

From Orbit to Ops Center: Col. Nick Hague Shares Insights from Space

The AFA was proud to welcome **Col. Nick Hague**, Space Force officer and NASA astronaut, as the featured speaker for AFA's **Warfighters in Action** event on **June 4**. Held at the AFA Operations Center, the event was moderated by **Maj Gen (Ret.) Larry Stutzriem**, AFA's Executive Vice President.

Col. Hague, a U.S. Air Force Academy graduate with a master's degree from MIT, shared reflections on his **374 days in space**—most recently as commander of **NASA's Crew-9 mission** to the International Space Station. That mission included a March 2025 rendezvous to retrieve astronauts **Suni Williams** and **Butch Wilmore**, who had spent over nine months aboard the ISS.



Pictured above (left to right): Maj Gen (Ret.) Larry Stutzriem, Col. Nick Hague, and Bob Hill, D.W. Steele Sr. Chapter Secretary.

He emphasized the vital role of **Space Force Guardians** in supporting NASA missions: **"NASA can't do its job if the Space Force doesn't do its job,"** he said. With over **48,000** objects orbiting Earth, Guardians provide tracking and collision warnings to protect vital space assets and human life.

Hague also noted that nearly two-thirds of NASA's astronaut corps are military professionals, valued for their leadership, decision-making, and resilience. Reflecting on his early inspirations, he recalled childhood nights under the Western Kansas sky—moments that sparked his path to STEM, flight, and space exploration.

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT:

Financial Training for Airmen and Cadets

A Financial Readiness Bootcamp equipped cadets and Airmen with key financial skills to support lifelong money habits and mission readiness. [Read About It Here.](#)

Honoring Heroism: A Tribute to the Doolittle Raiders

A Doolittle Raiders tribute drew over 75 guests, featuring remarks by Col. Matt Coleman, a national live-streamed toast, and a special appearance by former CMSAF JoAnne S. Bass. [Read About It Here.](#)

Wingmen Honored in Atlanta for Outstanding Support of AFA

The Andrew D. Turner Squadron and First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt Silver Wings chapter earned the Lt. Gen. George Mueller Award at the 2025 National Conclave for leadership, service, and AFA partnership, strengthened by work with the Steele Chapter. [Read About It Here.](#)

Supporting AFA at the Virginia CAP Cadet Summit

Bob Hill, Secretary of the Chapter, spoke at Burke Squadron's April 10 Dining Out, honoring its CyberPatriot team and Cadet 2nd Lt. Brisha Uprey as 2025 AFA Cadet of the Year. [Read About It Here.](#)

Celebrating Service, Continuity, and New Vision

Honoring Lloyd Swede's Continued Leadership as Vice President and Welcoming Col (Ret) DJ Padilla as Our New Chapter President



Lloyd Swede

Change is part of military life—and the same holds true for the Air & Space Forces Association and our D.W. Steele Sr. Chapter.

As of May 1, we bid farewell to **Chapter President Lloyd Swede**, who received Permanent Change of Station (PCS) orders to the **University of Kansas**, where he will serve as an **AFROTC instructor**. Lloyd was selected for this prestigious assignment in recognition of his leadership at the squadron level and previous instructor experience.

Though stepping down as president, Lloyd will continue his leadership as **Chapter Vice President**.

During nearly two years as president, Lloyd helped lead major milestones: expanding **AFA's Families and Forces (F2)** initiative, launching a successful **Salute to Service** honoring the 12 Outstanding Airmen of the Year, raising over **\$6,000 for aerospace education**, and advancing the chapter's communications—now recognized as a model across AFA chapters. He balanced it all while serving as an NCO, completing a degree, and preparing with his wife, Kylie, to welcome a baby girl this July.

As we thank Lloyd for his service, we also **welcome Col (Ret) Darian "DJ" Padilla** as our new president. A 1994 graduate of the **Air Force Academy**, DJ's career spans munitions and special ops maintenance, and senior leadership with **DTRA** and **AFDW**, where he finished as **Chief of Staff**.

It was during his time at **DTRA**, stationed at **Kirtland AFB**, that DJ met Claudine—the love of his life and now wife. Claudine is a successful entrepreneur, and together they make a powerhouse team.



Col (Ret) Darian "DJ" Padilla

After retiring from active duty, DJ and Claudine chose to stay rooted in the **National Capital Region**. He now serves as a contractor supporting **AFDW**, where one of his current responsibilities includes overseeing the **Air Force Memorial**, helping preserve one of the service's most symbolic landmarks.

