CIVIL AIR PATROL
SPACE OPERATIONS ACADEMY
COLORADO

January 26, 2026

MEMORANDUM FOR: SOA-CO ACADEMY CADETS
FROM: SANDRA ALAYON, CAPT, CAP
SUBJECT: **SPACE OPERATIONS ACADEMY WELCOME LETTER**

WELCOME TO THE 2026 SPACE OPERATIONS ACADEMY – COLORADO

Congratulations! You have been selected to attend the 2026 Space Operations Academy (SOA) in Colorado. SOA provides cadets with exposure to careers in government, military, and civilian sectors supporting Space Force operations. Cadets will also develop leadership and service skills through focused aerospace education. SOACO is hosted near Peterson Space Force Base in Colorado Springs, which supports multiple U.S. Space Force mission deltas and hosts major defense missions including NORAD and U.S. Northern Command headquarters and other joint space operations units. During the week, you will attend lectures, briefings, facility tours, and discussions led by space operations professionals, providing insight into areas and activities that are not accessible to the public.

Please read this detailed Welcome Letter in its entirety.
All sections are important and there are immediate action items you'll need to complete to retain your slot in this activity.

ACTIVITY DETAILS OVERVIEW

- **Location:** Colorado Springs, Colorado
- **Primary Lodging:** Radisson Colorado Springs Hotel
  1645 N. Newport Road, Colorado Springs, CO 80916
- **Dates:** 13–20 June 2026
- **Time Zone:** Mountain Time (MT)

Action Needed: Accept OR Decline Your Slot in Writing by March 14
To accept your slot:

- Please email ACTIVITY DIRECTOR Capt. Sandra Alayon at salayon@cap.gov with the subject line: **Slot Acceptance SPACE OPERATIONS ACADEMY- COLORADO**.
- In the body of the email, confirm your plan to attend.
- Complete and submit the ***U.S Citizenship Verification Form*** (sent via email after slotting) supplemental form no later than **March 14, 2026.**

To decline your slot:

- Please go to Registration Zone and cancel your application for ACTIVITY TITLE.
- Send a courtesy email to Captain Sandra Alayon at Salayon@cap.gov EMAIL ADDRESS notifying the staff you have cancelled.

It's ok if you change your mind and decide that this activity is not a good fit for you. We simply ask your courtesy to take action and decline your slot. This helps us offer that slot to another cadet on the alternate list. Thank you

for communicating in a timely manner. If you do not communicate any action by March 14 or fail to complete the U.S Citizenship verification form, we will assume you are declining your slot.

PAYMENT POLICY

Important payment dates:

- Standard Payment $650. Due date: April 15. Paying early saves you $100.
- Late Payment is accepted Apr 16-22, but a $100 late fee is automatically added to your tuition total.

- You must pay online in Registration Zone using PayPal or a credit card.
- If you haven't paid your tuition by April 22, National will unslot you on April 23 and you will be at the bottom of the alternate list.

Due to the complex nature of National Cadet Special Activities, no refunds are available after April 30.

If you were a Lift/Top financial assistance recipient OR Activity Scholarship recipient, you will have already been notified via email and your relevant tuition payment will have been entered in Registration Zone at the time you were slotted. Please check your activity card in Registration Zone to see if you have any balance due.

IDENTIFICATION & U.S CITIZENSHIP REQUIREMENT

Due to the sensitive locations visited, all participants, cadets and senior members, **must be U.S. Citizens**. *Permanent residents, DACA recipients, and individuals on visitor, work, or student visas are* ***not eligible****.* Cadets must have a **REAL ID-compliant, government-issued photo ID** (such as a driver's license, DOD CAC/dependent ID, or passport) at the time of slot acceptance and bring it with them to the activity. ***CADETS IN THE PROCESS OF OBTAINING AN ID CANNOT BE SLOTTED.***

To verify U.S. citizenship, cadets will receive a **supplemental U.S. Citizenship Verification Form** after receipt of this Welcome Letter. Cadets must submit this form along with **one of the following documents**:

- **Valid U.S. Passport**
- **Certificate of Naturalization (Form N-550)**
- **Certified U.S. Birth Certificate**

PHYSICAL REQUIREMENT

Cadets and Senior Members must meet CAP Physical Fitness Category I. Participants will be hiking at high elevations and must be physically able to complete these activities.

TRAVEL EXPECTATIONS

For the 2026 Space Operations Academy, **Colorado Springs Airport (COS)** will serve as the arrival and departure airport for all activity staff and cadets. These timelines are firm. We only have drivers and vans available within these timelines on 13 JUNE 2026, and 20 JUNE 2026. We cannot accommodate Unaccompanied Minors. We do not have the resources to participate in the Unaccompanied Minors program.

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE VIA COLORADO SPRING (COS) AIRPORT.

