

DEPARTMENT OF FRANCE

February 2026 - Vol. 24 / Nr. 2



BELGIUM-CHINA 01-DENMARK-ENGLAND-FRANCE-GREECE-GERMANY-IRELAND-ITALY-NETHERLANDS-SPAIN-THAILAND

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Jim Brotherton NL01

CHAPLAIN

Brad Bell NL01

ADJUTANT EMERITUS

Robert Fuelling FR01

DEPARTMENT COMMANDER



Dennis Owens

Greetings Department of France,

Januarys provide us with our yearly Post Officer Training opportunity, we call it the Mid-Winter Conference. This year, on the 24th of January, we held a one day in person and virtual combined Conference in Ramstein. Participation was healthy in person and we averaged about 8 online at most times.

Huge Kudos go out to VCAL Jim Brotherton for organizing it and to James Dennis for hosting it for us. Our instructors did a fantastic job sharing their experiences and knowledge. Who steps into an officer position and already knows everything about that new job??? I do not think many at all.

Also, who has been in that position for many years and thinks they know everything about it? That they cannot be taught anything new, well, I just do not think so. Everyone including long time officers learned a lot.

-Vice Commander Valerie Prehode was next and discussed her experiences in August last year in Legion Headquarters during the Membership Workshop, she even mentioned the National Commander's six priority points.

-Vice Commander Kerwin Hester discussed Basic Training and a bit on the Oratorical. He felt good when his lesson plan was over because he mentioned that he had not taught in a situation like that for 20 or 30 years. He did great!

- I had a chance to cover what an effective Post Adjutant needs to know to be Post Leader.

-Membership Chairman James Dennis Covered Membership and myLegion quite well. I noticed many folks taking notes when he was talking.

-The Rosenhof Hotel near Ramstein setup a very nice lunch for us and we share wonderful camaraderie enjoying that meal. Many Thanks for the Rosenhof Hotel Staff!!!

-Once we returned back to the seminar room, I gave an emotional, for me, briefing on Be The One. It was 1989 when I lost a very close friend of mine, on my Aircrrew who told me he was going to die by suicide, that he had already saved up his pills and that he had already changed his life insurance policy to also include suicide. I did not know what to do, I hugged him and asked him to consider all that he had to live for and let him walk out of my door. I went to the base chaplain the very next day and informed him that I was very concerned for my friend and asked him to check in on him. The next day I heard the news that my friend went through with his plan on ending his life. I was devastated! Most of the Legionnaires in the room raised their hand when asked if they know of a veteran who had died by suicide. Be The One is not a MOTTO, it is a MISSION!!!

-GR06 Past Commander Michael Pierce phoned in from Chicago and gave a great deal of information about Boys State. Thanks Mike! By the Way, it is that time where we need to get our Post nominations and applications to Mike Pierce to attend Boys State.

-Our Department Chaplain Brad Bell gave a very clear and compassionate briefing on the duties of Post Chaplain and also gave us some interesting information on the Four Chaplains who died together going down on the Dorchester after being hit by a German torpedo holding on to each other while singing religious songs after they had given their life jackets to young

soldiers selflessly. Very moving presentation Chaplain!

-Our Department Service Officer Frank Phillips signed on virtually and gave us a informative briefing on Foreign Medical Program (FMP). Since we have no VA overseas, did you know that you can be seen at any medical facility overseas for a Service Connected issue you have and FMP will cover your medical costs?

-And lastly our Department Finance Officer Larry Atkins provided us with a great foundation of how not to get your Post in trouble financially. He also covered what he expects each Post

Finance Officer to do with the IRS, Post Financial Reports and a Financial Audit each year. Also that some of our Posts still do not have a Bank in US Dollars thus making a whole lot of extra work on many people when it comes to National providing the Posts with their PUFL checks once a year. Larry, I can't thank you enough for the time you put into that briefing.

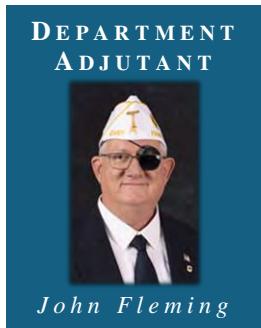
Here are some photos from that event. I fully believe we should do it again next year in Person and Virtual again.

