



John Hayes

D-2491

COL(R) John Hayes, 97 of Hayes, Virginia passed away on January 28th, 2026. John's storied military career began in 1950 during the Korean War where he served as a commander of infantry and armor units. In 1952, John volunteered for the newly created 10th SFG(A). He would serve two tours with the 10th (Ft. Bragg, and Bad Toelz). In 1955, he was reassigned to the 77th SFG(A). John joined the 5th SFG(A) in Vietnam in 1966 and served with Project Delta (B-52), A Company, and as acting commander of CCN. John returned stateside after serving five years in Vietnam. He retired from active duty in 1983 after 33 years of service. His incredible list of awards and decorations include The Silver Star (3 OLC), The Legion of Merit (4 OLC), the Distinguished Flying Cross (2 OLC), the Soldier's Medal (1 OLC), the Bronze Star (12 OLC), The Purple Heart (5 OLC), the Army Commendation Medal (5 OLC), the Air Medal (Number 38), the Combat Infantryman's Badge (w/Star), and the Master Parachutist's Badge. After retiring from active duty, John worked for 13 years as a Program Manager at TRADOC. He is survived by his wife Wiyada. A funeral service was held at the Hogg Funeral Home in Gloucester, Virginia on February 4th, 2026. Interment is at the Peninsula Memorial Park, Newport News, Virginia.

COL(R) John G. Hayes

January 28, 2026 (Age 97)

Hayes, Virginia

Special Forces (MACV-SOG, CCN Acting Cmdr, SOG HQ Opns and Training Div)

SFA Mem# D-2491

SOA Mem# D-974

Retired Army Colonel John G. Hayes, 97, born March 5, 1928, at Tripler Army Hospital, Honolulu, died on Wednesday, January 28, 2026, in Hayes, Virginia. He was preceded in death by his parents, William P. Hayes and Ceola Hayes, and brothers William P. Hayes and Robert H. Hayes. He is survived by his beloved and caring wife, Wiyada "Paula", his sister-in-law Betty Edwards Hayes, and his niece Elizabeth McBurney Hayes. John retired from the Army in 1982 after 33 years of service.

He had served two years in the Korean War, commanding infantry and armor units. His five years in Vietnam included setting up and training the first Vietnamese Ranger Battalion, command of Operation Delta with its Special Forces reconnaissance and interdiction units, and as Commander 1st Brigade, 9th Infantry Division. During his career, he earned numerous awards and citations, including four Silver Stars, five Legion of Merit medals, three Distinguished Flying Crosses, two Soldiers Medals (for risking his life to save soldiers in non-combat situations), 13 Bronze Stars, six Purple Hearts, 38 Air Medals, and six Army Commendation Medals. He also earned the Master Parachutist Badge and two awards of the Combat Infantryman Badge, along with multiple awards and badges awarded by several allied countries.

John's university studies were at VMI (49B) and at the University of New Mexico. His military education consisted of various combat-related courses as well as the Command and General Staff College and the Industrial College of the Armed Forces. After retiring from the Army, he worked 13 years in civil service, part of which was as Program Manager for TRADOC actions with the Italian and Israeli Armies, followed by an assignment facilitating the planning and construction of firing ranges worldwide. After retiring from Civil Service, John and his wife enjoyed traveling at home and abroad, and he spent much of his time reading and studying military history and geopolitical issues. He also enjoyed playing poker. The visitation will be held at Hogg Funeral Home on Wednesday, February 4, 2026, from 10:00 – 10:45 am, followed by the chapel service at 11:00, officiated by the Reverend Sven vanBaars, followed by interment in Peninsula Memorial Park at 1:00 pm with full military honors. In memory of our loved one, memorial contributions may be made to the Gloucester-Mathews Humane Society at P.O. Box 385 , Gloucester, VA 23061, to The Children's Hospital of the King's Daughters, CHKD Philanthropy Office, PO Box 2156, Norfolk, VA 23501-2156, or to Abingdon Episcopal Church, P.O. Box 82, White Marsh, VA 23183. Condolences may be registered online at <https://www.hoggfh.com/obituaries/Retired-Army-Colonel-John-Jack-Grier-Hayes?obId=47106698> . Services under the direction of Hogg Funeral Home and Crematory.