

RAO

BULLETIN

1 July 2017

PDF Edition



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1. The page number on which an article can be found is provided to the left of each article's title
2. Numbers contained within brackets [] indicate the number of articles written on the subject. To obtain previous articles send a request to raoemo@sbcglobal.net.

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Cyber Defense ► 3 Ways DARPA Will Attack The Cyber Problem

During a keynote presentation June 14 at the Defensive Cyber Operations Symposium in Baltimore, Steven Walker, acting director of the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, outlined three research areas his organization is focusing on in cyber.

- 1) **Hardening systems against attacks.** Walker referenced the Cyber Grand Challenge that was held last August as an example that could represent a paradigm shift in the way cyber is currently thought of. The challenge, he said, sought to defend a network and counterattack an adversarial network in a matter of minutes without human intervention — essentially machines versus machines in virtual capture the flag. This changes the idea of zero-day exploits and causes one to think in zero-second or zero-minute exploits, he said, given that the current timeline to close vulnerabilities in systems can run as high as 300 days, a timeline Walker called unacceptable. Systems that participated in the challenge automatically identified and addressed software flaws, maintained operations, and scanned the Cyber Grand Challenge network to identify exploits and vulnerabilities in the other systems. The next step is to evolve the experiment into an operational capability.
- 2) **Operating through cyberattacks.** DARPA is developing technologies to rapidly detect and isolate attacks on the electric power grid. This is occurring under a program called Rapid Attack Detection, Isolation and Characterization Systems, or RADICS, to develop technology that can quickly restore power to the grid following a fatal cyberattack.
- 3) **Winning in the cyber domain.** One such solution in this vein is the Plan X tool, which is a first-generation cyber mission framework tool to enable mission commanders, planners and operators to collaborate, understand, plan and manage cyber operations in real time against large-scale and dynamic network environments at both tactical and strategic levels. For commanders who might not be tech-savvy,

being able to understand and even visualize what cyber effects can bring to their campaign plan is critical. Plan X gets at this. Walker told C4ISRNET following his presentation that DARPA is looking to transition Plan X to Army Cyber Command but was not sure on the exact timeline, only offering a memorandum of agreement is being developed. During a briefing with reporters in February, Maj. Gen. Patricia Frost, who heads the Army's cyber directorate within the G-3/5/7 that tucks cyber, electronic warfare and information operations into one office, explained that they were still working closely with Plan X, describing it as a critical partner for looking at visuals.

Walker also outlined two additional programs his office is working on to help win in the cyber domain. The Enhanced Attribution program seeks to make adversary and individual cyber operator actions transparent by providing visibility into all aspects of malicious cyber actions. The Net Defense program has developed algorithms and data analysis tools that allow cyber situational awareness for identifying illicit behavior in networks and this is the program that, he said, they see now transitioning to Cyber Command. [Source: <http://www.c4isrnet.com> | Mark Pomerleau | June 14, 2017 ++]

Selective Service System Update 25 ► New Women Draft Attempt Shot Down

House lawmakers on 28 JUN turned aside a new attempt to require women to register with the Selective Service, arguing that any changes should wait on a review of the entire draft system. The move came as part of the House Armed Services Committee's debate on the annual defense authorization bill. Rep. Jackie Speier (D-CA) pushed for the amendment to add women to the military draft as an issue of fairness. "It's time to stop delaying the inevitable with parliamentary gymnastics," she said. "If it does come to a draft, men and women should be treated equally."

Under current law, all men ages 18 to 26 are required to register for possible involuntary military service with the Selective Service System. Women have always been exempt, and past legal challenges have pointed to restrictions placed on their military service as a reason for their exclusion. But in the last year defense officials have opened up numerous combat jobs to women, which advocates say eliminates the need for exempting women from the draft.

The committee approved similar language last year during its authorization debate, but Republican leaders stripped the language from the measure on the House floor. Senate planners supported the idea but dropped the issue during negotiations between the two chambers. House Armed Services Committee Chairman Mac Thornberry (R-TX) said he opposed Speier's latest push because lawmakers last year did include language requiring a review of the entire Selective Service System, arguing those findings could render any other changes irrelevant. [Source: MilitaryTimes | Leo Shane III | June 28, 2017 ++]

DoD/VA Seamless Transition Update 36 ► New Integrated EHR System Impact

An administrator with the Greenville VA Health Care Center said he hopes to see the numbers of veteran suicides diminish following an announcement earlier this month that the VA will adopt the same electronic health record system as the Department of Defense. "Currently, 20 veterans commit suicide per day, according to official government data," Greenville VA Health Care Center Associate Administrator Jonathan Forte said. "Among those, 14 never receive care within the VA."

The record of care vets may have received does not carry with them to the VA system, Forte said. "The biggest impact we're going to see with the new integrated EHR system is the transfer of the historical data of the service member's active record into VA health care, and we're hoping their mental health care record will come with that

and help us reduce the numbers of suicides. The decision to integrate systems will present an opportunity to achieve a stronger partnership between DOD and VA health information systems, according to Sen. Thom Tillis (R-NC) chairman of the Armed Services Subcommittee on Personnel. The integration helps streamline the transition period for veterans entering the VA medical system, giving VA providers a full clinical picture of the veteran's medical history, Tillis said in a prepared statement. "I applaud the VA for taking action to directly address the longstanding electronic records issue that has plagued the VA to the detriment of our veterans," Tillis said.

The VA currently uses a health record system known as the Veterans Health Information Systems and Technology Architecture, or VistA. The system was developed internally beginning in the 1970s and rolled out in the 1990s Forte said. It has been internally beneficial to the VA and its patients nationwide, resulting in a decrease in cost per patient and the number of employees needed to deal with the patient population and a 70 percent increase in the number of patients the VA system could accommodate, he said. "VistA isn't broken, but having full integration with DOD is going to greatly enhance the care we can provide to our veterans," Forte said. A system modernization will allow the VA to keep pace with improvements in health information technology and cybersecurity, department administrators said. The VA's adoption of the same commercial EHR system as DOD will ultimately result in all patient data residing in one common system and enable seamless care between the departments, U.S. Secretary of Veterans Affairs David J. Shulkin's in his announcement.

The system also must meet Shulkin's challenge to improve integration with academic affiliates and community partners, many of whom are on different commercial IT platforms, Forte said. The Greenville center's physicians are building a growing training relationship with East Carolina University's Brody School of Medicine and Allied Health Sciences College, Vidant Medical Center and other community health care partners, he said. More than 70 percent of all U.S. medical students rotate through a VA medical center at some point during their training. The VA center in Greenville is no different, Forte said. "We have a close strategic relationship and meet regularly with ECU officials to talk about how we can better collaborate to provide better educational and research opportunities among their future physicians, nurses and allied health professionals, as well as in their schools of public health and health systems management," Forte said. "More importantly, we also rely on them to help our veterans."

Forte believes the political will exists now to make the new system work. "For the first time in a long time, there is a strategic alignment of the VA secretary, Congress and the president who all are willing to get things done together for veterans," Forte said. "The secretary is willing to take bold action to improve the services we provide for veterans." [Source: The Daily Reflector | Michael Abramowitz | June 22, 2017 ++]

BRAC Update 58 ► Congress' Blockage Impact

Forty-five leading defense experts, think tank leaders and advocacy group officials are calling on Congress to allow the Pentagon to close excess military bases. "The time to act is now," they wrote in an open letter to the House and Senate Armed Services committees released 19 JUN. "Congress should grant our military the authority to eliminate waste and ensure that vital defense resources flow to where they are most needed." The letter was organized by Chris Preble, vice president of defense and foreign policy studies at the libertarian-leaning Cato Institute. The letter was signed by experts from across the political spectrum.

The Trump administration has requested that Congress authorize the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) procedure, saying the Pentagon has about 20 percent excess infrastructure capacity. A BRAC round could save an estimated \$2 billion by 2027, the administration says. Last week during hearings on the budget, Defense Secretary James Mattis argued for BRAC by showing that the money saved could be put into new hardware. "Over a five-year period, that would be enough to buy 300 Apache attack helicopters, 120 F-18s Super Hornets or four Virginia-class submarines," he said. But Pentagon leaders have for years requested a new round of BRAC as a way to save money, while Congress has repeatedly prohibited it in defense policy and spending bills. Lawmakers worry about the

economic effects of the closures on their communities, as well as the upfront costs of a BRAC round outweighing future savings.

In their letter, the defense experts sought to rebut both arguments. The experts said keeping unneeded or underused facilities open does more harm to communities than BRAC. They cited a letter last year from Deputy Defense Secretary Robert Work that said that, in the absence of BRAC, the Pentagon is making cuts at all installations. “Without BRAC, local communities' ability to plan and adapt to these changes is less robust and offers fewer protections than under BRAC law,” Work wrote in the letter. On the second point, the experts said savings from BRAC start almost immediately, despite the upfront costs. The 1990 BRAC saw savings in the first year, as did the 1992 BRAC. “Today, the first four BRAC rounds together are producing annual recurring savings of around \$7 billion,” the experts wrote. “Even the much-criticized 2005 BRAC — which focused mostly on realignment of functions at existing facilities, and closed far fewer bases than in preceding rounds — is producing nearly \$5 billion in annual savings.”

As Congress blocks BRAC, the military has been forced to cut training and equipment to maintain unneeded or unwanted facilities, the experts concluded. “BRAC has proven to be a fair and efficient process for making the difficult but necessary decisions related to the configuration of our military’s infrastructure,” the wrote. “In the absence of a BRAC, defense communities are hurting. Although members of Congress have blocked base closures with the intent of helping these communities, they are actually making the problem worse.” [Source: The Hill | Rebecca Kheel | Junr 19, 2017 ++]

CRSC Update 44 ► Are you Eligible for this DoD Retired Vet Program?

Have you heard about a retired veteran’s program called Combat-Related Special Compensation (CRSC)? If you haven’t, don’t worry, you are not alone. If you are familiar with CRSC, it’s likely you’re still not sure if you qualify or how retired veterans can apply for this benefit. To shed light on the program, the Army CRSC office at Fort Knox, Kentucky offers the following helpful tips and information.

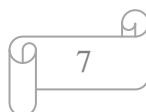
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Potential applicants should understand that CRSC is a Department of Defense (DOD) program, not a Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) program, and is authorized under 10 U.S. Code § 1413a. CRSC is a form of concurrent receipt paid monthly to eligible military retirees. In other words, CRSC restores military retired pay that is offset when a retiree accepts compensation from the VA for a disability or condition that can be directly linked to a combat-related event as defined by the CRSC DOD program guidance. The CRSC benefit allows eligible retirees to concurrently receive an amount equal to or less than their length of service retirement pay and their VA disability compensation. Retirees must meet all of the following criteria to be eligible for CRSC:

- Must be retired and receiving military retired pay.
- VA must have awarded 10 percent or greater service connected disability for a condition that meets the combat related definition as defined by CRSC DOD program guidance.
- Must have a VA waiver (VA Form 21-651, MAR 2005) in place for by-law reduction of military retired pay in the amount of the VA disability payment.
- Eligible retiree categories include those who have 20 or more years of service, or a medical retirement under Chapter 61, Temporary Early Retirement Act (TERA), or Temporary Disabled Retirement List (TDRL).

A combat-related injury is one that can be attributed to:

- Simulated war training (e.g., combat obstacle course)
- Hazardous duty (e.g., underwater diving, parachute duty)



- Instrumentality of war (e.g., military vehicle rollover during a training mission)
- Presumptive Disabilities (e.g., agent orange, mustard gas)
- Armed conflict (e.g., gunshot wounds, shrapnel wounds, punji stick injuries)

Due to the volume of applications received, the Army’s CRSC program is experiencing an average 10-month claims processing cycle. CRSC applicants should note that an uncorroborated statement in a record that a disability is combat-related will not be considered determinative for purposes of meeting combat-related program standards; documentation verifying the cause of the disability is required. The CRSC program validates your submitted information against your personnel records, available military medical and VA records in making eligibility determinations. Therefore, you only need to submit those documents that directly support your claim that are not already found in your official record. Submitting non-related documentation (i.e., your entire medical history) will only slow the process and increase your wait-time. Finally, electronic submittal is the best, lowest cost, and most efficient way for you to submit your claim.

For more information on CRSC, including how and where to submit an application, visit the Human Resources Command website at <https://www.hrc.army.mil/content/CRSC> , call toll free (866)281-3254 (Mon - Fri / 0800-1800 hours), or email CRSC questions to askhrc.army@us.army.mil . [Source: Army Echoes | JUN-SEP 2017 ++]

DoD/VA VLER Update 12 ► Authorization Needed to Share Your Records

Connecting your docs with the Veterans Health Information Exchange (VHIE), also known as the Virtual Lifetime Electronic Record (VLER) Health program shares important parts of your Veteran health record between the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and your community health care providers who participate in this program. This allows your health care providers to access important information about your health and provide you the best possible care. This exchange occurs over a secure and private network known as the eHealth Exchange. Watch the video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S4qVkr2U40w> to learn more. This program is free and voluntary for Veterans, but VA needs your consent to share your health records. To download VA Form 10-0485 go to <https://www.va.gov/vaforms/medical/pdf/10-0485-fill.pdf>. If you have technical difficulties, call 1-800-983-0937 for assistance. If you have not already joined, you must first sign up on the eBenefits website <https://www.ebenefits.va.gov>. [Source: U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs | June 21, 2017 ++]

Air Force Space Corps ► USAF Leaders Say 'Not good for Much'

The nation does not need a new armed service specializing in space, the leaders of the Air Force said 21 JUN in rejecting a House Armed Services Committee plan. In fact, they said, carving a “Space Corps” out of the Air Force — which handles most space missions today — would only make it harder to integrate space operations with warfare in the air, cyberspace, land, and sea. “The Pentagon is complicated enough,” Air Force Secretary Heather Wilson told reporters. “This will make it more complex, add more boxes to the organization chart, and cost more money. And if I had more money, I would put it into lethality, not bureaucracy....I don’t need another chief of staff and another six deputy chiefs of staff.”

The brainchild of Strategic Forces Subcommittee Chairman Mike Rogers said the HASC proposal would create the Space Corps as its own service with its own Chief of Staff sitting on the Joint Chiefs. The new Space Corps would be a separate uniformed service from the Air Force but would report to the civilian Air Force Secretary, who would oversee both Air Force and Space Corps acquisition. That’s similar to the longstanding arrangement whereby the Marine Corps is a separate service from the Navy but reports to the Navy Secretary. The Navy-Marine model

proves such arrangements can work — but then the sea services have had since 1798 to work out the many bugs. “We need to simplify, not make it more complicated and bureaucratic,” Wilson summed up.



Air Force Secretary Heather Wilson

The Air Force Chief of Staff, Gen. David Goldfein, focused on the operational downsides. “If you’re saying the word ‘separate’ and ‘space’ in the same sentence, you’re moving in the wrong direction,” he said. “The secretary and I are focused how do we integrate space.” Making a separate Space Corps would complicate life not just for the Air Force, but for the Army, Navy, and Marines as well, Goldfein emphasized. “Every mission we perform in the United States military is dependent on space,” he said. “Now is not the time to build seams and segregate or separate. Now’s the time to further integrate.” Goldfein is one of the military’s most senior advocates of multi-domain operations, in which new networks, doctrine, and training allow US forces in all five domains — air, sea, land, space, and cyberspace — to seamlessly combine their efforts, overwhelming the enemy from all directions. That’s hard enough with four armed services to coordinate: It would even harder with five, Goldfein and Wilson agreed.

Space Corps advocates would argue that space is too important not to have its own service. Just as the increasing importance of air warfare finally pushed the US to split the Air Force from the Army in 1947 — a generation after most European powers had done so — the growing threat of war in space requires us to split a Space Corps from the Air Force. Once seen as an adjunct to operations on Earth, as a matter for engineering rather than military art, space is increasingly seen as its own domain of combat, where advanced adversaries like Russia and China can attack our vital satellites.

Goldfein argues now is not the time to split off a Space Corps precisely because the nature of war in space is changing. “Right now, we’re in this transition period, (moving from) looking at space (as) this benign environment in which you sense, monitor, and report, to a warfighting domain where you’ve got to fight and win to gain space superiority,” Goldfein said. “Right now as we’re making this transition, to get us anchored into a discussion about the organizational chart, while we’re right now trying to improve lethality and warfighting going forward, quite frankly would slow us down.” Instead, the Air Force is working to enhance space operations within the current structure, for example by creating a new section of the Air Force staff, a 3-star deputy chief of staff for space designated the A-11.

“We announced a reorganization last week in the Air Force that integrates, elevates, and normalizes space operations, and that’s the direction we want to go,” Wilson said. (The idea was announced in April but the specifics were only settled recently, she clarified). “There’s one other thing,” Wilson added. “This budget increases space funding by 20 percent. The thing we need most from the Congress is funding. The sequester was devastating to the Air Force as a whole and also to our space capabilities, so I think the most important question is, how do we fund

what we need (to) change to a warfighting ethos... Org chart boxes is not the right question.” [Source: Breaking Defense | Sydney J. Freedberg Jr. | June 21, 2017 ++]

Military Recruits ► 1000 To Be Deported Under Proposed Plan

One thousand foreign-born military recruits are facing deportation under a proposed Pentagon plan to cancel enlistment contracts for those without legal immigration status, reports The Washington Post. A Defense Department memo obtained by The Washington Post highlights potential security threats in the Military Accessions Vital to National Interest (MAVNI) program, which was implemented to accelerate citizenship in exchange for crucial medical and language skills. In addition to the cancellation of contracts for some foreign-born recruits, 4,100 troops could undergo enhanced screening. Most of the 4,100 are naturalized citizens, and the Pentagon raised concerns on how to proceed with “significant legal constraints” of “continuous monitoring” of citizens without cause, per the report.



The MAVNI program was launched by the Defense Department in 2009. In the program’s eight-year history, 10,400 troops have come through the program to fill vital medical and language billets. Linguistic skill-sets such as Pashto, Russian and Mandarin Chinese are crucial to military operations, but in short supply with U.S. born troops, according to the report. The vetting process for MAVNI recruits diverted “already constrained Army fiscal and manpower resources,” the memo said. The memo also stated the enhanced vetting process and security risk prompted officials to recommend the cancellation of enlistment contracts for the 1,800 recruits awaiting basic training and suspending the program altogether. One thousand of the recruits currently in the military’s delayed-entry program have had their visas expire while awaiting orders for basic training, putting them at risk for deportation if their contracts are rescinded.

“It’s terrible. You trusted the Army, who delayed the process, and now they’re going to cancel your contract and have you deported,” commented Margaret Stock, an Alaska-based attorney and retired Army officer who played a central role in MAVNI’s implementation, to the Post. Stock, now an immigration attorney, noted the Department of Homeland Security may welcome the move as the Trump administration ups deportations. It is unclear if the military would turn over information on the recruits to the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

One of those recruits, Jullian Anderson Fernandes de Melo, is a part of those numbers, and because contracts may get cancelled, de Melo and many others like him face deportation, said The Salt Lake Tribune. A Brazilian national, de Melo came to Utah on a student visa and told the Tribune, “I am not illegal.” De Melo wants to join the U.S. Army and has a vital skill to the U.S. military — he can speak Portuguese fluently — but because of the delay, de Melo’s contract, which was signed on February 26, 2016, is being pushed back. He now faces possible

deportation after the Army told him to withdrawal from the student visa program before graduation from the University of Utah, said the Tribune. "I would never imagine that it would take me down this route to lose my status and be kind of grasping at straws here and try to find a way to stay in the country legally," de Melo said.

The delays began last year, according to Stock, after the Department of Defense determined higher security checks were needed for immigrant recruits. "It's okay to investigate someone with a legitimate security threat," Stock said. "But share a characteristic they don't like, which is they're foreigners. They're going to be treated as second-class citizens for their entire career." Stock waved off the concerns of increased risk associated with the MAVNI recruits. The memo states 30 percent have "unmitigable derogatory information" that could disqualify them from service. Stock said this term is often used to describe applicants with conditions that cannot be helped, such as having a family member who worked for a foreign government or just having foreign relatives — something very common. "You can't treat people with a certain characteristic differently," she told the Post. "You don't do surveillance on everyone who is Irish-American because Mike Flynn broke the law when talking to the Russians." [Source: MilitaryTimes | Mackenzie Wolf | June 28, 2017++]

DoD Fraud, Waste, & Abuse ► Reported 16 thru 30 JUN 2017

College Park, MD -- Antonin DeHays, a historian, has been accused of stealing dog tags of dead World War II troops from the National Archives facility in Maryland. Federal investigators said he's been selling them on eBay for personal financial gain, according to a report in Stars and Stripes. The report identified DeHays as a 32-year-old Frenchman. "The theft of our history should anger any citizen," the Archivist of the United States David Ferriero said Tuesday in a statement reported by Stars and Stripes, "but as a veteran I am shocked at allegations that a historian would show such disregard for records and artifacts documenting those captured or killed in World War II."

Investigators are accusing DeHays of theft from the National Archives at College Park, Maryland, since 2015, according to the news report, but archive staff didn't realize any of the dog tags had gone missing until this year. DeHays made a few appearances at the National Archives, according to the staff. Last seen there on 12 MAY, he asked to see box 352, which had several dog tags inside. Two weeks later, the staff noticed approximately 30 dog tags from the box were missing. The complaint alleges that law enforcement found six dog tags and related documents belonging to the archives in DeHays' Maryland home. If convicted, DeHays could serve up to 10 years in prison, prosecutors said in the report. [Source: ArmyTimes | Ashley Bunch | June 14, 2017 ++]

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Fat Leonard Scandal -- While he was stationed in Singapore, a U.S. Navy commander ate suckling pigs worth \$400 apiece, attended a Gucci fashion show with his wife and enjoyed the services of prostitutes — all courtesy of a Malaysian defense contractor, Navy prosecutors alleged 26 JUN. Cmdr. **David Alexander Morales** is the latest Navy official to be charged in a wide-ranging bribery scandal in which officers allegedly provided ship schedules and important access to Singapore-based businessman Leonard Francis. Nicknamed "Fat Leonard" for his large size, Francis was determined to maintain his firm's market share in servicing American warships in Asian ports, a lucrative operation that spanned 25 years and allowed him to overbill the Navy by nearly \$35 million.

The Department of Justice has already filed charges against 25 people, including Francis as well as 20 former and current officers in the Navy. Several, including a retired admiral, have pleaded guilty. But Morales, 49, is the first to be charged in the Navy's military court system. His journey effectively began Monday at a preliminary hearing in Norfolk, Virginia, as prosecutors flipped through pages of text messages between him and Francis while itemizing the various gifts Morales allegedly received. His attorney said after the hearing that the Navy has a weak case,

which federal officials had declined to prosecute. "The leftovers are for the Navy," said Frank Spinner, a Colorado-based military defense lawyer. "The sharks have been prosecuted. Now they're going after the minnows."



U.S. Navy Cmdr. David Morales Jan. 9, 2015

Much of the hearing centered on the testimony of Janice Horst, a special agent who conducts criminal investigations for the Department of Defense's Inspector General. She described a friendship between the two men in which Francis paid for expensive dinners, liquor and prostitutes when Morales' wife wasn't around. When she was, Horst said Francis bought the couple tickets to fashion shows or a Julio Iglesias concert. Horst said Francis seemed to be grooming Morales to provide him with important information, and that Francis had asked the commander for ship schedules. Morales told Francis that he wouldn't provide any classified information. Cmdr. Angela Tang, a Navy prosecutor, said Morales also gave Francis the email of an admiral, introduced him to other contacts and recommended others for Francis to approach. She said Morales was "right on the cusp of providing unclassified ship schedules" and "seemed very eager to please Mr. Francis."

Morales allegedly passed along an envelope to Francis. But Spinner, Morales' defense attorney, pointed out during cross-examination that it was never recovered and its contents remain unknown. Spinner also said the Navy lacks hard evidence that Morales engaged with prostitutes beyond claims made by Francis, who has since become a witness for prosecutors. Spinner said Morales may have had a close relationship with Francis "but that doesn't mean it crossed the line." A Navy captain who oversaw the preliminary hearing will decide in the coming weeks whether to recommend Morales for a court-martial. An admiral will then decide if one should proceed. [Source: The Associated Press | Ben Finley | June 26, 2017 ++]

POW/MIA Update 89 ► **Staff Sgt. Byron Nelson | WWII**

Staff Sgt. Byron Nelson, an airman with the Iowa National Guard, is finally returning home — more than 73 years after being shot down on a bombing mission during World War II, the Iowa National Guard said in a press release. Nelson served with the 721st Bomber Squadron, 450th Bomber Group, 15th Air Force, U.S. Army Air Corps, and was last seen April 25, 1944, over Varese, Italy, when he and nine other crew members were shot down, according to the release. Nelson and Sgt. John White were officially declared dead, while two others were taken as prisoners of war by German forces. The remaining six crew members evaded capture and returned to friendly lines. Nelson's remains were dug up by the American Graves Registration Service in a cemetery near Fognano, Italy — where it is believed locals had buried him after the crash — but he was never identified. Instead, his remains were classified as "Unknown X-190" and buried in the Florence American Cemetery in Italy on May 26, 1949.



After a new historical investigation and the use of new technology, Unknown X-190 was identified as Nelson when he was disinterred in August 2015 by the Defense Department's POW/MIA Accounting Agency and a DNA analysis was conducted, said the release. Nelson was the recipient of the Purple Heart, Air Medal with one silver and one bronze oak leaf cluster, Army Good Conduct Medal, European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal with one bronze service star, World War II Victory Medal, Enlisted Aircrew Member Wings and Aerial Gunner Badge Wings. According to the Iowa National Guard, a memorial service will be held for Nelson at 1:30 p.m. July 1 at Pleasant Hill Cemetery in Iowa. [Source: AirForceTimes | Ashley Bunch | June 23, 2017 ++]

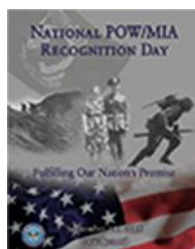
POW/MIA Recoveries ► **Reported 16 thru 30 JUN 2017 | Twenty**

“Keeping the Promise“, “Fulfill their Trust“ and “No one left behind“ are several of many mottos that refer to the efforts of the Department of Defense to recover those who became missing while serving our nation. The number of Americans who remain missing from conflicts in this century are: World War II (73,515) Korean War (7,841), Cold War (126), Vietnam War (1,627), 1991 Gulf War (5), and Libya (1). Over 600 Defense Department men and women -- both military and civilian -- work in organizations around the world as part of DoD's personnel recovery and personnel accounting communities. They are all dedicated to the single mission of finding and bringing our missing personnel home. For a listing of all personnel accounted for since 2007 refer to <http://www.dpaa.mil/> and click on ‘Our Missing’. If you wish to provide information about an American missing in action from any conflict or have an inquiry about MIAs, contact:

== Mail: Public Affairs Office, 2300 Defense Pentagon, Washington, D.C. 20301-2300, Attn: External Affairs

== Call: Phone: (703) 699-1420

== Message: Fill out form on <http://www.dpaa.mil/Contact/ContactUs.aspx>



Family members seeking more information about missing loved ones may also call the following Service Casualty Offices: U.S. Air Force (800) 531-5501, U.S. Army (800) 892-2490, U.S. Marine Corps (800) 847-1597,

U.S. Navy (800) 443-9298, or U.S. Department of State (202) 647-5470. The remains of the following MIA/POW's have been recovered, identified, and scheduled for burial since the publication of the last RAO Bulletin:

Vietnam

The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency announced the identification of remains and burial update of 1 U.S. servicemen who had been previously listed as missing in action from Vietnam. Returning home for burial with full military honors are:

-- **Air Force Col. Patrick H. Wood**, 36, of Kansas City, Mo., will be buried June 28 in Arlington National Cemetery, near Washington, D.C. On Feb. 6, 1967, pilot Wood and three crewmembers flew an HH-3E on a recovery mission over North Vietnam. They successfully recovered one individual before the aircraft was hit by enemy fire and crashed. Wood was declared missing in action. To read more about Col. Wood refer to <http://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/News-Releases/Article/1223852/airman-missing-from-vietnam-war-accounted-for-wood>.



Korea

The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency announced the identification of remains and burial update of 7 U.S. servicemen who had been previously listed as missing in action from the Korean War. Returning home for burial with full military honors are:

-- **Army Sgt. 1st Class Harold P. Haugland**, 22, of Belgrade, Mont., will be buried June 17 in Bozeman, Mont. Haugland was a member of Company D, 15th Antiaircraft Artillery Battalion, 7th Infantry Division, part of the 31st Regimental Combat Team deployed east of the Chosin Reservoir in North Korea. The RCT was attacked by an overwhelming number of Chinese forces in late November 1950. Haugland could not be accounted for by his unit at the end of the battle and was reported missing in action as of Dec. 2, 1950. Read more about Sgt. Haugland at <http://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/News-Releases/Article/1210731/soldier-missing-from-the-korean-war-accounted-for-haugland>.



-- **Army Pvt. Walter F. Piper**, 21, of Williamstown, N.J., will be buried June 17 in his hometown. Piper was assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 38th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Infantry Division. Piper was reported missing in action on Feb. 13, 1951, after his unit was attacked by Chinese forces in the village of Hoengsong, an area known as the Central Corridor in South Korea. Read about Pvt. Piper at <http://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/News-Releases/Article/1210720/soldier-captured-in-the-korean-war-accounted-for-piper>.



-- **Army Cpl. Edward Pool**, 22, of Paso Robles, Calif., will be buried June 19 in Portland, Ore. Pool was reported missing in action on Nov. 30, 1950, while serving with 31st Heavy Mortar Company, 31st Infantry Regiment, 7th Infantry Division. His unit was part of the 31st Regimental Combat Team deployed east of the Chosin Reservoir in North Korea. Pool could not be accounted for after several days of intense fighting. Read more about Cpl. Pool at <http://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/News-Releases/Article/1210742/soldier-captured-during-the-korean-war-accounted-for-pool>.



-- **Army Cpl. Edward L. Borders** was a member of Dog Battery, 82nd Anti-Aircraft Artillery Battalion (Automatic Weapons), 2nd Infantry Division. Borders' unit, part of Support Force 21, provided artillery fire support for South Korean forces from Changbong-ni. On Feb. 11, 1951, Chinese forces launched a massive counter offensive, forcing the support force to withdraw. Borders could not be accounted for after the unit reassembled in Wonju on Feb. 13. Interment services are pending. Read more about Cpl. Borders at <http://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/Recent-News-Stories/Article/1209206/soldier-captured-during-the-korean-war-accounted-for-borders>

-- **Army Cpl. Billie J. Jimerson**, 19, of Kerens, Texas, will be buried June 23 in Portland, Ore. Jimerson was a member of Company C, 1st Battalion, 24th Infantry Regiment, 25th Infantry Division. In late November 1950, his unit engaged with enemy forces near Anju, North Korea. Jimerson could not be accounted for after the battle and was declared missing in action as of Nov. 28, 1950. To read about Cpl. Jimerson <http://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/News-Releases/Article/1217598/soldier-captured-in-korean-war-accounted-for-jimerson>.



-- **Army Pfc. Albert E. Atkins** was a member of Company E, 2nd Battalion, 187th Airborne Infantry Regiment, 187th Airborne Regimental Combat Team. His unit attacked enemy forces near Mae-Bong, South Korea, on May 23, 1951, in an attempt to secure Hill 911. As the company prepared to assault the hill, Atkins and two other soldiers from his company were reported missing in action. Interment services are pending. To read more about Pfc. Atkins refer to <http://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/Recent-News-Stories/Article/1219532/soldier-missing-from-korean-war-identified-atkin>.

-- **Army Cpl. Leslie R. Sutton**, 24, of Rochelle, Ga., will be buried June 24 in his hometown. Sutton was assigned to Battery C, 99th Field Artillery Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division. Shortly after Sutton's unit received orders to take over positions occupied by the 11th and 12th Republic of Korea Army Regiments in the northwest region of North Korea, in the vicinity of Unsan, they were attacked by Chinese forces and forced to withdraw. Sutton was reported

missing in action on Nov. 2, 1950. To read more about Cpl. Sutton refer to <http://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/News-Releases/Article/1217594/soldier-missing-from-the-korean-war-accounted-for-sutton>



World War II

The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency announced the identification of remains and burial update of 12 U.S. servicemen who had been previously listed as missing in action from World War II. Returning home for burial with full military honors are:

-- **Mr. John D. Armstrong**, 24, of Hutchinson, Kan., will be buried June 17 in his hometown. A former U.S. Navy Reservist, Armstrong was training with the Flying Tigers at Kyedaw Airfield, a British Royal Air Force airfield outside of Toungoo, Burma, in 1941. Armstrong was killed in a midair collision during a training flight on Sept. 8, 1941. Go to <http://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/News-Releases/Article/1210725/flying-tiger-pilot-killed-during-world-war-ii-accounted-for-armstrong> to read more about Mr. Armstrong.

-- **Navy Fireman 1st Class Charles W. Thompson**, 19, of Weaubleau, Mo., will be buried June 17 in his hometown. Thompson was assigned to the USS Oklahoma, which was moored off Ford Island in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, when Japanese aircraft attacked his ship on Dec. 7, 1941. Thompson was one of 429 crewmen killed in the attack. Go to <http://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/News-Releases/Article/1210738/uss-oklahoma-sailor-killed-in-world-war-ii-accounted-for-thompson-cw> to read more about Fireman Thompson.



-- **Army Pvt. Gene J. Appleby**, 30, of Columbus, Ohio, was buried June 22 in Coshocton, Ohio. Appleby was a member of Company A, 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment. On Sept. 17, 1944, Appleby parachuted onto a drop zone north of Groesbeek, the Netherlands, as part of Operation Market-Garden. As the soldiers rallied, Appleby was reportedly struck by enemy fire and, following the attack, was listed as missing in action. To read more about Pvt. Appleby refer to <http://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/News-Releases/Article/1216860/soldier-killed-in-world-war-ii-accounted-for-appleby>.



-- **Navy Gunner's Mate 1st Class Arthur C. Neuenschwander**, 33, of Fessenden, N.D., will be buried June 24 in his hometown. Neuenschwander was assigned to the USS Oklahoma, which was moored off Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when Japanese aircraft attacked his ship on Dec. 7, 1941. Neuenschwander was one of 429 crewmen to be

killed in the attack. To read more about GM1 Neuenschwander refer to <http://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/News-Releases/Article/1217636/uss-oklahoma-sailor-killed-in-world-war-ii-accounted-for-neuenschwander>.



-- **Navy Seaman 1st Class George A. Coke**, 18, of Arlington, Texas, will be buried June 24 in his hometown. Coke was assigned to the USS Oklahoma, which was moored off Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when Japanese aircraft attacked his ship on Dec. 7, 1941. Coke was one of 429 crewmen killed in the attack. To read more about SN 1st Class Coke refer to <http://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/News-Releases/Article/1217613/uss-oklahoma-sailor-killed-during-world-war-ii-accounted-for-coke>.



-- **Machinist's Mate 1st Class Earl R. Melton**, 24, of Lakewood, N.J., will be buried June 28, in Arlington National Cemetery, near Washington, D.C. Melton was assigned to the USS Oklahoma, which was moored off Ford Island in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, when Japanese aircraft attacked his ship on Dec. 7, 1941. Melton was one of 429 crewmen killed in the attack. To read more about MM1 Melton refer to <http://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/News-Releases/Article/1223856/uss-oklahoma-killed-in-world-war-ii-accounted-for-melton>.