Best wishes,

Commander Dennis

Photos provided of Mid-Winter Conference 2026 by Department Historian Carlos Gonzalez





John Fleming

Department Adjutant's Corner

Greetings Comrades,

Consolidated Post Report (CPR) – is now available on myLegion.org, so please log in and start adding the 2025-2026 Report. This report covers the period 1 June 2025 to 31 May 2026. You can also download a copy of the form if you would like to use it to keep notes of your Posts activities. [CPR](#)

Certification of Officers: Thank you to the Posts who have recently held

elections and sent in the Notification forms. I can add all Post Officers to the Post Officers Roster on myLegion.org. Reminder, after Post elections or a change in Post Officers, it is required to send two forms to the Department Adjutant.

1. Notification of Post/Squadron Commanders & Adjutants: This form must be sent to the Department Adjutant immediately (within 24 hours) after Post elections. The form should be dated the date of the elections/appointment.

2. Post Officer Certification of Service Form: This form has been revised and sent to all Posts. It needs to be forwarded to the Department Adjutant as soon as possible after Post elections (within 15 days). The Effective Date of Election of Appointment is the date of the original election or appointment. For example, if an Officer was elected on 1 May 2023 and reelected on 1 May 2024, the

Effective Date block will show 1 May 2023.

These forms are critical to keep the current Post Officer informed of Department news. If I do not have the correct information, your Post may not receive vital information.

Please contact me for any questions or if you need the forms.

Dates to Remember:

1 February 2026, 1400 CDT, Commanders and Adjutants meeting.

21 March 2026, 1300 CET – 3rd DEC, Golfpark Bachgrund Büttelborn-Worfelden, Im Bachgrund 1, 64572 Büttelborn

18-21 June 2026 – 4th DEC/Convention/1st DEC, Location TBA

Thanks, and best wishes.

John Fleming

Good day, legionaries.

We now have another winter month behind us, before too long we'll be looking at warm weather and sunshine. As we head into February don't forget that significant other in your life on 14 Feb, Valentines Day.

On another note, if you missed our Mid-Winter Conference (MWC) on 24 January, you missed history in the making. We held our first ever, as far as I know, in place MWC, as well as online. I'm proud to say it was a welcome success. We had 18 Legion members attend in person and approximately 8 online. Everyone I talked to say the in-place meeting went well and was very informative. Aside from the meeting itself, our members

were able to enjoy a nice lunch together at the hotel where the meeting was held.

I would like to thank all our speakers who participated, would like to thank you for your time to prepare, attending

in person or online and pass along the information that our members requested. I find the training and briefings that were given were so successful that we may have to explore a larger facility next time we hold this event. Again, thank you all for your participation and/or attendance.

Everyone, please keep in mind that the 3rd DEC will take place in March on

DEPARTMENT VCAL



Jim Brotherton

the 21st, more information will be provided as we move forward. I can say it looks like the DEC will take place at the Golfpark Bachgrund Büttelborn-Worfelden im Bachgrund 1, 64572 Buttelborn Germany

Jim Brotherton
Vice Commander at Large

Black History Month is an annual celebration of achievements by African Americans and a time for recognizing their central role in U.S. history. Since 1976, every U.S. president has officially designated the month of February as Black History Month.

If you are traveling during February – or any other month – consider making a stop at one of these sites to learn about the long history of Black military experience in the United States.

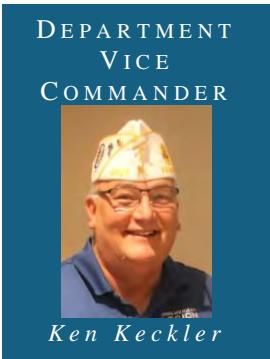
African American Civil War Memorial & Museum, Washington, D.C.

African American Medal of Honor Recipients Memorial, Wilmington, Del.

African American Military History Museum, Hattiesburg, Miss.

African American Veterans Monument, Buffalo, N.Y.

Buffalo Soldiers National Museum, Houston.



Location and Schedule Update for the 2026 American Legion Oratorical Contest.