ARRIVAL COS	DEPARTURE COS
13 JUNE 2026	**20 June 2026**
Cadets should arrive at **COS** between **1000 and 1400.**	Cadets should depart from **COS after 0830.**

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE VIA POV (PRIVATELY OWNED VEHICLE)
POV arrivals must check in with staff and turn in keys upon arrival.

ARRIVAL POV	DEPARTURE POV
13 JUNE 2026	**20 June 2026**
Cadets should arrive via **POV** between **1200 and 1430.**	Cadets should depart via **POV at 0830.**

DUE TO THE COMPLEX NATURE OF OUR ACTIVITY, PARTICIPANTS ARE ONLY ABLE TO TRAVEL TO AND FROM THE OPTIONS LISTED IN THIS WELCOME LETTER.

Please confirm your travel plans as soon as possible, ensuring your travel dates and times meet the travel rules above.

- Please email your travel itinerary to Major Cesar Alayon at calayon@cap.gov no later than May 1st. In that email, please include your method of travel, arrival date and time and departure date and time.

LODGING & MEALS

- Your lodging and meals are included in your activity tuition.
- This activity will be held at the Radisson Hotel in Colorado Springs located near Peterson SFB.
- Rooms are primarily double occupancy with private bathrooms. Two cadets of the same gender will share a room that contains two beds.
- Laundry facilities are available onsite, and detergent may be provided. Cadets will not be able to charge incidentals to their room.
- For meals, if you have prescribed dietary restrictions, allergies or food-related accommodations requests, please ensure all of that information is entered and up to date in CAP Health in eServices. This helps us generate a list for our food service providers, where applicable.
- Some Meals may be provided on military installations (DFAC):
    - *Please note that CAP does not have influence over military food service (DFAC) and are unable to make dietary requests to those vendors. The activity staff will be in touch with you to discuss any dietary requests you've entered in CAP Health during the application process.*

ACTIVITY EXPECTATIONS

- National Cadet Special Activities are fun, but intentional learning and career exploration experiences.
- You will be busy with programming from early morning through the evening.
- We expect you to be fully engaged in the activity, with your wingmen, senior staff, guest speakers, and instructors.
- Expect that you will not be on the internet or with regular access to your phone. Set expectations with your friends and family that you will generally not be available by text, email or social media while at this activity.

PRE-COURSEWORK ASSIGNMENTS

All coursework before and during the activity are a Graduation requirement.

- Pre-coursework Essay and Career Dossiers will be assigned after slotting and are required to help prepare you for Space Operations Academy.
- Pre-Coursework Essay and Career Dossiers are **DUE MAY 30TH.**
- **Optional:** Cadets are also strongly encouraged to review Aerospace Dimensions Modules 4 (Rockets), 5 (Space Environments), and 6 (Spacecraft) prior to the activity.

UPDATING CAP HEALTH

You are required to update CAP Health to register. You will be required to update CAP Health within 30 days of the activity start date. Please be sure to include any updates to medical history, and proactively communicate with the Activity Director, especially new injuries. Injuries may not prevent you from attending, but we need to prepare for your arrival and prepare for any assistance.

- **Example:** I'm going to ABC activity, and I recently twisted my ankle. I'm currently on crutches. I should tell the AD (Activity Director) about my injury because this activity involves a lot of walking.

- **Example:** A cadet takes medication that needs to be refrigerated. This information should be included in CAP Health so the HSO (Health Services Officer) understands this need and can have productive conversations with families.

UNIFORM & GROOMING STANDARDS

This is a high-visibility activity held in Space Force, joint military, and civilian facilities. All cadets are expected to maintain proper grooming and professional appearance. In addition to the requirements of CAPR 39-1, the following activity-specific uniform standards are mandatory for all cadets attending SOA-CO:

- No shoulder cords are permitted at this activity.
- Insignia must be up-to-date, serviceable, and worn correctly. Ribbons must match Cadet Rank.
- Haircuts must be clean, conservative, and within CAP standards.
- Footwear must be serviceable, conservative in appearance, and compliant with CAPR 39-1.

National Cadet Special Activities are premier opportunities for cadets to learn, network and grow as youth leaders. At these activities, you represent the Civil Air Patrol. A professional appearance is required. Please ensure that you meet grooming standards per CAPR 39-1 prior to arriving at your activity. **Failure to meet grooming standards will result in your being sent home at your own expense. Activity staff do not have waiver authority.**

PACKING LIST OVERVIEW

A full, detailed packing list will be provided in the **Cadet Handbook** released after slot acceptance. Expect to bring:

- 1 full set of **Short Sleeve Class-B Blues**
- 1 full set of **OCPs** or **ABUs** (1 pair of boots is sufficient)
- 1 set of black pants and/or 1 set of black shorts for designated activities.

