

# RAO

# BULLETIN

# 1 July 2018

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](mailto:raoemo@sbcglobal.net).

**\* ATTACHMENTS \***

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- Attachment - Military History Anniversaries 01 thru 15 JUL
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## DoD Blended Retirement System Update 02 ► Projected Lump Sum Take Rates

The Defense Department's Office of the Actuary released a report this month that projects "take rates" for the most controversial feature of the new Blended Retirement System (BRS): the option at retirement to forfeit 25 or 50 percent of earned retired pay until age 67 in exchange for a six-figure lump-sum amount. In the latest "**Valuation of the Military Retirement System**" report, department actuaries assume:

- 5.2 percent of retiring officers and 22.8 percent of retiring enlisted will be enticed enough by cash to accept deep cuts in retired pay. It also assumes, f
- For accounting purposes, that everyone who elects the BRS lump sum will take the larger pile of cash, cutting their retired pay in half rather than by a quarter, until full annuities are restored at 67.
- 2 percent of retiring reserve officers and 8.4 percent of retiring reserve enlisted will take the lump-sum offer, again enticed by cash compensation to cut their retired pay 50 percent until old age.

Last year's valuation report on retirement plans projected \$14 billion in future savings to the retirement fund related to the BRS, but the take rate for the lump-sum feature hadn't been estimated. Also, the projected cost savings failed to reflect two key components of the BRS whose costs to the department do not affect retirement funding: government matching of member contributions to the federal Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) and payment of a continuation bonus between the 8th and 12th years of service. No estimate of overall savings from the BRS are found in the latest valuation report, said Air Force Maj. Carla Gleason, a DOD spokeswoman. The purpose of the BRS, she added, "is not to reduce government costs, but rather to expand government-provided retirement benefits to a larger portion of the force."

The new retirement plan is "blended" because it combines a reduced annuity after 20 or more years of service — 20 percent below annuities paid under the legacy High-3 plan — with the two new features. A TSP with government matching will provide a portable nest egg regardless of when a member leaves service. The one-time continuation payment is to encourage full careers. Shaped largely by the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission, the BRS also includes that onerous lump-sum option that actuaries have attacked as both unusual and unfair.

Those who enter the military for the first time on or after Jan. 1 this year automatically fall under the BRS. Currently serving members can make an irrevocable decision to opt into the BRS during this calendar year if they had fewer than 12 years in service as of Dec. 31, 2017. Reserve component members can opt in if they earned fewer than 4,320 points toward retirement by that same date. Members with 12 or more years of service at the end of last year will stay under the High-3 plan or, if they first entered service before Sept. 8, 1980, under the more generous "Final Pay" plan.

A fourth retirement plan applies to 63,300 current retirees who were enticed by the offer of a \$30,000 Career Status Bonus (CSB) in their 15th year of service to shift from High-3 to a reduced annuity plan called Redux. Congress created this bad deal for careerists back in 2000. It became increasingly unattractive as the bonus lost value to inflation. The law that created the BRS also directed that the CSB-Redux offer sunset before 2018, though those 63,000 bonus takers remain stuck with a reduced annuity plan. The BRS lump-sum feature is similarly controversial. No other federal retirement plan offers a lump sum to replace a portion of a defined benefit. And while lump-sum buyouts of pension obligations are common in the corporate world, they typically don't embrace the provocative formula for calculating lump sums that Congress prescribes for BRS participants.

DOD officials urged that the lump-sum feature not be included in the new blended retirement plan as it moved toward final passage in January 2016. But during final negotiations with the House, members of the Senate Armed Services Committee insisted on it to hold down costs. They also pitched it as a way to give retiring members financial flexibility to pay off debts, begin a business, buy a home or meet other personal financial goals. For most retirees, however, it would not be good decision to take the lump sum, considering the risks of impulsive purchases or ill-

advised investments, and considering how deep would be the cut in retired pay for perhaps 28 to 30 years for the typical enlisted retiree or 20 to 24 years for the typical officer.

What most bothers actuaries is how the lump sums are to be calculated using “personal discount rates” to value annuities forfeited. It’s a concept not recognized as actuarially sound. Personal discount rates measure an individual’s or a group’s preference for current dollars over promised future dollars. The higher the discount rate in calculating lump sums for forfeited annuities, the greater the savings realized by employers, in this case the DOD. If the department used market rates instead of personal discount rates to calculate a present value for future lost annuities, lump sums at retirement would be substantially higher than planned. Amounts will still be large and enticing but also unfair, the DOD Board of Actuaries suggested in a December 2016 report. Using a personal discount rate “is not an appropriate approach for discounting in a retirement plan,” the board warned, noting how it varies by individuals or groups. The board correctly predicted that policy makers would adopt an aggregate personal discount rate for both officers and enlisted, which will “only rarely be appropriate for a given individual.”

The latest valuation report on military retirement confirms an aggregate personal discount rate will be used. The assumed rate for purposes of long-term projections will be 7.3 percent, more than double what a market-based rate would require, according to experts. The department claims its discount rate uses “the Department of Treasury High-Quality Market rates as a benchmark.” What it doesn’t say, and yet what’s true, is that it adds a premium to that market rate of more than four percentage points to comply with the personal discount rate requirement of the BRS law.

Regarding military retirement obligations, the report shows actuaries using something called a Normal Cost Percentage (NCP) for participants in each of four separate plans — Final Pay, High-3, CSB-Redux and BRS. The NCP is the percentage of basic pay that must be contributed over careers of members covered by the plans, using present value calculations of future benefits for members and survivors. Comparing retirement plan costs using NCP, the report shows BRS costs 22 percent less than the High-3 plan, with 2 percent of that reflecting anticipated savings from the lump-sum feature. But actual overall savings from BRS are substantially lower than the report shows because TSP matching and continuation bonuses are BRS obligations that will affect other parts of the defense budget, and not the retirement fund.

[Source: Military.com | Tom Philpott | June 14, 2018 ++]

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## **B-52's Update 04 ► Bomb Weight Capability to be Quadrupled**

The US Air Force (USAF) is looking to quadruple the weight of bombs that the Boeing B-52H Stratofortress is able to carry externally. According to a request for information (RFI) issued on 21 JUN, Air Force Materiel Command (AFMC) is seeking a new external weapons pylon that will take the B-52’s current 10,000 lb (4,536 kg) maximum external load (across two underwing pylons) to 40,000 lb (18,144 kg).

“The current Improved Common Pylon (ICP) ... was designed in 1959 and has been in service since the 1960s. When it was introduced, there wasn't a requirement nor did anyone foresee a need to carry weapons heavier than 5,000 lb. It was modified in the late 1990s ... and has performed exceptionally well ... [but] it has limitations when it comes to heavy weight capacity. With current heavy weapons exceeding 5,000 lb there is a new requirement for a replacement external carriage pylon assembly,” the RFI said, adding that the new replacement pylon will not exceed 5,000 lb in weight while being capable of carrying multiple weapons in the 5,000 lb to 20,000 lb weight class.

The RFI provided no details as to planned costs and timelines for the pylon upgrade, except to say that the total effort from development to fielding should be accomplished between 36 and 72 months. Responses to the RFI are due by 15:00 hrs Central Standard Time on 20 July. The new pylon would enable the B-52 to carry any of the air-

launched munitions in the USAF inventory up to the 22,000 lb Massive Ordnance Air Burst (MOAB) bomb. [Source: IHS Jane's Defence Weekly | Gareth Jennings, London | June 24, 2018 ++]

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## **DPRK Nuclear Weapons Update 22 ► Trump | Still An Extraordinary Threat**

President Donald Trump declared 22 JUN that North Korea still poses an “extraordinary threat” to the United States. In an executive order, the president extended for one year the so-called “national emergency” with respect to the nuclear-armed nation, re-authorizing economic restrictions against it. While expected, the declaration comes just nine days after Trump tweeted, “There is no longer a Nuclear Threat from North Korea,” following his summit with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un in Singapore. The order appears to undermine the president’s claim. It states that “the existence and risk of proliferation of weapons-usable fissile material” and the actions and policies of the North Korean government “continue to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States.”

The national emergency has been in place since 2008 and is a sign of the enduring tensions between the U.S. and North Korea that spiked last year as the North moved closed to perfecting a nuclear-tipped missile that could reach American soil, but ebbed with the June 12 summit where Kim agreed to “complete denuclearization” of the Korean Peninsula. The two sides, however, still have to negotiate the terms under which the North would give up its nukes and win relief from sanctions — a goal that has eluded U.S. administrations for a quarter-century. Trump claimed at a Cabinet meeting 21 JUN that denuclearization had already begun, although Defense Secretary James Mattis told reporters a day earlier that he wasn’t aware that North Korea had taken any steps yet toward denuclearization, and that detailed negotiations have not yet begun.

Meanwhile, the Pentagon said the evening of 22 JUN that it has “indefinitely suspended” a major military exercise with South Korea, known as Freedom Guard and scheduled for August, as well as two Korean Marine exchange training exercises. Officials had announced 18JUN that planning for Freedom Guard had been suspended in line with Trump’s decision to halt what he called U.S. “war games” in South Korea. A Pentagon spokeswoman, Dana W. White, said further decisions about military exercises in South Korea “in support of diplomatic negotiations” led by Secretary of State Mike Pompeo will depend on North Korea “continuing to have productive negotiations in good faith.”

[Source: The Associated Press | Matthew Pennington | June 24, 2018 ++]

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## **Commissary/Exchange Merger ► Task Force Analysis to Start in JUL**

A task force analyzing whether to consolidate the commissary and exchange systems won’t include members of military or veteran advocacy groups, Defense Department officials said, though its members plan to seek their input. “We will be engaging with the veteran service organizations at least once a month” for input and “some voice of the customer,” said Stacey Tyley, a management and program analyst working on community services reform in the Office of the Chief Management Officer, during a recent media roundtable. “It’s a logical conclusion that the beneficiary/customer voice should be considered in any change in the delivery of a significant benefit,” said Joyce Raezer, executive director of the National Military Family Association.

Details are still being worked out about who will be on the task force, and a director is expected to be named soon. Members from outside the government “would change the nature of the task force” and limit it to an advisory role, DoD spokesman Christopher Sherwood said. Officials do expect that at least one senior enlisted adviser will be a

part-time member of the task force, Sherwood said. They're in discussions about which enlisted leader will take part. "Presuming we lock in the [senior enlisted adviser]," Sherwood said, that member will be a resale system customer and an advocate, and will participate in the calls with military service organizations and veteran service organizations.

The task force starts its analysis in July and is expected to wrap up in seven months. In establishing the task force, Deputy Secretary of Defense Patrick Shanahan said in a 29 MAY memorandum that he agrees with the idea that "a single consolidated organization offers the greatest potential to achieve the economies and efficiencies" necessary to ensure that the commissary and exchange benefits survive. The DoD Reform Management Group recommended consolidating the Defense Commissary Agency, the Army and Air Force Exchange Service, Navy Exchange and Marine Corps Exchange. During the recent media roundtable, John H. Gibson II, the DoD chief management officer, and Tyley discussed their intentions and plans regarding the next steps in the consolidation effort. Some takeaways:

- **No customer changes, for now:** The "front piece" of commissaries and exchanges won't be addressed by the task force, said Gibson. "Where they shop... it all stays the same," he said. It will focus on the business operations to determine whether DoD can save money by combining functions such as accounting and personnel matters. Eventually consolidating those tasks wouldn't necessarily mean the stores would combine.
- **Pass the savings on:** Money saved could be used to benefit morale, welfare and recreation programs, Tyley said, or could allow officials to set lower prices. "Any time you can lower the cost of doing business, that's a benefit" for military customers, Gibson said. One potential savings point: Combining the buying power of the commissaries and exchanges to allow for bulk-order savings.
- **Exchanges first:** The task force will look at whether it's sensible to put the exchanges under a single management umbrella, Tyley said, then will determine whether the commissaries should be added. There's no timeline for either move, Tyley said, and changes could require new legislation. There is congressional support for integrating back-office operations of the exchanges, Tyley said.

[Source: MilitaryTimes | Karen Jowers | June 20, 2018 ++]

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## **Commissary/Exchange Future Update 01 ► Authorized User Expansion**

All veterans may be able to shop in commissaries and exchanges in the future, if Defense Department officials are successful in pushing their proposal. Officials have asked Congress to allow veterans who haven't already earned the shopping benefit as retirees, as well as civilian employees, to be able to shop in the stores, said Stephanie Barna, special assistant to the undersecretary of defense for personnel and readiness. The proposal would include an additional user fee of between 1 percent and 5 percent for those non-core groups to be able to shop in the commissary, she said. "But we think they'd still be getting an incredible deal. It also helps, even if only slightly, to distinguish them from our core group," she said, speaking Thursday at a forum on Capitol Hill of the American Logistics Association.

It's unlikely the change will happen this year, she said, as members of Congress wait to see how things settle out with commissaries during the reform efforts. But officials will continue to push the idea. "It's something that's very important to us," she said, "and it's something I think ultimately we will achieve." An estimated 18 million veterans potentially could claim such a benefits, but not all of those live near military bases. Currently, shopping privileges at brick-and-mortar commissaries and exchanges are limited to active duty, Guard and Reserve members; military retirees; Medal of Honor recipients and 100 percent disabled veterans, and their authorized family members. In May, DoD extended commissary shopping privileges to commissary employees for the first time. In 2017, online exchange shopping privileges were extended to all honorably discharged veterans.



There have been efforts to expand shopping privileges to more disabled veterans for a number of years. This year, a provision to allow Purple Heart recipients, veterans with service-connected disabilities, former prisoners of war, and caregivers of these veterans to shop at commissaries and exchanges, and to use morale, welfare and recreation facilities, has been included in the House version of the defense authorization bill. It is not included in the Senate version of the bill; lawmakers will decide whether to include it in the final bill. “All of these people who fall into these categories are heroes, have given so much for our country above and beyond even what other service members have given. It’s important to recognize that,” said Rep. Daniel Lipinski, D-Ill., who spoke at the forum. He and Rep. Walter Jones, R-N.C., introduced the proposal.

[Source: MilitaryTimes | Karen Jowers | June 22, 2018 ++]

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## **NDAA 2019 Update 04 ► Five Debates Lawmakers Still Need To Settle**

With the Senate prepared to pass its draft of the annual defense authorization bill on 18 JUN, military advocates are already looking ahead at what problem points will have to be worked out when the measure heads to conference committee later this month. The House and Senate versions of the 1,000-plus page bills tackle a host of personnel issues, hardware procurement and Defense Department restructuring. While congressional leaders have been optimistic that the conflicts in the two drafts won’t be as contentious as in years past, the differences still amount to a mammoth undertaking for staff charged with finding a reconciliation path between them. Here are five of the most problematic differences, each of which could result in a significant obstacle in coming weeks to final adoption of the annual policy bill if negotiations go awry:

### **Pentagon operations**

The Senate bill features language designed to help the undersecretary of defense for policy regain some of the power and responsibilities it has ceded to the Joint Staff in recent years. The House bill would require the Defense Department to eliminate two support agencies that are part of the so-called “Fourth Estate,” review and restructure several more, and cut certain personnel by 25 percent. Both are aimed at DoD reform, but neither has a direct analogue in the other bill, and that means lawmakers will have to horse-trade over what survives.

### **Military end strength**

Both the White House and House draft of the authorization bill call for a boost in the services’ end strength of 15,600 more service members. But the Senate plan calls for only about half of that (8,600 troops), and redirects the savings to other equipment and training accounts. Supporters of the larger number have said that more troops are needed to keep up with demands on each of the armed forces. But Senate officials have expressed concerns that roles and missions for those extra individuals haven’t been clearly defined, which could mean adding millions in personnel costs in years to come.

### **ZTE**

Senate legislation to block the Trump administration from allowing the Chinese telecommunications conglomerate ZTE to resume business with American suppliers is expected to face opposition in the House. Democrats fear House Republicans will look to strip the language, as the White House opposes the measure. House Armed Services Committee Chairman Mac Thornberry (R-TX) has said he would oppose anything non-germane to the bill, if it threatens passage. In April, Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross banned ZTE from doing business in the United States for seven years after ZTE evaded sanctions on Iran and North Korea. But Ross announced earlier this month that ZTE would pay a fine of \$1 billion and the U.S. would end a ban preventing the firm from buying American parts.

### **Personnel promotions**

The Senate inserted an ambitious overhaul to officer promotion rules within its draft of the bill, including more flexible guidelines for individual services and doing away with strict timelines for advancement or forced separation. But those provisions aren't in the House draft at all. Lawmakers in that chamber have discussed the ideas in the past, but are awaiting Pentagon reports on the issue due later this year before taking any steps forward. Senators have said they believe there has been enough research on the topic, and lawmakers need to act quickly to help the military better compete with private-sector recruiters. Finding a middle ground on the issue could prove tricky if individual senators push to keep the issue in the final draft.

### **Sage grouse**

The sage grouse elicits chuckles in the halls of Capitol Hill, but it has delayed and threatened to derail bicameral NDAA negotiations for several years running. It's at the center of serious battle between energy and ranching interests on one side and conservationists on the other. An amendment added to the House bill, from Rep. Rob Bishop (R-UT) would prohibit listing the greater sage-grouse and the lesser prairie chicken as endangered species for 10 years — if it survives conference. Bishop, a HASC member, also serves as chairman of the House Natural Resources Committee. McCain, Reed and Smith have in the past successfully fought to keep the issue out of the bill, while Thornberry has been beholden to House GOP leaders' preference it stay in. But the new wrinkle is that Inhofe is covering for McCain, and he has told reporters he believes the issue does belong in the NDAA.

[Source: DefenseNews | Joe Gould & Leo Shane III | June 18, 2018 ++]

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## **NDAA 2019 Update 05 ► Senate Version Passes 85-10**

In an 85 to 10 vote, the Senate on 18 JUN passed its version of the FY 2019 National Defense Authorization Act. The sprawling legislation must now be reconciled with the House, which passed its version of the bill in May. The bill authorizes a 2.6 percent military pay raise, matching both the administration's request and what House lawmakers passed. The raise, consistent with private-sector wage growth, would be the biggest pay raise for servicemembers in eight years. This also aligns with MOAA's 2018 Storming the Hill agenda. Following are some issues to watch. (\* indicates MOAA's support)

### **TRICARE fees**

House position: No new fees\*

Senate position: Repeal grandfathering

MOAA Position: The most controversial provision in the Senate bill unwinds an important TRICARE grandfathering provision from last year's defense bill. The move repeals protections for health care beneficiaries who entered into the service prior to Jan. 1 from a new cost share structure, one with higher fees and pharmacy copays. MOAA strongly opposes the Senate provision. According to the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office, higher out-of-pocket costs will push 20,000 beneficiaries out of TRICARE.

### **Survivor Benefits**

House position: "Sense of Congress" to end the widows tax ASAP\*

Senate position: Nothing

MOAA position: While the Senate remained silent on survivors benefits, the House included a language providing a "sense of Congress" that they "must work together to find a way to eliminate the widows' tax entirely." It may seem like a small gesture, but the language provides a line in the sand for us to return to lawmakers and say "You've admitted this is wrong. Now let's work towards a solution."

### **Housing allowance**

House position: No change to BAH

Senate position: No change to BAH

MOAA position: BAH is an essential part of Regular Military Compensation and should not be reduced.

Senators offered hundreds of amendments to the bill, including several MOAA-supported proposals to eliminate the widow’s tax, expand concurrent receipt, and to provide transition assistance to military spouses, but only a handful of amendments were voted on. Sens. Rand Paul (R-KY) and Lindsay Graham (R-SC) had a public intraparty feud of the amendment process, each accusing the other of holding up debate on the bill. The fallout led Sen. Jim Inhofe (R-OK) who shepherded the defense bill while Sen. John McCain (R-AZ) remains home battling brain cancer, to say he's considering changing the rules for next year's defense bill.

Last week, the administration issued a tepid statement on the bill saying, given the short time between the bill's release and when it was voted on, it was not providing feedback at this time. The statement said the White House would continue to work with Congress as the defense bill goes through the legislative process. The bill now moves to conference committee for House and Senate lawmakers to iron out differences between the two bills. Lawmakers say they expect to complete their work on the bill by the end of July. [Source: MOAA Newsletter | June 21, 2018 ++]

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## **Transgender Lawsuits Update 07 ► Judge Again Blocks Ban From Taking Effect**

A federal court on 15 JUN again said the Trump administration cannot implement its ban on most transgender military service while a lawsuit against it proceeds. “The status quo shall remain ‘steady as she goes,’ and the preliminary injunction shall remain in full force and effect nationwide,” Judge Marsha Pechman of the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Washington wrote Friday. In doing so, Pechman quoted the top Navy admiral, who told a Senate panel in April that it’s been “steady as she goes” since transgender people have been allowed to serve openly.

Pechman is one of four federal judges to have issued a preliminary injunction preventing President Trump from banning transgender military service while lawsuits against the ban work their way through court. In April, Pechman ruled the lawsuit would go to trial and the injunction would stay in place after the Pentagon issued a memo outlining a policy that would ban most transgender people from serving. In that ruling, Pechman said the memo did not represent a new policy, but rather an implementation of the ban Trump announced on Twitter in July 2017. The Trump administration appealed Pechman’s April ruling and then asked her for a stay on her injunction pending the appeal. The administration argued a stay was necessary to “prevent irreparable harm to military interests.”

Pechman’s ruling on Friday goes against the administration's request for a stay. In her ruling, Pechman wrote that the Trump administration made no arguments she had not already rejected and noted that there would be no demonstrable harm in keeping the injunction in place. Underscoring her argument, Pechman propped up Chief of Naval Operations Adm. John Richardson’s “steady as she goes” testimony to the Senate Armed Services Committee, as well as Army Chief of Staff Gen. Mark Milley’s testimony to the Senate panel that there have been “precisely zero” reports of problems with unit cohesion, discipline and morale.

The lawsuit was brought in Seattle by Lambda Legal and OutServe-SLDN and joined by the state of Washington on behalf of six troops that are currently serving, three people seeking to enlist and three LGBT rights groups. “Yet again, the Trump administration has tried to implement and expedite discrimination, and yet again, the court has said no,” Lambda Legal senior attorney Peter Renn said in a statement. “You would think the administration would get tired of all the losing, and more importantly, would read the writing on the wall and abandon this discriminatory and harmful scheme to prevent brave and qualified transgender people from serving their country.”

[Source: The Hill | Rebecca Kheel | June 15, 2018 ++]

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## Federal Retirement Planning ► Knowledge Test | True or False

Let's test your understanding of the retirement process. See how you do with the following true or false statements about subjects that commonly come up in pre-retirement or mid-career seminars. Answers are at the bottom of the column.

### Questions:

1. In order for your spouse to be entitled to continue federal health insurance after your retirement, they must have been covered for five years before you retired.
2. Federal retirees do not have to enroll in Medicare Part B when they reach age 65. Their Federal Employees Health Benefits Program plan will continue to provide coverage whether they enroll in Medicare or not.
3. You can be assured your military service and any other prior federal service will count towards eligibility and computation of your retirement benefit as long as it is included in the service computation date that appears on your Notification of Personnel Action statement, Form SF-50.
4. A widow or widower can file for Social Security benefits on the work record of their late spouse and delay their own Social Security benefit to as late as age 70.
5. The main reason so many federal employees retire at the end of the year is the tax advantages of doing so.
6. Federal employees who continue to work past age 70 ½ are required to take minimum distributions from their Thrift Savings Plan accounts and are no longer permitted to contribute to their accounts.
7. When you begin receiving federal retirement benefits, you must cancel your Federal Employees Group Life Insurance coverage.
8. When you retire, you can continue to use the balance in your health or dependent care flexible spending account through Dec. 31 even if your retirement date is earlier in the year.
9. If you retire the day after your salary increases, the new salary rate will count as one year of your high-three average salary.
10. You should retire on your federal anniversary date so your retirement benefit will reflect another full year of federal service.

### Answers:

1. **False.** You will need five years of coverage under FEHB to continue coverage after retirement. You can elect self plus one or self and family enrollment after retirement.
2. **True.** Your FEHBP plan will continue to provide coverage even if you don't enroll in one or more parts of Medicare. But there are benefits to enrolling in Medicare once it becomes the primary payer after you are retired and over age 65. Many FEHBP plans will waive their own deductibles, copayments and coinsurance once Medicare is the primary payer. Some plans will provide a supplement to help pay the premiums for Medicare Part B.
3. **False.** Your leave service computation date appears on your SF-50. This is not necessarily the same as your retirement service computation date. Some service that was not covered by retirement deductions may not be credited towards retirement eligibility and computation even though it counts towards leave accrual. In addition, some military service used in computing military retirement benefits will count towards leave accrual but not towards retirement unless the military retirement benefit is waived and a military service credit deposit is paid.
4. **True.** Widows and widowers benefits are more flexible than other Social Security benefits. It's possible to begin receiving benefits on the work record of a deceased spouse (or former spouse, in some cases) and delay your own "earned" benefit to avoid an early retirement reduction and earn delayed retirement credits up to age 70.

5. **False.** Although there may be some tax advantages to retiring at the end of the year, the main reason federal employees have traditionally done so is to get the maximum lump sum annual leave payout, which includes leave carried over from the previous year plus all leave accrued in the year of retirement that wasn't used.
6. **False.** RMDs are not required until after you reach age 70 ½ and are separated from federal service.
7. **False.** As long as you've had Basic FEGLI coverage for at least five years prior to retirement, you can continue this coverage into retirement. It is valued at your final salary rate rounded to the next thousand, plus \$2,000. You'll pay the same premium as you paid while employed if you are under 65. Once you turn 65 and are retired, basic FEGLI is free and the coverage will reduce by 75 percent.
8. **False.** Your participation in FSAFEDS ends when you separate from the government. Any expenses you incur after your participation ends are not eligible for reimbursement. Any eligible expenses incurred prior to separation will be reimbursed, and if you used your entire elected amount before FSAFEDS has deducted it from your pay, you will not be responsible for the remaining allotments.
9. **False.** Your high-three average salary is a daily average of your basic pay rates over any consecutive three year period of your career with each rate weighted by the length of time it was in effect. If you retire the day after a pay increase, that rate will count for only two days out of the three-year average.
10. **False.** The significance of your anniversary date of federal service is to be sure you have the minimum amount of service needed to retire at your age. For example, at age 60, you must have 20 years of service to be eligible for an immediate, unreduced retirement benefit. The service used in the computation of your retirement benefit is calculated in 30-day increments.

[Source: GovExec.com | Tammy Flanagan | June 14, 2018]

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## DoD Fraud, Waste, & Abuse ► Reported 15 thru 30 JUN 2018

**Fat Leonard** - Navy Secretary Richard Spencer has issued letters of censure to three officers for their roles in the "Fat Leonard" scandal, a web of bribery, kickbacks and classified info leaks that took place over more than a decade and ensnared scores of Navy officers. Of the three officers censured on 14 JUN, Capt. **Charles A. Johnson** is the only one still on active duty. The letter slams Johnson for committing graft and lying to investigators regarding his relationship with Glenn "Fat Leonard" Francis, the portly magnate of the in-port serving company Glenn Defense Marine Asia, or GDMA. Navy officials said they are reviewing what administrative action, if any, will be taken against Johnson. He went on to command Destroyer Squadron 31 and is currently stationed with Navy Region Hawaii.



**Capt. Charles A. Johnson (right)**

**Leonard Francis**

**Rear Adm. Richard Wren**

Johnson, who declined comment via a command spokesman, engaged in Fat Leonard-related wrongdoings from 2004 to 2010, according to the letter. "You and Francis had become Facebook friends," the letter states. "A GDMA

employee had referred to you internally as ‘in (Mr. Francis’) pocket.’” While serving as commanding officer of the destroyer McCampbell, Johnson solicited a free Francis-funded dinner for himself and his command’s department heads during a 2009 port call in Australia, the letter states. Johnson pitched that free dinner as a chance for GDMA to “indoctrinate” junior officers in Francis’ “way of doing business before they make XO,” according to the letter. He later took his executive officer and junior officer department heads to a Francis-funded dinner. “This action marks another instance in which you committed the offense of graft, as you received the gift of a dinner in recognition of performing a service for the benefit of GDMA by arranging an opportunity for its representatives to ‘indoctrinate’ your subordinate officers,” the letter states.

Johnson attended another Francis-funded dinner at an Australian restaurant that year, and disgraced the service by getting wasted, according to the letter. “A GDMA employee later told Mr. Francis by email that you were ‘blasted’ and that you finished the restaurant’s last bottle of a certain kind of liquor ‘on the spot,’” the letter states. While renewing his security clearance in 2014, Johnson failed to note his relationship with Francis, the letter states. When Johnson was the readiness officer for Carrier Strike Group 5 in 2006, Francis and his company paid more than \$6,000 for the officer’s wetting down party to celebrate a promotion. In return, Johnson shared a GDMA force protection marketing CD with two force readiness officers, and shared official information with Francis, according to the letter. Johnson also accepted other free dinners, a chocolate and fruit gift basket and two elephant vases from Francis and GDMA, the letter states.

Retired Rear Adm. **Richard Wren** also received a letter of censure this month for transgressions that took place from 2007 to 2010 while serving in leadership positions that included commander of Carrier Strike Group 5 and U.S. Naval Forces Japan. Wren took a bevy of gifts from Francis and his company over the years and lied to investigators in 2015 about being personally invited to a dinner by Francis, according to the letter. Those kickbacks included an \$8,827 dinner in Japan in 2008 for Wren, Francis and one other GDMA employee, the letter states. A few months later, Wren attended another dinner in Hong Kong with Francis and eight other officers, including some senior officers from his staff, that ran up a \$32,422 food and drink tab for which Wren paid nothing, according to the letter. Later that year, Wren accepted “two boxes of steaks, a bag full of wine and cigars, and three bottles of Dom Perignon” from Francis and his company, the letter states. After assuming command of Naval Forces Japan in late 2009, Wren accepted a \$2,000 box of steaks from Francis, according to the letter.

Retired Capt. **Timothy Conroy** was the third censured this month. The aviator was hired for a civilian job by the Navy just a few months after investigators interviewed him for at least the second time in 2016.

Francis pleaded guilty in federal court in 2015 to bribery and fraud charges in connection to a conspiracy that spanned more than a decade and involved scores of Navy officials, and millions of dollars in fraud, bribes and gifts, according to the U.S. Justice Department. He supplied Navy officials with gifts and expenses in return for classified and confidential information regarding ship schedules, and overbilled for goods and services, receiving preferential treatment for his company in the contracting process, according to the department. The Justice Department is prosecuting the highest-level cases and has referred hundreds of other cases back to the Navy for adjudication. Some have gone to court-martial while others have ended with letters of censure. In some cases, wrongdoing has been substantiated but officers have been allowed to stay in command.

[Source: NavyTimes | Geoff Ziezulewicz | June 25, 2018 ++]

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## **POW/MIA Update 104** ► **MIA Mission Included in US-North Korea Summit**

The U.S. suspended its MIA recovery missions in 2005 due to team safety and security concerns. The VFW is now hopeful that the agreement reached between President Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un will finally bring peace to the peninsula, and help bring closure to thousands of families of missing American servicemen from

the Korean War. According to the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency, there are 7,700 American MIAs from the Korean War, with 5,300 of them believed to be in the North. Including the MIA issue as a summit talking point was urged by VFW National Commander Keith Harman in a letter to the president shortly before the meeting. “The VFW salutes President Trump for bringing this issue to the table, and thanks the North Korean leader for agreeing to it. Now the hard work to bring the initiative to fruition begins,” said Harman. Read the [Joint U.S./North Korean summit statement](#). Read [VFW’s letter to President Trump](#). [Source: VFW Action corps Weekly | June 15, 2018 ++]

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## **POW/MIA Update 105 ► Army Maj. Stephen T. Uurtamo Laid to Rest**

Not long after her father went missing during the Korean War, Carol Elkin spotted then-Gen. Dwight Eisenhower in downtown Chicago and did what any kid might do when coming face to face with the nation’s most famous soldier: She asked him to bring her dad home. On 19 JUN, the now 76-year-old Elkin planned to be at Arlington National Cemetery to bury the remains of Army Maj. Stephen Uurtamo, nearly seven decades after he was taken prisoner by the Chinese and died. It is a chance to say goodbye to her father, watch as his remains are laid to rest with the dignity and honor he deserves, and watch her children and grandchildren see that their own history is linked to the history of their country. “This tells my family they are part of something,” said the retiree, who lives on Chicago’s North Side with her husband. “I just think that these kids might think we went from World War II to Vietnam and they don’t even know there was a Korean War.”



**This undated photo provided by the Department of Defense shows Army Maj. Stephen T. Uurtamo**

The service comes as questions about the whereabouts of those who never returned from the 1950-53 war have pushed their way into the news, with the commitment by President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un to recover the remains of as many of the nearly 7,700 U.S. troops that are still unaccounted for as possible. For the Uurtamo family, the service is the final chapter of a story that began in late 1950 when the 32-year-old career soldier was declared missing in action after fierce fighting in one of the bloodiest battles of the war near the Ch’ongch’on River in North Korea. He was declared dead after several returning U.S. prisoners of war reported that Uurtamo had been captured and died at a war transient camp where prisoners who survived came home with stories of watching their buddies starve to death. “He died from malnutrition and pneumonia,” Elkin said.

The whereabouts of his body remained a mystery for decades. Then, in 2005, a joint U.S. and North Korean military recovery team recovered 32 sets of remains from a burial site. About eight years after that, Elkin went to a Chicago hotel for one of the events the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency holds around the country in which people like her are updated about their missing loved ones and given a chance to provide DNA samples for comparison with DNA pulled from recovered remains. The match came last September and with it, Uurtamo’s name was taken off the list of Americans unaccounted for from the Korean War, which now stands at 7,697 names. He added to the list of 459 people whose remains have been identified since 1982. And, according to the POW/MIA

agency, the spot where his name appears on the Courts of the Missing at the National Cemetery of the Pacific in Honolulu will be affixed with a rosette to indicate he's now accounted for.

Elkin said she, her husband and more than 30 relatives will attend the burial. Inside the casket will be his remains, dress uniform and his medals, she said. Elkin said it is a chance to be openly proud of the father, whom she rarely talked about because he died in a war few seemed to care about, and her parents were divorced and “you didn’t talk about things like that.” Now, she said, she can talk about her father and her most lasting memory: a day when she was young and he visited her in the hospital and told her not to cry because “little soldiers don’t cry.” She is excited by the prospect of her father being buried in “his rightful place” in the most famous military cemetery in the U.S. “I am proud that our country would do this for someone who served so long ago — that he gets to go out in a blaze of glory,” she said. [Source: The Associated Press | Don Babwin | June 17, 2018 ++]

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## **POW/MIA Update 106 ► Pilot Missing Since 1944 Laid to Rest**

Second Lt. Robert R. Keown was piloting his P-38 aircraft to an airfield after a mission in 1944 when it crashed into a mountain in Papua New Guinea. World War II ended without Keown’s family knowing what had happened to him, and the military later declared him dead. Decades later, a villager found human remains in a swampy area near the mountain. Another resident of the Pacific island snapped a photo of the rusted wreckage of a warplane years after that. With all those puzzle pieces finally assembled and through the help of genetic testing, remains of the Georgia native and Alabama resident are now back on U.S. soil.



**An Army team (left) carries the casket of U.S. Army Air Forces 2nd Lt. Robert R. Keown to the burial site at Arlington National Cemetery. This 1943 photograph (center) released by the U.S. Army Air Forces shows Keown in the cockpit of a training aircraft in California. U.S. Army Capt. Christopher Blanchard (right) presents the flag from the casket to nephew John F. Keown during the burial on June 15, 2018**

Keown’s remains arrived 14 JUN at Washington’s Reagan National Airport, said Justin Taylan of Pacific Wrecks a nonprofit contractor that searches for the remains of missing service members in conjunction with the Department of Defense. Relatives gathered at Arlington National Cemetery near Washington, D.C. the next day for the long-delayed funeral of Keown (pronounced Cow-uhn). “I expect to be overwhelmed,” said nephew John Keown, 62, of Decatur, Alabama, speaking ahead of the burial. The ceremony included a flag-draped coffin that was folded up and given to John Keown and an honor guard for the fallen P-38 pilot, who grew up near Atlanta in Lawrenceville, Georgia, before moving to the northern Alabama city of Scottsboro. Keown was 24 and serving in the U.S. Army Air Forces, the predecessor to today’s Air Force, when he died.

More than 400,000 Americans died in World War II, and the Pentagon says nearly 73,000 of them remain unaccounted for. Keown was among that number until November, when DNA testing proved that skeletal remains found in Papua New Guinea were his. That confirmation, combined with photos of the wreckage, allowed the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency to remove Keown from the list of the missing, but it’s still unclear what happened



in the crash. “The pilot probably bailed out, but we don’t know,” said Taylan. “It’s impossible to say exactly how he died.”

The Pentagon said Keown was flying one of four aircraft of the 36th Fighter Squadron, 8th Fighter Group on a mission to locate a missing B-25 bomber when the weather turned bad and the fighters headed to an auxiliary airfield on April 16, 1944. Keown was declared missing after the planes failed to return. Two other planes also disappeared; Taylan said their pilots remain missing. The war ended with Keown’s whereabouts still unknown, and the Pentagon declared him dead on Feb. 7, 1946, according to a release from Defense. The loss and uncertainty over his fate were devastating to the family, said John Keown, the son of one of the pilot’s younger brothers. “They were torn up for a couple of years not knowing what had happened to him,” he said.

More than 50 years later, in 1999, the Papua New Guinea National Museum and Art Gallery gave the Army human remains a farmer had found on his land in the 1980s and reburied in a village cemetery. In 2005, Taylan said, another man in New Guinea provided photos of plane wreckage near the site where the remains were first found. A photo included a serial number that was used to confirm the plane was Keown’s, Taylan said, and DNA testing of the remains finally tied everything together last year.

John Keown and other nieces and nephews are the pilot’s closest remaining relatives. His father died in 1937 and his mother in 1979. Keown’s two brothers also died, the most recent in 2015. While Keown’s remains are interred at Arlington, the wreckage of his aircraft remains on a mountainside where it was found, said Taylan. Keown’s name has been added to a memorial that was previously erected in the village near the crash site, he said. “A boy from Alabama has a monument in Papua New Guinea,” said Taylan. [Source: The Associated Press | Jay Reeves | June 17, 2018 ++]

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## **POW/MIA Update 107 ► Preps To Receive Up to 200 Remains from DPRK**

The U.S. has moved 100 wooden transfer cases to the North Korean border and set other preparations in place to receive as many as 200 sets of human remains, a United Nations Command official said 23 JUN. The transfer cases have been moved up to the Joint Security Area, an iconic area within the demilitarized zone where North Korean and South Korean soldiers often stand face-to-face between a series of blue meeting houses that extend along both sides of the demarcation line and offer a neutral place to communicate.