THE AMERICAN LEGION Oratorical Contest

Dear Students, Parents, and Educators, On behalf of the American Legion Eifel Post GR20, I am writing to provide you with comprehensive details regarding the upcoming 2026 American Legion Department Oratorical Contest. As many of you are aware, our goal is to provide a platform where young leaders can demonstrate their speaking abilities and their knowledge of the United States Constitution. To ensure the best possible environment for our contestants and to resolve recent scheduling conflicts with Spangdahlem High School, we have finalized a new venue and timeline for the event. Please review the following information carefully to ensure you arrive at the correct location on time.

Event Logistics and Timing

To allow for proper setup, sound checks, and contestant briefings, we ask that all participants adhere strictly to the following schedule:

Date: Saturday, March 14, 2026

Registration Begins: 11:00 AM

Contest Commencement: 12:00 PM (Noon) prompt

Venue Location

The contest will be hosted at our community location in Gindorf. Please ensure your GPS or transportation arrangements are updated for the following address:

Bademerstr. 1a 54657

Gindorf Germany

Why the Change?

Due to conflicting schedules and facility overlaps at Spangdahlem High School, we have relocated the contest to Gindorf. Our priority is to provide a quiet, professional, and dignified atmosphere where our orators can speak without distraction. This venue offers the necessary space for both the prepared orations and the private consultation required for the assigned topic discourse.

About the Contest Requirements

The American Legion Oratorical Contest exists to develop a deeper knowledge and appreciation of the Constitution of the United States among high school students.

1. The Prepared Oration:

Participants will deliver a researched speech (8 to 10 minutes in length) on an aspect of the Constitution, emphasizing the duties and obligations of a citizen to our government.

Assigned Topics for 2026 Oratorical Contest:

Amendment IV The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no Warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause, supported by Oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized.

Article III Section 3. Treason against the United States, shall consist only in levying War against them, or in adhering to their Enemies, giving them Aid and Comfort. No Person shall be

convicted of Treason unless on the Testimony of two Witnesses to the same overt Act, or on Confession in open Court.

The Congress shall have Power to declare the Punishment of Treason, but no Attainder of Treason shall work Corruption of Blood, or Forfeiture except during the Life of the Person attainted.

Article IV Section 4. The United States shall guarantee to every State in this Union a Republican Form of Government, and shall protect each of them against Invasion; and on Application of the Legislature, or of the Executive (when the Legislature cannot be convened) against domestic Violence.

Article VI Clause 3. The Senators and Representatives before mentioned, and the Members of the several State Legislatures, and all executive and judicial Officers, both of the United States and of the several States, shall be bound by Oath or Afirmation, to support this Constitution; but no religious Test shall ever be required as a Qualification to any Ofice or public Trust under the United States.

Support and Attendance

We are incredibly proud of the hard work these students have put into their research and delivery. We strongly encourage family members, peers, and mentors to attend and support these impressive young citizens as they compete for the opportunity to advance to the next level of the competition. If you have any questions regarding directions to the Gindorf location, parking, or specific contest rules, please do not hesitate to contact me directly.

Sincerely,

Ken Keckler Oratorical Chairman
American Legion Eifel Post GR20
And least but not Last... Volunteers!!!
Judges, Time Keepers, Ushers, escorts, ect...
Are needed, so if you have time please call me and let me know...

REMINDER...ALL NEWSLETTER ARTICLES SHOULD BE TURNED IN BY THE END OF THE MONTH. I WOULD PREFER IF YOU SENT IT IN WORD FORMAT, PDF WOULD ALSO DO. GET THE WORD OUT!

Davidg1959@t-online.de

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**DEPARTMENT
NEWSLETTER
EDITOR**



David N. Greaux

**DEPARTMENT
VICE
COMMANDER**



Kerwin L. Hester

Brothers, Sisters, and Comrades, I want to extend my heartfelt gratitude to everyone who

participated in the Mid-Winter Conference, whether you joined us online or in person. Your presence made a significant impact, and I appreciate the fantastic turnout we achieved. A special shoutout goes to our I.T. team for their outstanding support, and a big thank you to VCAL Jim Brotherton for his exceptional organization of the event. I also want to acknowledge our speakers: Department Commander Owens, Dept. Adjutant Fleming, Dept. Chaplain Bell, Dept. Finance Officer Atkins, VSO Phillips, and VC Prehoda. Your contributions

"Greetings from frosty Monchy-Cayeux to all our DFR comrades-in-arms..."

