



The

# Red Tail

News about the Air and Space Forces Association



Report

Volume 16 Number 1

Red Tail Memorial Chapter 136

January thru March 2026

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT



Red Tail Memorial Chapter 136 is doing well, thanks to our energetic and reliable members. There is much to highlight as we work our AFA mission to “educate, advocate and support.”

The first is the golf tournament we sponsored on March 28 as a fundraiser for the AFA’s Wounded Airmen and Guardians Program. (See details and photos inside.) Our applause, of course, goes to Steve Hughes, who ran the event from start to finish. It was a success in many ways. First and foremost, according to early calculations before all the numbers are firm, our net for wounded airmen and guardians will exceed \$4,000. That was our purpose and the result is excellent, especially under the circumstances. It is more and more difficult to win participation in events like this. Steve still attracted 12 foursomes, and they had fun.

We were proud to welcome them. Among them were Mike Liquori, our Florida state/region president, and five AFROTC cadets from the Arnold Air Society squadron at the University of Florida in Gainesville. Mike said he “had a blast,” and enjoyed the day. The five cadets, who were sponsored by the chapter, also seemed to enjoy the day as a cap to spring break at UF.

Back to Steve Hughes: This was the third tournament he managed on behalf of the chapter and probably his last, he said. He is facing serious medical issues that we hope and pray will be resolved. Under these circumstances, he heroically undertook and completed the enormous amount of work involved in soliciting, organizing and managing a golf tournament. Our hats off to Steve and his wife, Deborah.

On a bright note, many of you receiving this newsletter are new or have been out of contact for some time. Welcome! Under leadership of AFA National, we have undertaken a massive effort to increase AFA membership to 1 million. It is the first tier of a new membership structure, called Mission Membership. This is AFA’s free membership tier for airmen, guardians, government civilians, military families, industry innovators, and anyone else with a passion for American airpower, spacepower, and national defense. It is a way to stay informed and connected to the U.S. Air Force and U.S. Space Force through news, live events, and a world-wide community at no cost. For more information about this effort, go to [AFA Launches ‘Mission Membership’ to Reach Goal of 1 Million Members - Air & Space Forces Association](#).

Finally, we will be presenting “Cadet of the Year” awards to AFJROTC cadets at five high schools this year. A sincere thank you to Steve Hughes, Terry Dickensheet, Bill Hodgkins, AFROTC Cadet Commander Carson Wade, and Corey Fossbender who have signed up to represent us at Forest, North Marion, Belleview, Buchholz, and Citrus High Schools for presentations during April and May. “Thank you” also to Terry for doing the scheduling, and most important, congratulations to the outstanding cadets who are receiving the awards.

Aim High!

*Ben Langer*

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## The Air Force & Space Forces Association Mission

1. Educate the public about the critical role of AeroSpace power in the defense of our nation.
2. Advocate AeroSpace power and a strong national defense.
3. Support the United States Air Force, United States Space Force, their families, and AeroSpace education.

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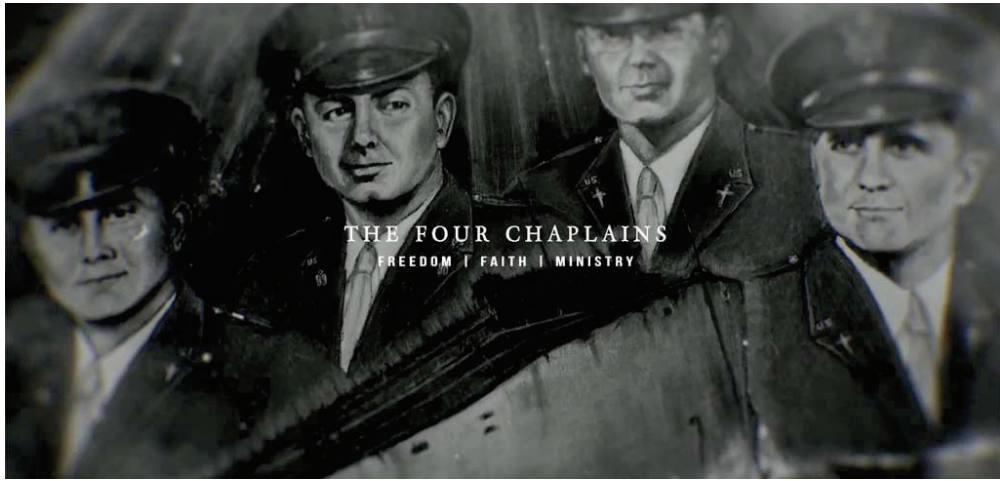
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**It's a Fact:** Red Tail Memorial Chapter 136 draws members from eight counties: Citrus, Alachua, Marion, Sumter, Dixie, Levy and parts of Lake and Putnam. It is not necessary to be an Air Force veteran.