“Today we moved 100 wooden temporary transit cases, which we had built in Seoul, to the JSA so that we are ready to receive remains and able to transport them in a dignified manner,” the official said on the condition of not being identified. “We are also moving [United Nations Command] flags to the Joint Service Area and trestles on which the boxes can stand as we prep them to move them to Osan [Air Base.]” The official did not have details on when the transfer would take place. President Donald Trump made the return of the remains part of the agreement he made with North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un last week in Singapore.

The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency has previously reported that North Korean officials have notified the U.S. that they have as many as 200 sets of U.S. remains from the Korean War, however it is not clear how many would be transferred in this ceremony. The UNC official said that civilian-hired vans will be used to drive the remains in the wooden transfer boxes back to Osan. Once DPAA’s initial work is complete, there will be a formal ceremony at Osan where the cases will be re-draped with American Flags to repatriate them and begin the final journey home.

The U.S. has prepared 158 metal coffins to fly the remains home. The remains will be loaded onto a C-17 and flown to the DPAA lab in Hawaii, where the painstaking process of using DNA from family members, personal effects and other forensics to identify the remains will begin. Human remains from war can often be intermingled fragments as small as a single bone, or can be a larger set, such as hip bones or skulls. It will likely take months of

lab work to determine exactly how many different sets of remains there are, and begin reuniting them with their families.

DPAA estimates that “of more than 7,800 men lost and unrecovered from the Korean War, about 5,300 were lost in North Korea.” The agency said most of those personnel were in prisoner camps, where they anticipate additional remains would still be concentrated. Defense Secretary Jim Mattis departs this weekend for China and will be visiting Seoul later in the trip, however it is not clear whether he would be present for a transfer ceremony. [Source: MilitaryTimes | Tara Coop | June 23, 2018 ++]

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## **POW/MIA Recoveries ► Reported 16 thru 30 JUN 2018 | 26**

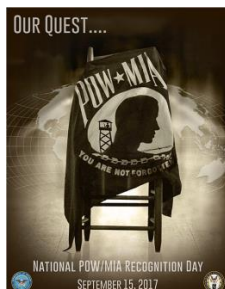
“Keeping the Promise“, “Fulfill their Trust” and “No one left behind” are several of many mottos that refer to the efforts of the Department of Defense to recover those who became missing while serving our nation. The number of Americans who remain missing from conflicts in this century are: World War II 73,025, Korean War 7730, Vietnam War 1604, Cold War (126), Iraq and other conflicts (5). 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 missing or unaccounted for personnel to date refer to <http://www.dpaa.mil> and click on ‘Our Missing’. Refer to <http://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/Recent-News-Stories/Year/2018> for a listing and details of those accounted for in 2018. 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 names, photos, and details of the below listed MIA/POW’s which have been recovered, identified, and/or scheduled for burial since the publication of the last RAO Bulletin are listed on the following sites:

- <https://www.vfw.org/actioncorpsweekly>
- <http://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/News-Releases>
- <http://www.thepatriotspage.com/Recovered.htm>
- <http://www.pow-miafamilies.org>
- <https://www.pownetwork.org/bios/b/b012.htm>
- <http://www.vvmf.org/Wall-of-Faces>

## LOOK FOR

- **Air Force Col. Peter J. Stewart**, 47, of Glasgow, Scotland, whose identification was previously announced, will be buried June 18 in Winter Haven, Fla. Stewart was a member of Headquarters, 8th Tactical Fighter Wing, and the pilot of a two-seater F-4C aircraft, the second in a flight of two on an armed reconnaissance mission over northern Vietnam. Stewart was assumed to have been shot down on March 15, 1966, along with his aircraft commander, Col. Martin R. Scott, whose remains were identified in June 2017. [Read about Stewart.](#)
- **Air Force Maj. James B. White**, 27, of St. Petersburg, Fla., whose identification was previously announced, will be buried June 19 in West Point, N.Y. White was assigned to the 357th Tactical Fighter Squadron. On Nov. 24, 1969, contact with White's F-105D was lost after a single pass attacking enemy troops in Laos. On Nov. 28, wreckage thought to be from White's aircraft was spotted by an Air America helicopter. A Laotian ground team searched the area and found only small pieces of wreckage. White was subsequently declared missing in action. [Read about White.](#)
- **Army Air Forces 1st Lt. John H. Liekhus**, 29, of Anaheim, Calif., whose identification was previously announced, will be buried June 27 in Arlington National Cemetery, near Washington, D.C. Liekhus was a member of the 323rd Bombardment Squadron, 91st Bombardment Group (Heavy), Eighth Air Force. On Nov. 2, 1944, their nine-man aircrew was on a mission to Merseburg, Germany, when their plane was hit by flak during the bomb run. As the B-17 fell out of formation, German fighters attacked and their plane crashed two kilometers southwest of the town of Barby. [Read about Liekhus.](#)
- **Army Air Forces Staff Sgt. Robert O. Shoemaker**, 23, of Takoma Park, Md., whose identification was previously announced, will be buried June 27 in Arlington National Cemetery, near Washington, D.C. Shoemaker was a member of the 323rd Bombardment Squadron, 91st Bombardment Group (Heavy), Eighth Air Force. On Nov. 2, 1944, their nine-man aircrew was on a mission to Merseburg, Germany, when their plane was hit by flak during the bomb run. As the B-17 fell out of formation, German fighters attacked and their plane crashed two kilometers southwest of the town of Barby. [Read about Shoemaker.](#)
- **Army Air Forces Staff Sgt. Roy F. Davis**, 26, of Peterborough, N.H., whose identification was previously announced, will be buried June 23 in Ashby, Mass. Davis was a member of the 13th Bombardment Squadron, 3rd Bombardment Group. On March 12, 1944, he was one of two crew members aboard an A-20G Havoc bomber that failed to return to base in northeastern New Guinea after attacking enemy targets on the island. Attempts to locate the aircraft and crew during and after the war were unsuccessful and the remains were listed as non-recoverable on June 30, 1949. [Read about Davis.](#)
- **Army Air Forces Tech Sgt. Allen A. Chandler**, 23, of Fletcher, Okla., whose identification was previously announced, will be buried June 27 in Arlington National Cemetery, near Washington, D.C. Chandler was a member of the 323rd Bombardment Squadron, 91st Bombardment Group (Heavy), Eighth Air Force. On Nov. 2, 1944, their nine-man aircrew was on a mission to Merseburg, Germany, when their plane was hit by flak during the bomb run. As the B-17 fell out of formation, German fighters attacked and their plane crashed two kilometers southwest of the town of Barby. [Read about Chandler.](#)
- **Army Air Forces Tech Sgt. John F. Brady**, 26, of Taunton, Mass., whose identification was previously announced, will be buried June 27 in Arlington National Cemetery, near Washington, D.C. Brady was a member of the 323rd Bombardment Squadron, 91st Bombardment Group (Heavy), Eighth Air Force. On Nov. 2, 1944, their nine-man aircrew was on a mission to Merseburg, Germany, when their plane was hit by flak during the bomb run. As the B-17 fell out of formation, German fighters attacked and their plane crashed two kilometers southwest of the town of Barby. [Read about Brady.](#)
- **Army Air Forces Tech Staff Sgt. Bobby J. Younger**, 19, of McKinney, Texas, whose identification was previously announced, will be buried June 27 in Arlington National Cemetery, near Washington, D.C. Younger was a member of the 323rd Bombardment Squadron, 91st Bombardment Group (Heavy), Eighth Air Force. On Nov. 2, 1944, their nine-man aircrew was on a mission to Merseburg, Germany, when their

plane was hit by flak during the bomb run. As the B-17 fell out of formation, German fighters attacked and their plane crashed two kilometers southwest of the town of Barby. [Read about Younger.](#)

- **Army Cpl. Morris Meshulam** was a member of Battery D, 82nd Anti-Aircraft Artillery Battalion (Automatic Weapons,) 2nd Infantry Division. The Division suffered heavy losses to units of the Chinese People's Volunteer Forces between the towns of Kunu-ri and Sunchon, North Korea. Meshulam was reported missing in action on Dec. 1, 1950. Interment services are pending. [Read about Meshulam.](#)
- **Army Cpl. Morris Meshulam** was a member of Battery D, 82nd Anti-Aircraft Artillery Battalion (Automatic Weapons,) 2nd Infantry Division. The Division suffered heavy losses to units of the Chinese People's Volunteer Forces (CPVF) between the towns of Kunu-ri and Sunchon, North Korea. Meshulam was reported missing in action on Dec. 1, 1950. Interment services are pending. [Read about Meshulam.](#)
- **Army Maj. Stephen T. Uurtamo**, 32, of Chicago, whose identification was previously announced, will be buried June 19 in Arlington National Cemetery, near Washington, D.C. Uurtamo was a member of Headquarters Battery, 82nd Anti-Aircraft Artillery Automatic Weapons Battalion, 2nd Infantry Division, which was engaged in persistent attacks with the Chinese forces near the Ch'ongch'on River in North Korea. On Nov. 30, 1950, the unit was forced to withdraw south along the Main Supply Route, known as "The Gauntlet." Uurtamo could not be accounted for after the withdrawal and was declared missing as of Dec. 1, 1950. It was later determined that he had been captured and died at a POW Transit Camp. [Read about Uurtamo.](#)
- **Army Pfc. David Baker**, 18, of Gary, Ind., whose identification was previously announced, will be buried June 23 in Hobart, Ind. Baker was a member of Company I, 3rd Battalion, 24th Infantry Regiment, 25th Infantry Division. On Nov. 25, 1950, his unit was attacked by Chinese forces while positioned near Yongbyong, North Korea. The battalion suffered heavy casualties and Baker was listed as missing in action on Nov. 28, 1950. Later reports indicated that Baker was likely captured by the enemy. [Read about Baker.](#)
- **Army Pfc. Felipe A. Champion**, 19, of Brownsville, Texas, whose identification was previously announced, was buried on June 21 in his hometown. Champion was a member of Company K, 3rd Battalion, 38th Infantry Regiment, when he was reported missing in action following a battle with Chinese forces on Feb. 12, 1951, in an area known as the Central Corridor, South Korea. [Read about Champion.](#)
- **Army Pfc. John H. Walker**, 20, of Morning Sun, Iowa, whose identification was previously announced, will be buried June 20 in his hometown. Walker was a member of Company E, 2nd Battalion, 18th Infantry Regiment, 1st Infantry Division, when he was reported missing in action after his unit engaged in fierce fighting on Hill 207 near Schönthal, Germany, in the Hürtgen Forest. With no evidence that Walker had been captured or survived combat, his status was changed to deceased on Nov. 25, 1945. [Read about Walker.](#)
- **Army Sgt. Donald L. Baker**, 20, of Thornton, Ark., whose identification was previously announced, will be buried June 19 in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Baker was assigned to Company H, 2nd Battalion, 24th Infantry Regiment, 25th Infantry Division. He was reported missing in action on Sept. 6, 1950, as a result of fighting that occurred between his unit and enemy forces near Haman, South Korea. [Read about Baker.](#)
- **Army Sgt. James K. Park** was a member of Company I, 26th Infantry Regiment, 1st Infantry Division. On Nov. 23, 1944, Park was declared missing in action after being wounded while his unit was engaged in fierce fighting within the Hürtgen Forest in Germany. Soldiers from Park's company attempted to search for him, but were prevented from doing so due to sustained fighting in the area. On Nov. 24, 1945, his status was amended to deceased. Interment services are pending. [Read about Park.](#)
- **Army Staff Sgt. Leo J. Husak**, 21, of West, Texas, whose identification was previously announced, will be buried June 23 in his hometown. Husak was a member of Company A, 1st Battalion, 309th Infantry Regiment, 78th Infantry Division, serving in the European theater. On Jan. 30, 1945, Husak was killed while out on patrol in Germany's Hürtgen Forest. The offensive in the forest was one of the longest battles the United States fought during World War II, lasting for nearly five months. [Read about Husak.](#)
- **Marine Corps Reserve Pfc. Paul D. Gilman** was assigned to Company M, 3rd Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, Fleet Marine Force. Gilman's unit landed on the small island of Betio in the

Tarawa Atoll on Nov. 20, 1943, against stiff Japanese resistance. Gilman was killed on the first day of the battle. Interment services are pending. [Read about Gilman.](#)

- **Marine Corps Sgt. Meredith F. Keirn** was a member of Company F, 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division. He was reported to have been killed Nov. 30, 1950, and buried at the base of “Fox Hill,” in the Toktong Pass, a critical main supply route between the villages of Hagaru-ri and Yudam-ni, North Korea. Interment services are pending. [Read about Keirn.](#)
- **Marine Pfc. John W. Mac Donald**, 19, of Somerville, Mass., whose identification was previously announced, will be buried June 22 in Bourne, Mass. Mac Donald was assigned to Company F, 2nd Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division. Mac Donald’s unit landed on the small island of Betio in the Tarawa Atoll on Nov. 20, 1943, against stiff Japanese resistance. Mac Donald was killed on the first day of the battle. [Read about Mac Donald.](#)
- **Navy Electrician's Mate 3rd Class Charles H. Harris** was stationed aboard the USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft on Dec. 7, 1941. The battleship sustained multiple torpedo hits, which caused it to quickly capsize. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 429 crewmen. Interment services are pending. [Read about Harris.](#)
- **Navy Fireman 1st Class Walter F. Schleiter** was stationed aboard the USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft on Dec. 7, 1941. The battleship sustained multiple torpedo hits, which caused it to quickly capsize. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 429 crewmen. Interment services are pending. [Read about Schleiter.](#)
- **Navy Pharmacist’s Mate 1st Class John H. Schoonover**, 39, of Port Edwards, Wis., whose identification was previously announced, will be buried June 26 in Pensacola, Fla. Schoonover was stationed aboard the USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft on Dec. 7, 1941. The battleship sustained multiple torpedo hits, which caused it to quickly capsize. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 429 crewmen. [Read about Schoonover.](#)
- **Navy Reserve Fireman 1st Class Lewis F. Tindall** was stationed aboard the USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft on Dec. 7, 1941. The battleship sustained multiple torpedo hits, which caused it to quickly capsize. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 429 crewmen. Interment services are pending. [Read about Tindall.](#)
- **Navy Reserve Radioman 2nd Class Julius H.O. Pieper**, 19, of Esmond, S.D., whose identification was previously announced, will be buried June 19 at the Normandy American Cemetery in Colleville-sur-Mer, France. Pieper was a member of Landing Ship Tank Number 523 (LST-523) off the coast of Normandy, France, on June 19, 1944. The ship struck an underwater mine and sank, killing Pieper. Pieper's twin brother, Radioman 2nd Class Ludwig J. Pieper, was also killed in the attack but his remains were recovered after the incident and buried at the Normandy American Cemetery in France. [Read about Pieper.](#)
- **Navy Seaman 1st Class Daniel L. Guisinger** was stationed aboard the USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft on Dec. 7, 1941. The battleship sustained multiple torpedo hits, which caused it to quickly capsize. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 429 crewmen. Interment services are pending. [Read about Guisinger.](#)

[Source: <http://www.dpaa.mil> | June 30, 2018 ++]

\* VA \*



## VA Hospital Staff Shortages Update 01 ► IG Identifies 140 Hospitals

The Office of Inspector General (OIG) for VA released its annual occupational report 14 JUN. Until this year the report had only included staffing shortages for clinical staff. This year, the OIG included shortages for all staff, clinical and non-clinical. The OIG inspection determined that all VA medical centers it reviewed were experiencing staffing shortages. The most commonly cited challenges to staffing are a lack of qualified applicants, non-competitive salary, and a high staff turnover. These reasons were consistent with last year's report. The five positions with the highest staffing shortages are psychiatry, human resources management, primary care, psychology and medical technologists. Read the [OIG Determination of Veterans Health Administration's Occupational Staffing Shortages](#) report. [Source: VFW Action Corps Weekly | June 15, 2018 ++]

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## VA Protest ► Vet Sets Self On Fire Outside GA Capitol Building

Air Force Veteran **John Michael Watts**, who was fed up with treatment by the Department of Veterans Affairs, set himself on fire in protest outside of the Georgia state Capitol building in downtown Atlanta on 26 JUN. The 58-year-old from Mableton, Georgia, who has not yet been identified, parked his car alongside the Capitol before walking toward the building, where he commenced self-immolation, the Atlanta Journal-Constitution reported. "He was strapped with some homemade incendiary devices (and) firecrackers, and doused himself with some kind of flammable liquid," Georgia State Patrol Capt. Mark Perry told the AJC. Loud explosions then began going off as the flames spread, sounds Perry attributed to fireworks strapped to the vet's body. The blast halted a news conference by state officials across the street. Police rushed toward what they thought was gunfire and found Watts badly burned on the sidewalk.

As the grisly scene unfolded, a nearby police officer rushed toward the veteran with a fire extinguisher in hand to smother the inferno, the AJC reported. The veteran was then rushed to the nearby Grady Memorial Hospital with burns to 85 to 90 percent of his body, the report said. Streets surrounding the Capitol had been cordoned off and a bomb squad dispatched to the scene for fear that the veteran may have planned an attack, the report said. A sign was positioned in the windshield of the car the veteran drove listing a phone number and instructions to call it. "Please don't call that number," Perry told the AJC. Officials believe dialing the number could trigger an explosive device. Authorities from various organizations are investigating the incident. No one inside or around the building was hurt in the explosion, troopers said. The Capitol and judiciary buildings were evacuated.

Law officers have not provided details about the man's complaints about the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, saying only that he is disgruntled with the system. "I'm not sure what his history is there, but he is disgruntled with the VA system and is trying to draw some attention to that. He stated something to the effect that he was looking for some help," Perry said. Veterans groups in recent years have demanded changes in the nation's Veterans Affairs system. Some veterans say they've had to wait months for appointments. On June 6, President Donald Trump signed legislation aimed at allowing veterans more freedom to see doctors outside the system in an attempt to reduce wait times and improve care. [Source: MilitaryTimes | J.D. Simkins | June 26, 2018 ++]

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## HUD-VASH Update 08 ► Critical Resource For Ending Vet Homelessness

More than 77,500 formerly homeless Veterans are living in their own permanent housing today because of a valuable program known as HUD-VASH. That stands for Housing and Urban Development – Veterans Affairs Supportive

Housing. Permanent supportive housing has been identified as a critical resource for ending homelessness. VA collaborates with the Department of Housing and Urban Development to provide eligible Veterans with vouchers to assist with rent payment to participating landlords. The program is administered by local public housing authorities. Chronically homeless Veterans are prioritized for admission into HUD-VASH. Following the prioritization of non-chronic homeless Veterans is based on vulnerability and need for the services provided through the program.



VA provides clinical case management and services to help Veterans obtain and sustain permanent housing while also assisting Veterans in accessing treatment and other supportive services that promote increased quality of life and full reintegration back into one's community. Because Veterans experience homelessness for a variety of reasons, case management is individually tailored to meet the needs of each HUD-VASH Veteran. The program assists Veterans who need case management due to mental health, substance use or other issues stemming from disability, economic hardship, or other barriers to permanent independent housing.

The primary goal of the HUD-VASH Program is to move Veterans and their families out of homelessness into permanent supportive housing while promoting maximum Veteran recovery and independence in the community. The HUD-VASH program operates using the principles of Housing First, an evidence based practice, that helps ensure that chronically homeless and highly vulnerable Veterans are provided opportunities to rapidly exit homelessness and maintain housing. Housing First seeks to rapidly house Veterans in a low-barrier case management program while providing supportive services that help Veterans stay housed. It does not require treatment completion or sobriety prior to housing.

There are eight principles of Housing First, which are based on the belief that housing is a basic human right. This is in contrast to the belief that people need to earn or prove that they are deserving of housing by engaging in treatment for mental illness or substance use. Additionally, there should be choice in options for housing locations and supportive services. Services that are provided should focus on supporting the Veteran's recovery and individual goals. According to Jesse Vazzano, "Utilizing the principles of Housing First, we have seen great success with the HUD-VASH program and its ability to house some of the most vulnerable homeless Veterans successfully." Vazzano is VA's National Director of HUD-VASH.

In addition, VA prioritizes homeless populations who are particularly vulnerable, including women, Veterans with children in custody, Veterans 65 and older, Veterans who served in Iraq or Afghanistan during Operations Iraqi Freedom, Enduring Freedom, or New Dawn, and Veterans with an extensive history of homelessness that does not meet chronic homeless criteria. To apply for HUD-VASH, please contact [local VA Homeless Program](#). Veterans can contact the HUD-VASH program directly, or obtain a referral from a case manager in another VA program, from a community program, or other referral sources. [Source: VAntage Point | Hans Petersen | May 22, 2018 ++]

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## **VA Appointments Update 19 ► Epic’s Scheduling System Early Results Promising**

The Department of Veterans Affairs has been piloting a scheduling system designed by Epic at a site in Columbus, Ohio, and officials on the project are praising its early success, according to the Wisconsin State Journal. Epic teamed up with Leidos for the project in a \$624 million, five-year contract with the goal of resolving the wait time issues plaguing many VA facilities. Will Johnson, the vice president for veterans affairs at Leidos, told the publication the system could be implemented at all VA hospitals and clinics in a fraction of the time and at half the cost. "We communicated to the VA that we are able to do a national deployment in 24 months. We can do that for less than \$350 million," said Mr. Johnson told the Wisconsin State Journal.

Epic's scheduling system has been operational at the Columbus facility since 9 APR, and the company's vice president for implementation, Dan Sullivan, said early results are promising. "We are looking at wait times and access to care. Those numbers look positive so far," Mr. Sullivan told the Wisconsin State Journal. "In the brief period of time we've been live, we've seen improvement in same-day appointments, through May." Neither Epic nor Leidos provided specific data on the project's results. Staff at the Columbus VA are also pleased with the new system. Joanne Kusko, group practice manager, told the news outlet it is easier to use than its prior system, and its resource-based build means appointments can't be scheduled if they require a specific piece of equipment or unique room that may be unavailable or broken at the time.

The project is not a certainty, though. The agency has been grappling with leadership changes that could compromise the deal struck nearly three years ago by then-Secretary David Shulkin, MD. A Senate committee plans to hold a hearing June 27 to confirm Acting VA Secretary Robert Wilkie as Dr. Shulkin's permanent replacement. The VA's contract with Cerner could potentially throw another wrench in the project's future. In May, the agency signed a 10-year, \$10 billion deal with Cerner to put the Veterans Department on the same EHR as the Defense Department, which has been transitioning to Cerner since winning a contract in 2015. That rollout has faced a number of problems, according to a DOD report that called it "neither operationally effective nor operationally suitable" in some locations. House lawmakers are planning to establish a new oversight panel tasked with monitoring the VA's EHR transition. [Source: Health IT & CIO Report | Julie Spitzer | June 25, 2018 ++]

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## **VA Cancer Policy Update 03 ► Agent Orange Related List | Bladder?**

Vietnam War veteran Robert Lytle was diagnosed in 2009 with bladder cancer, a disease that he believes — and science now suggests — is linked to the chemical herbicide Agent Orange. In the past nine years, Lytle has undergone three surgeries. Doctors removed eight malignant tumors from his bladder. The Department of Veterans Affairs has denied his requests for disability compensation three times. "I volunteered to go to Vietnam in 1970," said Lytle, now 70 and living in Metter, Ga. "That wasn't the coolest thing. That didn't get you a lot of dates. I just feel like... I just feel they owe me."

The federal government is considering whether to add bladder cancer to a list of diseases presumed to be caused by Agent Orange, but veterans might wait another two years before a decision is reached. VA leadership informed the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs last week that the government is waiting on results of two studies, the second of which isn't expected to be complete until 2020, committee staff said. For Lytle and other veterans and their families, it's already been a long wait. In March 2016, the National Academy of Medicine released new research that for the first time recognized evidence exists of a link between bladder cancer and Agent Orange. The report stated there was "limited or suggestive" evidence of a connection — an upgrade from "inadequate or insufficient."

It took 20 months before the VA sent a recommendation to the White House's Office of Management and Budget in November 2017 that bladder cancer and three other illnesses be added to a list of diseases presumed to be caused



by Agent Orange. The other ailments are hypothyroidism, Parkinson’s-like tremors and hypertension. There are 14 diseases on the list, and veterans suffering from them are allowed a fast-track to monthly compensation. “I have transmitted my recommendations to the Office of Management and Budget. I did that by 1 NOV,” former VA Secretary David Shulkin said in March during a Senate hearing. “And we are in the process right now of going through this data. In fact, they asked for some additional data to be able to work through the process and be able to get financial estimates for this. So, we are committed to working with OMB to get this resolved in the very near future.”

Seven months after the VA sent its recommendation, some veterans are now speaking out, wondering why the Office of Management and Budget hasn’t issued a decision. The White House recently referred questions about the issue to a spokesman with the Office of Management and Budget, who did not return multiple requests for comment. A VA spokesman only said the agency had no announcements to make regarding their recommendation to OMB. VA officials told the House Committee on Veterans’ Affairs that they are waiting for results of ongoing mortality and morbidity studies, which could provide more evidence of a connection between the diseases and Agent Orange. Committee staff said the first of those studies will be complete in spring of fiscal year 2019, the other in fiscal 2020.

Martha Edgin, the wife of a Vietnam veteran with bladder cancer, has contacted the VA and Office of Management and Budget in the past several months, in addition to congressional offices and anyone else she thinks might know something about when — or whether — it will get approved. “I have emailed. I have telephoned. I have texted. I have done about everything,” Edgin said. “It kind of became my mission.” Edgin, 73, and her husband, Jerry, live in Norman, Okla. Jerry Edgin, 74, was a Marine corporal in Vietnam. In 2013, Jerry Edgin went into the doctor for a checkup and was diagnosed with bladder cancer. Martha Edgin immediately went to work researching whether there was a connection to his military service. Marth Edgin had retired from her teaching career by then. Researching, documenting and applying to the VA quickly became her full-time job.

The couple was denied twice before they recruited the help of an attorney and the office of Sen. James Lankford, (R-OK). The VA approved their third claim – but not for Agent Orange. Instead, they accepted the link between Jerry Edgin’s bladder cancer and his exposure to diesel engine fumes in Vietnam. Through her years of research, Martha Edgin met a community of people online who are struggling. She’s continuing to research and push the VA so others can get approved for disability compensation, too. “I just think it should be the same for everybody across the board,” she said. “If it was definitely from Agent Orange, then all the men and women who have developed bladder cancer should be approved also.”

Edgin said she’s always maintained hope the government would add bladder cancer to the list of Agent Orange illnesses – until the last few weeks. Now, with further delays and silence from federal agencies, she’s not so certain. “Over the last week, I thought, ‘It’s not going to happen,’” she said. “I’ve never felt that way.” Lytle, who was an infantry platoon leader in Vietnam, thought the report from National Academy of Medicine meant he would quickly be made eligible for VA benefits. In March, he sent in his third claim expecting it to get approved. His denial letter arrived in May. “The VA has gotten a lot better. But from this aspect, it’s broken,” Lytle said. “Fair is fair, and it’s not fair.” [Source: Stars & Stripes | Nikki Wentling | June 21, 2018 ++]

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### **VA Mission Act Update 03 ► Signed But Remains Unfunded**

More than 30 Veterans Service Organizations have backed Senate proposals to fund the recently passed VA Mission Act, which expands private health care options. The proposals, which are opposed by the White House, would give up to \$55 billion in funding over five years. The bill, signed into law by President Donald Trump earlier this month,

provided \$5.2 billion in funding to keep the current Veterans Choice and Accountability Act running through next May while the Department of Veterans Affairs puts in place the VA Mission Act.

The Choice program pushes some veterans to private care in lieu of care at VA hospitals or clinics, while the Mission Act aims to overhaul Choice and consolidate programs. The Mission Act also lifted restrictions on caregiver benefits for disabled veterans. The caregiver benefits program had been limited to post/9-11 veterans, but the VA Mission Act opened it to veterans of all eras. But funding for the VA Mission Act beyond next May has been left in limbo, putting the White House and Senate appropriators at odds on a plan for how to pay for it.

The coalition of veterans groups has urged support for the "Complete the Mission Amendment." That amendment would "allow Congress to provide VA with sufficient resources required to implement the provisions of the VA Mission Act without triggering sequestration or requiring cuts to other VA programs," they wrote 19 JUN in a letter sent to Senate leaders of both parties. That amendment was sponsored by Sen. Richard Shelby (R-AL) chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, and Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-VT), vice chairman of the Committee.

The problem, the veterans groups said, was that in passing the VA Mission Act Congress moved funding for it "from mandatory appropriations to a new discretionary program that must fit within overall domestic discretionary caps." "However, the current domestic discretionary budget cap for FY 2019, and the anticipated caps for FY 2020 and FY 2021, did not contemplate the new and increased costs associated with the VA Mission Act," the groups said in the letter. "As such, Congress may not have the ability to fully fund all of the programs, benefits and services that our veterans, their families and survivors have earned."

The letter went to Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY); Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY); Sen. Johnny Isakson (R-GA), chairman of the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee; and Sen. Jon Tester (D-MT), ranking member of SVAC. Sen. Shelby's proposed amendment to lift the caps on discretionary spending to fund the VA Mission Act has been opposed by the White House, which favors offsetting the costs of the veterans bill through cuts to other programs.

In a memo circulated to Republican senators earlier this month, White House officials said Shelby's proposals were "anathema to responsible spending" and would lead to "virtually unlimited increases" in veterans' spending on private health care, the Washington Post reported. The White House memo contrasted with Trump's exuberance in signing the bill earlier this month. "There's never been anything like this in the history of the VA," Trump said at the White House ceremony where he signed the VA Mission Act, formally known as the Maintaining Internal Systems and Strengthening Integrated Outside Network Act.

The bill is set to eventually replace the Choice Act, which was enacted in haste in 2014 in response to scandals concerning lengthy VA wait times for appointments. That law has been the target of criticism from veterans and private care doctors, who complain of late payments and delayed appointments. [Source: Military.com | Richard Sisk | June 20, 2018 ++]

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## **VA Secretary Update 80 ► Wilkie Confirmation Hearing Set for 27 JUN**

The upcoming confirmation hearings for the next Veterans Affairs secretary won't be nearly as contentious as they would have been with the last nominee, but Robert Wilkie still faces a host of tough questions before he steps back into the department's top leadership spot. Wilkie, who serves as the Pentagon's undersecretary for personnel and readiness, was announced as President Donald Trump's pick for the Cabinet post in May after a tumultuous stretch for VA. His confirmation hearing is set for 27 JUN, after his formal nomination arrived on Capitol Hill this week. Key lawmakers on the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee don't expect allegations regarding Veterans Affairs Secretary nominee Robert Wilkie's past political views to upend his confirmation process, but they do expect debate on the issues during his public hearing this week.

Until last month, Wilkie had been working as acting VA secretary for two months, bringing a measure of stability to the organization. His official nomination comes three months after former VA Secretary David Shulkin was dismissed from the job over Twitter and two months after former White House physician Rear Adm. Ronny Jackson withdrew from consideration for the job. Unlike those two, Wilkie's recent government work and proposed promotion have not been surrounded by controversy. He was confirmed for his Defense Department post last November just two weeks after an uneventful Senate Armed Services Committee hearing, and has drawn praise for his work from lawmakers and veterans advocates as acting VA secretary in recent months.

The 55-year-old bureaucrat is an Air Force Reserve colonel who previously spent time in the Navy Reserve. He is also the son of an Army artillery commander, and has spoken frequently about growing up on military bases and the challenges his family faced in dealing with his father's combat injuries. Unlike Jackson, whose inexperience with the VA system was expected to dominate his confirmation hearings (before rumors of unprofessional behavior surfaced), Wilkie is likely to face less skepticism about his readiness to run the system and more questions about Trump's policies for veterans reforms moving ahead. Here are the most critical questions and answers to watch for when he takes the stand:

### **What is Wilkie's definition of VA privatization?**

Wilkie is likely to be asked multiple times whether he is in favor of privatizing VA health care, and he will say no every time. But the term has become an ill-defined pejorative (i.e. expressing contempt or disapproval) within the veterans community, meaning different things to different groups. About one-third of all medical appointments paid for by VA last year took place in hospitals and clinics outside its own federal system. That number is expected to rise as the department implements a new community care overhaul in the next year, allowing veterans more access to private-sector appointments at VA's expense. Democrats largely went along with that plan, but are likely to question Wilkie on where he would draw the line on allowing patients outside the VA system. The new legislation keeps department administrators heavily involved in veterans' overall care plan, but rules governing that arrangement still have to be finalized. Union officials have already attacked the new plan as VA outsourcing its most important responsibility to care for ailing veterans. And Shulkin, in his departure tour, repeatedly warned that forces within the White House are pushing too many department financial resources out of the current system and into the private sector.

### **How much say will Wilkie have over his staff?**

Shulkin blamed political operatives within the department for undermining his tenure as secretary, and for trying to advance a too-aggressive privatization agenda within the department. Nearly all of the individuals he viewed as opponents are still there. Whether Wilkie will make large-scale changes at the department remains to be seen. Acting VA Secretary Peter O'Rourke is likely to return to his role as department chief of staff — or another high-profile post — but Wilkie could also push to bring some of his own confidants in to ease his transition from the Pentagon. Wilkie's team earned high marks during his two months as acting secretary, so that may give him more ability to bring in new faces than Shulkin, who had promised to fire insubordinate workers in the weeks leading up to his dismissal.

### **Can Wilkie get anyone to work at VA?**

The department has seen numerous high-profile and lower-level departures in recent months, leaving a host of vacancies that the next secretary will have to work to fill. Lawmakers — especially Democrats — have criticized department leaders for thousands of medical position vacancies throughout VA hospitals, saying it undermines care and faith in the system. Recruiting for those posts has also been a persistent problem since the 2014 wait-time scandal hurt the public image of the sprawling medical system. Meanwhile, the White House has been unable to find a nominee for the VA under secretary of health for the last 17 months, and saw Deputy Secretary Thomas Bowman retire last week. Courting replacements for those posts will be a major task for the new secretary, or will require him to perform double duty for months to come.

[Source: MilitaryTimes | Leo Shane III | June 21, 2018 ++]

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## **VA Employee Moonlighting ► Education-Related Work Proposal**

Employees at the Department of Veterans Affairs aren't allowed to moonlight at for-profit schools or receive gifts, services or other financial benefits from such institutions, which enroll tens of thousands of veterans using the GI Bill. But VA officials are considering waiving that rule for most employees — a proposal that has several military and veteran advocacy organizations crying foul.

Leaders and ethics experts from more than 40 organizations wrote in a letter to VA, dated 20 JUN, that the plan “falls short of VA’s statutory responsibility to protect veterans.” There have been well-documented instances of for-profit schools “targeting veterans with deceptive and aggressive recruiting,” they said, and granting automatic waivers could put veterans at risk of being manipulated, including by VA medical-center employees affiliated with for-profit institutions.

The new VA proposal follows a similar September plan by former VA Sec. David Shulkin. While Shulkin’s plan would have given automatic waivers to VA employees, the new proposal would only give automatic waivers to employees whose VA work isn’t tied to education benefits. Employees who do education-related work could still qualify for a waiver, but they would need special permission from VA leadership. Shulkin’s initial proposal, which he later rescinded, came after a VA Inspector General report found that two employees had conflicts of interest when they taught classes at for-profit schools. The report recommended that VA either enforce its ethics law as written — meaning fire employees involved with for-profits — or institute a waiver similar to what is now being considered.

If VA enforced the law as written, “the department could lose thousands of employees and our ability to serve veterans would be seriously impeded,” VA spokesman Curt Cashour told Military Times last fall. “To require individual waivers would be a tremendous waste of government resources, when we know that the duties of the vast majority of VA employees have no impact on for-profit educational institutions,” Cashour said. [Source: MilitaryTimes | Natalie Gross | June 20, 2018 ++]

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## **VA Whistleblowers Update 55 ► VA IG in Fight With VA Leadership**

The Department of Veterans Affairs' Inspector General (IG), an independent watchdog office, accused VA leaders of improperly withholding records dealing with employee complaints. VA leaders have responded by accusing the IG of overstepping its authority and improperly issuing reports that "recklessly cast the VA and its employees in an unfavorable light."

VA Inspector General Michael Missal has asked VA leadership to review all complaints filed with the department's new Office of Accountability and Whistleblower Protection. This was part of the VA accountability measures that were passed in the wake of the Phoenix VA wait list scandal (and many other scandals) to help root out misbehavior within the department. Missal said he was promised access to those records in his role as an independent overseer. Earlier this month, he accused acting Veterans Affairs Secretary Peter O'Rourke of violating the law by refusing to open those files to the IG staff. In response last week, O'Rourke denied unfettered access to the documents, calling the request too broad and impractical.

Allowing the VA IG to view these records is absolutely vital to insuring that the VA system is being held accountable. Claiming that retaliation against whistleblowers has occurred, a fact that the IG has little to no power to stop on their own absent action by Congress, is a malicious way to cut down on the IG's ability to root out corruption and malfeasance on the part of everyday VA officials against their employees. Missal said his staff needs access to the accountability office complaints to ensure that work isn't being duplicated and that criminal accusations are being

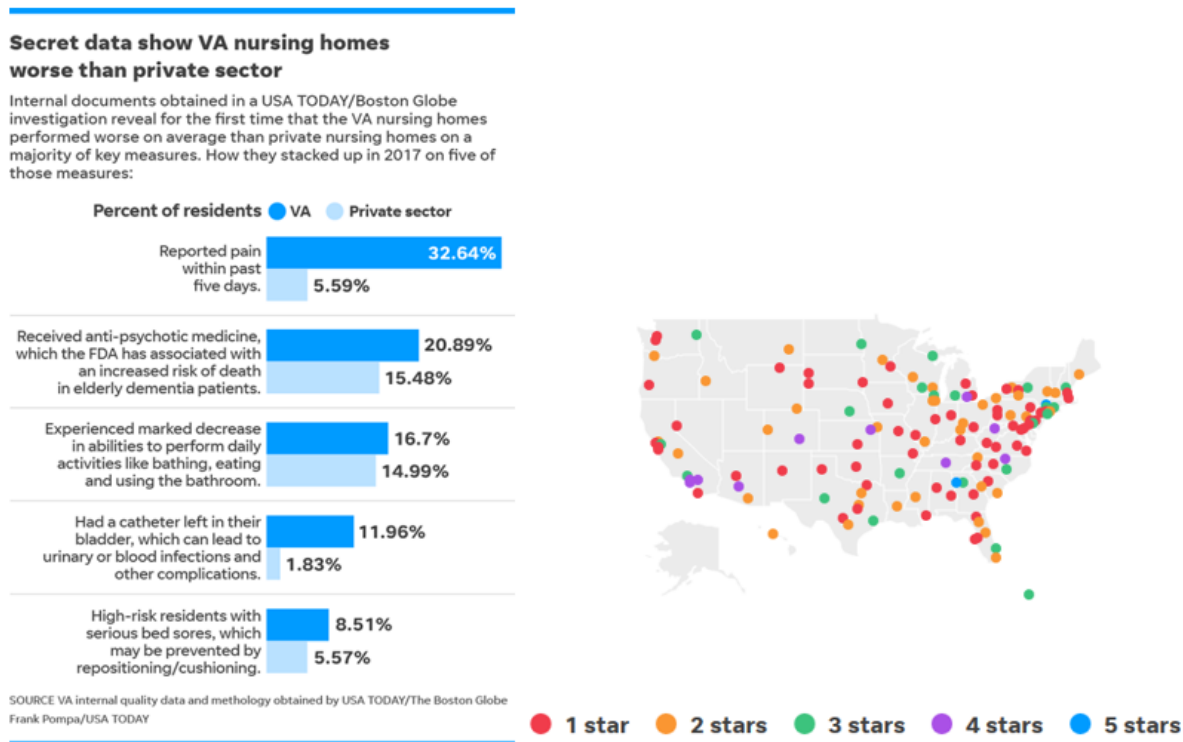
properly pursued. The Senate this week unanimously intervened in the dispute between the Veterans Affairs Department and its inspector general, voting to tell the agency it cannot make any efforts to block the watchdog’s investigations. The 96-0 vote came as an amendment to a VA spending bill and after a back-and-forth exchange of letters in which Peter O’Rourke, the department’s acting secretary, and Michael Missal, its inspector general, traded criticisms.