First off, if I haven't already shouted this out - "Happy new Year of the Horse" to one and all! Being a horse person, this makes me very happy, and I just have this feeling that 2026 will be a great year for all of us.

Second, I want to congratulate "my" posts EG01, IR02, IR03, TH01, and TH02 for meeting or exceeding 100% of our 2026 membership goals to date. EG02 and NL01 are right there as well, so to all of you working so diligently for our membership, my cap's off to you, and keep up your great work. URAH!

Lastly, I'd like to take this opportunity to provide you all with the highlights of my MWC National Membership Workshop presentation, which may

serve as a recap for those hard chargers who attended, and those who couldn't.

Having never attended such an event at National, I was impressed with the overwhelming positive energy of purpose and camaraderie I experienced there. It was highly gratifying to witness - I encourage any of you all to attend one or more of National's workshops and/or conventions...you'll come away with lasting motivation, I guarantee!!!

My biggest takeaways, besides the above, were the opportunity to become familiar with our TAL Membership & Post Activities Committee's "21st Century Strategic Plan". I found it to be concise, germane, and actionable, and I encourage all of you to look it up...I'll be happy to send a pdf

were invaluable, and I am grateful for the encouragement I received during and after my presentation. Looking ahead, we have some important events on the horizon for the department. We will need volunteers for the Department Oratorical, with more details to follow. Additionally, the 3rd DEC will take place at my post home, GR05. The organizing committee will share further information soon. Thank you for your time, and let us continue to serve for God and Country.

**DEPARTMENT
VICE
COMMANDER**



Valerie Prehoda

to anyone who would rather get it that way.

With our very own Doug Haggan, I got the chance to meet with the (now) National Commander, Dan Wiley. I found him to be highly focused, mission-oriented, personable, and fit both mentally and physically for the position. which made me feel comfortable under his leadership.

Final thoughts on the Workshop: Since returning from Indianapolis (several

months ago already!) I have reflected on the Workshop's impact on me personally. To reiterate, I was amazed to experience the patriotism and mission focus of the attendees, which in turn has turned up the gas under my keester, so to speak!! It made me proud to be a Legionnaire, and especially a DFR Legionnaire, because of the unique extent of our international reach.

And finally, my thoughts on our MWC: Kudos to our indefatigable VCAL for pulling off a very successful mission!!!

In every interesting session, I added to my repertoire of knowledge that serves

to make me more useful to our membership. And I was immensely motivated by the initiative of several attendees, who wish to participate in my "250 Challenge" project of constructing and dedicating a memorial to Lt. Wilson, the first MIA hero I was honored to help bring home, and by extension, to honor all our remaining MIA/POWs. My goal is to "git 'er done" on or about 19 Sept 26

(POW/MIA Day), here in Monchy-Cayeux, overlooking the field where "Frankie" as his family called him, deliberately crashed his exploding B-17 after his crew bailed, so as miss the village. We call it "Frankie's Field" now. I encourage you all to "google" or Facebook page "Finding George" and you'll understand my passion for this project.

Semper Fi, and see you in March at our 3rd DEC!!"

DEPARTMENT RIDERS DIRECTOR



Jim Brotherton

Good Day Riders.

We have not yet made it to the riding weather, but you can almost see it from

here. The only thing I have for you is some information concerning an upcoming Motorcycle show.

The Netherlands will hold their annual motorcycle show, 19-22 February in Utrecht. This is the largest Bike show in the Netherlands and possibly all of Europe. If it has anything to do with motorcycles, new or used, motorcycle touring, camping, equipment or clothing, you will find it there. Along with that there are several excellent

demonstrations and stunt riding. It is even possible to test ride a limited selection of motorcycles. I've seen everything from Harleys, Indians to BMW's available.

If you Google or search 'motorbeurs Utrecht' you will be able to find any information you need or are looking for, check it out. Everyone take care and when you ride, ride safely.

