

THE SCOTTISH AMERICAN MILITARY SOCIETY



SOCIETY NOBLE IN THE NOBLESSE OF SCOTLAND

From the National Commander,

To the members of the Scottish American Military Society; Good day to you all. I apologize in advance for the length of this letter, but these matters need to be addressed.

When I was running for Commander, I promised that communications between the membership and the Executive Committee would improve. With the addition of Debra Lloyd as the Corporate Communications Officer and Al Ankrum as the Operations Officer, I believe there has been a big improvement in communications, but we have a long way to go.

A couple of months ago the former National Adjutant told my wife and I that she was the "FACE of SAMS." If you put your magazine down and look in a mirror you will see the true "FACE of SAMS"! Each and every member who is looking at his or her reflection needs to know that without YOU there is NO SAMS!

Many of you want to know what is really happening in the Society as a whole and at the National level. I have read some of the remarks out on Facebook – mostly untruths and assumptions.

I will outline some of the problems that have transpired along with a few of the solutions. Some things I cannot give you the answers to at this time or the solution because of an ongoing investigation.

1. When I became Commander, I asked for financial reports and copies of Executive Council meeting minutes for the last 2 years. I am still waiting. I did get a one-page financial statement. It had some questionable expenditures on it. When I asked the previous Comptroller about it, he said do not worry they were probably just a mistake and were paid back. Really? Bubba Shrimp, Wine of the Month Club, and so on. I never saw any reports showing reimbursements to the Society.

The former Comptroller volunteered to resign; we are in the middle of an internal investigation into the finances of the Society. So far, we have found misappropriations of funds to the amount of \$20,500.00. His was the only name listed on all the bank accounts. This gave him sole responsibility, power, and use of funds with no checks and balances. There are now 3 signatories on each of the banking accounts: The National Commander, the National Vice Commander, and the National Comptroller. All expenditures have to be approved by the National Commander and the Comptroller. There is an ongoing investigation, and an audit will be ordered with a third party.

2. Extremely large issues with the former Quartermaster, 300+ new member packets behind, since last year. One Post waited for over a year and never received their packets. Supplies ordered by Posts, were lost, or never filled. Checks were deposited into the SAMS account, but members never received their orders. We were not up-to-date on SAMS Medals, behind on orders, and did not have inventory to fill the current ones. The prior Quartermaster resigned her position due to these issues.

The new Quartermaster, Adrien Herbison, was appointed by the Council. He is now caught up on new members packets and is working on getting supply orders out in a timely manner.

3. The National Council was lacking leadership and guidance. Meetings were conducted by email and messaging. As far as I can tell there were no minutes taken from those meetings. No one could tell me what was brought to the Council, or what was voted on or passed. The Council is now 6 members strong. The 5 standing committee chairs have been filled and we are working on having regular Zoom meetings. Al Ankrum, SAMS National Commander Emeritus, has come back on board to help as appointed Operations Officer. He is also the Advisor to the Executive Council.

4. If you remember we elected a new Vice Commander Allan Sperling in December of 2023. He was also the Dress Code Committee Chair. For some unknown reason he resigned not only as Vice Commander, but also as Regional Commander of the SW Region 14, and as the Dress Code Committee Chair.

Mr. Robert Donaldson was appointed as Vice Commander by the Council to fill the vacancy left by Allan Sperling. He will be working on communications between all of the RCs, PCs, the Council, the Corporate Communications Officer, Website Webmaster and the Editor of The Patriot Magazine. We hope to keep the door of communication open at all times!

We also have a new Dress Code Committee Chairperson, Scott Eliason, who will be looking into the current Dress Code and making appropriate changes. Any volunteers to help please let me know.

5. As you know, the Website went down last November. This was primarily due to the former Comptroller not paying the bill. It was brought back up, but we are now in the process of building a New Interactive Website. We have a New Webmaster, Ray McGuire, a retired Veteran from Post 1955, He and his wife, Brenda live in Portugal but, still belong to Post 1955 and attend meetings via WhatsApp and Zoom. Ray has been working tirelessly with Al Ankrum, Debra Lloyd, Brenda McGuire, and myself to build a New Website from scratch, while maintaining the current antiquated site with updates and other important announcements until the June 14th release of the New Website.