O’Rourke was named acting VA secretary on 30 MAY after then-acting secretary Robert Wilkie was nominated to be the permanent Secretary of Veterans Affairs. His paperwork has not yet been delivered to the Senate for consideration, so no timeline has been set for confirmation hearings or a full chamber vote. [Source: TREA Washington Update | June 20, 2018 ++]

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## VA Nursing Home Care Update 01 ► VA Release of Underlying Data Demanded

Several members of Congress demanded 19 JUN that the Department of Veterans Affairs release a full complement of nursing home data that the agency has kept hidden from the public for years, citing a recent USA TODAY and Boston Globe investigation into the state of care at VA facilities. The VA pushed back on the report, which was based on the agency’s own internal documents and facility ratings, by downplaying the findings and calling the story “fake news.” The internal documents show that care at the VA’s 133 nursing homes scored worse on average than private sector homes on key quality indicators, including rates of anti-psychotic drug prescription and residents’ deterioration.



Following inquiries from USA TODAY and the Globe, the VA last week released some of its nursing home ratings, but not the underlying quality data, such as rates of infection and injury. The agency has tracked this information for years, but kept it from public view. “Widespread underperformance at VA nursing homes is a betrayal of veterans’ trust and wellbeing,” said Minnesota Rep. Tim Walz, the highest ranking Democrat on the House Veterans Affairs Committee. “VA concealing this data from the public until news stories were about to be filed makes matters infinitely

worse and is nothing more than fake transparency. “Veterans and their loved ones deserve real accountability and transparency at VA, and that is why I am calling on VA to make all nursing home data, especially key quality indicators such as rates of injury and infection, available to the public immediately.”

Both the Republican-led House and Senate VA committees requested briefings from VA officials following the report. Those meetings are scheduled later in the week of 18 JUN, spokespeople for the committees said. VA press secretary Curt Cashour, meanwhile, took to Twitter to claim that prior to Trump’s presidency, “you haven’t seen this much VA transparency or accountability,” and call the story about the secret nursing home data “the definition of fake news.” Cashour on Tuesday claimed the story painted “a misleading picture of how our facilities actually compare with the private sector.” The ratings showed that as of March 31, nearly half of VA nursing homes – 58 – received the lowest rating for quality in the agency’s rankings of one out of five stars.

Cashour declined to answer questions about why the VA hasn’t released the underlying nursing home quality data, inspection reports, or staffing data. He asserted that “overall,” the VA nursing home system “compares closely” with the private sector. But he said VA nursing homes score lower on key quality indicators because veterans are typically sicker than residents of private facilities. “Also, private sector nursing homes admit patients selectively, whereas – unlike the private sector – VA will not refuse service to any eligible veteran, no matter how challenging the veteran’s conditions are to treat,” Cashour said. Lawmakers demanding the VA release all its nursing home data include Massachusetts Democratic Sens. Elizabeth Warren and Ed Markey, Alabama Sen. Doug Jones, and Massachusetts Rep. Seth Moulton, also Democrats.

- The VA nursing home in Bedford, Massachusetts, was one of the worst in the country in the agency’s quality ratings last year receiving one out of five stars, in part for giving so many residents anti-psychotic drugs, according to internal VA documents. “Veterans deserve the best healthcare in the world. Period. That means having more transparency than private providers, not less,” said Moulton, an Iraq veteran who receives healthcare at the Bedford VA. “The VA is doing many things well, but this is a clear example of where they are failing.”
- The VA nursing home in Tuskegee, Alabama, also was among the worst in the country in the agency’s quality ratings last year, according to internal documents. Staff there lost track of Earl James Zook, 72, a dementia patient and known wander risk, who walked out a broken door on a secure ward in January 2017 and hasn’t been seen since. His wife of 38 years, Leslie Roe, had him declared dead earlier this year.

“This information is shocking,” Alabama Sen. Doug Jones said. “And even more than that, it’s so sad that we continue to let down those men and women who have served us so well, and that we have made promises to take care of them, and we just continue to fail, and that is both sad and shocking.” A bipartisan group of House members from Florida penned a letter to the VA Monday urging that care be improved at VA nursing homes in Tampa and Bay Pines, Fla., both one-star facilities in agency rankings. The lawmakers called the VA’s claim that veteran’s are sicker than private nursing home residents “simply insufficient.” “We cannot tolerate sub-par quality of care for Veterans who have sacrificed so much,” wrote Republican Rep. Gus Bilirakis and Democratic Reps. Kathy Castor and Charlie Crist. “They have earned the best we can offer.”

Cashour, the VA spokesman, said “VA appreciates the lawmakers’ concerns and will respond to them directly.” Conservative advocacy group Concerned Veterans for America, which has generally been supportive of VA leadership under Trump, echoed lawmakers who said VA needs to open the books on its nursing homes. “The more data that the VA can share, the better, because ultimately, at the end of the day, it helps veterans,” Dan Caldwell, executive director of the group, said in an interview. “It helps veterans determine whether or not they are getting the quality of care that they deserve.”

[Source: USA Today & The Boston Globe | Donovan Slack & Andrea Estes | June 19, 2018 ++]

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## VA Accountability Update 53 ► Senior Executive Relocation Benefit Abuse

The top career civil servants at the Veterans Affairs Department will soon face increased scrutiny over their relocations, with lawmakers passing a bill they say will crack down on senior executives who abuse the benefits associated with internal transfers. The VA Senior Executives Accountability Act (S. 2382), which was presented to President Trump for his signature in mid-JUN, will have a twofold benefit, according to its supporters. The measure will eliminate executives' use of reassignments for personal gains and prevent the department from moving managers around rather than disciplining them.

Lawmakers expressed concern over the Appraised Value Offer Program, which VA uses to recruit and relocate employees for mission critical positions. The program is run by a private company that contracts with the General Services Administration to help employees who are relocating to find a purchaser for their old home. The company will buy it outright for a fair market price if a third-party buyer is not identified quickly enough. An inspector general report in 2015 found VA's senior executives were improperly taking advantage of the program and other relocation incentives for their own financial gains. Diana Rubens, senior executive director of the Veterans Benefits Administration's Philadelphia office, was accused of abusing her authority to secure a transfer from Washington, D.C., to her current position, along with nearly \$310,000 in relocation costs, including more than \$200,000 through the appraised value offer program. The IG report led to VA suspending the program, but the department reinstated it in November 2016.

The reauthorization of the program was done "quietly" and with no "implementation policy to avoid abuse," according a Senate report accompanying the bill. The measure will also require the VA secretary to approve all SES reassignments "to ensure that such moves are justified and are in the best interest of the department, veterans and taxpayers." VA will report to Congress semiannually to update it on all senior executives who were reassigned and the associated costs. In addition to shining a light on potential abuses in spending, lawmakers said the increased scrutiny will discourage VA leaders from transferring SES employees to different positions rather than taking them through the disciplinary process. [Source: GovExec.com | Eric Katz | June 15, 2018 ++]

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## VA Accountability Update 54 ► S.1094 Repeal Effort | Low Ranking Employee Impact

In a surprising move, a Republican lawmaker on 14 JUN introduced a bill to repeal President Trump's signature civil service legislative accomplishment to date, the **VA Whistleblower Protection and Accountability Act of 2017**. The measure made it easier to fire all VA employees by shortening the timeframe for due process and lessening the burden of proof required to prove a termination was warranted.

The implementation of that bill, however, has drawn bipartisan concern. Government Executive has reported that the increased firing authority has disproportionately focused on lower-ranking VA employees, and lawmakers subsequently complained to VA about the law's enforcement. A group of Democratic senators said in a letter to then-Secretary David Shulkin that new policies have led to employees being fired for "missing deadlines or moving slowly after an injury," even on first offenses. Such actions "are not the types of offenses that rise to the level of immediate termination," an authority provided in the law, the senators said. The criticism came despite unanimous support for the measure in the Senate and opposition from only a few dozen House lawmakers, nearly all of whom were Democrats. Fitzpatrick himself voted in favor of the bill. Rep. Anthony Brown (D-MD) who voted against the bill, and Rep. Chris Smith (R-NJ), who voted for it, co-sponsored the repeal measure.

The American Federation of Government Employees, which represents 230,000 VA employees and opposed the firing bill from its inception, praised Fitzpatrick's repeal bill. "As we near the one-year anniversary of the so-called

‘Accountability Act,’ and can now see the law’s disproportionate impact on rank-and-file workers—a majority of whom are veterans, women, and minorities—it’s great to see members of Congress take action to right that wrong,” said J. David Cox, AFGE’s president.

Trump has repeatedly praised the law, including earlier this month when signing a bill to overhaul VA health care. At the signing ceremony, Trump falsely said that federal employee unions like AFGE had eventually come around to supporting the measure. “Last year, I signed the historic VA Accountability legislation, meaning you now can immediately get rid of people that don't treat our veterans right; that rob us, or cheat us, or aren't good to our great vets,” Trump said. “You can get them out. You couldn't do it.” Even if the lawmakers usher the repeal through Congress, they will likely face a resistant president. When malfeasance was uncovered at VA, “They couldn't do anything about it,” Trump said at the signing ceremony. “Good people that worked there, they couldn't take care of the bad people. Meaning, you're fired; get the hell out of here.” [Source: GovExec.com | Eric Katz | June 15, 2018 ++]

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## **VA Fraud, Waste & Abuse ► Reported 16 thru 30 JUN 2018**

**Jacksonville, FL** --- federal jury on 15 JUN found Jose **Calderon-Fuentes** (63, Jacksonville) guilty of theft of government property. He faces a maximum penalty of 10 years in federal prison. His sentencing hearing is scheduled for September 26, 2018. Calderon-Fuentes was indicted on July 13, 2017. According to evidence presented at trial, in July 2000, Calderon-Fuentes was designated by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs as 100% disabled for bilateral blindness. He collected disability benefits in the years that followed, eventually receiving more than \$4,000 per month. Federal agents opened an investigation when they learned that Calderon-Fuentes had a Florida drivers license. They then developed evidence that Calderon-Fuentes was exaggerating his disability claim, including recordings of him doing yard work, washing his truck, and driving. After Calderon-Fuentes learned that he was under investigation in Florida, he obtained another drivers license in Puerto Rico. As part of the application process for that license, he submitted a medical certificate that stated he had 20/50 vision. [Source: | DoJ | Middle Dist. of FL | June 15, 2018 ++]

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**Charleston, SC** — A man who never served in the military swindled nearly \$200,000 in health care benefits out of the Department of Veterans Affairs by claiming he fought in the Vietnam War and received two Purple Heart medals, federal prosecutors say. Keith Hudson, 70, pleaded guilty to health care fraud in U.S. District Court this week. He faces a maximum sentence of 10 years in prison for the scam, which marked the second time authorities said he has posed as a U.S. Navy veteran for benefits. Hudson was suspected of carrying out a similar scheme in Connecticut where he received medical care at VA facilities from 2003 until authorities caught on about two years later, according to federal court records. He was placed in a pretrial diversion program.

In the latest case, Hudson received more than \$197,000 in benefits after applying to the VA in Charleston in 2015. Prosecutors said he went as far as to make up the name of a medal he claimed he received. An investigation by the Veterans Affairs Office of Inspector General revealed Hudson submitted a forged Department of Defense separation from active duty document — the same falsified form that he used in the Connecticut case. He said he saw combat as a medic and suffered wounds and other trauma when he served from August 1967 through October 1971. Hudson said he received two Purple Heart medals but the citation on the document was inaccurate. The form also claimed Hudson received the Fleet Marine Force Medal with Marine Device, but no such medal exists. He said he received a Combat Medical Badge, but that award is only given for service in the U.S. Army.

The document had a stamp from the Alaska State Defense Force, which investigators said was suspicious because the force is a volunteer group and not an official military organization. Additionally, the typeset of the Social Security



number on Hudson's form was different than the rest of the document. Employment and fingerprint records from the time frame Hudson said he was in the Navy showed he worked a variety of jobs in New York and Maine. The VA Office of Inspector General declined speak about the ongoing case. To report potential fraud, call the VA Office of Inspector General hotline at 1-800-488-8244 on weekdays between 8:30 a.m. and 2 p.m. [Source: The Post and Courier | Angie Jackson | June 27, 2018 ++]

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## **VAMC Loma Linda CA Update 01 ► Legionella Found In Water Fountains**

The water fountains at the Pettis VA Medical Center in Loma Linda are out of service because evidence of Legionella, the bacteria that can cause Legionnaire’s disease, was found during the most recent quarterly water safety tests. Nancy Darling, whose husband gets treated at the VA, isn’t worried. “I think it’s a minor problem. I really do. They’re on top of it,” said Darling. Staff at the VA insist there is no Legionella outbreak. That they shut off water to all the areas that tested positive and are mitigating the issue. They say only one patient room was impacted and no patients were exposed. But according to The San Bernardino Sun, a group of physicians and nurses filed a federal whistleblower complaint just a few months ago, saying not enough was being done to protect employees and patients from exposure to Legionella.

“It’s sad. It’s scary. Wish we could do more,” said Vanessa Ceja, ex-wife of a patient. No employees at the facility would talk on camera, but several admitted off-camera that they weren’t told about the latest water tests. They didn’t know if any long term efforts were under way to prevent future issues with the water, but say the facility is probably due for some upgrades. “Most likely because the hospital is old. It’s like Redlands Hospital. It’s old. It needs to be upgraded,” said Darling. Everyone CBSLA’s Tina Patel talked to said our veterans deserve better. “It’s just kind of absurd how we don’t put enough of our tax dollars to the facility,” said Ceja. The VA wouldn’t directly address concerns brought up in the federal complaint. But they did say they’re constantly educating staff members about the risks of Legionella and how to prevent outbreaks. [Source: CBS Los Angeles | June 14, 2018 ++]

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## **VAMC Topeka KS Update 02 ► OIG Finds No Evidence Wrongdoing**

A federal review of Topeka’s hospital for veterans underscores problems with the medical center’s shortage of specialists but clears the clinic of alleged misconduct. Staffing levels and limited hours for specialty care providers at Colmery-O’Neil VA Medical Center resulted in delays, increased lengths of stay and patient transfers, according to a report released 18 JUN by the Veteran Affairs Office of Inspector General.



**Colmery-O’Neil VA Medical Center**

The OIG reviewed patient records from April 2016 to March 2017 in response to anonymous complaints and found no evidence of wrongdoing. But chronic staffing shortages within the VA system could be a contributing factor to deaths like the suicide last week of a Vietnam-era veteran at the Leavenworth VA hospital, said Melissa Jarboe, an advocate for service members and founder of Military Veteran Project. “Veterans not receiving timely, adequate or immediate medical care when they seek help could continue the downward spiral if proper staffing needs are not met as well as availability of specialists are not available,” Jarboe said.

Joseph Burks, a regional spokesman for the VA, said the report was favorable to the Topeka facility. Following the OIG visit, Burks said, the clinic addressed staffing shortages by securing an agreement to transfer patients to other hospitals. The medical center also has initiated a cardiology service agreement. “We are pleased of the results of this inspection,” Burks said. “We will continue working with our taxpayers, our elected officials, our community partners and our veteran stakeholders in upholding the highest standards for the customers we serve, our nation’s finest.”

OIG inspected the Topeka VA based on allegations that physicians were practicing beyond their scope of expertise and failing to seek assistance from specialists. The oversight agency also looked into an allegation that inpatient medical service was covered by a nurse practitioner without assistance. Inspectors didn’t substantiate either of those claims. A surgeon and another staff member were granted privileges for procedures that exceeded the facility’s complexity levels, the report said, but those procedures hadn’t been performed. Nurses usually worked with a physician or acted within their scope of practice when a physician wasn’t required.

OIG looked at medical records for 100 patients who were transferred to another facility and found that specialty services were ordered when necessary. Additionally, inspectors reviewed health records for 47 patients who died and determined their deaths were caused by terminal end-stage disease rather than delays in service. However, OIG made six recommendations, including requirements for after-hours surgeon staffing and the timeliness of specialty care consultants. Burks said leadership has addressed those recommendations. “We are confident in sharing that our organization remains as one our veterans can choose and trust,” Burks said.

Topeka and Leavenworth hospitals operate under the VA Eastern Kansas Health Care System. Last week, Michael Douglas shot and killed himself in the parking lot outside the Leavenworth emergency room. A day after Douglas died, OIG reported 140 of the 141 VA medical centers are understaffed. The system is challenged by a lack of qualified applicants, noncompetitive salaries and high staff turnover, the report found. Jarboe’s Topeka-based organization supports mental health research in an effort to combat the staggering suicide rate of 22 veterans per day. “The burden is far too great for our veterans to bear, and I believe as a nation we need to unite around our military community to ensure the men and women who have served our country are cared for properly,” Jarboe said. [Source: The Topeka Capital-Journal | Sherman Smith | June 18, 2018 ++]

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## **VAMC Fayetteville AR ► IG Investigating Misdiagnosed Pathology Cases**

Federal officials said 18 JUN a pathologist fired from an Arkansas veterans hospital for being “impaired on duty” misdiagnosed seven cases and that more than 30,000 additional cases are being reviewed. The Veterans Health Care System of the Ozarks in Fayetteville said one error may have led to a death. Spokeswoman Wanda Shull said the seven errors were found among 911 cases already reviewed by the Department of Veterans Affairs and Office of the Inspector General.

According to Shull, the medical center removed the pathologist from clinical care in March 2016 after a colleague reported the pathologist was impaired. The unidentified pathologist returned to work that October after completing a state licensure board-run support program, but was removed from the clinic again last fall. The pathologist was eventually fired in April. Shull said the pathologist handled about 33,000 cases for nearly 19,800 veterans since being hired in 2005. Inspector General Michael Missal said the earliest identified misdiagnosed case is from 2013. The

medical center largely serves veterans in Arkansas, Missouri and Oklahoma but it has analyzed tissue samples for patients across the country. Because the investigations are ongoing, Shull could not say what impairment was reported. Shull also didn't say whether criminal charges were being pursued.



**Fayetteville Veterans Administration Hospital**

Due to the high volume of cases being reviewed, this process will take several months to complete. The VA will be reaching out directly to any patient found to be impacted, and has arranged a fully staffed call center and toll free number to answer questions regarding this serious matter. Patients with questions can call (866) 388-5428 or (479) 582-7995. This call center will be staffed Monday-Friday from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m.; and Saturday from 8:00 a.m. to noon to ensure anyone who has questions will be able to speak to someone in person.

The medical center had already identified some missed diagnoses through a constant random sampling the hospital conducts. However, in October 2017, when the pathologist was reported a second time, the medical center began a deeper review of the cases. The VA will continue reviewing the cases, although at least 50 percent of the pathologists helping with the reviews will be outside of the VA, Shull said. The OIG began investigating the pathologist in mid-May and Missal briefed the Arkansas congressional delegation 14 JUN. Missal said the OIG is "taking a comprehensive look" at the situation to determine exactly what happened, why, who knew, and what controls are in place to keep it from happening again.

The medical center has sent out letters to all the patients who had tests reviewed by the physician notifying them of the situation and the VA has opened a call center for concerned veterans. "We all expect better and our veterans certainly deserve better," said Rep. Bruce Westerman, who represents the district where the deceased veteran lived. "If there are some who need another diagnosis or need specific care, the first priority is to make that happen." The investigations are expected to take months, Missal said. The VA has been mired in controversy recently after an OIG investigation found "critical deficiencies" at the Washington, D.C. medical center, including taxpayer waste, unsecured patient data and patient safety issues. [Source: Associated Press | Hannah Grabenstein | June 19, 2018 ++]

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## **VA Clinic Oceanside CA ► Four Female Patients Sexually Assaulted**

Four female patients from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs were sexually assaulted by an Oceanside physician who was arrested on 13 JUN, authorities say. Out on a \$150,000 bond, Dr. Edgar Manzanera is slated to be arraigned on 19 JUN in California Superior Court's North County Regional Center in Vista on four separate felony counts of sexually penetrating the women with a foreign object. A physician contracted by VA to review pension disability claims, Manzanera also is accused of violating the state's professional code for health providers by allegedly making sexual contact with his patients. Deputy Prosecutor Dan Owens during a telephone interview on 18 JUN said, "If there are any other potential victims, please contact the San Diego County District Attorney's Office".



VA Oceanside Clinic, 1300 Rancho del Oro Drive Oceanside, CA 92056

The case was investigated by VA's Office of Inspector General and the Medical Board of California following a sexual assault report made to the Oceanside Police Department nearly two years ago by a former service woman who had gone to VA to seek disability pension benefits. Manzanera's arrest came two days before one of his former patients filed a series of lawsuits in state and federal courts against the doctor, the VA and his former employer, QTC Medical Services. The San Diego Union-Tribune does not name alleged victims of sexual assault. They're identified in the criminal complaint as Jane Does 1, 2, 3 and 4.

The lawsuits filed in Vista CA and Arizona claim that Manzanera committed sexual battery against the plaintiff and falsely imprisoned her inside the QTC clinic at 2204 S. El Camino Real in Oceanside on June 15, 2016 while he was alone with her in his examination room. Although there was no medical reason for her to get naked, Manzanera allegedly told the military veteran to take off her clothes and don a medical gown and lift it over her head for an examination, according to the complaint filed in California Superior Court. "He then told her to hold her gown up higher; and then higher again until she was holding it so high that it was over her head, and she could not see what he was doing," the complaint states. The doctor's actions allegedly scratched and bruised her, leading to severe physical and mental injuries that left her in pain, humiliated, sad, fearful and distressed, according to the lawsuit.

Assigned to Judge Jacqueline M. Stern, the lawsuit seeks unspecified monetary and punitive damages against both Manzanera and QTC. The Arizona case targets the Veterans Benefits Administration, part of the larger VA system. Acquired in 2016 by defense contractor Leidos, QTC was awarded a \$6.8 billion nationwide contract by the VA last August to handle disability exams for separating and retiring military members. It's unclear whether Manzanera continues to see patients. Although QTC employees in Oceanside said he no longer is employed there, the state's Medical Board has yet to rule on his case. His medical license issued in 2013 remains valid through Aug. 31, 2019, according to the state. The board lists his address as a post office box in San Luis Rey and indicates the physician and surgeon graduated from Guatemala's Francisco Marroquin University Faculty of Medicine in 2008. [Source: San Diego Union-Tribune | Carl Prine | 19 Jun 2018 ++]

**\* Vets \***

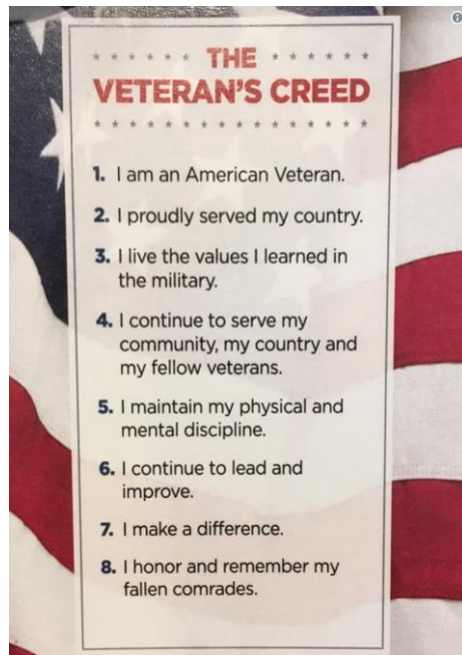


## Veterans Creed ► Unveiled 14 JUN

In an effort to promote public service and camaraderie among former servicemembers, advocates unveiled a new “Veteran’s Creed” on 14 JUN designed to provide a familiar mantra as they navigate civilian life. The eight-point creed is backed by a host of well-known veterans groups — among them the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Disabled American Veterans, Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America and Wounded Warrior Project — and is set to be heavily promoted at events and conventions throughout the summer.

Organizers behind the project said their goal was to provide a rallying idea for the larger veterans community, which they believe is needed given the disconnect many veterans feel with their communities upon leaving the military. “It can serve as a unifying concept to remind veterans of the value of their military service, to inspire veterans to continue to serve and lead at local, state and national levels, and to push them to continue to excel,” said retired Gen. George Casey, former chief of staff of the Army and one of the leaders of the effort. The creed itself is modeled after the Soldier’s Creed, repeating many of the same themes. While the Army’s version reminds soldiers to “never quit” and “maintain my arms,” the new veterans version calls on individuals to “continue to lead and improve” and “honor and remember my fallen comrades.”

Joe Chenelly, national executive director at AMVETS, said veterans he has spoken to in recent weeks about the new creed have lauded the concept, even if the effort is largely symbolic. “This really speaks to the values that every veteran shares,” he said. The idea has also gained support from several veterans in Congress, including Rep. Brian Mast (R-FL) who praised the idea at the Capitol Hill launch of the event. “All the military creeds out there ... we don’t just put those words on paper, we say them, and then we say them again,” he told the crowd of supporters. “We repeat it with each other and we remind ourselves of these things constantly, because they are such an important part of the makeup of who we are. “These are things that define us as servicemembers, and have to continue to define us as veterans.”



[Source: MilitaryTimes | Leo Shane III | June 14, 2018 ++]

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## **Burn Pit Toxic Exposure Update 53 ► Burn Pits -- The New Agent Orange**

When the United States military fights protracted conflicts abroad, both combatants and civilians on both sides are likely to suffer. In addition to the obvious direct combat-related injuries and casualties, many experience unintended injuries even after the conflict ends. With the upcoming vote on legislation expanding who may receive benefits for Agent Orange exposure, Verdict's Lesley Wexler wanted to highlight the slowly expanding, but limited circle of concern for Agent Orange victims. The policy on Agent Orange provides a vivid example of the way in which domestic and foreign victims of US military action are treated differently even though they are similarly situated as to their harms. Moreover, the actions of the Department of Veterans Affairs and Congress on Agent Orange may provide some insight as to how the government is likely to treat victims of US military base burn pits, an issue just starting to work its way through Congress and the courts.

When the Department of Veterans Affairs first received claims regarding Agent Orange, it often denied them, claiming servicepeople were unable to demonstrate their exposure to the toxin or to prove a link between their exposure and their ailments. Thus, the government's first move was to rely on scientific uncertainty. But over time, as increasing research confirmed the danger of Agent Orange, veterans organized a class action to protest widespread coverage denials. In *Nehmer vs. VA*, service people successfully challenged the rigorous "cause and effect test" which the VA had deployed in making its determination that the only disease presumptively associated with Agent Orange was chloracne. The court sided with veterans calling for a much looser "significant statistical association test" to determine presumptive coverage for medical conditions caused by Agent Orange.

Congress then passed a series of legislative fixes to enhance veteran access to benefits including the Agent Orange Act of 1991 which established a "presumption of service connection for [specific] diseases associated with herbicide exposure." This legislation alleviated servicepersons' burden of demonstrating individual exposure to Agent Orange and of proving the specific relationship to ailments for specified conditions and in so doing, vastly expanded the number of those able to access benefits. Since the passage of the Agent Orange Act, the VA has paid out over a billion dollars for compensation to affected veterans in addition to outlays on related health care costs.

Even with the Agent Orange Act's expanded coverage of Vietnam veterans, many affected service people were still excluded from its medical presumptions. For example, Air Force and Air Force Reservists who had worked on C-123 aircrafts used to spray Agent Orange were not included under the VA's interpretation until June 2015. In addition, the VA crafted regulations limiting the Agent Orange Act's coverage presumption to those who had served on Vietnamese soil or Vietnamese rivers (so called Brown Water veterans). In *Haas v. Peake*, the Federal Circuit upheld this "foot on the land" interpretation which excluded approximately 90,000 Blue Water Navy servicemembers. The Vietnamese soil and brown water limitation also excluded those who were exposed during service in Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, or in the Korean demilitarized zone. While the battle to include the Blue Water Navy has been ongoing for over a decade, advocates are optimistic legislation covering them as well as some of the others will finally pass, an optimism perhaps warranted by a relevant act recently clearing major legislative hurdles.

If this new legislation passes, some deserving Americans will still be excluded from presumptive coverage. While the new bill would add spina bifida as a presumptively covered condition for children of relevant servicepersons, many suspect this is under inclusive. Although an Agent Orange exposure registry exists to help inform the expansion of illnesses to be covered, eligibility is limited to those who served in Vietnam, Korea, or some bases in Thailand; no such registry for the children or grandchildren of servicemembers exists despite repeated appeals via legislation. Thus, many children must attempt to individually prove the relationship of their illnesses to their parent's or grandparent's exposure. Relatedly, civilian contractors who assisted the military during the Vietnam War are categorically not eligible under the Agent Orange Act. That said, they are theoretically eligible for workers' compensation under the Federal Employees Compensation Act. Theoretically since government reports suggest that of the few claims that have been filed, most have been denied.

While the US government has been slow to provide compensation and health care for many Americans suffering from Agent Orange exposure, the situation is meaningfully worse for millions of Vietnamese. Not surprisingly, neither litigation nor legislation has provided much relief. Most notably, in 2005's *Vietnam Association for Victims of Agent Orange vs. Dow*, district court judge Jack Weinstein concluded that while chemical manufacturers were not entitled to government contractor defenses for violations of international law and war crimes, the manufacture of Agent Orange was not such a violation and manufacturers were entitled to a government contractor defense for state-law claims.

Efforts to get legislative remedies have been only marginally more successful. Decades after Operation Ranch Hand, during which the United States sprayed over 10 million gallons of Agent Orange, the US government is only just starting to clean up hot spots in Vietnam where defoliants were used in heaviest concentration. And in contrast to the over a billion dollars paid out to servicemembers, only 20 million dollars have been allocated to assist the estimated three million Vietnamese victims as repeated legislative efforts to provide more assistance have been defeated.

Of course, governments often legitimately treat citizens and non-citizens as well as domestic and foreign victims differently. For instance, governments may lawfully and morally decline to devote resources to non-citizens or foreign victims when their home governments are willing and able to assist them. Even if home governments may not act as effectively as others, states need not act if they did not cause the harm and international law does not otherwise require their assistance. But when a government is itself directly responsible for causing harm to innocent parties, even if they cause that harm in armed conflict, the difference in treatment is much more difficult to justify. For those committed to amends making for wrongdoing, even for lawful behavior, the treatment of Vietnamese civilians calls out for a stronger remedy.

This limited circle of concern for Agent Orange also sets a dangerous precedent for current and future conflict pollutants. For instance, many are describing the use of open air burn pits in recent conflicts such as Iraq and Afghanistan as the "new Agent Orange." Troops and private contractors use burn pits to dispose of garbage on US military bases, now alleged to cause a host of respiratory, reproductive, and other serious health issues such as cancer. Yet again, the VA's opening position was that scientific evidence didn't establish long term health consequences for those exposed to pits.

Fortunately, it appears that coverage for burn-pit-related illnesses may come much sooner for servicepersons. In February, a Department of Labor judge determined that for purposes of workers' compensation open air pits are linked to lung disease, paving the way for civilian contractor recoveries. While this ruling is not precedential for the VA's purposes, it suggests a governmental willingness to engage the emerging scientific evidence. In addition, former President Obama's promise that burn pits would not become the next Agent Orange paved the way for a voluntary veteran's Airborne Hazards and Open Pit Registry to facilitate data collection proving the link between exposure and specific illnesses. Given the low response rate, legislators are now pressing for a mandatory registry that would record exposure rather than requiring servicemembers to opt in.

Even so, a trial court dismissed consolidated litigation against military contractor KBR for negligence, concluding that deference was owed to the executive branch's wartime decision to use burn pits on bases. While the appeal is currently pending in the Fourth Circuit, there's not much optimism about an appeal, leaving the VA as the sole remedy for the time being. Much like with Agent Orange prior to the Agent Orange Act of 1991, servicemembers must individually prove that their ailments, such as the types of pulmonary issues thought to be caused by burn pits, arise from military service in order to receive compensation. Veterans are now pushing for mandatory presumptions for certain illnesses similar to what occurred under the Agent Orange Act.

Lesley Wexler, Professor of Law at the University of Illinois College of Law, is worried that we may witness the same sort of limited circle of concern for various victims of burn pits—combatants, their children, contractors and civilians. While the impacts will likely be greatest for those operating the burn pits, a meaningful effect on the local population is also pretty predictable. Yet no legislation has considered the impact on locals, and media coverage has almost exclusively focused on the military. [Source: *Verdict* | Lesley Wexler | June 25, 2018 ++]

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## **Vet Jobs Update 235 ► Cloud Computing & Artificial Intelligence Openings**

Amazon made news not long ago by committing itself to hiring 25,000 military veterans and spouses by 2021. Now a top executive at the global tech firm has doubled down on that promise. Teresa Carlson, vice president for Amazon Web Services, announced 20 JUN at the annual AWS Public Sector Summit that Amazon is "well on its way" to reaching that goal and has "trained 10,000 veterans and their spouses in cloud computing." Carlson also pledged to expand the company's new technical apprentice program for veterans, which partners with local colleges to provide a specialized education to prepare veterans for technical careers. Following an inaugural year of 60 participants in 2017, the program added 300 new students this year.

CIA and Defense Department representatives both spoke after Carlson during the same keynote session, appearing before the AWS Summit as vocal proponents of cloud computing and artificial intelligence. Carlson framed the training of veterans in these new technologies as providing the government with crucial know-how. The globe-trotting businesswoman noted that the U.S. is not alone in bringing cloud functions to government. Chile, Argentina, Singapore and Bahrain are strongly interested in AWS-type technology for their respective governments, but have complained that "their No. 1 barrier" is a lack of a "cloud-enabled workforce," Carlson said.

Cloud computing and related advancements offer enormous potential in defense. The increased speed and power of such data handling improves satellite-image processing to weapons systems interoperability to spacecraft development timelines. As Microsoft competes for the massive Joint Enterprise Defense Initiative contract, Defense News Weekly looks at the offering. Amazon runs the AWS GovCloud West, a cloud service for classified government developments throughout the western United States. Now it is unveiling GovCloud East, allowing for complete nationwide cloud availability for Defense Department programming and data storage. The Pentagon has expressed interest in cloud technology before, both for internal use as well as potentially coordination with troops anywhere using real-time data. "At the end of the day," Carlson told summit attendees, "cloud computing is key to moving fast." [Source: MilitaryTimes | Andrew C. Jarocki | June 22, 2018 ++]

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## **Vet Suicide Update 22 ► Latest VA Report**

Veterans are twice as likely as civilians to die by suicide, the Department of Veterans Affairs said 18 JUN in its latest report on suicide. Veterans make up more than 14 percent of all suicides, although they account for only 8 percent of the total population, the VA report said. While the trend hasn't changed since 2014, deaths by suicide are increasing among veterans just as they are in the general population, the VA found. Data for the study was obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Death Index. "After adjusting for differences in age, the rate of suicide in 2015 was 2.1 times higher among veterans compared with nonveteran adults," the report reads. Data for 2015 was the latest complete set of numbers available.

The rate was 1.3 times higher for male veterans compared with civilians and twice as high for female vets, the report found. "In 2015, an average of 20.6 active-duty service members, nonactivated Guard or Reserve members, and other veterans died by suicide each day," it said. Suicides are up across the country. Report after report finds that they are becoming more common among men, women and children. It's not clear why, but psychiatrists and suicide experts say it's probably a combination of factors — a lack of access to mental health care, a growing sense of disconnection in society, economic woes and relationship problems.

At least one study showed that among veterans, quick turnarounds between deployments, or deploying military personnel too early, raised the risk of suicide. Guns were used in two-thirds of suicides by veterans in 2015. Having



access to firearms raises the risk of suicide, experts have found. [Source: NBC News | Maggie Fox | June18, 2018 ++]

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## **Burn Pit Toxic Exposure Update 52 ► 4th Circuit Rules KBR Cannot be Sued**

Military veterans who claim that the use of open burn pits during the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan caused myriad health problems cannot move forward with dozens of lawsuits against a military contractor, a federal appeals court ruled Wednesday. A three-judge panel of the 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals agreed with a federal judge in Maryland, who last year threw out the lawsuits brought against KBR, a former Halliburton Corp. subsidiary. More than 60 lawsuits allege that KBR’s practice of dumping tires, batteries, medical waste and other materials into open burn pits created harmful smoke that caused neurological problems, cancers and other health issues in more than 800 service members. The lawsuits, which were filed in multiple districts around the country and then consolidated, also alleged that at least 12 service members died from illnesses caused by the burn pits.

Like the lower court judge, the appeals court panel found that the lawsuits are barred under a legal doctrine holding that courts are not equipped to decide political questions; only Congress and the president have the power to resolve those. The panel found that the military had unrestricted control over KBR so that KBR’s decisions on waste management and water services were “de facto military decisions” not appropriate for judicial review. “The facts found by the district court plainly show that KBR had little to no discretion in choosing how to manage the waste,” Judge Henry F. Floyd wrote for the panel in the 3-0 ruling. “The military mandated the use of burn pits as a matter of military judgment. KBR could not unilaterally choose to use landfills, recycling, or incinerators instead.”

