



Monthly Newsletter

National Security Highlights



A Note from the President

*Tracy Gregorio,
President, Women in
Defense Greater
Hampton Roads*

As we step into spring, the defense community faces a world where alliances are tested, and cyber warfare rivals traditional battlefields. With a new administration shaping policy, Hampton Roads must lead with adaptability and vision. Our strength lies in those who step up, mentor others, and foster resilience in uncertain times.

This month, I challenge you to recognize a leader in your circle. Write them a handwritten note or make a personal call to thank them for their impact or encourage their growth. Small but meaningful actions uplift others and build the unity that keeps our defense community strong.

Leadership isn't just about the challenges we face; it's about the people who help us rise to meet them. Let's commit to shaping the future together, one connection at a time.

Who will you recognize this month?

*With gratitude,
Tracy Gregorio*

In his March 4th address to Congress, President Donald J. Trump reaffirmed his commitment to military strength, shipbuilding, and innovation, laying out a vision that calls for resilience and leadership. For Hampton Roads—home to the nation's largest naval base and a thriving defense sector—these changes present both challenges and opportunities.

DoD Budget Adjustments and New Opportunities

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth has initiated a \$50 billion budget reallocation, working with the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) to eliminate waste and streamline operations. While shifts in funding may impact certain initiatives, efficiency efforts could create new pathways for businesses that can offer agile, cost-effective solutions. For Hampton Roads, this means an increased focus on operational effectiveness at Naval Station Norfolk and other installations, opening doors for firms specializing in logistics, workforce training, and defense technology.

Shipbuilding Surge and Workforce Growth

President Trump's pledge to expand American shipbuilding is a promising development for Hampton Roads, a hub for naval construction and repair. Business leaders in shipyard-adjacent sectors—ranging from manufacturing to supply chain management—stand to gain from new contracts as firms like Newport News Shipbuilding ramp up production. However, with rising demand for skilled labor, businesses will need strong recruitment and retention strategies to stay competitive. In a tightening labor market, mentorship and leadership development will be key to strengthening the defense workforce, ensuring that businesses of all sizes can meet growing demands.

Emerging Tech: Blockchain and Defense Innovation

As the DoD explores blockchain applications for secure supply chain management, Hampton Roads businesses have an opportunity to lead in defense logistics innovation.

Companies specializing in cybersecurity, compliance, and digital contract management could find a competitive edge by integrating blockchain solutions. While regulatory uncertainty and market fluctuations remain, forward-thinking businesses that invest in emerging technology will help shape the next generation of secure defense operations.

Leading Through Change

As policies shift and new opportunities emerge, leadership remains the foundation of our strength. Recognizing and uplifting those who mentor, adapt, and drive our industry forward is essential. Whether through innovation, resilience, or collaboration, the Hampton Roads defense community is poised to thrive in this evolving landscape.



AI Tip of the Month

Artificial Intelligence is evolving rapidly, with each company rolling out new models that offer unique capabilities and perspectives. Rather than sticking to just one AI, leveraging multiple AI models can help balance biases, capitalize on strengths, and get a more well-rounded response to complex questions. Each AI is trained on different datasets and optimized for different tasks, which means that using multiple models can provide diverse insights and help mitigate blind spots.

If you do need to choose a single AI, it's important to carefully evaluate your needs. Are you primarily using AI to draft business documents? Conduct research and summarize articles? Conduct real-time news analysis? Different AIs excel at different tasks, so picking the right one requires understanding how their strengths align with your specific use case.

AI Model	Strengths	Weaknesses
ChatGPT (OpenAI)	Strong at reasoning, coding, and structured responses. Offers extensive memory for personalized interactions.	Can be verbose and sometimes overly cautious.
Claude (Anthropic)	Excellent at programming, writing clean code, and debugging. Also great for nuanced discussions and summarization.	May avoid speculative or controversial topics more than others.
Grok 3 (xAI)	The newest AI, designed for real-time news analysis and access to X (Twitter) data. Strong at current events and rapid information synthesis.	Less tested in technical reasoning and detailed long-form responses.

Heard at the Congressional Water Cooler...



As March 2025 unfolds, the 119th Congress faces critical appropriations and budget decisions impacting defense and national security.

With the March 14 appropriations deadline looming, lawmakers are striving to finalize funding for the remainder of fiscal year 2025. A current and key point of contention is the refusal by GOP leaders to limit President Trump's and Elon Musk's authority to rescind funding, a move Democrats argue undermines legislative power and authority. The outcome of these negotiations will significantly influence defense operations and funding.

Additionally, both the House & Senate have recently advanced budget resolutions to facilitate President Trump's legislative agenda through reconciliation. The House narrowly passed its budget resolution by a 217-215 vote, mandating \$2 trillion in spending cuts over the next decade to offset \$4.5 trillion in proposed tax cuts. The Senate, on the other hand, adopted its own budget resolution focusing on defense and border security. The Senate's plan allocates \$175 billion for border security and \$150 billion for military funding, allowing for a federal deficit increase of up to \$515 billion over ten years. Notably, the Senate's resolution omits specific directives on tax reforms, proposing a two-bill approach that separates immediate priorities from more complex issues like tax policy. The President, House of Representatives, and Senate now seem aligned on the House one-bill strategy after the House's approval of their reconciliation proposal.

Over at the Pentagon, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth has initiated significant changes since his being sworn into office January 27, 2025. He has ordered an 8% budget cut, totaling \$50 billion, reallocating funds toward priorities like border security and nuclear force modernization. These cuts affect various military commands and programs. Additionally, Secretary Hegseth has dismissed top military legal advisors, citing a need for individuals better aligned with his vision of restoring a "warrior ethos."

For more Women in Defense Greater Hampton Roads news and information, select the following icons.



Local Events

WID Hampton Roads

WIDGHR Speed Mentoring Event

March 26th, 2025

WIDGHR is partnering with The Mustard Seed Place Women's Business Center and the ODU Women's Business Center to bring you the second annual Speed Mentoring Program, in support of Women's History Month. Join other successful business owners, government officials, and industry leaders for a no-cost mentorship experience. [Sign up now.](#)



AFCEA Hampton Roads Emerging Leaders: Ladies Tea Time

March 27th, 2025

The AFCEA Ladies Tea Time is a networking and professional development event designed for women in the defense and technology sectors. Hosted in an elegant tea room setting, this gathering offers an opportunity for women leaders and emerging professionals to connect, share insights, and discuss career growth in a relaxed and supportive atmosphere. [Sign up now.](#)



Spring Business Expo

April 22nd, 2025

The Hampton Roads Chamber is showcasing businesses from various industries, including defense, technology, and professional services. Attendees will have the opportunity to connect with industry leaders, explore new business opportunities, and gain insights into regional economic trends. [More information here.](#)

Featured Member Spotlight



Brenda Kerr

CEO

Plans and Projects LLC

Brenda Kerr is the founder of Plans and Projects LLC, a construction project management company, and serves as Vice President of WIDGHR. After a 31-year Coast Guard career, she launched her business with a focus on networking and client relationships.

Brenda joined WIDGHR after connecting with members through the Chamber of Commerce. She now leads an initiative with the Women in Construction group, organizing joint events. She values WID for its supportive network and professional growth opportunities.

Her advice to women in business? Show up, network, and have a clear plan. A strong business strategy helps you stay focused while allowing you to adapt and grow.

[Connect with Brenda](#) on LinkedIn to see how she can help!