Jim Brotherton



American Legion posts nationwide remember Four Chaplains Day with memorial services that pay tribute to the courageous chaplains and the brave young men who lost their lives when the Dorchester tragically sunk on Feb. 3, 1943, while crossing the North Atlantic, transporting troops to an American base in Greenland.

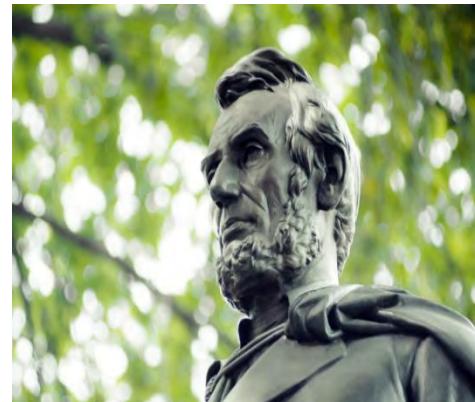
[View a guide to honoring the Four Chaplains.](#)

Lincoln's Birthday - 12 February 2026

Some states observe the day as part of [Presidents' Day](#), which is officially known as Washington's Birthday.

Various activities such as re-enactments, concerts and birthday parties are often organized for the day. Organizations such as the Indiana Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission, Kentucky Lincoln Heritage Trail, and the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum often plan large-scale events to honor and remember Lincoln on or around his birthday.

A wreath-laying ceremony and reading of the Gettysburg Address at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington DC are traditional events on February 12. Republican Party members may also hold Lincoln Day fundraising dinners because he is known as the first president of the Republican Party.



Here are some Pictures I took when I was in the States in June 2024, at Ft. Jackson S.C., at the Chaplains Museum. Visiting where my career began. This is from the briefing of the Dept. Chaplain when he was telling us of the Four Chaplains. I recommend to anyone if you are in the Columbia S.C. Area and are interested in the Chaplains History, it's on Ft. Jackson Bldg. 10100. Take care. Cmdr. GR01 David Garcia.



RHEIN NECKAR POST GR03

HEIDELBERG, GERMANY

The meeting with Post Commander GR03 Gerdeman and Department Vice Commander Hester included discussion of current membership status and P.O. status. Other members present were Adjutant Ed Sherman and Private Organization Chairman Henry Johnson.



14 February 2026

In the US, Valentine's Day is a celebration of love and affection shared among romantic partners, family members, friends, and other loved ones. Today, the holiday is largely secular in nature. It is strongly associated with romantic love and the exchange of Valentine's Day cards and gifts.

GR 79 JOHN WAYNE POST HEILBRONN



Valentines Dinner

There will be a Valentines dinner that will be held on February 14, 2026 at the post home in Kirchhausen Steinbrünnleswiessen 1 74078 Heilbronn - Kirchhausen (Euro 30) for Adults or our Early Bird Ticket Price of (Euro 25) if purchased by January 24 2026 be €25 per person that wish to attend. Time 14.00
If you plan to attend I need to know as soon as possible in order to coordinate everything with the gasthaus.

POC Past Commander Charlie Brown
H-01701888034 Email—vcalbrown50@gmail.com

U.S. Army Col. James Turner, assigned to Multi-Domain Command – Europe, walks with the members of the American Legion Veterans Association to the memorial ceremony in Heilbronn, Germany, Jan. 11, 2026. The ceremony honored three Soldiers who died after a Pershing II missile explosion.



GR79 Bowling Night



National Freedom Day commemorates the Lincoln, who was the nation's president at proposed the 13th amendment to the United States Constitution. The amendment was made to outlaw slavery and was ratified on December 18, 1865. Major Richard Robert Wright Senior, a former slave who founded the National Freedom Day Association, played a crucial role in creating the observance. Major Wright was deemed as a community leader in Philadelphia and was active in education, the media, business and politics. He hoped to see a day that would be dedicated to celebrating freedom for all Americans.



The first commemoration of such a day took place on February 1, 1942, although it was not made into law yet. A tradition of laying a wreath at Liberty Bell also began. On June 30, 1948, President Harry Truman signed a bill to proclaim February 1 as the first official National Freedom Day in the United States.