During arguments before the 4th Circuit last month, Susan Burke, a lawyer for the service members, argued that KBR repeatedly violated the terms of its contract with the military to handle waste disposal. She said KBR also disobeyed a military directive against burning hazardous materials. Burke said she and the veterans are disappointed in the court’s ruling. She declined to say whether they plan to ask the U.S. Supreme Court to hear the case. KBR’s attorney, Warren Harris, told the court that the decision to use burn pits was made by the military, which also made decisions on where the pits would be located, what hours they would operate and what would be burned. [Source: The Associated Press | Denise Lavoie | June 21, 2018 ++]

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## **Vet Toxic Exposure | McMurdo Update 03 ► U.S. Navy Reactor Radiation Leak**

The New Zealand government is warning personnel who worked in Antarctica in the 1960s and ‘70s about radiation from a leaky U.S. Navy reactor. Alerts were posted online by the New Zealand Defence Force, Antarctica New Zealand and other government entities in January and reported by local media last month. They advise people to contact the New Zealand Office of Radiation Safety or their doctor if they think they may have been exposed to radiation from the reactor used to power McMurdo Station, Antarctica, from 1962 to 1979. The U.S. Department of Defense has assessed the risk of radiation exposure for those who worked there as low.

However, the Department of Veterans Affairs ruled in November that retired Navy veteran James Landy’s “esophageal, stomach, liver, and brain and spine cancers, [were] incurred in active duty service.” Landy worked at McMurdo as a C-130 flight engineer from 1970 to 1974 and from 1977 to 1981 before dying at age 63 in 2012, said his widow, Pam Landy. “He had pain in his kidneys and went to the doctor and they sent him to an oncologist who said he had cancer from radiation exposure,” she said in a phone interview Monday from her home in Pensacola, Fla. Veterans who served in Antarctica should have been warned about the radiation risk, Pam Landy said. “The

government knew that thing was there. If they had given people a heads up he could have been diagnosed early and might have a shot at being alive,” she said. “I got a payout from the VA, but it’s a pittance compared to a life.”

The McMurdo reactor had many malfunctions, but personnel might also have been exposed during its decommissioning when soil and rock from the site was trucked through the base to be shipped off the continent, she said. Peter Breen, 64, was a New Zealand Army mechanic about 2 miles from McMurdo at Scott Base from 1981 to 1982. Rock and soil from the reactor site was taken to a wharf in open trucks, and Breen fears he could have been exposed to contaminated dust blown by the wind or on ice harvested from nearby cliffs. He’s campaigning for New Zealand Antarctic veterans to be recognized with a medal and offered health checks. “It is not compensation that guys are after,” he said in a phone interview from his home in Tauranga, New Zealand. “They want a health-check program.” [Source: Stars & Stripes | Seth Robson | June 19, 2018 ++]

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## **Vet Toxic Exposure | Base Water ► HHS Study Released | Not Good**

The government released 21 JUN its first in-depth look at the health risks created by chemical compounds found in hundreds of military water sources and what illnesses may be linked to even minimal exposure to them. Bottom line: The man-made chemical compounds found in military fire-fighting foam, perfluorooctane sulfonate and perfluorooctanoic acid, known commonly as PFOS and PFOA, are hardy, toxic chemicals that do not degrade in soil or water, and can be absorbed by humans through drinking water, or through the soil or air. The compounds even get to fetuses. The study reported the chemicals have been found in umbilical cords and human breast milk. Go to <https://s3.amazonaws.com/static.militarytimes.com/assets/tp200.pdf> to review the Toxicological Profile for Perfluoroalkyls

In people, the study found that exposure could be associated with pregnancy complications, thyroid issues, liver damage, asthma, decreased responsiveness to vaccines, decreased fertility and kidney and testicular cancer. The report’s findings on human exposure — and which looked at the whole population, not just military locations — were based on multiple studies of populations near contaminated water sources. However, causality could not be directly established because there could have been multiple ways a person could have been exposed instead of just drinking water. The compounds are present in everyday household goods, but are concentrated in military firefighting foam.

But the study also looked at the compounds effects on animals. Based on 187 peer-reviewed studies where laboratory rats or other animals directly ingested the compounds, the results were more dire. At the highest dosages, the animals experienced liver or other organ failure. At significantly decreased exposure levels the subject rats survived but had increased prenatal loss in pregnant lab rats, and increased loss of the pups after birth. Long-term effects at lower doses included long-term impacts to rat testes and ovaries. The “Toxicological Profile for Perfluoroalkyls” was produced by the Department of Health and Human Services’ (HHS) Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR). It was released for public comment. The study directed respondents to go to [regulations.gov](https://www.regulations.gov) to leave a public comment on the report. There the study can be searched by name.

Over the last several weeks Military Times has interviewed former service members or family members who have reported cancers, miscarriages and other chronic illnesses they suspect may be tied to drinking contaminated military base water. On military bases, the compounds seeped into the soil and water through the use of firefighting foams. After the foams were sprayed on aircraft, the remaining foam and chemicals would just be dumped onto the ground, or into a drain, multiple former airmen have told Military Times. “It was just draining into whatever drains were around,” Paul Cyman, who served as an Air Force firefighter from 1969 to 1973. “It would go into the storm drains. There was no containment at all.”

The report had been withheld by the administration, which reportedly called it a “public relations nightmare,” according to news reports. After a bi-partisan push by lawmakers demanding its release, the report was released for comment Thursday. “Based on this information, I encourage federal, state, and local environmental regulators to examine whether they are appropriately communicating the risks presented by and adequately addressing the presence of PFOS and PFOA in drinking water,” said Rep. Mike Turner, (R-OH).

Sen. Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH), who represents the former and contaminated Pease Air Force Base, got funding passed in the 2018 and 2019 defense bills for a nationwide study that will look at eight to 10 military bases to study the effects of PFOS and PFOA exposure. The 2019 bill also supports creation of a national registry for service members, their families and the public to report exposure to the contaminants. I’m glad the administration heeded the bipartisan call in Congress and finally published these reports,” Shaheen said. [Source: MilitaryTimes | Tara Copp | June 21, 2018 ++]

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## **Vietnam Veterans Memorial Update 22 ► Annual Father's Day Rose Remembrance**

Three thousand roses were placed carefully along the base of the wall at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. The colors of the flowers placed for the annual Father’s Day Rose Remembrance had special meaning: The 1,400 red roses were for those killed in action, the 1,200 yellow ones for those missing in action, and the 400 white-with-red-tip ones for “In Memory” honorees — Vietnam veterans who died after the war from war-related causes. The Father’s Day event at the memorial, a grassroots effort started in part by Gary Alton, has been taking place since the early 1990s.

Vietnam veteran John Bickford, who had been a friend of Alton’s, has been doing the Rose Remembrance for 14 years. Bickford had placed at least 50 roses on Father’s Day this year, two specifically for friends he lost. “Before we went over from Fort Riley, I made friends with a young guy. We got to Vietnam, he and a pilot were the first ones we lost. It was only about a month after we got there. They were missing for a long time – they eventually found the remains and ID’s them. They were buried maybe about 10 years ago down at Arlington. “One of the pilots on the wall – I always try to put a rose for him,” Bickford said. "He was like the enlisted man’s pilot. You’d go down into the town and he’d buy you a soda. He was one of the more enlisted-man types. A friendly guy. “It just feels good to come down here, to help them out and put some of the roses on.”



**Johnnie Downs places one of about 3,000 roses at the Vietnam Memorial Wall in Washington, D.C., as part of the Annual Father's Day Rose Remembrance.**

Johnnie Downs, also a Vietnam veteran, was there to remember his brother, Herman, as well as a friend’s brother and a young Marine. To Downs, the Rose Remembrance signifies that “God allowed me to live this long to see and honor these young men that gave their ultimate sacrifices in the Vietnam War. "Many of them didn’t get a chance to see their children," he said. "Many didn’t have a chance to see their children grow up. Many didn’t get a chance to see birthdays. Many of these guys here didn’t get to see their graduations. I come to honor them and be here for them

today. I feel like that — as a survivor — is the least I can do to honor the fallen.” There are more than 58,000 names on the Vietnam Memorial's wall, which was dedicated in 1983. “There were so many teenagers there in the Vietnam War,” Downs said.

One of the men Downs placed a rose for was Dan Bullock, a Marine who was the youngest person killed in action in Vietnam. Bullock was only 15 when he died — he had altered the date on his birth certificate to say he was born in 1949 rather than 1953. According to a short biography left near his name at the wall, Bullock arrived in Vietnam on May 18, 1969. Less than a month later, on June 7, he was killed while making an ammunition run.

Downs, who is now 72, was drafted on the same day as his brother — and they went to Vietnam on the same day as well. Johnnie Downs, a year older than his brother, was a soldier in the 73rd Engineer Co. Herman Downs saw action on Hill 55 as a U.S. Marine. They were both teenagers, people from the city of Akron, Ohio, sent to the jungles of Vietnam. They both made it back from the war, but Herman Downs returned a changed man — and he would become sick in later years due to exposure to Agent Orange.

“My brother passed away in one of the most horrible cases of Agent Orange in this country,” Johnnie Downs said. Herman Downs underwent an operation in which they removed his tongue. “Inside of his mouth was boot black. They split my brother's face down the middle, pulled his face apart and cut his tongue out. The operation took over 24 hours. Then, after my brother had his tongue out, six months later, the cancer came back and completely ate his whole face off of his shoulders. So we had to call in a plastic surgeon. Agent Orange literally ate him up.” “The last day I seen my brother, I went to the VA hospital and he was laying there. His face was rotting flesh ... I never saw a monster movie that looked as bad as he did that day.” Herman Downs died at age 42 on June 5, 1990.

In April 2017, Johnnie Downs was diagnosed with diabetic neuropathy, which he said is from his exposure to Agent Orange. “I’m not concerned today about my brother. I’m not concerned about myself. My biggest concern right now: Have I passed Agent Orange in the DNA of my children? Have I passed DNA over to my grandchildren? Have I passed DNA over to the great-grandchildren?” His voice breaking, Downs added, “I prayed with my kids to ask them to forgive me if I poisoned them with Agent Orange and what it’s done.”

The physical toll on Downs to visit the Vietnam Memorial Wall was immense. “Every day, it took everything I did to come here, because I’ve been in so much pain since I have been diagnosed. Diabetic neuropathy from Agent Orange is one of the most painful and excruciating pains that I’ve had to deal with in my 72 years of living.” Despite the pain, Downs walked the length of the wall and placed his roses. He stopped and smiled, too, when a crowd of people swarmed him and asked for his photograph. “This is very emotional for me to be here today,” he said. “Just to see these and recognize these young men. Some of these young men didn’t have a chance in life. We were drafted. We had to do what they told you to do. At that time in my life, at 18, 19, you don’t know nothing about life.”

That could be why Downs' heroes are the names on the wall. “I don’t have any heroes. My heroes don’t dribble a basketball. My heroes don’t throw a football. My heroes are the Vietnam veterans. My heroes are the persons on the wall today. Those are my heroes. I dearly love the men on that wall.” [Source: Stars & Stripes | Meredith Tibbetts | June 17, 2018 ++]

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## **Vet Predatory Loans Update 03 ► VA Issues New Policy to Protect Vets**

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has issued a new policy implementing the May 2018 Economic Growth, Regulatory Relief, and Consumer Protection Act, to protect Veteran homeowners from predatory lending practices when obtaining a VA-guaranteed refinance loan. The act helps protect Veterans and service members from the dangers associated with repeatedly refinancing their home loans, requiring, among other things, the seasoning of the original loan and a recoupment period for fees, closing costs, and expenses related to the refinance.

“We want to ensure Veterans have the informed ability to take advantage of economic opportunities and make sound decisions that enable them to prosper when using their benefits,” said Acting VA Secretary Peter O’Rourke. “This is yet another tool that will help Veterans meet their personal goals.” The act also provides for a specified interest rate decrease and for protections of loan-to-value ratios. A refinancing loan must meet the requirements specified in the act or VA will not guarantee the loan.

VA recently implemented a policy where lenders provide Veteran borrowers a comparison of their existing VA-backed home loan to the proposed one when refinancing to ensure borrowers are set up for success. This is also referred to as a recoupment or break-even analysis, which helps Veteran borrowers clearly understand the costs of refinancing, the monthly payment savings, and the overall impact on their finances.

VA-backed home loans generally do not require a down payment, have low closing costs, and are the lowest rates among all loan products in the marketplace. Notably, VA-backed home loans also continue to outperform other products in the market. In fiscal year (FY) 2017, VA guaranteed more than 740,000 loans for a total of \$189 billion, an all-time record for the VA Home Loan Program. Over the past three years, VA has guaranteed more than 2 million VA home loans for over \$500 billion.

The VA Home Loan Program’s mission is to maximize Veterans’ and service members’ opportunity to obtain, retain, and adapt homes by providing a viable and fiscally responsible benefit program in recognition of their service to the nation. In addition, VA also helps severely disabled Veterans adapt their homes to live more independently by providing up to \$81,080 for home modifications. For more information, including eligibility criteria, visit [Housing Grants for Disabled Veterans](#). [Source: VA News Release | June 15, 2018 ++]

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## **Korean War Vets** ► **Carl Murphy | “Forgotten War” Composer**

Army veteran Carl Murphy served during for three years during the Korean War and also served in the reserves for five years. He joined the military when he was 18 years old and was placed in South Korea where he witnessed some of the most intense fighting. As a combat engineer, with the Army 633rd Engineer Company, he recalled when the North Korean Army invaded South Korea. The United Nations forces quickly pushed past the 38th parallel, as they took back the city of Seoul and Pyongyang all the way up to the Yalu River in China. Carl cleared roads, demolished bridges, cleared landmines, and remembers fighting the North Korean forces along the Korean Peninsula.



**Carl Murphy at the Korean War Memorial**

Carl's song "Forgotten War" discusses his time in Korea. One of the verses says, "We ran through fire; half froze to death", this emulates the horrors he felt while being trapped at the Battle of the Chosin Reservoir. Outnumbered and cut off by enemy forces, he remembers having to fight countless waves of attacks that left heavy casualties on both sides. Chinese and North Korean forces would attack day and night in below freezing temperature. Frostbite became a common problem for soldiers that often meant death. With a growing number of wounded and dead, Army engineers were under pressure to hold off enemy forces. He recalled an instance where his unit was able to save a group of American prisoners crossing frozen waters that were captured by North Korean forces across the Chosin River. Unlike Chinese forces, the North Korean Army would often execute POW's or strip them and leave them to freeze in the winter conditions

When Carl returned home, he was surprised to learn that there were no parades or celebrations for the soldiers coming home from the Korean conflict. Unlike the celebrations at the end of World War II, people paid little attention to Korean War Veterans. Carl stated at the time the Korean War was unpopular among the nation, but he never imagined it would become the "Forgotten War."

Carl worked as a turbine engineer for 25 years at General Electric after leaving the Army. Today, he continues to serve our nation as an Honor Guard for the American Legion. As a member Honor Guard, he plays the bugle at Veteran funerals and presents the flag each year at Veteran Day Ceremonies. You can check out his "Forgotten War" composition on Sound Cloud: <https://soundcloud.com/operationsong-tm/the-forgotten-war-carl-murphy-george-teren> and learn more about Operation Song on their web and Facebook pages <http://www.operationsong.org> and [Operation Song](#). [Source: Vantage Point | June 18, 2018 ++]

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## **Afghanistan Vets [03] ► Kyle Stewart | Marine Veteran & Professional Fighter**

A rising prodigy in the mixed martial arts world, Kyle Stewart has spent a lifetime pursuing fighting, martial arts and engaging in bloody battles with Taliban fighters in the volatile Helmand province, Afghanistan. Now, boasting a 10-0 professional MMA record, the Marine veteran says his success is owed to his time in the Corps. The former 0331 machine gunner served three deployments to Afghanistan and was part of one of the first Marine battalions to take on the Taliban in Helmand province — an experience he says helped shape him into a fierce and tenacious MMA fighter. Without the Corps, he says, "I wouldn't have the intestinal fortitude to get into the cage today."



**"I have standards to uphold. I didn't come home to be average." — Marine veteran and professional fighter Kyle Stewart.**

The tatted-up redhead from Tempe, Arizona, is now the No. 1 ranked American non-UFC fighter in the 170-pound class and boasts an impressive undefeated pro record and an amateur welter weight championship. He is adorned with Marine tattoos in remembrance of a Corps that took him to war, and his demeanor and success stands as a beacon of hope for veterans and former Marines struggling to make their way after serving.

Stewart, like many young Marines, entered the Corps straight out of high school, and soon after found his way to war in Helmand with 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment in 2008. He was also a brown belt instructor in the Corps and started doing karate when he was a child. The Corps' deployment to Helmand that year was the first of what would eventually become a much longer commitment by the Marines to one of the most unstable provinces in the region. "When we went there in 2008, we weren't really sure what we were getting into," Stewart said. During that deployment, Stewart's unit regularly would go two days without sleeping and carried out combat operations running on very little. They were constantly "trying not to hit IEDs, and getting ambushed," Stewart said, describing his first deployment. The Marines with 2/7 would return home that year without 20 of their fellow comrades. "The belief I have in myself, knowing what I've been through, I know I can make it in the UFC," he said.

In 2010, Stewart deployed with the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit, or MEU, where he started his MMA training grappling a ground fighting with fellow Marines. When he returned from the 31st MEU, Stewart joined the Twentynine Palms, California, base fight team, known as "Fight Club 29." "When I wasn't in the field, we would train every single day at 5:30 pm." Stewart took to MMA very quickly and started competing in grappling tournaments with the base team. "I was doing really well, and I kept winning and I thought to myself I might be really good at mixed martial arts," Stewart said. In 2012, Stewart would go on to win the 2012 U.S. Armed Services Pankration Championship held at Camp Pendleton, California.

At this point in his career Stewart decided to make the leap to go amateur and fight outside of the military bubble. The problem, Stewart said jokingly, "you don't get paid, but you still get punched in the face." But, Stewart would have to wait until after his second deployment to Afghanistan in 2011 with 3rd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, to get his first amateur bout. In between combat operations and filing sand bags in Afghanistan, Stewart continued to hone his MMA skills. "I remember being on deployment and a lot of people would see me after patrol, filling sandbags and I'd be shadowboxing," he said. "They kind of looked at me weird. What is this weird dude doing?"

Stewart got some assistance with his training from a fellow Marine teammate, Julio Castellanos, who served with the MMA fighter on two deployments to Afghanistan as a section leader and squad leader. Still in the Corps after nearly 14 years, Castellanos, now a staff sergeant, used to hold striking pads to aid in Stewart's training. Castellanos says he still shows up to some of Stewart's fights. "Whenever we had time off, we'd spend time in the gym," Castellanos told Marine Corps Times. "It's something he's been chasing since he came to 2/7." But the training routine paid off, Stewart won his first amateur bout on August 18, 2012, against Scott Godsil in round 1.

Stewart would go on to hold an impressive 9-1 amateur record and was the King of the Cage amateur welterweight champion with his only loss coming against Justin "Lazy Bones" Jones. "I won a world title as an amateur," Stewart said. Stewart deployed a third time to Afghanistan in 2013 again with 3rd Battalion, 4th Marines. After returning from a third combat tour "I realized I was either going to re-enlist or I was going to get out and turn professional MMA." But to go professional required a full-time training commitment. "I love the Marine Corps, if it wasn't for MMA I would have stayed in the Marine Corps," he said. "You can't be half into MMA," he explained. "I've knocked a lot of guys out and I see that devastation."

To fight professionally, Stewart maintains an intense training routine, working out nearly six hours a day. At 10 a.m. he works with his boxing coach, at noon it is grappling, and at night he switches to kickboxing. "I do this full-time," he said. "I am always banged up, my knuckle is busted right now, and sparing last night I got a cut on my face from getting punched." But the gut-wrenching regimen has paid off for the 29-year-old former Marine. Stewart boasts an undefeated 10-0 professional record and says he's the No. 1 ranked 170-pound fighter in the country that is not in the UFC.

Despite his success in the cage, Stewart hasn't landed a fight in the UFC. "My goal is to get into the UFC by the end of this year," Stewart quipped. He claims that it's just hard to get guys to step into the cage with him. "I've knocked a lot of guys out." Stewart even appeared in a fight on Dana White's Tuesday Night Contender Series, a show that looks for future UFC talent by pitting gifted fighters against each other. On July 25, 2017, Stewart knocked out Jason Jackson on the Contender Series. "I won the fight, I knocked the guy out, but they didn't end up picking

me,” Stewart said. But Stewart isn’t discouraged. “I could get in right now,” he says: It’s just a simple call from the UFC to Stewart and his manager to schedule in a fight.

After leaving the Corps at the rank of sergeant, Stewart returned home to Tempe, Arizona, to train professionally for MMA. Unmarried and with no kids, most of his time is dedicated to training for his next big fight at Arizona Combat Sports gym in Tempe. Stewart’s success in MMA has also become a bright light of inspiration for struggling veterans, former Marines and current active-duty service members. And despite the fame and busy schedule, Stewart stays close to the Marines he deployed with, and many of them fly in from all over the country to watch his fights. “They go f\*\*king bananas when I walk out to the cage, I always wear the Marine Corps flag on my back,” he said. “I am representing an elite class of warriors.” The moments just before a big fight, Stewart says it —reminds him of combat: “When you walk across that field, you know you’re about to get into a gun fight, but you know your boys are with you, that’s the same feeling I get when I walk into the cage.”

Castellanos isn’t surprised about his friend’s success. “He’s got the heart for it,” he said. “He’d do a shit ton of hours on post, and instead of taking a break, he’d go out and start training hitting bags, pads or gloves.” Stewart’s success in the cage has been wearing off on other veterans struggling since separating from the military. “I’ve seen the positive effects it has had on veteran’s I served with, guys I went into combat with,” Stewart said. “A lot of people get out and struggle to find something to work for.” “You’re isolated, you’re alone, a lot of guys get out and you don’t have that comradery anymore,” he said. “The Marine Corps gave us all a huge sense of purpose.”

Stewart’s advice to struggling service members is to not be a statistic and to work to become the guy that inspires other veterans, and that doesn’t require being an MMA fighter, it just requires setting higher goals “I have standards to uphold,” Stewart said about being a Marine in the cage. “I didn’t come home to be average.” [Source: MarineCorpsTimes | Shawn Snow | June 13, 2018 ++]

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## **WWII Memorial Update 01 ► Saturdays With Bob Dole**

Each Saturday, before Bob Dole sets off on his latest vocation, he has cornflakes, a little sugar on top, and a bottle of chocolate Boost. It takes less time to get dressed now that the 94-year-old finally allows a nurse to help him, but it remains a rough half-hour on a body racked by injury and age. The blue oxford has to be maneuvered over the dead right arm and the shoulder that was blown away on an Italian hillside. The pressed khakis over the scarred thigh. A pair of North Face running shoes, the likes of which his artillery-blasted hands have been unable to tie since 1945. Then comes the hard part — getting there. On this particular 16 Jun Saturday, the Lincoln Town Car with the Kansas plates is unavailable, so Nathaniel Lohn, the former Army medic who serves as Dole’s nurse, helps the nonagenarian into Lohn’s Honda Insight. It’s tight, but good enough for the 20-minute drive to a monument the former senator all but built himself.

There, from a handicapped parking spot, he eases into the wheelchair as the greetings begin — “Oh my gosh, Bob Dole!”— finally rolling into his place in the shade just outside the main entrance to the National World War II Memorial. And then they come, bus after bus, wheelchair after wheelchair, battalions of his bent brothers, stooped with years but steeped in pride, veterans coming to see their country’s monument to their sacrifice and to be welcomed by one of their country’s icons. “Good to see you. Where you from?” Dole says, over and over, as they roll close, sometimes one on each side. New York, Tennessee, Nevada, the old roll-call once again. “Let’s get a picture.” “Thank you for your service.” “What about your service?” “How old are you?” “I’m 90.” “I’m 94.” “Where you from?” “Good to see you.”

He’ll do it for more than three hours on this muggy day, more than six hours on others, staying until the last veteran has gone on by to see the grand columns and fountains behind him. They pump his left hand — the one with some numb feeling left — and squeeze his shoulders, and sometimes he gets home not just tired but gently battered by



humanity and humility alike. "Physically, it takes a toll," Lohn says, watching his charge from a few feet away with a waiting bottle of water. "I may find five new bruises on him tonight. But he won't miss it."



**Former Senator Bob Dole, R-Kansas, and Vietnam Army veteran Luther Cole (center) thank each other for their service to the country at the National World War II Memorial in Washington, D.C., on June 9, 2018.**

Dole has been coming for years — weather and his health permitting — to greet these groups of aging veterans, brought at no cost from throughout the country by the nonprofit Honor Flight Network. As the many missions of a mission-driven life have faded into history — combat hero, champion for the disabled, Senate majority leader, 1996 Republican presidential candidate — this final calling has remained, down to just Saturdays, sometimes derailed by the doctors, but still a duty to be fulfilled. "It's just about the one public service left that I'm doing," he says. "We don't have many of the World War II vets left. It's important to me."

But it's important for him, too. He seems to get more energized with each encounter, frail in his chair but his still-bright eyes locking in on the next old tail gunner or rifleman or supply corps clerk trundling toward him. "I tell them it doesn't matter where you're from, what war you served in, whether you were wounded or not wounded," Dole says. "We're all in this together." He has watched the proportion of World War II veterans fall over the years, from half the bus to just a few per group, the sun setting on the generation that saved the world. "I just met a fellow who was 103 years old," he says. "Sometimes I'm the kid."

Maybe it keeps him young, these Saturdays in the shade of history and heroism. Lohn thinks they do, with this year a vast improvement over 2017, when serious health problems kept Dole grounded for months. Dole's wife, former Sen. Elizabeth Dole, says her husband is wired to serve. She joins him frequently on the Saturday outings, helping to direct the receiving line, sharing the tears, doubling the number of Senator Doles in the pictures and stories visitors take home. "It's great, all these tremendous men and women," she says. "Bob has a goal. He wants to make a positive difference in one person's life every day."

One Saturday this month, it was Willis Castille, who walked into a Navy recruiting station when he was 15 and spent six years at Saipan, Iwo Jima and other Pacific hot spots. A lot of years in steel mills and auto factories have passed since, and the 90-year-old wasn't so sure he was up to a one-day flying visit just to see some fountains. ("Hate airplanes. Would rather come by ship.") At his home in Indian Mound, Tennessee, he keeps an article about Bob Dole, detailing how the Kansan was struck by a shell while aiding a radioman in Italy's Po Valley. He earned the Bronze Star for valor and was awarded the Purple Heart for injuries that hospitalized him for 2 1/2 years. Sitting in a wheelchair just outside the memorial, Castille found a story more moving than any marble wall. "He made this worthwhile," Castille said after his chat with Dole, the senator's injured hand resting on Castille's arm while they talked of age and life and the Navy. "The only person I'd rather meet is [Fleet Adm.] Chester Nimitz. But he's dead."

Some give Dole military "challenge coins," which Lohn puts in his backpack to be stored — or displayed — in the Watergate apartment where the Doles have lived for more than 40 years. Mostly they just swap niceties. "I'm 95. I've got you beat," one says, before his escort leans down to correct him. "Oh, I'm 94. We're both 94." "Let's get a picture," Dole says. "I voted for you," say more than one. A Korean War vet from Nevada asks Dole his opinion of

that state's Republican senator, Dean Heller. "I think he's all right" is all Dole will say, still the laconic Midwesterner and practiced pol.

He prefers to leave the politics outside this shrine to national unity, where "E Pluribus Unum" is carved in a nearby wall. But one tourist asks about President Donald Trump, whom Dole endorsed when he clinched the Republican nomination. "What about all the tweeting?" she asks. "I thought tweeting was for birds," Dole says. "But he loves it, and he's not going to quit." Even two hours in, Dole perks up at the passing of any dog or a pretty woman, asking their names (the dogs), leaning up for a peck on the cheek (the women). "Oh, you want a kiss," cries Lisa Velez, a middle school teacher escorting a student group from San Clemente, California. "Oh, another one? You're delightful. Thank you, Senator!" He says he has more fun when his wife doesn't come with him. "That's okay," Elizabeth Dole says. "When I'm there, I'm hugging and kissing all the men coming through."

These outings are the highlight of his week, she says. They make it to brunch many Sundays, the Hay-Adams or the Palm. During the week, while she's busy with the Elizabeth Dole Foundation, which supports military caregivers, he may go into his office at Alston & Bird, an international law firm, for a few hours. Until recently, he was raising money for the Dwight D. Eisenhower Memorial, just as he led the campaign that raised more than \$170 million for the World War II Memorial, which opened in 2004. But if his dialing-for-dollar days are largely over, his duty post at the grand marble pond he had built on the National Mall endures. "I sort of have a propriety interest in the place," says former 2nd Lt. Dole of the 10th Mountain Division. "It's another opportunity to say thank you." [Source: The Washington Post | Steve Hendrix | June 19, 2018 ++]

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## **WWII VETS 167 ► Harry Weber | 554<sup>th</sup> Quartermaster Railhead Company**

Weber was born in New York City on July 11, 1917. Both of his parents were Jewish immigrants from Russia. He completed two years of college before enlisting in the Army in January 1943. He married Edith Chizefsky 10 months later. He served as a typist in the 554th Quartermaster Railhead Company. Though he did not serve on the front line of the battlefields, his actions during the war saved the lives of those around him.



**Harry and Edith Weber on their wedding day (left) and the Grave Marker (right) for Cpl. Harry Weber at Florida National Cemetery in Bushnell, Florida.**

During World War II, Cpl. Weber was stationed on a local farm near Omaha Beach. He quickly befriended the French family that lived on the farm, and ensured that the family had food to eat and that they remained safe. Near the farm, the German Army had placed traps along the roads to target American soldiers. However, the traps also threatened the local civilian population. One of the children that lived on the farm with Weber wrote a letter

describing how the American soldiers saved his life. The letter tells the story of how Weber disarmed one of the traps before he or another child could trigger them.

A German soldier had placed a grenade inside of a corned beef can. The child brought the trap to the attention of Weber and another soldier, who quickly attempted to safely disarm the trap. After it was successfully disarmed, the trap was later destroyed in a controlled detonation. The author of the letter states that Weber's actions that day may have saved his life and taught him important lessons for the rest of the war.

Weber went on to be stationed in England, France, Belgium, Germany, and Austria throughout the war. After leaving the Army, he used the G.I. Bill to earn a degree in library science. He then worked as a librarian. Harry and Edith Weber lived a long life together. They retired and moved to Florida in 1984, and remained there for the rest of their lives. Harry Weber died on March 18, 1994. Edith Weber died on May 9, 2009. The two are buried together at Florida National Cemetery. [Source: Vantage Point | Kenneth Holliday | June 15, 2018 ++]

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## **Vet Hiring Fairs ► Scheduled As of 30 JUN 2018**

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. refer to the Hiring Our Heroes website <http://www.hiringourheroes.org/hiringourheroes/events>. Listings of upcoming Vet Job Fairs nationwide providing location, times, events, and registration info if required can be found at the following websites. You will need to review each site below to locate Job Fairs in your location:

- <https://events.recruitmilitary.com>
- <https://www.uschamberfoundation.org/events/hiringfairs>
- <https://www.legion.org/careers/jobfairs>

[Source: Recruit Military, USCC, and American Legion | June 30, 2018 ++]

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## **Military Retirees & Veterans Events Schedule ► As of 30 JUN 2018**

The Military Retirees & Veterans Events Schedule is intended to serve as a one-stop resource for retirees and veterans seeking information about events such as retirement appreciation days (RAD), stand downs, veterans town hall meetings, resource fairs, free legal advice, mobile outreach services, airshows, and other beneficial community events. The events included on the schedule are obtained from military, VA, veterans service organizations and other reliable retiree/veterans related websites and resources.

The current Military Retirees & Veterans Events Schedule is available in the following three formats. After connecting to the website, click on the appropriate state, territory or country to check for events scheduled for your area.

- HTML: [http://www.hostmtb.org/RADs\\_and\\_Other\\_Retiree-Veterans\\_Events.html](http://www.hostmtb.org/RADs_and_Other_Retiree-Veterans_Events.html).
- PDF: [http://www.hostmtb.org/RADs\\_and\\_Other\\_Retiree-Veterans\\_Events.pdf](http://www.hostmtb.org/RADs_and_Other_Retiree-Veterans_Events.pdf).
- Word: [http://www.hostmtb.org/RADs\\_and\\_Other\\_Retiree-Veterans\\_Events.doc](http://www.hostmtb.org/RADs_and_Other_Retiree-Veterans_Events.doc).

Please note that events listed on the Military Retirees & Veterans Events Schedule may be cancelled or rescheduled. Before traveling long distances to attend an event, you should contact the applicable RAO, RSO, event sponsor, etc., to ensure the event will, in fact, be held on the date\time indicated. Also, attendance at some events may require military ID, VA enrollment or DD214.

Please report broken links, comments, corrections, suggestions, new RADs and\or other military retiree\veternans related events to the Events Schedule Manager, [Milton.Bell126@gmail.com](mailto:Milton.Bell126@gmail.com)

[Source: Retiree\Veterans Events Schedule Manager | Milton Bell | June 30, 2018 ++]

RETIREE APPRECIATION DAYS					
Attend and receive benefits information, renew acquaintances and ID Cards, get medical checkups, and receive other services. Some RADs include dinners or golf tournaments. For more information, contact the Retirement Services Officer sponsoring the RAD.					
Location	Date	Contact	Location	Date	Contact
Fort Wainwright, AK	Aug. 4	(907) 353-2095	Rock Island, IL	Oct. 13	(563) 445-0191
Tobyhanna Army Depot, PA	Aug. 11	(570) 615-7409	Fort Detrick, MD	Oct. 16	(301) 619-3381
Altoona, IA	Aug. 16	(515) 240-1469	USAG-Bavaria	Oct. 16	0964-183-8709
Rosemount, MN (Twin Cities)	Aug. 17	(763) 516-2931	USAG-Ansbach	Oct. 17	0981-183-3301
Fort McCoy, WI	Sep. 7	(608) 388-3716	Rheiland-Pfalz/Ramstein	Oct. 18	0631-411-8838
Camp Zama, Japan	Sep. 7	011-81-46-407-3940	Schinnen, Netherlands	Oct. 19	0032-65-44-7267
Fort Leonard Wood, MO	Sep. 7-8	(573) 596-0947	Fort Bragg, NC	Oct. 19-20	(910) 396-5304
Fort Carson, CO	Sep. 15	(719) 526-2840	BENELUX-Brussels	Oct. 20	0032-65-44-7267
Fort Sill, OK	Sep. 20-22	(580) 442-2645	Schofield Barracks, HI	Oct. 20	(808) 655-1514
Redstone Arsenal, AL	Sep. 21-22	(256) 842-2421	Fort Riley, KS	Oct. 20	(785) 239-3320
Fort Belvoir, VA	Sep. 21	(703) 806-4551	Fort Polk, LA	Oct. 20	(337) 531-0402
JB San Antonio, TX	Sep. 22	(210) 221-9004	Camp Humphreys, Korea	Oct. 20	(315) 753-8839
Fort Drum, NY	Sep. 22	(315) 772-6434	USAG-Stuttgart	Oct. 25	07031-15-3442
Selfridge, MI	Sep. 22	(586) 239-5580	Fort Meade, MD	Oct. 26	(301) 677-9603
Fort Campbell, KY	Sep. 22	(270) 798-5280	Fort Rucker, AL	Oct. 26	(334) 255-9124
Carlton, MN	Sep. 28	(608) 388-3716	Fort Hood, TX	Oct. 26-27	(254) 287-5210
Fort Lee, VA	Sep. 29	(804) 734-6555	USAG-Wiesbaden	Oct. 27	0611-705-5338
Fort Bliss, TX	Sep. 29	(915) 569-6233	Fort Hamilton, NY	Oct. 27	(718) 630-4552
JB Myer-Henderson Hall	Oct. 3	(703) 696-5948	Fort Leavenworth, KS	Oct. 27	(913) 684-2425
Carlisle Barracks, PA	Oct. 6	(717) 245-4501	Fort Benning, GA	Nov. 2	(706) 545-1805
JB Ellington Field-Houston, TX	Oct. 6	(210) 221-9004	Fort Gordon, GA	Nov. 3	(706) 791-2654
USAG-Italy	Oct. 12	0039-0444-61-7747	Daegu	Nov. 3	315-723-3735
Fort Knox, KY	Oct. 12	(502) 624-1765	Yongsan	Nov. 17	315-723-3735

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## State Veteran's Benefits & Discounts ► Washington 2018

The state of Washington 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 – WA**” 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 below refer to

<http://www.dva.wa.gov> & <http://militaryandveteransdiscounts.com/location/washington.html> .

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

[Source: <http://www.military.com/benefits/veteran-state-benefits/washington-state-veterans-benefits.html> | July 2018++]

**\* 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.

### **Transition Assistance Program Update 06 ► H.R.5553 | Improve DoD’s Program**

On April 18, 2018, Congressman Don Bacon introduced H.R. 5553, the **Loya-Sears Warrior Transition Assistance Reform Act**. This bill requires the Department of Defense (DoD) to implement an action plan to improve the DoD Transition Assistance Program (TAP) by mandating earlier pre-separation counseling, standardizing curriculum, increasing participation rates, and improving transition assistance resources. The bill also requires the development and measurement of long-term metrics to assess outcomes and provide continuous feedback to DoD transition assistance program managers, in coordination with the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Labor.

Current policy allows retiring service members to start TAP two years before they retire and separating service members to start the program one year, but no later than 90 days, before getting out of the military. DoD does not track averages of when service members go through the program, but a recent GAO report found more than half of service members, 53.3 percent, are not completing TAP by the 90-day mark, and only 2.6 percent are completing the program nine months or more before leaving the military. In addition, there is little oversight to ensure that the program includes veterans service organizations (VSOs) like the DAV, to be incorporated in its workshops.

This bill would require service members to start TAP one year before separation, establish reporting metrics that can be used to glean successes of the program, and would ensure unit and installation compliance with applicable statutes governing TAP program management, to include VSO participation. H.R. 5553 is in accordance with DAV Resolution No. 122, which calls for Congress to monitor the review of the Transition GPS program, its workshops, training methodology and delivery of services, and the collection and analysis of course critiques; and to ensure the inclusion of DAV and other VSOs in workshops, in order to confirm the program is meeting its objective, and to follow up with participants to determine if they found gainful employment following such training.

Readers are encouraged to either write their own letter to their congressman use DAV’s editable prepared letter at <http://cqrcengage.com/dav/app/take-action?engagementId=485493> to request they cosponsor and support passage of H.R. 5553, the Loya-Sears Warrior Transition Assistance Reform Act. [Source: DAV National Commander msg. | June 15, 2018 ++]

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### **VA Overpayments Update 02 ► H.R. 4974 | Verify Who’s at Fault & Modify Recoup Policy**

The Department of Veterans Affairs has accidentally overpaid hundreds of thousands sending some into debt when the government agency asked them to pay it back. But, new legislation sponsored by Sen. Sherrod Brown aims to prevent that from happening in the first place. The U.S. Senate earlier this week passed Brown’s amendment to the

Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Act (H.R.4974) that requires the VA to track overpayments to veterans which is known to lead to “veteran debt,” according to the senator’s office. The amendment will force the VA to verify whether the agency is at fault of overpayments and whether it is disputed by a veteran. “Our veterans sacrifice so much already to serve our country,” Brown said in a prepared statement. “They shouldn’t be paying for the mistakes of the Department that’s supposed to serve them. This amendment is a step in the right direction to address an issue that impacts so many veterans in Ohio and across the country.”