-- **Army Air Forces Pvt. Harold S. Hirschi**, 29, of Oklahoma City, will be buried June 28, in Andersonville, Ga. Hirschi was assigned to Headquarters Squadron, 19th Bombardment Group, when Japanese forces invaded the Philippine Islands. American forces on Corregidor Island fought intensely until they were forced to surrender on May 6, 1942. Hirschi was captured and transferred to Cabanatuan POW camp. He was admitted to the Camp hospital for illness, where he died on Nov. 19, 1942. To read more about Pvt. Hirschi refer to <http://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/News-Releases/Article/1223831/airman-captured-in-wwii-accounted-for-hirschi>.

-- **Marine Corps Pvt. Archie W. Newell** was assigned to Company C, 2nd Tank Battalion, 2nd Marine Division. Newell's unit landed on the small island of Betio in the Tarawa Atoll on Nov. 20, 1943, against stiff Japanese resistance. Newell was killed on the first day of the battle. Interment services are pending. To read more about Pvt. Newell refer to <http://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/Recent-News-Stories/Article/1217980/marine-missing-from-world-war-ii-identified-newell>.



-- **Marine Corps Pfc. George B. Murray** was assigned to Company B, 1st Battalion, 2nd Marines Regiment, 2nd Marine Division. Murray's unit landed on the small island of Betio in the Tarawa Atoll on Nov. 20, 1943, against stiff Japanese resistance. Murray was killed on the first day of the battle. Interment services are pending. To read

more about Pfc. Murray refer to <http://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/Recent-News-Stories/Article/1219541/marine-killed-during-world-war-ii-identified-murray>.



-- **Army Staff Sgt. Gerald L. Jacobsen** was a member of the 134th Infantry Regiment, 35th Infantry Division. On July 15, 1944, Jacobsen's unit participated in the siege of Saint-Lô, France. Jacobsen and another service member were manning a mortar compound post near La Forge, approximately two kilometers northeast of Saint-Lô, when they went missing. Jacobsen was subsequently declared deceased as of July 16, 1945. Interment services are pending. To read more about Sgt. Jacobsen refer to <http://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/Recent-News-Stories/Article/1216583/soldier-missing-from-world-war-ii-accounted-for-jacobsen>.

-- **Army Air Forces 1st Lt. George W. Betchley** was a member of the 429th Bombardment Squadron, 2nd Bombardment Group, 15th Air Force. On March 22, 1945, Betchley served as navigator on a B-17G Flying Fortress, carrying a crew of 10 on a bombing mission targeting the Ruhland oil refinery near Schwarzheide, Germany. After two of its engines and the left wing were reportedly damaged by German fighters and anti-aircraft fire, the plane crashed in southwest Poland. Eight crewmembers, including Betchley, were not recovered following the crash. Betchley was declared missing in action as of March 22, 1945, but his status was later amended to killed in action. Interment services are pending. To read more about 1st Lt. Betchley refer to <http://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/Recent-News-Stories/Article/1219772/airman-missing-from-world-war-ii-identified-betchley>.

-- **Marine Corps Pfc. Ray James** was assigned to Company F, 2nd Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division. James' unit landed on the small island of Betio in the Tarawa Atoll on Nov. 20, 1943, against stiff Japanese resistance. James was killed on the first day of the battle. Interment services are pending. To read more about Pfc. James refer to <http://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/Recent-News-Stories/Article/1217984/marine-missing-from-world-war-ii-identified-james>



[Source: <http://www.dpaa.mil> | July 1, 2017 ++]

* VA *



VA Budget 2018 Update 06 ► Plan Criticized by Democrats as Hurting VA Care

Congressional Democrats on 15 JUN sharply criticized President Donald Trump's proposed budget for the Department of Veterans Affairs, saying it would harm veterans by rapidly expanding private care while neglecting core VA hospitals and programs. The report from top Democrats on the Senate and House committees overseeing the VA pointed to proposed double-digit increases to expand veterans' access to private doctors as funding for VA services remains mostly flat. Not included in the budget plan, for example, is money to overhaul VA's electronic medical records system or reduce a massive appeals backlog — major VA initiatives touted by Trump.

The initial budget proposal also seeks to cap the amount of educational benefits veterans receive under the GI bill and halt "individual unemployability" benefit payments to out-of-work disabled veterans. Veterans' organizations are opposed to cuts. "The president's budget takes benefits from veterans who have sacrificed the most and those seeking health care from the VA," said Sen. Jon Tester of Montana, the top Democrat on the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, noting that private-sector care tends to be more scarce in rural parts of the U.S. "Balancing the budget on the backs of veterans — especially disabled and elderly veterans — is a nonstarter to me." He was joined by Sen. Brian Schatz of Hawaii of the Senate Appropriations subcommittee, as well as Reps. Tim Walz of Minnesota and Debbie Wasserman Schultz of Florida, who sit on the respective House committees.

Trump's budget proposal calls for a 3.7 percent increase in total VA funding, one of the few agencies slated for more money amid big-time cuts to other departments. But the bulk of the VA increase will pay for rising health care costs, and in particular a revamp of a Choice program to give veterans more access to outside providers. Under questioning from members of Congress, Shulkin in recent weeks has acknowledged gaps in the budget proposal. He told a Senate committee 14 JUN the VA would need an additional \$800 million if the government wanted to clear a massive backlog of appeals from veterans unhappy with their disability payouts.

Shulkin also says the VA is not yet requesting money for an overhaul of its electronic records system, expected to cost more than \$4.3 billion. The VA wants to adopt a commercial product used by the Pentagon and intends to negotiate a no-bid contract with Cerner Corp. And the VA warned this week it faced an unexpected budget shortfall of more than \$1 billion for its Choice program. It is urgently asking Congress for authority to tap other parts of its budget to cover costs, including \$620 million in carry-over money that it had set aside for use in the next budget year beginning 1 OCT. Shulkin did not rule out taking money from VA hospitals.

Major veterans' organizations have been critical of Trump's proposed budget, citing the proposed cuts to disability benefits for thousands of veterans once they reach retirement age. The American Legion has described the funding trade-offs as "stealth privatization." In response to initial criticism, Shulkin told a Senate committee Wednesday that he would reconsider cutting the disability benefits. He has warned that due to a tightening Trump administration budget, future increases to the VA budget cannot be assumed. [Source: The Associated Press |Hope Yen |June 15, 2017 ++]

VA Budget 2018 Update 07 ► Looking for Ways to Fund Choice Expansion

VA Secretary Dr. David Shulkin's reversal on cutting a major benefit for elderly and disabled vets left the VA with a \$3.2 billion budget hole to fill to meet President Donald Trump's demand for an expanded Choice program. Despite Shulkin's change of course 14 JUN, veterans service organizations urged their members to keep pressure on members of Congress to block any attempt to revive the plan in the \$186.5 billion proposed budget for the Department of Veterans Affairs, which would have eliminated the Individual Unemployability (IU) benefit once veterans reached Social Security age. "It shouldn't have been proposed to begin with," Veterans of Foreign Wars National Commander Brian Duffy said of the initial plan to cut the benefit. "Balancing budgets on the backs of

veterans is something the VFW will never tolerate." He called on the 1.7 million members of the VFW "to urge their respective members of Congress to oppose the IU cuts and make certain this proposal does not resurface."

Shulkin began by saying that the cut was one of several options the VA was looking at to offset the costs of expanding the Choice program, which allows veterans to get care in the private sector. However, "as I began to listen to veterans and their concerns," Shulkin said, "it became clear that this would be hurting some veterans" and would amount to "a takeaway from veterans who can't afford to have those benefits taken away." "I'm really concerned about that," Shulkin said. "This is part of a process. We have to be looking at ways to do things better, but I am not going to support policies that hurt veterans."

Veterans currently eligible for the IU benefit have a 60 to 100 percent disability rating through the VA and are unable to secure a job because of their disability. IU allows them to receive the highest compensation rate. The budget proposal would have removed veterans from the IU program when they reached the minimum age for Social Security. About 225,000 veterans aged 60 or older could have been affected by the cut -- about 7,000 of them over the age of 80. The reversal on the IU cuts, which were projected to save about \$3.2 billion, left Shulkin looking for other ways to offset the costs of a planned \$2.9 billion expansion of the Choice program that he expects to send to Congress before the end of fiscal 2017 on 30 SEP.

After the Senate hearing 14 JUN, Shulkin told Stars & Stripes, "The president, as you know, is concerned about the government being too large, so our responsibility is to make sure the programs we have are working well." However, "The president and I both do not want to be taking away from veterans" in the effort to shrink government and make it more efficient, he said. "So we are going to go back and make sure we can hit the targets but look at alternative ways of doing it." [Source: Military.com | Richard Sisk | June 16, 2017 ++]

VA Mental Health Care Update 33 ► Emergency Care for OTH Vets Starts 5 JUL

Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) on 27 JUN released finalized plans that lay the framework for providing emergency mental health coverage to former service members with other-than-honorable (OTH) administrative discharges. This is the first time a VA Secretary has implemented an initiative specifically focused on this group of former service members who are in mental health distress. "Suicide prevention is my top clinical priority," said Secretary Shulkin, also a physician. "We want these former service members to know there is someplace they can turn if they are facing a mental health emergency — whether it means urgent care at a VA emergency department, a Vet Center or through the Veterans Crisis Line."

Effective 5 JUL, all Veterans Health Administration (VHA) medical centers will be prepared to offer emergency stabilization care for former service members who present at the facility with an emergent mental health need. Under this initiative, former service members with an OTH administrative discharge may receive care for their mental health emergency for an initial period of up to 90 days, which can include inpatient, residential or outpatient care. During this time, VHA and the Veterans Benefits Administration will work together to determine if the mental health condition is a result of a service-related injury, making the service member eligible for ongoing coverage for that condition.

Since Secretary Shulkin announced his intent in March to expand VA mental health coverage to service members with OTH administrative discharges, VA has worked with key internal and external stakeholders, including members of Congress, Veterans Service Organizations and community partners on the issue. Veterans in crisis should call the Veterans Crisis Line at 800-273-8255 (press 1), or text 838255. [Source: VA News Release | June 27, 2017 ++]

VA Disability System ► Time to Rethink - Current System Not Sustainable

It's time to rethink a veteran disability system that "incentivizes disability," Veterans Affairs Secretary David Shulkin said during a 23 JUL forum in Washington, the same day President Trump signed new VA accountability legislation. "Our current disability system that is designed from 50, 60 or 70 years ago..... I would suggest it's not sustainable and it may not be achieving the results of well-being for our veterans," Shulkin said at an event organized by the Bush Institute's Military Service Initiative. "Our system incentivizes disability, when our system should be incentivizing health and well-being."

That doesn't mean pulling back disability compensation benefits, he said. "Everybody recognizes we have a responsibility as a country to provide and be able to supplement resources for veterans that were harmed or injured during their time of duty. I don't think anybody's suggesting that we take away our commitment to that," he said. "But to suggest that there's not a better way to do things is also wrong."

Shulkin made the comments in response to a question about whether the system should be re-evaluated. Potential new offerings could include wellness programs, rather than simply monthly compensation payments. Disability compensation is a monthly tax-free benefit paid to veterans who are determined to be at least 10 percent disabled because of injuries or diseases that happened during or were aggravated by military service. "I do believe we need to begin to start having a discussion and a dialogue. Not so much about withdrawing our commitment," Shulkin said, but about how to make the system better to improve outcomes for veterans.

"I think that rethinking how we could approach disability is a key topic that's going to be very important in future years," he said.

According to the VA budget documents, there are about 5.5 million veterans and survivors who will receive disability compensation or pension benefits in 2018 — about 180,000 more than there were in 2017. The budget proposal includes a request for nearly \$87 billion for disability compensation and pension benefits; \$86 billion was budgeted for fiscal 2017. He acknowledged that the discussion will be a difficult one, "because this is one that I worry, if not done well, could become politicized."

"VA has really done a great job in keeping itself in a bipartisan dialogue," he added, "and I am committed to making sure that VA and veterans don't become part of the political discussion, but more part of, 'How do we do what we do better? How do we accomplish our mission better?'" [Source: MilitaryTimes | Karen Jowers | June 23, 2017 ++]

VA Appeals Backlog Update 08 ► 10 More Years Before Fix Starts

Veterans Affairs Secretary David J. Shulkin said on 21 JUN that it might take about another decade to start dealing with a backlog of 470,000 legacy appeals claims for VA benefits. Between 2015 and 2017, the number of pending appeals ballooned from 380,000 to 470,000, and the average wait time on appeals now stands at about five years. Shulkin appeared Wednesday before the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs, where he made his case for a 5.5 percent year-to-year increase in discretionary funding (\$82.1 billion) included in the president's 2018 budget request of \$186.5 billion. The increase, Shulkin said, will help the VA add 142 more staff to the Board of Veterans Appeals. That increase along with the Veterans Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act, a bipartisan piece of legislation projected to shorten appeals wait times from five years to 125 days, will allow the VA to begin expediting existing claims before the board.

The agency is looking at 2026, however, before addressing the backlog in legacy claims, he said. Shulkin explained that the VA is going to have to "whittle away on them," and hesitantly revealed to committee Chairman

Johnny Isakson (R-GA), who introduced the legislation, that it would take \$800 million to address the backlog immediately. Shulkin said that veterans with existing claims would be able to opt into the modernized appeals process, allowing for expedited service. “So that is my hope to be able to accelerate the backlog, to encourage veterans, who unfortunately right now, would have to wait years to get decisions to opt into the new process,” Shulkin said. Isakson thanked Shulkin for his honest answer that there is no process in place for addressing the legacy claims, before noting that the oldest legacy claim on record is 25 years. “Eventually he’ll die, and we’ll get that one solved,” Isakson said.

“We share that frustration,” Shulkin said. “I find it really difficult to tell people who have submitted into the appeals process that they have six years to wait on average to get a response.” Shulkin initially balked at offering the \$800 million figure, explaining to the chairman that he probably didn’t want to know. Isakson said that everything the committee does will “pale in comparison to the hell we’re going to catch if it’s going to cost \$800 million to handle those claims before 2026.” He said anger and frustration over the appeals process will only grow louder and deeper, and the VA has an obligation to honor veteran benefits. The Veterans Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act has 26 cosponsors, including 15 Republicans and 11 Democrats. [Source: PJ Media | Karl Herchenroeder June 17, 2017 ++]

VA Privatization Update 11 ► David Shulkin’s Vision for the Department

Future Veterans Affairs clinics could feature fewer maternity services, fewer cancer specialists and more reliance on private-sector clinics for routine or non-military care, under Secretary David Shulkin’s vision for the department. But he insists that doesn’t amount to privatization of VA’s responsibilities. “I am interested in building world-class services in things I know the veterans of this country must rely upon us for,” he told reporters at a roundtable event morning of 20 JUN. “I’m not interested in building world-class services that already exist.” “We don’t have enough resources to do everything. So let’s build an integrated system that relies on what already exists in the private sector with what needs to be enhanced in the VA.”

For months, Shulkin and top congressional Republicans have insisted that criticisms their plans would “privatize” VA services are unfounded, and that the \$180 billion-plus department will not be slowly dismantled in favor of commercial medical options. But veterans groups in recent days have criticized a number of pending plans they say will diminish VA’s position as a robust health care system for former service members. In particular, they’re taking issue with department plans to expand the controversial Choice program, which allows veterans to see private sector doctors at government cost if they face delays in getting VA care. Last week, in Senate testimony, Vietnam Veterans of America National President John Rowan criticized the preliminary details of the plan as “a false choice” that will add “layers of bureaucracy and cost” without improving care. Carlos Fuentes, director of national legislative services for the Veterans of Foreign Wars, said the idea “could possibly lead to the gradual erosion of the VA health care system.”

But Shulkin on 20 JUN repeated that offering more choice to veterans is one of his top priorities for VA, along with eliminating duplicative services and combating veterans suicide. “We are increasingly seeing more veterans who are pregnant, since women are our fastest growing demographics,” he said. “You don’t hear me suggesting we should be building maternity floors and neonatal intensive care units. Frankly, that exists already in the private sector.” Those comments seem to run contrary to those of his predecessor, former VA Secretary Bob McDonald, who during Barack Obama’s presidency promised to expand services for female veterans. Shulkin also said regional assessments are already underway to identify gaps in services and strengths of community offerings. “If you’re in an area where there are strong cancer or kidney dialysis services, then you will take advantage of what the private sector has,” he said. “If you already have strong services within VA, then you won’t be buying as much of those (private) services.”

The VA secretary downplayed questions about a broader philosophy from President Trump's administration to privatize a range of government offerings, saying there is no political coordination between departments to find ways to shift tax money outside of government programs. "This is not a move towards privatization," he said. "This is a move to help veterans." He said VA needs to excel in "the services that veterans must rely upon it for. If you just turn our veterans over to the private sector, they would not find the experience in issues such as PTSD, TBI, in complex rehabilitative needs, in prosthetics and orthopedics, in spinal injuries, in behavioral health care in general." Shulkin is expected to unveil more details of his planned Choice program revamp — already named the Veterans Coordinated Access and Rewarding Experiences program (Vets CARE) — in coming weeks.

Meanwhile, department officials last week announced that the existing Choice program is on pace to run out of money in August, months ahead of schedule. Shulkin has petitioned lawmakers to free up money in other accounts earmarked for later this summer, to avoid major disruptions in thousands of veterans' medical care. But critics are already pointing to the problem as evidence that moving veterans outside of VA care will not solve long-term access and cost issues. [Source: MilitaryTimes | Leo Shane III | June 20, 2017 ++]

VA Vet Choice Program Update 54 ► \$1 Billion Shortfall

Leaders at the Department of Veterans Affairs revealed a significant budget shortfall in the department's Choice program at a budgetary hearing on Capitol Hill. VA Secretary David Shulkin said in his testimony to the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee that the program faces a \$1 billion shortfall. This was caused, at least in part, by the department's excessive use of an exception that allows veterans to be treated by private physicians if traveling to a VA facility proved too much of a burden, he said. The department is requesting that Congress allow it to shift money from other budgetary areas to the Choice program. "We need your help on the best solution to get more money into the Choice account," Shulkin said at the hearing. "If there is no action at all by Congress, then the Choice program will dry up by mid-August."

The Trump administration had previously extended the program, and funding was expected to last until early next year. If it had not been continued, Choice would have ended on 7 AUG. Shulkin said he became aware of the funding shortfall last week and that the department has told its medical centers to limit the number of patients they send to private doctors to cut back on Choice spending. The program typically restricts the use of private physicians only to when a veteran would have to wait 30 days or more to get an appointment at a VA facility, or must drive more than 40 miles to a VA hospital. Some veterans were being sent to other VA facilities farther away, Department of Defense hospitals and other alternatives, according to an internal memo from 7 JUN, reports the Associated Press.

Senators on the panel expressed disbelief and disappointment in the VA's inability to see the spending problems coming down the pike. "For months we've been asking about the Choice spend rate and we were never provided those answers to make an informed decision," Sen. Jon Tester (D-MT), the panel's top Democrat, said, according to the AP. "No one wants to delay care for veterans—no one—so we will act appropriately. For that to happen this late in the game is frustrating to me." All aspects of VA healthcare have been under close scrutiny following a nationwide scandal in 2014 that exposed long wait times for veterans seeking care in the system. Since then, hospitals from North Carolina to Houston to Washington, D.C., have come under fire for practices that may have put patients at risk. [Source: FierceHealthcare | Paige Minemyer | June 15, 2017 ++]

VA Caregiver Program Update 42 ► Lack of Support Creates Challenges

Caregivers, wounded warriors, and their advocates testified in front of the Senate Special Committee on Aging this week to ask for passage of the bipartisan Military and Veteran Services Improvement Act (H.R. 1472 and S. 591) along with increased research on military and veteran caregivers. The bill expands the comprehensive support services provided by the VA to caregivers of veterans severely injured or disabled after Sept. 11, 2001. Currently, these post-9/11 caregivers receive a comprehensive package of benefits including a stipend, health care benefit, respite care, and a variety of other assistance above and beyond support services and benefits provided to all veterans through the VA's caregiver program.

Since passage of the Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act in 2010, The Military Coalition has continued to push for the expansion of comprehensive caregiver services to all veterans of all eras and to ensure severely ill and injured veterans also are eligible for the benefit. Out of 5.5 million caregivers of veterans, 20 percent are from the generations serving in the post-9/11 era, while the rest come from pre-9/11 conflicts. Each demographic faces different challenges. Caregivers of the Vietnam era now support veterans with service connected conditions, which are compounded further by aging. Veterans who are cared for by aging parents might face losing their immediate support network.

Most people who became caregivers in the post-9/11 era started to do so in their 20s or 30s, and face decades of caregiving, often while raising young children. The needs of these veterans and their caregivers, as well as the adequacy of specific support mechanisms are largely untested. The differences in support needs for the different generations of veterans and their caregivers beg for further study. This week, RAND released a blueprint (its third study on military and veteran caregivers) commissioned by the Elizabeth Dole Foundation to forecast research needs for caregivers, our nation's hidden heroes.

Caregivers provide a critical service to the nation's commitment to those “who have borne the battle.” This service comes at an estimated benefit (or savings) to our nation of \$14 billion annually, while the loss of caregiver productivity is a loss to the economy of approximately \$6 billion per year. Caregivers' service begins when the servicemember's ends. Not only do caregivers sacrifice a variety of personal endeavors for their new roles, many feel isolated by the personal challenges they face as caregivers, and are at increased risk for depression, stress, and other health related conditions. This puts both the caregiver and the veteran at risk.

At the hearing, former Sen. Elizabeth Dole, creator and chair of the Elizabeth Dole Foundation, said, “Based on what we already know, we expect more alarming issues to be uncovered. Anecdotally, we are hearing more about caregiver substance abuse and caregiver suicide. Marriages between veterans and caregivers are more vulnerable than ever.” From previous RAND research, we know the recovery process improves with the presence of a well-supported caregiver. But according to the study, caregivers face poorer health outcomes, higher relationship stress, and more workplace issues. These challenges can have a devastating emotional, physical and financial impact on wounded warriors and their families or support networks. Supporting our troops should not stop when they take the uniform off. Military service is a family mission, and when a veteran is wounded or ill as a result of their service, the family often continues the mission by providing lifelong care services. [Source: MOAA Leg Up | Frank Konkel & Eric Katz | June 5, 2017 ++]

VA MOVE! Program Update 02 ► Others Did It. So Can You

Do you need some inspiration to keep you on track with your health and wellness goals? Meet Donald Johnson who lost more than 67 pounds with the help of the Overton Brooks VA Medical Center's MOVE! Weight Management Program. The 62-year-old U.S. Army Veteran struggled with his weight for more than five years, was prediabetic and suffered from a host of preventable health-care illnesses, to include elevated blood pressure and depression before joining the MOVE! Program. Johnson's doctor suggested VA MOVE! and urged him to enroll in the weight management program. The day he enrolled, he weighed 317 pounds. “My doctor told me that if I didn't lose weight

I would become diabetic,” Johnson said. “I had trouble getting around like I used to, tying my shoes, getting in and out of the bathtub.”



Johnson began the eight-week diet and exercise group where he lost 22.4 pounds. He tried to lose weight with other diets such as low-carb and the Slim Fast diet plan with little success. Since his initial weigh in and enrolling in MOVE! Johnson has lost a total of 67.6 pounds. His goal was to weigh 250 pounds. On 9 MAY, he met that goal weighing in at 249 pounds, meeting on an individual basis with his dietician and MOVE Program Coordinator Emily Walker. “Mr. Johnson is one of our success stories. He’s an inspiration to our other Veterans who are just starting their weight-loss journey,” Walker said.

Because of the MOVE! program, Johnson’s life has improved. He now finds it easier to do daily tasks, stays active with his lawn care service and enjoys bike rides and walks with his wife. He makes every effort to stick to the plan of what he learned in MOVE! with nutrition. “MOVE! is different from other programs I’ve tried,” Johnson said. “It’s more hands-on and the instructors are knowledgeable and took a personal interest in our weight loss,” Johnson said. “If you are a Veteran and want to lose weight, try MOVE! You have to commit and you have to want to lose weight.” For more information about VA MOVE! Weight Loss Program for Veterans call the MOVE! Coordinator for Overton Brooks at 318-990-5023 or go to <https://www.move.va.gov> [Source: MOAA Leg Up | June 9, 2017 ++]

VA Suicide Prevention Update 42 ► Hotline Backup Center Use Drops to 1%

A 10-year-old suicide hotline designed to assist veterans at their deepest moments of despair has taken heavy criticism recently following a trio of highly critical government reports that questioned answer times, staff preparedness and quality assurance. In mid-JUN Acting Director Susan Strickland, acting director of the Veterans Crisis Line, and Julianne Mullane, assistant deputy director of team operations for the Canandaigua, N.Y., veterans hotline, sat down to discuss the government reports and their agency's efforts to improve operations. Some findings from that conversation:

- **Mostly complete.** Although an Office of the Inspector General report in March said numerous recommendations made the year prior about improvements to the Veterans Crisis Line had not been completed, six of the seven recommendations already were put in place by the time the report came out.
- **Additional improvements.** Sixteen more recommendations made this year will be in place by 31 DEC.

- **New automation.** Upgraded phone systems now automatically record all calls, as well as log phone numbers of callers — a practice that had previously been done by hand.
- **Temporary problems.** Opening a new call center in Atlanta this past fall had been temporarily detrimental to service at the Canandaigua site, about 30 miles southeast of Rochester, as staffers there were redeployed to train new employees in Georgia. Since training has settled down, the crisis line now is answering more than 90% of calls within 8 seconds, and only about 1% of calls are being rerouted to a backup call center.
- **Quality control.** Now silent monitors listen to random calls in real time and review the counselors' advice for quality assurance.
- **High demand.** In some ways, the center has been a victim of its own success. Started 10 years ago with a skeletal staff and a prevailing attitude that veterans wouldn't call for help, the Veterans Crisis Line has been scrambling to keep up with unanticipated demand ever since. Just since May, calls for service have increased from 2,000 a week to more than 2,250.

A year ago, the Veterans Health Administration Office of Inspector General reported that more than a third of calls to the Veterans Crisis Line, then located only at the Canandaigua Veterans Affairs Medical Center in upstate New York, were being shunted to backup call centers, some calls were taking more than a half hour to be answered and other callers were being given only an option to leave messages on voicemail. In March, another inspector general's report said not only had recommendations from its previous report not yet been carried out but also that hotline staff had a host of continuing deficiencies in the way they handled incoming phone calls, staff training records and other oversight. In June, a Government Accountability Office report said nearly 1 in 4 text messages to the center were met with no response.

On 15 JUN, Secretary David Shulkin of the Department of Veterans Affairs told the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee the operation had made great strides following the March report, including reducing the rate of calls being shifted to backup centers to about 1%. The center handles in excess of 500,000 calls per year, and has initiated nearly 75,000 emergency service responses since its inception in 2007. In October, an additional call center went online in Atlanta. The new center more than doubles the number of staffers handling calls: 297 in Canandaigua and 281 in Atlanta. Officials expect the sites to have a total of more than 800 workers by the end of the federal fiscal year Sept. 30. Every year volume has increased dramatically. VA started with what, 20 people maybe? And four phone lines? So look how far VA has come. [Source: USA Today Network | Meaghan M. McDermott | June 16, 2017 ++]

VA Vacant Buildings ► Shulkin Plan to Dispose/Reuse All Within 2 Years.

Following through on a key promise from less than a month ago, VA Secretary Dr. David J. Shulkin on 20 JUN announced a plan to dispose of all vacant VA buildings in 24 months either by demolishing or setting for reuse. Shulkin had raised the vacant building issue as a priority in his “State of the VA” address delivered at the White House on 31 MAY. Nationwide, VA currently has 430 vacant or mostly vacant buildings that are on average more than 60 years old, and cost taxpayers more than \$7 million per year to maintain.

Shulkin announced that, of those 430 buildings, VA has begun disposal or reuse processes on 71. Of the remaining 359 buildings, Shulkin announced VA will begin disposal or reuse processes on another 71 in the next six months, and plans to initiate disposal of the final 288 vacant buildings within 24 months. “We owe it to the American taxpayer to apply as much of our funding as possible to helping Veterans,” said Shulkin. “Maintaining vacant buildings, including close to 100 from the Revolutionary War and Civil War, makes no sense and we’re working as quickly as possible to get them out of our inventory.” Secretary Shulkin also announced that VA will

review another 784 non-vacant, but underutilized, buildings to determine if additional efficiencies can be identified to be reinvested in Veterans' services.

Finally, in addition to the building closure, Shulkin announced 20 JUN that the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) is freezing its footprint and will maximize space management by leasing or eliminating office space nationwide, thanks to a robust telework program and the digitization of claim files. VA estimates these actions will save taxpayers an additional \$15.7 million annually beginning in 2017, for a total of close to \$23 million in combined annual savings from the initiatives. "As I said in my State of the VA presentation, we need to move rapidly to bring savings to taxpayers," said Shulkin. "We will work through the legal requirements and regulations for disposal and reuse and we will do it as swiftly as possible." [Source: VA News Release | June 20, 2017 ++]

VA Grave Markers Update 07 ► 718 Needed for Mount Moriah Cemetery

Hundreds of U.S. Navy officers and sailors have lain for decades under the anonymity of inscrutable gravestones at Mount Moriah, a 19th century cemetery whose 380 acres span Southwest Philadelphia and Yeadon Borough. For many of the dead, time wore away their names. For others, long-ago conflicts stole not only their lives but their identities, rendering them "unknown" — though not, as it turns out, for eternity. A corps of 250 volunteers invested nearly a thousand hours over the course of four years to identify 718 veterans buried in the Naval Plot, one of two sections within Mount Moriah that are part of the National Cemetery Administration and reserved for those who served in the military and their families.



Sam Ricks, who has spearheaded the effort to identify hundreds of "unknown" military graves at Mount Moriah Cemetery.

"These men and women had a name when they went into the service, whether they fought a war or stayed home, whether they served a day or 30 years. They had a name," said Paulette Rhone, board president of the Friends of Mount Moriah Cemetery, a nonprofit dedicated to preserving the graveyard. Now, nearly two years after the veterans identification project ended, cemetery officials and relatives of those interred there are urging the federal government to replace the old stones with new ones, engraved with the names recovered by the volunteers. National Cemetery Administration officials say such an effort is in the works, but that it will take time. "We want to make sure we've done our due diligence and insure accuracy," said Gregory Whitney, director of the Washington Crossing National Cemetery, who oversees Mount Moriah's military plots for the Veterans Administration.

The agency's historians are researching burial records and other historic information about the graves. When that task is completed, Whitney said, the VA will replace the stones. Each will reflect the marker's original design, which differs depending on the era in which the veteran died, and could incorporate information combed from cemetery archives by the volunteers, who included members of the Friends group and students from area universities, Whitney said he expects replacement to start next spring.

The veterans identification project got underway in 2012 following an inquiry from the Medal of Honor Historical Society of the United States. The education and research organization was looking for the burial location of a John Smith who received the medal for heroism while serving on the USS Richmond during the Civil War, and had tracked his grave to Mount Moriah. Samuel Ricks, a board member of the Friends group, tried to help them, but he was stymied. By then, the cemetery's records — 300 boxes of everything from perpetual care contracts to financial documents — were packed away at a storage facility, a situation prompted by the cemetery's whirlwind rescue in 2011.

In April of that year, Mount Moriah, once the resting place of Betsy Ross's remains, was closed, having been abandoned by the widow of the last known member of the Mount Moriah Cemetery Association, which owned the property. The graveyard was placed in receivership and the Mount Moriah Cemetery Preservation Corp. was created to organize its records and restore its overgrown grounds. That included the two sections administered by the Veterans Administration: the Naval Plot, where 2,120 Marine and Navy vets are buried, and the Soldiers' Lot, the resting place of 400 Army vets. Once the receivership was finalized, volunteers began weekly visits to the storage facility — and later, to the City Archives in University City, where the records were moved — to photograph every cemetery document in the 300 boxes.

But by the summer of 2013, no registry had been found with the names and locations of those buried in the cemetery. Unsure that such a list was even in the boxes, but determined to attach a name to every grave, Ricks settled on an even more labor-intensive strategy. He recruited 200 students from Villanova, Drexel, and Temple Universities to walk the rows of the Naval Plot and record the information on its more than 2,000 stones. As they did, they located John Smith's nearly illegible stone. They also found 717 markers that were worn to illegibility, cracked, toppled, moss-covered or inscribed "Unknown."

Ricks entered every stone's piece of information, however small and incomplete, on a computer spreadsheet. Then, in December 2014, one of the 300 storage boxes gave up Mount Moriah's secrets. Inside were seven large binders containing the elusive burial records. Ricks now had the names and gravesites that he could cross-reference with his own survey. Among the hundreds confirmed were Commodores Jesse Duncan Elliott, a Medal of Honor recipient and hero of the War of 1812, and Peter Turner, commander of the U.S. Naval Asylum in Philadelphia from 1863 to 1868. Elliott was in a grave marked "Unknown." Turner had no stone at all.

Scott Anderson, a house painter from Yardley, had been looking for the grave of his great-great-great-grandfather, Elliott, for 10 years. Several years ago, online research led him to Mount Moriah, and Ricks led him to Elliott's grave, near a monument depicting a Navy anchor. Elliott's and Turner's graves were identified earlier than others in the project, so their stones are due to be replaced "shortly," Whitney said. Anderson can't wait. "We took some pictures" of the grave, he said. "They're supposed to be putting up a new marker. We're looking forward to it, whenever it happens.[Source: Philadelphia Inquirer | Kristin E. Holmes | June 15, 2017 ++]

VA Mustard Agent Care Update 05 ► Shulkin Believes WWII Veterans Claims

Veterans Affairs Secretary David Shulkin said 20 JUN that he believes veterans who say they were harmed by mustard gas exposure during World War II but have had claims denied by the VA, and that he will work with Sen. Claire McCaskill on a remedy. "I think the government can and should do better than it has done on this issue," said

Shulkin, who was appointed by President Donald Trump to head the 350,000-employee veterans health care system that was rocked in 2014 by allegations of poor service and long waits for appointments at some VA facilities.

Shulkin said he was behind the efforts of McCaskill (D-MO) to pass legislation that would deal with a dwindling number of these World War II veterans, including Arla Wayne Harrell of Macon, Mo., who says he was exposed to mustard gas experiments at Camp Crowder in Missouri in the waning days of World War II, but kept quiet for decades under threat of being thrown in military prison for exposing military secrets. “We believe him, and we are going to act as quickly as we can to make sure that he is recognized and gets what he clearly deserves,” Shulkin said at a breakfast with reporters sponsored by the Christian Science Monitor. Harrell, 90, was 18 when he says he was twice exposed in mustard gas experiments at Camp Crowder in southwest Missouri in 1945. The VA has repeatedly denied his claims, saying he did not prove that his medical problems were caused by exposure to experiments that the Pentagon for years did not acknowledge.

The bill introduced by McCaskill would set aside \$1 million annually to take a fresh look at the chemical agent exposure claims of World War II vets who had those claims denied. She estimated that no more than 400 are still alive. Harrell’s family say their claims on his behalf are mainly for their father’s peace of mind; they say he is troubled that his government does not believe him. [Source: St. Louis Post-Dispatch | Chuck Raasch | Jun 20, 2017 ++]

VA Female Vet Care Update 01 ► Privacy Issue

In 2014, a study by the VA Inspector General found that 20.4% of community-based outpatient clinics run by the Veterans Health Administration failed to provide adequate privacy for female veterans. That number dropped to 14.3% in 2015, but still has a ways to go, according to a new report released 19 JUN. The findings come amid rising concerns from veterans service organizations that more needs to be done to ensure adequate services are available for women who rely on the VA for health care. “The Veterans Health Administration is a large organization and ongoing training is expected,” Lou Celli, director of veterans affairs and rehabilitation at The American Legion National HQ, told Task & Purpose. “There are more women veteran specific clinics at VA medical centers today than ever before and while still not perfect, with the proper funding, we are confident that VA will be able to provide appropriate gender specific facilities at all VA medical locations.”