DETACHMENT COMMANDER



John Fleming

DETACHMENT OF FRANCE



DETACHMENT ADJUTANT



James Dennis

Hello Comrades,

Consolidated Squadron Report (CSR) – is now available on myLegion.org, so please log in and start adding the 2025-2026 Report. This report covers the period 1 June 2025 to 31 May 2026. You can also download a copy of the form if you would like to use it to keep notes of your Posts activities. [CSR](#)

of our 2026 Goal of 167! Please talk to your Squadron members and ask them to renew. Please talk to your Post members to see if they are eligible. If your Post does not have a Squadron, contact the closest Squadron or the Squadron of your choice and sign up. Talk to family members and sign them up. The Department has over 3000 Members. The Detachment should have at least that many.

Upcoming Events:

7 March 2026 – 3rd DEC, 1100 CET, Lunch, 1300 CET Meeting at Gasthaus Licht & Luft, Entersweilerstr 51, 67657 Kaiserslautern
6 June 2026 – 4th DEC/Conference/1st DEC, hosted by Kaiserslautern Squadron GR01

John Fleming
Detachment Commander

PCC President



Jim Brotherton

Department of France Past Commanders Club 2026MY

**Who is eligible to join the Department of France
Past Commanders Club?**

PCC Secretary



Richard Simmons

Past and Present Department Commanders, Department Vice Commanders At Large, Department Vice Commanders, Post Commanders, SAL Detachment Commanders, SAL Squadron Commanders, Auxiliary Department Presidents, Auxiliary Unit Presidents... so if you were just voted into the office, you are eligible to join

Initial dues for the Past Commanders Club is only \$25.00 / Renewal dues for the Past Commanders Club is only \$10.00

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GRAND CHEF DE GARE

DAVID GARCIA

GRAND DU GERMANY**GRAND CORRESPONDANT**

DAVID GREAUX

LA SOCIÉTÉ DES QUARANTE HOMMES ET HUIT CHEVAUX (THE SOCIETY OF FORTY MEN AND EIGHT HORSES) IS AN INDEPENDENT, BY INVITATION, HONOR SOCIETY OF AMERICAN VETERANS, MORE COMMONLY KNOWN AS "THE FORTY & EIGHT".

THE FORTY & EIGHT IS COMMITTED TO CHARITABLE AND PATRIOTIC AIMS. OUR PURPOSE IS TO UPHOLD AND DEFEND THE UNITED STATES CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES, TO PROMOTE THE WELL-BEING OF VETERANS, THEIR WIDOWS, WIDOWERS, AND ORPHANS, AND TO ACTIVELY PARTICIPATE IN SELECTED CHARITABLE ENDEAVORS, WHICH INCLUDE AMONG OTHERS, PROGRAMS THAT PROMOTE CHILD WELFARE AND NURSES TRAINING.

MEMBERSHIP IS BY INVITATION, AND OPEN ONLY TO HONORABLY DISCHARGED VETERANS AND HONORABLY SERVING MEMBERS OF THE UNITED STATES ARMED



Chef de Gare Garcia (L) presents Grand Cheminot Preston a Nationale Certificate of Appreciation for Membership



Grand Cheminot Preston (R) presents Chef de Gare Garcia a Nationale Certificate of Appreciation as Grand Chef for the 2025 Membership Year

<http://www.fortyandeight.org/>

DATE TO REMEMBER: 23 May 2026 – Grande Elections – GR01 Post Home, Kaiserslautern

PRESIDENTS DAY

February 16, 2026

On this federal holiday, Legion Family members honor all those who have served as president of the United States.

AMERICAN LEGION

Reach VETERANS in Crisis...

- ★ **ASK** how they're doing
- ★ **LISTEN** when they need to talk
- ★ **REACH OUT** when they're struggling

BETHEONE.ORG

AMERICANISM MONTH

See American Legion youth programs



Americanism

...is an unfailing love of Country; loyalty to its institutions and ideals; eagerness to defend it against all enemies, undivided allegiance to the flag; and a desire to secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and posterity

Men and women returning from all quarters of the globe stand before our altars of comradeship, pledging loyalty to the Nation and to one another. Through the generations we give life to our impressive ritual, for it solemnly binds young and old who have fought for America on land, on sea and in the air

This Newsletter approved by the American Legion, Department of France Department Commander