With Lloyd continuing to support the chapter as **Vice President** and DJ stepping in as our new **President**, we're fortunate to have two dynamic leaders at the helm.

Their shared passion for service and commitment to the AFA mission ensures our chapter is well-positioned for continued growth, innovation, and impact.



Pictured above (left to right): Col (Ret) Darian "DJ" Padilla and Lloyd Swede. Photo Credit: Alex Sakes for Air & Space Forces Association

Honoring Excellence in Education

Tony Frazier

Virginia AFA Teacher of the Year

The D.W. Steele Sr. Chapter proudly announces **Mr. Anthony (Tony) Frazier, Jr., MAS, MBA, AGI, LCP**, as its **2025 Chapter Teacher of the Year**. In recognition of his exceptional leadership in STEM and aerospace education, **Mr. Frazier was also named the 2025 AFA Virginia State Teacher of the Year**. He will now represent Virginia in the national-level AFA Teacher of the Year competition.

Each year, AFA chapters nationwide honor outstanding STEM educators shaping the future of aerospace. Chapter honorees move on to state-level competitions, with winners considered for national recognition.

Mr. Frazier teaches Aviation Technology and Small Unmanned Aircraft Systems (sUAS) at Arlington Career Center in Arlington Public Schools. With over 20 years of experience, he is one of only four public high school aviation programs in Virginia. His program's two-year waitlist reflects its exceptional quality and demand.

Using an FAA-approved curriculum, he prepares students for the **Private Pilot Ground School** and **FAA Part 107 Drone Certification exams**. His teaching blends academic rigor with real-world experience, producing graduates who attend U.S. Military Academies, top aviation universities, and enter aerospace careers.

Beyond academics, **Mr. Frazier fosters mentorship, industry partnerships, and diversity in aviation—especially among young women**. His program has even gained international attention, including an invitation from Saudi Arabia's Technical and Vocational Training Corporation to share their model abroad.

"We are thrilled to recognize Tony Frazier's outstanding dedication, passion, and innovation in STEM education," said Darian "DJ" Padilla, President of the D.W. Steele Sr. Chapter. **Virginia State AFA President Mike Maxwell added,** "Tony exemplifies the best in STEM education. His work is a model for the nation."



Tony Frazier



Tony Frazier and Bob Hill, D.W. Steele Sr. Chapter Secretary.

Eva Guerrette Honored, GWU and Howard Units Earn National Recognition at NATCON

At the 2025 Arnold Air Society and Silver Wings National Conclave (NATCON) in Atlanta, **Eva Guerrette** received the **Marianne Tango Williams Award** for her outstanding leadership as National Chief of Protocol Executive Officer. A dedicated Steele Chapter supporter and former 2023 Silver Wings Vice President, she recently graduated from George Washington University and was selected for the **Air Force Palace Acquire Program**. Also at NATCON, **Christian Williams**, GWU Silver Wings President and Steele Chapter Vice President, helped secure **Lt. Gen. George Mueller Awards** for the Andrew D. Turner Squadron at Howard University and the First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt Chapter at GWU—recognized by Vice President Lloyd Swede as "among our most trusted and valued Wingmen."



Pictured above (left to right): Eva Guerrette and Christian Williams

Steele Chapter Honors CAP Cadet of the Year

On May 12, the D.W. Steele Sr. Chapter of AFA proudly joined the Fredericksburg Composite Squadron to present **Cadet Captain Jaedon Twum** with the **2024 AFA Civil Air Patrol Cadet of the Year award**—the chapter's highest honor for a CAP cadet.



Pictured above (left to right): Bob Hill, D.W. Steele Sr. Chapter Secretary, and Jaedon Twum

Presented by Chapter Secretary Bob Hill, the award recognizes Twum's exceptional leadership as Cadet Commander, where he has led over 80 cadets, revitalized programs, and introduced key structural innovations. Hill praised him as "a true leader" who embodies the values of character, service, and commitment that the award celebrates.

AFA Honors Fallen Heroes at Arlington

On May 26, Americans across the nation paused to observe **Memorial Day**, a solemn occasion honoring those who gave their lives in service to our country.

At Arlington National Cemetery, the Air & Space Forces Association joined senior U.S. leaders in paying tribute to our nation's fallen heroes.

This year marked the **157th official Memorial Day ceremony**, held in the cemetery's historic amphitheater. The event featured remarks from national leaders, including **President Donald Trump**, **Vice President JD Vance**, **Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth**, and **Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Dan Caine**.



