

FROM THE DESK OF
President and CEO, Elizabeth Cromwell

Highlights of the vital and ongoing work of the Charlottesville Regional Chamber of Commerce.

One of the most significant contributors to our local economy is the defense/intelligence sector. More than 2,500 federal workers are employed locally by the US Army National Ground Intelligence Center (NGIC), the US Department of Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA), and the US Army Judge Advocate General (JAG) School. Also, our private sector employs approximately 2,000 intelligence and defense contractors.

Together, these jobs represent an estimated annual payroll of hundreds of millions for our region. These generally well-paid employees live, work and play here and contribute significantly to our community's tax base.

The purpose of the Defense Affairs Committee (DAC) of the Chamber is to foster economic vitality by strengthening relationships among Chamber members, the regional defense and intelligence community, and our municipalities. By working together to enhance these relationships, the DAC solidifies this crucially important part of our economy.

According to Helen Cauthen, President of the Central Virginia Partnership for Economic Development and Executive Director of Virginia Careerworks—Piedmont Region, “the shared investment in the DAC helps all of our organizations support our defense industry, one of the Partnership’s targeted industry sectors. We want to be sure we help our existing defense-related companies remain and grow here as well as keep a strong military presence at Rivanna Station.”

The City of Charlottesville, Albemarle County, and Greene County are all deeply engaged in the work of the DAC. Alan Yost, Director of Economic Development and Tourism for Greene County, commented, “Greene County has been directly impacted by the work of the DAC in strengthening the collaborative efforts of the local military, defense businesses, veterans, and the localities.”

In 2018, Albemarle County’s Economic Development Strategic Plan, referred to as Project Enable, envisioned that the Chamber hire a professional to focus on retaining and expanding the area’s defense industry. Many other organizations agreed on that need.



Elizabeth Cromwell
President and CEO of the Charlottesville Regional Chamber of Commerce



Retired US Army Colonel Lettie J. Bien
Program Coordinator, Defense Affairs Committee (DAC)

Accordingly, the DAC recently established its first full-time position to support defense intelligence enterprise advocacy in the region with investment from public and private partners.

In July of 2020, the Chamber engaged Retired US Army Colonel Lettie J. Bien to become its first DAC Program Manager. Col. Bien has quickly worked with the DAC leadership team to build strategies, tactics, and shared successes.

Among its many accomplishments, the DAC has recently:

- Established a welcome/reception center housed at North Fork—A UVA Discovery Park just a few miles north of Charlottesville, for incoming, existing, and transitioning military personnel, local veterans, and their families. The welcome center is home to a large community of federal contractors supporting the mission of NGIC/DIA/NGA Rivanna Station through the UVA Foundation’s generosity.

- Published resource lists to connect the business community with the defense community and our military veterans with local discounts, companies that give hiring preferences to veterans, and more.

- Significantly updated the Welcome Packet for new arrivals at NGIC with local community assets and useful information.

- Created several volunteer working groups to engage our business community with our military partners.

- Provided support to the Albemarle County JROTC.

The DAC has momentum, enthusiasm, and a shared vision for success. But beyond

this committee’s mission and tasks, I’d like to highlight an important milestone. We are witnessing through this endeavor a confluence of goals. Many of the organizations across the region have not always been 100% on the same page. Multiple cities, counties, regional economic development partners, academic partners, and the private sector are not only in agreement that the Chamber’s vision for a vibrant economy is crucial—but they are investing in that vision.

By collaborating and building shared goals and shared successes, the Chamber’s role as convener becomes evident and natural. Shared investment for shared success is a plan worth replicating in other parts of our economy.

For further and updated information, visit cvillechamber.com.

Central Virginia Partnership for Economic Development
centralvirginia.org

Virginia Careerworks—Piedmont Region
vcwpiedmont.com

North Fork—A UVA Discovery Park
discovernorthfork.com

Charlottesville Albemarle Convention & Visitors Bureau (CACVB)
visitcharlottesville.org



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The Charlottesville Regional Chamber of Commerce advocates, convenes, and engages to strengthen business in the greater Charlottesville Region.