In 2014, nearly 8% of doors did not have manual or electronic door locks for the examination rooms used for women veterans, and that number only went down a few points to 5.4% in 2015. And 16 of the 93 clinics had physical settings where gowned female veterans couldn’t access restrooms without entering public areas, with “no alternative measures were in place“ in 2014; in 2015, the number dropped to four. Still, much of the gender-specific medical care required by female veterans is carried out within VHA facilities, meaning regardless of the privacy issues, more women are trusting the VA to handle their health care needs. The report found that 82.5% of gender-specific care visits occurred within VA facilities, while only 17.5% were handled outside. Pregnancy was the one exception. “We also noted that patients with pregnancy-related issues had the majority of their visits at non-VA sites rather than VA sites, [but] this was the only subcategory of gender-specific care where we found this to be true,” the report reads.

While there is still need for further improvement, VHA appears to have taken some steps to ensure that it is better at addressing the needs of its female veterans, who make up about 10% of the overall veteran population. That number is expected to grow as women currently represent nearly 15% of service members. The report did not have any specific criticisms for VHA; however, it did recommend that the VA’s acting under secretary for health, Dr. Poonam Alaigh, review and update the requirements for female veteran providers and make note of how and when those requirements are met by VA facilities. “[We will continue] to evaluate the quality, access, and availability of

safe and appropriate healthcare for women and are very pleased with the progress that VA has made over the years,” Celli added. [Source: Task & Purpose | Sarah Sicard | June 20, 2017++]

VA Pharmacy Update 09 ► Additional Capabilities Needed

A new report from the United States Government Accountability Office is calling for pharmacy systems to better serve veterans through additional capabilities for viewing, exchanging, and using data. According to the report, the Department of Veteran Affairs’ (VA) medical sites lack the capability for pharmacists to transfer prescriptions to other VA pharmacies, and does not allow the processing of prescription refills from other VA sites. These limitations can negatively impact patient care since pharmacists are unable to make clinical and prescription decisions efficiently because of the restricted availability of patient information.

According to the report, the VA’s pharmacy system only has capabilities to fulfill 3 of the 6 main healthcare industry practices. “Specifically, the pharmacy system (1) provides the ability to order medications electronically, (2) enables prescription checks for drug-to-drug and drug-allergy interactions, and (3) tracks the dispensing of controlled prescription drugs,” the report stated. However, the system lacks the ability to electronically exchange prescriptions outside of VA pharmacies, and the system does not have certain workflow and clinical decision capabilities, or maintain a capability to monitor medication inventories. In order to improve the VA’s pharmacy system, the report recommended 6 actions:

- Formulate a plan for fixing the inefficiencies in viewing medication data,
- Support the capability for clinicians and pharmacists to have access to all Department of Defense (DOD) data,
- Assess the exchange of information between the VHA and DOD’s pharmacy systems impact on transitioning service members,
- Create a plan for the capability for sending electronic prescriptions to pharmacies outside of the VHA,
- Guarantee that evaluations of electronic health records will consider generation level 3 capabilities, and
- Establish an inventory manager to track medications.

“VA is limited in its ability to interoperate with private providers, provide additional clinical decision support, and more effectively track medications that could impact veterans’ patient safety,” the report concluded. The critical role of pharmacists was highlighted in a recent issue of Evidence-Based Oncology™. Shank et al discussed the integral part played by pharmacists in enhancing transitions of care in patients undergoing cancer treatment through medication reconciliation, education, and post-discharge follow-up to ensure optimal, safe, and effective medication use. The authors write that pharmacists at large cancer centers, who have experience with the treatment regimens, should be able to collaborate with smaller centers and with other facilities such as a skilled nursing home or a long-term acute care facility, to ensure adequate patient care. [Source: MilitaryTimes | Leo Shane III | June 2, 2017 ++]

VA Accountability Update 49 ► Largest Reform to the VA In Its History

With the stroke of a pen, President Trump made what he called one of “the largest reforms to the VA in its history” today with the signing of the Department of Veterans Affairs Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act of 2017. “Today we are taking a very historic action,” the president said. “This law will finally give the VA secretary the authority to remove federal employees who fail and endanger our Veterans — and to do so quickly and effectively.” “In just a short time we’ve already achieved transformative change at the VA and, we’re just getting

started,” Trump added.

VA Secretary Dr. David Shulkin also spoke at the event, and introduced Army Veteran Michael Verardo and his wife Sarah. A sergeant with the 82nd Airborne, Verardo was injured by an IED explosion in Afghanistan in 2010 and has had more than 100 surgeries and countless hours of therapy. After experiencing issues with timely appointments at VA, Verardo met with Shulkin earlier this year and urged reform. “Today is a new day and this administration has fulfilled its promise to put a Veteran in charge of his own care,” Verardo told those gathered for the bill signing. “Thank you for ensuring that we are not forgotten and that we will receive the care that we deserve.” “The president and I are committed to fixing the VA,” Secretary Shulkin explained. “Veterans deserve an organization they can trust.”

Earlier Friday, Shulkin spoke at an event hosted by the Bush Institute on 23 JUN and explained what the new law enables VA to do. “I’m grateful to Congress and the president for moving forward with this,” Shulkin told the morning audience. “There is bipartisan support to help us fix issues that have been broken for a long time.” “I believe that to be able to move people out who have lost their way is part of the solution to be able to fix VA. It’s good news for Veterans, their families. It’s good news for our employees,” Shulkin said. You can watch the signing ceremony event at <https://youtu.be/S33cIdlF6S4>. Coverage starts at the 43:26 mark. [Source: Vantage Point Blog | Leo Shane III | June 23, 2017 ++]

VA Fraud, Waste & Abuse ► Reported 16 thru 30 JUN 2017



Wichita, KS — An Army veteran from Reno County has admitted he pretended to be blind in order to receive more than \$70,000 in benefits. U.S. Attorney Tom Beall announced 12 JUN that 62-year-old **Billy Alumbaugh**, of Turon, pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to defraud the government. His ex-wife, 58-year-old Debra Alumbaugh, also of Turon, pleaded guilty to concealing the crime. Alumbaugh admitted that he received special monthly pension benefits after falsely telling the Veterans Administration he was blind and homebound. In reality, Alumbaugh was able to drive and take part in other routine activities without assistance. Beall says Alumbaugh’s wife accompanied him to medical visits in which they pretended he was blind and needed her assistance. Sentencing is set for 6 SEP. [Source: The Associated Press | June 15, 2017 ++]

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Wilmington, Del — Federal prosecutors say a former nurse at the Wilmington Veterans Affairs Medical Center was sentenced to three years’ probation for stealing more than \$22,000 from a disabled veteran. Acting U.S. Attorney for the District of Delaware David Weiss announced 17 JUN that **Alexander Kudla** was sentenced after pleading guilty to wire fraud. Prosecutors said a disabled veteran needed help withdrawing money from an ATM and asked Kudla to assist. Prosecutors said Kudla withdrew funds for his personal use more than 40 times in 2015. He’s been ordered to repay the stolen money, with \$4,000 due immediately. Kudla no longer works at the VA center. [Source: Associated Press | June 18, 2017 ++]

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Martinsburg WV — A Maryland man was arrested 20 JUN after being indicted on drug charges by a federal grand jury in Wheeling on June 6, 2017, Acting United States Attorney Betsy Steinfeld Jividen announced. **Daniel J. Bochicchio**, of Monkton, Maryland, age 59, was indicted on 15 counts of “Acquiring Fentanyl by Misrepresentation, Fraud, Deception, and Subterfuge.” Bochicchio allegedly acquired fentanyl by fraudulently entering patient information at the Veterans Administration Medical Center in Martinsburg, West Virginia. The crimes are alleged to have occurred from January to March of 2017. An indictment is merely an accusation. A defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty. [Source: DoJ Northern Dist of WV | U.S. Attorney's Office | June 20, 2017 ++]

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Washington DC — Veterans Affairs Secretary David Shulkin said 20 JUN the department was taking immediate steps to remove employees found to have stolen opioid and other drugs from VA medical centers, citing a flawed accountability process that has delayed disciplinary action. Shulkin said 300 out of the VA’s 1,500 pending cases of employee misconduct involve drug theft. He said in response to rising cases of reported drug theft, the department had recently issued new policy to make clear it would have no tolerance for the theft and would proceed with possible disciplinary action. “There will be an investigation. People will have a due process. But if it’s determined that our employees are involved in diverting drugs, there will be zero tolerance and we will move for immediate removal,” Shulkin said. The Associated Press reported last month that federal authorities were investigating dozens of new cases of possible opioid and other drug theft by VA employees, even after the VA announced “zero tolerance” in February.

Since 2009, in only about 3 percent of the reported cases of drug loss or theft have doctors, nurses or pharmacy employees been disciplined, according to VA data obtained by AP. Shulkin disclosed the new efforts as he touted a bill passed by Congress that would make firing employees easier for the beleaguered Department of Veterans Affairs. He acknowledged to reporters at an event sponsored by the Christian Science Monitor that accountability legislation would not likely speed up action in at least 1,200 cases because the alleged misconduct happened before the bill’s passage. Shulkin said the accountability bill was not intended to be “a tool to lead to mass firings” but to remove a smaller group of bad actors at the VA. He said President Donald Trump was expected to sign the bill as early as this week. [Source: Associated Press | Hope Yen | June 20, 2017 ++]

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Morganville, NJ — The owner of a New Jersey computer training center has admitted stealing \$2.8 million from a program designed to help veterans find employment. **Elizabeth Honig** pleaded guilty 21 JUN to theft of government funds. The 52-year-old Morganville, New Jersey, resident faces up to 10 years in prison when she's sentenced Sept. 25. Honig owns the Eatontown-based Computer Insight Learning Center. Federal prosecutors say she helped 182 veterans enroll to receive federal funding under a program designed to help older, unemployed veterans receive training and find employment in high demand occupations. But the vast majority of these veterans were either not eligible or not actually attending the training. Honig admitted logging on to the applications system more than 100 times and certifying that she was the actual veteran who was applying for benefits. [Source: The Associated Press | June 21, 2017,

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Denver, CO — An Army veteran who reportedly lied about his combat record for years to claim disability compensation for post-traumatic stress disorder was convicted this week of making a false statement, the Colorado U.S. Attorney's Office announced 21 JUN. **Cameo Williams Sr.**, 34, of Denver, was found guilty Monday after a five-day trial and faces up to five years in federal prison and a \$250,000 fine. For years, Williams received disability compensation from the Department of Veterans' Affairs while claiming to suffer from PTSD from a combat deployment, the U.S. Attorney's Office said. Williams served a little more than two years in the Army before he was discharged for misconduct. He did not serve overseas.

He told the VA his discharge paperwork didn't mention his deployment because of an Army error, but not only did his personnel file not mention deployment, he never received combat pay and he never had the medical screenings and immunizations required before a deployment. Two soldiers from his unit testified that no one from their unit was deployed during the time Williams said he was overseas, and Williams' medical records also show him attending doctor's appointments in Washington during that time. The case was investigated by the Department of Veterans Affairs Office of the Inspector General. Williams' sentencing hearing has not yet been scheduled. [Source: The Colorado Gazette | Ellie Mulder | June 21, 2017 ++]

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Johnson City, TN — A United States Postal Service contractor pleaded guilty 21 JUN in federal court to stealing mail, specifically 33 packages containing narcotics that were meant for Veterans Affairs patients. **Bronson Cobble** signed a plea agreement last week admitting to a scheme where he stole VA packages and took the medication inside them. On Wednesday, a judge accepted that plea in federal court. The court released Cobble on a \$20,000 bond. He was set to be sentenced on 27 SEP. [Source: WJHL News Channel 11 Staff | June 21, 2017 ++]

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Oklahoma City — The Veterans Affairs Department's Office of the Inspector General found in late JUN that a former research investigator with the department abused the wage and official time systems, claiming thousands of hours of work when he was being compensated elsewhere. The office said the employee, whose name has been redacted from the report, only showed up to the Oklahoma City VA health care facility for 30 of the 409 workdays between his hiring in April 2014 through September 2016. And on many of those days, he was working at Johns Hopkins University, earning a total of 1,374 hours' worth of dual compensation from the government and the university. In addition to earning two paychecks for the same hours of work, the inspector general said the researcher, who was fired in March, worked remotely without proper authorization from his supervisor, Dr. Philip Comp, and he misused official time to travel for non-VA sponsored talks and lectures for at least 66 days.

In total, the employee's alleged malfeasance cost the agency more than \$100,000 in wages. The inspector general's office in part blamed the situation on inattention by Comp, who admitted he "rarely, if ever" checked to see if the employee was working onsite. "We further found that Dr. Comp failed in his supervisory responsibilities by being unaware of Dr. [redacted]'s attendance, yet certifying Dr. [redacted]'s subsidiary timecards as well as VA's electronic and attendance system for hours [he] was not present at the facility and/or did not work," the inspector general wrote. Comp resigned from his position at the VA in March. When interviewed by investigators, the employee under Comp's supervision claimed he would do agency work while at Johns Hopkins, but that he technically was not being dually compensated because the university did not require him to fill out timecards. "Sometimes I was sitting in Hopkins, and I claimed time for the VA here," the employee told officials. "But I would spend a lot of actual time working for Hopkins. So I would be—I would be wrong if I send the same timecard at the same time. Then I'm getting double pay, OK? But the thing is that at Hopkins, I never signed a timecard. So I was under impression myself because, you know, I could work other hours."

The inspector general's office said the employee could not provide sufficient evidence of work he had done for VA while at Hopkins, and noted he could not account for 1,972 hours of paid salary, for a total of \$102,542. Officials referred the matter to the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Western District of Oklahoma, but prosecutors declined to move forward with criminal charges. The report recommended that the Oklahoma City VA health care system examine administrative discipline against the employee, to issue a bill for the hours he claimed but did not work, as well as examine his conduct for ethical violations. It also recommended the possibility of administrative action against Comp. Wade Vlosich, director of the Oklahoma City VA health care system, concurred with the inspector general's findings. He said the employee has been fired and that the office is working to send him a bill for the lost wages. And he noted Comp's acceptance of "voluntary separation from service." [Source: GovExec Today | Erich Wagner | June 26, 2017 ++]

VAMC Aurora CO Update 21 ► Cost Overrun Scapegoat

A former Veterans Affairs Department executive who was harshly criticized by Congress for massive cost overruns at a new Colorado VA medical center said he was never told the price had ballooned to more than \$1.7 billion before he left the agency, and does not know how it happened. "I'm just astounded, quite frankly, I'm absolutely astounded," Glenn Haggstrom told The Associated Press in a rare interview. Haggstrom, who was the VA's top construction official when the project nearly collapsed amid legal disputes and skyrocketing costs, said the last estimate he heard from the builder before he was removed from the project was about \$890 million.

Haggstrom said he had been made a scapegoat, and that responsibility for the failures was widespread within the agency. But he acknowledged that he had a role because he was director of the VA's Office of Acquisition, Logistics and Construction. "As the leader of that organization you do bear the responsibility," said Haggstrom, who retired in March 2015 amid an internal VA investigation into the costs. The medical center, under construction in the Denver suburb of Aurora, has been a monumental embarrassment for the VA.

The initial construction contract was awarded in 2010 with a projected cost around \$590 million. But after years of disputes among the VA, the contractor and the design team, an independent government panel called the Civilian Board of Contract Appeals ruled in December 2014 that the VA had violated the contract by not giving the builders, the Kiewit-Turner joint venture, a design that could be built within budget. The VA then asked the Army Corps of Engineers to estimate the cost, and the answer, delivered in March 2015, was a staggering \$1.73 billion. The Corps took over management of the project, and the medical center is expected to be completed next year for about \$1.7 billion. Multiple investigations concluded the costs got out of hand because the VA did not oversee the project closely enough, did not assign enough officials to it, approved lavish design elements, failed to get the designers and builders to agree on the design and tried to use a complicated form of construction contract that agency executives did not fully understand.

The VA's inspector general, an internal watchdog, said last year that Haggstrom knew the project was veering toward huge cost overruns but didn't tell lawmakers when he testified before Congress in 2013 and 2014. That prompted lawmakers to call for a perjury investigation, but the Justice Department decided last month not to file charges, citing insufficient evidence. Haggstrom told the AP he had been given conflicting information about the project. He said cost projections kept rising, and the highest estimate he saw from Kiewit-Turner was about \$890 million. He said the VA removed him from the project before the Corps of Engineers compiled its estimate. "This thing is a moving target," he said.

Kiewit-Turner spokesman Tom Janssen said the Civilian Board of Contract Appeals clearly faulted the VA for the problems. He quoted from the board's decision: "We find that the behavior of the VA has not comported with the standards of good faith and fair dealing required by law." Haggstrom said the architectural and engineering team had repeatedly assured him it could be built within budget. The architects and engineers, a group of four companies known as the Joint Venture Team, said it had done what the contract required. "The JVT worked diligently to ensure the project was designed to meet the standards set ... within the budget and on time," spokesman Andy Boian said. Haggstrom declined to identify any other VA officials he thought shared the responsibility for the problems. "I'm not going to pin this on anybody because this was a decision that was made by the department," he said.

Haggstrom said he decided to retire because the members of the panel conducting the internal VA inquiry, called an administrative investigation board, did not have skills to sort out what happened. "I didn't want to be a part of that process," he said. Haggstrom said a high-ranking VA official had been pressuring him to retire for weeks, but he declined to say who it was. The investigation board's report, obtained by the AP through an open records request, echoed many criticisms of previous reviews. No one has been fired or criminally charged over the project, angering

members of Congress. Lawmakers were incensed when Haggstrom retired with full benefits, but the VA said he was legally entitled to do so.

Congress this week passed a bill designed to make it easier for the VA to fire employees and allowing the department to reduce an employee's pension for negligence or mismanaging funds — in part a response to the Colorado project. Last year, Congress stripped the VA of the authority to manage large construction projects and turned it over to the Corps of Engineers, also a reaction to the Colorado project. Haggstrom said some VA employees were unfairly criticized for the failures when they were trying to get the project completed, and they made numerous cost-cutting suggestions, most of which were rejected by higher-ups. "They're being vilified for it," he said [Source: The Associated Press | Dan Elliott | June 15, 2017 ++]

VAMC Atlanta Update 04 ► IG Report Shows Sweeping Mismanagement

A new inspector general report shows sweeping mismanagement at Atlanta's VA hospital. Channel 2 investigative reporter Aaron Diamant obtained a copy of the reports that show concerns ranging from safety to sanitation at the DeKalb County facility. "It's very distressing," Sandra Petit told Diamant. "I wish that they would push toward having integrity at all levels." The suicide of Petit's son Joseph inside the Atlanta VA hospital went unnoticed by hospital staff for nearly 24 hours in the middle of another federal investigation in 2013, which linked mismanagement by hospital leaders for three other patient deaths. "They did not respect him as a human being, much less a veteran," Petit said.

According to the new report, during a routine review inspectors identified "system weakness" and were not assured that "clinical managers effectively monitor the professional competency of providers, ... hospital leaders maintain a clean and safe environment in patient care areas ... (or that) clinicians always safely transfer patients from the facility." Diamant showed part of list to Brandie Petit Robinson, who was as emphatic as she was at a congressional field hearing following her brother Joseph's death. "No other family needs to go through what we've been through. The VA should have learned a lesson already," Robinson said. Diamant asked hospital leaders for an interview but got turned down flat. A VA representative sent Diamant an email saying, "We concur with all recommendations outlined in this report and have implemented several actions to correct the findings. Our commitment to the health and well-being of our veterans is unwavering." [Source: WSB-2 TV | Aaron Diamant | Jun 17, 2017++]

VAMC Little Rock AR Update 01 ► Understaffing Causing Safety Concerns

Around two-dozen nurses gathered to picket outside the Little Rock VA Hospital 26 JUN—working to get the attention of commuters, patients, and the VA administration. This following a complaint filed with multiple government agencies alleging understaffing is causing safety concerns. Today, protestors chanted, "safe staffing now." Nurse Betsy Harrison echoed their cries saying the hospital can do better, "Because it's a wonderful place. We care for our veterans. Our veterans are our nation's heroes. It's an honor." The nurses are playing this out publicly because they say a year of back and forth with the administration is not producing any changes: "We're hoping the management is hearing us this time. We have asked, we have begged." Local AFGF President Barbara Casanova says the short-staffing is causing a chain reaction of safety issues: "We're very worried that something could go wrong. We're worried for our veterans; we made a promise when we went to nursing school that we would keep our patients safe... We have even more of a promise to keep our veterans safe." They're encouraged by the

plan the VA released on Friday, and pleased by the turnout for this past weekend's job fair. But say, it will take a while for the changes to effect. In the meantime, they want to see more safe guards: "We want our licenses protected. We want our patients protected." [Source: ABC 7 On Your Side | Elisabeth Armstrong | June 26, 2017 ++]

*** Vets ***



Vet Benefits ~ Seniors Update 02 ► Officials Back Off Cutting IU

Administration officials are backing away from plans to slash tens of thousands of dollars in unemployment benefits from elderly veterans after an outcry from advocates who warned the move could cause significant financial harm to vulnerable veterans. During a Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee hearing on Wednesday, Veterans Affairs Secretary David Shulkin said that he wants to avoid any policy changes that "hurt veterans" and is considering other options to the proposed changes. "The budget is a process, and it became clear this (plan) would hurt some veterans," he said. "I'm really concerned about that ... I'm not going to support policies that hurt veterans."

At issue is a provision in President Donald Trump's \$186.5 billion VA budget for fiscal 2018 that would dramatically change eligibility rules for the department's Individual Unemployability program. Up to 210,000 veterans over the age of 60, at least 7,000 of whom are over 80, could be impacted by the change. Under current rules, the IU program awards payouts at the 100 percent disabled rate to veterans who cannot find work due to service-connected injuries, even if their actual rating decision is less than that. It amounts to an unemployment benefit for veterans not officially labeled as unable to work. Administration officials want to stop those payouts once veterans are eligible for Social Security retirement benefits, arguing that retirement-age individuals should no longer qualify for unemployment benefits. Veterans who cannot collect Social Security would be exempt.

The move would save \$3.2 billion next year alone. Last month, Shulkin told lawmakers the IU changes were "a hard decision" but added that "I don't think we can continue to only expand services and not look at the ones we are delivering." For veterans who aren't already retirement age, the change could largely be offset by their new Social Security payouts. But for veterans already receiving both, the move would mean a sudden loss of a significant income source. The IU payouts can total almost \$20,000 a year. Veterans groups have strongly opposed the proposal.

On 12 JUN, officials from AMVETS sent a letter to Shulkin blasting the changes as "gutting critical benefits for our veterans." Representatives from the group canvassed congressional offices on Tuesday, building support for dumping the IU changes. "These cuts would throw senior citizen veterans in poverty, homeless and even more susceptible to suicide," said Joe Chenelly, National Executive Director at AMVETS. "Our message was that while the budget process is long, these scared veterans need real assurance now that this proposal is a non-starter. We cannot subject these veterans to a long, stressful summer." Before Shulkin's announcement, Chenelly said he was confident that Congress would not support the move. In a statement after the comments, American Legion officials

praised the administration “for coming to their senses and committing to protect the Individual Unemployability program that provides for our most vulnerable veterans and their families.”

Shulkin said he is still committed to looking for ways to be more efficient with taxpayer funds, but not at the expense of veterans’ financial health. “If we were designing this system from the beginning, we wouldn’t have used it for veterans’ retirement,” Shulkin said. “But the end result is that is the benefit. And to withdraw that money now is something that would be very difficult to do.” Earlier this week, officials from the House Appropriations Committee advanced VA budget language for fiscal 2018 without the Individual Unemployability changes. The Senate is expected to move its own budget plans in coming weeks. [Source: MilitaryTimes | Leo Shane III | June 14, 2017 ++]

Vet Jobs Update 223 ► VA VR&E Paid Apprenticeship Training w/PVA

Veterans service organizations (VSOs) play a major role as advocates for the Veteran community, and as partners with VA, to ensure this nation’s Veterans receive the benefits they have earned. An important part of this partnership is to support VSOs as they train their advisors on the benefit process. VA’s [Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment](#) (VR&E) program recently entered in to an agreement with [Paralyzed Veterans of America](#) to participate in an apprenticeship program to train Paralyzed Veterans’ employees on how to assist Veterans to file for and obtain their benefits. A similar program is currently in effect with the Disabled American Veterans organization. Paralyzed Veterans is an advocate for quality health care, spinal cord injury and disease research, VA benefits, and civil rights for Veterans and all people with disabilities. As a service oriented non-profit organization, Paralyzed Veterans employs national service officers to serve Veterans.

“The apprenticeship program with Paralyzed Veterans will put much needed resources into communities nationwide to work with our Veterans and assist them in applying for benefits,” stated Tim Johnston, supervisor for rehabilitation services at VR&E. “This not only gives those accepted into the program a skill, but ensures that Veterans in communities, large and small, have access to trained professionals who can help them understand the process and apply for those benefits they have earned and deserve.” In a memorandum of understanding between the two organizations, Paralyzed Veterans will provide a 36-month on-the-job training program to qualified Veterans who are selected for the apprenticeship program. Most of the apprenticeship is supervised work with some classroom and on-line learning. These are full-time national service officer positions.

Pay during the apprenticeship is supplemented by the VR&E program. For the first 12 months, those selected for the program are paid \$2,890 per month by Paralyzed Veterans, and an additional \$651 from VA as a training allowance. In the remainder of the apprenticeship, Paralyzed Veterans pays \$3,166.66, and VR&E pays \$375 per month for training. The VR&E training allowance to the Veteran is tax-free. VA also pays for the training and necessary supplies. Selection for the program generally comes from two sources. Paralyzed Veterans may notify VR&E that they have a candidate in mind, or a VA vocational rehabilitation counselor can recommend someone for the program. The current memorandum of understanding will be in effect until May 2021. [Source: Vantage Point | Donna Stratford | June 29, 2017++]

Stolen Valor Update 106 ► New Pennsylvania Law

Military fakers in Pennsylvania may want to consider a change of station. The state on Tuesday passed stolen valor legislation that will make impersonating a service member or veteran, or wearing unearned military decorations, a third-degree misdemeanor if it's done "with intent to obtain money, property or other benefit," the legislation states.

The law goes into effect in 60 days. "This legislation is incredibly important because Pennsylvania has the fourth-largest veteran population in the country," Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Wolf said in a statement, "and it is our duty to be certain that benefits for those veterans are available to those who have earned them."

Third-degree misdemeanors in Pennsylvania can result in jail time of up to a year and a fine of up to \$2,000. The law expands upon the federal statute, which provides for a fine and up to a year behind bars for wearing unearned military decorations such as the Medal of Honor, Purple Heart or Combat Action Badge, with the intent to receive some tangible benefit. That law went into effect in 2013, a year after the Supreme Court struck down existing federal stolen valor legislation on free-speech grounds. That 2005 law did not include language limiting punishment to those seeking or obtaining financial benefit; in a case involving a California man who lied about receiving the Medal of Honor, the court held that "falsity alone does not bring speech outside First Amendment protection" and ruled the law unconstitutional. Many states have passed stolen valor legislation in the wake of that ruling. Just in 2015, for instance:

- A Massachusetts law with similar provisions to the Pennsylvania law gives fakers up to a year in jail and a \$1,000 fine.
- A New Jersey law mandated a minimum \$1,000 fine for impersonating a service member or wearing unearned medals, and attempting to benefit from the ruse. The money goes into a scholarship fund for military dependents.
- A Texas law upped the stolen valor penalty in that state from a maximum \$500 fine to a \$2,000 max fine and up to 180 days in jail.

[Source: MilitaryTimes | Kevin Lilley | June 28, 2017 ++]

DoD Disability Severance Update 04 ► Review Eligibility for Some Airmen

Airmen medically separated between Sept. 11, 2001, and Dec. 31, 2009, who had a combined disability rating of 20 percent or less and received separation pay rather than a medical retirement may request a review of their disability rating, according to Air Force officials. Modifications to assigned ratings can potentially allow veterans and their families to receive benefits that were previously unavailable to them. "The intent is to ensure fairness and accuracy as well as consistency across the services," said Troy McIntosh, president of the Physical Disability Board of Review. Those who are eligible and wish to have their rating reviewed may do so by including any documents supporting their case, including: briefs, statements and medical records, according to an Air Force news release. However, they may not appear before the board in person. Applicants will be notified of the board's decision after all documents have been reviewed, according to the release. For more information, visit www.health.mil/PDBR. [Source: AirForceTimes | Ashley Bunch | June 26, 2017 ++]

Medicaid Eligible Vets Update 04 ► Lifeline For 1 In 10 Vets May Be Cut

We are on the eve of Congress enacting radical changes to the American healthcare system, including proposals to significantly restructure the Medicaid program. Republican leadership in the Senate is working to swiftly finalize a bill to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act (ACA). Although many details are still unknown, the House-passed American Health Care Act (AHCA) included proposals to enact per capita caps or block grant Medicaid, resulting in a \$834 billion cut to the program—the single largest source of funding for mental health and substance abuse treatment in the United States. Some Americans, including members of Congress, have a distorted view of what the Medicaid program is and who it serves. One group it serves is an often-overlooked group of the Medicaid

population—America’s veterans, a demographic currently facing a mental healthcare crisis resulting in the highest suicide rate in the country.

Our nation’s current healthcare debate ensuing in the halls of Congress is ignoring the fact that not all veterans receive their health care through the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). In fact, only 40 percent of America’s approximately 22 million veterans are enrolled in and receive all or part of their care through the Veterans Health Administration (VHA). Eligibility depends on minimum service requirements, disability ratings, and discharge status. Additionally, millions of veterans living in rural areas find it impossible to access care at a VA facility. These factors combined leave a significant gap in access to healthcare. For approximately 1.75 million veterans—nearly 1 in 10—Medicaid fills this gap and for many, is the sole source of coverage for primary and specialty healthcare. Efforts to cap and cut Medicaid risk the health and well-being of veterans most in need. In addition, many veterans require intensive care for service-related injuries, including mental health conditions, and are at particular risk if the program is cut.

America’s veterans already face many barriers to accessing quality care and congressional actions to cap and cut Medicaid or phase out Medicaid expansion entirely, would make it impossible for veterans to get necessary health services. In fact, 340,000 veterans would lose their coverage in 2020 if Medicaid expansion is ended. As experts who work with the military community know, stigma is still one of the main reasons veterans are apprehensive in seeking care for a mental health condition. In a culture that demands strength, it is often difficult to step forward and seek help for an injury, such as PTSD, that remains unseen. For this reason, adding another large barrier to accessing mental health services would result in deadly consequences.

Let’s consider for a moment, veterans who served in Iraq or Afghanistan struggling with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), substance use disorder and other mental health conditions who are relying on Medicaid to cover all or part of their care. The mental health therapies and medications they are receiving is calming the nightmares and flashbacks they experience as witnesses of war—putting them on a pathway to recovery. The proposed draconian cuts to Medicaid threaten to end coverage for this population, a group of dedicated Americans who have sacrificed so much for our Nation’s greater good. Men and women who answered the highest call to serve when freedom hung in the balance. Most alarmingly, this proposed cut to care comes at a time when 20 veterans die each day by suicide. This places the risk of suicide for veterans at a 21 percent higher rate than civilians. As a nation, we can and we must do better. [Source: The Hill | Emily Blair | Opinion Contributor | June 21, 2017 ++]

WWII VETS 139 ► Moylan Smith | Invasion of Europe

Moylan "Mo" Smith thumbed through a giant book — The Story of the 390th Bombardment Group — and shook his graying head in wonder. "I'm amazed when I think about how we were able to accomplish what we did," says the Fountain Hills, AZ retiree. "We had to take off in the dark. ... We had thousands of planes flying out from all over England, on instruments. And the problem on D-Day was, the weather was so bad, we had to bomb the beaches through the clouds."

Smith did not set out to be a pilot, let alone lead a squadron of B-17 bombers against Nazi gun placements during the Allied invasion at Normandy. The Philadelphia native joined the Army National Guard in 1940 and was assigned to a field artillery unit. But after the U.S. entered World War II, he put in for the Army Air Forces, which needed to replace pilots killed in action. Smith was trained in a new type of B-17 bomber called a Pathfinder, equipped with radar that could help find targets through cloud cover. From England, he began flying into France and Germany, dodging flak while dropping 500-pound bombs on the enemy. Smith recalls rising from the runway on June 6, 1944, through layers of clouds into an eerie calm. There were no German fighters overhead, no ack-ack guns peppering the sky. Just 20 minutes before troops swarmed the Normandy shore, Smith's 18-plane group

pounded the beach. "We're pretty sure we hit our targets," he says. "We never knew. But we lost the least number of men at Caen."



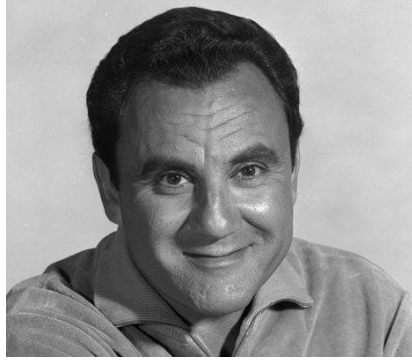
Moylan "Mo" Smith, age 96 in 2014 and During WWII

Smith reloaded in England and was ordered to destroy a bridge, again through cloud cover. He learned years later, from a history book, that his bombs missed the target — but tore up a German panzer division. Smith says he flew 31 missions, including a 7,000-mile shuttle to Russia and back. He never lost a crewmember and came home with two Distinguished Flying Crosses, plus five Air Medals. After his discharge in 1948, Smith remained in the Air Force Reserve for a decade. As a civilian, he went to work for the Insurance Company of North America (which evolved into CIGNA) and became a senior executive.

Smith retired to Arizona 39 years ago. He and his wife of 47 years, Marjorie, had two children and four grandchildren. He also had two children from a prior marriage. Like so many from his generation, combat provided some of his life's most vivid memories — eating pickled fish and cherries in Russia, listening to German propagandist Axis Sally on the radio, sweating through close calls. Smith flashes a smile as he recalls his safe landing in England on D-Day after a treacherous flight home from the second bombing run. "When I stepped off that plane, I was just wringing wet — with sweat," he says. [Source: USA TODAY | Dennis Wagner | June 5, 2014 ++]

Obit | Bill Dana ► 15 JUN 2017

Comedy writer and performer Bill Dana, who won stardom in the 1950s and '60s with his character Jose Jimenez and earned a Bronze Star for his service in the Army in World War II, died 15 JUN at age 92 at his home in Nashville, Tennessee, according to Emerson College, his alma mater. Dana was born William Szathmary Oct. 5, 1924, in Quincy, Massachusetts. He attended the school using GI Bill benefits. After graduation, Dana began writing for the original NBC "Tonight" show, starring Steve Allen, and for Don Adams, a Marine veteran who'd become famous for his role as Maxwell Smart in "Get Smart." It was for a sketch on "The Steve Allen Show" that Dana created Jose Jimenez, which eventually led to his own NBC sitcom, "The Bill Dana Show," which aired from 1963 to 1965.