Brown’s amendment is part of a larger piece of legislation the Senator has been pushing called the Veterans’ Debt Fairness Act (S.2341). The bipartisan bill would only allow the VA to collect on debts that occur due to an error or fraud on the part of veterans and their beneficiary. It would also make it so the VA can only deduct up to 25 percent from a veteran’s monthly payment to recoup debt and would prevent the VA from collecting debts incurred more than five years earlier, according to Brown’s office. Brown’s legislation was inspired by veteran James Powers of Massillon, Ohio, a little more than three hours northeast of Dayton. Powers was one of the hundreds of thousands of vets impacted by the VA’s overpayment mistake, according to Brown’s office. [Source: Dayton Daily News | Max Filby | June 26, 2018 ++]

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## **VA Dental Benefits Update 01 ► H.R.4556 | Expand Care to all Vets**

Representative Carol Shea-Porter (NH) introduced H.R.4556, a bill that would require the VA to offer comprehensive dental care to all 9.1 million veterans enrolled in the VA health care system. Current law limits eligibility for VA dental care to veterans with a service-connected disability rated 100%; veterans with a service-connected dental condition; former prisoners of war; and homeless veterans. Dental care is also available if a dental condition is aggravating a service-connected condition or complicates treatment of that condition.

This bill would eliminate these restrictions on eligibility for VA dental care, allowing all veterans that are enrolled in the VA system to access in-house dental care. The bill phases in the new eligibility over five years to give the VA time to invest in and increase its capacity to provide dental care. This bill is in accordance with DAV’s Resolution No. 013, which supports legislation for VA to provide dental care services to all enrolled veterans. If you are in favor of this bill recommend you use DAV’s prepared editable letter to ask your Representative to support passage of H.R. 4556. The letter is accessible via the DAV Commander’s Comander's Action Network at [Take Action](#). [Source: DAV National Commander | Delphine Metcalf-Foster | June 27, 2018 ++]

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## **VA Nursing Home Care Update 02 ► Senate Passes H.R.5895 | Publish Quality Ratings**

U.S. Senators Bill Cassidy, M.D. (R-LA), and Doug Jones (D-AL), members of the Senate Veterans’ Affairs Committee, released the following statements today after the Senate passed their legislation requiring the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to publish the quality ratings of its 133 nursing homes nationwide, including all internal metrics and criteria used in determining the ratings. The legislation passed as an amendment to the Energy and Water, Legislative Branch, and Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Act (H.R. 5895).

- “Our veterans deserve the best care in all stages of life. For years, the VA has kept the quality data of their nursing homes a secret,” said Dr. Cassidy. “While I’m glad the VA recently took steps to address this, we need full transparency so we can hold the VA accountable and provide our veterans with the best nursing home care possible.”
- “Our veterans and their loved ones have given a great deal in service to our country, which is why I was so appalled by reports of very poor ratings and the unwillingness of the VA to be more transparent with this

important data,” said Senator Jones. “Having every available piece of information is critical to veterans and their families as they determine where they will live and receive care, during what is unquestionably the most vulnerable stage of their lives. I am confident that this report will help the VA provide the kind of care that our men and women who served our country deserve.”

USA Today and the Boston Globe recently reported that more than 100 VA nursing homes “scored worse than private nursing homes on a majority of key quality indicators, which include rates of infection and decline in daily living skills, according to the analysis of data withheld by the VA from public view.” [Source: Press Release | Sen. Bill Cassidy | June 25, 2018 ++]

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## **VA Budget 2019 Update 01 ► Senate Passes 86-5 | Goes to Conference Committee**

Senate lawmakers approved a “minibus” of appropriations bills 25 JAN that could result in next year’s Veterans Affairs and military construction funding being finished before the start of the new fiscal year. That would represent a significant legislative victory for Congress, given the lengthy delay in most appropriations measures in recent years. In 2016, just a few weeks before the presidential election and a few days before the next fiscal year, lawmakers finalized their VA and military construction budget plan. It’s the only time in the last five years that Congress has met that deadline for funding any portion of federal operations.

The Senate’s 86-5 vote to approve the multi-agency appropriations package — along with VA money, it includes fiscal 2019 funding for the energy and water programs and the legislative branch — comes three weeks after the House passed a similar combined budget deal. Now the two separate funding plans will head to a conference committee, where lawmakers will have about three months to negotiate a final agreement. Senators have proposed \$86.4 billion in discretionary spending for VA programs in fiscal 2019, 5.7 percent above the department’s fiscal 2018 budget and about \$1.1 billion more than what the White House and House lawmakers have backed.

Senate appropriators said the extra money is spread across a host of different programs, and will help cover increasing demands being placed on VA operations. But fiscal conservatives in Congress have lamented the ever-growing size of the VA budget and warned that unchecked raises cannot continue indefinitely. Combined with mandatory spending, the Senate proposal totals nearly \$196 billion for VA operations in fiscal 2019. When the war in Afghanistan began in fiscal 2001, the VA budget totaled less than \$49 billion. In fiscal 2009, it was \$93.7 billion, less than half the current target.

Another issue that conference officials will have to resolve is whether to exempt certain department accounts from future spending caps, a move that advocates have said is necessary given the health care overhaul legislation signed into law by President Donald Trump last month. White House officials have resisted the idea, preferring instead that any new VA spending be offset by cuts elsewhere in the budget. But veterans groups have said that could negatively impact other services. Both the House and Senate measures include \$10.3 billion in military construction funds, in line with administration plans. That includes \$1.6 billion for military housing projects, nearly 11 percent above fiscal 2018 levels. Another \$361 million is earmarked for construction and alterations at military medical facilities, and \$368 million more for improvements at DOD schools.

The House is expected to finalize its draft of the defense appropriations bill for fiscal 2019 this week, and the Senate Appropriations Committee’s defense panel will unveil its draft of the legislation on 26JUN. But work on that appropriations package is expected to be more problematic, given that Democrats in both chambers are unlikely to support any military funding plan until fights on several non-defense budget measures are settled. [Source: MilitaryTimes | Leo Shane III | June 25, 2018 ++]

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## **VA Medical Marijuana Update 46 ► Senate Bill Sent to Conference Committee**

Senate lawmakers approved a bill to fund the federal government through 2019 on 25 JUN, including an amendment that would allow Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) doctors to recommend state-legal medical marijuana to returning soldiers and for qualified veterans to use cannabis freely. According to Marijuana Moment, the Senate approved the highly intricate budget plan by a landslide vote of 86 to 5, advancing the protections for veteran MMJ patients and doctors to a joint legislative committee before the government spending bill is eventually sent to the president.

If ultimately approved, the veterans' cannabis amendment would restrict any VA funds from being spent to "interfere with the ability of a veteran to participate in a medicinal marijuana program approved by a State; deny any services from the Department to a veteran who is participating in such a program; or limit or interfere with the ability of a health care provider of the Department to make appropriate recommendations, fill out forms, or take steps to comply with such a program." For years, legislators and veterans alike have called for the VA to embrace medical marijuana, with clinical studies and anecdotal evidence demonstrating the controversial plant's ability to treat post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, chronic pain, and other ailments common among those with military service. Just last month, noted anti-cannabis congressman Pete Sessions used his power as House Rules Committee chairman to block a similar piece of legislation in the lower chamber of Congress.

"All they want is fair and equal treatment, and the ability to consult with their own physician on all treatment options," said cannabis advocate Rep. Earl Blumenauer after Sessions tanked the House VA amendment. "By blocking this vote, Chairman Sessions has turned his back on our wounded warriors, common sense, and the will of the American people. He should be ashamed." If medical marijuana protections for veterans are going to make it into the final 2019 budget bill, a bicameral conference committee would need to side with the Senate's legislation. [Source: Merry Jane | Zach Harris | June 26, 2018 ++]

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## **VA Blue Water Claims Update 46 ► House Passes HR.299 by Vote of 382-0**

The House unanimously passed legislation 26 JUN that would extend the Department of Veterans Affairs benefits to approximately 90,000 sailors who served off the coast during the Vietnam War, some of whom have been fighting for years to prove their illnesses were caused by exposure to Agent Orange. Lawmakers voted 382-0 in favor of the Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act, which must go to the Senate for final approval. It provides eligibility for disability compensation to "Blue Water" Navy veterans -- those sailors aboard aircraft carriers, cruisers, destroyers and other ships who contend they were exposed to Agent Orange through the ships' water systems. The dioxin-laden herbicide has been found to cause respiratory cancers, Parkinson's disease and heart disease, as well as other conditions.

"Every day, thousands of brave veterans who served in the Vietnam War fight the health effects of Agent Orange exposure," said Rep. David Valadao (R-CA), the bill's lead sponsor. "It is far past time we pass this critical legislation and give them the comfort and care they deserve." Rep. Mark Takano (D-CA) said the legislation would correct a "long-standing injustice." A VA policy decision in 2002 stripped Blue Water Navy veterans of their eligibility for compensation, unless they could prove they set foot in Vietnam. Bills were introduced in 2011, 2013 and 2015 to address the problem, but progress stalled because of cost concerns.

Extending the benefits for 10 years would cost \$1.1 billion, according to estimates from the Congressional Budget Office. To make up the cost, the legislation raises fees for servicemembers and veterans who use the VA's home loan program. The increase amounts to between \$2.14 and \$2.95 each month. "It has taken years of dedicated advocacy



and bipartisanship to get us here today," Takano said. "Finding over \$1 billion in the federal budget is not an easy task. The solution in this bill is fair."

Susie Belanger and John Wells -- both Florida residents -- were in the House gallery on Monday when lawmakers cast their votes. The two formed the group Military-Veterans Advocacy nearly eight years ago to push Congress to work for Blue Water Navy veterans. Belanger's husband, Ernest Belanger, was a sailor who served off the coast of Vietnam. He successfully received approval for VA benefits by proving he stepped foot in the country, but the couple knew other veterans were still being denied coverage. Susie Belanger recruited Wells, an attorney and retired Navy officer, and started an emailing campaign. Now, her emails are known on Capitol Hill as "Susie-grams." "Little by little, they all listened," Belanger said. "That's how we got this as far as we have."

Lawmakers repeatedly thanked advocates Monday who helped make the issue a priority in Congress. Valadao called Belanger out by name. "Passage of this bill today would not be possible without Ms. Susie Belanger, who worked tirelessly to raise awareness on this issue," Valadao said. It's uncertain when the Senate might take up the issue. Rep. Phil Roe, R-Tenn., the chairman of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, urged the Senate to pass it. "When I got the chairmanship a year ago, I said one of the things I'll base my chairmanship on is if we can get this solved and do the right thing," Roe said. "Today we're going to do the right thing in this House and send it to the Senate, where they will do the right thing." [Source: Stars & Stripes | Nikki Wentling | June 26, 2018 ++]

**\* Military \***



## **Army Recruiting Update 07 ► Retired Recruiters Asked to Reenlist**

The Army is short on recruiters, and as hundreds of thousands of American teenagers graduate high school in June and — perhaps — turn their attention to enlisting, the service is pulling out all the stops to man those recruiting stations. Specifically, the service is looking for 150 retired staff sergeants and sergeants first class, who have either been recruiters or instructors, to come back on active duty. The Army also is looking for a handful of officers and warrants. “This opportunity is a normal strength management tool used by the Army to meet critical skill requirements, while preserving unit readiness in the operational Army,” according to a 12 JUN release from Training and Doctrine Command.

This kind of measure has been used before in the Army, according to a spokeswoman, though she did not elaborate on how often or when it was last used. “The policy of retired soldiers returning to active duty on a voluntary basis is used frequently to assist Army commands across the force and is used by commanders at their discretion,” Megan Reed told Army Times. With the Army’s end strength on a steady upswing, the need to grow the training base is growing as well. But soldiers aren’t generally clamoring for instructor or recruiting duty, and operational tempo is still high, so bringing back retirees could be one way to fill those gaps. Officers, meanwhile, are needed to serve as ROTC professors, or small group leaders at basic officer leader courses and captains career courses. Some warrants and officers could also return as instructor pilots.

A return to active duty would mean a two-year commitment, with full pay and benefits due to active soldiers, the release said, though there aren't any bonuses associated. They also have to pass a PT test and meet height-weight standards. The Army is short about 400 recruiters, Lt. Gen. Thomas Seamands, the Army G1, confirmed to Army Times earlier this year. The service has been working on measures to fill the shortfall, he said, a result of 2017's significant bump in recruiting.

Earlier this year, Sergeant Major of the Army Dan Dailey sent an email to senior enlisted leadership about the possibility of involuntarily sending some former recruiters TDY to recruiting duty to help with the shortage. That measure never materialized, however. Neither did the extended hours and additional weekend shifts suggested by a Texas recruiting brigade back in May, though officials told Army Times that those options are always on the table. Interested retirees can send an email to [usarmy.jble.tradoc.mbx.g1g4-rdad@mail.mil](mailto:usarmy.jble.tradoc.mbx.g1g4-rdad@mail.mil) or call the TRADOC adjutant general's office at (757) 501-6855/6863/6861. [Source: ArmyTimes | Meghann Myers | June 14, 2018 ++]

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## Railgun Update 02 ► China's Version

While the United States spent years dithering over the future of its much-hyped electromagnetic railgun project, China ate its lunch. The Chinese navy plans to field its own secretive version of the electromagnetic railgun on naval vessels as early as 2025, according to a U.S. intelligence assessment first reported by CNBC. China's interpretation of the long-theoretical supergun, which utilizes a massive amount of power to create electromagnetic fields to accelerate projectiles to hypersonic velocities, is reportedly capable of "striking a target 124 miles away at speeds of up to 1.6 miles per second," according to CNBC — fast enough to strike Philadelphia from New York in just under a minute.

If the U.S. intelligence assessment is accurate, this is a major strategic coup for the Chinese. Back in February, photos circulating on social media appeared to show a railgun-esque deck gun mounted on the bow of the Type 072III-class landing ship Haiyang Shan. The next month, a People's Liberation Army-run news outlet confirmed that the Chinese navy had achieved a "breakthrough" during sea trials for the new railgun.



China Electromagnetic Railgun

The Chinese railgun was first developed in 2011 and then tested in 2014. Over the next three years, the supergun was calibrated for extended operational ranges. Meanwhile, the Office of Naval Research was still trying to figure out how to fire multi-shot salvos with its version of the railgun. Indeed, the U.S. intelligence assessment confirms that the Chinese supergun was first mounted on a naval vessel for at-sea trials even earlier than the PLA said, with initial tests underway as early as December 2017.

The December sea trials are some serious egg on the face of the Pentagon. As Task & Purpose reported around the time, the ONR electromagnetic railgun has been stuck in a research and development "valley of death" after more than a decade of development that cost \$500 million. The reason? Shifting priorities within the Pentagon's Strategic

Capabilities Office towards other directed energy projects — namely the hypervelocity projectile and solid-state lasers that offer more cost-effective alternatives to the pricey supergun — that left the prospect of future tactical demonstrations up in the air.

There is the possibility, of course, that the Chinese railgun is a paper tiger of sorts, a hoax designed to make the already-overstretched DoD antsy about its future in the Pacific amid growing tensions over artificial islands in the South China Sea. But even if the railgun ends up relegated to the function of shipboard missile defense rather than an offensive weapon, it's very existence is a shot across the bow to the United States when it comes to engineering next-generation weapons. The War Zone's Joseph Trevithick sums it up perfectly in his analysis of the U.S. intel assessment. "If the PLAN's fleets actually include any significant number of railgun-equipped ships by 2025," he writes. "It is even more likely that the era of near total United States naval supremacy in any prospective conflict, especially in Pacific Region, will have come to a close." [Source: Task & Purpose | Jared Keller | June 25, 2018 ++]

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## **USMC Base Upgrades ► MCAS Cherry Point, Guam, Camp Pendleton & Camp Lejeune**

Costs to upgrade Marine Corps bases to house new aircraft and amphibious vehicles and to support modernization efforts are proving exceedingly expensive, with costs in the hundreds of millions of dollars. The Senate's version of the annual defense legislation approved 19 JUN included \$199,630,000 in funding for construction projects at Camp Pendleton, California, \$133,860,000 at Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point, North Carolina, and \$326,845,000 for projects on Guam. The soaring figures are partially the result of the Corps' efforts to modernize its force and ongoing construction projects to house nearly 5,000 Marines on Guam. "We have quite a bit of hangar and utilities work to support the first F-35 squadrons assigned to MCAS Cherry Point," said Marine spokesman Rex Runyon.

At Camp Pendleton, the Corps is building a new maintenance facility to support Assault Amphibious Vehicles, or AAVs, and the Corps' latest Amphibious Combat Vehicle, or ACV. BAE was recently awarded a contract to build the Corps' new eight-wheeled ACV 1.1 vehicle, which will ultimately replace the legacy AAVs. The new AAV/ACV facility could cost as high as \$49 million, according to the funds approved in the Senate version of defense budget. The Senate also approved \$10 million for a full motion trainer for Marines aboard Camp Pendleton and \$71 million for a new mess hall and warehouse. The Navy also has some projects at the sprawling southern California base to support Landing Craft Air Cushion ships, according to Runyon. And the Corps is dishing out roughly \$51 million for a new complex for 2nd Radio Battalion headquartered at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. Radio battalions in the Corps provide tactical level signals intelligence and electronic warfare support.

Construction projects are still ongoing on Guam to house nearly 5,000 Marines. About 4,100 of those Marines will eventually be moved off Okinawa, Japan, to new facilities on Guam. It is part of the Corps' effort to decentralize Marines in the Pacific in the event of a major conflict with China or a near-peer competitor. The Senate's version of the defense bill approved more than \$340 million for joint Navy/ Marine and Air Force construction projects on the Island. Some of those projects include new ordnance storage, dining and housing facilities, and a machine gun range. According to the Senate's version, about \$141 million was requested for a machine gun range on Guam, but the Senate only authorized \$15 million. Roughly \$83 million was set aside for joint Navy and Marine Corps housing projects on the small Pacific island. [Source: MarineCorpsTimes | Shawn Snow | June 25, 2018 ++]

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## **Army Training ► OSUT Pilot Program Extension**

The Army is on a quest to build better soldiers from top to bottom, and the next step might be to extend the amount of time spent making them. The Army is moving forward with a pilot program to extend infantry one-station unit training (OUST) by eight weeks, according to the service's top enlisted soldier. "We have packed a lot into basic

training — we have — and we need to extend it,” Sergeant Major of the Army Dan Dailey told reporters on 25 JUN. “We know we can make a better product.”

One Station Unit Training, sometimes referred to as One Site Unit Training, is a term used by the United States Army to refer to a training program in which recruits remain with the same unit for both Basic Combat Training (BCT) and Advanced Individual Training (AIT). Immediately following Basic Training, the unit seamlessly transforms from a BCT unit into an AIT unit. There is no relocation and the same Drill Sergeants who conducted the Basic Training continue to instruct all of the participating recruits in their Advanced Individual Training. This streamlines the training schedule and helps to produce more camaraderie between recruits.



Leadership first publicly announced the idea back in March, when infantry school Commandant Brig. Gen. Christopher Donahue spoke at the AUSA Global Force Symposium in Huntsville, Alabama. “What we want, ultimately, is we want any soldier who graduates from OSUT, that they can immediately go and join any formation that they need to go to, no matter what phase of the sustained readiness model they’re in,” Donahue told Army Times of what was then an idea to extend to 21 weeks. Current infantry OSUT, which combines the separate basic training and advanced individual training that most support MOSs go through, is 14 weeks long. Under this pilot program, which launches in July, it would go up to 22 weeks through the rest of the year.

The program of instruction would be expanded to include more weapons training, first and foremost, Dailey said. Field training exercises would be extended, with more time spent on land navigation and combat lifesaving. There will also be more physical training, drill and ceremony and combatives he said. If that sounds familiar, it’s because it’s right out of the basic training overhaul at Fort Jackson, South Carolina, that went into effect earlier this year. A 2017 study of unit leaders found that soldiers were showing up to their first assignments out of shape and undisciplined, Maj. Gen. Malcolm Frost, who runs the Army’s training base, told reporters earlier this year. The skills and habits of a good soldier have steadily grown in number over the years, and in order to make sure trainees are ready to deploy as soon as they graduate, Dailey said, it would make sense to give drill sergeants a few more weeks to make sure they have them down pat.

But the Army’s had quite a lot to do over the past couple of decades, with any extra time and money going to relentless deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan. Post-2010, as the U.S. prepared to end combat missions in those countries, a drawdown was on the horizon, and the opportunity to re-set the training base presented itself. Training and Doctrine Command floated the idea of extending all basic training back in 2016, but an end strength surge the following year put that on hold. Changing up the POI was an immediate fix, but the longer term goal has always been to add weeks to basic. The infantry, the Army’s largest MOS, will be the guinea pigs. “Part of this study is to tell us, what is it going to cost?” Dailey said.

Leaders could sign off on an extension right now, he said, but there will be repercussions. Longer basic training requires more drill sergeants — sergeants through sergeants first class who are already in high demand as squad leaders and recruiters. It also decreases the number of new soldiers coming into the Army, at a time when the service is training to make it to 500,000 in the active duty component over the next several years. There’s no urgency to extend basic, Dailey said, particularly without weighing out the costs and benefits. Still, he added, leaders know it

would make a difference at the individual level. “We’ve been looking at extending basic for a long time,” he said. “We know if we have more time with soldiers we can make them more physically capable.” [Source: ArmyTimes | Meghann Myers | June 26, 2018 ++]

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## **MCPON Update 01 ► Steven Giordano Resignation Amid Ongoing Investigation**

Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy (SG/IW) Steven Giordano resigned 21 JUN as the Navy’s 14th senior enlisted leader, leaving the top job vacant for the first time since it was created more than 50 years ago. His resignation comes amid an ongoing investigation by the Navy’s inspector general into allegations he fostered a toxic work environment in his Navy office. The complaint was filed by a member of his own staff, according to sailors familiar with the investigation. Giordano’s announcement was posted on the Navy’s Facebook page, but gave no official date for the retirement.

Chief of Naval Operations John Richardson acknowledged Giordano’s resignation on his Facebook page. “I have accepted Master Chief Giordano’s offer to step aside as the MCPON effective immediately. I appreciate his recognition that the situation had become untenable,” Richardson’s message said. “Now we need to move forward — together — as a Navy striving with all our energy to become a more lethal fighting force...America expects no less.” Giordano’s own message had a different tone. “My love for our Navy and our sailors is absolute,” Giordano wrote in the Facebook message. “For that reason, I seek to avoid any distraction from the success of our sailors and our mission. “I have informed the Chief of Naval Operations that I intend to step aside and submit my retirement request, in order to allow the CNO, our CPO Mess, and our sailors to continue to move forward with the initiatives we have begun.”

Giordano made no specific mention of the allegations against him in the message and it’s unclear what the status of the investigation is. Also unclear is whether Giordano could face any disciplinary measures from the Navy if the investigation finds any wrongdoing. Navy officials have made no announcements about the investigation or the status of the MCPON’s office, which has not been empty, ever, since it was created in 1967. The office of Chief of Naval Operations Adm. John Richardson did not immediately respond to questions from Navy Times about the status of the investigation or whether Richardson will appoint an interim MCPON while a successor is found.

Giordano’s retirement from office comes just one year, nine months and 19 days since he took over from MCPON (AW/NAC) Mike Stevens, making him the shortest serving MCPON in history. Giordano’s total is 198 days fewer than MCPON (SW/FMF) Joe Campa, who served for just over two years and four months. Campa also retired from office in 2008, stating he’d accomplished what he set out to do. Campa’s unexpected decision to retire caught many by surprise and it was later revealed he was also battling an undisclosed medical condition at the time.

Giordano’s term has been rocky, as the career cryptologist took office while surrounded by revelations of past fraternization and adultery while he was an E-6. But Giordano owned up to his misconduct and said he learned from it. “I utilized this incident to shape who I became as a husband, father and sailor,” he told Navy Times in an email exchange shortly after taking office. “At this point in my term as the 14th Master Chief Petty Officer of Navy, I have no agenda but to visit and listen to our sailors and their families stationed around the globe.” And it was the fact he didn’t come into the job with any agenda that became a problem. Giordano set out on an aggressive travel schedule during his first months in office. He would later tell Navy Times that he was in a “listen and learn” mode and that those conversations would fuel the development of an agenda that would be released.

Such a comprehensive to-do list never materialized, though, resulting in constant urging from his staff that he needed to engage the enlisted force — particularly his nearly-30,000 strong Navy-wide chiefs mess on the issues of the day, which included a massive compromise of the E-9 selection board in April 2016, a rise in command master

chief firings due to misconduct and the deadly ship collisions in 7th Fleet. A year ago, in response to growing complaints from the fleet about MCPON's silence on big Navy issues, Giordano granted Navy Times a rare interview in which he said that he was a different style of leader and tended to work behind the scenes, but had put together an agenda that would soon be revealed. "People operate differently and use different mechanisms to communicate for different reasons — that's the leaders we all grow into being," Giordano told Navy times in a May 2017. "If you know me at all, you know I'm the type of person that will not go into a position with any kind of intent, without knowing what's going on out there in the environment that we operate in every day," he said.

But as time went on, a clear agenda never emerged. He did send a message to all the Navy's chiefs saying they were off track, though his message never stated any root causes, and his solution was that all Navy chiefs needed to read the CPO creed for a rudder correction. Recent weeks brought forth the allegations that his office was a toxic work environment, resulting in a nearly 100 percent turnover in staff during his brief tenure as MCPON. Multiple former staff members from his office spoke to Navy Times on condition of anonymity, numerous senior sailors painting nearly identical pictures of life in Giordano's Pentagon office.

"This is a man defined by a passive-aggressive leadership style, laced with a horrific and unpredictable temper," said one former staff member. "Behind closed doors, MCPON Giordano takes on an alter ego that is condescending and defaming to the senior leaders and junior staff alike on a regular basis, totally contradicting his own publicly preached values and beliefs of being a 'quietly humble leader,'" the former staff member said. While researching that story, Navy Times learned that a current staff member had filed an inspector general complaint against Giordano, triggering the current investigation. Giordano took leave from his office shortly after Navy Times reported about that investigation. [Source: NavyTimes | Mark D. Faram | June 21, 2018 ++]

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## **B-1 Bomber Update 03 ► Reason for May Groundings Revealed**

With their B-1 on fire and one crew member strapped into an armed but malfunctioning ejection seat, the aircraft commander made a decision: If all could not eject, none would. It was 1 MAY in Texas. The Dyess Air Force Base B-1 had just finished a training run when warning lights indicated they had a fire in the wing. A terrifying 25 minutes followed until the crew safely landed at Midland International Air and Space Port. The Air Force had previously stayed quiet about the incident, citing the ongoing investigation. Some details emerged earlier this month after photos taken at the scene revealed the bomber had a blown hatch. The incident led to a temporary grounding of the whole B-1 fleet as all ejection seats were inspected. That grounding was lifted 19 JUN. On 18 JUN, at an event in Washington, Air Force Secretary Heather Wilson shared the crew's story, and the hard and brave decisions made in seconds. Wilson's full comments, without edits, follow:

"They were out training. B-1 with [an] instructor pilot and a brand-new crew. So these are young people, maybe less than a year out of pilot training, less than two years out of college. This is a young crew. And they are out training, and the indicator lights goes off. They have a fire in the wing. This is not a good thing.

"They go through their checklists on everything you are supposed to do if you've got indication of a fire. A wing is where the fuel is. A fire in the wing is not a good day.

"They go through their checklists. They do everything they are supposed to do and they still have an indication that they have a fire.

"The next thing on the checklist is to eject from the airplane.

"You don't eject from the B-1 all at once. You go out — one crew member goes out before the other so there's a sequence you go so you don't hit a buddy on the way out.

"And so they started the ejection sequence. As you can imagine this is a pretty tense time. To eject from an aircraft anyway is a very high-risk thing.

“So the first crew member pulls the handles to eject. The cover comes off above the ejection seat. And nothing else happens. The seat doesn’t fire.

“Within two seconds of knowing that that had happened the aircraft commander says, ‘Cease ejection. We’ll try to land.’

“And that did two things. First the airman who’s sitting on an eject seat where he’s pulled the fire pins — and sits there for the next 25 minutes. Wondering whether — it’s like pulling out the pin on a grenade and holding it as you come in to land. And not knowing whether the next piece of turbulence is going to cause you to launch.

“The second is the courage it took and the valor represented by that aircraft commander who decided, ‘We are going to try for all of us to make it, rather than sacrifice the one guy who can’t get out.’ Those are the men and women who choose to wear the uniform of the United States Air Force.”

[Source: AirForceTimes | Tara Copp | June 19, 2018 ++]

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## West Point Update 05 ► ‘Commie Cadet’ Spenser Rapone Receives OTH Discharge

The images Spenser Rapone posted on Twitter from his West Point graduation were intentionally shocking: In one, the cadet opens his dress uniform to expose a T-shirt with a blood-red image of socialist icon Che Guevara. In another, he raises his fist and flips his cap to reveal the message: “Communism will win.” Less than a year after Rapone’s images drew a firestorm of vitriol and even death threats, the second lieutenant who became known as the “commie cadet” is officially out of the U.S. Army with an other-than-honorable discharge. Top brass at Fort Drum accepted Rapone’s resignation 18 JUN after an earlier reprimand for “conduct unbecoming of an officer.”

Rapone said an investigation found he went online to advocate for a socialist revolution and disparage high-ranking officers. Officially, the Army said in a statement only that it conducted a full investigation and “appropriate action was taken.” An unrepentant Rapone summed up the fallout in yet another tweet Monday that showed him extending a middle finger at a sign at the entrance to Fort Drum, accompanied by the words, “One final salute.” “I consider myself a revolutionary socialist,” the 26-year-old Rapone told The Associated Press. “I would encourage all soldiers who have a conscience to lay down their arms and join me and so many others who are willing to stop serving the agents of imperialism and join us in a revolutionary movement.”

Rapone said his journey to communism grew out of his experiences as an Army Ranger in Afghanistan before he was accepted into the U.S. Military Academy. And those views only hardened during his studies of history as one of the academy’s “Long Gray Line.” He explained that he took the offending selfies at his May 2016 West Point graduation ceremony and kept them to himself until last September, when he tweeted them in solidarity with NFL quarterback Colin Kaepernick, who was taking heat for kneeling for the national anthem to raise awareness of racism. Many other military personnel also tweeted in favor of Kaepernick, although most were supporting free speech, not communism.



Second Lt. Spenser Rapone

West Point released a statement after Rapone posted the photos, saying his actions “in no way reflect the values of the U.S. Military Academy or the U.S. Army.” And U.S. Sen. Marco Rubio, a Florida Republican, called on the secretary of the Army to remove Rapone from the officer ranks. “While in uniform, Spenser Rapone advocated for communism and political violence, and expressed support and sympathy for enemies of the United States,” Rubio said Monday, adding “I’m glad to see that they have given him an ‘other-than-honorable’ discharge.”

One of six children growing up in New Castle, Pennsylvania, Rapone said he applied to West Point, which is tuition-free, because he couldn’t afford college. He was nominated out of high school by then-U.S. Rep. Jason Altmire in 2010. “He was an honors student, an athlete, a model citizen who volunteered in the community,” recalled Altmire, a Democrat. “During the interview, he expressed patriotism and looked just like a top-notch candidate. There were no red flags of any kind.” But he wasn’t accepted to West Point, so Rapone enlisted in the Army. He was deployed to Afghanistan in 2011 and was assigned as an assistant machine gunner in Khost Province.

“We were bullies in one of the poorest countries on Earth,” Rapone said. “We have one of the most technologically advanced militaries of all time and all we were doing is brutalizing and invading and terrorizing a population that had nothing to do with what the United States claimed was a threat.” Toward the end of his deployment, he learned West Point fulfills a certain quota of enlisted soldiers every year. Despite his growing disillusionment about the military, he applied and got in. “I was still idealistic,” he said. “I figured maybe I could change things from inside.” In addition to classic socialist theorists such as Karl Marx, Rapone says he found inspiration in the writings of Stan Goff, a retired Special Forces master sergeant who became a socialist anti-war activist.

Even while still a cadet, Rapone’s online postings alarmed a West Point history professor, who wrote Rapone up, saying his online postings were “red flags that cannot be ignored.” Rapone was disciplined but still allowed to graduate. Greg Rinckey, an attorney specializing in military law, said it’s rare for an officer out of West Point to receive an other-than-honorable discharge. He added that it’s possible the military academy could seek repayment of the cost of Rapone’s education because he didn’t serve the full five-year service obligation required upon graduation. “I knew there could be repercussions,” said Rapone, who is scheduled to speak at a socialism conference in Chicago next month. “Of course my military career is dead in the water. On the other hand, many people reached out and showed me support. There are a lot of veterans both active duty and not that feel like I do.” [Source: The Associated Press | Mary Esch | June 19, 2018 ++]

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## **U.S. Space Force ► Trump Orders New Service Branch**

Donald Trump said 18 JUN that he had directed the Pentagon to establish a Space Force, describing it as a sixth branch of the U.S. military. It would be the first time the Pentagon has stood up a new service since the Air Force received its independence after World War II. Creating a standalone service for space isn’t something the president can do on his own; he needs congressional authorization. But Monday’s announcement ([here’s video](#), via Reuters), which follow broad endorsements of the concept by the Joint Chiefs’ office and various military branches, means that Senate holdouts who were taking their cues from the Air Force are likely to bow out of the fight. That could clear the way for a Space Force to be in the 2019 defense authorization act, says Todd Harrison, who directs the Center for Strategic and International Studies’ Aerospace Security Project.

It wasn’t immediately clear just what parts of the Pentagon’s sprawling space endeavors would be swept into this new outfit. Most of the Navy’s space-and-satellite work falls under the Space and Naval Warfare Systems Command, based in San Diego, while the Army has its Space and Missile Defense Command in Huntsville, Ala. But the bulk of the military’s space efforts are handled by the Air Force — specifically Air Force Space Command at Peterson Air Force Base, Colo. — and it has been the air service that has fought hardest against the idea. It wasn’t even clear



whether the new service branch would have its own secretary, putting it on par with the Army, Navy, and Air Force — or would occupy a lower tier, like the Marine Corps. Trump seemed to suggest the former. “We are going to have the Air Force and we are going to have the Space Force, separate but equal,” he said, carefully enunciating the oddly infelicitous phrase.

The announcement caught some in the Pentagon by surprise. “We understand the President’s guidance. Our Policy Board will begin working on this issue, which has implications for intelligence operations for the Air Force, Army, Marines and Navy. Working with Congress, this will be a deliberate process with a great deal of input from multiple stakeholders,” Pentagon spokesperson Dana W. White said in a statement. The military was in the process of evaluating the entire space force concept in terms of feasibility and structure. Deputy Defense Secretary Patrick Shanahan’s office was conducting what Harrison described as a broad study due in August. A potentially more interesting study, due in September, was to be completed by the Center for Naval Analysis. “Their job was to create a roadmap for how to create an independent service for space. They’re supposed to be coming up with the plan for how to do this. They would give it to Congress to consider for next year’s NDAA,” said Harrison.

To some, Monday’s announcement smacked of impulsiveness. “This is another example of: ready, fire, aim,” said David Deptula, a retired Air Force lieutenant general who leads the Mitchell Institute for Aerospace Power Studies. One former Air Force chief of staff urged a more gradual approach to establishing a Space Force. “I think we need at this point in our history to think about setting up a force that can answer the question: ‘What are you going to do when you have to fight in space?’” said Merrill “Tony” McPeak, who led the service from 1990 to 1994. “I think we’re poorly equipped to do that until we have a service that grows people from the beginning to be Coneheads and Star Trek warriors, not fighter pilots or bomber pilots and transport pilots or anybody who knows how to operate in an air-breathing environment.” McPeak said it would be best to keep the Space Force under the Air Force umbrella, “although eventually I think it would migrate totally into its own department, and should.”

What would a Space Force actually do? Harrison suggested that the most useful thing would be to create a “cadre of space professionals. [It would] groom them and grow them to think space, space power, strategy, doctrine, and to develop more innovative operational concepts.” He added, “It doesn’t mean that space will become more weaponized or militarized; that’s happening anyway, regardless of what the United States does. The weaponization of space is being led by other countries.”

In the decades before the Air Force’s creation, a cadre of aviators developed airpower doctrine and strategy at the Army Air Corps Tactical School. That has not been the case this time around, said Doug Birkey, executive director for the Mitchell Institute for Aerospace Power Studies. The military has treated space airmen as technical experts providing a utility, Birkey said, largely because talking about offensive wars in space has been taboo. Policy makers “need to think about how to use space as a national military asset, not just Verizon” — a telecom utility, Birkey said. He said that if lawmakers create a Space Force, it’s essential that space specialists in the Army, Navy, and Marine Corps also get put into the new branch.

Space has at times been seen as the Air Force’s red-headed stepchild, playing second fiddle to go-fast jets. After Strategic Air Command shut down, its ICBMs were shuffled to Space Command, until the creation of Global Strike Command some 17 years later. This summer, the cyber warfighting arm of the Air Force will move from Space Command to Air Combat Command. Air Force leaders — who have been opposed to creating a new space service — have made a number of moves that they say show they take the space mission seriously.

The concept of a standalone service for space received some top-level support under Donald Rumsfeld and in the 2000 National Defense Authorization Act. More recently, Rep. Mike Rogers (R-AL) and Jim Cooper (D-TN). — the chairman and ranking member of House Armed Services Committee’s strategic forces panel — pushed the House to include a Space Force amendment in its version of the 2018 NDAA. The provision was ultimately axed in negotiations with the Senate. But today’s announcement goes beyond what Rogers and Cooper sought, which was a Space Corps whose commander would answer to the Air Force Secretary, just as the Marine Corps answers to the

Navy Secretary. A Space Force, however, would be independent entirely from the Air Force, potentially with its own Secretary.

The chief study that Space Corps (or Force) proponents cite for the necessity of such a thing is a May 2017 Government Accountability Office report that concluded that the way the Air Force was buying space capabilities was leading to cost overruns and schedule delays. The military has been expanding its outreach to commercial satellite providers to offer secure communications capabilities and, potentially, to host intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance payloads, one of many signs showing that private sector is moving more aggressively than government entities in terms of putting new assets into orbit.