There have been quite a few roadblocks in the way, but we are handling them one-at-a-time and the Corporate Communications Center team; Al, Debra, Ray, Brenda, and I have agreed that this was what SAMS needed the most; communication and organization. Every aspect of running SAMS is being examined and revamped. It is making SAMS a better and more efficient organization, to say the least. Our former Comptroller and former Adjutant have both withheld vital Society information desperately needed to finish the New Website. At one point, the former Comptroller was holding our New Website platform "Hostage" because he wanted to control the software licensing instead of the Webmaster. He held up the progress and work for over two months. Until the Council took a vote and made the decision that the Webmaster would be in control of the licenses and the Corporate Communications Center would be responsible for the Website and the Patriot Magazine as it falls under the internal and external communications involving SAMS.

One of our new improvements will be an "Interactive" Website. You will even be able to cast your votes in the Fall Elections for New Officers on the website through a new software application that Ray has discovered. You will also be able to cast your vote via email on a secured platform and not have to cut-up your patriot and pay for postage to mail your ballot in.

6. A 3-page letter and emails between former Adjutant Jo Lawrence and Councilor Ralph Wallace; Stating that they were getting rid of 1 "Demon" and now have to contend with a "New Demon". This Councilor has since resigned and is no longer a National Councilor, Cyber Committee Chair, or Liaison for National Tartan Day. It was his choice to leave.
7. Now to clear up some other issues regarding former National Adjutant Jo Lawrence, as you know she was the Editor of the Patriot Magazine too. The Corporate Communications team found multiple mistakes and deficiencies in each issue of the Patriot. Duplicate R numbers being given out, National Membership Applications lacking vital information necessary to communicate with the membership; missing email addresses, phone numbers, incomplete addresses, deceased members and inactive members on the Master Roster, lost applications, lost checks, misguided information being disseminated to the membership, and inaccuracies of membership calculations resulting in thousands of dollars lost to the Society. It was brought to the attention of the Council that the Society was spending between \$5000 and \$6000 per quarter to print The Patriot Magazine. She would have 1500 copies printed out, when our current membership analysis by two different sources showed the membership to be 1279 members at the most. A lot of families were getting 2 to 4 copies per household quarterly of The Patriot Magazine. The one-time discount for two veterans, who are married and living at the same address, were to receive a 25% discount on one membership, and in lieu only receive one Patriot Magazine. The former Adjutant was giving the memberships out at the discounted rate of \$17.50 (discount on two memberships and should have only been one: \$8.75 but being applied as the full membership fee given to these households and they were still receiving two Patriot Magazines instead of one). How long is undeterminable to know but, she also gave them the same rate upon renewal of their National dues! We have lost substantial amounts money to the Society because of these type mistakes.

She was asked to work with the Corporate Communications Team, and she refused. She was asked to resign, and she refused. So, the Council voted in compliance of our 2010 Bylaws under Article III, section 9 unanimously to remove her as the National Adjutant and as the Patriot Editor. On the grounds of Insubordination, Dereliction of Duty, and Conduct Unbecoming an Officer. She is still holding Vital Society information and has not returned Society Property as instructed in our Bylaws. We sent her a letter requesting that she return all of SAMS property to us; and she signed the return receipt on May 13, 2024, we still have not had any communication with her regarding the return of said property.

8. Another of our improvements is our SAMS National Integrated Database (SNID). Which is replacing the Master Roster Excel spreadsheet. SNID has 39 points of data compared to the 25 originally on the Master Roster. So, we will only be accepting the New National Membership Application completed correctly or it will be returned for additions and/or corrections. They will be scanned and added to the database for future reference. We now have secure and reliable data storage. This will allow us to communicate with the membership by having accurate contact information. We can easily query and create custom reports. The collected data will also help us to apply for grants in the future.
9. At the first of the year the Society had less than \$9000.00 in the general fund. You do the math, printing two additional issues of the Patriot Magazine, Spring and Summer would have bankrupted us and we would be insolvent. We now have a New Patriot Editor Brenda McGuire. I would like to request that every member give the New Digital Patriot Magazine a chance, which will be out on June 14th on the New SAMS National Website for all our members to review and read, you will be extremely impressed. The Patriot Magazine in a digitized format will be totally in color, have more than the 48 pages that we currently print, a new cover, and the front, back and insides will all be in color too. We heard your displeasure about not having a hard copy of The Patriot Magazine in your hands. We, however, had to figure out a way to produce the desired end result without bankrupting the Society and the Corporation. We decided to look for a different printer and change the format and layout of the magazine, by cutting down on the number of military articles and recipes but including more pertinent and vital information for our membership. This cost savings will be roughly about \$1800 quarterly. We will continue to print The Patriot Magazine as long as there are funds to do so but, due to budget constraints it will not have as many pages or be in full color like the digitized version.