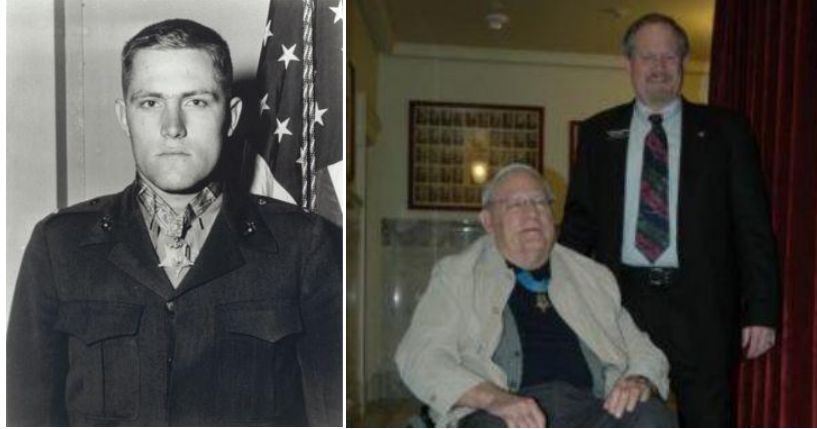
The character's shy, Spanish-accented introduction, "My name ... Jose ... Jimenez," became a national catchphrase. Dana appeared with Ed Sullivan as the iconic host played straight man to Jimenez; in one visit, the character gave his thoughts on becoming the first man to visit Mars. Jimenez — an Air Force officer, in at least one version of the character — became a mascot for the Mercury astronauts, the first group of Americans to reach space. Dana told The New York Times that "The very first words after Al Shepard's liftoff from Deke Slayton on the ground were, 'O.K. Jose, you're on your way.' " Dana would be named an honorary astronaut by the International Aerospace Society. He recorded eight best-selling comedy albums, and made many TV appearances while continuing behind the scenes as a comedy writer. He is survived by his wife, Evelyn. [Source: MilitaryTimes | June 19, 2017 ++]

Obit | Arthur J. Jackson ► 14 JUN 2017

Marine Corps Capt. Arthur J. Jackson, who received the Medal of Honor for killing 50 Japanese soldiers and silencing a dozen enemy pillboxes during the World War II battle of Peleliu, and almost two decades later was forced out of the service after covering up his slaying of an alleged Cuban spy, died June 14 in Boise, Idaho. He was 92. The Congressional Medal of Honor Society announced the death but did not provide a cause. Jackson, then 19, was with the 1st Marine Division in the western Pacific during one of the most grueling battles in that theater of operations. He was among the wave of U.S. forces that landed on Japanese-controlled Peleliu on Sept. 15, 1944, with the intent of overtaking it within days and securing the entire Palau Islands chain in advance of the invasion of the Philippines and Japan.

Instead they met a large, determined and heavily fortified Japanese resistance, about 11,000 troops in all, that inflicted heavy casualties and kept the battle raging for two months before U.S. forces prevailed. Eventually more than 27,000 Americans were involved in the struggle for Peleliu, and they endured one of the highest rates of death and injury in the Pacific, with at least 2,300 killed and 8,400 wounded.

Jackson's unit was ordered to clear the southern end of the island, but on 18 SEP, they were stalled by a storm of enemy gunfire coming from a large Japanese bunker. He was told to move ahead alone and clear it. Loaded up with grenades, he charged the pillbox, raking it with automatic fire while discharging white phosphorus grenades and other explosives. He was credited with killing all 35 occupants. Continuing alone and again at tremendous peril, he repeated the same maneuver at 11 smaller pillboxes that contained another 15 Japanese soldiers. "Stouthearted and indomitable despite the terrific odds, Jackson resolutely maintained control of the platoon's left flank movement throughout his valiant one-man assault and, by his cool decision and relentless fighting spirit during a critical situation, contributed essentially to the complete annihilation of the enemy in the southern sector of the island," read his citation for the Medal of Honor, the military's highest award for valor.



He was wounded both at Peleliu and subsequently at Okinawa, receiving two Purple Hearts. In October 1945, President Harry S. Truman bestowed the medal on then-2nd Lt. Jackson at a White House ceremony. He met with dignitaries including Adm. Chester W. Nimitz and Gen. James H. Doolittle. He was feted in a Manhattan ticker-tape parade, riding in a car with columnist Walter Winchell. Four years later, he joined the Army as a commissioned officer. But after a decade, he returned to the Marines and was serving as a company commander at Guantanamo Bay on Sept. 30, 1961 - during the unnerving interim between the disastrous Bay of Pigs invasion and the Cuban missile crisis.

On that night, then-Capt. Jackson said he was alarmed to find a 44-year-old Cuban, Ruben Lopez, in a restricted part of the base used for ammunition storage. Lopez worked as a bus driver on the site, even though he expressed openly pro-Fidel Castro sympathies and was under surveillance by naval intelligence. On his own initiative, Capt. Jackson decided to eject Lopez with the help of his executive officer, Marine 1st Lt. William Szili. They said they marched him to a long-unused rear gate, but they found the lock rusted shut. Capt. Jackson said he sent Szili to get something to break the lock and, while left alone, Lopez leapt at him. He shot the Cuban with his sidearm. With the assistance of a few other Marines, Capt. Jackson buried Lopez in a shallow grave on the base.

Szili described an atmosphere of heavy drinking on the base - he said he had been with Capt. Jackson at an officers' bar on the night of the killing - and that word of the death leaked during one cocktail party. After the body was discovered, the Defense Department issued a terse statement noting an investigation was underway. The story gained no traction, but Capt. Jackson quietly left the military in March 1962 after being denied a court-martial (and the publicity it could generate) to clear his name. The full tale came to light in April 1963, when Capt. Jackson was poised to appear at a White House event with President John F. Kennedy honoring Medal of Honor recipients. Szili said he had been discharged by that time - under threat of a \$10,000 fine and 10 years in prison if he disclosed the killing - and he was seeking reinstatement.

The Philadelphia Bulletin and the syndicated columnist Jack Anderson reported the coverup, a Cold War blockbuster that had the potential to become an international incident. Capt. Jackson, then working as a \$90-a-week letter carrier in San Jose, sent his regrets to the White House. He stayed mum, but his wife spoke to the San Jose Mercury News to say her husband had been "thrown out" of the corps and pressed into signing a statement forbidding discussion of the incident, lest he face the same fine and imprisonment as Szili. He left 18 months before he was eligible for a full pension. He later worked in a warehouse and managed a pizza parlor before joining the Veterans Administration and retiring as chief of veterans services for Idaho.

Arthur Junior Jackson was born in Cleveland on Oct. 18, 1924, and grew up in Canton, Ohio, and later Portland, Ore., moving for his father's job as a watchmaker during the Depression. He was a high school athlete, lettering in baseball, football and track. After graduation, he left for a construction job in Alaska, helping build a runway at a naval air station near Sitka. After enlisting in the Marine Corps as an infantryman, he distinguished himself during

the New Britain campaign in the Pacific in late 1943. His first marriage, to the former Dolores Bawden, ended in divorce. Survivors include his wife, Kathlyn Doell Jackson of Boise; five children from his first marriage, A.J. Jackson of Ashland OR, Kathy Watson of Rhinelander WI, Susan Claycomb of Lakewood CO Lori Hickerson of Littleton CO and Monte Jackson of Boise ID; seven grandchildren; and seven great-grandsons.

Capt. Jackson, who said he long felt "ashamed" of his Guantanamo killing, did not speak publicly about the incident until an Idaho Statesman reporter interviewed him in 2013. He said his key concern was his "understanding" of a treaty between the United States and Cuba that could have resulted in his detention in a notorious Cuban prison. "I hoped no one would find out," he told the newspaper. "The world found out." Funeral services are pending. There are 71 recipients alive today. [Source: Winston-Salem Journal | June 17, 2017 ++]

Obit | Robert E. Woods ► 30 MAY 2017

Robert E. Woods, the only man to take the field as a starter in the Army-Navy football game as both a cadet and a midshipman, died 30 MAY at his home in Darien, Connecticut. He was 96. Woods played halfback for the Naval Academy's freshman team in 1940, then moved to the varsity in 1941. Struggling academically, he was "asked to leave" Annapolis in the spring of 1942, his son Bob Woods told Military Times. He would resurface at West Point with an assist from legendary football coach Earl "Red" Blaik, playing halfback on the 1942 and 1943 teams. He would be chosen first captain of the Class of 1945, be featured on the cover of Time magazine as part of a piece on the "Long Grey Line," and marry Geraldine "Gerry" Harrington at West Point the day after graduation. He's survived by Gerry, his wife of 72 years, along with three sons, seven grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.



West Pointer Woods | June 11, 1945 (left) and Robert and Geraldine "Gerry" Woods in Martha's Vineyard in 2012.

An Army West Point athletics spokesman said Woods was the only player to suit up on both sides of the rivalry game; a Navy athletics spokesman said official records on such personnel details aren't available, though Woods' status as the only starter on both sides has, to his knowledge, never been challenged. "Our sincere condolences to the Woods family," the Naval Academy athletics department said in a statement. "Although he finished up at West Point, he started his career at the Naval Academy and will always be part of the Navy Football Brotherhood. Mr. Woods' legacy as the only person to ever start in the Army-Navy game for both teams will likely never be duplicated again."

After graduation, Woods served in Japan with Allied occupation forces under Gen. Douglas MacArthur. In uniform for about nine years, he moved into executive management positions in the private sector for the next four

decades, first at the Continental Can Company and later at Doubleday Publishing, where he worked until the mid-1980s. A baseball and track standout at West Point in addition to his time on the gridiron, Woods remained active well into retirement — he played in a Saturday morning tennis group until he was 89, his son said. His athletic prowess and longevity may have been matched by his passion for jazz, specifically the trumpet: He began playing as a teenager for money during the Great Depression and didn't stop until two years before he died, spending decades playing alongside professional musicians in and around his hometown and frequently showing off his talent in the big city.

Woods “didn’t study as hard as I probably should have” at Annapolis, he told Jack Cavanaugh, a former New York Times sports writer and the author of the Army football history book “Mr. Inside and Mr. Outside.” After his time at the Naval Academy ended, he came home to Corning, New York, and reached out to Blaik, who was entering his second season as Army’s head football coach and had been beaten by the Midshipmen 14-6 a few months prior. Initial talks fell through, and with World War II in full force, Woods attempted to enlist in the Marine Corps — he told Cavanaugh that the recruiting station was closed when he arrived. “Later that day, after I got home, I got a call from Red Blaik, asking me if I was still interested in coming to West Point,” Woods says in Cavanaugh’s book, “but that since I was going to turn 22 the next day, I had better hurry up to get there so that I could get sworn in by midnight.”

What followed was a 270-mile race from Corning to West Point, through fog and rain. Woods and his father were pulled over for speeding about 10 miles from campus, but instead of a ticket, they received a police escort the rest of the way to Blaik’s house. “The coach then hurried us over to the adjutant general’s house and he swore me in just minutes before midnight,” Woods says in Cavanaugh’s book. Navy blanked Army in 1942 in Annapolis (14-0) and in 1943 at West Point (13-0), the only football rivalry games played on campus since the 1890s. Wartime travel restrictions were severe; to balance the crowd, some members of the host team’s student body were ordered to cheer for the visitors. Woods’ football eligibility was gone after the 1943 season. He coached the junior varsity team in 1944 while beginning his time as first captain, the top cadet chosen by school leadership for academic, military and athletic prowess.

His gridiron career may have been brief, but it covered two service academies and straddled two eras — Woods went from leather helmets in Annapolis to plastic ones at West Point, and his senior year at the academy (1944-1945) would mark the beginning of Army’s domination of the national college football scene. Both Felix “Doc” Blanchard and Glenn Davis debuted in the Army varsity backfield that season. Nicknamed “Mr. Inside” and “Mr. Outside,” they led the team to a 27-0-1 record over three years. Both earned Heisman Trophies as the nation’s top college player (Blanchard in 1945, Davis in ’46), and neither finished lower than fourth in the voting for the award throughout their college careers. The 1944 team averaged 56 points per game and a margin of victory of more than 52 points, both records that still stand. The academy’s football success and the ongoing war put West Point, and its first captain, in the national spotlight. The June 11, 1945, issue of Time magazine featured an image of Woods on its cover; the oil painting on which it was based always held a prominent place in the family home, Bob Woods said.

His football days for Army weren’t quite over with, though. “In the occupational Army, in Asia or Japan, where he was, what the colonels and generals would do, they would recruit football players,” Bob Woods said. “It got pretty boring, fast, in occupying Japan. My father was in the 11th Airborne (Division), and he was under a general, I can’t remember his name. But my dad got recruited for football. And they had the championship football team in Asia. ... “He would say those guys were even better than the West Point teams. They were like pros. They were from all over the place.” The senior Woods took in Army football games in person through 2009 or 2010, his son said, and always sought company to watch the annual rivalry game. While he held fond memories of his time in Annapolis, he had a clear rooting interest. “He wouldn’t tell you this bluntly, but my impression ... clearly he was an Army guy for football,” Bob Woods said.

Bob was born in Corning, NY to Arthur and Eleanora Woods. He is survived by his wife of 72 years, Geraldine, three sons and their wives: Bob Jr. and Mary, Jerry and Kate, and Chris and Debbie; seven grandchildren and three

great grandchildren. A 29 JUN memorial was set for Woods in his hometown, his son said. He will be interred at West Point's columbarium, near the chapel where he and Gerry were married, at a later date. [Source: MilitaryTimes | Kevin Lilley | June 20, 2017 ++]

Retiree Appreciation Days ► As of 30 JUN 2017

Retiree Appreciation Days (RADs) are designed with all veterans in mind. They're a great source of the latest information for retirees and Family members in your area. RADs vary from installation to installation, but, in general, they provide an opportunity to renew acquaintances, listen to guest speakers, renew ID Cards, get medical checkups, and various other services. Some RADs include special events such as dinners or golf tournaments. Due to budget constraints, some RADs may be cancelled or rescheduled. Also, scheduled appearances of DFAS representatives may not be possible. If you plan to travel long distances to attend a RAD, before traveling, you should call the sponsoring RSO to ensure the RAD will held as scheduled and, if applicable, whether or not DFAS reps will be available. The current updated schedule for 2017 is available at:

== HTML: http://www.hostmtb.org/RADs_and_Other_Retiree-Veterans_Events.html

== PDF: http://www.hostmtb.org/RADs_and_Other_Retiree-Veterans_Events.pdf

== Word: http://www.hostmtb.org/RADs_and_Other_Retiree-Veterans_Events.doc

This schedule has been expanded to include dates for retiree\veteterans activity related events such as Seminars, Veterans Town Hall Meetings, Stand Downs, Resource\Career Fairs and Other Military Retiree & Veterans Related Events for all military services. To get more info about a particular event, mouseover or click on the event under Event Location. Please report comments, changes, corrections, new RADs and other military retiree\veteterans related events to the Events Schedule Manager at milton.bell126@gmail.com.

(NOTE: Attendance at some events may require military ID, VA enrollment or DD214."@“ indicates event requires registration\RSVP.)For more information call the phone numbers indicated on the schedule of the Retirement Services Officer (RSO) sponsoring the RAD.

To quickly locate events in your geographic area just click on the appropriate State\Territory\Country listed at the top of the schedule. They will look like this:

**AK AL AR AS AZ CA CO CT DC DE FL GA GU HI IA ID IL IN KS KY LA MA
MD ME MI MN MO MS MT NC ND NE NH NJ NM NV NY OH OK OR PA PR RI
SC SD TN TX UT VA VI VT WA WI WV WY Belgium Germany Italy Japan Korea
Netherlands Thailand**

[Source: RAD List Manager | Milton Bell | June 30, 2017 ++]

Vet Hiring Fairs ► 01 thru 31 JUL 2017

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce's (USCC) Hiring Our Heroes program employment workshops are available in conjunction with hundreds of their hiring fairs. These workshops are designed to help veterans and military spouses and include resume writing, interview skills, and one-on-one mentoring. For details of each you should click on the city next to the date in the below list. To participate, sign up for the workshop in addition to registering (if indicated) for the hiring fairs which are shown below for the next month. For more information about the USCC Hiring Our Heroes Program, Military Spouse Program, Transition Assistance, GE Employment Workshops, Resume Engine,

etc. visit the U.S. Chamber of Commerce’s website at <http://www.hiringourheroes.org/hiringourheroes/events> . Vet Job Fairs being conducted in the next 30 days in state order include:



Recruit Military Listings *Note: Click on site for details*

Indianapolis IN Veterans Job Fair	July 13
St. Louis MO Veterans Job Fair	July 13
Eastern Region Virtual Career Fair	July 18
Sacramento CA Veterans Job Fair	July 20
Tampa FL Veterans Job Fair	July 20
Joint Base Lewis-McChord Job Fair	July 26
Dayton OH Veterans Job Fair (Wright Patterson AFB)	July 27
Fort TX Hood Job Fair	July 27

U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation Listings

[Joint Base San Antonio Transition Summit](#) July 11 to July 13
Fort Sam Houston, TX [Details](#) [Register](#)

[American Legion Department of Virginia Hiring Fair](#) July 13 - 9:00 am to 2:00 pm
Herndon, VA [Details](#) [Register](#)

[First Annual Tri-State New England Hiring Event](#) July 19 - 10:00 am to 2:00 pm
Portsmouth, NH [Details](#) [Register](#)

Veteran Career/Job Fairs

[Fort Sam Houston, TX](#) July 12, 2017, 8am - 7pm [More information](#)
Fort Sam Houston Community Center 1395 Chaffee Road, Fort Sam Houston, TX 78234
* TRANSITION SUMMIT (Day 1 of 2)

- 8-9 a.m. | Registration
- 9 a.m.-4 p.m. | Industry briefs for job seekers
- 5-7 p.m. | Networking reception

[Herndon, VA](#) July 13, 2017, 9am - 1pm [More information](#)

Hilton Washington Dulles Airport 13869 Park Center Road, Herndon, VA 20171

* AMERICAN LEGION DEPARTMENT OF VIRGINIA HIRING FAIR

- 9-10 a.m. | Personal branding workshop
- 10 a.m.-1 p.m. | Hiring fair

Fort Sam Houston, TX July 13, 2017, 8am - 4pm **More information**

Fort Sam Houston Community Center 1395 Chaffee Road, Fort Sam Houston, TX 78234

* TRANSITION SUMMIT (Day 2 of 2)

- 8-9 a.m. | Registration
- 9 a.m.-Noon | General session including workshops, interactive forums and a panel discussion for job seekers
- 1-4 p.m. | Hiring fair

Herndon, VA July 19, 2017, 3pm - 7pm **More information**

Security University, 510 Spring Street, Herndon, VA 20170

Portsmouth, NH July 19, 2017, 10am - 2pm **More information**

Great Bay Community College, 320 Corporate Drive, Portsmouth, NH 03801

Enterprise, AL July 27, 2017, 8:30am - 1pm **More information**

Enterprise High School, 1801 Boll Weevil Circle, Enterprise, AL 36330

- 8:30-10 a.m. | LinkedIn workshop
- 10 a.m.-1 p.m. | Hiring fair

[Source: Recruit Military <https://events.recruitmilitary.com> & <https://www.uschamberfoundation.org/events/hiringfairs> & <https://www.legion.org/careers/jobfairs> | June 30, 2017 ++]

Vet State Benefits & Discounts ► Louisiana 2017

The state of Kentucky provides several benefits to veterans as indicated below. To obtain information on these plus discounts listed on the Military and Veterans Discount Center (MCVDC) website, refer to the attachment to this Bulletin titled, “**Vet State Benefits & Discounts – LA** for an overview of the below benefits. Benefits are available to veterans who are residents of the state. For a more detailed explanation of each of the following refer to <http://vetaffairs.la.gov> & <http://www.military.com/benefits/veteran-state-benefits/louisiana-state-veterans-benefits.html> and

- Housing Benefits
- Financial Assistance Benefits
- Employment Assistance
- Education Benefits
- Other State Veteran Benefits
- Discounts

[Source: <http://www.military.com/benefits/veteran-state-benefits> | June 2017 ++]

*** Vet Legislation ***



Note: To check status on any veteran related legislation go to <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress> for any House or Senate bill introduced in the 115th Congress. Bills are listed in reverse numerical order for House and then Senate. Bills are normally initially assigned to a congressional committee to consider and amend before sending them on to the House or Senate as a whole.

Vet Health Care 07 ► H.R.2372 | AHCA Tax Credit Issue Resolved

House lawmakers on 15 JUN quietly passed a fix regarding veterans status under the proposed new health care bill H.R.1628 that Republican supporters hope will silence one part of the opposition to the measure. The legislation passed by voice vote without opposition. The bill states that veterans who are eligible for medical care through the Department of Veterans Affairs but not using those services are eligible for health insurance tax credits under the American Health Care Act. Republicans billed the measure as nothing more than bookkeeping work. “I’m confident that the IRS would interpret the relevant language of the (ACHA) in the same manner as it did similar language in the Affordable Care Act under the Obama administration,” said Rep. Phil Roe (R-TN), chairman of the House Veterans’ Affairs Committee. “Nevertheless, I’m glad that the passage of (this) act today will once and for all put an end to posturing over this issue and codify Congress’ expectation (for veterans).”

But Democrats labeled the move as an overdue correction of one of the health care overhaul’s multiple mistakes. In March, House leaders dropped language specifically stating that veterans not using VA services would be receive the tax credits, because it potentially violated Senate legislative rules. The Republicans insisted the move was of no consequence, because the exception is already spelled out in existing Internal Revenue Service rules. But Democrats said it potentially cheated 7 million veterans out of the tax credit, because of questions surrounding the applicability of the past IRS rules. “This bill is evidence that the loophole is an issue,” said Rep. Mark Taka (D-CA). “While I am glad we are making this fix, I am concerned that the rushed process for considering the ACHA led to the House passing disruptive health care legislation without fully understanding its impact on millions of Americans, especially our nation’s veterans.”

The Senate is unlikely to take up the legislation unless it reaches a compromise on the larger health care overhaul plan, since it’s only applicable if that measure passes. Takano said in a statement that while the veterans tax credit issue is now fixed, “there are far more severe problems for veterans under the AHCA that remain unresolved.” They include cuts to Medicaid, revised requirements for mandated health benefit rules, and eliminating some protections for individuals with pre-existing conditions. [Source: MilitaryTimes | Leo Shane III | June 15, 2017 ++]

Medicare Part B Enrollment Update 01 ► S.1461/HR.2243 | HEARTS Act

A bill was introduced in the Senate on 28 JUN to end a practice that inadvertently penalizes some medically retired servicemembers by forcing them to pay higher Medicare rates in order to maintain their Tricare health coverage. Sen. Joni Ernst (R-IA), a combat veteran, introduced the Health Equity and Access for Returning Troops and Servicemembers, or HEARTS, Act. A House version of the legislation was introduced in April. Ernst’s office called the practice of charging some veterans higher rates to keep their Tricare an “unintended burden” that’s “plaguing wounded servicemembers.” “Our veterans deserve every opportunity for a smooth transition back into civilian life,” Ernst said in a statement. “The HEARTS Act gives medically retired servicemembers returning to work access to the health benefits they were originally entitled to, and have rightfully earned, after selflessly serving our country.”

When servicemembers are injured and medically retired, they are eligible to enroll in the military’s Tricare health plan. If their injuries prevent them from working when they return home, veterans can receive Social Security disability payments. After two years of those payments, they become eligible for Medicare. At that point, they must

enroll in Medicare Part B to keep their Tricare for Life supplement. Enrolling in Medicare means having to pay higher rates than they would with their traditional Tricare plan. Even if they start working again and stop their Social Security payments, veterans stay eligible for Medicare for another 8.5 years – meaning they have to pay the higher rates throughout that time.

The HEARTS Act would alter how Medicare and Tricare work with each other and allow veterans to opt-out of Medicare Part B. “The fact is that every American servicemember willingly makes a commitment to put life and limb on the line in defense of freedom. In return, there is the promise that when they return home, they have access to quality affordable health care,” Rep. Sam Johnson (R-TX), who introduced the bill in the House, said earlier this year. “Unfortunately, right now, many of our most seriously injured military retirees eventually lose access to their traditional, affordable Tricare and cannot regain it for years if they return to work. This is wrong.” [Source: Stars & Stripes | Lowary | June 6, 2017 ++]

*** Military ***



USS Gerald A. Ford Update 06 ► Plane Launch/Recovery Troubles

The newest and costliest \$13 billion U.S. aircraft carrier, praised by President Donald Trump and delivered to the Navy on 31 MAY with fanfare, has been dogged by trouble with fundamentals: launching jets from its deck and catching them when they land. Now, it turns out that the system used to capture jets landing on the USS Gerald R. Ford ballooned in cost, tripling to \$961 million from \$301 million, according to Navy documents obtained by Bloomberg News. While the Navy says the landing system has been fixed, the next-generation carrier built by Huntington Ingalls Industries Inc. still hasn't been cleared to launch F/A-18 jets carrying a full complement of fuel tanks under their wings, a handicap that could limit their effectiveness in combat.



The twin issues underscore the technical and cost challenges for the planned three-ship, \$42 billion Ford class of carriers that is drawing increased congressional scrutiny. The Navy and Trump want to increase the carrier fleet from 11 authorized by law to 12. Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman John McCain has long criticized the Navy's management of the Ford program and joined a congressional effort that capped funding for the Ford at \$12.9 billion and for a second ship under construction, the John F. Kennedy, at \$11.4 billion. He's likely to grill Navy officials about the newly disclosed landing system costs and troubled launch system during a hearing Thursday on the Navy budget.

The surge in costs for the development phase of the advanced arresting gear -- built by General Atomics to catch planes landing -- was borne by the Navy under terms of that contract. In addition, the program acquisition costs of the three systems built so far more than doubled to \$532 million each from \$226 million, an increase which must be paid by closely held General Atomics. General Atomics spokeswoman Meghan Ehlke referred all questions to the Navy "per our contract." Captain Thurraya Kent, a Navy spokeswoman, said the contractor forfeited all bonus fees it could have made during the 2009-2016 development phase and the service is reviewing the company's master schedule for the John F. Kennedy weekly. The Navy also has placed personnel at the company's facility in Rancho Bernardo, California, to monitor progress.

The Navy reported the cost increase to Congress last month because it breached thresholds established under a 1982 law for major weapons systems. It's separate from the 22 percent increase since 2010 for construction of the carrier, which resulted in Congress imposing the \$12.9 billion cost cap. Trump, who has repeatedly complained about the high cost of major weapons systems -- and then taken credit for reining them in -- did that in a Coast Guard commencement address on 17 MAY. The Ford "had a little bit of an overrun problem before I got here, you know that. Still going to have an overrun problem; we came in when it was finished, but we're going to save some good money." Trump said "when we build the new aircraft carriers, they're going to be built under budget and ahead of schedule, just remember that." Still, the Government Accountability Office said in a new report 13 JUN that the John F. Kennedy's cost estimate "is not reliable and does not address lessons learned" from the Ford's performance.

Trump scoffed at the carrier's troubled electromagnetic launch system in a Time magazine interview last month, saying it doesn't work and "you have to be Albert Einstein to figure it out." Saying the Navy should stick with an old-fashioned steam-driven catapult, he added, "The digital costs hundreds of millions of dollars more money and it's no good." Until the catapult problem, which was discovered in 2014, is resolved it limits how much combat fuel can be carried in planes being launched from the carrier's deck. That "would preclude normal employment" of the F/A-18E/F Super Hornet and the radar-jamming Growler version because "the aircraft are limited in the types of missions that they can accomplish" without added under-wing fuel tanks, Army Lieutenant Colonel Roger Cabiness, spokesman for the Pentagon's testing office, said in an email. He said the Navy asserts that testing on the ground has solved a software flaw that caused excessive vibrations of those fuel tanks.

"The Navy estimates the software problem will be resolved and software updates incorporated" on the carrier for testing at sea during the vessel's post-shakedown phase between May and November of 2018, Michael Land, spokesman for the Naval Air Systems Command, said in an email. He said actual launches of jets with wing tanks will follow in 2019. The Navy still has time to fix the catapult issue. Though the Ford has been delivered, the ship is not scheduled to be declared ready for operations until 2020, with first actual deployment planned for about 2022, according to spokeswoman Kent. [Source: Bloomberg | Anthony Capaccio | June 14, 2017 ++]

USMC Drones ► 3-D Printed Nibbler

Marines are set to launch a 3-D-printed drone into combat zones in the coming weeks, reports 3D Printing Industry. The drone, nicknamed the "Nibbler," is the first drone of its kind to be used in a combat theater by conventional

forces. The Nibbler’s simple design is comprised of a few prefabricated components including a motor, batteries and a spool of filament. The body of the drone is printed using 3-D technology. “Our team is very enthusiastic about the Nibbler, but even more enthusiastic about what it represents for the future,” Capt. Chris J. Wood told Defense Systems.



U.S. Marines with II Marine Expeditionary Force assemble the Nibbler drone.

Marines have embraced the technology — they view it as compatible with the “adapt and overcome” mentality of the Marine Corps. “Imagine being in a forward deployed environment, and just like Amazon, you can ‘order’ the weapons and equipment you need for the next day’s mission from an entire catalog of possible solutions,” Wood said to Defense Systems. “These solutions can all be upgraded literally overnight, in order to integrate new components or adapt to new requirements. On a very small scale, Nibbler shows us that this is possible right now with the group 1 UAS family of systems.” [Source: MarineCorpsTimes | Mackenzie Wolf | June 22, 2017 ++]

Military Reenlistment ► **Navy Relaxing Up or Out Policy**

If you’re a petty officer who’s having trouble advancing in your rating, your career might not be over. A new Navy policy change, announced 21 JUN, relaxes the “high year tenure” policies that have forced many enlisted sailors to age out of the service. When the new policy takes effect on 1 AUG, E-4 through E-6 sailors on active duty or full-time support status will get a few more years to make rank before they’re discharged. Here are how those ranks’ maximum time in rate changes:

- E-4: increases from 8 years to 10 years
- E-5: increases from 14 years to 16 years
- E-6: increases from 20 years to 22 years

This is potentially good news for thousands of high-performing sailors who, in recent years, could lose out on career-saving promotions if there simply wasn’t enough room for timely advancement in their jammed-up job fields. “There are some ratings where people can’t advance for some reason,” Sharon Anderson, a spokeswoman for the chief of naval information, told Task & Purpose, “but we want to keep those people and their experience in” the service.

The service calls the policy change a response to “critical manning” issues, in particular “filling key sea duty and other high priority billets” that the Navy anticipates being understaffed as more sailors rotate onto shore duty in the coming years. Anderson said the Navy expected 600 petty officers to be retained in fiscal 2017 under the new policy, with 2,200 more up for retention in fiscal 2018. “Extending our high-year tenure policy for journeyman sailors is part of the larger strategy to ensure we are able to mitigate the effects caused by the FY12-13 cohort

groups rotating to shore duty,” Lt. Cmdr. Nate Christensen, a chief of naval personnel spokesman, told Navy Times. “We are aggressively using all force shaping levers to man the fleet.”

For sailors still butting up against the up-or-out ceiling, there’s always another chance for relief: The Navy added that it “will continue to offer HYT waivers for enlisted Sailors who volunteer for sea duty on a case-by-case basis.” If your wife, your lover, your lady is the sea, you’d better put a ring on it. [Source: Task & Purpose | Adam Weinstein | June 21, 2017 ++]

USS Fitzgerald (DDG-62) ► Collision Investigations Initiated

A U.S. warship struck by a container vessel in Japanese waters failed to respond to warning signals or take evasive action before a collision that killed seven of its crew, according to a report of the incident by the Philippine cargo ship’s captain. Multiple U.S. and Japanese investigations are under way into how the guided missile destroyer USS Fitzgerald and the much larger ACX Crystal container ship collided in clear weather south of Tokyo Bay in the early hours of 17 JUN.



In the first detailed account from one of those directly involved, the cargo ship’s captain said the ACX Crystal had signaled with flashing lights after the Fitzgerald “suddenly” steamed on to a course to cross its path. The container ship steered hard to starboard (right) to avoid the warship, but hit the Fitzgerald 10 minutes later at 1:30 a.m., according to a copy of Captain Ronald Advincula’s report to Japanese ship owner Dainichi Investment Corporation that was seen by Reuters. The U.S. Navy declined to comment and Reuters was not able to independently verify the account.

The collision tore a gash below the Fitzgerald’s waterline, killing seven sailors in what was the greatest loss of life on a U.S. Navy vessel since the USS Cole was bombed in Yemen’s Aden harbor in 2000. Those who died were in their berthing compartments, while the Fitzgerald’s commander was injured in his cabin, suggesting that no alarm warning of an imminent collision was sounded. A spokesman for the U.S. Navy’s Seventh Fleet in Yokosuka, the Fitzgerald’s home port, said he was unable to comment on an ongoing investigation.

The incident has spurred six investigations, including two internal hearings by the U.S. Navy and a probe by the United States Coast Guard (USCG) on behalf of the National Transportation Safety Board. The Japan Transport Safety Board, the JCG and the Philippines government are also conducting separate investigations. Spokesmen from the Japan Coast Guard (JCG), U.S. Coast Guard and ship owner, Dainichi Invest, also declined to comment. Reuters was not able to contact Advincula, who was no longer in Japan. The investigations will examine witness testimony and electronic data to determine how a naval destroyer fitted with sophisticated radar could be struck by a vessel more than three times its size.

Another focus of the probes has been the length of time it took the ACX Crystal to report the collision. The JCG says it was first notified at 2:25 a.m., nearly an hour after the accident. In his report, the ACX Crystal's captain said there was "confusion" on his ship's bridge, and that it turned around and returned to the collision site after continuing for 6 nautical miles (11 km). Shipping data in Thomson Reuters Eikon shows that the ACX Crystal, chartered by Japan's Nippon Yusen KK, made a complete U-turn between 12:58 a.m. and 2:46 a.m. [Source: Reuters | Tom Kelly & Nobuhiro Kubo | June 26, 2017 ++]

Army Manning Levels ► Army is Hiring - Will Reach 1.8M by End of SEP

Since taking office, President Trump has ceded significant control over military decisions to Defense Secretary James Mattis and his generals, and this week Mattis is expected to announce that about 4,000 more troops will be sent to Afghanistan. That's in addition to the 8,400 already there. But it is not just deployment decisions that are now in the hands of the Pentagon. On the campaign trail, candidate Donald Trump promised to rebuild the military, and the generals have taken him at his word. Reversing what was to have been a reduction in troops to 989,000 by 2018, driven in large part by budget caps imposed in 2011, the Army is now adding 28,000 soldiers. It has announced that it is on track to have a force of 1.018 million by the end of the fiscal year in September. The numbers break down like this: 476,000 regular Army troops (up by 16,000), 343,000 in the Army National Guard (up by 8,000), and 199,000 in the Army Reserve (up by 4,000).

With the troop strength of the Marines at almost 184,000, that should give America more than 1.2 million ground troops. That compares with 1.6 million for China, which Vice says is the "largest standing ground force in the world." Estimates differ, but when all military forces – navies and air forces -- are added together, the WorldAtlas says that China has more citizens in uniform than any other nation, at about 2.3 million. WorldAtlas puts the U.S. in second place at about 1.5 million. However, it looks like their count is on the low side, since adding active-duty U.S. Navy and Air Force personnel – 322,900 and 317,000, respectively -- to the 1.2 million members of the Army and Marines produces a bigger number, more than 1.8 million. Still, at some points during the Vietnam War, the U.S. military had almost twice that number – or more than 3.5 million personnel.