The U.S. military's ambitions for space, and its recognition of space as a domain critical to communications and economic security, is on a crash course with "an acquisition process that doesn't allow you to get there until the late 2020s," retired Gen. Robert Kehler, a former commander of U.S. Strategic Command, told lawmakers in March. Among those ambitions: satellite-based weapons that destroy enemy ballistic missiles with particle beams, a Cold War idea that is making a comeback under Michael Griffin, the first defense undersecretary for research and engineering.

President Donald Trump's push to establish a sixth military branch dedicated to space would probably be a lot more expensive than just extending the U.S. Air Force's capabilities -- and no doubt the nation's largest defense contractors love that idea. It also could create a military competition in outer space, the Chinese Foreign Ministry warned 19 JUN. "China always advocates the peaceful use of outer space and opposes the placement of weapons and an arms race in outer space," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang told reporters. "In particular, we oppose turning outer space into a battlefield." [Source: DefenseOne | Marcus Weisgerber | June 18, 2018 ++]

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## **Neo-Nazi Marine ► LCpl. Vasilios Pistolis Found Guilty**

A Marine and alleged neo-Nazi who allegedly participated in the deadly "Unite the Right" rally last year in Charlottesville, Virginia, has been court marshaled. During the rally one person was killed and 19 were hurt when a speeding car slammed into a throng of counterprotesters. In addition there were at least 15 other injuries associated with the scheduled rally. LCpl. Vasilios Pistolis was found guilty at a summary-court martial on 18 JUN and is and now is being processed for administrative separation. His sentencing produced some confusion after Task & Purpose reported the Marine was sentenced to 28 days of confinement, reduction in rank to private, and forfeiture of two-thirds pay for one month. Emily Gorcenski, an activist who confronted white supremacists at the Charlottesville rally, tweeted that the Corps had just let a neo-Nazi stay in the Marines. But that is not entirely accurate.



**In this Aug. 12, 2017, file photo, white nationalist demonstrators use shields as they guard the entrance to Lee Park in Charlottesville, Virginia.**

Pistolis, who is assigned to Combat Logistics Battalion 8, 2nd Marine Logistics Group based out of Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, has about a week to file for leniency before the convening authority in his case initiates any action.

That means no final decision has been made regarding separation. If precedence has bearing in this case, Pistolis is likely to be separated. Two Marines, Sgt. Michael J. Chesny and Staff Sgt. Joseph W. Manning, were both separated from the Corps in April and December, respectively, for ties to white supremacist groups.

A summary court-martial generally is used for minor offenses. Pistolis was charged with Article 92, failure to obey a regulation, and Article 107, making false official statements. “The guidance to Marines is clear: participation in supremacist or extremist organizations or activities is a violation of Department of Defense and Marine Corps orders and will lead to mandatory processing for separation following the first substantiated incident of misconduct which is what occurred with these former Marines,” Nat Fahy, a spokesman with Marine Corps Installations East, told Marine Corps Times in a statement about Chesny and Manning’s separation.

Gorcenski helped expose Chesny’s white supremacist ties and others associated with the “Unite the Right” rally. She told Marine Corps Times that she is sure there is more to Pistolis’ story and that it is not over yet. ProPublica reported Pistolis’ ties to a neo-Nazi organization known as Atomwaffen Division and his actions during the Charlottesville rally. According to the Anti-Defamation League, Atomwaffen Division is a neo-Nazi organization “whose members are preparing for a race war to combat what they consider the cultural and racial displacement of the white race.” Alarmed by the revelation that members of the military were caught participating in Atomwaffen Division, Rep. Keith Elliso (D-MN) sent a letter in early May to Defense Secretary James requesting information on investigations into white supremacist activities within the military. [Source: MarineCorpsTimes | Shawn Snow | June 19, 2018 ++]

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## **Oregon Tuition Aid ► Bill Signed to Grant Funds for National Guard Members**

The Oregon National Guard will receive state tuition assistance with the signing of House Bill 4035. Governor Kate Brown, signed the bill during a ceremony at Kingsley Field, Air National Guard Base on 16 JUN. According to an Oregon Military Department press release, the bill, passed by the Oregon Legislature on March 3, authorizes state tuition assistance for service members in the Oregon National Guard. It qualifies them to receive state-funded tuition assistance towards degrees at Oregon public universities and community colleges. The Higher Education Coordinating Commission will administer the grant program, scheduled to begin in the 2018-2019 academic year.

The bill was introduced by House Minority Leader Rep. Mike McLane, receiving bi-partisan support across the legislature and from the governor in alignment with her goal to enhance education programs across Oregon. “I’m proud to sign a bill into law that deepens Oregon’s commitment to our National Guard service members,” said Governor Brown. She went on to praise the readiness of the National Guard and added, "extending tuition assistance to Guard members is one important way to show our appreciation for their service by investing in their education and future.”

Qualified students can use up to 90 credit hours at an Oregon community college and up to 180 credit hours at a public university. To receive the tuition assistance they must be in good standing with their Oregon National Guard commitments and their educational institution. [Source: Salem Statesman Journal | June 16, 2018 ++]

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## **Variable Kinetic System ► New Non-Lethal Weapon Purchased for Army**

The Army recently awarded a \$650,000 contract to purchase a new non-lethal weapon that launches paintball-like projectiles that irritate and deter potential aggressors. The Variable Kinetic System, made by PepperBall Technologies was purchased for troops in Afghanistan, according to a company release. The weapon has the same

controls and ergonomics of the M4/M16 weapons system, so muscle memory training is the same for soldiers who carry those weapons, which is practically everyone in the Army. The call for increased lethality is being heard across all of the services, but there are still missions that need a non-lethal touch.



**This new non-lethal option can help troops fighting in cities**

The launcher has a dual feed system, so a shooter can switch the selector knob between “hopper mode” and “magazine mode” to increase ammunition capacity. The hopper holds up to 180 rounds and has the same design as a common paintball gun, with a large basin holding the projectiles. The magazine can hold 10 to 15 rounds for more compact carry. The projectiles are effective to 50 yards, or half a football field length, providing short-range standoff for soldiers in riot control situations. The PepperBall specific projectiles fire an irritant that bursts upon impact, according to the release. It leaves a “debilitating cloud” that effects the eyes, nose and respiratory system. [Source: ArmyTimes | Todd South | June 16, 2018 ++]

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**Navy Warrant Officer ► W-1 Rank to Return in 2019**

After a 44-year absence, the rank of warrant officer-1 will return to the Navy in 2019 for cyber specialists, a move signifying the great lengths the service must take to retain talent and fill leadership roles in an increasingly tight labor market. The return of warrant officer-1 (W-1) — discontinued by the Navy in 1975 — is both a Navy bid to keep highly sought-after computer technicians and is indicative of the greater challenge facing the service as it seeks to meet growing recruiting and retention targets.

The Navy projects growing the number of all active duty sailors to nearly 344,800 within the next five years, a nearly 20,000 increase from the roughly 325,000 sailors now on active duty, according to its Fiscal Year 2019 budget request. But achieving this force level, and reaching longer-term goals to fill out a growing fleet-size will be difficult, as previously reported by USNI News. A tight labor market means sailors can often find higher paying jobs outside the Navy, often doing the same type of work. With cyber specialists, the Navy found its ability to retain talent was especially difficult. The higher pay offered by private sector companies, often performing Navy contract, increasingly lures away sailors the Navy would eventually want to fill leadership roles, Vice Adm. Robert Burke, chief of Naval Personnel, told USNI News. “We have kids come into the CT (cryptologic technician) program that come in with four-year degrees already,” Burke said.

The Navy’s problem is keeping these technicians and grooming them for leadership roles, Burke said. In the private sector, salaries for such cyber specialties as network and computer systems administrators, computer systems analysts, and information security analysts had median annual incomes of between \$81,000 and \$95,000 in 2017, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor and Statistics. Current pay for an E-5 with six years of service is \$35,103, according to the Office of Personnel Management. “We’re bringing in our own crypto technicians, we’re growing them, they get to E-5, E-6 (petty officer first class) and they get hired by all the defense contractors working for us. So, there’s no E-6’s around to go become eligible to be W-2s (warrant officer-2), so we’re opening it up to the E-5s to get them to stay Navy and become those managers,” Burke said.

This is at a time the Navy is paying greater attention to cyber vulnerabilities. After last summer’s deadly ship collisions involving two U.S. guided missile destroyers and two commercial ships, the Navy announced future collision investigations will include probing for evidence of cyber tampering. No evidence was found of cyber tampering during last summer’s investigations.

Only a small number of enlisted personnel will qualify for W-1, the pay still will not match what the private sector offers, and the Navy will still face tough recruiting and retention challenges. However, those sailors who do qualify for W-1 will be the ones the Navy hopes will consider remaining in the service longer because they rank offers something the private sector can’t as easily match — a quicker path to management positions. Historically the Navy would select petty officer first class sailors to become chief warrant officer (W-2) to manage the growing cyber workforce. Yet to be considered for W-2, sailors must already have 13 years of service and these sailors reach retirement age quickly or find the lure of big private sector paydays too great, Burke said.

To qualify for consideration, sailors must at least be a petty officer second class (E-5), hold a cryptologic technician networks rating, and have between six and 12 years in service, the Navy announced. Ideally, these sailors would promote through the ranks to become leaders in the cyber community. But many reach retirement age with their previous years in service. Allowing junior enlisted to promote to W-1, after as few as six years if they qualify, the Navy can potentially keep this expertise longer, Burke said. “The W-1 gets them in earlier. They can go LDO (limited duty officer) or go regular commission program,” Burke said. “They’re not just managers, they become leaders.” [Source: USNI News | Ben Werner | June 13, 2018 ++]

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## **Navy Sea Pay ► NavAdmin 143/18 Updates Rules**

Navy officials are changing the career sea pay rules for sailors in expeditionary and small craft units, as well as afloat staffs that aren’t on ships full-time. Sailors only earn CSP while on certain types of sea duty — mostly onboard ships — and the monthly payout is based on a combination of the sailor’s pay grade and cumulative years of sea duty. Depending on the command, sailors may qualify for continuous CSP for the entire duration of a tour at sea. This means that regardless of being at sea or in port, sailors get the pay continuously while assigned to a ship. In addition, cumulative sea time also grows for every month spent onboard. Others qualify only for daily CSP, meaning these sailors only qualify for the pay and have their cumulative sea time grow a day at a time — only when they’re actually underway or meet other qualifying conditions.

The daily rate of pay is calculated as three percent of the monthly rate of an individual paygrade. Cumulative sea time only increases one day at a time as well. By law, monthly CSP can’t exceed \$750 — few sailors actually earn that much. Currently, an E-6 with more than 18 years of sea time will net the monthly maximum of \$750, while E-7s through E-9 only need 13 years of cumulative sea time to rate the monthly max. That amount translates to an extra \$25 per day. NavAdmin 143/18 updates the rules on receiving the pay, as well as the ship and craft types that qualify for each type of pay.

Sailors assigned to units operating the Navy’s landing craft, coastal riverine and special warfare boat units, for example, can now qualify while serving on their own boats or when their boats are embarked on larger vessels. The message lists 15 different types of craft and vessels where sailors assigned can qualify for the daily rate. Coastal riverine and special warfare boat crews qualify while their craft is either at sea or in a port more than 50 miles from their homeport, and when the ship is underway at least six hours a day. For those assigned to landing craft units, the rules are the same as the riverine and special boat sailors, but in addition, these sailors can also qualify if they’re embarked on an amphibious class of ship for training or deployment.

As for afloat staffs, just two staffs still qualify for the continuous pay while assigned. Those are the Japan-based Seventh Fleet staff and Carrier Strike Group 5. The reason these staffs qualify, the message says, they don't have permanent offices ashore. Career sea pay has been around since the 1980s and was last updated in 2014. For more details, read [NavAdmin 143/18](#). [Source: NavyTimes | Mark D. Faram | June 13, 2018 ++]

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## USMC Base Quantico 911 Monument ► Honors 17 Marine Deaths



Monument on Path into USMC Base Quantico, Virginia

[Source: Vet Resources | June 14, 2018 ++]

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## USS Thomas Hudner (DDG-116) ► Delivery Accepted

The Navy has accepted delivery of a destroyer named for a naval aviator who crash-landed his plane to try to save a downed pilot in the Korean War. Medal of Honor recipient Thomas Hudner witnessed the christening of the ship in April 2017 at Maine's Bath Iron Works and died months later at 93 in his native Massachusetts. Hudner was awarded the Medal of Honor for valor during in the Korean War when he intentionally crash landed his plane in an effort to save fellow pilot Ensign Jesse Brown, the Navy's first African-American pilot. Hudner failed to save his comrade, Ensign Jesse Brown, but is remembered for his devotion. During Friday's ceremony in Bath, a flag was hoisted that previously flew over Arlington National Cemetery and on the USS Constitution to honor Hudner's efforts. The Hudner will join the fleet when it's commissioned into service 1 DEC in Boston.



## The Ship

- Class: ARLEIGH BURKE class destroyer
- Motto: Above All Others
- Keel Laid: November 16, 2015
- Christened: April, 1, 2017
- Length: 513 feet
- Beam: 66 feet
- Draft: 30.5 feet
- Displacement: 9,217 tons
- Speed: 30+ knots (34.5 mph)
- Propulsion: 4x General Electric LM2500 Gas Turbines 100,000 shp (75,00 kW)
- Crew: 27 Officers, 280 Enlisted Personnel
- Armament:
  - 96 MK41 Vertical Launch System (VLS) cells for Standard Missiles, ESSM, Tomahawk, and VLA
  - 1 MK34 Gun Weapon System 5"/62
  - 1 MK15 Mod 1B 20 CWIS
  - 2 MK38 Mod2 25mm Machine Gun System
  - 2 MK32 Triple Tube Mount SVTT
- Aircraft: 2 SH-60R LAMPS MKIII Helicopters

[Source: The Associated Press | June 18, 2018 ++]

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## USS Fitzgerald (DDG-62) Update 15 ► All Negligent Homicide Charges Dropped

The Navy will no longer pursue negligent homicide charges against Cmdr. Bryce Benson, who commanded the destroyer Fitzgerald when it collided with a merchant vessel just more than a year ago, killing seven sailors. Service officials also announced 19 JUN that two of the Fitz's junior officers will not face a negligent homicide charge in connection to the June 17, 2017, catastrophe. These developments mark the service's latest reconsideration of negligent homicide charges in the case of the Fitz and the John S. McCain collision, which happened less than two months later and killed another 10 sailors.

The call was made by Adm. James Caldwell, who was appointed last year to oversee all disciplinary matters regarding the Fitz and the McCain. Benson's attorneys said Tuesday that this about-face shows the negligent homicide charge "was not warranted." "The evidence now before Admiral Caldwell was the same evidence that initially caused him to bring a negligent homicide charge against Commander Benson," the attorneys said in a statement. "A fair trial will reveal the remaining charges are likewise unsupported by the facts." He has decided that Benson will face negligent dereliction of duty resulting in death, negligent dereliction of duty and negligent hazarding of a vessel charges at a general court-martial, according to a Navy statement.

Benson waived his right last month to a preliminary Article 32 hearing, where an officer would have reviewed the prosecution's case and recommended to Caldwell whether Benson should be court-martialed. His attorneys torched leadership at that time, claiming that public comments by Navy brass had imperiled the former skipper's right to a fair trial. Navy officials declined to comment, citing the ongoing nature of the proceedings. The Navy also announced Tuesday that two junior officers will not face negligent homicide charges for their roles in the Fitz collision.

Lt. Natalie Combs will still be court-martialed on negligent dereliction of duty resulting in death and negligent hazarding of a vessel charges, but not for negligent homicide. She was serving as the tactical action officer, or TAO,

at the time of the collision, and oversaw the ship’s weapons, propulsion and sensors. Her civilian attorney, David Sheldon, said earlier this month that the Article 32 officer had recommended she not go to trial and instead go before an administrative separation board. Combs “is obviously very disappointed” in Caldwell’s decision to still go forward with a court-martial, Sheldon said in a statement Tuesday. “She nonetheless is resolute in her belief that when the facts are fully presented, she will be exonerated,” Sheldon said. “The blame in this case is widespread. The Fitzgerald had systemic problems with its equipment and training—to single this young woman, who has served honorably and with distinction, for prosecution is very troubling.”

Lt. Irian Woodley went before an Article 32 alongside Combs last month, but Navy officials said Tuesday that all charges against him were dismissed. Woodley will still have to go before an administrative board, however, to show why he should be allowed to stay in the Navy, officials said. Tuesday’s developments marked the Navy’s latest reconsideration of negligent homicide charges in connection to the two collisions. Lt. j.g. Sarah Coppock was the Fitz’s officer the deck, or OOD, at the time of the collision. She pleaded guilty to a dereliction charge at court-martial last month. [Source: NavyTimes | Geoff Ziezulewicz | June 19, 2018 ++]

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## Army Reserve Retirement Services Update 01 ► Pre-Retirement Briefings

Did you know the Army Reserve Readiness Divisions conduct pre-retirement briefings each month? Do you know how to apply for your retirement pay, and when to do it? Or what about your Survivor Benefit Plan? The Reserve Retirement Service Officers (RSO) provide all this information and more during the eight hour briefing, focused specifically on the Reserve Component Soldier. These eight hour briefings, typically held on a Saturday, cover the retired pay application process and timeline, VA benefits, TRICARE benefits, Survivor Benefit Plan, benefits available to you as a gray area Retired Soldier, points corrections process and how many points you are authorized during different periods of time.

While all this information is available online, we bring the subject matter experts from each of the specific areas to better explain the benefits you are eligible to receive. They are also available to discuss your specific situations so you have the information you need to make informed decisions. What’s more, the RSOs will sit with you to discuss retirement points, assist you in filling out the retired pay application, and further discuss the survivor benefit plan options and properly complete the appropriate documents. The Army Reserve, through its RSOs, wants to ensure Soldiers beginning the process of transitioning to the gray area, or those already in the gray area, are provided the information needed to make informed decisions in order to enjoy their well-deserved retirement.

### Upcoming Army Reserve Pre-Retirement Briefings:

Location	Date	Contact	Location	Date	Contact
Indianapolis, IN	23 Jun 18	(608)388-7448/9321	Raleigh, NC	11 Aug 18	(803) 751-9864/9698
Carlisle, PA	23 Jun 18	(609) 562-1696/7055	JBER, AK	11 Aug 18	808-438-1600 ext. 3553
Honolulu, HI	23 Jun 18	808-438-1600 ext. 3553	Devens, MA	18 Aug 18	(609) 562-1696/7055
Jacksonville, FL	14 Jul 18	(803) 751-9864/9698	Columbia, SC	25 Aug 18	(803) 751-9864/9698
Salt Lake City, UT	14 Jul 18	(608) 388-7448/9321	Buckley AFB, CO	25 Aug 18	(608) 388-7448/9321
Santa Fe, NM	21 Jul 18	(650) 526-9513/9512	Riverside, CA	8 Sep 18	(650) 526-9513/9512
Niagara Falls, NY	21 Jul 18	(609) 562-1696/7055	ST Croix, VI	8 Sep 18	(803) 751-9864/9698
Barrigada, GU	28 Jul 18	(808) 438-1600 ext. 3553	Belton, MO	15 Sep 18	(608) 388-7448/9321
Fraser, MI	4 Aug 18	(608) 388-7448/9321	Bangor, ME	22 Sep 18	(609) 562-1696/7055

. [Source: Army Echoes | Chris Henderson | JUN – SEP 2018 ++]

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## Warships That Will Change The Future ► HMS Queen Elizabeth (RO-8)



**HMS Queen Elizabeth (RO-8)**

HMS Queen Elizabeth is the lead ship of the Queen Elizabeth class of aircraft carriers, the largest warships ever built for the Royal Navy of the United Kingdom and capable of carrying up to 60 aircraft. She is named in honour of the first Queen Elizabeth, a renowned World War I era super-dreadnought, which in turn was named after Queen Elizabeth I. The new Queen Elizabeth will carry her namesake's honours, as well as her Tudor rose-adorned crest and motto. The ship began sea trials in June 2017, and was commissioned on 7 December 2017. Her first Commanding Officer is Commodore Jerry Kyd, who had previously commanded the carriers HMS Ark Royal and HMS Illustrious. As Captain of HMS Queen Elizabeth, Kyd will wear the Royal Navy rank of Captain while retaining the substantive rank of Commodore.

Queen Elizabeth has no catapults or arrestor wires and is instead designed to operate V/STOL aircraft; the air wing will typically consist of F-35B Lightning II multirole fighters and Merlin helicopters for airborne early warning and anti-submarine warfare. The design emphasises flexibility, with accommodation for 250 Royal Marines and the ability to support them with attack helicopters and large troop transports such as Chinooks. She is the second Royal Navy vessel to bear the name Queen Elizabeth and is based at HMNB Portsmouth. Ship characteristics are:

- Displacement: 65,000 tonnes (64,000 long tons; 72,000 short tons)
- Length: 284 m (932 ft)
- Beam: 39 m (128 ft) (waterline - 73 m (240 ft) overall)
- Draught: 11 m (36 ft)
- Propulsion: Integrated Electric Propulsion via Two Rolls-Royce Marine 36MW MT30 gas turbine alternators and four 10MW diesel engines
- Speed: 29 knots (54 km/h)
- Range: 10,000 nautical miles (19,000 km)
- Capacity: 1,600
- Troops: 250
- Complement: 679
- Sensors and processing systems:
  - S1850M long range radar
  - Type 997 Artisan 3D medium range radar
  - Ultra Electronics Series 2500 Electro Optical System (EOS)

- Armament:
  - 3 x Phalanx CIWS[10]
  - 4 x 30mm calibre gun, various Miniguns and GPMGs to counter asymmetric threats.
- Aircraft carried: Planned Carrier Air Wing of 24 to 36 STOVL fighter jets & 14 helicopters
- Aviation facilities: Hangar below deck
- Two aircraft lifts

[Source: <http://www.kiwireport.com/amazing-29-warships-will-totally-change-future> | June 2018 ++]

\* **Military History** \*



**Soviet Troops in Cuba** ► **A 1979 Uproar Over Practically Nothing**

In the fall of 1979, a furor erupted in the United States over the discovery of Soviet combat troops in Cuba. Scarcely remembered today, it was an episode of the Cold War that seemed like a very big deal at the time, so much so that it prompted U.S. president Jimmy Carter to address the American people on nationwide television. Ultimately, it was an uproar over practically nothing, but it helped derail a major nuclear arms agreement between the United States and the Soviet Union and signaled that the era of détente between the two countries was coming to an end. To learn more on what happened when an American U-2 reconnaissance aircraft detected evidence that the Soviet Union was constructing a long-term naval facility at the Cuban port of Cienfuegos, one which could serve as a permanent base for Soviet ballistic missile submarines, refer to the attachment to this Bulletin titled, "**The Other Cuba Crisis**". [Source: The National Interest | Richard Purcell | January 2, 2018 ++]

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**WWII D-Day** ► **Six Facts You Never Learned in School**

What most Americans these days know about D-Day comes from the movies "Saving Private Ryan" (1998) and "Band of Brothers" (2001), and that's pretty good! It's infinitely better than not knowing anything at all about this pivotal Allied invasion of World War II. However, to enhance your knowledge of this important battle whose anniversary is June 6, here are a few more interesting facts you probably didn't learn in school.

**1. Teddy Roosevelt Jr. fought on D-Day.**

You remember the original Teddy Roosevelt and his Rough Riders charging up San Juan Hill in the Spanish-American War, (1898) right? He earned the Medal of Honor for his incredible bravery that day. Well, his son Ted Jr. was no less brave. Teddy Jr. fought in World War I at Soissons and was wounded in action. Later, in World War II, he was a brigadier general and led troops in North Africa and Italy. For the D-Day invasion, the 56-year-old soldier (the oldest Allied soldier on D-Day, by the way) begged to lead the men out of his landing craft and be the first on shore. He was given that honor, and led his men onto Utah Beach. (While they were heading for shore he led his men in singing "Battle Hymn of the Republic" and "Onward, Christian Soldiers.")

They landed about a mile off course and not under as much direct fire as the Americans on Omaha Beach, but they were receiving fire nevertheless and taking casualties. (His son, Captain Quentin Roosevelt, was fighting on Omaha Beach when he landed on Utah.) The arthritic general, with cane in one hand and pistol in the other, personally led his troops off the beach, flanking and attacking the Germans. Later when General Omar Bradley was asked what was the most courageous thing he saw in WWII he said, "Ted Roosevelt on Utah Beach." Here is the real General Roosevelt just days after D Day: Tragically, one month later, he died from a heart attack. He is buried in a U.S. military cemetery next to his brother, who was killed in World War I. For his actions on D-Day, he was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor, making him and his dad the second father-son Medal of Honor "team" in our history (General Douglas MacArthur and his dad, General Arthur MacArthur, are the other father-son team).

## **2. The Nazis used non-German draftees to fight in Normandy.**

The Germans had some very fine troops at Normandy (most notably the 352nd Infantry Division at Omaha Beach). However, the Allies also captured Koreans, Poles, Czechs, Russians, Mongolians, Georgians, and Kazakhs in German uniforms. At <https://youtu.be/uepK-tF0qqk> is a good little video telling the true story of the Korean man, Yang Kyoungjong, who (along with several other Koreans) was captured by American paratroopers that day: The German war machine was desperate for manpower by this time, and so they ignored the "non-Aryan" qualities of the troops that they had captured from the Soviet Union or drafted from their conquered territories. These "Ostlegions" that were part of the 709 and 716 Static Infantry Divisions in Normandy did not put up much of a fight and were happy to be captured by the Allies. Another tragic scene from "Saving Private Ryan" at <https://youtu.be/I7dmcHoODZI> shows Czech men in the German Army who are trying to surrender. They are actually saying in Czech, "Don't shoot; we are Czechs!"

## **3. Hitler was asleep and Rommel was at a birthday party.**

Thank God that the Germans were caught napping ... literally, in the case of their Führer! Hitler had been telling his generals for months that the Allies would probably attack far to the north at Calais, and thus had stationed the bulk of his armored divisions. He had also told his generals that no one could move any of the German troops without his express permission. Hitler had been entertaining his high command all day and night on 5 JUN, and went to bed at 3 a.m. on 6 JUN ... just as Allied paratroopers were landing all over Normandy. No one woke him all morning long as 160,000 American, British, and Canadian troops fought their way off the beaches. And no German general could order a single panzer division to counterattack until Hitler was awake.

Der Führer finally awakened and greeted the world at 12 noon. When told of the invasion, he released panzer divisions to counterattack, but it was too late. And what of his best general, Erwin Rommel? The Desert Fox was not expecting the invasion at all, and had gone home to celebrate his wife's birthday on 6 JUN. The entire German army at Normandy was basically paralyzed, understrength, and leaderless.

## **4. One little town in Virginia took more casualties than any other small town in America.**

Bedford, Virginia, was home to just 3,400 people. They had one taxi driver, one funeral home, and one sheriff. It was like Andy Griffith's Mayberry. Thirty-five men from the town were in Company A of the 116th Regiment of the 29th Infantry Division. They were Virginia National Guard troops, they had never seen combat, and they wanted to be the first to hit the beach. They got their wish. Out of those 35 boys from Bedford, 19 were killed on Omaha Beach. It is [one story after another](#) of heroism, tragedy, and sorrow. For them, this was not just a scene from a movie or a page in a book. This was real, and their families were never the same.

## **5. The Allies fooled the Germans.**

Part of the Allied success lay with the fact that they convinced the German High Command that they were going to land elsewhere. They also had the Germans believing that U.S. General George Patton was going to lead the charge! (The Germans feared Patton more than any other American or British general. Patton would not land on D-Day, but rather two months later. The Allies created fake Army divisions, fake planes, fake tanks, and put them all in fake camps all across Britain. They used fake radio traffic to make sure that the Germans believed that these were real

troop movements. They even came up with phony U.S. Army shoulder patches and "let" the Germans get a hold of these documents! [Britain even used double agents](#) to fool and paralyze German armies on D-Day.

When the Allied paratroopers were flying to France on the night of June 5, 1944, our planes also dropped thin metal strips to confuse German radar stations. On their screens, they could not tell if these were planes or snow! The Allies also dropped little mannequins dressed up as paratroopers! When they hit the ground, they were filled with firecrackers and started exploding! At <https://youtu.be/xfOQuEO9gQg> you can see these little guys at the 1:13 mark in an OSS (early version of the CIA) film from 1943: Plenty of German troops were alarmed by this and thought they were truly under fire. With all these ruses, the Allies were able to pin down and isolate German troops in the first hours of the invasion.

#### **6. The invasion was almost jeopardized by a crossword puzzle!**

In the months leading up to the invasion, secret code words for the British and Canadian landing sites (Gold, Sword, Juno) appeared in crossword puzzles of the *Daily Telegraph* newspaper. Interesting, but MI5 (British military intelligence) concluded that those were common enough words. So, probably no one was leaking out any secret military information. However, beginning one month before the invasion, on 2 MAY, words such as Utah, Omaha (American landing sites), Mulberry (an artificial harbor the Allies would tow across the English Channel), Overlord (the code name for the invasion), and Neptune (the code name for the naval aspect of the invasion) all appeared in the *Daily Telegraph*.

Now Britain's MI5 was suspicious! They finally tracked down the person responsible for putting these code words in the crossword puzzle! He must be a secret agent for the Nazis! He was Mr. Leonard Dawe, the headmaster of a school. The authorities arrested him along with an assistant and grilled them ... but finally concluded that they were innocent. The whole thing was just a ... coincidence. Or was it?

-o-o-O-o-o-

The story of D-Day is filled with hundreds and even thousands of fascinating stories like these. Jeff Sanders' favorite author on the subject is Stephen E. Ambrose. His books "[D-Day: June 6, 1944: The Climactic Battle of World War II](#)," "[Band of Brothers: E Company, 506th Regiment, 101st Airborne from Normandy to Hitler's Eagle's Nest](#)," and "[Citizen Soldiers: The U. S. Army from the Normandy Beaches to the Bulge to the Surrender of Germany](#)" are just superb! Grab a book, learn some more history, think about what really happened, and thank God every day for your freedom. [Source: PJ Media | Jeff Sanders | June 5, 2018 ++]

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## **Desert Storm Memorial Update 09 ► Site Selected**

A federal commission on 21 JUN approved a site on the National Mall for the future National Desert Storm and Desert Shield War (a.k.a. Gulf War) Memorial after several months of debate over whether to choose another location along the Potomac River. The U.S. Commission of Fine Arts voted to place it on one-quarter acre at the southwest corner of 23rd Street and Constitution Avenue, a decision celebrated by supporters who advocated for a spot on the National Mall during the three-year site selection process. Rep. Phil Roe (R-TN), Sen. Joe Donnelly (D-IN), and Joe Davis, spokesman for the Veterans of Foreign Wars, spoke at the commission meeting and urged members to choose the Mall site. "These men and women who went to Desert Shield, Desert Storm put their lives on the line for this country, and they deserve to be placed next to my brothers and sisters who are on that wall in Vietnam, in World War II and Korea, where I served," Roe said.

Four members voted in favor of the location, one opposed it and one member abstained from voting. It was a reversal of their decision in March to put the memorial on the Belvedere, a portion of land along the Potomac River at the western end of Constitution Avenue. The commission was forced to reconsider their previous decision because another federal board tasked with choosing the memorial location – the National Capital Planning Commission –

decided on the 23rd and Constitution site. According to federal statute, both commissions, along with the National Park Service, must agree on a location. The National Desert Storm War Memorial Association, which is responsible for the planning and construction of the memorial, opposed the Belvedere site because it is difficult to access from other war memorials.



Scott Stump, president of the memorial association, opened the meeting by asking commissioners to watch their presentation with “an open mind and objective eyes.” Commissioner Elizabeth Meyer, who voted in opposition to the 23rd and Constitution site, asked the National Park Service and Department of Interior to reflect on the long-term vision for the National Mall. She said it should include more than war memorials. “I’m concerned with the proliferation of war memorials on the National Mall,” Meyer said. “The Mall is public space that symbolizes our collective national identity, and we’re more than wars.”

President Donald Trump signed a resolution in March approving a Desert Storm and Desert Shield memorial in Washington. The association is responsible for all aspects of the memorial, including fundraising, design and construction. It’s estimated to cost about \$25 million and to be completed in 2021. Now that the location has been approved, the National Desert Storm War Memorial Association will move forward with the memorial’s design and fundraising. “This has been the longest, daunting, and most enduring part of our endeavor so far,” the association posted Thursday to its website. “It has also been a very rewarding one.” [Source: Stars & Stripes | Nikki Wentling | June 21, 2018 ++]

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## **Military & Whiskey Bond ► Deep-Seated**

The United States Army turned a ripe 243 years old on 14 JUN, a festive occasion made all the more exceptional because of another special designation occurring on the same day. No, not Flag Day — National Bourbon Day, one of the many nectars as critical to the military’s sustained success as 5.56 ammunition and marriage annulments. Not all bourbons, of course, are whiskey, but those variants produced in America happen to be, and since we’ve decided to delve into whiskey’s deep-seated relationship with American patriots, the adjacent existence of dark drink and duty to country must be recognized.

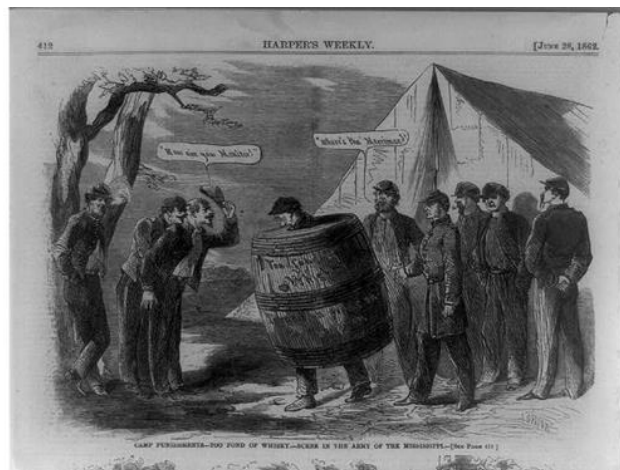
When the Revolutionary War cut off the trade of molasses and inspired disdain toward all things English, the old drink of choice — rum — was abandoned. Whiskey quickly ascended to the throne of American spirits and subsequently entered the hearts of patriots everywhere. The word “whiskey” comes from the original Gaelic term, “uisce beathadh,” which translates to “water of life.” Scour the annals of U.S. military history and evidence of whiskey-induced intoxication is littered throughout — it is the military’s life water. Consider that Congress authorized an actual whiskey ration on Nov. 4, 1775, for Gen. George Washington’s Continental Army, or that exemplary actions on the battlefield were rewarded with even more drunkenness.

In 1794, an uprising of distillers and farmers in Pennsylvania threatened full revolution because of a whiskey tax enacted by the government. This was, of course, appropriately coined the Whiskey Rebellion. By the early 1800s,

the ration was increased, and would serve as an integral component of the Lewis and Clark expedition — and not always a positive one. Journal entries made by Meriwether Lewis during the expedition told of the incessant drunkenness of his company. Take this entry from 1803, for example: September 14, 1803, near Marietta. Set out this morning at 11 oClock [sic] was prevented setting out earlier [sic] in consequence of two of my men getting drunk and absenting themselves. I finally found them and had them brought on board, so drunk that they were unable to help themselves.

Today, just the task of getting your still-smashed roommate to get dressed for morning formation can be as difficult as explaining the theory of relativity to your dog. But imagine making a round-trip journey on foot, by boat and horseback spanning a total of about 8,000 miles — from the St. Louis-area to the Pacific coast in Oregon and back — while most of your party is continuously hammered. And don't forget that Lewis was also shot in the leg by a member of his own party during a hunt. Wonder how that happened... Decades later during the Civil War, the drink would be used by medics to treat patients, employed to quell the nerves of soldiers and, most commonly, heavily consumed during breaks in the chaos.

Just look at the cartoon below from an 1862 issue of Harper's Weekly. Some poor sap — probably named Jedediah or Thaddeus or something 1860-ish — who inevitably had too much bark juice is given the dubious honor of donning the 1800s-era drunk tank — an actual whiskey barrel — while his friends stand around taunting him. “Nice barrel, moron!” Imagine enduring a brutal hangover and fighting a war while wearing a barrel. Not all heroes wear capes.



**A page from Harper's Weekly in 1862 depicts a soldier from the Army of the Mississippi wearing an antiquated drunk tank — a whiskey barrel — as punishment for excessive intoxication.**

President Abraham Lincoln, too, developed an appreciation for the drink while valuing the military tactics of Union Gen. Ulysses S. Grant, a man of renowned drinking ability. In this excerpt from a October 1863 New York Times article, Lincoln was questioned about Grant's recurrent inebriation.

*“When some one charged Gen. Grant, in the President's hearing, with drinking too much liquor, Mr. Lincoln, recalling Gen. Grant's successes, said that if he could find out what brand of whisky [sic] Grant drank, he would send a barrel of it to all the other commanders.”*

Fast forward to today, and whiskey remains the preeminent alcohol of choice for Americans, especially among those serving in the armed forces. In fact, no U.S. demographic purchases more Jack Daniel's “By The Barrel,” a bottling program started in 1997, than the military. “Over the entire span of when the program has existed, the U.S. military is the largest purchaser,” Jack Daniel's Master Distiller Jeff Arnett told Business Insider in 2016. “It has been represented by base exchanges, individual units, as well as other on-base military entities like Officers' Clubs.”

So raise your shot glass to the Army for number 243, or make yourself a cocktail, and take pride in the interminable impairment of your forefathers. Whiskey is, after all, the water of life, beating through the very veins of military personnel everywhere. [Source: MilitaryTimes | J.D. Simkins | June 14, 2018 ++]

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## National Museum of the U.S. Navy Update 01 ► DC's Secret Amazing Museum

The National Museum of the United States Navy (NMUSN) is tough to visit but absolutely jam-packed with fascinating stuff. Though the NMUSN is free and open to the public, it's on the Washington Navy Yard - a military base that intentionally deters casual visitors. Over the years, tightened security has made it more difficult for nonmilitary folks to go inside. It's not impossible, just intimidating - the "Warning, This Property Patrolled by Police Dog Teams" signs and stern men with giant guns certainly gave me pause. But all you need is a driver's license and a felony-free record, and you can enter the base at the visitors' gate at 11th and O streets SE, and then just walk yourself to the museum.

The Washington Post's Sadie Dingfelder recommends visiting the NMUSN if only for the opportunity to see what's inside the Navy Yard's foreboding brick walls. On a recent visit, she caught a glimpse of the chief of naval operations' beautiful Georgian house, heard a Navy band practicing and wandered around a field strewn with interesting artifacts, including the top of a World War II submarine. It was a weekday, so she saw only a handful of people walking around - mostly office workers out for an early lunch - and the museum was practically deserted. She thought she was totally alone until, about an hour into her visit, two children appeared out of nowhere and trampled over her feet. "Sorry!" their mom called out to me. The three of them were there for a ceremony of some kind, and the kids were having a great time climbing enormous WWII anti-aircraft artillery, an activity that is allowed - encouraged, even - according to signs on the guns.