I would also like to inform you that your annual dues of \$35 do not explicitly pay for the printing of the Patriot Magazine. There was supposed to have been advertising being sold to offset the printing costs, but we discovered that the costs were not being assessed at the current and correct publishing rates either and most advertisers were receiving a 40% discount or getting the advertising for FREE.

Your dues are used to cover the total operating costs of the Society and Corporation. Let us do some math; take the total membership: 1321 members, minus the Life members who paid for a one-time lifetime membership, then take the remainder of those left (all the Regular members who pay \$35 annual dues) and then multiply that by the number of members left will equal the Fiscal Year's Budget for Operations. That figure does not increase at any time during the year unless we get new members signed up or if we get a huge donation. That is all we have to use to operate the Society and Corporation. Out of that comes our fees for our software we use to run the financial bookkeeping system, the software fees for the website platform, our Quartermaster supplies, shipping and handling, our awards that we contribute to for the Coalition of Scottish Foundations and National Tartan Day awards, our office supplies, and renewals of our computer software for the SAMS computers that the National Adjutant and other Officers were using to do their jobs, and MUCH, MUCH MORE! So please do not be led astray by the inaccurate information you have been getting over the years, it is just not true.

10. Since this letter is getting so long; I will finish with; a lot has been happening behind the scenes and will continue to happen until we can get this Society up and running as it should be. There has been a lot of complaints and grumbling from membership across the United States. As I told all of you earlier that you are all "The FACE of SAMS"! With your cooperation and help, why not become the "VOICE of SAMS" too? We are making a lot of progress toward the betterment of the Society. It takes time and a lot of work. **We need and want help!**

I look at the statistics when I want to know what the truth really is, and I need to understand what has happened. Since 2015, (we had 1,111 Regular Members, 573 Lifetime, 74 Honorary Members for a total of 2,431). And now we have 1,321 as I write this sentence. We have LOST 1,108 and we have 4,130 members on the Inactive List. We determine our growth by the numbers or so we should. However, the numbers do not show growth, they show lack of retainment. We have become stagnate, complacent and have lost focus to gain our footing in a time when other

organizations are also losing members. I see SAMS as the once leader of Veterans Organizations because none of us get paid to promote, recruit, and build on our membership. We had the opportunity to see SAMS grow into the BIGGEST organization with our Scottish Roots, Military traditions and now we are stumbling to stay afloat. I know we can get back on focus; we just have to believe in ourselves and the foundation on which SAMS was founded. As we turn this page, the next page is empty; so, I ask, how do you want to have our story read? Together, we can put down better statistics, have excellent retainment and see growth like we never have before. It will take ALL of us to make it happen.

Members, please contact any Officer listed in The Patriot Magazine. (Yes, there will be hard copies of The Patriot Magazine printed again)! With savings of up to \$1800 or more per quarter hopefully, New Editor, New Printer, New Format, and a choice of either a hard copy or digital (digital is FREE). We want to hear from you! Zoom meetings per Region and Post are being set up as I write this letter. We will start with the Regional RCs and their PCs. Give us your suggestions and comments! My door and that of all the National Officers, Councilors, and Appointed Staff are always open to all members.

Thank you for your patience and understanding of what has been happening behind the scenes and for keeping the faith that this Organization and Society has more to accomplish in the years ahead!



Respectfully,

Kenneth A. Lloyd

Kenneth A. Lloyd,
SAMS National Commander