Whatever the exact number of current troops, there is one measure that puts the U.S. definitively in first place: budget size. By 2016, Vice says, China was spending about \$144 billion on its military. According to the Defense Department, the 2018 budget proposal sent to Congress by the Trump administration is for \$639.1 billion -- \$52 billion over the defense budget caps. In order to put more boots on the ground, the Army is spending big, offering re-enlistment bonuses for selected soldiers of up to \$90,000 for a four-year commitment. On 6 JUN the AP reported that the Army had shelled out over \$26 million in the previous two weeks, and it expects to spend more than \$380 million in bonuses in 2017. Among the soldiers eligible for big bonuses are those working in cryptography, cyber operations, intelligence and special ops. "The top line message is that the Army is hiring," Maj. Gen. Jason Evans, chief of the Human Resources Command, told the AP. [Source: The Fiscal Times | Ciro Scotti | June 20, 2017 ++]

DIRECT Tool Suite ► Natural/CBRNE Disaster Communications

Army National Guard soldiers will soon be able to provide first responders with network and phone communications to keep them operational when local infrastructures stop working after a disaster, Army officials said 14 JUN. The Army is getting ready to field the new Disaster Incident Response Emergency Communications Terminal (DIRECT) tool suite to all U.S. states and territories where the National Guard operates, officials said in a release. "In a disaster situation, interoperable communications between the military, first responders and other [non-government] agencies is always critical," Maj. Gen. Timothy McKeithen, National Guard deputy director, said in the release. "Lessons learned from Hurricane Katrina [taught us that] it's all about timing — a few minutes, compared to an hour or days, in communicating is huge when it comes to your property, life and family members."



The Army is projecting fielding completion for 2021. With this new tool, first responders can focus on their mission rather than having to worry about communication, officials said. The system will help with this by bridging different communication formats — radios, cell phone, internet telephone — so if one responder only has a radio and the other has a cell phone, the two will still be capable of communicating with each other between those two devices. "That interoperability will allow us to move quicker, to act quicker and get things done," McKeithen said. The bridging capability "allows us to communicate from a radio to a cell phone, land line or another radio on a different frequency," said Maj. Gen. Garrett S. Yee, acting director of Cybersecurity Directorate, Office of the Chief Information Officer/G-6.

The concept is designed to enable communications on a local level in a variety of contingencies. "In a domestic operation, whether it be a natural disaster or a CBRNE [chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, explosives] event, DIRECT enables and enhances the communication capabilities between the first responders, the military, and local township, county, and state authorities," said Lt. Col. Joseph Yawn, deputy brigade commander for the Delaware Army National Guard's 261st Theater Tactical Signal Brigade. DIRECT also enables a reach-back capability — with the use of the WIN-T network, commercial wireless 4G LTE and commercial phone and internet — providing disaster responders the opportunity for information and leadership from experts anywhere in the world during a disaster, the Army said.

DIRECT will replace the Army National Guard's legacy Joint Incident Site Communication Capability (JISCC.) Although JISCC assisted first responder communications, it did not enable the military and first responders to directly communicate over the Army's robust WIN-T satellite--based network, which enables mission command and voice, video and data communications anywhere in the world without need of static infrastructure. Additionally, unlike JISCC, DIRECT falls under a funded Army program of record, so training and sustainment are built into the program. This stability will enable the Guard to more cost effectively operate, manage and maintain the equipment. [Source: ArmyTimes | Ashley Bunch | June 14, 2017 ++]

Military Spouse Employment Update 02 ► Under Examination

Military spouse employment problems are "under active examination" by the Trump administration, presidential counselor Kellyanne Conway said 14 JUN during an event sponsored by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation in Washington. "I'm happy this particular issue of military spouse unemployment and underemployment is part of my portfolio, and I share that issue with a number of people in the administration," said Conway, who spoke at a military spouse employment summit, part of the chamber's Hiring Our Heroes program.



Trump administration, presidential counselor Kellyanne Conway

Among the issues being looked at, Conway said, are problems with regulations regarding professional licensing. Spouses have long complained about the difficulties and expense in taking their careers across state lines. Conway said military families shouldn't have to choose between paying a \$500 fee for a professional license and buying groceries or other necessities for that month. Jill Biden, the wife of former Vice President Joe Biden and an advocate for military families, said that with everything military spouses manage on the home front, they shouldn't be worried about paying bills and facing career hurdles. Both Biden and Conway noted the effect spouse employment has on retention and readiness. Biden cited a Hiring Our Heroes survey released at the event that found 81 percent of military spouses and their service members have discussed the possibility of leaving service, with one of the top factors in deciding whether to stay being the availability of careers for both spouses.

The survey involved 1,273 spouses of active-duty or recently separated service members. The report notes a decline in the unemployment rate of spouses from 23 percent to 16 percent in 2017, according to the survey; the new figure is still four times the national unemployment rate. Spouses who do find a job may take one that's below their qualification level, harming their career progression, the report states. And almost half of spouses in their current job make less money than they did in a previous job. "This is the beginning of a conversation that's long overdue," said Eric Eversole, president of Hiring our Heroes. "It's time to take action and start to address the critical challenges of our military families." [Source: MilitaryTimes | Karen Jowers | June 14, 2017 ++]

USS Independence (CV-62) Update 01 ► Puget Sound Cleaning Lawsuit

The Suquamish Tribe and two environmental groups are suing the U.S. Navy, saying it sent harmful pollutants into Puget Sound when it cleaned a decommissioned aircraft carrier near Bremerton. The mothballed 60,000-ton (60,963-metric ton) USS Independence was cleaned in waters near Bremerton, Washington, in January and February

before it was towed to Brownsville, Texas, this in JUN to be dismantled. The tribe, Washington Environmental Council and Puget Soundkeeper Alliance allege that the Navy violated clean-water laws by not obtaining a permit when it scraped the ship's hull and underwater components and sent pollution into the water. The lawsuit was filed in federal court in Tacoma.

While the decommissioned Independence is no longer at Naval Base Kitsap, other mothballed Navy ships remain, the groups said. They want to ensure that the Navy doesn't conduct similar hull cleaning activities on those ships in the future and without obtaining a permit. A Navy spokeswoman did not immediately provide a comment when reached on 13 JUN. Navy spokeswoman Colleen O'Rourke previously said that skilled divers gently scrubbed marine growth on the hull of the ship to prevent the possible transfer of invasive species. The Suquamish Tribe estimates that between 49 to 73 dump truck loads of debris such as paint chips, copper, zinc and other metals from the former USS Independence went directly into Sinclair Inlet, a waterway already suffering from water quality problems.

The tribe said it raised concerns about the potential impact of the project with the Navy. But the Navy moved forward without determining what impacts the cleaning would have on Puget Sound, Suquamish Tribal Chairman Leonard Forsman said in a statement 13 JUN. "Though we do respect the Navy's mission, we do not believe they should be exempt from regulations that other vessel owners routinely follow," he said. Studies have shown that copper is harmful to salmon and other marine life because it can disrupt the fish's sense of smell, which they use to avoid predators or find their spawning streams. Mindy Roberts, Puget Sound director for the Washington Environmental Council, said that the region has spent a lot of money cleaning up decades of contamination in Puget Sound. "We cannot have the Puget Sound Naval Shipyard disregarding reasonable pollution controls," she said. [Source: The Associated Press | Phuong Le | June 14, 2017 ++]

Navy Uniform Changes Update 04 ► Ball Cap Wearing, Earrings ++

Navy officials have changed uniform regulations for female sailors wearing ball caps and will now allow a hair bun through the cap's opening, a 21 JUN Navy release said. It's a move that reflects reality, as many female sailors had already been quietly wearing their hair this way for years. Chief of Naval Operations Adm. John Richardson decided to push forward after a 6 JUN all hands call in San Diego. The release outlined several other uniform changes ranging from earring authorization to new uniforms for prisoners in the Navy's brigs. "Effective immediately you can now wear your cap with the bun through the hole in the back above the strap," Richardson said in a Facebook video addressing the Fleet. "I think this will be more comfortable and will look a lot better. Thanks to the Lt. j.g. out there for making that known to me. We promised to fix it and now it's fixed." The message also authorizes



- Women to wear white pearl or synthetic pearl earrings, as well as round cut white diamonds or white synthetic diamond earrings with their dress uniforms. The earring must be 4 millimeters to 6 millimeters in size.

- Navy officials also say the supply of the soon-to-be-discontinued Navy Working Uniform Type I maternity blouses are running thin due to production cuts in preparation for the Type III working uniform becoming available in the Fall. Pregnant sailors can now wear Type III maternity uniforms if they're unable to purchase the Type Is.
- Sailors assigned to the Defense Health Agency and Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency are now authorized to wear the identification badges of the commands but only while assigned those units. Currently, prisoners in the Navy's brigs wear their respective service uniform while confined. Starting in July, however, the Navy will transition everyone, regardless of service, to one of two new "Standard Prisoner Uniforms." Officials say the reason for the shift is to "enhance correctional security."
- Prisoners in a pre-trial status will wear a brown uniform, while khaki will be the color worn by post-trial prisoners.

[Source: NavyTimes | Mark Faram | June 21, 2017 ++]

Transgender Troops Update 05 ► Six Month Delay on Enlistments Sought

Military chiefs will seek a six-month delay before letting transgender people enlist in their services, officials said 23 JUN. After meetings this week, the service leaders hammered out an agreement that rejected Army and Air Force requests for a two-year wait and reflected broader concerns that a longer delay would trigger criticism on Capitol Hill, officials familiar with the talks told The Associated Press. The new request for a delay will go to Defense Secretary Jim Mattis for a final decision, said the officials, who weren't authorized to discuss the internal deliberations publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity.

Transgender service members have been able to serve openly in the military since last year, when former Defense Secretary Ash Carter ended the ban, declaring it the right thing to do. Since 1 OCT, transgender troops have been able to receive medical care and start formally changing their gender identifications in the Pentagon's personnel system. But Carter also gave the services until 1 JUL to develop policies to allow people already identifying as transgender to newly join the military, if they meet physical, medical and other standards, and have been stable in their identified genders for 18 months. The military chiefs had said they needed time to study the issue and its effects on the readiness of the force before taking that step.

Officials said 23 JUN that the chiefs believe the extra half-year would give the four military services time to gauge if currently serving transgender troops are facing problems and what necessary changes the military bases might have to make. The chiefs of the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps discussed the matter with Deputy Defense Secretary Robert Work on 22 JUN, officials said. Stephen Peters, spokesman for Human Rights Campaign, said the group is disappointed with the delay request. "Each day that passes without implementing the final piece of this important policy harms our military readiness and restricts the Armed Forces' ability to recruit the best and the brightest," said Peters, a Marine veteran. "There are thousands of transgender service members openly and proudly serving our nation today, and as they've proven time and time again, what matters is the ability to get the job done — not their gender identity."

Already, there are as many as 250 service members in the process of transitioning to their preferred genders or who have been approved to formally change gender within the Pentagon's personnel system, according to several defense officials. According to several officials familiar with the matter, three of the four services wanted more time. In recent weeks, Navy officials suggested they would be ready to begin enlistment in July but asked for a one-year delay, largely to accommodate a request from the Marine Corps for more time, officials said. The Navy secretary also oversees the Marine Corps. The Army and Air Force wanted a two-year delay to further study the issue, said the officials, who were not authorized to talk about the internal discussion publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity.

Officials said there was a broad recognition that allowing transgender individuals to enlist affects each service differently. They described the biggest challenge as the infantry. They said the discussions aimed at a solution that would give recruits the best chance of succeeding, while ensuring the services maintain the best standards for entry into the military. Service chiefs will also require that transgender recruits be stable in their preferred genders for at least two years, an increase from Carter's earlier plan to allow 18 months, the officials said. The chiefs also want to review the policy in a year to see how things are working, the officials said. Key concerns are whether currently enlisted troops have had medical or other issues that cause delays or problems with their ability to deploy or meet physical or other standards for their jobs. Military leaders also want to review how transgender troops are treated, if they're discriminated against or have had disciplinary problems, the officials said. Gen. Joseph Dunford, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told a Senate committee last week there have been some issues identified with recruiting transgender individuals that "some of the service chiefs believe need to be resolved before we move forward." He said Mattis is reviewing the matter.

The military services have various ways of counting the number of transgender troops currently serving. The Pentagon has refused to release any data. But officials said there are 42 servicemembers across the Army, including the National Guard and Reserve, who have been approved to change their gender identities in the personnel system. At least 40 more are in the process of transitioning, they said. Officials said there are about 160 sailors in the Navy who are somewhere in the process of gender transition. That could include counseling, hormone treatment or gender reassignment surgery. And about "a handful" of Marines have come forward to seek medical care involving gender transition, and there are possibly others going through the process with their commanders, officials said. The Air Force refused to release any numbers, and other officials did not know those details. A RAND study found that there are between 2,500 and 7,000 transgender service members in the active duty military, and another 1,500 to 4,000 in the reserves. [Source: The Associated Press | Lolita C. Baldor | June 23, 2017 ++]

Military Deserters Update 01 ► A1C Rudy Redd Victor Remains ID'ed

Airman 1st Class Rudy Redd Victor, who was stationed at Holloman Air Force Base in New Mexico, went missing in 1974. Now, Victor's remains have been identified — almost exactly 43 years after he vanished and decades after his remains were found in Wolf Creek Canyon in Montana. According to the Air Force, Victor was on leave visiting family in Arizona and Colorado at the time of his disappearance. The 20-year-old was last seen on June 15, 1974, and was determined to be absent without leave six days later, when he did not return to duty. The military classified Victor as a deserter on July 21, 1974, and four years later, the FBI closed Victor's missing person case with no leads.



Airman First Class Rudy Victor Redd

While Victor's remains were identified in June 2017 through dental records, his skull was actually turned in to the Lewis and Clark County coroner in 1984 and found in the canyon two years prior to that by a brand inspector who kept it as a souvenir, according to Independent Record. On June 8, 2017, investigators received a dental match on an unknown skull found in Montana in 1982. After 43 years, Investigators returned to the site, where they found more remains, which were tested with identifiers pointing to Victor. However, the case went cold and the skull was unidentified after tests proved inconclusive, said the Independent Record.

Last year, an Air Force cold case unit reviewed the file and loaded Victor's information into the National Missing and Unidentified Person System. The Montana medical examiner had also entered the information for the unidentified skull in 2014, said Air Force officials. On 8 JUN of this year, Victor's dental records confirmed the skull found in Wolf Creek Canyon belonged to him. "It's never easy to lose a loved one, it's even more difficult when that person's whereabouts are unknown," said Sheriff Leo Dutton of the Lewis and Clark Sheriff's Office in Montana. "This is a case where the original investigation was conducted well with technology available, and our coroner's office was able to take advantage of this new technology to identify the unknown remains they've been holding for quite some time. Fortunately for all citizens, the U. S. Air Force does the same." According to the Air Force, Victor's military records have been fixed, and he is no longer listed as being AWOL, since it has been determined he was on leave during the time of his death. [Source: AirForceTimes | Ashley Bunch | June 24, 2017++]

Military Pay Raise 2018 Update 01 ► Stop Cutting Or Change Rules

House lawmakers want White House officials to either stop cutting back on military pay raises or change the federal rules governing how those rates are set. Next week, members of the House Armed Services Committee are expected to approve a \$640 billion defense authorization plan which includes a 2.4 percent pay raise for troops starting next January. That's 0.3 percentage points above what the White House proposed in its budget plan last month. On 22 JUN, committee chairman Rep. Mac Thornberry (R-TX) highlighted the bigger raise as "number one on my list" of important defense provisions and noted that the 2.4 percent is what service members and their families are "entitled."

This year's Pentagon budget proposal is the fifth in a row where military planners have recommended a raise below the Employment Cost Index, the expected rise in private sector wages and the statutory standard for troop's paycheck hikes. Last year was the first time in that stretch that lawmakers overrode the president's smaller pay hike request, arguing that years of trims had raised concerns about growing wage inequality between the military and private sector. Thornberry said he was disappointed to see the new administration follow the same pattern this year. "This administration did what the previous administration has done, which was to knock that down," he said. "If we need to change the formula, maybe we need to change the formula. But the way the formula is, it's based on economic indicators. If we're going to try and keep pay competitive, we ought to follow the formula."

Outside advocates have argued that for years, saying that even small trims to pay raises risk recruiting and retention problems in the future. But Pentagon leaders have said the smaller raises can create significant savings for the military, which can be directed to other top personnel priorities like training and readiness. The proposed 2.1 percent raise is expected to save the department \$200 million next year and \$1.4 billion over the next five years when compared to the 2.4 percent figure. Earlier this month, Defense Secretary James Mattis called current military wages "competitive" and said he is focused on finding the right balance for the defense budget. "For the enlisted

ranks, we probably have a better benefits package than most places,” he told lawmakers during a Senate hearing. “Not all of them. There are some out in Silicon Valley that can probably beat us hands down. But when you look across the United States, we’re drawing in very high quality people because we are competitive.”

Lawmakers want more troops, new criminal penalties in defense budget proposal Dana Atkins, president of the Military Officers Association of America, took exception to that analysis. “When it comes to the pay raise, his assessment of what constitutes “competitive” may be correct for the youngest enlistee who faces the prospects of a minimum wage or something close to it,” he said. “However, for those currently serving among the other ranks, the difference of 0.3 percent and its cumulative effect starts to matter. It matters even more for those about to retire. For all those continuing to serve, we owe them the pay they deserve at least comparable with their civilian counterparts.” MOAA officials estimate the gap between military and civilian pay currently sits around 3 percent. [Source: MilitaryTimes | Leo Shane III| June 25, 2017 ++]

Aerial Combat ► Days Of American Dogfighting Might Be Over

One of the greatest combat pilots in history was a German named Manfred von Richthofen, also known as the Red Baron, who shot down nearly 80 enemy aircraft in World War I. A lot has changed since the days of the Red Baron, as technology has rapidly advanced and unmanned drones have begun to fill the skies over conflict spots around the globe. The proliferation of drones is changing the role and meaning of air combat and calling into question the U.S. military’s policy on awarding aerial combat victories. Does it count if a pilot shoots down a drone? What if a remotely-piloted aircraft, manned by a pilot in Nevada, shoots down a fighter jet?

In just the past month, U.S. fighter jets have managed to score three aerial victories — two against Iranian Shahed 129 drones and one against a manned Syrian Su-22 fighter jet. The last air-to-air kill by an American pilot was nearly 20 years ago in Bosnia, when Lt. Col Michael Geczy, flying an F-16, shot down a Serbian MiG-29 with an AIM-120 AMRAAM missile. Dogfighting and aerial combat have had a relatively non-existent role in the U.S. military since the 1990s. During the first Gulf War, U.S. pilots scored 39 aerial combat victories. They scored another nine over Bosnia from 1994 to 1999, with zero U.S. aircraft being shot down during that period, according to research by Daniel Haulman, a historian for the Air Force. In Vietnam, the kill ratio was far worse — for every plane shot down, the U.S. lost two, according to Haulman.

America’s entrance into the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq in the early 2000s saw zero aerial combat — in part because Russian MiGs in Afghanistan at the time were largely inoperable, and the U.S. destroyed what few aircraft remained during the onset of the war. U.S. pilots decimated most of Iraq’s air force during the first Gulf War, and few Iraqi pilots were brave enough to engage coalition aircraft during the 2003 invasion, according to Haulman’s research. To claim the coveted title of “ace,” it takes at least five aerial combat victories, said a spokesperson for the Air Force. And for nearly 20 years, it appeared the days of American dogfighting might be over, especially as unmanned aircraft began to fill the skies in America’s wars overseas. That period now appears to be over.

On June 8 and again on June 20, U.S. Air Force F-15Es shot down armed Iranian Shahed 129 drones over Syria — just northeast of the U.S. garrison at Tanf where special operations forces are training anti-ISIS fighters. On June 18, a Navy F/A-18E Super Hornet downed a manned Su-22 after it threatened Syrian Democratic Forces near the village of Ja-Din, which is south of the Tabqa dam near Raqqa.

The U.S. military’s policy on awarding aerial combat credits is a topic that has not been discussed for some time. “The Air Force may award an aerial victory credit to an Air Force pilot or crew that destroys an in-flight enemy aerial vehicle, manned or not, armed or not,” an Air Force spokesperson said. According to the spokesperson, that applies to drone pilots who shoot down manned or unmanned aircraft. If a drone pilot shoots down five or more MiG-29s, though unlikely, that pilot would be eligible for five aerial combat victories and could be deemed a “flying

ace.” Though the policy may be controversial to many, as the threat and size of drones vary greatly, it follows a historical trend. As technology has advanced, the definition of an “ace” has molded to fit the technology of the time.

In World War II, the term “observer ace” was coined for tail gunners like Michael Arooth of the 379th Bomb Group, who was credited with downing 17 aircraft but was not the pilot of the aircraft. He received the Distinguished Flying Cross for his heroic feats. In Vietnam, Capt. Charles DeBellevue, flying as a weapons system operator, became the first Air Force navigator to earn ace status after shooting down six enemy aircraft. He was the highest scoring ace in Vietnam and received the Air Force Cross, the service’s second-highest award for valor, for his actions. The last U.S. flying ace was Capt. Richard Ritchie, who downed five enemy aircraft in Vietnam in an F-4 Phantom II. [Source: AirForceTimes | Shawn Snow | June 24, 2017 ++]

*** Military History ***



Battle of Okinawa ▶ Remembrance

Sunao Oshiro’s eyes moistened as the 84-year-old made his yearly pilgrimage to the granite wall in Naha inscribed with the names of his family. Oshiro was only 11 when the Battle of Okinawa came to his tiny home island of Ie Shima, which lies just off the coast of Okinawa’s main island. He was huddled in a cave with his parents and four younger brothers when a bomb landed on the island, killing his entire family and 48 village residents. Oshiro said he felt a hand pull him out of the rubble. He was one of only three to survive. “Why am I the only one who survived?” Oshiro asked about his family. “If it was God’s will, what sin had my young brothers committed to be killed? I have kept asking myself these questions.”



Okinawans mourn for lost relatives during the Irei no Hi ceremony at Okinawa Peace Memorial Park in Naha, Okinawa, Friday, June 23, 2017

Oshiro visited Okinawa Peace Memorial Park on Friday for the annual Irei no Hi ceremony, which marked the 72nd anniversary of the Battle of Okinawa. The battle began April 1, 1945, and lasted for 82 days. It claimed more than 14,000 Americans who lost their lives during or after the fighting, about 110,000 Japanese troops and at least 140,000 Okinawan civilians, though the total number of civilian deaths may never be known. The battle spelled utter devastation for the people of Okinawa, and its reverberations can still be felt in the island's passionate anti-war movement. However, for the allies, it was pivotal. With airfields close to the Japanese mainland in their possession, they could begin the final assault on the Japanese homeland that would end World War II, which began with the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor 3½ years earlier. The war ended several months after the Battle of Okinawa.

As those who remember the horrors get older, attendees stressed the importance of passing their experiences on to the next generation. Setsuko Kurita, 74, visits the memorial each year, all the way from Nagoya on the mainland. This year, she was accompanied by her granddaughter, Kaho, 12, who lives on Okinawa. Kurita recalled seeing off her uncle from an airport near Nagoya. He was a student of the Imperial Naval Air Corps. He died on Okinawa at 20, and his remains have not been recovered. Kaho said she looked for her great-uncle's name on the memorial because she often hears his story from her grandmother. "I found it and I prayed for him," she said.

The day began, as it does every year, with a small contingent of Marines, sailors, veterans and diplomats laying wreaths at the part of the monument dedicated to the battle's American losses. Lt. Gen. Lawrence Nicholson, III Marine Expeditionary Force commander, said attendees owe a debt to every name inscribed on the ever-stretching granite walls, which means maintaining a strong alliance with Japan and its people, especially those on Okinawa, and ensuring regional security and prosperity. "This is hallowed ground," Nicholson said. "We honor them by the way we live our lives every day. Their sacrifices can't be in vain." George Cabrera of Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 9723 said he could "feel" the sacrifice made by those who fell in battle. "This date is to remember and honor those who gave their lives to give us the freedom we enjoy today," he said.

About 5,000 people then packed into a white tent to escape the unrelenting summer heat. Okinawa's anti-base governor, Takeshi Onaga, used the platform to talk about last year's killing of an Okinawan woman in which an American base worker was charged. His attention then turned to the controversial relocation of Marine Corps Air Station Futenma. "I cannot tolerate the situation in which the central government forcefully carries out the project at Henoko, ignoring the voices of Okinawa against it," Onaga said, drawing applause from about half the crowd. "I will work closely with the people of Okinawa to block the construction with an unwavering determination." Prime Minister Shinzo Abe told the crowd he was resolved not to let the disaster of war be repeated again. "The present situation of a large presence of the military on Okinawa is not acceptable," he said. "I am resolved to reduce the burden of Okinawa and provide a maximum support for promotion of Okinawa's economic activities." When asked after the ceremony how to handle a lawsuit over Henoko that is expected to be filed by Onaga as early as next month, Abe said he would do his best to close Futenma at the earliest possible date and would follow a court-mediated settlement to proceed with the construction.

Most attendees, however, were not focused on politics. They were thinking about the horrors they had endured and the lives that were lost. "Five or six Imperial soldiers suddenly appeared at our cave, surrounded my mother and shouted at gunpoint, 'You must kill your children, or you all have to leave the cave,'" recalled Kinuko Ishihara during an interview with Stars and Stripes before the event. Ishihara was 7 years old during the battle. "We left the cave, leaving what small amount of salt and water we had there by their demand," she said. "My mother, who had burned her legs, could barely walk." Her brother, Tadao, helped her mother, and Ishihara carried her 1-year-old sister, Fujiko, on her back and held hands with her 3-year-old sister, Tsugiko. "We wandered the sugarcane fields that had been burned by flamethrowers. Under the rains of naval gunfire, flamethrowers, motor shells and bombing from B-29 bombers, people were running about trying to escape. We really did not know where we were going. We merely followed people ahead of us, while pieces of human bodies kept flying over our heads."

She recalled losing sight of her mother and brother. “When I finally found my mother and brother trapped under rocks, their bodies were already cold with their intestines scattered around,” Ishihara said. “Horried, I cried out and stepped back. The scene was etched into my mind, and the incurable wounds that deeply seated in my heart haunt me throughout my life.” She then realized that Fujiko was dead, still strapped to her back. Tsugiko later died in her arms. Her father died fighting in the battle. “I witnessed a gruesome hell on earth that is beyond description,” she said. “What we Okinawans have nurtured and longed for through the horrible war is the wish for lasting peace.” [Source: Stars & Stripes | Matthew M. Burke/ June 26, 2017 ++]

Alaska Highway ► 75th Anniversary of WWII Project

Leonard Larkins and nearly 4,000 other segregated black soldiers helped build a highway across Alaska and Canada during World War II, a contribution largely ignored for decades but drawing attention as the 75th anniversary approaches. In harsh conditions and tough terrain, it took the soldiers working from the north just over eight months to meet up with white soldiers coming from the south to connect the two segments on Oct. 25, 1942. The 1,500-mile (2,400-kilometer) route set the foundation for the only land link to Alaska.

The project to build a supply route between Alaska and Canada used 11,000 troops from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers divided by race, working under a backdrop of segregation and discrimination. The soldiers connected the road in Canada's Yukon Territory east of the border of what was then the U.S. territory of Alaska. A photo of a smiling black soldier shaking hands with a cigarette-dangling white soldier became emblematic of their effort. State lawmakers voted this year to set aside each 25 OCT to honor black soldiers who worked on the Alcan Highway, now called the Alaska Highway. They note the soldiers' work became a factor in the integration of the Army in 1948. With the anniversary of the highway's completion approaching, its history is gaining attention with multiple events in Alaska this summer. Larkins, now 96 and living in New Orleans, applauds lawmakers for finally recognizing their role. "It's way past time," said Larkins, who recently was back in Alaska for commemoration events.



A road link between Alaska and the Lower 48 was long a dream for territorial officials, but disagreements over a route and necessity caused delays until December 1941. The Japanese attack on Hawaii's Pearl Harbor sparked an urgency to build the link out of concern that the U.S. territory and West Coast shipping lanes also were vulnerable.

The southwest tip of Alaska's Aleutian Islands chain is just 750 miles (1,206 kilometers) from Japan. Larkins worked on both sides of the border with the 93rd Engineers, one of several black regiments sent north to help cut and hack through virgin wilderness. Along the way were clouds of mosquitoes, boggy land, permafrost and temperatures ranging from 90 degrees to minus 70 during one of the coldest years on record.

The soldiers slept in tents or in military metal structures called Quonset huts between duties like road cleanup and bridge building, Larkins said. He wasn't directly touched by the racial discrimination of the time, although he remembers black soldiers doing all the work, while white officers supervised them. His most vivid recollection remains the bone-chilling temperatures — shocking to the young man from Louisiana. "So cold," Larkins recalled in a phone interview. "You can't stand there too long, you know. It's entirely too cold." Black soldiers also faced racism from military leaders and were kept away from Alaska settlements. The Army's Alaska commander at the time, Gen. Simon Bolivar Buckner Jr., a Confederate general's son, wrote that he feared the soldiers would settle in the state and have children with "Indians and Eskimos," according to a letter cited by historians.

Before the project, black soldiers were considered incapable of front-line duty or sensitive deployments and were largely relegated to housekeeping and clerk duties, said historian and author Lael Morgan, who researched the project for its 50th anniversary. However, a shortage of men prompted the deployment of black soldiers to help carve out the initial route, said Morgan, who is largely credited with introducing their story to modern audiences.

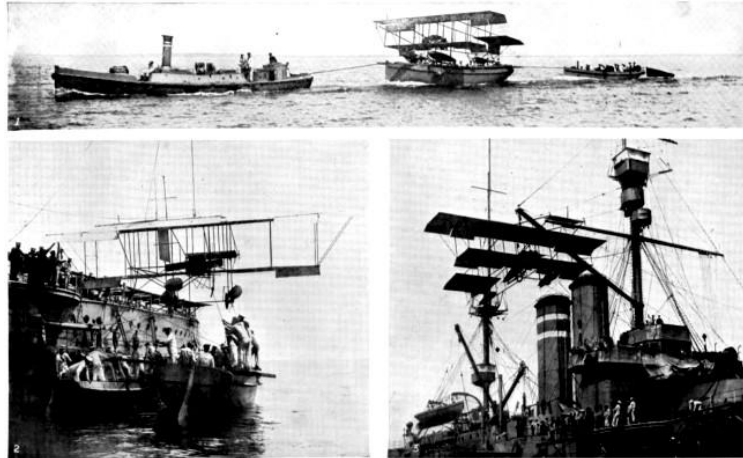
The gravel road opened to supply trucks and other vehicles in November 1942. The following year, contractors worked on the permanent road, following much of the original route. A 1944 military documentary called it "one of the wonders of the modern world." The highway, which runs from Dawson Creek in British Columbia to Alaska's Delta Junction, opened to general civilian traffic in 1948. But little more than a historical footnote mentioned the black soldiers, with only a fraction of photographs showing them. "I'm delighted that credit is finally going to where credit is due," Morgan said. "We owe them for a job well done."

The recognition didn't come without dissent. Several people testified in favor of honoring all who worked on the highway — a stance adopted by Republican state Rep. David Eastman of Wasilla, who cast the only no vote. Singling out a group for their race is another form of segregation, in his view. State Sen. Tom Begich said the point of the recognition was not to minimize anyone's work but to acknowledge a group that played a role in the battle for integration, whose contribution was historically downplayed. "We often acknowledge the construction of the Alcan," the Anchorage Democrat said. "This is simply going a step further and saying there was a contribution made by African Americans as well." [Source: The Associated Press | Rachel d'Oro | June 27, 2017 ++]

Insanely Daring Air Raids ► No. 1 | The Cuxhaven Raid

Air raids were one of the military strategies that were used to attack enemies using fighter planes which would drop bombs and blow buildings apart. This task was perhaps the most dangerous and terrifying mission during the times of war. However, many brave aviators risked their lives and conducted daring raids against insane odds. Following covers one often of the most daring raids to ever been conducted in history, the story behind the raids and the crews who flew the military planes.

During the early stages of the war, the Germans had built giant airships called Zeppelins which had intimidated the British. They were faster than the fighter planes of that time and the Germans flew and roamed with them over the UK airspace unmolested. Also, the Germans had built large storage sheds for the Zeppelins, and they became impenetrable when the British attacked. With all these looming their mind, the British hatched a plan which involved using nine Royal Naval Air Service seaplanes to find and bomb the German airship shed near Cuxhaven.



On the day of the raid, the Harwich Force escorted three seaplane carriers (Engadine, Riviera, and Empress) to a position twelve miles due west of Heligoland, which was considered to be a suitable position to commence operations. While the fog, low cloud, and anti-aircraft fire prevented the raid from being a complete success, one of the British airplanes found the German fleet – and promptly flew off after the German warships opened up on it. The second airplane sighted and attacked a German destroyer while the third spotted the German cruisers Stralsund and Graudenz. Several German sites were attacked, and the British planes returned unmolested. The raid became a turning point to military tactics, and the British proved that shipborne air strikes were possible.

Military History Anniversaries ▶ 1 thru 15 JUL

Significant events in U.S. Military History over the next 15 days are listed in the attachment to this Bulletin titled, **“Military History Anniversaries 1 thru 15 July”**. [Source: This Day in History <http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history> | Jun 2017 ++]

Medal Of Honor Story ▶ Ronald E. Rosser | Korea



Go to <https://youtu.be/p4Xy-qr4azI> to listen to former Cpl. Ronald E. Rosser describe his time as a forward observer in the Korean War during which he was awarded the Medal of Honor r. [Source: The American Legion | May 2017 ++]

Medal of Honor Citations ► Richard E. Fleming | WWII



*The President of the United States in the name of The Congress
takes pleasure in presenting the
Medal of Honor posthumously
to*

Richard E. Fleming

Rank and organization: Captain, U.S. Marine Corps Reserve

Place and date: Battle of Midway, June 5, 1942

Entered service: 1939

Born: 2 November 1917, St. Paul MN

Citation

For extraordinary heroism and conspicuous intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty as Flight Officer, Marine Scout Bombing Squadron 241, during action against enemy Japanese forces in the battle of Midway on 4 and 5 June 1942. When his Squadron Commander was shot down during the initial attack upon an enemy aircraft carrier, Capt. Fleming led the remainder of the division with such fearless determination that he dived his own plane to the perilously low altitude of 400 feet before releasing his bomb. Although his craft was riddled by 179 hits in the blistering hail of fire that burst upon him from Japanese fighter guns and antiaircraft batteries, he pulled out with only 2 minor wounds inflicted upon himself. On the night of 4 June, when the squadron commander lost his way and became separated from the others, Capt. Fleming brought his own plane in for a safe landing at its base despite hazardous weather conditions and total darkness. The following day, after less than 4 hours' sleep, he led the second division of his squadron in a coordinated glide-bombing and dive-bombing assault upon a Japanese battleship. Undeterred by a fateful approach glide, during which his ship was struck and set afire, he grimly pressed home his attack to an altitude of 500 feet, released his bomb to score a near miss on the stern of his target, then crashed to the sea in flames. His dauntless perseverance and unyielding devotion to duty were in keeping with the highest traditions of the U.S. Naval Service.



Fleming was born in Saint Paul, Minnesota on November 2, 1917. He attended Saint Thomas Military Academy and graduated in the Class of 1935. During his senior year he was chosen as top student officer. From Saint Thomas, he entered the University of Minnesota and became president of Delta Kappa Epsilon fraternity. He received his Bachelor of Arts degree in 1939. Soon after graduation, he enlisted in the Marine Corps Reserve and applied for flight training. He was sent to the Naval Air Station in Pensacola, Florida, for training and finished at the top of his class in 1940. He was promoted to first lieutenant in April 1942 and to captain a month later.

