboration between installation and community partners, identifying gaps in spouse employment, childcare, and veteran transitions. Successful summits have been completed at Fort Meade and Joint Base Andrews (JBA). The third is currently being scheduled for Aberdeen Proving Ground (APG) this summer. DVMF hopes to bring similar summits to all of Maryland's military communities over time.

**2. Blue Star Families: 2025 Military Family Lifestyle Survey (Yolanda Rayford, Blue Star Families, Maryland Chapter)**

Blue Star Families has expanded to a statewide Maryland chapter, to increase its support to Maryland's diverse and geographically dispersed military population. Ms. Rayford presented key findings of the 2025 Nationwide Military Family Lifestyle Survey, which include three key quality of life findings: military spouse employment (and underemployment), childcare affordability, and food insecurity. The next annual survey will be fielded in May 2026. Survey results are available at the Blue Star Families website:

<https://bluestarfam.org/research/mfls-survey-release-2026/#reports>

COL Chung, Garrison Commander of Fort Detrick suggested that future studies may want to shift the survey window to September/October timeframes to avoid conflicts with the Army Housing survey and family relocation seasons.

### **3. Federal Budget & Defense Acquisition Reform (Matt Herrmann The Roosevelt Group)**

Matt Herrmann presented on the federal defense budget outlook, acquisition reforms, and other legislative and departmental actions that may affect the Maryland Military community.

**FY27 Outlook:** The President is targeting a \$1.5 trillion defense budget in FY2027, up significantly from the current fiscal year's \$900 billion. This is likely to be achieved by a \$1 trillion base budget and a \$500 billion reconciliation budget. The House deadlines have or are expiring while the Senate deadlines are forthcoming in April to mid May. The hope is to see the "skinny" budget by late April but rumors are it could be June which makes passing it hard by the new fiscal year. He anticipates a shutdown again, especially if midterm elections result in Congress majority changes. He said to plan for the Continuing Resolution October to December 2026 and likely a shutdown during the holidays even if a CR is approved. The House agreed to some MILCON constraints using the previous year FYDP and unfunded priorities list. The Senate did not use that, so Mr. Herrmann advised communities to advocate for an installation MILCON project, and given current timelines, influence your Senate rep vs Congressional rep.

**FY26 Reconciliation and budget obligations:** Desire in DoW and Congress as appropriators to see all these funds obligated by 30 September. Mr. Herrmann stated that it is very unlikely from where the expenditure and obligations are today. OMB is looking at this when additional funds are being considered. The priorities remain the CUAS, munitions, shipbuilding to include industrial bases like Maryland's USCG yard project.

**Acquisition Reform:** The department is shifting toward a "portfolio acquisition" model, grouping offices by capability rather than by Program Executive Office (PEO). These resulted out of the Speed Act (through incremental changes) and the Forge Act for the Portfolio Execution Offices being established. This is not a new concept in the OSD A&S Pentagon offices but has not been implemented to date. So far, the result is the established PEOs (Program Executive Offices) are being absorbed into the Portfolio offices. Only one PEO has gone away (PEO Stride). The desire is that the Portfolio Executives could move funds around to program needs but Mr. Herrmann is not sure this liberty will result. The current opportunities for Maryland he sees is the encouragement to find non-traditional and off-the-shelf answers and suppliers. The Pentagon wants to be closer to the suppliers vs current model of working through the OEMs.

**Current OSD assessment ongoing at the service warfare centers.** A current OSD data call regarding R&E infrastructure and capability overlaps could be a precursor BRAC-like consolidation discussions. They are looking into ranges, FFRDCs, T&E, R&D, and other shared capabilities. Mr. Herrmann advised communities to stay aware and mindful of these.

### **State Agency Defense Community Updates**

#### **1. Maryland State Department of Education (Assistant State Superintendent Mary Gable)**

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) reported that despite some fluctuations in federal appropriations (up 1% in some categories and down 11% in others) federal funding remains stable enough to continue core missions.