The NMUSN has a wonderfully old-fashioned approach to interactivity. In addition to the climbable artillery, there's a replica battleship bridge with turning wheels and cranking cranks, and two working submarine periscopes, one of which was trained on an overturned boat in the Anacostia River. "We think it was abandoned by a drug dealer during a police chase," a museum staff member said of the boat. "It's been there since February." Sadie had a lot of questions for her, because - while this Navy museum has tons of amazing stuff on display - the signage is a bit lacking.



Visitors to the National Museum of the United States Navy view works of art from the Navy's Combat Art Program on March 5, 2018 in Washington.

For instance, she couldn't find any information on the strange orange glider hanging in the museum's World War II gallery. "That's a kamikaze training airplane," the staff member told me, adding, "Yes, there was a training program to become a kamikaze pilot." She also explained a U-shaped machine gun on display near some WWII anti-aircraft artillery. "It's from a Japanese torpedo plane that was shot down" by an American ship, she said. "It crashed into the

ship and got bent around one of the ship's guns." The American artillery continued to work even after the Japanese airplane crashed into it and set it on fire, she added with pride.

Admiration for Navy engineering is evident throughout this museum, and that point is driven home by its largest artifact: the bathyscaphe Trieste, a 50-foot-long deep-water research vessel that consists of a huge gasoline tank with a claustrophobic compartment for riders stuck to the bottom. Nearby, Sadie found a Navy submariner giving an ad hoc tour to his wife. The Trieste, he said, touched down at the deepest part of the ocean - about 35,800 feet beneath the surface - in 1960. "They literally just went down there, peeked out of the window, saw some fish no one had ever seen before, and went right back up," the submariner said. "No one ever went again until James Cameron in 2012."

Sadie spent most of her time in the World War II gallery, but sections devoted to other conflicts were equally fascinating. The Cold War gallery, for instance, includes a Viet Cong water mine, a landing vehicle from the Korean War and an enormous nuclear missile (emptied of its payload, I assume) that was toted around by American submarines at the height of America's stalemate with the former USSR. Going backward in history, she found the museum's most impressive artifact in its Revolutionary War section. There, alongside all sorts of old swords, guns and cannons, is the original fighting deck from the USS Constitution, a high perch for sailors to stand on while shooting their muskets at enemy ships.

This is illustrated by two dusty mannequins that appear to be historic artifacts themselves which date to about 1963, when the NMUSN opened. Base security was so relaxed in the museum's early years, entire busloads of tourists regularly stopped by. These days, the museum mostly seems to host school groups and military ceremonies. That's too bad, because the NMUSN is full of fascinating artifacts and it's quiet, which is a nice contrast to the crowded American history museums of the National Mall. Still, she hopes to see bigger crowds there in the future. If the Navy Yard's high walls cause us to forget that this excellent museum exists, it might just disappear forever.

If you go the Museum is easy to get into - just walk right in Mondays-Fridays, 9 a.m.-5 p.m., or Saturdays, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. But there's a catch: First, you have to get through the gates at the Washington Navy Yard. This is no problem if you're a military member, employee or contractor with a CAC (Common Access Card) - just swipe yourself in at any of the four gates around the base. Everyone else must go through the Visitor Control Center (VCC) at 11th and O streets SE and pass a quick background check. At the VCC, they'll check your driver's license and ask you to fill out a two-page form. The process took Sadie about 20 minutes. Once you pass, you'll be fingerprinted and photographed, handed a temporary pass and sent on your way. (Almost everyone passes except for convicted felons, staff say.) There's one more catch: If you want to visit on a Saturday, you must submit your access request two weeks in advance, because the VCC is open only on weekdays. To arrange a weekend visit, call 202-685-0589.

A note about transportation: The VCC is located on the far eastern side of the Washington Navy Yard, more than a mile from the Eastern Market or Navy Yard-Ballpark Metro stations. There's no parking, so your best bet is to take a dockless bike-share or scooter-share. That way, when you're done with your visit, you can exit the base from a more convenient gate than the one you entered through, such as the gate at the edge of Yards Park. [Source: Washington Post | Sadie Dingfelder | June 14, 2018 ++]

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## **Rosenberg Execution** ► **Case Remains Controversial To This Day**

On 19 JUN 1953, Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, who were convicted of conspiring to pass U.S. atomic secrets to the Soviets, were executed by the electric chair at Sing Sing Prison in Ossining, New York. Both refused to admit any wrongdoing and proclaimed their innocence right up to the time of their deaths. The Rosenbergs were the first U.S. citizens to be convicted and executed for espionage during peacetime and their case remains controversial to this day.

Julius Rosenberg was an engineer for the U.S. Army Signal Corps who was born in New York on May 12, 1918. His wife, born Ethel Greenglass, also in New York, on September 28, 1915, worked as a secretary. The couple met as



members of the Young Communist League, married in 1939 and had two sons. Julius Rosenberg was arrested on suspicion of espionage on June 17, 1950, and accused of heading a spy ring that passed top-secret information concerning the atomic bomb to the Soviet Union. Ethel was arrested two months later. The Rosenbergs were implicated by David Greenglass, Ethel's younger brother and a former army sergeant and machinist at Los Alamos, the secret atomic bomb lab in New Mexico. Greenglass, who himself had confessed to providing nuclear secrets to the Soviets through an intermediary, testified against his sister and brother-in-law in court. He later served 10 years in prison. After a brief trial that began on March 6, 1951, and attracted much media attention, the couple was convicted. On April 5, 1951, a judge sentenced them to death and the pair was taken to Sing Sing to await execution.

During the next two years, the couple became the subject of both national and international debate. Some people believed that the Rosenbergs were the victims of a surge of hysterical anti-communist feeling in the United States, and protested that the death sentence handed down was cruel and unusual punishment. Many Americans, however, believed that the Rosenbergs had been dealt with justly. They agreed with President Dwight D. Eisenhower when he issued a statement declining to invoke executive clemency for the pair. He stated, "I can only say that, by immeasurably increasing the chances of atomic war, the Rosenbergs may have condemned to death tens of millions of innocent people all over the world. The execution of two human beings is a grave matter. But even graver is the thought of the millions of dead whose deaths may be directly attributable to what these spies have done."



Julius Rosenberg was the first to be executed, at about 8 p.m. on June 19, 1953. Just a few minutes after his body was removed from the chamber containing the electric chair, Ethel Rosenberg was led in and strapped to the same chair. She was pronounced dead at 8:16 p.m. Both refused to admit any wrongdoing and proclaimed their innocence right up to the time of their deaths. Two sons, Michael and Robert, survived them.

The timing of when their case came to trial arguably played a key role in how justice was served. They were accused of passing top-secret information concerning the design and use of the atomic bomb to the Soviet Union during the Cold War between the United States and the communist nation, still headed at the time by the ruthless Joseph Stalin. These tensions were also being played out in the Korean War, a proxy war between east and west then taking place on the Korean peninsula. "Most historians would agree that they would not face the death penalty if they were put on trial at any time other than the early 1950s," noted Lori Clune, PhD, associate professor of history at California State University, Fresno, and author of the 2016 book 'Executing the Rosenbergs: Death and Diplomacy in a Cold War World'. [Source: This Day in History | June 19, 2018 ++]

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## **Military History Anniversaries ► 01 thru 15 July**

Significant events in U.S. Military History over the next 15 days are listed in the attachment to this Bulletin titled, "Military History Anniversaries 01 thru 15 JUL. [Source: This Day in History [www.history.com/this-day-in-history](http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history) | June 2018 ++]

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**WWII Bomber Nose Art [09] ▶ To Each His Own**



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**Medal of Honor Citations ▶ Ross F. Gray | WWII**



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

**ROSS FRANKLIN GRAY**

**Rank and organization:** Sergeant, U.S. Marine Corps Reserve Co. A, 1st Bn. 25th Marines 4<sup>th</sup> Mar Div.

**Place and date:** Iwo Jima, Volcano Islands 21 February 1945

**Entered service:** Birmingham, Alabama on July 22, 1942.

**Born:** August 1, 1920 Marvel Valley, Alabama.

**Citation**

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty as a Platoon Sergeant attached to Company A, 1st Battalion, 25th Marines, 4th Marine Division, in action against enemy Japanese forces on Iwo Jima, Volcano Islands, 21 February 1945. Shrewdly gauging the tactical situation when his platoon was held up by a sudden barrage of hostile grenades while advancing toward the high ground northeast of Airfield No. 1, Sgt. Gray promptly organized the withdrawal of his men from enemy grenade range, quickly moved forward alone to

reconnoiter and discovered a heavily mined area extending along the front of a strong network of emplacements joined by covered trenches. Although assailed by furious gunfire, he cleared a path leading through the minefield to one of the fortifications, then returned to the platoon position and, informing his leader of the serious situation, volunteered to initiate an attack under cover of 3 fellow marines. Alone and unarmed but carrying a huge satchel charge, he crept up on the Japanese emplacement, boldly hurled the short-fused explosive and sealed the entrance. Instantly taken under machinegun fire from a second entrance to the same position, he unhesitatingly braved the increasingly vicious fusillades to crawl back for another charge, returned to his objective and blasted the second opening, thereby demolishing the position. Repeatedly covering the ground between the savagely defended enemy fortifications and his platoon area, he systematically approached, attacked and withdrew under blanketing fire to destroy a total of 6 Japanese positions, more than 25 troops and a quantity of vital ordnance gear and ammunition. Stouthearted and indomitable, Sgt. Gray had single-handedly overcome a strong enemy garrison and had completely disarmed a large minefield before finally rejoining his unit. By his great personal valor, daring tactics and tenacious perseverance in the face of extreme peril, he had contributed materially to the fulfillment of his company mission. His gallant conduct throughout enhanced and sustained the highest traditions of the U.S. Naval Service.



Gray enlisted in the Marine Corps Reserve in Birmingham, Alabama on July 22, 1942, and was assigned to active duty the same day. After receiving his recruit training at Parris Island, South Carolina, he went to New River, North Carolina, and in September joined the 23rd Marines, 4th Marine Division. Promoted to private first class in April 1943, he was transferred to Company A, 1st Battalion 25th Marines, a month later.

Private First Class Gray left for overseas duty on January 13, 1944 and landed at Kwajalein in the Marshall Islands where he took part in the Roi-Namur campaign. He was made an engineering corporal in March and in June made another assault landing — this time at Saipan. At the conclusion of the fighting at Saipan, Cpl. Gray took part in the landing on Tinian Island, also in the Marianas.

Promoted to sergeant in August, he attended the 4th Marine Division Mine and Booby Trap School, upon completion of which he was rated qualified to instruct troops in the laying of mine fields; the reconnaissance of enemy minefields, day and night; the location, neutralization, disarming, and removal of mines; the neutralization of booby-trapped mines; and the day and night clearance of lanes through minefields. Examined and found qualified for promotion to the rank of staff sergeant, Sgt. Gray, due to the lack of openings for that rate in his organization, was never promoted to the third pay grade.

Although he remained unscratched through his twelve trips back and forth among enemy mines, constantly under heavy fire, Sgt. Gray was killed six days later, on February 27, 1945, by an enemy shell which inflicted fatal wounds in his legs.

For his personal valor, daring tactics, and tenacious perseverance in the face of extreme peril on February 21, Sgt Gray was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor by President Harry S. Truman. The coveted award was presented to the hero's father by Rear Admiral A. S. Merrill, United States Navy, then Commandant of the Eighth

Naval District, at the football field at Centreville High School in the presence of the Governor of the State of Alabama, Chauncey Sparks, on April 16, 1946.

Sergeant Gray was initially buried in the 4th Marine Division Cemetery on Iwo Jima, but later his remains were returned to the United States for private burial in Woodstock, Alabama. The frigate USS Gray (FF-1054) was named for Sergeant Gray.

[Source: <https://history.army.mil/moh/wwII-g-1.html> | June 2018 ++]

## \* Health Care \*



## Fireworks & PTSD Update 01 ► 4<sup>th</sup> of July Warning

For some, 4th of July brings to mind the smell of burgers on the grill or the celebratory fireworks lighting up the night sky. But for some Veterans, typical Independence Day celebrations include reminders that trigger uneasiness and discomfort. We've gathered a few pointers to help make this 4th of July enjoyable for all — especially those who have served our country in the military.

### For Veterans: Planning Ahead

1. You can let your family and friends know if something makes you feel uncomfortable. Recognizing your triggers ahead of time can help avoid bigger problems down the road. Common symptoms experienced around July 4th may include:
  - Light sensitivity to fireworks and sparklers, especially at night.
  - Sound irritability from fireworks and ceremonial gun and cannon fire.
  - Uneasiness or feeling on edge in crowds.
  - Flashbacks due to sounds or smells
2. Check out stories from other Veterans who found treatment for light or noise irritation [here](#).
3. Practice a few [self-help tips or relaxation exercises](#) to relieve feelings of uneasiness.

### For friends or family: Paying Attention

1. If you are hosting a 4th of July party or picnic, you can ask ahead of time if any Veterans you invite have difficulty around the holiday. It doesn't hurt to ask.
2. Consider safe alternatives to your typical Independence Day celebrations. For example, if a Veteran friend or family member is alarmed by the loud sound of fireworks, you can suggest that your group use sparklers instead.

For Mike, featured in the video at <https://youtu.be/4xSv-roemVw>, and other Veterans who are sensitive to noise or bright lights, anxiety caused by loud noises and unexpected flashes of light during 4th of July celebrations can take a toll. Hear Mike describe these symptoms and effective coping skills. During the battle of Fallujah, Mike, a Marine officer, was wounded. He was told he had PTSD, but he thought it would go away on its own. He experienced

severe headaches, problems with anger, and light sensitivity. After a friend encouraged him to seek support from VA, Mike began treatment for PTSD and TBI and is on the road to recovery. [Source: Vantage Point | June 29, 2018 ++]

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## Toxic Exposure | Patrick AFB ► Florida DOH Gathering Data

The Florida Department of Health is gathering data from current and former residents who are concerned their cancers may be linked to living near Patrick Air Force Base, the agency confirmed 14 JUN. The agency’s interest was first posted on a Facebook community page for Satellite Beach. Residents there have been tracking the issue since the Pentagon’s issued its first-ever [public report](#) this March on the levels of water contamination at current and former military installations, including Patrick. Since then, the number of current and former residents coming forward to say they lived on or near the base and have cancer has grown.

“The department was contacted by a concerned citizen regarding an area in Brevard County and is currently working to gather more information related to their concerns,” said Florida Department of Health spokesman Devin Galetta. The county lies on Florida’s east coast and includes Patrick Air Force Base and Cape Canaveral Air Force Station. “While this is not a formal investigation, the department does recognize the importance of gathering and assessing any information to help us determine necessary next steps,” Galetta said. “Our current goal is to continue encouraging any concerned citizens in the community to provide further information to the local county health department to aid in that assessment.” Galetta said they put the initial concerned resident in touch with the Florida statewide cancer registry and “will work with the county health department and the state’s epidemiology division to determine any necessary next steps.”

On the community Facebook page, dozens of current or former residents wrote in with personal stories of cancer battles and questions as to what they should do next. Almost two decades ago, the community around Patrick was [was identified](#) as having an unusually high rate of Hodgkin’s lymphoma, although no root cause was identified. In California, a similar [Facebook support group](#) supports former service members or family who were stationed at the now-closed George Air Force Base. Those members report an unusual number of miscarriages and cancers. The communities’ concerns come as Congress has funded a separate, first-of-its-kind study on the long-term effects of perfluorooctane sulfonate or perfluorooctanoic acid, also known as PFOS and PFOAs, compounds that are widely used in household goods, but concentrated in the foam used to put out aircraft fires.

The congressional study will be conducted by the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR), with support from the Department of Defense’s Office of Health Affairs. The nationwide study will include an exposure assessment at “no less than eight domestic DoD installations,” said Steve Jones, DoD’s director of force readiness and health assurance policy at the office health affairs. Those results will be used in a larger, follow-on review that will include non-DoD locations as well to “better define potential health outcomes associated with [the compounds,]” Jones said. The study is expected to take seven years to complete, Jones said. ATSDR has found that exposure to the compounds may increase risks for cancer, affect female fertility and increase the risks of birth defects, among other health risks.

DoD has been looking more closely at the compounds since 2012, when the Environmental Protection Agency first put out a requirement to test for them, said Jones. However, DoD has used the foams containing PFOS and PFOA since the 1970s. DoD officials have stressed that they relied on the Environmental Protection Agency to determine if the compounds were harmful. Once the 2012 EPA requirement and the agency’s subsequent 2016 recommendation on levels of exposure came out, DoD took steps to protect both on-base and off-base populations from exposure, including providing alternate drinking water and closing contaminated wells. All of DoD’s actions

to date can be found in the report they provided to Congress, which is searchable [here](#), in a database compiled by Military Times. [Source: MilitaryTimes | Tara Copp | June 14, 2018 ++]

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## **NDAA 2019 Update 06 ► Stop Another Year of TRICARE Fee Increases**

The House and Senate have both passed their respective 2019 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) proposals. The Senate's version shows currently serving TRICARE beneficiaries would experience zero to minimal relief on their existing higher cost shares. Even worse, retirees and their families under age 65 are targeted for another round of excessive increases to their TRICARE Prime and TRICARE Select enrollment fees. These proposed fee increases are set to be implemented just as a large percentage of currently serving members - those who have served their entire careers during wartime - become eligible for retirement. MOAA viewed last year's large fee increases as a break in faith with currently serving families and those who have served full careers - this proposal by the Senate expedites the erosion of the service-earned health care benefit.

These TRICARE fee increases amount to taking real money right off the top of servicemembers' retirements. Most of those servicemembers have endured multiple deployments to war zones. This Congress has the fewest number of veterans in decades, causing a misunderstanding of what life has been like for these servicemembers and their families for the past 17 years. Reflecting on these members' service might be more appropriate than placing an additional tax on benefits earned through sacrifice. MOAA's key concerns are:

- The proposal will result in zero to minimal reductions in cost shares for most beneficiaries. Grandfathered Prime retirees are already paying higher copays that match those of new entrants due to the increases which the Defense Health Agency implemented Jan. 1.
- Unfortunately this proposal does NOT address one of MOAA's objections to the current copayment structure. That is the extraordinarily high copays for outpatient therapies requiring recurring appointments. For example physical/speech/occupational therapy and mental health visits are considered specialty care and are associated with much higher copays. These high costs would run unabated for many beneficiaries and serves as a barrier for beneficiary adherence to treatment plans.
- The proposal targets retirees under age 65 for steep increases to grandfathered retiree enrollment fees. For example, TRICARE Prime enrollment fees increase 21 percent and TRICARE Select families would confront an unprecedented (and unexpected) fee of \$450 for individuals and \$900 on families.
- The proposal creates a new non-network deductible for TRICARE Select retirees. Select retirees would have to pay the first \$300 (individual) or \$600 (family) in medical expenses when using non-network providers even though at least 15 percent of beneficiaries don't have the option of choosing network providers because TRICARE Select was designed to cover only 85 percent of the beneficiary population. And the existing provider network has not yet reached this contractual requirement.

Last year's TRICARE fee increases were disproportionately high and broke faith with currently serving families and those who have served full careers. The addition of these new Senate-proposed fee increases do nothing but place a more disproportionate burden on military beneficiaries with the sole intent of raising revenues for defense programs unrelated to the costs of health care. Reader are requested to contact their legislators and let them know of your concerns. At <http://takeaction.moaa.org/moaa/app/write-a-letter?2&engagementId=486485> MOAA has provided an editable letter that readers can use to send to their legislators with the click of a tab. [Source: The MOAA Newsletter | Kathryn M. Beasley | June 28, 2018 ++]

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## Medicaid Fraud Update 95 ► \$137 Billion Annually

Anti-fraud specialists at the joint federal-state Medicaid program are failing to effectively combat improper payments, which have risen by 157 percent since 2013, according to a report released 20 JUN by the chairman of the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee. The \$37 billion that annually goes to fraudsters represents 26 percent of government wide improper payments and shows that the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services is a “poor steward” of Medicaid dollars, wrote Sen. Ron Johnson (R-WI) in the report released by the majority staff in time for a hearing that ended up being postponed.

“CMS has not taken basic steps to fight Medicaid fraud, including reviewing federal eligibility determinations for accuracy and even creating an antifraud strategy,” Johnson said, citing multiple Government Accountability Office reports showing a continuing problem. “CMS must take proactive steps and make a serious commitment to reduce Medicaid fraud and improve program integrity,” he said, pointing to tools provided under updates to the improper payments statutes and the 2010 Affordable Care Act. “Since 2015, GAO has made 11 separate anti-fraud recommendations to CMS,” the report said. “CMS has implemented none.” Johnson accused the agency of “conducting only irregular, highly flawed audits of Medicaid providers and failing to meet annual deadlines for program integrity reporting to Congress.”

Watchdogs have documented fraudulent Medicaid payments totaling more than \$1 billion just in eight states—California, New York, Kentucky, Illinois, Arizona, Florida, Michigan, and New Jersey, the report noted. Johnson called Medicaid fraud “rampant,” noting that GAO warned in its most recent high risk report that “CMS’s improper payment rate estimates may be inaccurate.”

Johnson’s report—which was not signed by committee Democrats—comes as the Trump administration is raising alarms about high spending on Medicare and Medicaid. CMS Administrator Seema Verma last month told the American Hospital Association that Medicare “spending on prescription drugs is growing more quickly than spending on any other area. Spending is also on the rise in Medicaid, with expensive new therapies putting a strain on state budgets. The status quo simply is unsustainable.”

In his report, Johnson heaps some blame for undetected fraud on Obamacare. “With the [Affordable Care Act’s] reimbursement formula giving states an incentive to enroll more beneficiaries to obtain more federal money, CMS has allowed certain states to game the system,” he said. “California, for example, has received a share of Medicaid expansion dollars vastly disproportionate to other states, even while California officials gave Medicaid money to ineligible people.” In 2015, GAO reported that while CMS had helped state Medicaid programs implement systems to detect overpayments, “it had failed to require states to measure whether those systems worked,” Johnson’s report said. “With no requirement, most states did not implement metrics to measure success. Around that time, Medicaid improper payments began rising, going from \$14.4 billion in 2013—the year before Obamacare took effect—to \$37 billion in 2017—a 157 percent increase.

In another criticism of the health law, Johnson back in April wrote to Verma urging CMS to review the practice of “dues skimming,” in which states allow unions to classify home health care workers as government employees for purposes of collecting union dues from Medicaid payments. Dues skimming “allows states to take an estimated \$200 million each year in union dues—money that would otherwise help for the care of Medicaid beneficiaries,” Johnson wrote. Verma said in a 13 JUN letter that CMS is reviewing possible changes in enforcement.

A new survey of CMS and other federal employees involved in combating improper payments showed that agencies believe they are understaffed, and acknowledge they don’t have a handle on the long-standing problem of maintaining program integrity. “We wholeheartedly agree with Chairman Johnson that taxpayers deserve to know that their hard-earned money is not being wasted,” Verma said in a statement to Government Executive. “Medicaid expenditures have grown rapidly and are consuming ever-increasing shares of state budgets. We have a responsibility to make sure that federal dollars are spent only on those who are truly eligible, even as we return greater control of the Medicaid

program to the states. This is why our vision for transforming the Medicaid program is grounded on three principles: greater flexibility, stronger accountability and enhanced program integrity."

Survey results published 20 JUN by Government Executive Media Group's Government Business Council suggest that successful program integrity frameworks are the exception, not the rule, in health agencies. The survey, which was underwritten by KPMG, showed that only 36 percent of respondents acknowledge and approve of the framework their agency has in place, while as many as 28 percent do not believe it has been effective. Confidence in their ability to curb improper payments differed greatly between respondents who feel their agency has a clear program integrity framework. As many as 54 percent of those citing such a framework are confident in their ability to prevent such payments, while only 32 percent of those without such a framework expressed confidence. Of all respondents, 53 percent said their agency does not possess sufficient personnel to run program operations effectively, 35 percent said they lacked the required information technology, and 35 percent pointed to a lack of organizational collaboration.

Senate committee staffers did not responded to inquiries about why Wednesday's hearing was postponed. It was to feature as witnesses Comptroller General Gene Dodaro and Health and Human Services Department Inspector General Daniel Levinson. Sen. Tom Carper (D-DE) just a week earlier had hailed the committee's approval of two bipartisan bills to curb improper payments. The Stopping Improper Payments to Deceased People Act (S. 2374) would provide agencies with more accurate data through greater information sharing between agencies. And the Payment Integrity Information Act of 2018 (S. 2948) would require agencies to undertake additional efforts and develop plans to prevent improper payments and improve the way they identify programs with the highest risks. [Source: GovExec.com | Charles S. Clark | June 20, 2018 ++]

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## Medicare Cataract Coverage ► What You Should Know

Medicare covers many medically necessary surgical procedures, like cataract surgery. For surgeries or procedures, it's hard to know the exact costs in advance. This is because no one knows exactly what services you'll need. If you need surgery or a procedure, you may be able to estimate how much you'll have to pay. You can:

1. Ask the doctor, hospital, or facility how much you'll have to pay for the surgery and any care afterward.
2. Find out if you're an inpatient or outpatient because what you pay may be different.
3. Check with any other insurance you may have to see what it will pay. If you belong to a Medicare health plan, contact your plan for more information. Other insurance might include:
  - Medicare Supplement Insurance (Medigap) policy
  - Medicaid
  - Coverage from your or your spouse's employer
4. Log into MyMedicare.gov, or look at your last "Medicare Summary Notice" (MSN) to see if you've met your deductibles.
  - Check your Part A deductible if you expect to be admitted to the hospital.
  - Check your Part B deductible for a doctor's visit and other outpatient care.
  - You'll need to pay the deductible amounts before Medicare will start to pay. After Medicare starts to pay, you may have copayments for the care you get.

Your doctor or other health care provider may recommend you get services more often than Medicare covers. Or, they may recommend services that Medicare doesn't cover. If this happens, you may have to pay some or all of the costs. Ask questions so you understand why your doctor is recommending certain services and whether Medicare will pay for them.

Related resources



**Eyeglasses/contact lenses** - Generally, Medicare doesn't cover eyeglasses or contact lenses. However, following cataract surgery that implants an intraocular lens, Medicare Part B (Medical Insurance) helps pay for corrective lenses (one pair of eyeglasses with standard frames or one set of contact lenses). Medicare covers the surgery if it's done using traditional surgical techniques or using lasers. Medicare will only pay for contact lenses or eyeglasses provided by a supplier enrolled in Medicare no matter who submits the claim (you or your supplier). Your out of pocket costs will be:

- 20% of the Medicare-approved amount for one pair of eyeglasses or one set of contact lenses after each cataract surgery with an intraocular lens.
- Any additional costs for upgraded frames.
- 100% for non-covered services, including most eyeglasses or contact lenses.
- The Part B deductible applies.

[Source: Medicare.gov | June 21, 2018 ++]

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## Food Poisoning Update 02 ► Tips to Avoid

Summertime is filled with special occasions focused on family, friends, and food. While cookouts and picnics are fun, food preparation and storage is a serious consideration in the summer months. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) report that each year, nearly 48 million people get sick from a foodborne illness. Although proper preparation and prevention help reduce the chances of getting sick from food, it's also important to be familiar with your TRICARE treatment options.

Symptoms of foodborne illness, also called food poisoning, occurs when contaminated food is eaten and causes an adverse reaction. This reaction may differ among various illness strains, but most include stomach cramping, vomiting, and diarrhea. Pregnant women, young children, older adults, and individuals with conditions causing a weakened immune system are at an increased risk for food poisoning. Most food poisoning symptoms are minor and will get better without treatment. If symptoms continue or worsen, see your doctor or seek urgent care. You can also contact the Military Health System Nurse Advice Line (MHS NAL) 24/7 with urgent care questions. In the U.S., call 1-800-TRICARE (1-800-874-2273) and select option 1. On the MHS NAL website, you can also chat with a nurse or find country-specific phone numbers.

According to the CDC, following four simple steps at home — clean, separate, cook, and chill — can help protect you and your loved ones from food poisoning.

- **Clean** - Wash your hands and clean kitchen surfaces often when cooking. Use soap and warm water when washing hands and make sure to wash continuously for at least 20 seconds. Wash your cookware and utensils thoroughly.
- **Separate** - Keep foods apart and don't cross-contaminate. Keep raw meat, poultry, seafood, and eggs separate from all other foods in the refrigerator and when grocery shopping. Use separate cutting boards and plates for these foods before they're cooked.
- **Cook thoroughly** - Consider your food safely cooked when the internal temperature gets high enough to kill germs. You can check the temperature of your food by using a food thermometer. Use this chart for comparing food temperatures.
- **Chill** - Refrigerate perishable food within two hours - within one hour if the outdoor temperature is above 90°F. Thaw frozen foods in the refrigerator, in cold water, or in the microwave. Don't leave food at room temperature where bacteria can easily grow.

Go to [https://tricare.mil/CoveredServices/BenefitUpdates/Archives/06\\_13\\_18\\_summer\\_safety\\_tips](https://tricare.mil/CoveredServices/BenefitUpdates/Archives/06_13_18_summer_safety_tips) and check out more tips from TRICARE to help you enjoy a safe and healthy summer. [Source: TRICARE Communications | June 21, 2018 ++]

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## **Canada/Mexico Prescription Drugs Update 01 ► Increased Mail Seizures**

The U.S. government has stepped up seizures of drugs ordered by Americans from international sources through the mail—including cheaper, legal medications from legitimate pharmacies, non-profit Tarbell has found. The interdiction is linked to new efforts by Food and Drug Administration and other parts of the federal government to block prohibited opiate deliveries. But the dragnet is catching increasing numbers of orders by individual Americans seeking medicines that are less costly or only available internationally—a practice that has not been the target of federal enforcement—until now.

“Something is really stupid. The government is supposed to help the American citizen, not hinder them,” said Francis Donnelly, an 85-year-old retiree in New Jersey. Donnelly recently was notified by the FDA that it had intercepted his order of a drug called Asacol, which he’s been taking for decades to treat Crohn’s disease and ulcerative colitis. He has to get it overseas because its manufacturer stopped making it in the United States just before its patent expired in 2013. Donnelly said he and his doctor could not find alternatives that worked as well.

The FDA began committing more money and staff to intercepting drugs at the nation’s nine international mail facilities in October 2017. In a recent post, the FDA noted that it intercepted 10,231 packages of drugs in the 2017 fiscal year. This year, the agency intends to quadruple that number to 40,000, and as soon as possible to 100,000 a year. It’s already expanded the team of investigators in mail facilities from eight to 22. An FDA spokeswoman confirmed the pace is rising. In the first eight months of Fiscal Year 2018 (October 1, 2017 – May 31, 2018), a total of 19,318 FDA-regulated products, consisting primarily of drugs, offered for import through the international mail facilities were refused admission into the United States. 18,388 were returned to sender. 930 products (all drugs) were destroyed.

That tally likely includes the seizure of Donnelly’s medication, which he learned of in early April. For that order, he used the online branch of a business called The Canadian MedStore that primarily serves people in Florida through a string of six storefronts. The business, according to founder William Hepscher, aims to help consumers gain safe access to overseas drugs by steering customers toward pharmacies that require prescriptions, are closely regulated in the countries where they are located, and ship genuine products. Hepscher’s stores were raided in October 2017 just as the FDA was ramping up its efforts to block international shipments of medication.

Since then, Hepscher says he has gotten steady complaints from individual customers whose medication has been seized. Dozens of notices forwarded to Tarbell list treatments for asthma, blood pressure, multiple sclerosis, and diabetes, among others. In at least one instance in November, armed agents knocked on a retiree’s door and warned the man he could be arrested and prosecuted if he kept buying his less expensive medication, Hepscher said. The agent who interviewed that customer did not return a call seeking comment. “People are feeling that their own federal government is threatening them,” said Hepscher. “For 15 years they’ve been allowing this, and now all of a sudden it’s as if they flipped a switch.”

On top of the government actions, Hepscher said he received notice in mid-May that two of his bank accounts were being closed. Both banks, PNC and Regions Bank, declined to explain what precipitated the closures, citing confidentiality. They also declined to explain the actions to Hepscher, he said. Banks can close accounts for any reason, but the simultaneous shuttering at least suggests a governmental impetus. FDA spokeswoman Lyndsay Meyer declined to address any specifics about the MedStore cases, but pointed out that it is illegal to import drugs into the United States without FDA approval. The government generally looks the other way when individuals bring in their

own drugs under the FDA's personal importation policy. Yet the agency retains the discretion to intercept anyone's drug shipment at the border or at the post office. [Source: Prescription Justice | Tarbell | June 14, 2018 ++]

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## Internet Pharmacies Update 01 ► How To Buy Safely

Ever been tempted to buy your medicines from an online pharmacy or another website? Protect yourself and your family by using caution when buying medicine online. There are many pharmacy websites that operate legally and offer convenience, privacy, and safeguards for purchasing medicines. But the U.S. Food and Drug Administration warns that there are many rogue online pharmacies that claim to sell prescription medicines at deeply discounted prices, often without requiring a valid prescription. These Internet-based pharmacies often sell unapproved or counterfeit medicines outside the safeguards followed by licensed pharmacies.

These rogue sites often prominently display a Canadian flag, but may actually be operated by criminals from the other side of the globe with no connection to Canada. Medicines bought from these websites can be dangerous and may put your health at risk. How can you tell if an online pharmacy is operating legally? The FDA's [BeSafeRx](#) can help you identify and avoid fake online pharmacies.

**Signs of a Rogue Online Pharmacy --** Beware of online pharmacies that:

- Allow you to buy prescription medicine without a valid prescription from your health care provider.
- Do not have a U.S. state-licensed pharmacist available to answer your questions.
- Offer very low prices that seem too good to be true.
- Send spam or unsolicited email offering cheap medicine.
- Are located outside of the United States or ship worldwide.

These pharmacies often sell medicines that can be dangerous because they may:

- Have too much or too little of the active ingredient you need to treat your disease or condition.
- Not contain the right active ingredient.
- Contain the wrong or other harmful ingredients.

The active ingredient is what makes the medicine effective for the illness or condition it is intended to treat. If a medicine has unknown active ingredients, it could fail to have the intended effect, could have an unexpected interaction with other medicines you are taking, could cause dangerous side effects, or may cause other serious health problems, such as serious allergic reactions. Also, these medicines may not have been stored properly, such as in a warehouse without necessary temperature controls, which may cause the medicine to be ineffective in treating the disease or condition for which you are taking it.

**Know the Signs of a Safe Online Pharmacy --** There are ways you can identify a safe online pharmacy. They:

- Require a valid prescription from a doctor or another licensed health care professional.
- Are licensed by your state board of pharmacy, or equivalent state agency. (To verify the licensing status of a pharmacy check your [state board of pharmacy](#).)
- Do not appear on the National Association of Boards of Pharmacy's "[List of Not Recommended Websites](#)." (Just because the online pharmacy does not appear on this list does not mean it is safe.)
- Have a U.S. state-licensed pharmacist available to answer your questions.
- Are in the United States, and provide a street address.

Another way to check on a website is to look for the National Association of Boards of Pharmacy's (NABP) Verified Internet Pharmacy Practice Sites™ Seal, also known as the VIPPS® Seal. This seal means that the Internet pharmacy is safe to use because it has met state licensure requirements, as well as other NABP criteria. Visit the [VIPPS website](#) to find legitimate pharmacies that carry the VIPPS® seal.

## Shop Safely Online

- Learn more about the [risks of buying prescription medicine from rogue online pharmacies](#).
- [Report sales of medicine on the Internet](#) by illegal online pharmacies to the FDA.
- [Report adverse effects caused by any medicine](#) to FDA's MedWatch program.
- Visit [FDA's web page on counterfeit medicine](#) for more information.

[Source: FDA Consumer Health Information | January 25, 2018 ++]

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## TRICARE Podcast 454 ► Protecting Your Skin - Tanzeum - Marital Status Changes

**Protecting Your Skin** -- Summer is here and with so many sun-filled fun activities to look forward to, don't let safety take a backseat. Skin protection, especially during the summer, is crucial to ensuring overall health. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the sun's ultraviolet rays can damage your skin in just 15 minutes. The most preventable cause of skin cancer is overexposure to UV light, either from the sun or artificial sources like tanning beds and sunlamps. Both indoor and outdoor tanning can be extremely harmful and should be done in a cautious and mindful manner. You have many options for protecting your skin while outdoors in the sun. Here are some tips to help protect yourself and your family:

- Use sunscreen with SPF 15 or higher. Put on broad-spectrum on all parts of exposed skin before you go outside. Remember, you may need to reapply sunscreen if you're in the sun for more than two hours, and after you swim or sweat excessively.
- Wear clothing to cover your skin. When possible, wear a T-shirt or beach cover-up, in addition to sunscreen.
- Use shade. Reduce your risk of skin damage and skin cancer by seeking shade under an umbrella, tree, or other shelter when the sun's rays are strongest, between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.
- Wear a hat to provide upper body shade. Wear a hat with a wide brim to shade your face, head, ears, and neck.
- And wear sunglasses. Protect your eyes and the skin around your eyes by wearing sunglasses.

TRICARE covers skin cancer exams for people who are at a higher risk for developing skin cancer. This includes individuals with a family or personal history of skin cancer, increased occupational or recreational exposure to sunlight, or clinical evidence of precursor lesions. To learn more about sun safety, visit [cdc.gov/cancer/skin](http://cdc.gov/cancer/skin) .

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**Tanzeum Prescriptions** -- If you're using a pen-injection prescription medication called Tanzeum to aid with managing your Type 2 diabetes, you'll need to switch to an alternative. GlaxoSmithKline PLC recently announced that it will stop manufacturing the drug starting in late July. Tanzeum will continue to be available until the current supply runs out; however, beneficiaries who continue filling prescriptions for the drug after July 24 will be charged a higher copay. You should speak with you provider about preferred alternative medications. Tanzeum prescriptions can be transferred to a brand-name alternative without your provider submitting a new prior authorization. Prior authorization is a routine review process to ensure that the requested medication is safe, cost-effective, and medically required. GlaxoSmithKline said its decision to stop manufacturing Tanzeum was voluntary and not related to any safety concerns.

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**Marital Status Changes** -- Did you get married or divorced recently? If so, you've experienced a TRICARE Qualifying Life Event, or QLE. With TRICARE, QLEs are certain life changes, like moving, getting married or divorced, becoming Medicare-eligible and more. These changes may trigger a change in your TRICARE eligibility and options. A QLE for one family member creates a QLE for all family members. This means all family members may switch enrollment plans when one person in the family has a QLE. Getting married or divorced allows you and

your dependents 90 days to enroll in or change your TRICARE health plan coverage outside of the annual open season. It may allow you to enroll in a new TRICARE plan or change your TRICARE health plan coverage within 90 days of the QLE.