Captain Fleming's first duty station was the Naval Air Base in San Diego, California. Ten days after World War II began, he flew from Pearl Harbor to Midway Island. He fought in the Battle of Midway as Flight Officer of Marine Scout Bombing Squadron 241. When squadron commander Lofton Henderson was shot down during the initial attack on a Japanese aircraft carrier, Fleming took command of the unit. Leaving the remainder of his formation, he dived to the perilously low altitude of 400 ft (120 m), exposing himself to enemy fire in order to score a hit on the ship.

The following day, June 5, 1942, Capt. Fleming led the second division of his squadron in a mass dive-bombing assault on the Mikuma. Putting his plane into an approach glide, he again dived low and succeeded in scoring a near-miss on the objective. His plane, hit by anti-aircraft fire, caught fire. Unable to pull out of his dive, Capt. Fleming, his plane a mass of flames, crashed into the sea. His gunner, Private first class George Albert Toms, was also killed.

For "extraordinary heroism and conspicuous gallantry above and beyond the call of duty," Capt. Fleming was posthumously awarded the nation's highest military decoration — the Medal of Honor, while Pfc. Toms received the Distinguished Flying Cross. On November 24, 1942, President Franklin Roosevelt presented the Medal of Honor to Capt. Fleming's mother.

The "battleship" attacked by Capt. Fleming was actually the heavy cruiser Mikuma. Interestingly, despite the clear language in Fleming's Medal of Honor citation, which noted (correctly) his having achieved a near miss and then crashing into the sea, the common wisdom of the battle has often had Fleming striking Mikuma with his bomb, and then crashing his aircraft onto her aft turrets. This construction is based upon the eyewitness accounts of both a Japanese naval officer and Fleming's wingman. Some sources state that the wreckage of Fleming's plane is shown in the very famous image of Mikuma in a pre-sinking state on the early evening of 6 JUN,. Wreckage located on the roof of #4 turret has commonly been ascribed as that of Fleming's aircraft. However, Mikuma had suffered catastrophic damage from the detonation of her own Type 93 torpedo mounts, which were located immediately forward of the main battery turrets, on the main deck. The resulting explosions had largely destroyed the aft portion of Mikuma's funnel, as well as her rear superstructure and mainmast. This accounts for the wreckage on her turret roof. Similarly, the particulars of Mikuma's damage, as well as the American attacks against her, were very

accurately recorded by the Japanese, and these sources make no mention of a hit by an enemy aircraft. There is an unresolved controversy as to whether Fleming's plane did or did not strike the Japanese ship.



The *Mikuma* shortly before sinking.

The United States Navy ship, the USS Fleming, commissioned on September 18, 1943, was named in honor of Captain Fleming, and a memorial to him was placed at Fort Snelling National Cemetery. Captain Fleming's name is listed on the Tablets of the Missing at Honolulu Memorial in Honolulu, Hawaii. Fleming is also memorialized each year at his high school alma mater, Saint Thomas Academy. Each year during the Cadet Colonel promotion ceremony, he is remembered by the presentation of the "Fleming Saber", which is given to the Cadet Colonel. Richard E. Fleming Field is the name for the South St. Paul Municipal Airport.

[Source: <http://www.history.army.mil/moh> | June 2017 ++]

Abandoned Military Bases [02] ► Maginot Line, France



Named after a French Minister of War, this series of forts runs across the lands shared with France, Switzerland, Germany, and Luxembourg. They were built in the 30's in hopes of protecting the borders of France but they were not enough to keep the Germans out during World War II. The Nazis successfully invaded France by avoiding the Maginot Line at first and then later overtook the forts. The soldiers within the forts were surrounded and forced into POW camps but today a few have become discos and homes to residents.

*** Health Care ***



Men's Health Care ► Men's Health Is Important Too

Do you know what the top health risks are for men? According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the leading causes of death among men in the U.S. include heart disease, stroke, cancer and respiratory diseases. How can you reduce men's health risks? Learn about common health problems facing men and how to prevent them. For example, TRICARE covers preventative services to help men of all ages get and stay healthy.

Identify Potential Health Concerns -- Men and women share many of the same health concerns, but there are certain conditions that predominately affect men. Examples include colon cancer, skin cancer, high blood pressure, obesity and heart disease. It's important to learn about these conditions in addition to the health conditions that are unique to men, such as prostate and testicular cancers. "Take the opportunity to put your health first today," said Dr. James Black, Medical Director for the Clinical Support Division at the Defense Health Agency. "Knowing the signs and symptoms of common conditions can help let you know if you need to speak to a medical provider and may even save your life." Your primary care manager (PCM) can also help you identify potential health concerns and assess your risk for developing certain health problems. If you don't have a primary care manager, find a PCM on the TRICARE website. You can also set up your appointment online.

Get Screened Regularly -- Women are 100 percent more likely to visit the doctor for annual exams and preventive services than men. However, TRICARE offers men several preventative services, such as cancer screenings, lab tests and immunizations. Your PCM can help you decide what tests you need based on your age and risk factors. Important health screening tests for men include:

- Blood Pressure Screening
- Cardiovascular Screening
- Colorectal Cancer Exam
- Prostate Cancer Exams
- Skin Cancer Exams
- Testicular Cancer Exams

Make Healthy Lifestyle Choices -- Although men seek regular medical care less often than women, they're more likely to smoke, drink and choose unhealthy or risky behavior. The more committed you are to choosing healthy lifestyle choices, the easier it is to maintain your health. Consider making the following choices to help you live a long and healthy life:

- **Avoid smoking:** Smoking can cause conditions such as heart disease and cancer. TRICARE provides resources to help you quit tobacco, such as toll-free quit lines, counseling, and tobacco-cessation medications. Also, UCanQuit2 provides useful tips and tools.
- **Limit alcohol:** Drinking too much can contribute to poor health. Visit the TRICARE Alcohol Awareness page for information about alcohol and drinking responsibly.
- **Eat a healthy diet and exercise regularly:** Eating healthy and being physically active can help prevent a variety of health problems. Learn about the benefits of healthy living and how you can improve your overall health.

Knowledge of men's health issues, regular health screenings and leading a healthy lifestyle is only half the challenge of maintaining your health. Taking steps to improve your health and reduce your risk for disease is just as important. Visit the TRICARE website today to learn more and get started.

[Source: TRICARE.mil | Staff | June 20, 2017 ++]

Vitamins ► Shedding Light On Vitamin D

Vitamin D is an essential nutrient that your body produces when your skin is exposed to sunlight, but there are ways to get it from foods too. It helps your body absorb calcium and maintains the calcium and phosphate your bones need to form and grow. It also contributes to cell growth, immunity, and nerve and muscle function, and it can help reduce inflammation. In addition, it plays key roles in reducing your risk of many adverse health conditions, including depression, cancer, heart disease, osteoporosis and others.

Sun exposure

Fair-skinned people can get enough from as little as 15 minutes in the sun; the darker your skin, the longer it will take (up to 2 hours), but less than it would take for your skin to burn. For many reasons, however, people often don't get enough exposure. A little time outside on a sunny day with your arms and legs uncovered can provide nearly all the vitamin D most people need, but that can be challenging when you're wearing a long-sleeved uniform, working inside all day, or in winter.

Vitamin D from foods

Unlike other nutrients, vitamin D occurs naturally in very few foods, so it can be difficult to get enough through your diet. That's why some foods are "fortified" with vitamin D; that is, they have vitamin D added. The most common is milk, but some cereal products, yogurt, orange juice, margarine, and other foods also are fortified. Foods that naturally contain vitamin D include cod liver oil, swordfish, salmon, tuna, sardines, beef liver, and egg yolks.

How much vitamin D?

The Recommended Daily Allowance of vitamin D is 600 IU (except that infants under one year need only 400 IU and adults over 70 need 800 IU). On fortified food labels, look for "DV" (Daily Value) to make sure you get some in your diet if you don't get enough sun on your skin. The 100% DV is only 400 IU, because it assumes you get some vitamin D from sun exposure and foods with natural vitamin D content. Foods fortified with vitamin D are required to list the amount and their label's Nutrition Facts panel. However, natural vitamin D content isn't required on food labels. If you want to find out the natural content in various foods, you can use the USDA Food Composition Databases.

Vitamin D supplements

Another way to get vitamin D is through supplements, especially for people who are deficient in this nutrient or have special medical needs. However, it's important to consult a healthcare provider before taking supplemental vitamin D, because **excess vitamin D can be stored in your body, putting you at risk for toxicity**. Over time, too much vitamin D can lead to irregular heart rhythms, kidney damage, and other serious health problems. If you take large doses of supplemental vitamin D and eat foods that are fortified with it, you could easily obtain more than recommended amounts.

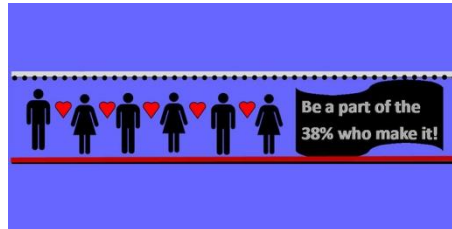
The bottom line

Despite the availability of vitamin D from all these sources, nearly one-fourth of people living in the U.S. have low vitamin D levels, which can lead to osteoporosis, autoimmune diseases, type 2 diabetes, certain types of cancer, and more. All adults and children should have their vitamin D status checked by their healthcare provider. For more information about vitamin D, read this fact sheet from the Office of Dietary Supplements.

[Source: Health.mil | June 26, 2017 ++]

PTSD & Marriage ► Advice From Someone Who's Been There

Sometimes you may want to give up. Why does everything have to be so, so hard? Other times, you wish someone would just give you a manual for dealing with all aspects of post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or Complex PTSD. Wouldn't it be nice if the doctor gave you a handbook when they gave you or your spouse the diagnosis of PTSD? Because the worst part is that you have no real idea of how this new acronym will affect your relationships. However, there are a [few tips available](#) for you regarding your PTSD and marriage.



Your marriage and PTSD

You and your spouse did not elect to have PTSD enter your marriage. Although you cannot control what has happened to you doesn't mean that you cannot have a stronger marriage. Anyone can search for "PTSD and marriage" all over the web, but what they usually find are a numbers of websites and articles listing discouraging divorce statistics. Most of these sites and articles are dreadful to read. This is due to the fact that they can influence you to lose hope for your relationship.

Although what you read is disheartening for couples facing PTSD, you do not have to be a part of these statistics at all! [I'm not](#). And my journey with my husband who has Complex PTSD (CPSTD) has not been easy at all. In fact, our marriage is stronger than ever before. There was a point where I did not believe that we would make it. Now, don't get me wrong. I was motivated and very hopeful for a long steady time after my husband's diagnosis. Despite overcoming challenges and having persistency, more challenges developed. After about a year and a half I really lost all hope. Then, I ended up becoming extremely depressed. In fact, my psychiatrist diagnosed me with major depressive disorder. Surprising to me was my next diagnosis of [Vicarious PTSD](#). In most situations where PTSD and marriage don't mix well, the [non-PTSD spouse](#) may develop Vicarious PTSD. Essentially, this type of PTSD evolves from exposure to the trauma that takes place in the midst of your spouse's PTSD episodes.

PTSD and Marriage: First steps to take

Listed here are the very first steps to take if your marriage is facing PTSD. I have separated out steps for each partner. As a matter of fact, there are steps for each of you to take and some that will be a joint effort. Of course, I am not a medical professional, but I have learned a lot over the last couple of years. In addition, what I have found is that PTSD and marriage do mix. Comparatively, a couple wouldn't divorce for the reason of one partner losing an arm, or having cancer. So why would a couple separate when a behavioral health issue surfaces? Not to mention, the U.S. already has high enough divorce rates without the presence of a mental health illness. Let alone comparing PTSD and marriage statistics show that rates for divorce increase incredibly.

Spouse with CPTSD or PTSD

- **If you are not in therapy** please [find a local therapist](#) who specializes in trauma. It cannot be expressed enough just how crucial treatment is for PTSD and marriage, let alone PTSD.
- **If there is any substance abuse** present, find help. When you are interviewing potential therapists ask if they are qualified to treat both trauma and substance abuse. In addition, do not be embarrassed. It is not uncommon to find PTSD and alcohol or drug abuse paired together.
- **Research often** to find relative articles to read with information about PTSD. There are so many wonderful resources online, like [NAMI](#), with content including techniques to [self-manage your symptoms](#). Then, try a few of them. But, try the techniques a few times. Because consequently, trying anything new can feel

uncomfortable at first. Soon enough you will have your own personally selected grounding and calming tools in your arsenal.

- **On the good days** that PTSD symptoms are not active, do something thoughtful for your spouse. By all means, your genuine acts of love and kindness will nurture your marriage. With this intention you will reinforce the love, safety, and security that your spouse needs to feel.
- **Process through** any guilt you hold onto pertaining to your PTSD and marriage. After you experience a PTSD episode you may have feelings of guilt or shame. In spite of these feelings, holding onto any guilt distracts from your relationship. If you remain in this “head-space” you will furthermore miss out on precious time living “in the moment” with your spouse.
- **Don’t worry** about past events or anything in the future. Think only about the current day and how you can enrich the next 24 hours spent with your partner. In the same fashion it is very healing for you to be centered and in the moment as often as possible.
- **Get involved** with PTSD support groups. Facebook has several groups for this facing PTSD. Additionally, these groups offer encouragement, privacy, and a large support system. Some of my favorites are [PTSD Buddies](#), [Women With PTSD United](#) and [Complex PTSD Recovery](#).

Spouse without PTSD or CPTSD

- **Help your spouse** [find a good therapist](#) that has experience with trauma victims. They will be able to teach your spouse the tools that they need. Hence, PTSD or CPTSD symptom management. Of course, when your loved one is able to manage their symptoms, your relationship will take a turn for the better. There are self-guided practices that they can do to reduce the symptoms’ severity. And the same thing goes for minimizing an episode’s duration. Educate yourself on these practices so that you can help them out of their PTSD episode so long as it is safe for you to do so.
- **Build a support system** for yourself. Due to caring for a spouse who suffers from PTSD and marriage challenges, it is equally important for you to find enrichment. Perhaps you can make a new friend. There are few online platforms for the spouses of those facing PTSD. With that being said, here is a couple that are helpful and designed with YOU in mind. Furthermore, these Facebook groups provide a private place where you can get advice, connect with others in your situation, and find encouragement: [Spouses and Family Members PTSD Support Group](#), [PTSD Spouses/Family Support](#), [Spouses Living With Military PTSD/TBI](#).
- **Take time** to take [care of yourself](#). Equally important is [nurturing yourself](#) in order to keep a positive mindset and peaceful heart. Naturally, you most likely have taken on the role of “Caregiver” for your spouse. With that being said, a caregiver’s role is never easy. Moreover, it is easy to lose yourself and end up on auto pilot as your spouse’s caregiver. If you do not take care of you first, then you can’t really care for anyone else the way that you want to.
- **Let go** of any resentment towards your spouse. You may not even realize that you harbor feelings like this. Because of your spouse’s condition and symptoms you may be angry or hurt. But, please keep in mind that they did not ask to develop PTSD or CPTSD. The person they become during “PTSD mode” is not their true selves. That person is someone who temporarily took over your spouse’s mind and body. Contrary to this though, it is especially relevant that your spouse learns to take ownership of their symptoms. Meaning, acknowledging that PTSD and CPTSD symptoms are vicious and that they can be managed. When managed appropriately, there will be less of an effect on you.
- **Familiarize yourself** with your spouse’s triggers. By doing so, you will be able to help prevention of a PTSD episode. Talk about the triggers with them. Find out why someone, or something, a specific behavior, or sensation is triggering. By all means, keep in mind that you don’t necessarily need to speak about the traumatic event or series of traumas unless your spouse requests to. But, you simply want to help avoid or work through a trigger with your spouse so that it can be eliminated.
- **Educate yourself** on best case scenarios, and, worst case scenarios. Do not wait until something tragic or until their symptoms get so out of control to start researching all things PTSD. Learn now, and continue to

educate yourself so that you can always be prepared. [Learn what signs to look for regarding suicide and self-harm](#). Additionally, having tips to show support in the front of mind will ensure that you remain supportive. Consequently, your partner will feel secure and comforted causing symptoms of anxiety to subside.

- **Whenever possible**, express your love and appreciation for your spouse in an unbridled way. Remind them that they are wonderful and that you love them. Due to their depression that accompanies PTSD and CPTSD their self-esteem has plummeted and they need reminders that they are needed, wanted, and admired.
- **Read**, “*The Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Relationship*” by Diane England (available on Amazon as a free download). Reading this book will give you a new perspective and act as a pivotal turning point in your role of your spouse’s PTSD and marriage.

PTSD and marriage: Hope for the future

The two of you deserve the most enriching, loving, and strongest marriage. Many prospectors will say that PTSD and marriage do not mix. Certainly they would agree that the statistics surrounding PTSD and marriage are extremely high. Notably so, they have not been in your shoes. It is very hard for someone outside of your marriage to understand what the two of you really go through on a daily basis. Due to this alone, you and your spouse should continuously work on creating stability, strength, and an impenetrable love. Your marriage, family, and each of you will find the peace that you are desperately seeking. I hope that this article has been helpful. You are not alone – and your marriage can make it through all of the storms of life.

[Source: Vantage Point | Megan Maloney | June 24, 2017 ++]

Traumatic Brain Injury Update 64 ► Prevent TBIs this Summer and Beyond

During Men’s Health Month (JUN), we’re taking a closer look at men’s risk of traumatic brain injury. The good news is there are ways to “protect your head” and prevent TBI while you enjoy your favorite summertime activities. Each year, more than 1 million people visit the emergency room because of TBIs. And contrary to common belief, most TBIs experienced by service members result from motor vehicle accidents, not exposures to blasts. TBI can damage your brain tissue, and it can impair your speech and language skills, balance and motor coordination, and memory. Depending on the severity of your injury, your symptoms might last for days, weeks, or even longer. It’s especially important to prevent head injuries because more than 50,000 people die from TBI-related symptoms each year.



TBI risk and men -- In general, men take more risks with their health and safety, and it can increase their chances of sustaining TBIs. Your risk for TBI might increase during the summer months, especially if you engage in

activities where a bump, blow, or jolt to the head is possible. Men also tend to experience more TBIs than women, and they're more likely to visit the emergency room, be hospitalized, and die from brain and head injuries.

TBI risk and alcohol use -- Summertime can see an increase in social events where heavy drinking might occur. Alcohol use can increase your risk for TBI, and it can impact your recovery and treatment. It impairs your decision-making skills, which could lead to you taking more risks with your health and safety. Combining energy drinks with alcohol also can lead to more binge drinking. Driving while impaired increases your risk for motor vehicle accidents too. In addition, alcohol abuse increases your risk of falls and other accidents that can cause head injuries. After a TBI, consuming alcohol – especially in large amounts – interferes with brain healing and recovery, and it can lead to longer hospital stays and poorer outcomes at discharge. Excessive alcohol consumption after a TBI can reduce your seizure threshold and interfere with seizure medications. Long-term effects from alcohol abuse include multiple organ damage (including your liver, pancreas, heart and brain) and possible brain shrinkage. The good news is that substance-abuse treatment and abstinence from alcohol allow time for your brain to heal.

TBI risk and summer activities -- Take these steps to prevent TBI while you enjoy summer fun:

During sports

- Make sure you wear a bike helmet when biking, skateboarding, and rollerblading.
- Watch out for fly balls at baseball and softball games. If you're playing, wear a batting helmet while hitting and be attentive while fielding.

At the pool

- Be aware of how deep any pool is before you dive in.
- Encourage safety and discourage running around wet pool areas to help prevent falls.

While driving

- Wear your seatbelt. Insist your passengers wear seat belts too.
- Always wear a motorcycle helmet when operating a motorcycle or other motorized vehicles.

Men are at increased risk for TBI year-round, and consuming alcohol while engaging in summer activities could further increase your risk. Be smart and safe about keeping your head and brain injury-free this summer. Visit A Head for the Future's webpage to learn how to prevent, recognize, and recover from TBI too. [Source: DoD's Human Performance Resource Center Up | June 15, 2017 ++]

TRICARE Cancer Screenings Update 06 ► Males

Your doctor calls to give you your test results. Is it cancer? You are worried because cancer runs in your family. Luckily the tests come back clear. Although there's no magic potion to prevent all cancers, you may be able to reduce your cancer risk by participating in recommended cancer screenings. Learn more about risk factors for cancers that are common in men and about screenings covered under TRICARE.

Prostate Cancer -- Prostate cancer is the most common cancer among men in the U.S. It's also very curable and easily preventable if found early. Several factors might affect a man's risk of getting prostate cancer, but the American Cancer Society identifies age, race and family history as leading risk factors. More specifically, those at a higher risk include:

- Age 50 or older. Your risk increases as you age.
- African Americans. You're more than twice as likely to die of the disease.
- Family history. Father or brother who have or had prostate cancer

TRICARE covers exams and screenings for prostate cancer for those men who meet certain criteria. Refer to <https://tricare.mil/CoveredServices/IsItCovered/ProstateCancerExams>.

Colon Cancer -- Colon cancer is more common in men than women, according to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Factors that may increase your risk of colon cancer include:

- Older age. The majority of people diagnosed are older than 50.
- Family history. Your risk is even greater with more than one family member.
- Being overweight or obese
- Smoking or heavy alcohol use

Regular screening is one of the most important things you can do for preventing colon cancer. TRICARE covers colon cancer exams (<https://tricare.mil/CoveredServices/IsItCovered/ColorectalCancerExam>) based on a person's age and cancer risk.

Skin Cancer -- The most common form of cancer in the U.S. is skin cancer. Overexposure to ultraviolet (UV) light (sun, tanning beds, sunlamps) causes the majority of skin cancer. Risk factors vary for different types of skin cancer, but some general risk factors are:

- Physical traits such as fair skin, blue or green eyes, and blonde or red hair
- Excessive sun exposure and a history of sunburns
- Many or abnormal moles
- Skin that burns, freckles, reddens easily, or becomes painful in the sun

TRICARE covers skin cancer exams (<https://tricare.mil/CoveredServices/IsItCovered/SkinCancerExam>) for individuals who meet certain criteria, including family or personal history of skin cancer.

Testicular Cancer -- Testicular cancer is not common. About one of every 263 males will develop the disease. The average age at the age of diagnosis is 33. TRICARE covers annual testicular cancer exams for 13 to 39 year olds with a history of testicular issues. Refer to <https://tricare.mil/CoveredServices/IsItCovered/TesticularCancerExams>.

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If you have risk factors for cancer, talk to your doctor. If you don't, it's still important to discuss what cancer screening is right for you and how often to get tested. Learn more about covered screenings under TRICARE at <https://tricare.mil/CoveredServices/IsItCovered/CancerScreenings>. [Source: TRICARE Communications | June 9, 2017 ++]

PTSD Update 231 ► July 4th Impact

July 4th can be hard for veterans with PTSD. This fact is one of the biggest ironies of treating people with post-traumatic stress disorder: Military veterans with PTSD often are unable to attend the Fourth of July fireworks displays that celebrate the freedoms of the nation they fought for. "Lots of veterans cannot stand the sound of fireworks," said Vicki Harris, a licensed therapist in Shelbyville. The colorful explosions that just entertain most people can trigger grim flashbacks of the horrific events that traumatized the former soldiers in the first place, she explained.

Many people who have PTSD are veterans, noted Harris, who said she worked at the Veterans Administration for about 10 months. However, anyone can become afflicted with post-traumatic stress disorder, she told a group gathered at Shelby Senior Services, 1504 S. Harrison St., for her presentation. And many are right here, Harris added. "We do have a lot of people in Shelby County with PTSD," she said. The illness has gone by many names over the years, she said. Veterans of World War I were said to have "shell shock" – in World War II it was

“battle fatigue,” Harris said. As psychologists began to understand the affliction better, in 1980 it was officially named post-traumatic stress disorder, she told the group Wednesday at Senior Services.

PTSD is found especially in military combat veterans, but can it affect anyone who’s been through a terrible event, such as rape, Harris said. “There’s a high correlation between domestic violence and PTSD,” she added. Substance abuse is common among those with the disorder. During the shocking event, the body produces endorphines that numb the victim; that’s why a person can seem calm and collected immediately after an incident but later falls apart, Harris said. Alcohol and drugs also numb the pain, she said. Despite the agency’s other shortcomings, the VA does have an outstanding website devoted to PTSD, Harris noted. The site www.ptsd.va.gov has a section “For the Public.” In that section, under the PTSD Overview “Basics” tab, there is a list of four types of symptoms:

- Reliving the event via bad memories, nightmares or flashbacks.
- Avoiding situations that remind you of the event.
- Having more negative beliefs and feelings.
- Feeling keyed up (also called hyperarousal).

Harris told the group at Senior Services to listen to someone who wants to talk about their event, and never tell the person just to get over it. Say instead, “I’d love to hear your story,” she advised. [Source: The Shelbyville News | John Walker | June 23, 2017 ++]

Back Pain Update 03 ► Alternate Treatments That Work

There’s a revolution in the treatment of back pain now that research shows that physical therapy, spinal manipulation, and yoga can help as much as surgery or drugs — with far fewer risks. That advice is backed up by a new nationally representative Consumer Reports survey of 3,562 back-pain sufferers. It found that more than 80 percent of those who had tried yoga or tai chi or had seen a massage therapist or chiropractor said it had helped them. Altogether, a higher percentage of people in our survey who saw a yoga or tai chi instructor, massage therapist, chiropractor, or physical therapist said the advice or treatment was helpful compared with those who said they saw a doctor.



Back pain is one of the main reasons people go to a doctor, accounting for more than 24 million visits each year in the U.S.

One of these individuals is Army Veteran Thomas Sells. Note that a typical week for Sells includes acupuncture, tai chi, yoga, and a couple of hours with a massage therapist and sometimes a chiropractor. You might think that the

retired bank vice president and business manager in Southern California is simply enjoying a pampered spa lifestyle. But Sells gets most of those services through the Department of Veterans Affairs — all for his aching back. Those VA programs are more necessity than luxury, says Sells, who first injured his back carrying heavy packs as a combat soldier in the Vietnam War. “None of these therapies were available to me back then,” he explains. “Had I known then what I know now, I could have avoided decades of debilitating pain.”

It used to be that those treatments were considered fringe, but no more. Growing research shows that a combination of hands on therapies and other nondrug measures can be just as effective as more traditional forms of back care, including drugs and surgery. And they’re much safer. More than 80 percent of those who had tried yoga or tai chi or had seen a massage therapist or chiropractor said it had helped them. “Tai chi helps with back pain in several ways,” says Benjamin Kligler, M.D., national director of the Integrative Health Coordinating Center at the Veteran’s Health Administration. “It strengthens the muscles in your abdomen and pelvic area that are crucial to supporting the lower back; it improves your balance and flexibility; and it makes you more aware of your posture when you sit, stand, and walk.”

Back pain strikes most of us at some point. It’s one of the main reasons people go to a doctor, accounting for more than 24 million visits each year in the U.S., according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. More than one of four in our survey said that an episode of back pain “severely” interfered with their daily life. But there’s good news. “Even though back pain can be severe at first, it almost always gets better,” says Kligler. But “what has been considered ‘conventional’ care, including prescribing opioid pain medication, can short-circuit healing,” he says. “I feel better now than I did as a much younger man.” These drugs include opioids such as hydrocodone and oxycodone.

As a young combat soldier, Sells says he turned to alcohol and illegal drugs to numb his back pain. “That took me down a dangerous road,” he recalls. “I became addicted.” With help from recovery programs, he says he has been clean and sober for 30 years. But even with his attempts to self-medicate, his low-back pain continued to worsen over time. “It became so bad I could barely walk,” Sells says. “I consulted with surgeons but I worried about the risks, and given my history, I didn’t want to take opioids.” Instead, he looked for something safer, and came across a class at VA in tai chi, which combines slow, gentle movements with deep breathing and meditation. Soon he noticed improvements, gradually adding more exercise and hands-on therapies, which he says manage his pain while keeping his “mind, body, and spirit strong.” And he’s become so good at tai chi that he now studies with a grand master. “It’s given me back my life,” Sells says.

Success stories like this, combined with new research, convinced the agency to make nondrug therapies a foundation of its pain treatment strategy. As a result, VA has cut overall opioid use by 25 percent since 2012, according to a March 2017 analysis published in JAMA Internal Medicine. Thomas Sells says that a combination of approaches has worked for him. “I feel better now than I did as a much younger man,” he notes. “Mentally, physically, and spiritually, I’m in the best place in my life.” Watch this 4-minute video and hear directly from Thomas Sells about his experience at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h5zsoMXMuR8>. [Source: Veterans Health | VHA Update | June 27, 2017 ++]

TRICARE Podcast 402 ► Eating Fruits/Vegetables | ECHO | Sponsors

Eating Fruits & Vegetables -- Power your performance with colorful produce! Eating colorful fruits and veggies can help reduce your risk of stroke, heart disease, diabetes, and some cancers too. They also contain water, electrolytes, vitamins, minerals, and carbohydrates – all essential nutrients for top performance. Eat your greens and other colors in the produce “rainbow.”

- Think pink. Lycopene is a powerful antioxidant that gives fruits and vegetables their red color, and it might reduce your risk of heart disease and some cancers. Enjoy lycopene-rich foods such as watermelon, pink grapefruit, and tomatoes.
- Enjoy orange. Many yellow and orange vegetables and fruits get their color from beta-carotene. It's an antioxidant that can reduce your risk of headaches, high blood pressure, and more. Choose sweet potatoes, mangoes, and peaches.
- Get right with white. These fruits and vegetables contain potassium, fiber, and other nutrients. Fiber-filled fruits and vegetables can help lower your risk of obesity too. White produce includes bananas, white corn, cauliflower, and pears.
- Pick purple. These vegetables and fruits get their color from anthocyanins, which is a powerful phytonutrient that might reduce your risk of chronic disease. Enjoy purple berries, grapes, eggplants, and more.

For adults, the current daily recommendation is 2 to 3 cups of vegetables and 2 cups of fruit. Remember that raw, cooked, steamed, grilled, and broiled varieties all count, so fill half your plate with fruits and vegetables at mealtimes! Visit www.nutrition.gov more healthy eating tips and resources.

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ECHO Webinar -- TRICARE and Military OneSource hosted a webinar to discuss the TRICARE Extended Care Health Option, or ECHO on, June 27th. ECHO provides supplemental services to qualified beneficiaries with special needs. It offers services beyond those offered by a regular TRICARE program option. To use ECHO, beneficiaries must have a qualifying condition. These may include:

- Moderate or severe mental disability
- Serious physical disability
- Autism spectrum disorder
- Extraordinary physical or psychological condition
- Neuromuscular developmental disorder in an infant or toddler
- Multiple disabilities affecting separate body systems

If you're new to ECHO, or just want to learn more about the program, visit www.militaryonesource.mil/social click on "Webinars", and look for the archived presentation. Webinar presenters discussed ECHO eligibility, benefits, costs and coverage limits, and more.

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Multiple Sponsors -- Life changes such as marriage, divorce, birth, or adoption can result in spouses or dependents with TRICARE eligibility under multiple sponsor Social Security numbers. If this occurs, you must select one sponsor for your dependents and update this information with your ID card-issuing facility. If both spouses are active duty service members, they aren't eligible for TRICARE as each other's dependent. Eligibility under multiple sponsors isn't coordinated like other health insurance. Claims won't not be paid under both sponsors for the same service to reduce or eliminate out-of-pocket expenses. Instead, eligibility under multiple sponsors can lead to delays in processing referrals and prior authorizations, and higher out-of-pocket costs. To see if your family has more than one eligible sponsor, check your listing in DEERS at www.dmdc.osd.mil/milconnect. Only a sponsor, or a sponsor-appointed individual with valid power of attorney, can add family members in DEERS. Visit www.dmdc.osd.mil/rsl to find facility near you if you'd like to meet with someone in-person.

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The above is from the TRICARE Beneficiary Bulletin, an update on the latest news to help you make the best use of your TRICARE benefit. [Source: <http://www.tricare.mil/podcast> | June 16, 2017 ++]

TRICARE Podcast 403 ► Staying Hydrated | Healthy Snacks | Divorced Spouse

Staying Hydrated -- Getting enough water every day is important for your health. Healthy people meet their fluid needs by drinking when thirsty and drinking with meals. Most of your fluid needs are met through the water and beverages you drink. However, you can get some fluids through the foods that you eat. For example, broth soups and foods with high water content such as celery, tomatoes, or melons can contribute to fluid intake. Here are some tips to make sure you're getting enough water every day!

- Carry a water bottle for easy access when you are at work or running errands.
- Freeze some freezer safe water bottles. Take one with you for ice-cold water all day long.
- Choose water instead of sugar-sweetened beverages and choose water when eating out.
- Add a wedge of lime or lemon to your water. This can help improve the taste and help you drink more water than you usually do.

For more information on staying hydrated this summer, visit www.cdc.gov/healthywater/drinking.

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Healthy Snacks -- Nutritionists and doctors recommend eating several small meals throughout the day vice three large meals. This practice isn't always possible because of the work and school schedules we keep. An alternative would be to eat healthy snacks between meals and subsequently reduce the size of your meals. Here are a few tips and snack ideas.

- Plan ahead. The vending machines are full of delightful, and often calorie dense, snacks. The best option is always to prepare your snacks ahead of time and store them in convenient, grab-and-go containers.
- Keep an eye on the size of your snacks. Using snack-size bags and containers will help you control portion sizes. After all, the object isn't to replace your meals, only to fill you up until the next meal time.
- A good filling snack is trail mix. You can make your own using dried fruit, unsalted nuts and popcorn. Divide it up in snack-size bags and keep it at your desk in your backpack.
- Fruit, whether fresh, frozen, dried or canned, is an easy grab-and-go option. You can slice fruit and veggies ahead of time for convenience and to add a little protein by wrapping lean deli meat around an apple slice.

The key to snacking success is simple and convenient. Your snacks should be simple to prepare and consume and convenient when you're ready to enjoy them. For more snacking tips and recipes visit www.ChooseMyPlate.gov.

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Divorced Spouse Health Care Options -- Certain spouses are eligible to retain their TRICARE health coverage after getting a divorce from their sponsor. Your sponsor's Service Personnel Component determines if you meet eligibility criteria to establish your status of unremarried former spouse. In order to get this determination, you must have your marriage certificate, divorce decree, and your former spouses' DD 214 if the member is no longer on active duty. You'll be issued a new ID card with your own name and your own Social Security number listed as the "sponsor Social Security number". Be sure you have received the Service Personnel Component's eligibility determination letter prior to getting your new ID.

You're eligible for TRICARE as your own sponsor as long as you meet conditions for the 20-20-20 rule: Your former spouse has at least 20 years of credible service, you were married to that same sponsor during those 20 years and all 20 years overlap the 20 years of creditable service. Under the 20-20-20 rule, you retain your TRICARE eligibility without a time limit. You may also be eligible for TRICARE as your own sponsor if you meet conditions for the 20-20-15 rule: Your former spouse has at least 20 years of credible service, you were married to that same sponsor during those 20 years and at least 15 of those years overlap the 20 years of creditable service. Under the 20-20-15 rule, you're generally TRICARE eligible for one year from the date of the divorce/annulment. If you do not meet these conditions, you are no longer eligible for TRICARE. You may purchase temporary health care coverage

through the Continued Health Care Benefit Program. For more information about CHCBP, please visit www.TRICARE.mil/CHBP. You can also visit www.TRICARE.mil/divorce or more information.