A major state legislative priority is the Advanced Enrollment Bill (HB0102/SB0263), which allows for a smoother transition for military students. In advance of the codification of these provisions into statute, the State Superintendent recently issued a memo to local districts to ensure these children are enrolled immediately, even if their paperwork follows later.

Furthermore, Maryland's Purple Star Schools program is seeing significant growth, with 25 first-time applications and 8 renewal applications currently under review for the 2026-2027 school year. MSDE also continues to lead the Interstate Compact for Educational Opportunity for Military Children, a program Maryland has participated in since 2009 to ensure transitioning students remain on track for graduation.

## **2. Maryland Department of Planning (Secretary Rebecca Flora)**

The Maryland Department of Planning is tracking socio-economic data that shows families are increasingly burdened by "housing plus transportation" costs, which are frequently exceeding the 50% affordability threshold. The planning department is also working through the Governor's Permitting Council to address land-use issues related to energy infrastructure, such as solar siting and data centers.

## **3. Maryland Department of Veterans and Military Families (Secretary Ed Rothstein)**

Secretary Rothstein recalled the government shutdown during the Veterans Day period as a particularly challenging time when many individuals were losing their jobs or going without pay. He explained that although the Veterans Trust Fund worked extensively to provide support, it was not structurally designed to handle immediate crises like food insecurity. To address this, the state collaborated with Maryland Joining Forces, Blue Star Families, Operation Homefront, and the Maryland National Guard to provide financial assistance to junior enlisted members, specifically ranks E1 through E6. Rothstein highlighted that this rapid support was made possible because the Governor and the state allocated funds directly to these partner organizations to help military families navigate the crisis.

Secretary Rothstein also emphasized the success of recent veteran communications efforts at the DVMF, including a doubling of newsletter subscriptions and a newly upgraded website.

## **4. Maryland Department of Commerce (Lisa Swoboda, Senior Director, Office of Military and Federal Affairs)**

Ms. Swoboda described efforts of the Department to expand childcare infrastructure, recently appropriating \$10 million (of \$17 million requested) in the fourth round of childcare grants to help providers modernize and expand capacity. The total of the 4 rounds of funding since inception is \$29.2 million for expansion, modernization, and new business locations.

The Resilient Maryland Defense Communities project is moving into a new phase that includes regional exercises in April and May focusing on coastal flooding and energy grid failure. A Statewide Resiliency Convening for Maryland's Defense Communities will take place on 23 June. Additionally, the office confirmed that the FY27 Military Alliance Grant applications will open in mid-to-late April, with awards expected by July 1, 2026.

The state will kick off a new defense installation Economic Impact Study for Maryland's military installations in April 2026 looking back at Federal Fiscal Year 2025. The FY21 defense EIS showed a \$61.4 billion impact. The goal is now to conduct this study every two years rather than every four.

## **5. Maryland Department of Labor (John C. Dove, Jr., Commissioner of Occupational & Professional Licensing)**

Commissioner Dove greeted the group, but did not provide an update.

### **Alliance Reports**

#### **Army Alliance (Patrick Mullin, Alliance Vice President)**

- **Strategic Meetings:** The alliance recently met with CBC CBRNE and several other tenant commands.
- **Legislative Outreach:** A meeting was held with Senator Alsobrooks on February 17.
- **Upcoming Events:** Key dates include an ROTC leadership event on April 9 and a golf outing on May 7.
- **Energy Initiatives:** The alliance is currently supporting Small Modular Reactor (SMR) efforts at Aberdeen Proving Ground (APG).

#### **Fort Detrick Alliance (David Evans, Alliance President)**

- **Education:** The alliance is pursuing expanded Purple Star School representation within Frederick County.
- **Board Changes:** Blue Star Families has been welcomed to the alliance's Board of Directors.
- **Events & Comms:** A quarterly breakfast is scheduled for April 28, followed by a mid-May panel on new SCIF regulations. A new website has also been launched.

#### **Fort Meade Alliance (Tim O'Ferrall, Executive Director)**

- **Digital Infrastructure:** Kiosk units are being updated to include mobile QR code access for calendar interfaces.
- **Teacher Externships:** Funding has been secured for 13 teacher externs this summer; these are paid positions requiring 120 to 150 hours at member companies.
- **SCOPE Program:** For the first time, this security clearance outreach program is engaging 7th graders to discuss the traits of "trusted individuals".