The Red Tail Report is a quarterly newsletter published by Red Tail Memorial Chapter 136 of the Air Force Association, Ben Langer, 4005 N Hatchet Cir, Lecanto, FL 34465, president; Rob Price, editor. The Red Tail Report is distributed quarterly electronically and upon request on paper via USPS.



February 3, 2026 is the 83rd Anniversary of the FOUR CHAPLAINS DAY! The Marion County Veterans Council's Four Chaplains Ceremony celebrated this event on Saturday, 31 January 2026 at 1000 in the Marion County's Commissioners Auditorium.

They commemorated the heroic actions of four military chaplains during World War II. On February 3, 1943, the troop ship SS Dorchester was torpedoed by a German U-boat in the North Atlantic. As the ship sank, these four chaplains selflessly sacrificed their lives to save others including Army Air Corps members on board, demonstrating extraordinary courage and unity in the face of adversity.

They remembered and honored the memory and legacy of four brave chaplains: George L. Fox, Alexander D. Goode, John P. Washington, and Clark V. Poling. These men, represented different faiths and backgrounds, came together in an act of unity and selflessness that serves as a symbol of courage and compassion.

## COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Red Tail Memorial Chapter 136 salutes its Community Partners. The Air & Space Forces Association enjoys a warm relationship with the following businesses through its Community Partners Program. Please support these local businesses.



# VETERAN BOOT CAMP

Veteran Boot Camp – An unclassified intelligence briefing revealing all of the great veteran and civilian benefits available to veterans and their families in Ocala and Marion County.

A Veteran Boot Camp is held every 4th Saturday from 9 – 11 AM at the Elliott Center, 3231 SW 34th Avenue, Ocala, FL.

Lots of important information for whether you are new to Florida or have been living here a long time. This is your chance to learn the ins and outs of Ocala and Marion County and the great benefits of living here - both as a veteran and a resident.

All of your **What When Where and How** questions will be answered and the many free veteran benefits explained. Spouses should attend – the available family benefits are part of the information. Many are hard to find, and most are free!

Veteran Boot Camp is presented by the Vet Resource Center, Inc., a 501(c)(3) charity working for our vets.

📞 352-433-7290

👤 [VeteranBootCamp.org](http://VeteranBootCamp.org)

📧 [info@VeteranBootCamp.org](mailto:info@VeteranBootCamp.org)

## Veteran Boot Camp Meeting Dates

**Elliott Center  
3231 SW 34th Avenue  
Ocala, FL.**

**April 25, 2026**

**May 23, 2026**

**June 27, 2026**

**July 25, 2026**

**August 22, 2026**

**September 26, 2026**

# STARCOM Opens New Headquarters Building in Florida

March 26, 2026 Air Space Forces Magazine | By [Matthew Cox](#)

Space Training and Readiness Command officially opened its new headquarters building in Florida this month, as the field command starts to move in earnest from Colorado. The process will hopefully be complete by 2027, Chief Master Sergeant of the Space Force John F. Bentivegna told lawmakers March 25.

Since it was established in 2021, STARCOM has been temporarily headquartered at Petersen Space Force Base, Colo. As one of the Space Force's three field commands, it's [responsible](#) for educating and training Guardians, developing the service's doctrine and tactics, and testing Space Force capabilities.

Bentivegna told members on the House Appropriation Committee that the command held a ribbon-cutting ceremony March 10 at a new headquarters "annex" on Patrick Space Force Base, located just a few miles from Cape Canaveral Space Force Station and the Space Force's main launch facilities on the East Coast.

"That was just the first phase; in May, the second phase of the annex will open," Bentivegna said, adding that it will increase the amount of STARCOM staff at Patrick.

The Department of the Air Force selected Patrick as STARCOM's new home [in 2023](#). The Florida base location [beat out five other bases for STARCOM headquarters](#)—Buckley, Peterson, and Schriever Space Forces Bases in Colorado; and Vandenberg Space Force Base and Los Angeles Air Force Base in California.

The command started its move in July 2025, with Maj. Gen. James E. Smith taking the helm of STARCOM. But to this point, the headquarters staff has been small and scattered across Patrick. The new headquarters building sets the stage for the move to pick up steam.

"This is a symbol of momentum as we move in," Smith, said in a release. "We now have a place we can call home. It's going to enable us to continue to get after our mission."

Bentivegna said that "we're hoping to have several hundred more people there this summer, with the full move from Colorado executed and completed by the end of 2027."

STARCOM is conducting a "phased approach" for the move to work with the local community around Patrick to assess "what's the childcare look like; what's the housing situation look like," Bentivegna said.