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The above is from the TRICARE Beneficiary Bulletin, an update on the latest news to help you make the best use of your TRICARE benefit. [Source: <http://www.tricare.mil/podcast> | June 23, 2017 ++]

* Finances *



Dumb Insurance Update 03 ► Rental car, Pet & Extended/Home Warranties

Insurance, at its best, helps protect against events that could send your finances into a death spiral. Crucial products include insurance against serious car crashes, the loss of or damage to a home, and the loss of income due to death or disability. Other products? Many offer little value, or they're filled with exclusions and caveats. Following are some potentially dumb insurance buys:

❁ **Rental car insurance** -- If you have full insurance coverage on a car of your own, you probably don't need rental car coverage, no matter what the gal behind the rental car counter says. Go ahead and waive it if one of the following alternatives apply to you:

- Make certain you are covered under your own auto policy.
- Your credit card also may have coverage if you pay for the rental with the card.
- Car rentals may be covered by an umbrella home-life-auto policy.

❁ **Pet insurance** -- This is another tough call: Most people consider pets to be part of the family. Veterinary bills can be high, and insurance can be a good call in certain circumstances. "There's no magic formula that will tell you if it's right for you and your pet," [according to the American Veterinary Medical Association](#). The AVMA suggests you talk to your veterinarian about the general health of your pet. The age of the animal is also a factor. If you do opt for pet insurance, first take a look at the [AVMA's guidelines for pet health insurance policies](#). For more information see "[4 Ways to Keep Your Pet Away From the Vet](#)."

❁ **Extended warranties** -- Whether you are buying a TV, computer or hedge trimmer, chances are the salesman will suggest you purchase an extended warranty. In most cases, you don't need it. Products seldom break during the two-to-three-year period after the manufacturer's warranty and service plan expires. And the repairs can cost less than the large amounts you are paying for the warranties, according to [Consumer Reports](#). Consumer Reports also says stores keep 50 percent or more of what they charge for these contracts, which is a considerably larger profit margin than they make selling the product! In some cases, the salesperson also gets a hefty cut of every warranty sold.

❁ **Home warranties** -- Consumers frequently expect more than these plans deliver and end up frustrated. See: "[Are Home Warranties Worth the Money?](#)" for a breakdown of the pros and cons of home warranties. Hint: There are few pros. If you decide to go with a warranty, read the fine print to see what's really covered. Money Talks News founder Stacy Johnson tells of the time he had a home warranty that covered his refrigerator. "When it broke,

I had to pay \$50 for the repairman to come out,” he says. “Then he said it was excluded because the condenser coils were dusty.” In my experience, the warranty dictates which repair company comes to your house: You don’t have any say in that. Do you have a trusted plumber, electrician or appliance service? If so, it’s another reason that a home warranty may not be for you.

[Source: MoneyTalksNews | Marilyn Lewis and Hiram Reisner | April 30, 2017 ++]

Credit Monitoring Update 01 ► 4 Reasons Not to Use A Service

Converting fear into fees -- They say sex sells, and I’m sure they’re right. But it is doubtful if it outsells fear. From burglar alarms to bomb shelters, Americans shell out billions annually to protect against all manner of evil: some real, much greatly exaggerated. But wherever fear can be churned up, you can bet there’s someone not far behind making a buck. Such is the case with credit monitoring. These services are more sizzle than steak for at least four reasons.

1. You’re not liable if someone opens credit in your name -- If someone forges your signature on a credit application, check or anywhere else, you’re generally not responsible for the results. As with anyone stealing anything, the thief is liable. And if the thief isn’t caught or can’t make restitution, it’s a problem for the institution that accepted the fraudulent charge, not you. Of course, we’ve all read stories of how credit fraud is passed along to consumers in the form of higher prices. We’ve also read about the nightmare that ensues when your identity is stolen: Your credit is trashed, and you’re forced to spend months — even years — restoring it.

2. Credit monitoring doesn’t prevent ID theft -- Monitoring your credit is marketed as if it’s a burglar alarm that keeps bad guys out. But what it more closely resembles is an alarm that’s tripped as the bad guys are leaving. By definition, credit monitoring can only monitor transactions that have already occurred. What you want is to prevent them from happening in the first place. As it happens, dissuading crooks from making off with your identity and going on a spending spree isn’t hard to do, and it doesn’t cost a dime. Just put a fraud alert on your account. According to Experian: *Fraud alert messages notify potential credit grantors to verify your identification before extending credit in your name in case someone is using your information without your consent.*

Doesn’t that seem like a good idea? It costs nothing, and there aren’t a lot of hoops to jump through. Take a look at the form (https://www.alerts.equifax.com/AutoFraud_Online/jsp/fraudAlert.jsp) and see for yourself. So fraud alerts are one way to slow crooks down. An even more effective method is a credit freeze. A freeze means nobody — including you — can open new credit until your account is “thawed,” a process that can take a few days (<https://www.moneytalksnews.com/how-get-heavy-duty-fraud-protection-with-credit-freeze>). Unlike fraud alerts, credit freezes aren’t always free or even available, depending on where you live, and some states also allow fees to be charged to temporarily lift the freeze. Read more about credit freezes at this page of FTC.gov and learn about the rules in your state at this page of the Consumers Union website.

3. Who’s monitoring the monitors? -- LifeLock is a monitoring service that’s probably the most heavily advertised. But here’s something they don’t advertise: In 2015, they settled with the Federal Trade Commission in an action that accused them of misleading consumers and not adequately protecting their private information. From the FTC press release: *LifeLock will pay \$100 million to settle Federal Trade Commission contempt charges that it violated the terms of a 2010 federal court order that requires the company to secure consumers’ personal information and prohibits the company from deceptive advertising.*

In 2010 action referred to above, the FTC collected \$12 million from a settlement with LifeLock. From the 2010 press release: *“While LifeLock promised consumers complete protection against all types of identity theft, in truth, the protection it actually provided left enough holes that you could drive a truck through it,”* said FTC Chairman

Jon Leibowitz. LifeLock isn't the only company that's found itself in hot water over credit monitoring. A few years ago the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau required Capital One Bank to refund about \$140 million to 2 million customers and pay an additional \$25 million penalty for misleading consumers into paying for add-on credit card products like payment protection and credit monitoring.

4. **It costs too much** -- Some monitoring services allow you to get your credit report and score any time for free. Against a backdrop of \$11 for a credit report or \$20 for a credit score, paying \$20 a month for unlimited looks may seem like a bargain. But you can get a free credit report once a year from www.AnnualCreditReport.com, and these days you can easily get free access to your credit score. For details, see "Ask Stacy: Where Can I Get a Free Credit Score?" at <https://www.moneytalksnews.com/ask-stacy-where-can-get-free-credit-score>

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One of the things about monitoring services is that we shouldn't need these services in the first place. Unless you're the one who negligently leaves your credit information lying around, you shouldn't have to worry about your credit history being stolen and you shouldn't have to jump through hoops if it happens. The banking and credit reporting industries make billions annually from American consumers. If they can't be bothered to create a system that protects the information they collect and sell, they should solve — and pay for — the problems that result. But instead of crafting a safer system, they craft clever commercials to sell you "protection."

Is it all bad? There are those who disagree with the above and tout credit monitoring and protection as a smart thing to do. For example, in this 2010 article, personal finance author Lynnette Khalfani-Cox said: *The single biggest reason to use credit monitoring is that you'll receive an incredible amount of credit education simply by staying on top of your credit. The mere act of constantly reviewing your credit files and being aware of changes to your credit profile promotes enhanced financial literacy and better credit awareness.*

Fine. Monitoring your credit is a good educational experience. And if you're going to be applying for a mortgage or other big loan, the three free reports you're entitled to yearly from AnnualCreditReport.com may not be enough. But paying \$20 a month — or more than \$50 in Heather's case — for "education"? [Source: MoneyTalksNews | Stacey Johnson | June 23, 2017 ++]

Credit Repair Companies ► 5 Lies They Tell

Buying new furniture with a credit card, financing a car and agreeing to that variable rate mortgage all seemed like good ideas. That is, until you lost your job and couldn't make your payments. Now, your credit score has dropped through the floor, and it feels like you'll never get back on your feet. Never fear! A credit repair company can undo the damage and have your score back to near-perfect condition in no time. Or can they? Credit repair scams are rampant. Sure, there are some legitimate companies that will help sort out the details of your credit report, but many others are simply preying on desperate people. Before you fork over what's left of your hard-earned money, you should know that these five things you might hear from credit repair companies are all untrue:

Lie No. 1: You can start over

Wouldn't a do-over be nice? Some credit repair companies will say you can do just that. They may say you can get a new identification number that will make it easy to rebuild credit and erase past mistakes. Some companies may refer you to the IRS website to request an employer identification number (EIN). The shadier ones may hand you a stolen Social Security number and tell you it's a "credit profile number" or "credit privacy number." The problem is that it's illegal to request an EIN under false pretenses. It's also illegal to lie on a loan application or misrepresent your Social Security number by subbing in an ill-gotten EIN. And we certainly shouldn't have to tell you that it's illegal to use a fake Social Security number, regardless of how the credit repair company tries to sell it to you as a different kind of number.

Lie No. 2: Disputing negative records will solve all your problems

Here's another trick scam credit repair companies use. They tell you to dispute every bad record on your credit report. They don't care if you really were delinquent on that account or that debt really did get written off without payment. It doesn't matter. They want you to dispute it all, even if you know the information is true. Once you file the disputes, you'll then be encouraged to quickly apply for whatever loans or credit you need. That's because the credit bureaus have to pull the disputed info off their reports while they investigate. It gives you a 30-day window with a clean report to get whatever new credit you need. There are a couple of problems with this. First, it's illegal, and you could find yourself in hot water for committing fraud. Second, once the credit bureaus substantiate the bad debt, they'll put it back on your report. So you'll have paid a credit repair company a ton of money and still have a crappy score.

Lie No. 3: It's OK to fudge your income

Getting some extra credit might help boost your score by reducing your debt-to-credit ratio. You might also be in a situation in which you need to take out a loan. Regardless of why you're applying, a sketchy credit repair company may tell you it's OK to inflate your income on an application to boost your chances of approval. No one will ever know. Well, maybe you get away with it and maybe you don't, but the credit repair company is lying when it says this practice is OK. It's not. As you may have already guessed, it's illegal to lie about anything on a credit application. For more sage advice on deterring fraudsters, check out: "10 Golden Rules to Avoid Getting Scammed" at <https://www.moneytalksnews.com/the-10-golden-rules-scam-prevention>.

Lie No. 4: You have to pay upfront

If the first thing a credit repair company says to you is "show me the money," you need to show them the door. You don't need to pay a retainer or an upfront fee to use a credit repair company. In fact, the federal Credit Repair Organizations Act prohibits companies from collecting fees in advance. What's more, federal law requires you get a credit repair contract in writing to outline the services to be rendered. If a company doesn't provide this and insists on being paid upfront, you know you're dealing with a scam.

Lie No. 5: Only we can help you

This is possibly the worst lie credit repair companies tell. It's the lie that makes people think they are trapped into using a company's service. The reality is that you don't need to pay anyone to fix your bad credit. There is nothing a credit repair company can do that you can't do for yourself.

How to repair bad credit on your own

So how do you repair credit on your own? It'll require a little work, but you can do exactly what a legitimate credit repair company would do. Even better, you don't have to pay a dime.

- First, you need to request copies of your free credit reports. You can get them through annualcreditreport.com. That's the official place to request your reports, and you're entitled to one report from each of the three major credit bureaus every 12 months. Other websites will try to charge you for this information, so if you're asked for credit card information, you're on the wrong page.
- Next, you need to comb through those reports for any incorrect information. Did you pay off that balance? Were you only late on that account once rather than the three times reported? Circle everything that may be wrong.
- Now you can send letters of dispute to the credit bureaus asking them to review the info. You can even do this online now.

If the credit bureaus side with you, the negative reports will drop off and your score will rebound. Otherwise, you'll need to wait seven years for the info to disappear. [Source: MoneyTalksNews | Maryalene LaPonsie | June 27, 2017 ++]

Earn Extra Money ► 20 Unusual Ways

Almost everyone can use a little more cash in their pocket from time to time. Expenses can arrive when you least expect — and often at the least convenient time: No matter how carefully you plan, money can run a little short at times. Maybe your child needs new shoes. Perhaps your car broke down, or you just want a night out on the town.

While a part-time job may be your best bet for a steady stream of income, delivering pizzas or waiting tables might not be your thing. Whatever the reason, here are a slew of unusual ways for you to bring in extra cash.

1. **Sell your body** -- sell your plasma or even your hair. Either can be legally sold for money. Unfortunately, the government frowns on you selling a kidney — something about ethics, I hear. (In fact, it's illegal.) Plasma will garner you pocket change, while there are big bucks to be made with the right hair.
2. **Participate in a clinical trial** -- Do your part for science and earn some cash on the side by participating in a clinical trial. Clinical trials are often intended for people who have specific medical conditions in the hopes of seeing how they respond to new treatments. However, some clinical trials also recruit healthy adults as a control group. If you don't mind being a guinea pig, you can find clinical trials by searching on [ClinicalTrials.gov](https://www.clinicaltrials.gov). Use the advanced search feature to find trials that accept healthy volunteers.
3. **Round up scrap metal** -- If you have access to a truck or trailer, you can collect old metal items and head to your local scrap yard. You need to do a little research to learn which items can be scrapped and where to find them. But this can be a lucrative niche for those who know what they're doing.
4. **Walk some dogs — or clean up after them** -- Spread the word to family and friends that you are available for dog-walking services for pay. You can also join a website like [Rover.com](https://www.rover.com) or [Thumbtack.com](https://www.thumbtack.com), post an ad on Craigslist or contact local kennels to see if they need anyone to exercise the canines under their care. At the same time, you can advertise your services to clean up after dogs. Some owners will gladly pay someone else to do the dirty work of picking up their yards.
5. **House-sit** -- Baby-sitting kids is one way to earn money, but why stop there? Houses are so much quieter, don't need to be fed and never talk back. Several websites, including [Rover](https://www.rover.com) and [Thumbtack](https://www.thumbtack.com), offer potential sitters the opportunity to connect with homeowners who need someone to keep an eye on their houses for an extended period. It might be a good way to see the world, even if your compensation is just free room and board. Advertise locally for people who are willing to pay you to check in on their house and maybe perform some light maintenance – such as lawn mowing – while they're gone.
6. **Get creative and open an online store** -- Various types of websites make it simple to create designs or products and then market your wares. To learn more, check out “[4 Ways Creative People Can Make Money Online.](#)” Additionally, online marketplaces for freelancers, such as [Fiverr.com](https://www.fiverr.com) and [Thumbtack](https://www.thumbtack.com), enable you to sell your creative skills themselves rather than a product.
7. **Become a translator** -- If you're multilingual, you're a hot commodity. The U.S. Department of Labor reports that interpreters and translators belong to one of the fastest-growing occupations in the nation. Demand for these professionals is expected to jump more than 28 percent from 2014 to 2024. Of course, you can still make money off your talents without working full-time as a translator. Advertise locally or work on a contract basis through marketplaces like [Fiverr](https://www.fiverr.com), [Guru](https://www.guru.com), [Thumbtack](https://www.thumbtack.com) and [Upwork](https://www.upwork.com). Or check out [Gengo](https://www.gengo.com), which is solely for freelance translators.
8. **Make money with your phone** -- You're attached to your phone 24/7, so why not let it make a little money for you? Here's [a big list of apps](#) that can make your smartphone a money machine.

9. **Work at home as a customer service rep** -- When you dial a company's 800 number, you may well be speaking to someone wearing fuzzy slippers and sitting on their couch. Some companies outsource customer calls to at-home representatives. Customer service is one of the top career fields for remote workers. Check out "[Top 25 Companies for Work-From-Home Jobs](#)." To do this work, you may need a landline, specific equipment and a quiet, child-free zone.

10. **Join a focus group** -- Companies are willing to pay consumers to provide feedback on products or share thoughts on a new idea. Often this is done through focus groups, which typically compensate members for their time. Opportunities for focus groups are better in larger metro areas, but many marketers are moving to online discussions that can include consumers nationwide. You can find them on websites like [FindFocusGroups.com](#) or do a web search for the words "focus group" and your closest metro area.

11. **Take surveys for cash** -- Rather than spending hours in a focus group, you could spend minutes filling out an online survey to make some cash. To learn more, check out "[Survey Sites to Turn Extra Minutes Into Extra Money](#)."

12. **Enter contests and sweepstakes** -- It's unconventional, but some people make extra money from sweepstakes. It's probably only a marginally better option than hitting the casino, but at least you won't lose any money.

To give it a try, head to a site like [Online-Sweepstakes.com](#), which categorizes all the sweeps by date, prize and how often you can enter. There's also a forum in which you can connect with other sweepstakes fans.

13. **Find some gigs online** -- Another option if you have some free time is to check out [Amazon Mechanical Turk](#), a platform through which businesses and other organizations can crowd-source small tasks to individual workers. You might do something like entering a few bits of data, for example. It's easy work that, in some cases, will pay you literally pennies. To maximize your potential earnings on MTurk, check out "[The Browser Extension That Can Earn You Thousands of Dollars](#)."

14. **Rent out a room** -- It's definitely not as unusual as it was a few years ago: A lot of people make extra money by renting out a room in their home to travelers. [Airbnb](#) is the biggest name in the business, but other big sites offering to facilitate room rentals include [Homestay.com](#). To learn more, check out "[15 Steps to Making Money Renting Your Home to Strangers](#)."

15. **Rent your space** -- Instead of renting a room at your home, just rent some space. For example, if a local festival means public parking is at a premium, charge a few dollars for people to park in your driveway or on your lawn. Or rent out space in your pole barn or garage to those who need to store items. Check out "[Need Extra Cash? This App Helps You Rent Out Your Yard \(and Hot Tub\)](#)" for details. However, keep it legal by checking with your municipality first to make sure it's allowed.

16. **Rent your friendship** -- Of all the things you could rent out to others, your friendship might be the strangest. Sites such as [RentAFriend.com](#) allow people to rent someone's companionship for a day. Supposedly, it's all on the up and up, and the outings are strictly platonic.

17. **Be a tutor** -- You suffered through all those long years of algebra, geometry and grammar. As a tutor, you can get a little payback for the knowledge you gained. Local schools or colleges might be a good place to look for tutoring opportunities. Otherwise, you can find online gigs at websites such as [Tutor.com](#).

18. **Flip items on eBay** -- The 50-cent finds you discover at a local thrift store or garage sale might be worth a whole lot more on the global marketplace of eBay. It might take a little trial and error to learn what's worth money online, and you can search for "flipping on eBay" or "reselling on eBay" to learn the tricks of the trade. Also check out:

- "[How to Make Extra Money Buying Locally, Selling Globally](#)"
- "[Earn Thousands a Year Shopping Garage Sales](#)"

19. **Become a mystery shopper**

-- Gathering information for businesses about their customer service and compliance with regulations. Just be aware that mystery shopping isn't nearly as easy as you might think. My experience was that some shopping scenarios were a bit contrived — for example, requiring you to ask strange questions or make returns immediately after a purchase. Once you finish shopping, you typically need to whip up a narrative of your experience, so good writing skills are a must. To learn more, check out:

- “Weird Ways to Make Money: Mystery Shopping“
- “Watch Out for These Signs of a Mystery Shopper Scam“

20. **Crowdfund your dreams** -- Finally, you could simply ask for money. Crowdfunding sites like [Kickstarter](#) and [Indiegogo](#) enable you to solicit money from others for a wide variety of reasons.

[Source: MoneyTalksNews | Maryalene LaPonsie | June 16, 2017 ++]

Living Together but Not Married ► 5 Important Things to Know

Here's some sobering information: Although marriage rates have fallen, cohabitation relationships continue to increase, with about 18 million couples deciding to live together in 2016, an increase of at least 29 percent from 14 million in 2007, according to Pew Research Center, citing U.S. Census Bureau statistics. It is likely that many unmarried couples haven't considered the financial ramifications of living together. That's a mistake because they're not afforded all of the same protections and advantages that married couples have. Every young couple that breaks up has faced the issue of “this is yours, that's mine” — from books and music to pets and furniture. But living together as you get older (and hopefully wealthier) can pose additional challenges. It's essential to remember, whether gay or straight: When it comes to money, the law doesn't recognize relationships not officially documented on paper.

1. How to buy half a house

With mortgage rates near historic lows and home prices rising, unmarried couples may decide not only to move in together, but also to buy their own place. This could be a great move, but be aware of potential problems. Keep in mind the house belongs to the person whose name appears on the legally recorded deed. It doesn't matter what verbal agreements were made or who paid the mortgage. So make sure both parties are named on the deed. The two basic ways of taking title with other people are tenancy in common (<http://www.nolo.com/dictionary/tenancy-in-common-term.html>) and joint tenancy with right of survivorship (<http://www.nolo.com/dictionary/joint-tenancy-term.html>). The difference is that with right of survivorship, your interest in the property automatically transfers to the other owner when you die. With tenancy in common, it doesn't. Also keep this in mind: If you both apply for the mortgage, you're both responsible for paying it — even after you break up. If both parties are on the deed as owners, but only one is on the mortgage, the one responsible for the mortgage remains responsible, even if that person has moved out and moved on.

Another common scenario: John already owns a house, then Jane moves in and, because she makes more than John, proceeds to make the monthly mortgage payments. Is Jane then entitled to any of the equity she's creating by paying down John's mortgage? No. Absent a legal document to the contrary, it's John's house and his equity. So, if you're thinking of buying a house together — or taking on the responsibilities of someone who already owns a home — go into the transaction with your eyes open. The steps are simple:

- Think it through.
- Talk it out.
- Draw it up.
- Have a lawyer look it over, then have it notarized or recorded.

2. Where there's a will, there's a way.

It's bad enough when married couples don't have a will, especially when it's so easy to do. (See "How Do I Get a Will on the Cheap?" at <https://www.moneytalksnews.com/ask-stacy-how-get-will-the-cheap>). But even without a will, the law won't leave a surviving spouse high and dry, because of another piece of paper — a marriage certificate. If there's no paper, as far as the law is concerned, you're strangers even if you've shared a bed for 20 years. If you're married and die without a will, your estate will eventually go to your spouse because, according to the law, your spouse is your next of kin. If you're unmarried and die without a will, your estate still goes to your next of kin — but that's not your partner. If you don't relish the idea of a parent, a sibling or some distant uncle inheriting everything, get a will. Something else to consider: If you're rich — say, with assets exceeding \$5 million — you could have estate tax issues that wealthy married people don't. So talking to an estate attorney is a good idea.

3. **A taxing health care plan.**

Many big companies and government agencies extend health insurance coverage to unmarried couples. While it may not matter to your employer if you're hitched, it does however matter to the IRS. When you're married, the IRS doesn't tax your health benefits, nor does it tax the benefits your spouse receives under your plan. But if you're providing your domestic partner with health care benefits, the portion applying to them could be taxable to you. In other words, if John covers Jane as a domestic partner under his employer-sponsored health plan, John could be taxed by Uncle Sam for any benefits extended to Jane.

Why? Federal tax law specifically excludes employee benefits received by spouses from taxation, but Uncle Sam doesn't recognize domestic partners. Thus, if John's and Jane's employers both pay for their health coverage, they're better off keeping them separate. If John has coverage and Jane doesn't, they have to make a calculation: Do John's extra taxes exceed what it would cost Jane to get a private health insurance policy? The correct path will depend on John's tax bracket and Jane's cost of health insurance.

But there's something else to consider. Suppose Jane develops a health problem? If she's on John's group policy through his workplace, she'll continue to be insured. But if they split up and John cancels her coverage, she could be denied individual insurance on her own because she now has a pre-existing condition, especially if new health care reform bills become law that allow denial of insurance because of your health history.

4. **In case of medical emergency.**

If one partner has a medical emergency, absent paper to the contrary, the other has no legal right to be given information or to make decisions about care. The solution to this problem is an advance health care directive (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Advance_healthcare_directive), which allows each of you to legally make decisions if the other is incapacitated. It also allows hospitals to share information usually reserved for spouses. Like a will, these directives aren't hard to get. Your hospital or county health department can give you the form, or you can download one online.

5. **Marriage without paper.**

There is one situation in which a couple living together can enjoy the rights of marriage without getting hitched the traditional way: They can claim a common law marriage — which is recognized by law in 15 states. But if you think a common law marriage is created simply by living together, you're wrong. According to Nolo.com, these couples must:

- Live together for a significant period of time (not defined in any state).
- Hold themselves out as a married couple — i.e., share a last name, refer to each other as husband and wife, and file a joint tax return.
- Intend to be married.

Keep in mind that the burden of proving you're a common law married couple will fall to you — it's not automatic. Once you've proved it, you'll then have the privileges of married couples — including the privilege of going through a legal divorce if you break up.

[Source: MoneyTalksNews | Stacy Johnson | June 13, 2017 ++]

DUI Costs Update 01 ► Can you Afford It?

Celebrity Trivia: What do Nicole Richie, Kiefer Sutherland, Tracy Morgan, Mel Gibson and Tiger Woods have in common? Answer: They've all been arrested on driving under the influence (DUI) charges. In this case they are part of a club — and not an exclusive or elite one, at that. Some 1.5 million Americans are arrested each year for DUI. Every day, 28 people in the United States die in an alcohol-related vehicle crash—that's one person every 53 minutes. Drunk driving fatalities have fallen by a third in the last three decades; however, the chance of being in an alcohol-impaired crash is still one in three over the course of a lifetime. These deaths and damages contribute to a cost of \$52B per year. Collectively, deaths and damage from DUI violations cost the nation some \$52 billion annually, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA).

The celebs listed were unlucky in that their arrests made front-page news, damaging their reputations. But they were fortunate, too. First, no one was injured or killed as a result of their actions. And, of course, they likely didn't suffer much financial hardship covering the fines and legal expenses rung up by their behavior. For most of us, the cost of a first-time DUI, which typically runs \$7,500 to \$10,000, is serious money. That's not counting the cost of any property damage or bodily harm that you and/or your insurance company will need to cover — and comes on top of the trouble a DUI arrest can visit on our personal and professional lives.

Here's how it works:

- Cases of DUI (or DWI — driving while intoxicated) are treated differently in each state, reported FindLaw. Some states have mandatory penalties — both administrative and criminal — for first-time offenders. Other states allow judges wide discretion when imposing penalties.
- Some of the possible actions, depending on the state, include: confiscation of the driver's car, mandatory installation of ignition interlock devices (like a breathalyzer that prevents the car from starting if the driver has been drinking) at the driver's expense, mandatory alcohol education, treatment, and/or assessment and suspension or revocation of the driver's license.
- Judges generally have discretionary power on setting fines, jail time, community service and other penalties.
- OneDUI Insurance has an interactive map at <http://onedui.com/dui-costs> with a breakdown of average costs in each state.

State-by-state view

Driving while impaired in Arizona? This is an especially bad idea, because according to the NHTSA, the Southwestern state carries the harshest penalties for the violation. First-time offenders get a minimum jail term of 10 days, have their vehicle impounded and must install an ignition interlock device, according to NHTSA. Other states that come down hardest for a DUI are Alaska, Connecticut and West Virginia, according to analysis by Guardian Interlock. South Dakota is on the lenient end. If you are hit with a DUI in the "Mount Rushmore State" there is no minimum jail time for the first and second offenses, according to Guardian Interlock's analysis. The third time, and you're out — facing a felony. But the state does not suspend licenses or require mandatory ignition interlock devices, the company said. Other relatively lenient jurisdictions are the District of Columbia, North Dakota and Montana.

Though there are regional differences in various penalties and fees associated with a DUI arrest, nowhere is it cheap. Follows are median costs for a DUI in the United States, according to OneDUI Insurance:

- Total cost of a first-time DUI: \$7,772 to \$10,172
- Minimum fine: \$400
- Penalty assessment: \$600

- State restitution fund: \$100
- Alcohol abuse education fund: \$50
- Blood/breath testing fee: \$37
- Jail cite and release fee: \$10
- Driving alcohol school: \$375
- License reissue fee: \$100
- Attorney fee: \$2,500
- Auto insurance increase: \$3,600 to \$6,000

A DUI on your record could also cause longer-term damage to your financial standing. You could lose your job for an array of related reasons, as explained by California-based lawyer Randy Collins. Among them: If your arrest goes in the newspaper or otherwise damages your company's reputation or your position at the company (think social media buzz), your job may be on the line. If your job involves driving, and now you can't, you may quickly find that you need to change careers, according to Collins. And some companies have rules in place that mandate firing an employee who is arrested for DUI, he says.

We all know that driving under the influence is dangerous, but sometimes we forget the real and irreversible consequences if things go wrong. If you kill or hurt someone you face a lifetime of regret and shame. If that isn't enough to discourage you from driving while impaired, maybe the risk to your bank account will. As you enjoy your summer barbecues, graduation parties and weddings, be sure to help keep the roads safe, and don't risk the trauma to your finances. [Source: MoneyTalksNews | Nancy Dunham | June 20, 2017 ++]

Tax Burden for Pennsylvania Retired Vets ► As of JUN 2017

Many people planning to retire use the presence or absence of a state income tax as a litmus test for a retirement destination. This is a serious miscalculation since higher sales and property taxes can more than offset the lack of a state income tax. The lack of a state income tax doesn't necessarily ensure a low total tax burden. States raise revenue in many ways including sales taxes, excise taxes, license taxes, income taxes, intangible taxes, property taxes, estate taxes and inheritance taxes. Depending on where you live, you may end up paying all of them or just a few. Following are the taxes you can expect to pay if you retire in Pennsylvania.

Sales Taxes

State Sales Tax: 6% (food, clothing, text books, heating fuels, prescription and non-prescription drugs are exempt). Other taxing entities may add up to 2%.

Gasoline Tax: 76.6 cents/gallon (Includes all taxes)

Diesel Fuel Tax: 99.1 cents/gallon (Includes all taxes)

Cigarette Tax: \$2.60/pack of 20

Personal Income Taxes

Tax Rate Range: Flat rate of 3.07%

Personal Tax Exemptions: None

Standard Deduction: None

Medical/Dental Deduction: None

Federal Income Tax Deduction: None

Retirement Income Taxes: Retirement income is not taxed after age 59 1/2 if the person has reached retirement, based on years of service or age. Retired means meeting the requirements of a Pennsylvania eligible plan and separated from service by retiring. Eligible employer-sponsored retirement plans can, but do not necessarily, include employer-sponsored deferred compensation plans; 401(k) plans, thrift plans, thrift savings plans, and

eligible welfare plans. Income not taxed includes Social Security benefits and Railroad Retirement benefits; commonly recognized pension, old age retirement benefits paid after becoming eligible to retire, and then retiring. It also includes United Mine Workers' pensions, military pensions, and civil service annuities. For more information, click here.

Retired Military Pay: As long as you retire from the military with either years of service or age, your retirement income is not taxable.

Military Disability Retired Pay: Retirees who entered the military before Sept. 24, 1975, and members receiving disability retirements based on combat injuries or who could receive disability payments from the VA are covered by laws giving disability broad exemption from federal income tax. Most military retired pay based on service-related disabilities also is free from federal income tax, but there is no guarantee of total protection.

VA Disability Dependency and Indemnity Compensation: VA benefits are not taxable because they generally are for disabilities and are not subject to federal or state taxes.

Military SBP/SSBP/RCSBP/RSFPP: Generally subject to state taxes for those states with income tax. Check with state department of revenue office.

Property Taxes

Property taxes are levied by local governments (counties, municipalities and school districts). The tax cannot exceed 30 mills on the assessed valuation of the property without special permission from the courts. Households with claimants or spouses 65 years of age or older, widows or widowers 50 years of age or older and the permanently disabled 18 years of age or older meeting income eligibility requirements may qualify for this program. Rebates of paid property tax or rent, up to a maximum of \$975 per year, are available. To qualify, annual household eligibility income must not exceed \$35,000. Applicants can exclude, as income, one-half of Social Security, Supplemental Security Income and Railroad Retirement Tier 1 benefits. The Property Tax/Rent Rebate program (www.revenue.pa.gov/generaltaxinformation/propertytaxrentrebateprogram/pages/default.aspx#.WUb6vSErJD9) allows residents to exclude 50% of Social Security payments and 50% of Railroad Retirement benefit payments from eligibility income. The maximum rebate is \$650. Counties may levy an intangible personal property tax, which taxes stocks, bonds and other personal property taxpayers may own. Not all counties levy this tax. For more details, click here.

Inheritance and Estate Taxes

The Pennsylvania inheritance tax is calculated at a percentage of the value of the assets transferred which is determined by the relationship of the heir to the decedent and the decedent's date of death. The tax rate is 4.5% for transfers to direct descendants (lineal heirs), 12% for transfers to siblings, and 15% for transfers to other heirs (except charitable organizations, exempt institutions, and government entities). Property owned jointly between husband and wife is exempt from the tax, while property inherited from a spouse, or from a child 21 or younger by a parent is exempt. The estate tax is related to federal estate tax collection.

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For further information call 717-787-8201 or visit the [Pennsylvania Department of Revenue](http://www.revenue.pa.gov) site at <http://www.revenue.pa.gov/Pages/default.aspx#.VP0oHu85Cpo> [Source: <http://www.retirementliving.com> | JUN 2017 ++]

*** General Interest ***



Notes of Interest ► 16 thru 30 JUN 2017

- **International Space Station.** Russia's space agency says an unmanned cargo ship has been launched en route to the International Space Station. Roscosmos said in a statement that the Progress ship, carrying 2.5 metric tons of supplies, blasted off from the Baikonur launch complex in Kazakhstan on 14 JUN. It reached orbit and is to dock with the space station on 16 JUN. The ship is carrying water, food and scientific equipment, among other items.
- **Drug Seizures:** The Combined Task Force 150 has conducted a "record" number of drug busts in the Arabian Sea over the past several months, confiscating 3,300 kilograms of narcotics over the course of 10 raids, according to a recent Navy release (http://www.navy.mil/submit/display.asp?story_id=101030).
- **Drug Seizures:** The USCGC Waesche (WAY-shee) brought approximately 18 tons (16.3 metric tons) of seized cocaine to San Diego. The drugs brought ashore 15 JUN were seized by the crews of eight Coast Guard cutters in the Eastern Pacific from late March through this month.



- **Man Overboard.** A sailor from the cruiser Shiloh whom Navy officials said fell overboard last week, triggering a massive search-and-rescue effort, has been discovered on board. Presumed dead after going missing 8 JUN, Gas Turbine Systems Technician (Mechanical) 3rd Class Peter Mims reportedly hid himself in one of the engine rooms, according to two sources familiar with the situation.
- **USA.** The Army is expected to have more than 1 million troops after adding about 28,000 soldiers to its active and reserve components by the end of September. The growth will allow the Army to create new units, keep some units marked for deactivation active, and fill vacancies in existing units.
- **Memory.** Go to <https://youtu.be/Sn19xh3qHmI> and watch memory expert young Katherine and what she can do with her memory.
- **Airbags.** Is yours defective ? Go to <https://www.airbagrecall.com/en> and enter your license plate or VIN number to see if there has been a recall on your car's airbags.
- **Ballistic Missile Defense.** The U.S. Navy conducted a failed ballistic missile intercept 21 JUN with its SM-3 Block IIA off the coast of Hawaii. The destroyer John Paul Jones, running the Navy's top-of-the-line Aegis Baseline 9.C2 combat system, failed to intercept a medium-range ballistic missile launched from the Pacific Missile Range Facility at Kauai, Hawaii.
- **Taliban Captive Video.** American and Australian captives are seen in newly released Taliban video at https://twitter.com/_/status/877563882780336129. They were abducted outside the American University of Afghanistan in Kabul, where they work as teachers.