- **Government-issued ID** (School IDs and CAP IDs do **not** count) such as Driver License/State ID, US Passport, DOD Issued CAC/Dependent Card. These must be **REAL-ID Compliant**.
- **Spending Money**: All lodging and meals during the activity are included in your tuition. Cadets may choose to bring cash or a debit card for purchases at places such as a Base Exchange or gift shops during tours.

RESTRICTED ITEMS

For safety, security, and professionalism, the following items **are not** permitted at Space Operations Academy – Colorado. Prohibited items may be confiscated or may result in removal from the activity at the discretion of the Activity Director.

- **Weapons or weapon-like items**, including firearms, knives (other than small personal hygiene items), pepper spray, stun devices, or replicas.
- **Alcohol, tobacco, nicotine products**, and **illegal drugs or drug paraphernalia**, including marijuana products (regardless of state law or Cadet being of age).
- **Fireworks, explosives, drones, laser pointers**, or similar devices.
- **Inappropriate or offensive materials** or any item prohibited by CAP regulations, hotel policy, or host installation rules.

Electronic Devices: Devices with Bluetooth, Wi-Fi, cellular data, or internet connectivity (including smartwatches, tablets, laptops, gaming devices, wireless accessories, and cameras) **may be brought but will not be permitted on tours, base visits, or certain scheduled activities and may be secured by staff during those periods.** Medical devices (such as insulin pumps or continuous glucose monitors) are authorized. Due to these restrictions, cadets are ***strongly encouraged to bring only a personal cell phone.***
All medications must be documented in CAP Health and handled in accordance with SOA-CO medical procedures.

ACTIVITY DATES & IMPORTANT TIMELINES

- **Start Date:** 13 June 2026
- **Return Date:** 20 June 2026
- **March 14th:** Slot Acceptance Form & Proof of U.S. Citizenship Due
- **March 31st:** $100 Deposit Due (to secure primary slot)
- **April 30th:** Final Payment Due
- **May 1st:** Travel Itineraries and Graduation Banquet Guests Due (Cadets and Seniors)
- **May 30th:** Pre-Coursework Essay and Career Dossier Due NLT 2359.

PRE-ACTIVITY COMMUNICATION POLICY

The activity staff will communicate with you via email. Please monitor your email and be responsive to anything related to the activity. If we ask you to take an action, we need you to take care of it right away and no later than the stated deadline. Deadlines are there for a reason; please don't be the person that holds up an entire activity.

If you have a different email address that is your primary, please update your eServices profile and Notify the Activity Director Capt. Sandra Alayon immediately with your updated contact information.

Activity staff will communicate directly with cadets regarding all pre-activity requirements via email, Dropbox File Requests, and Google Forms. Each request will include a clear suspense deadline. Failure to meet a deadline, without prior notice to staff, may be interpreted as a lack of interest in attending, and may result in your Squadron Commander or Wing Staff being notified. Continuous lack of response may lead to removal from the activity at the discretion of the Activity Director.

Any pre-activity questions please direct them to our Deputy Director for Operations; Major Alayon, Calayon@cap.gov

GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

Cadets must fulfill the following requirements to be eligible for graduation and to wear the activity patch and NCSA ribbon on their uniform:

- Participate actively in at least 80% of  the course's activities, including being attentive during lectures and contributing meaningfully and regularly to lectures and tours, as judged by the activity staff.
- Successfully complete the **pre-arrival course essay** (with a score of 70% or higher) and/or **team assignment(s).**
- Pass the terminology quiz or the Academy Exam with a minimum score of 70 percent.
- Complete **two Career Dossiers.**
- Demonstrate a high degree of professionalism and commitment to the Core Values throughout the course, as judged by the SOA staff.

GRADUATION CEREMONY

A graduation ceremony and banquet will be held on **Friday, 19 June 2026 at 1900** at the **Radisson Hotel Colorado Springs**, **1645 N Newport Rd, Colorado Springs, CO 80916**.
The ceremony will recognize cadet accomplishments and successful completion of the Space Operations Academy – Colorado.

Authorized Guests: Parents, family members, and friends of participating cadets, as well as senior members assigned to the activity, are authorized to attend.

Uniform:

- **Cadets:** Short-sleeve Class B Blues
- **Senior Members:** Class A Blues (Service Coat) or corporate equivalent, or Business casual attire.
- **Civilian Guests:** Business casual attire

Cadets will receive an **Eventbrite registration link** to register their guests. **All guests must be registered no later than 1 May 2026.** This deadline is firm. **No additional guests may be added after this date**, as all guests must be registered in advance for planning and access purposes.
Attendance at the graduation ceremony is required for all cadets.

The staff and I look forward to a wonderful week and the privilege of sharing this learning opportunity with you.

Sincerely,

Sandra Alayon

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