#### **MAC (Steve Mitchell, President)**

- **State of the Station:** The alliance recently completed its 4th annual "State of the Station" report.
- **Business Partnerships:** Efforts are underway to build public-private partnerships to support the energetics mission, including an off-base energetic center funded by a Congressional set-aside.
- **Infrastructure:** A transportation study regarding the alignment of Maryland Route 210 has concluded.

#### **Maritime Technology Alliance (Robert Keene, President)**

- **Design Planning:** Veteran expertise is being used to inform a new "big beautiful battleship" design plan.
- **Workforce Development:** The alliance is coordinating with the Department of the Navy on internship programs at Carderock.

- **STEM & Internships:** They are supporting 12 interns from Digital Harbor High School, including providing student lunches.
- **Reorganization Concerns:** Long-term concerns were raised regarding the impact of broad Naval reorganization on warfare centers.

#### **Southern Maryland Navy Alliance (Dale Moore, President)**

- **Advocacy:** Priority federal advocacy efforts are focused on the F/A-XX airframe, catapult replacement options, and a second anechoic chamber.
- **Economic Growth:** The alliance participated in a ribbon cutting for the Aero Park facility and runway expansion in St. Mary's County.
- **Leadership Liaison:** An April 1 luncheon is planned for the new Naval Aviation Portfolio Acquisition Executive, Mr. Steve Critchie.

#### **Andrews Business and Community Alliance (Jim Estep, Jr., Executive Director)**

- **Imagine Andrews:** The alliance is pursuing a new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the "Imagine Andrews" program.
- **Success Story:** They successfully facilitated student enrollment during an administrative closure period.
- **Elections:** Outreach is being conducted for prospective District 5 congressional candidates due to potential redistricting.

#### **Installation Reports**

##### **US Coast Guard Yard (Captain Emily Tharp, USCG )**

- **Energy Resilience:** A recent award to BGE creates a partnership for an "island strategy" to meet the Yard's industrial energy needs. It is expected to save the Coast Guard \$200 million.
- **Modernization:** Using \$500M of reconciliation funds from a 2025 bill, the yard is working with the Army Corps of Engineers on a high-capacity dry dock and channel dredging. This is part of the critical industrial shipyard work needed to handle the larger and critical cutters.
- **Shutdown Impacts:** As a working capital fund, the yard can pay its own employees, but 13 tenant commands (HHS) have gone two weeks without pay.

##### **NSA Bethesda (Captain Alan Christian, USN)**

- **Facilities:** The P114 project has officially opened. This provides capability for Veterans medical care at Walter Reed Bethesda.
- **Future Planning:** Current priorities include plant renovations, installation development, and transportation plans.
- **Graduation:** The base is preparing for upcoming graduations at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences.

##### **NSWC Carderock (Captain Christopher Matassa, USN)**

- **Reorganization:** The commander expressed concerns regarding broad Department of War (Defense) reorganization affecting research, test, and evaluation activities. This includes the assessment Mr. Herrmann mentioned previously.

- **Safety:** Ongoing negotiations with Montgomery County are seeking alternatives for commercial traffic to address Gate 3 flooding. The alternative is the main entrance off Clara Barton parkway which is under the National Park Service. The NPS does not want commercial vehicles on this parkway.

#### **NSA South Potomac (Captain John Nadder, USN)**

- **Modernization:** The energetics community modernization plan is a multi-billion dollar, multi-year program.
- **Infrastructure:** The base is focused on infrastructure needs identified in the Route 210 transportation study.