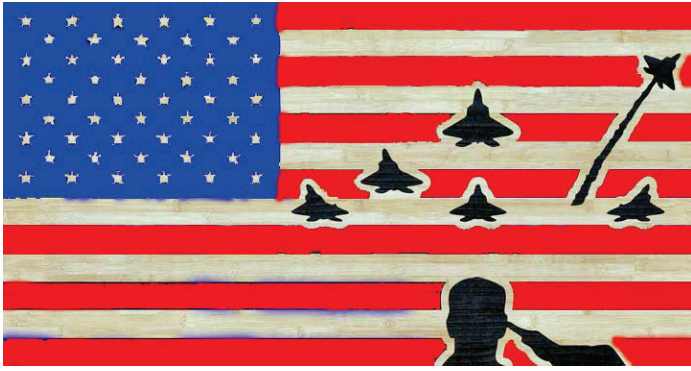
The aging infrastructure on Patrick will have to be modernized as well, he said.

"When you look at Patrick and Cape Canaveral, the buildings might be old, but the views are amazing," Bentivegna joked, then reassured lawmakers that the service will improve the infrastructure "to make sure there are clean, safe, and healthy conditions, and that [Guardian's] quality of life and quality of service is such that we can retain the talent."

Bentivegna [said in February](#) that the Space Force needs to more than double its size, pointing out that that the service had already surpassed its recruiting goals for fiscal 2026 by reaching 125 percent of its goal.

"I think we are about 10,500 Guardians today, so when I say double the size, it [will be] about 24,000 over the next five to seven years," he told committee members. Bentivegna added that having STARCOM located on the East Coast will be key to doubling the force.

"The scouting of that talent that will be coming into the service, the technical training, the professional military education—all of that will be the responsibility of Space Training and Readiness Command that's headquartered down there."



## LAST FLIGHT

**No Deaths to Report**

## NEW MEMBERS

**Dale Katz**

**William H Heagy**

**David M. Shaler**

**Gerald E. McNair**

**Linda L. Wills**

**Martin J. Foy**

**Tony Jenkins**



1. What member of the Musical Group The Monkees was an Air Force engine mechanic prior to joining the group?
2. What do the Air Force Colors ultramarine blue and yellow stand for?
3. What U.S. Presidents served in the Air Force?

*3. Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush*

*2. Blue for the sky and yellow for the sun*

*1. Michael Nesmith*



**1900 HOURS**

**Ocala Airport Terminal  
Conference Room**

**April 16, 2026**

**May 21, 2026**

**June 18, 2026**

**July 16, 2026**

**Subject to Change**

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**2026 AFA Florida Convention July 18, 2026**

**In-Person Event**

**2026 National Convention September 12 to 13, 2026**

**Virtual and In-Person Event**

**2026 Air, Space & Cyber Conference September 14 to 16, 2026**

**Virtual and In-Person Event**

# CHAPTER GOLF TOURNAMENT A SUCCESS FOR WOUNDED AIRMEN AND GUARDIANS

Red Tail Memorial Chapter 136 of the Air & Space Forces Association on March 28 sponsored a successful fundraising golf tournament at the Inverness Golf and Country Club for airmen and guardians wounded in war.

According to early calculations, the tournament that day raised more than \$4,000.

The winning foursome were Michael Harris, Bill Blum, Jesse Cruz and Dennis Papangua.

In addition to the overall winner, prizes also were awarded for the longest drive, closest to the pin, and other great shots.

Twelve foursomes comprising 48 players played the course and later took chances on prizes, many of which were donated by local businesses.

Among the players were Mike Liquori, Florida State AFA President from Orlando, and five Air Force Reserve Officer Training Corps cadets from the University of Florida Arnold Air Society AFROTC Det. 150 in Gainesville.

The tournament was a fundraiser for the Wounded Airmen and Guardians Program, an effort by the AFA to help care for servicemen and women injured in war.

Steve Hughes, a retired Air Force chief master sergeant from Inverness, masterminded the tournament and solicited the vast array of prizes. He was assisted by his wife, Deborah, and their friend, Cathy Baughman.



*The Rev. Chappie Kitchens, chapter 136, Florida State, and National AFA chaplain, opened the tournament with an invocation.*



*The crew that made the golf tournament happen, from the left, Terry Dickensheet, Chappie Kitchens, Steve Hughes, Ben Langer, Bruce Gillett and AFA State President Mike Liquori.*



*On a beautiful Florida day that began with fog and ended in sunshine, players await instructions before the tournament.*



*Bruce Gillett (from the left) checked in players as they arrived and Terry Dickensheet sold tickets for a vast array of prizes. AFROTC Arnold Air Society cadets from the University of Florida in Gainesville checking in were Squadron Commander Carson Wade, Cody DeMayo, Austin Stephenson, Mycah Armes, and Adam Sicard.*



*Post-tournament, there was dinner for all.*



*This foursome played in patriotic colors.*



*After the tournament, Terry Dickensheet, Chappie Kitchens and the mastermind of it all, Steve Hughes, loaded up the equipment and closed the end gate on another successful Red Tail Memorial Chapter 136 golf tournament.*



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