- **USS Fitzgerald Collison.** The crew of the guided-missile destroyer in which 7 sailors perished when struck by a merchant ship on 17 JUN off the coast of Japan fought to save the ship for an hour before the first calls went out for help, Japanese investigators now believe.
- **Navy Re-Up Bonuses.** The bad news effective 21 JUL is 14 award levels will decrease while six others will be removed altogether. There were no new additions or increases to award levels. The good news is the remaining 130 skills — ratings, reenlistment zones and enlisted classification multiples — will remain the same, for now. It's the second update to the SRB plan this fiscal year.
- **Cyberattacks.** Threats to industrial control systems are becoming increasingly widespread, according to a new survey from cybersecurity firm Kaspersky Lab and Business Advantage that found over half of the companies sampled reporting at least one cyberattack in the last 12 months.
- **Korea Tensions.** South Korea's Ministry of National Defense (MND) has confirmed that a camera-equipped unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) that was found on 9 JUN on a mountain near the inter-Korean border was launched from North Korea.
- **Snipers.** A Canadian sniper set what appears to be a record, picking off an ISIS fighter from some 2.2 miles away, and disrupting a potentially deadly operation by the terror group in Iraq. Shooting experts say the fatal shot at a world-record distance of 11,316 feet underscores how stunningly sophisticated military snipers are becoming. The feat, pulled off by a special forces sniper from Canada's Joint Task Force 2, smashed the previous distance record for successful sniper shots by some 3,280 feet, a record set by a British sniper.
- **Fukushima Nuclear Power Plant.** A federal appeals court says members of the U.S. Navy can pursue their lawsuit in a U.S. court alleging radiation exposure from Japan's Fukushima nuclear power plant. The 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco ruled 22 JUN that the sailors for now don't have to make their legal claims in Japan.
- **Sub Detection.** Chinese scientists claim to have made a major breakthrough in magnetic detection technology that could bring unprecedented accuracy to the process of finding hidden metallic objects — from underground minerals to underwater submarines.
- **Tornados.** The U.S. has more than all the rest of the world combined. We average a 1,000 per year whereas Canada at roughly the same land mass average only 100 per year. The rest of the world gets only 100 to 200 per year.
- **Defense 2018 Budget.** Senate Armed Services Committee members are holding all of their defense budget deliberations behind closed doors this year, a move that outside watchdogs are calling upsetting and against public interest.
- **Clouds.** An average cloud weighs 216 thousand pounds. An average storm cloud weighs 105.8 million pounds.
- **Alaska.** If you live there for 190 days a year and you aren't a convicted felon, you get an annual check from the state of Alaska just for not leaving
- **Zonky.** Donkeys and zebras can mate and create a Zonky.



Lying About Military Service ► Pennsylvania Makes It A Misdemeanor

A bill that would make it a misdemeanor to benefit from lying about military service or receiving decorations or medals unanimously passed the state Senate on 20 JUN and now heads to Gov. Tom Wolf's desk to be signed into law. House Bill 168, introduced by state Rep. Rick Saccone, R-Elizabeth Township, bans anyone from economically benefiting from lying about their service or decorations. Violators could be charged with a third-degree misdemeanor. "Our men and women of the armed forces and their families deserve the utmost respect and praise, and criminals who disguise themselves as illegitimate veterans demean our true American heroes," Saccone said. "Some people have actually tried to make money by falsely claiming veteran status," said Saccone, an Air Force veteran and a 2018 U.S. Senate candidate. "They will now be brought to account."



Saccone said lying about military service or medals to make money "is truly an insult and discredit to the men and women who have selflessly sacrifices their lives on the battlefield." Saccone introduced the same legislation in May 2016, calling it the Stolen Valor Act. It unanimously passed the state House in June 2016, but did not advance in the Senate. When the new legislative session started in January, Saccone reintroduced his bill and it passed the House 190-0 in April. In 2013, Congress passed the federal Stolen Valor Act, which addressed those who might lie about having military decorations and medals, such as the Congressional Medal of Honor and the Purple Heart, in order to obtain benefits. Those convicted of violating the federal law can face fines and up to a year in jail. [Source: Beaver County Times | J.D. Prose | June 22, 2017 ++]

Roswell UFO Incident ► 70th Anniversary

Suddenly, the silver saucer that has been suspended, stationary and silent above and behind four sallow-skinned, somber-faced, spaced-out aliens, starts to spin and spew smoke. Caught by surprise, visitors to the International UFO Museum and Research Center – kids and adults – stand wide-eyed and transfixed, traces of smiles creasing their faces as they watch and wonder what's next. Well, actually, that's about all. This saucer in the museum display does not crash as many people believe – or would like to believe – an actual alien craft did 70 years ago and about 75 miles northwest of here. The so-called Roswell Incident of 1947 is the reason the city of Roswell started a UFO Festival in 1995 and will host the 2017 festival Thursday, June 29, through Sunday, July 2.

It's the reason stores along Main Street sell T-shirts embossed with little green men and slogans such as "Roswell – Green since 1947." It's the reason why this museum was opened in 1992. And it's the reason Dana Lenko, 35,

alien-visaged antennae growing out of her long, dark hair, is among the museum visitors delighting in the spinning, smoking saucer. Lenko is a native of Melbourne, Australia, but she has lived in this country for three years and makes her home in Austin, where she is a fashion designer. Earlier this month, she was traveling with friends in New Mexico. "I have never been in New Mexico before," she said. "We want to see Santa Fe and Taos. But I've always been very keen on the stars and the vastness of space. My dad was an amateur astronomer. He gave me a love for that and for science fiction and the films. So I wanted to see Roswell for sure. You've got the chance to come here where it all started."

Strange debris

There were reports of Unidentified Flying Objects before whatever happened in New Mexico in the summer of 1947 happened. But the Roswell Incident planted the seed out of which today's fascination with extraterrestrial visitation sprouted. It started when W.W. "Mac" Brazel, who was running a sheep operation on a ranch 30 miles southeast of Corona, in Lincoln County, found debris scattered in his pasture in the summer of 1947. It was described as lightweight wood, tinfoil, tape, paper and strips of rubber, which sounds mundane enough. Except that some of it has also been described as impervious to fire, knife and hammer and unnaturally resilient. When Brazel told neighbors about it during the first week of July, they said he might have found wreckage from one of those flying saucers that had been in newspaper stories recently. So Brazel drove down to Roswell Army Air Field and reported his find.

The Army collected the debris and on July 8 the Roswell air field public relations officer released information saying the Army had recovered a flying disc. It made newspaper headlines, but the story was retracted by the Army almost immediately. The debris was actually from a weather balloon, the Army said. So sorry for the goof up. That could have been that. Mac Brazel died in 1963 and the years rolled along until 1980, when, in "The Roswell Incident," Charles Berlitz and William L. Moore wrote that the weather balloon story was a cover-up, that not only was the stuff Brazel found from a flying saucer but that the Army had discovered the crashed saucer itself and the bodies of its alien crew. It exploded from there. There were more books with varying body counts and crash-site locations. There was a 1999 TV movie; a 1999-2002 TV series; countless TV documentaries, including one in 1995 that claimed to depict an autopsy of an alien crash victims (it wasn't); and a 1999 episode on "The X-Files" TV series.

Wall-to-wall people

Roswell, a city of 50,000 about 200 miles southeast of Albuquerque, was not about to miss out on the action or the opportunity. Today, the "Welcome to Roswell" sign sports a tilted saucer on one corner. Through 2016, the UFO Museum had attracted 3,569,826 visitors, 13 percent of whom come from other countries. This year's UFO festival was expected to draw 30,000 people, a boon to hotels, restaurants, service stations and stores with names such as Alien Zone, Alien Invasion, 3RD Rock From the Sun and Roswell Landing. "The festival is our Black Friday," said Robert Marshall, 53, a Roswell native and an employee of Roswell Landing, which sells alien-themed merchandise such as T-shirts, coffee cups, shot glasses, key chains, magnets and so on. "We've been back stocking a lot of merchandise (for the festival). Upstairs is all T-shirts."

Jessie Payne, 32, manager of Alien Zone, remembers the 1997 festival, which marked the Roswell Incident's 50th anniversary, as being the landmark celebration to date. "That was wall-to-wall people," she said. "People were walking up and down Main Street for miles. You couldn't (drive) anywhere for stopping for pedestrians." To boost its everyday traffic, Alien Zone features Area 51, a special section where, for a \$2 to \$3 admission fee, patrons can see displays depicting aliens adapting to earthly avocations such as lounging on couches and drinking beer. On a recent day, Kevin Childers, 33, a medical doctor from Hendersonville, Tenn., and his wife, Danielle, 30, checked out Area 51. The Childers said their interest in Roswell had been piqued by "Unacknowledged," a recent documentary about the suppression of alien-encounter incidents, a recurring theme in the UFO books, articles and films. The Childers said they were having a good time in Roswell. "We are here purely for the entertainment," Kevin Childers said. "No tinfoil hats for us."

Something happened

Roswell Landing's Marshall said 95 percent of the people who come into the store are from somewhere else. He said those are the people who want alien T-shirts and coffee mugs. He said it's different for people, such as himself, who were born in Roswell. "You hear about it so much you don't pay attention to it anymore," he said. "But something happened. When the Army tells the Roswell Record (newspaper) they have found a flying saucer, and then the next day they have to come back and say it was a weather balloon." One explanation, and it sounds reasonable, is that the Army was not covering up for a flying saucer find but for Project Mogul, an operation, top secret at the time, aimed at discovering whether or not the Soviet Union was testing atomic bombs. The project employed high-altitude balloons equipped with sensitive microphones that could detect sound waves generated by atomic testing. Maybe it was a Project Mogul balloon that crashed into Brazel's sheep pasture.

Frank Kimbler, 61, one of the guest speakers at this year's UFO Festival, thinks the Project Mogul theory is just so much gas. "A craft of unknown origin crashed in the New Mexico desert and scared the hell out of the American military and out of people (witnesses) to the point they won't talk about it today," Kimbler said. An assistant professor of earth sciences at the New Mexico Military Institute in Roswell, Kimbler was scheduled to give a festival lecture titled "Roswell Crash Site: The Quest for Physical Evidence." Over the last seven years he has been scouring the Brazel debris field, using metal detectors, remote sensing and radiation-detecting devices to search for pieces of debris overlooked by the Army, artifacts that may shed some light on what happened there in 1947. "All we have is handed-down stories," he said. "I need to take some of my science and see if I can find some physical evidence. I've found some aluminum-type alloys. For good science, you need to have samples tested at three independent laboratories. But as soon as I start to get an answer, things disappear – in the mail or somehow."

Nazi UFOs

Guy Malone, 48, of Roswell organized a series of UFO Festival lectures that challenge the extraterrestrial hypothesis. He himself was to do presentations titled "Are Aliens Demons? Evidences That Suggest 'Yes'" and "Roswell 1947: What Really Happened?" Malone's theory is that the Roswell Incident is about something more devious and sinister than an alien crash and subsequent government cover-up. He thinks it might have involved the crash of an experimental aircraft being developed for the United States by German scientists.

Malone said that following World War II, a secret effort, known as Operation Paperclip, smuggled hundreds of German scientists, engineers and technicians – many of them former members of the Nazi party – into this country. "Hitler was notorious for developing flying craft of different shapes and propulsion devices," Malone said. "The U.S. wanted the technology because the Russians were trying to scoop up these (Germans), as well as other countries." He said some of the Germans were sent to Fort Bliss in Texas and New Mexico and White Sands in New Mexico. Malone believes the cover-up was an attempt to keep new technology under wraps and conceal from the public the fact that Nazis were working for the U.S. government.

Don Schmitt, 62, the co-author of five books about the Roswell Incident, said he was a skeptic when he started investigating the case in 1989. "But the moment we started talking to people who actually handled the material (debris found by Brazel), we started thinking 'What if we are wrong?'," Schmitt said during a phone interview from his Wisconsin home. He said the first 10 witnesses all said the same thing about the debris, that it was like metal but it wasn't, it was like plastic but it wasn't, that it couldn't be cut or burned or creased. Now, he says, he is 99 percent sure the crash involved something from another world. Schmitt and his writing partner, Thomas J. Carey, were scheduled to give several lectures at the UFO festival, one titled "The Misadventures of Two Roswell Investigators." "The investigation is still fluid," he said. "We are planning our sixth archaeological dig (at the Brazel debris field). We may come away with nothing, but we can say we did it."

Mysterious universe

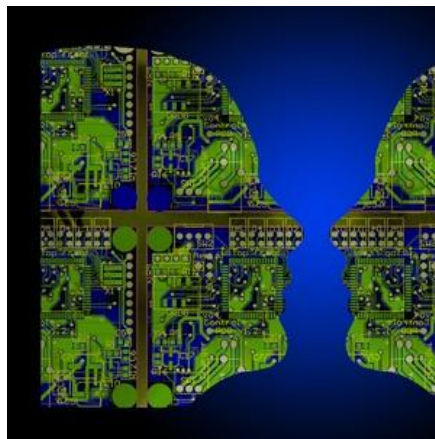
Back at the UFO Museum, Pamela Cortez, 46, of Idaho Falls, Idaho, was checking out the exhibits. She has come to New Mexico to visit her daughter and two grandkids, all of whom live in Carlsbad. Cortez's favorite museum display features statements by persons involved directly or indirectly with the Roswell incident. She thinks an alien

spacecraft did slam into a New Mexico pasture 70 years ago. “I believe it’s true. I believe the government hides a lot of stuff from us.” Fashion designer Lenko, she of the alien antennae, is more cautious. “I believe – in a more scientific way – that there might be other inhabitable planets out there,” she said. “It would be a bit arrogant of us to think that in this whole wide universe there is no other life. There’s a big universe out there, a lot of mysteries. It is very exciting.”

[Source: Albuquerque Journal, N.M. (TNS) | Ollie Reed Jr. | June 25, 2017 ++]

Artificial Intelligence ► DARPA Ensuring Man Can at Trust Machine

Under initiatives such as the so-called third offset strategy, which on a basic level imagines humans and machines teaming together to overcome the parity competitors have reached with American capabilities, artificial intelligence (AI) will be a critical component. For humans, however, learning to trust machines is a real challenge. “A lot of AI today is a black box, you have this neural net that you put in the inputs, it spits out an answer and 90 percent of the time it’s right. But that last 10 percent, sometimes it really screws up,” Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency acting Director Steven Walker said 14 JUN at the Defensive Cyber Operations Symposium in Baltimore, Maryland.



Walker's predecessor, Arati Prabhakar, last year at the Atlantic Council displayed a picture of a baby holding a toothbrush that a machine identified as a baseball bat. This could have mortal implications if a drone feed misidentifies a rake for an AK-47. “The best of these systems are statistically better than humans at identifying images. The problem is that when they’re wrong, they are wrong in ways that no human would ever be wrong and I think this is a critically important caution about where and how we would use this generation of artificial intelligence,” Prabhakar said.

The goal of DARPA's Explainable AI program, Walker said, is to utilize psychologists and others to understand what would make a human comfortable in working with a machine, and what must a human know in regard to how a machine develops an answer so it’s not just answer and probability but rather the methodology laid out. Walker discussed another program in the works in regard to AI that looks at how a human can trust a machine-learning algorithm and a machine based on AI. What verification process must take place surrounding how a machine develops an answer for a human to trust the machine? These are critical questions that need to be answered for concepts such as the third offset and man-machine teaming to be realized. [Source: <http://www.c4isrnet.com> | Mark Pomerleau | June 14, 2017 ++]

Money Contaminants ► Unsavory Substances Luring On Your Cash

The late, great comedian and actor Robin Williams once said, “Cocaine is God’s way of saying you’re making too much money.” If that’s the case, a lot of folks are raking in too much cash these days. Traces of cocaine are found on nearly 80 percent of dollar bills, [The Conversation reports](#), citing scientific studies. Not a fan of cocaine? Not to worry. Several other illicit substances linger on our banknotes, although not as commonly as cocaine. Germs and DNA are also in circulation. Perhaps this should come as no surprise, considering the range of bacteria that have been found to coat [airplane tray tables](#) and [rental-car steering wheels and shifters](#).

Still, the array of uninvited hitchhikers riding our hard-earned cash is impressive. Studies show these clingers include:

- **Drugs:** In addition to cocaine, drugs found on our cash include heroin, methamphetamine, amphetamine and morphine.
- **Bacteria:** More than 100 strains have been found on dollar bills in New York City alone. They often include the acne-causing bacteria *Propionibacterium acnes* and *Streptococcus oralis*, bacteria found in our mouths. The dreaded infection-causing methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*, or MRSA, has been found on banknotes in the U.S. and Canada. Foodborne illness-causing strains like salmonella and *E. coli* can survive on both coins and ATM machines.
- **DNA:** Traces from both humans and pets have been found in circulation. The DNA left behind on ATMs has even shown researchers how diets vary among residents of different New York neighborhoods. For example, folks in Harlem have a heftier hankering for chicken than folks in Flushing or Chinatown, where fish and mollusks are preferred.

Before you freak out, know that no major disease outbreak has been traced back to ATMs, and monetarily transmitted disease is rare, according to [The Conversation’s](#) report. Just consider this news a reminder to wash your hands more often. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention describe hand-washing as a “do-it-yourself vaccine” that can save your life. The federal agency explains: “Regular hand-washing, particularly before and after certain activities, is one of the best ways to remove germs, avoid getting sick, and prevent the spread of germs to others.” [Source: MoneyTalksNews | Karla Bowsler | June 23, 2017 ++]

PRK~US War ► What It Would Be Like | A Grim Scenario

Asked on Thursday by Rep. Tim Ryan of the House Appropriations Committee to explain why the US doesn't just go to war to stop North Korea from developing the capability to hit the US, Secretary of Defense James Mattis [painted a grim scenario](#). "I would suggest that we will win," Mattis said. "It will be a war more serious in terms of human suffering than anything we've seen since 1953. "It will involve the massive shelling of an ally's capital, which is one of the most densely packed cities on earth," Mattis said of Seoul, South Korea, which boasts a metro-area population of 25 million. "It would be a war that fundamentally we don't want," Mattis said, but "we would win at great cost."

Mattis explained that because the threat from North Korea loomed so large and a military confrontation would destroy so much, he, President Donald Trump, and Secretary of State Rex Tillerson had all made a peaceful solution a top priority. Mattis said the topic of North Korea dominated Trump's meeting in April with President Xi Jinping of China, North Korea's only ally, and that the US intended to make China understand that "North Korea today is a strategic burden, not a strategic asset." China argues it has limited influence on Pyongyang, but as one expert

explained, Beijing could at any moment cripple North Korea through trade means, forcing it to come to the negotiating table.

Mattis made clear that the US was nearing the end of its rope in dealing with North Korea, saying: "We're exhausting all possible diplomatic efforts in this regard." North Korea recently taunted Trump by saying it was capable of hitting New York with a nuclear missile, but Mattis said a war today would hurt our Asian allies. "It would be a serious, a catastrophic war, especially for innocent people in some of our allied countries, to include Japan most likely," Mattis said. To view Mattis' testimony before the House Appropriation Committee subcommittee on go to <https://youtu.be/YH48NEWXvaw>. [Source: Business Insider | Lex Lockie | June 16, 2017 ++]

Coca Cola Update 01 ► 24 Ways it Can Be Used

It's hard to imagine a world without Coca Cola. The iconic beverage, invented in 1886 by Atlanta pharmacist Dr. John S. Pemberton, is available just about everywhere you can travel. Today more than 1.9 billion servings are sold annually throughout the world. Mostly, of course, those sales are for Coke as a beverage. But as it turns out, Coke is useful for myriad tasks — from de-skunking your dog to shining your copper cooking pots. And the fact that it you can get it almost anywhere means it can help you with all sorts of problems in all sorts of places. Consider these alternate uses for Coke, but remember we haven't tested all of them:

1. **Remove grease stains on clothing** -- Sometimes it seems impossible to keep grease stains from getting on your clothes, whether while you're working around the house or eating lunch. As a solution, [Lifehacker](#) suggests you pour a can of Coke into your wash — while also using regular detergent — to remove grease stains and smells.
2. **Attract and kill slugs and snails** -- Is your yard overrun with slugs and snails? [FactsUniversity](#) and many other sites suggest that you fill a small bowl with Coca-Cola and set it outside to attract and kill the pests.
3. **Scrub burned-on food from pans** -- Pans caked with burned-on food take forever to clean unless you know the Coca-Cola secret. Pour Coke into the pan, bring it to a boil, and you can scrub the crusty stuff right off, reports [Parent Hacks](#).
4. **Clean car battery terminals** -- Car aficionados know that you can clean corrosion off battery terminals by wiping them with a cloth soaked in Coke. It's a quick fix if you are stranded somewhere due to battery issues, reports [Lifehacker](#).
5. **Remove gum from hair** -- Gum in the hair is messy and painful to remove. Coke can help. Dip the gummy area of hair in Coke (or pour it on), let it sit a few minutes, and then just wipe the gum and cola out, suggests [HappyLifestyleJournal](#).
6. **Clean a toilet** -- The toilet is probably everyone's least favorite area to clean, especially when it's filled with nasty rust stains. Ease your work by pouring Coke around the rim of the bowl so that it covers the stains, suggests [HappyLifeStyle Journal](#). Leave the cola in the toilet for at least an hour, and then flush the stain away.
7. **Soothe a jellyfish sting** -- When stung by a jellyfish during an underwater adventure, try pouring Coca-Cola on the affected area for a few seconds to lessen the pain, recommends [Diver-to-Diver forums](#) and other sites. Although most avid scuba divers carry vinegar for that purpose, typical beachgoers don't pack that but often have Coke at the ready.
8. **Ease nausea** -- We bet your mom sometimes soothed your upset tummy with Coca-Cola when you were a child. It still works. Flat soda is best, notes [The New York Times](#).
9. **Clean copper** -- Want to shine up that copper pot? Soak a cloth in Coke and rub it on the copper, let it set and rinse.

10. **Lighten dyed hair color** -- Unusual hair colors are pretty but often can turn out more vibrant than expected. Lighten dyed hair by washing it with a can of Coke, reports [Business Insider](#).
11. **Loosen paint from metal** -- Removing paint from metal furniture is a long, arduous task that usually involves chemicals and heat. Before you try those methods, dip a towel in Coke and set it on the metal surface for a few days, suggests [WiseBread](#). Keep the towel wet with cola. The paint then should be easy to remove.
12. **Clean your garage floor** -- Sweep up dirt and dust, then pour Coca-Cola on the floor. Let it set for a while, and hose it down, suggests [WiseBread](#). Oil and grime will rinse away.
13. **Remove marker stains from carpet** -- Pour Coke on the marker stain on the carpet, let it set a few minutes, then blot it up. Spray water on the area to dilute the remaining Coke and stain, and keep blotting until the liquid is absorbed, says [Business Insider](#).
14. **Create barbecue sauce** -- All you need is 1 cup of Coca-Cola and a few other ingredients (ketchup, Worcestershire sauce, liquid smoke, A-1 Steak Sauce and spices) to make a delicious barbecue sauce, according to [Food Network](#).
15. **Repel bugs** -- Fill a spray bottle with Coke to arm yourself against pesky insects. If you can't swat that nasty mosquito or other bug, spray it with Coke, suggests [Cafe Mom](#). Side note: It's best to do this outside only, or risk staining the walls and furniture.
16. **Dilute bloodstains** -- So many websites report that Coca-Cola removes blood, including [Emlji](#), it's almost too obvious to mention. Pour Coke on the stain, let it set (just as you would with commercial stain remover), and wash as usual.
17. **Clean windows** -- Forget commercial citrus-scented cleaners. Grab a Coke, pour some in a spray bottle and use it to clean your windows, recommends sites including [Shareable TV](#).
18. **Topical pain reliever** -- Calm the annoying itch of mosquito bites — and even ease the pain of wasp and bee stings — by dabbing them with Coke, recommends [Goliath](#).
19. **Clean rust** -- Do you have rust on your tools, nails and other metal objects? Soak them in Coke and then scrub them clean, recommends [Goliath](#).
20. **De-ice a window** -- There are few things more annoying than going out to your car and finding the windows coated with ice. Rather than chipping away, [ParentHacks](#) suggests grabbing a can of Coke and pouring it on the windshield to melt the ice. One warning though — keep it off your paint or make sure to wash the car right away.
21. **Eliminate skunk smell** - When a skunk sprays you or your pet, the go-to product for removing the greasy, smelly stuff is tomato juice. But a can of Coke provides a good alternative. Apply Coke to the affected skin or fur, wait a few minutes and then rinse well with water, recommends [Business Insider](#).
22. **Jump-start a compost bin** -- Pour a can of flat Coca-Cola on a compost pile to speed decomposition, recommends [Lifehacker](#).
23. **Clean coins** -- Shine up coins by rinsing them under running cold water, letting them soak in Coke for about five minutes, and rinsing again, recommends [OurPastimes](#).
24. **Moisturize your face** -- Add extra oomph to your moisturizer by mixing in a spoonful of Coke, reports several sites including [WiseBread](#).

[Source: MoneyTalksNews | Nancy Dunham | June 14, 2017 ++]

Hitler Mementos Update 01 ► Large Collection Found in Argentina

In a hidden room in a house near Argentina's capital, police believe they have found the biggest collection of Nazi artifacts in the country's history, including a bust relief of Adolf Hitler, magnifying glasses inside elegant boxes with swastikas and even a macabre medical device used to measure head size. Some 75 objects were found in a collector's home in Béccar, a suburb north of Buenos Aires, and authorities say they suspect they are originals that belonged to high-ranking Nazis in Germany during the second world war. "Our first investigations indicate that these are original pieces," Argentine security minister Patricia Bullrich told The Associated Press on 19 JUN, saying that many pieces were accompanied by old photographs. "This is a way to commercialize them, showing that they were used by the horror, by the Fuhrer. There are photos of him with the objects."

Among the disturbing items were toys that Bullrich said would have been used to indoctrinate children and a statue of the Nazi Eagle above a swastika. Police are trying to determine how the artifacts entered Argentina and came to be in the room hidden behind a library in the house, she said. The raid that found them was carried out on 8 JUN. The main hypothesis among investigators and members of Argentina's Jewish community is that they were brought to Argentina by a high-ranking Nazi or Nazis after the second world war, when the South American country became a refuge for fleeing war criminals, including some of the best known.

As leading members of Hitler's Third Reich were put on trial for war crimes, Josef Mengele fled to Argentina and lived in Buenos Aires for a decade. He moved to Paraguay after Israeli Mossad agents captured Holocaust mastermind Adolf Eichmann, who was also living in Buenos Aires. Mengele later died in Brazil in 1979 while swimming in a beach in the town of Bertioga. While police in Argentina did not name any high-ranking Nazis to whom the objects might have originally belonged, Bullrich noted there were medical devices. "There are objects to measure heads that was the logic of the Aryan race," she said. [Source: Associated Press | June 19, 2017 ++]

Plastic Packaging ► Best Way to Deal With It

Have you suffered from "wrap rage," the term coined to describe consumers' frustration while opening the hard plastic packaging that encases so many things? According to one oft-cited Consumer Product Safety Commission statistic, "oyster" or "clamshell" package injuries resulted in some 6,400 emergency room visits in 2004. At that point, the problem was so prevalent that Consumer Reports named an annual "Oyster Award" to the company with the hardest-to-open package. Since then, some major industry players have begun shifting to alternative packaging. But clamshell packaging is still around and still a menace! So, don't become one of the statistics. Follow these tips for opening those seemingly impermeable packages without cutting hands or lopping off fingertips and you have an open package in just a few minutes with the contents and the instructions intact:

Use a can opener -- Check for pull tabs or perforated lines to help you open the package. Sometimes these features are part of the design. Usually not, though. In the absence of these features, grab a rotary can opener and a small kitchen knife. Then:

- Place the package on its side with the edge facing up.
- Insert the bottom edge of the package inside the can opener like you'd normally do to open a can.
- Turn the can opener until you reach the other end of the package.
- Insert the kitchen knife inside the now open part of the clamshell with the blade facing away from you. Slowly run the knife along the remaining three edges.

Safety -- Consumer Reports has some additional tips on how to avoid injuring yourself:

- If you must use a knife or another type of sharp object, cut away from your body.

- If you must use scissors, use a pair with blunt tips.
- Wear protective gloves.
- Avoid opening tough-to-open packages in a crowded area.
- Don't hold the product between your legs to keep it stable.
- Get a tool made for the job

If the idea of opening packaging yourself still seems daunting or risky, a few products on the market are designed to make the task easier. For example, the Zip-it opener (<https://youtu.be/xotNkxoXmas>) promises to slide along the package and looks similar to a can opener, but works with the press of a button. Another tool designed for the task is called Open It (<https://www.vat19.com/item/openit-plastic-blister-packaging-opener?>) — and looks like miniature garden shears. Alternatively, if you have tin snips in your tool box, use those. They cut effortlessly through the hard plastic packaging.

Preventative measures -- If you've ever found yourself spending Christmas morning with a crying child who just can't wait for you to break open that clamshell package and untwist those 14 twist ties, consider this alternative: Open the package ahead of time, save any packaging materials in case you have to return it later, put the toy in a box, and then wrap it. Your kid won't care if the item isn't in its original packaging. You avoid the potential stress and injury of rushing to open it.

Avoid the problem -- There are various industry efforts under way to move away from the difficult-to-open clamshell packaging, so it is getting somewhat easier to avoid buying products wrapped in it. For instance, since 2008, online retail giant Amazon has been phasing in Frustration Free packaging, which the company says is:

- Recyclable and does not include excess packaging materials, such as hard plastic clamshell casings, plastic bindings and wire ties.
- Designed to be opened without a box cutter or knife, while protecting products just as well as traditional packaging. Products can be shipped in their own boxes, without an additional shipping box.

It was a move welcomed by consumers and environmentalists alike, but there's still plenty of diabolical clamshell still out there. So if you can't avoid it, be prepared to do battle with it — without getting hurt. [Source: MoneyTalksNews | Kari Huus & Craig Donofrio | June 19, 2017 ++]

PRK Nuclear Weapons Update 11 ► Advancing H-bomb Development

North Korea clearly has the ability to produce tritium internally, a basic element for making hydrogen bombs, although the country has yet to weaponize it, an American nuclear expert said 27 JUN. "The evidence is quite clear that North Korea is able to produce tritium, which is necessary for a hydrogen bomb to create fusion. So you need tritium when you are going to have hydrogen bombs," Siegfried Hecker, a professor at Stanford University, told a group of journalists here. During his 2010 trip to North Korea, he was allowed to take a look into the country's uranium-enrichment facility in Yongbyon.

North Korea claimed it used a hydrogen bomb when it conducted its fourth nuclear test in January last year, although it has not been proven. "I believe they have made tritium. In fact, last year there have been some indications that they were trying to market one of the key ingredients for making tritium, something called lithium-6 ... So it's clear they know how to make tritium. We know that's official," he noted. Also citing commercial satellite imagery, the nuclear expert also said that North Korea is adding at least one more tritium production facility to an old facility. But he was negative about North Korea being able to weaponize the material. "They can make tritium so they have the basic element for a hydrogen bomb. But it takes much more than that to weaponize hydrogen bombs. I don't believe they can do that (yet)."

Hecker said the first step to denuclearize North Korea should start with a "no-use" agreement with the country to guarantee that Pyongyang would not use its nuclear weapons. Without the agreement, accidental launch, miscalculation or loss of control could wreak unimaginable damage on the Korean Peninsula, he said. "Those possibilities are sufficiently worrisome that I maintain that the crisis is here now, not when they (North Korean missiles) are able to reach the U.S.," according to Hecker. "Once you do no-use,... then it's halt, roll back and eliminate," he said, indicating that the denuclearization process should be carried out in three phases. "It's (also) important for the U.S. and South Korea to come to an agreement (on how to phase the process) before they would negotiate with North Korea."

Drawing on American college student Otto Warmbier, who died last week less than seven days after being released from a 17-month detention in North Korea, Hecker said that the event would weigh on the U.S. administration's stated willingness to hold dialogue with North Korea. "I think that what happened to Warmbier has put focus on three other Americans that are there (in North Korea). Getting them out becomes more important and an obstacle to moving down the path," he said. "I don't think it completely stopped it, but it's another roadblock or pothole." In an earlier presentation given to a forum on North Korean nuclear issue, hosted by the Institute of Korean Studies, Hecker also said that North Korea appears to be in possession of enough nuclear fuel to make as many as 25 nuclear weapons in addition to the ability to produce about six or seven additional nuclear weapons every year. [Source: Yonhap News Agency | June 27, 2017 ++]

Have You Heard? ► Idle Observations | Leo and Frank

1. The location of your mailbox shows you how far away from your house you can be in a robe before you start looking like a mental patient.
2. My therapist said that my narcissism causes me to misread social situations. I'm pretty sure she was hitting on me.
3. My 70 year kindergarten reunion is coming up soon and I'm worried about the 75 pounds I've gained since then.
4. I always wondered what the job application is like at Hooters. Do they just give you a bra and say, "Fill this out?"
5. Denny's has a slogan, "If it's your birthday, the meal is on us." If you're in Denny's and it's your birthday, your life sucks!
6. If I join you for breakfast in bed, a simple "Thank you" is all I need; not all this talk about, "How did you get into my house?"
7. The pharmacist asked me my birth date again today. I'm pretty sure she's going to get me something now that I'm nearly 87!
8. On average, an American man will have sex two to three times a week. Whereas, a Japanese man will have sex only one or two times a year. This is very upsetting news to me. I had no idea I was Japanese.
9. I can't understand why women are okay that JC Penny has an older women's clothing line named, "Sag Harbor."
10. I think it's pretty cool how Chinese people made a language entirely out of tattoos. I wonder if Ms. CHU the Yale Dean who was just fired has any?
11. What is it about a car that makes people think we can't see them pick their noses?

12. Money can't buy happiness, but it keeps the kids in touch!

13. The reason Mayberry was so peaceful and quiet was because nobody was married. Andy, Aunt Bea, Barney, Floyd, Howard, Goober, Gomer, Sam, Earnest T Bass, Helen, Thelma Lou, Clara and, of course, Opie were all single. The only married person was Otis, and he stayed drunk.

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Two 90-year old guys, Leo and Frank, had been friends all of their lives. When it was clear that Leo was dying, Frank visited him every day. One day Frank said 'Leo, we both loved playing baseball all our lives, and we played all through High School. Please do me one favor: when you get to Heaven, somehow you must let me know if there's baseball there.'

Leo looked up at Frank from his deathbed and said, 'Frank you've been my best friend for many years. If it's at all possible, I'll do this favor for you.'

Shortly after that, Leo passed on.

A few nights later, Frank was awakened from a sound sleep by a blinding flash of white light and a voice calling out to him 'Frank... Frank.' 'Who is it?' asked Frank sitting up suddenly. 'Who is it?'

'Leo-- it's me, Leo'.

'You're not Leo, Leo just died.' 'I'm telling you, it's me, Leo' insisted the voice.

'Leo!...Where are you?'

'In Heaven,' replied Leo. 'I have some really good news and a little bad news.'

Tell me the good news first,' said Frank.

'The good news,' Leo said, 'is that there's baseball in Heaven. Better yet all of our old buddies who died before us are here, too. Better than that, we're all young again. Better still, it's always springtime, and it never rains or snows. And best of all, we can play baseball all we want, and we never get tired.'

'That's fantastic,' said Frank 'It's beyond my wildest dreams! So what's the bad news?'

'You're pitching Tuesday.'

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