#### **NSA Washington (Captain Ryan Gaul, USN)**

- **Suitland Expansion:** The Navy received 11 acres from the GSA to support military construction (MILCON) starting in October or November 2026. This project however is displacing 750 parking spaces on the installation which is a significant impact. They are working solutions.
- **Hiring Challenges:** The base is facing significant difficulties in hiring security and Public Works professionals.
- **Resiliency:** The National Capital Planning Commission passed plans for a solar project to improve resiliency.
- **Prince George Suitland Development Authority.** Captain stated they were aware of the pending bill and supportive in the ONI area but would like to be engaged when appropriate.
- **General Region support.** He also stated that he believed this Suitland installation should have an alliance for its advocacy to the community, Lastly he believes that with the community partnership the area would benefit from a MIRR or ELU.
- **Olney site.** They presented to the NCPS on March 5th regarding an on base solar project to support the new battery facility MILCON.

#### **NAS Patuxent River (Captain Mark Zemantis, USN)**

- June 20/21, 2026 Air Show for the 250th anniversary. Expecting thousands in St. Mary's and the region each day.

#### **Fort George G. Meade (COL Yolanda Gore, USA)**

- **Events:** A "Massing of the Colors" event is scheduled for May 17 to commemorate Memorial Day.
- **Anniversary:** Plans are underway for a July ball celebrating America's 250th anniversary.

#### **Aberdeen Proving Ground (COL Troy Johnson, USA)**

- **Leadership:** A change of command for Major General Terminetti is expected this summer.
- **Outreach:** The "My Army Post" app now has 8,000 subscribers.
- **Staffing:** There are currently 18 open civilian positions available for hire.

#### **Fort Detrick (COL Christopher Chung, USA)**

- **Operations:** A full-scope base exercise is scheduled for April.
- **Infrastructure:** Demolition of the steam sterilization plant will finish this year; however, \$100 million is needed for land restoration.

- **Forest Glen Annex:** The commissary will remain closed following a 2024 water leak, as repairs are not financially feasible; an "instacart-like" app is supporting affected families.
- **Security Concerns:** Hiring freezes have led to the use of "borrowed military manpower" for security, which impacts research missions.

### **Maryland National Guard (COL Patrick Hawkins, USANG)**

- **Deployments:** 1,700 soldiers and airmen will deploy this year, which will have second-order effects on civil protection missions.
- **Civil Readiness:** The Guard is preparing a 500-soldier group for civil unrest response requirements.

### **Joint Base Andrews (COL Jun Oh, USAF)**

- **STEM Fair:** Recently hosted 1,500 students for a STEM event.
- **Active Mission:** The base serves as an active aeromedical evacuation staging facility for current deployments.
- **Future Staging:** JBA will be the staging area for aircraft flyovers during the America 250 National Mall celebrations.

### **Representative Sarah Elfreth's Keynote**

Representative Sarah Elfreth (MD-3) distributed her inaugural **2025 Maryland Defense Report**, which resulted from her 2025 visits to every major installation in Maryland.

### **Key Themes and Successes**

- **Identified Vulnerabilities:** Major concerns across installations include flooding risks due to coastal proximity, significant deferred maintenance on aging facilities, and quality-of-life issues like childcare and housing affordability.
- **Legislative Action:** Representative Elfreth successfully introduced 28 amendments to the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) targeting base infrastructure and veteran healthcare.
- **2027 Goals:** Looking ahead, her priorities include energy generation and storage, laboratory research spaces, and bipartisan resilience efforts.

### **Discussion and Q&A**

- **Energy Vulnerability:** In response to questions from Colonel Gore, the Representative noted that 90% of installation energy across the U.S. comes from off-base sources. She expressed a broad base of support for creative solutions such as small modular reactors (SMRs) and geothermal energy.
- **Security Hiring:** Colonel Chung (Fort Detrick) highlighted that hiring freezes have forced bases to use "borrowed military manpower" for security, often impacting mission activities. Discussion followed regarding Intergovernmental Support Agreements (IGSAs) and A-76 exemptions as potential hiring alternatives.

The Congresswoman stated that she will work for bipartisan solutions, but requests that if you bring an issue or propose a solution, it is best if you are aware of another base or community with the same or similar issue and can identify a Congressional Representative on a related committee that she can work with for support. She introduced Connor Swett as her National Security Advisor and Taylor Donaghue as her Senior Advisor on Defense.