Pictured above (left to right): Col (Ret) Darian "DJ" Padilla, Claudine Padilla, and Bob Hill, D.W. Steele Sr. Chapter Secretary.

During his speech, President Trump recognized the service and sacrifice of **Air Force SMSgt Elroy Harworth**, a **C-130 loadmaster** lost in combat on **May 31, 1966**, during a mission from **Da Nang Air Base**, South Vietnam. Harworth's remains were repatriated in **1986**, and his name was later added to the **Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall** in Washington, D.C. Members of his family were in attendance and were honored during the ceremony.

Following the speeches, military service organizations participated in the **wreath-laying ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier**—a powerful tradition that symbolizes the nation's gratitude to those who never returned home.

Representing the AFA, **Col. Hill, USAF "D.J." Padilla, USAF (Ret.)**, President of the D.W. Steele Sr. Chapter, and **Col. Bob Hill, USAF (Ret.)**, Chapter Secretary, laid AFA's wreath at the Tomb. **"It's so important that we never forget the sacrifices that Airmen have made over the years to keep us free,"** said Padilla. **"Honoring our heroes reflects AFA's ongoing commitment to honor our heritage and history,"** said Hill.

University of Maryland's Arnold Air Unit Earns Top National Awards



The Frank P. Lahm Squadron of Arnold Air Society at the University of Maryland earned two prestigious awards at the 2025 National Conclave in Atlanta: the **Badley Trophy** for the nation's top squadron and the **Phoenix Award** for service excellence.

With 23 cadets, the squadron completed 400+ volunteer hours and raised over \$1,400 in 2024–2025. Their efforts included laying 2,000 wreaths at Arlington National Cemetery, hosting a Pet Essentials Drive, organizing a 5K for scholarships, and supporting Night to Shine—a raffle for guests with special needs.

Col. Nate Rabe, Professor of Aerospace Studies, praised the cadets: **"The Frank P. Lahm Squadron truly exemplified the meaning of service and were outstanding ambassadors for Arnold Air Society and Air Force ROTC on campus and throughout the National Capital Region. We are extremely proud of their contributions to our local communities and excited to see them recognized at NATCON with these impressive awards."**

The Steele Chapter is proud to partner with the Lahm Squadron on initiatives including a Financial Readiness Bootcamp and Tribute to the Doolittle Raiders.

Honor the Past, Inspire the Future: Volunteer with AFA

Help Preserve Air Force History — A Grant Writing Opportunity

One of the chapter's closest partners, or **"Wingmen,"** is the **Air Force Historical Foundation**. The Foundation plays a vital role in **preserving the rich history of the United States Air Force** by collecting and safeguarding irreplaceable artifacts—photos, film footage, and written correspondence—some dating back more than 80 years.



But time is not on our side. Many of these historical documents are deteriorating. Photos fade, film reels degrade, and paper records become brittle. To protect these treasures for future generations, the Foundation is working to **digitize its collection**—but they need help.

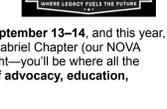
They're looking for a **volunteer with experience in grant writing** to assist in securing funding for this important work. It's a chance to use your skills to **honor and preserve the legacy of the Airmen** who came before us.

If you—or someone you know—has a few hours to give and experience in finding and writing grants, please contact **Chapter Secretary Bob Hill** at VA239.steele.secretary@afa.org.

Even a **small contribution of time can make a lasting impact.**

Airshows and AFA — A Perfect Pairing!

What's better than the heart-thumping roar of jet engines, the gleam of polished aircraft on display, and the jaw-dropping precision of the Thunderbirds streaking across the sky?



Not much—unless you add great company and a chance to tell others about the amazing work of the Air & Space Forces Association!

Mark your calendars: the **Andrews Air Show is happening September 13–14**, and this year, members from our Steele Chapter will be teaming up with the Gabriel Chapter (our NOVA neighbors) to represent the AFA right on the flightline. That's right—you'll be where all the action is, meeting airshow guests and sharing the AFA's story of **advocacy, education, support, and heritage.**

You don't need to commit to the whole day—just a couple of hours at the AFA tent can make a real difference. Plus, you'll get a front-row seat to all the aerial excitement!

Want to be part of the fun? Keep an eye out for more info as the date gets closer. In the meantime, if you're interested or have questions, reach out to **Chapter Secretary Bob Hill**, VA239.steele.secretary@afa.org.

Let's show the public what the AFA is all about—and have a blast doing it!