If you get married, register your new spouse in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System, or DEERS. This is the step that will make him or her show as TRICARE-eligible. Your spouse's TRICARE plan options will depend on your beneficiary status and where you live. You must also update DEERS if you get divorced. The sponsor will need to provide a copy of the divorce decree, dissolution or annulment. Former spouses who aren't eligible for TRICARE will no longer be eligible to get health care services under TRICARE. And former spouses who haven't remarried can keep TRICARE in certain situations. If you meet the eligibility requirement, you will be listed in DEERS under your own Social Security number or Department of Defense Benefits Number— not your former sponsor's.

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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 14, 2018 ++]

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## **TRICARE Podcast 456 ► Updating DEERS - Healthy Hydration - Maintaining Dental Health**

**Updating DEERS** -- The Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System, or DEERS, is a database that manages your eligibility status. DEERS is used for all active duty, National Guard and Reserve, and retired service members worldwide and their family members. The information you provide in DEERS confirms your eligibility and your family members' eligibility for TRICARE coverage and programs. It's important to keep your information current, especially during qualifying life events, such as moving, getting married or divorced, and having children. Only sponsors, or a sponsor-appointed individual with valid power of attorney, can add family members in DEERS. When there's a change in information, each family member's DEERS record must be updated separately.

It's important for sponsors to register new spouses and children in DEERS to ensure their TRICARE coverage. The sponsor needs to provide a copy of the marriage or birth certificate and/or adoption papers to the nearest uniformed services ID card office, or to a DEERS representative in remote locations. To find your nearest office, visit [www.dmdc.osd.mil/rsi](http://www.dmdc.osd.mil/rsi). Sponsors must also update DEERS if they divorce. Certain former spouses who haven't remarried may be eligible for continued coverage. Check with the sponsor's service personnel office to verify eligibility and find out what documentation is necessary to continue TRICARE coverage. For more information, visit [www.TRICARE.mil/DEERS](http://www.TRICARE.mil/DEERS).

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**Healthy Hydration** -- We've all seen the TV commercials portraying an athlete consuming a sports drink as a quick way to refuel after an exhausting practice. But what's really in a sports drink? Sports drinks are a blend of carbohydrates, electrolytes, and water. Basically, they're water-based beverages with sugar, salt, and sometimes a few extra micronutrients added in. Generally our bodies are comprised of approximately 60 to 70 percent water. We need water for digestion, energy and oxygen transport, and temperature regulation. We lose water every day, mostly through urination and sweat, and it's up to us to replace it through what we eat and drink.

However, sweat is made up of more than just water alone. We also lose salt, potassium, and other micronutrients such as calcium and magnesium when we sweat. These nutrients, also referred to as electrolytes, are found in many of these foods we eat and help maintain fluid balance and assist in muscle and nerve regulation. Many Americans already consume more salt than what is needed in a day, so it's important to keep an eye on how much of these electrolytes are we consuming versus losing during exercise. Maintaining a balance of these electrolytes and water

in our blood minimizes risk for dehydration. This is why sports drinks typically claim they contain added electrolytes for optimal hydration.

Carbohydrates are our body's main source of energy and can be found in a variety of foods and beverages such as grains, fruit, milk and even some vegetables. During exercise, our body's energy levels become depleted. These fuel levels must be replaced by consuming carbohydrates - often found in sports drinks as sugar. Sugar is a "simple" or "refined" form of carbohydrate that provides easily available energy for our muscles but lacks any extra nutritional value. For this reason, it is important to remember that we can maximize our nutrition when refueling after exercise with whole and minimally processed meals or snacks such as a piece of fruit paired with a glass of milk. For more healthy eating tips, visit [www.cdc.gov/nutrition](http://www.cdc.gov/nutrition).

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**Maintaining Good Dental Health** -- Most of us learned at an early age that brushing and flossing twice daily is an effective way to maintain a healthy mouth. Surveys show, however, that not all adults follow this advice. In fact, the American Dental Association reports that only four of 10 Americans floss at least once a day—and 20 percent never floss at all. Interdental cleaners like floss are a critical part of sound oral hygiene. Plaque between teeth can lead to gum disease or cavities. It's difficult for a toothbrush to reach the areas between teeth. Without regular flossing, plaque and food debris can accumulate and cause decay and disease. When you brush, make sure to use a fluoride toothpaste and brush for two minutes, twice a day. Floss once a day, in the morning or evening, whichever you prefer. In addition to brushing and flossing, visit the dentist regularly.

The TRICARE Dental Program covers yearly diagnostic and preventive services, giving you even more reasons to visit the dentist. During a 12-month period, the TDP covers two routine teeth cleanings. For more information what's covered under the TRICARE Dental Program, visit [www.TRICARE.mil/tdp](http://www.TRICARE.mil/tdp). Since childhood, we have all heard that how daily brushing and flossing is integral to the health of our mouths and bodies. Put that knowledge into action and develop consistent brushing and flossing routines. Paired with regular cleanings and exams and less sugar consumption, you will be on your way to fantastic oral hygiene. Your mouth will thank you!

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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. **Note** – There was no Podcast 455 issued. [Source: <http://www.tricare.mil/podcast> | June 29, 2018 ++]

## \* Finances \*



### **Dumb Things We Pay For** ► **Stop Making Purchases You Don't Need To**

**1. Bottled water** -- When you put down a buck or two for bottled water, you've usually wasted money. What you get in those bottles is sometimes tap water, or maybe filtered water. Avoid that unnecessary purchase by carrying

your own reusable water bottle from home — you can filter it there if your tap water is funky. Or, drink from a fountain. You'll also save the environment from one more plastic bottle.

**2. Books --** It's fun to buy new books. But let's face it: They are expensive, and most of us read them exactly once. There are a few books that it's nice to own — maybe a cookbook or other reference book, or a classic that you read and reread. But most books just fill shelves and collect dust. So, try this: Borrow the book from the nearest public library. After all, you've already paid for it with your tax dollars. Many older books also can be downloaded for free because they are now in the public domain. [Project Gutenberg](#) offers more than 50,000 e-books. Or you can opt for free audiobooks through sites such as [LibriVox](#). You can also buy books used on [Amazon.com](#) or any number of more specialized book websites for a fraction of the cost of a new book. For more, check out "[Five Easy Ways to Get Free Books](#)."

**3. Brand names --** It really makes no sense to pony up for an expensive brand-name bottle of pain reliever. Right next to that medicine, you will find the store brand — same product, different label — for less. For many products, the brand has nothing extra to offer. So, don't pay for the brand. Use generics or store brands, especially for things like over-the-counter medications, cleaning supplies and baking supplies. Just read the labels. If they're the same item, why the heck would you ever pay more?

**4. Credit reports --** You do not need to pay for your credit report. Instead, pull the report — for free — at least once a year. Doing so will help you spot mistakes that could damage your credit. You also can find possible fraudulent activity in your name. There is no charge for one annual report from each of the three major credit-reporting agencies when you go to [AnnualCreditReport.com](#). For all the details, check out: [AnnualCreditReport.com](#). For all the details, check out: "[How to Get Your Full Credit Report in 6 Easy Steps](#)."

**5. Pets --** Do you really need a pet with a pedigree? Or are you just looking for a creature to love? There are so many dogs, cats, bunnies and birds waiting for a home at shelters — and often the cost of spaying/neutering and shots is included in a small fee charged to those who adopt them. Check out the lovable animals at your local shelter before you plunk down money on a "new" pet.

**6. Bank fees --** You put money in the bank, then the bank lends out money for a profit. So, how is it that you need to pay the bank so many fees? It's crazy. There are monthly maintenance fees for checking accounts, overdraft fees, ATM fees for using an out-of-network ATM and many more. You can avoid many of these charges by switching to a smaller bank or local credit union. For more tricks, read "[14 Ways to Avoid Paying Irritating Bank Fees](#)."

**7. Low insurance deductibles --** If you insure yourself so you'll never lose a penny, you'll never have a penny to lose! That's the observation of Money Talks News founder Stacy Johnson, who goes on to say: "\$250 deductibles are common on many car and home insurance policies. Why? Because insurance is normally sold, not bought. In other words, the companies who sell you insurance make more money if you pay more, and you pay more with low-deductible policies." By raising your deductibles — the amount you pay out of pocket before insurance kicks in — you can save hundreds or even thousands of dollars a year on your policy premiums.

**8. Credit card interest --** Let's say you have a credit card balance with a 20 percent interest rate. If that is the case, yet you also have a bunch of money in a savings account earning peanuts, you need to rethink things. Use your savings to pay off the debt. An emergency fund makes sense. But if you're paying high interest while earning low interest, you're on the road to creating an emergency, not solving one. There are exceptions to this rule. For example, if you're unsure about your job security, you certainly want to have a stash of cash available. But if you're about to celebrate the 20th anniversary of your government job, use low-earning savings to pay off high-cost debt.

**9. Basic tax preparation --** If your tax situation isn't that complicated, you should probably be preparing your own tax return using one of the many free online services. It's now common for e-filing to be free as well with many services. You won't even need a stamp. [H&R Block](#) and [TaxAct](#) are a couple of places you can check out to see if you can handle it yourself. There are many other services that are available online you can choose from.

**10. Shipping --** If you're buying something online and it's not an emergency purchase, you can probably benefit by waiting for a shipping discount.

**11. Life insurance for your children --** It's hard to make a case for child life insurance in financial terms. The point of life insurance is to replace lost income, and unless your child is the next Justin Bieber, the kid probably isn't pulling in much of a salary. You might want to buy a policy if your child has a pre-existing medical condition that likely will make it difficult for her or him to buy coverage as an adult. Otherwise, take a pass.

**12. Lots of other stuff --** Before you set out to buy building materials, dance or sports gear, a sewing machine, a chicken coop, a television — pretty much anything — take a quick look at [Craigslist](#) and [Freecycle](#). Both sites list a huge range of stuff that people are getting rid of for cheap or free. Amazing deals can be found.

[Source: MoneyTalksNews | Kari Huus | June 10, 2018++]

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## **Insurance Bundling ► Pros & Cons**

Bundling means buying different types of insurance policies from the same company. For example, you might have your car and home insurance with the same company. You might also have motorcycle, boat and RV coverage with the same company. You can sometimes even bundle life insurance. The idea is that by giving one company all your insurance business, they're going to cut you some slack and give you a discount.

### **Bundling Pros**

One advantage to bundling is you might save some money. According to one source, the average savings on bundling policies in the U.S. is around 16 percent. However, that's going to differ a lot by state. In other words, in some states you'll save more than you will in others. Still, the potential to save money is certainly one of the pros. Another advantage to bundling: It's simpler. You've only got one company to deal with and perhaps only one check to cut if your policies all come due at the same time. You may also have less paperwork to deal with.

### **Bundling Cons**

The primary drawback of bundling is that you might not get the best possible deal. You've got to shop your policies individually and find out what will get you the best deal, both initially and on an ongoing basis. Here's something personal about you that insurance companies know: You hate shopping for insurance. Since insurance companies know this about you, it's possible — even likely — that after you make your initial wonderful bundle deal, they're going to begin gradually raising your rates every year. They're well aware you don't want to shop prices, especially now that you've got everything under the same roof.

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Bottom line? If you're going to save a bundle, bundle away. But bundled or not, shop those policies individually at least every couple of years to make sure those savings last. If you want more info, go to [MoneyTalksNews.com](#) and do a search for "insurance." [Source: MoneyTalksNews | Stacy Johnson | June 27, 2018 ++]

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## **Social Security Benefits Update 05 ► Worth Even Less Than You Think**

Social Security benefits cover a lot fewer expenses than they used to — despite the fact that benefits increase almost every year on account of inflation. Since 2000, Social Security benefits have lost 34 percent of their buying power, according to a recent study by the Senior Citizens League. That includes a 4 percent loss in buying power last year



alone. According to the organization: Housing and medical costs — particularly home heating expenses and Medigap premiums — were among the most rapidly-rising costs over the past year.

### **COLAs vs. costs**

Social Security benefits are losing buying power because retirees' expenses are increasing faster than Social Security cost-of-living adjustments, or COLAs. Cost-of-living adjustments are small automatic increases to Social Security benefits based on inflation. They occur almost every year. For example, the cost-of-living adjustment was 0.3 percent for 2017 and is 2 percent for this year. A survey of some 1,000 seniors conducted by the Senior Citizens League earlier this year found that, for half of seniors, the cost-of-living adjustment amounted to less than \$5 a month from January through March of this year. That's after accounting for Medicare Part B premiums, which are generally withheld from Social Security benefits. By comparison, for a majority of seniors, household expenses increased by more than \$79 a month during the same period. The two retiree expenses that have increased fastest since 2000 are both related to health care:

- Medicare Part B premiums: The average monthly premium has risen from \$45.50 in 2000 to \$134 per month this year — a 195 percent increase.
- Prescription drugs: The average annual out-of-pocket cost has risen from \$1,102 in 2000 to \$3,172.72 this year — a 188 percent increase.

### **What it means for you**

Watered-down Social Security benefits arguably impact retirees living on fixed incomes more than any other group. As study author Mary Johnson, a Social Security policy analyst at the Senior Citizens League, explains: “When costs climb more rapidly than benefits, retirees must spend down retirement savings more quickly than expected, and those without savings or other retirement income are either going into debt, or going without.” For folks who have yet to retire, the Senior Citizens League's study underscores the importance of saving and investing your own money for retirement. Social Security alone won't cut it — and was never meant to. As of April, the latest month for which the Social Security Administration has released data, the average retired worker's Social Security benefit was \$1,412.14 per month. That's less than \$17,000 per year. The Senior Citizens League study also underscores the importance of maximizing Social Security benefits through a sound claiming strategy. You can learn more about that in [“Maximize Your Social Security.”](#)

[Source: MoneyTalksNews | Karla Bowsheer | June 26, 2018 ++]

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## **Regional Health Command Europe ► Billing Delays**

The Army's Regional Health Command Europe (RHCE) is sending out incomplete delinquency notices and asking patients to call their insurance companies to find out how much they really owe, due to a billing backlog the command attributes to staffing shortages. The health command, which couldn't immediately say 25 JUN how many customers have been affected, oversees 15 Army health care facilities in Germany, Belgium and Italy. “Currently, the UBO (Uniform Business Office) is processing insurance checks received in March 2018. We have detailed employees from other sections to assist with processing payments from insurance companies,” health command resource management chief Lt. Col. Yun Fan said in a statement.

For customers, that means accounts are not getting reconciled in a timely manner and patients may receive delinquency notices that do not reflect payments from their insurance companies, the command said. While the command works through its backlog, no accounts will be sent to the Defense Finance and Accounting Service or the Treasury Department for collection until the accounts are reconciled and the backlog is cleared, according to RHCE. “We expect the check processing backlog to be reduced to 60 days by the end of July,” Fan said. Meanwhile, customers should contact their insurers to find out how much of a bill their policy will cover and then pay the remainder, the

medical command said. “We ask that our patients pay their portion on time so the claims can be closed as soon the insurance payments are processed,” Fan said.

The billing office, which is authorized to have 25 full-time workers but now has only 16, is in the process of filling the vacancies, RHCE said. The command’s billing office welcomes the help of volunteers interested in learning about medical billing through the American Red Cross’ station at Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany. The Red Cross at Landstuhl can be contacted at 06371-9464-7298. [Source: | Stars & Stripes | John Vandiver | June 25, 2018 ++]

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## **Funerals Update 02 ► Cost Management**

No matter how inevitable death is, many of us are still caught off-guard when it’s time to make funeral arrangements for a loved one. When we plan funerals, we are often under time pressure. Also, as can happen with weddings, there may be social pressure to honor the deceased with an opulent event. What can you do to plan a funeral at a reasonable price? Consider these ideas:

### **1. Shop**

Federal law is on your side. Funeral homes must disclose the prices of their services, according to the [Federal Trade Commission](#). Many providers have menus that lay out costs for various services and options, and they should share these prices with you whether you’re meeting in person or inquiring by phone. However, don’t let your guard down. Although price disclosure is a federal law, a [2014 survey](#) found that about 25 percent of funeral homes don’t comply. Go online to compare local services. [Parting.com](#) lists prices from providers, and the site is searchable by ZIP code. The price listings may not be exact, the site notes, since they do change over time — but they can save on legwork and haggling during an already-difficult time.

### **2. Prioritize**

What is the most important element of the funeral? Is it a coffin and vault? A large headstone? An elegant wake? Weigh your options and preferences, and then plan how to allocate your money. You can purchase [caskets from Costco](#) or other retailers that are likely to be less expensive than buying from a funeral home. Urns are available from a wide array of retailers, including [Walmart](#), [Sears](#), vendors on [Amazon](#) and elsewhere online. And you may be able to bury a person on privately owned land and avoid paying for a cemetery plot, but be sure to check local ordinances. Understand that these options might involve trade-offs. You might need to pay delivery fees for the casket you bought at a big-box retailer. And you may be able to bury a body on your property, but it could impact your property value.

### **3. Mix and match services and goods**

Just because you go to a funeral home doesn’t mean you need to buy a package of services. In fact, you might mix and match services and goods, such as purchasing a casket at Costco but the liner from the funeral home. The advantage of using a funeral home — whether for a traditional burial or cremation — is that funeral directors and their staff typically take care of many details at a time when your energy level might be low due to grief. These include placing obituaries, accepting flowers and other gifts for the family, coordinating vigils and even coordinating with the church for meals after the service.

### **4. Consider a DIY funeral**

A growing number of people are returning to at-home funerals, [the New York Times](#) reported a couple of years ago. These intimate end-of-life rituals are usually conducted by family members, who may also have assistance from funeral directors, clergy or home funeral guides. They are usually much less expensive than mainstream funerals — typically costing under \$200, compared with \$8,343 for the average professionally directed funeral, according to the nonprofit [National Home Funeral Alliance](#). The NHFA, which provides support and resources for families seeking this alternative, emphasizes the spiritual, environmental and therapeutic benefits of the home funeral.

Families who choose to care for their own report a sense of completion, a feeling of having done their best for those they love, and a stronger connection to their friends and family and community. Having something meaningful to do to help others through a crisis or sorrowful time is usually empowering for all involved. The NHFA notes that laws governing home funerals vary, and provides a [state-by-state breakdown](#) of requirements.

### **5. Look into pre-need funeral options**

As the name implies, pre-need services usually allow you to design and pay for a funeral and burial before those services are needed. If you choose this option for yourself, you could be doing your family a great favor by lifting from them the burden of planning and making your wishes clear. The pre-need approach allows you to discuss and choose services and goods, sometimes without paying for them in advance, [according to AARP](#). There are also pre-need agreements that allow you to pay in advance for a funeral and burial services you request. If you opt for a pre-need agreement, verify that the price paid locks in the cost of services and goods. You can also buy pre-need insurance to cover predetermined costs of your funeral and burial. (Note: This is different from [life insurance](#) that allows beneficiaries discretion over how to use the funds.) Each of these plans can have limitations buried in the fine print. Be sure to research them carefully.

[Source: MoneyTalksNews | Nancy Dunham | June 26, 2018 ++]

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## **Mortgage Update 09 ► Should You Buy Mortgage Life Insurance**

### **Thing No. 1: It's insurance that's tied to a specific debt**

Mortgage life is a subset of a category of insurance called "credit life." Credit life is life insurance tied to a specific debt. It could be a credit card, a car loan or — in this case — a mortgage. It's simply life insurance that pays off a specific debt if you should die while there's still a balance. As we all know, regular life insurance pays a death benefit if you should die within the term of the policy. In the case of life insurance, your beneficiary receives the death benefit. In the case of credit life insurance, the death benefit goes to a lender to retire a debt.

### **Thing No. 2: The pros of credit life**

If you can't qualify for any other kind of insurance due to poor health or other reasons, credit life offers a way to extinguish a debt if something should happen to you. Also, you typically don't have to get a physical to prove you're healthy, as you do with regular life insurance. So, credit life is less hassle.

### **Thing No. 3: The cons of credit life**

There are several disadvantages associated with mortgage life insurance.

- You're paying a level premium every month, but your mortgage is getting smaller. If your debt is declining, shouldn't the money you're paying to insure it every month also decline?
- It's typically more expensive than regular term life insurance. If you're healthy, you'll find term life insurance for less than you'll pay for credit life. Granted, you may have to endure a physical for regular life insurance, but insurance physicals aren't that big a deal and the savings could be significant.
- If you die, the proceeds of your policy will bypass your heirs and go directly to your lender. Remember, this is insurance to pay off a mortgage, not to otherwise provide for your family. With regular life insurance, your beneficiary gets the proceeds and uses the money as he or she sees fit. Maybe the beneficiary will pay off the mortgage, but maybe there are other bills that are more important. In short, regular life insurance is more flexible.

Bottom line? Get term life insurance if you can. If you can't — that is, if you can't qualify for insurance because of a pre-existing health condition, and really feel the need to protect your family from a mortgage debt — maybe take a look at mortgage life. But make it a last resort. Go to [https://youtu.be/fQEyk\\_ARFII](https://youtu.be/fQEyk_ARFII) for a video on the subject.

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## Sales Tax Update 02 ► Online Purchases Change

States gained new power on 21 JUN to collect sales taxes from online vendors that are not located within their boundaries, as the U.S. Supreme Court sided with South Dakota over a group of retailers who challenged the constitutionality of a state law there. In *South Dakota v. Wayfair, Inc.*, the legal dispute centered on a law the South Dakota legislature passed in 2016 requiring out-of-state retailers that meet certain conditions to collect and pay sales taxes. The merchants that challenged the law, Wayfair, Inc, Overstock.com, Inc. and Newegg, Inc. have no employees or real estate in the state.

The 5-4 court decision has implications for state tax revenues, particularly in the long-term as online sales are expected to continue expanding in proportion to the overall retail market. But some of the largest online vendors have already been paying sales taxes on many of their transactions, and e-commerce, while growing, still only made up about 9 percent of retail sales in the U.S. last year, so the near-term effects on state budgets could be more limited. "It's a pretty big deal," John Hicks, the executive director of the National Association of State Budget Officers, said by phone as he reacted to the Supreme Court's ruling. "The amount of online sales is only going to grow," he added. "It stems the tide of sales tax losses." Hicks said that based on NASBO's figures for the last fiscal year, South Dakota, along with Florida, Tennessee, Texas and Washington all depend on sales taxes for more than half of their general fund revenues.

Justice Anthony Kennedy delivered the court's opinion. It is a death knell for the so-called "physical presence rule," which has blocked states from collecting taxes from out-of-state businesses. The rule was grounded in two prior Supreme Court cases that involved mail order catalog retailers—the 1992 *Quill Corp. v. North Dakota* case and the 1967 case *National Bellas Hess, Inc. v. Department of Revenue of Illinois*. Thursday's ruling from the high court called the physical presence rule established under *Quill* "unsound and incorrect" and said that the case, along with *Bellas Hess*, are overruled.

*"The physical presence rule has long been criticized as giving out-of-state sellers an advantage," the court's majority opinion says. "Each year, it becomes further removed from economic reality and results in significant revenue losses to the States. These critiques underscore that the rule, both as first formulated and as applied today, is an incorrect interpretation of the Commerce Clause." It goes on to say: "Quill creates rather than resolves market distortions. In effect, it is a judicially created tax shelter for businesses that limit their physical presence in a State but sell their goods and services to the State's consumers, something that has become easier and more prevalent as technology has advanced." "The Internet revolution has made Quill's original error all the more egregious and harmful," the opinion adds.*

Forty-one states and the District of Columbia had urged the court to reject the physical presence test cemented by *Quill*. Kennedy was joined by Justices Clarence Thomas, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Samuel Alito and Neil Gorsuch. Chief Justice John Roberts, along with Justices Stephen Breyer, Sonia Sotomayor and Elena Kagan, issued the dissenting opinion. "We've waited 26 years," state Sen. Deb Peters, who authored the South Dakota's tax legislation, and who is the current president of the National Conference of State Legislatures, said in a statement, referring to the end of the *Quill* standard. "Good tax administration is good public policy," Peters added, "and state officials look forward to working with all stakeholders in the coming months as we move forward to level the playing field for all of our nation's retailers."

The South Dakota law only requires out-of-state retailers to pay sales taxes if they have over \$100,000 of sales, or 200 separate transactions, in the state annually. It is also written so that it can not be applied retroactively to past sales. U.S. Government Accountability Office estimates released last year show that state and local governments

could have gained \$8 billion to \$13 billion in 2017, if states could have required sales tax collections from all out-of-state “remote sellers,” like online vendors. Those gains would be equal to about 2 percent to 4 percent of total 2016 state and local revenues. [Source: Route Fifty | Bill Lucia | June 21, 2018 ++]

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## Washington D.C. Military Discounts ► Places To check Out

A vacation to our nation’s capital is educational and entertaining but not always affordable. Fortunately, we found military deals on accommodations, attractions, and activities in and around Washington, D.C.

- The **Fairfax Hotel** at Embassy Row in Washington, D.C., has a storied past, with notable tenants including Al Gore; Adm. and Mrs. Chester William Nimitz; and Sen. and Mrs. Prescott Bush and their young son, George H. Bush. The inaugural breakfast for President Dwight Eisenhower was hosted here. During World War II, the hotel opened its doors to visiting soldiers — no man in uniform was ever turned away. Military members still get special treatment: The “Salute to Heroes” package offers active duty military members discounts from 15 to 50 percent. (At this writing, we found military prices at \$330, compared to the regular price of \$389.) Call (800) 678-8946, or when booking online, use promo code SALUTE.
- **DoubleTree** by Hilton in Annapolis, Md., is 28 miles from D.C. and 3 miles from the U.S. Naval Academy. With the “Military Family Rate,” military members and veterans traveling at leisure stay for as little as \$128 (up to a \$20 savings). Wi-Fi, use of the fitness center, and a hot breakfast are included. Call (410) 224-3150, or book online using rate code MFR.
- Military members get a 15-percent discount, and veterans also get free reserved parking spots at **Super 8**, the hotel brand by Wyndham. Choose from several hotels in the area, including Alexandria, Va.; College Park, Md.; Camp Springs, Md.; and Laurel, Md. Free Wi-Fi and free breakfast are included. Find more information on the military offer here. Use rate code SML when booking online, or call (800) 545-3213.
- **Arlington National Cemetery’s** tram tours are complimentary for servicemembers in uniform and 50 percent off for active duty servicemembers or veterans with military ID. Stops include the U.S. Marine Corps War Memorial, Kennedy gravesites, U.S. Coast Guard Memorial, U.S. Army Gen. John J. Pershing’s gravesite, Tomb of the Unknown Soldier (Changing of the Guard), and Arlington House (Robert E. Lee Memorial). Find details here. Call (866) 754-9014.
- **Urban Adventure Quest** is a fun and different way to sightsee D.C. It’s an interactive scavenger hunt on your smartphone that takes you on a tour of the city’s monuments, museums, and architecture, from the National Mall to Ford’s Theatre and the Heritage Trail. Regular price is \$49, but with the military 25-percent discount, you pay just \$36.75 per team of two to five people. Learn more or purchase here, using promo code MIL25.
- Add the **International Spy Museum** to your list of must-see D.C. attractions. The museum explores the craft, history, and role of global espionage and intelligence, with its collection of gadgets, weapons, bugs, cameras, cars, and spy-tech. The military price for admission is \$16.95 (a \$6 savings). Call (202) 393-7798.
- A new **public observatory** opens in Arlington, Va., on June 21, offering 360-degree panoramic views of the nation’s capital. The Observation Deck is perched on the 31st floor of the glass CEB Tower, the area’s tallest building. A “Windows Into History” exhibit points out local landmarks while narrating the stories of people and events throughout history. Regular admission is \$22, but military members with ID pay \$16. Call (703) 423-0600.

[Source: The MOAA Newsletter | Maryann Hammers | June 21, 2018 ++]

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## Square CC Processing Scam ► Phishing Emails Target Small Businesses

Many small businesses accept payments through [Square](#). For a small fee on each transaction, Square can turn a smartphone or iPad into a credit card payment station. But scammers are taking advantage of the service's popularity by sending phishing emails that appear to be official correspondence.

### How the Scam Works

- You get an email that appears to be from Square. There are several different versions, but they all use the Square logo and seem legitimate. In one common version, the message claims that you accepted a payment and provides credit card details. In another, a client has allegedly requested a refund and funds are being removed from your account. Both messages urge you to click a link and "View Full Payment/Refund Details" or "Deposit Now."
- Whatever you do, don't click the links. They can download malware to your computer that can acquire your usernames, passwords and even sensitive personal information, such as your credit card number.

### How to Avoid this Scam

- **Verify the Secure Square URL.** Many phishing scams direct you to a non-secure site and then prompt you to enter your login and password or other personal details. Always double check that you are on the official Square website and that you have a secure connection before you login. How can you tell? Your browser should say "https://squareup.com/login" and the locked Square, Inc. icon should populate next to this web address.
- **Be on the lookout for red flags.** Typos and grammatical errors, as well as unfamiliar email addresses and scare tactics are all signs of a phishing scam.
- **Protect your personal information.** Never share your credit card numbers, Social Security number or even address and phone number with a stranger, especially if they have contacted you unsolicited.

### For More Information

To find out more about how phishing scams work and how to avoid them, at [BBB.org/phishingscam](http://BBB.org/phishingscam). If you are a Square user who has been targeted by a phishing scam, help others avoid the same problem by reporting your experience on the [BBB Scam Tracker](#). [Source: BBB Scam alert | June 1, 2018 ++]

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## Birth Certificate For A Fee Scam ► Online Offerings

When you need a copy of your birth certificate, ordering one online can seem fast and easy. However, con artists have created websites that promise a birth certificate for a fee, with no intention of actually sending one to you.

### How the Scam Works

- You look online for a company that can provide an official copy of your birth certificate. A web search turns up a long list, and you click on one of the first results. You fill out a form and enter your payment information. It seems official, and the form appears to be from you state or province's health department.
- However after several weeks of waiting, your birth certificate never turns up. You may try to contact the company, but they are suddenly unreachable. Your money and personal information have been compromised, and you never even received a copy of your birth certificate.

### How to Avoid Birth Certificate Scams

- **Go through official channels.** In the United States, visit the [official government website](#) for instructions on how to request a copy of your birth certificate. In Canada, go to the Registrar of your provincial government.
- **Be wary of third party sites:** Non-governmental websites that promise to get your birth certificate or other official documents for a fee are often scams.

- **Guard your personal information carefully.** If you need to request a document, be wary about submitting sensitive personal information online. Double check that you are on an official government website with a secure connection before submitting personal details.

**For More Information**

See [BBB.org/shoppingonline](http://BBB.org/shoppingonline) for more advice on ordering online. If you have been the victim of a birth certificate scam, help others protect themselves by filing a report with [BBB Scam Tracker](#). [Source: BBB Scam Alert | June 22, 2018 ++]

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**Kidnap Scam Update 01 ► Army CID Warning**

A parent in an Army family got a threatening phone call recently from someone claiming a child in the family had been abducted, and demanding money for the safe return of the child. The parent called the school and learned the child was safe and in class. Virtual kidnapping hoaxes aren't a new type of scam, but because this recently happened to someone in the Army community, a warning has come out from officials at the Army's Criminal Investigation Command.

The scam usually involves a phone call in which the caller claims to have taken a child or a loved one. The caller says something like "I've kidnapped your kid. Send money or the kid dies," according to CID. Victims of this scam have reported hearing screams, crying or pleas for help, all effects that are fake to persuade the victims to respond to the demands. The scammers appear to choose their victims randomly. "They dial sequential numbers until the call is answered by someone they can shock into believing that their child has been kidnapped," CID officials said in a release 27 JUN. "The caller's approach is forceful, well scripted and can be very convincing."

If you get such a call, the CID advises trying to end the phone call and then confirm the safety of the person who the caller claims to have taken, or ask the caller to put the child on the phone. Do not confirm or tell them any details about you or your family, officials say. Remember the scammers work on fear and impulsiveness to try to coerce "ransom" money from their victims. If you need to buy time, ask the caller to repeat the requests and tell them you need time to respond, officials advise. If you do suspect a real kidnapping is taking place, do not hesitate to contact the nearest FBI office, CID or law enforcement agency. [Source: ArmyTimes | Noah Nash | June 27, 2018 ++]

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**Tax Burden for Hawaii Retired Vets ► As of JUN 2018**

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. Following are the taxes you can expect to pay if you retire in Hawaii:

**Sales Taxes**

**State Sales Tax:** (General Excise Tax) 4% (prescription drugs exempt) Oahu has a county surcharge tax of 1/2% to pay for a mass transit system.

**Gasoline Tax:** 62.79 cents/gallon (Includes all taxes)

**Diesel Fuel Tax:** 66.23 cents/gallon (Includes all taxes) (Local option taxes may add 8.8 to 18 cents to fuel tax)

**Cigarette Tax:** \$3.20/pack of 20

**Personal Income Taxes**

**Tax Rate Range:** Low – 1.4%; High – 11%.

**Income Brackets:** Twelve. Lowest – \$2,400; Highest – \$200,000 as indicated in the following table:

***Tax Bracket (Single)***

\$0+ 1.40% of taxable income  
\$2,400+ = \$ 34 plus 3.20% over \$2,400  
\$4,800+ = \$ 110 plus 5.50% over \$4,800  
\$9,600+ = \$ 374 plus 6.40% over \$9,600  
\$14,400+ = \$ 682 plus 6.80% over \$14,400  
\$19,200+ = \$ 1,008 plus 7.20% over \$19,200  
\$24,000+ = \$ 1,354 plus 7.60% over \$24,000  
\$36,000+ = \$ 2,266 plus 7.90% over \$36,000  
\$48,000+ = \$ 3,214 plus 8.25% over \$48,000

***Tax Bracket (Couple)***

\$ 0+ 1.40% of taxable income  
\$ 4,800+ = \$ 67 plus 3.20% over \$4,800  
\$ 9,600+ = \$ 221 plus 5.50% over \$9,600  
\$19,200+ = \$ 749 plus 6.40% over \$19,200  
\$28,800+ = \$1,363 plus 6.80% over \$28,800  
\$38,400+ = \$2,016 plus 7.20% over \$38,400  
\$48,000+ = \$2,707 plus 7.60% over \$48,000  
\$72,000+ = \$4,531 plus 7.90% over \$72,000  
\$96,000+ = \$6,427 plus 8.25% over \$96,000

**Personal Exemptions:** Single \$1,144; Married – \$2,288; Dependents – \$1,144

**Standard Deduction:** Single – \$2,200; Married filing joint return – \$4,400

**Medical/Dental Deduction:** Same as Federal taxes

**Federal Income Tax Deduction:** None

**Retirement Income Taxes:** Social Security, first tier Railroad Retirement benefits, military, federal, state/local, and some private pensions are exempt. All out-of-state government pensions are exempt. Also, employer-funded pension plans are exempt. Distributions from private employer pension plans received upon retirement are partially taxed by the state if the employee contributed to the pension plan.

**Retired Military Pay:** Not taxed.

**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**

Personal property such as cars or boats are not subject to property tax. Real property and land are assessed at 100% “fair market value.” Taxes are administered by the four counties. The homestead exemption is \$12,000, but is \$40,000 in the city and county of Honolulu. Persons 60 to 69 years of age may claim double the homestead exemption, and a person age 70 or older, may claim 2.5 times the homestead exemption. In the city and county of Honolulu, the exemptions are: 55-59 years, 1.5 times the exemption amount; 60-64 years, 2.0 times; 65-69, 2.5 times, and 70 and older, 3.0 times. Homeowners 55 and older are exempt from property taxes on \$60,000 to \$120,000 (amount depends on owner’s age) of the assessed value of their residence, regardless of income. They must pay at least \$100 in taxes, however. Homeowners 55 and older who earn less than \$20,000 are also eligible for a tax credit of up to \$500. Call 808-587-4343 for details.

**Inheritance and Estate Taxes**

The state has imposed a tax on estates of Hawaii residents over \$3.5 million ranging from 0.8% to 16% rate on estates over \$10.1 million. Nonresidents receive a reduced exemption, paying estate tax on as little as \$60,000 of property. Tax rates range from 1.4% to 8.25%.

**Other State Tax Rates**

To compare the above sales, income, and property tax rates to those accessed in other states go to:

- Sales Tax: <http://www.tax-rates.org/taxtables/sales-tax-by-state>.



- Personal Income Tax: <http://www.tax-rates.org/taxtables/income-tax-by-state>.
- Property Tax: <http://www.tax-rates.org/taxtables/property-tax-by-state>.

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For further information visit the Hawaii Department of Taxation site <http://tax.hawaii.gov/geninfo> or call 800-222-3229 or 808-587-4242. [Source: [www.retirementliving.com](http://www.retirementliving.com) | June 2018 ++]

\* General Interest \*



## Notes of Interest ► 16 thru 30 JUN 2018

- **Dance.** Fans of Honky Tonk should enjoy watching Dancers Jason Colacino and Katie Boyle at <https://youtu.be/T7XfKf46iZY>. These two talented dancers can also be seen at in a rather sensual dance routine at <https://youtu.be/fK2JeyGfBiw>. Their dancing together ended when Jason passed away unexpectedly in 2009 at age 31 from cardiac arrest due to pneumonia as well as an enlarged heart.
- **Vietnam.** New legislation requires the armed forces to divest their economic holdings, a move aimed at asserting Communist Party power and revolutionary ideology.
- **DPRK.** North Korea has decided to skip one of the most symbolic and politically charged events of its calendar: the annual ‘anti-U.S. imperialism’ rally marking the start of the Korean War.
- **Army Echoes.** Army Echoes, which is published three times a year, is the U. S. Army’s official news for Retired Soldiers, surviving spouses and their families. To access the JUN–SEP 2018 issue go to [https://soldierforlife.army.mil/sites/default/files/echoes\\_issues/army\\_echoes\\_electronic\\_copy\\_june\\_2018v1\\_0.pdf](https://soldierforlife.army.mil/sites/default/files/echoes_issues/army_echoes_electronic_copy_june_2018v1_0.pdf).
- **IG Report.** Check out former Judge Jeanine Pirro’s opening statement at [https://youtu.be/Z309jLC\\_hNM](https://youtu.be/Z309jLC_hNM) of the long delayed Inspector General’s report on the actions of the Department of Justice and the FBI handling of the Clinton email investigation. Regardless of your political persuasion, something smells fishy.
- **Comedy.** *Push To Add Drama* – Check out TNT’s commercial at <https://youtu.be/316AzLYfAzw> to entice Belgium customers.
- **USS John S. McCain.** The company who owns the commercial oil tanker involved in a deadly collision with a Navy destroyer last year has filed a lawsuit in federal court asking not to be held liable for damages. If a judge accepts the claim, Energetic Tank Inc. would not have to pay the families of the sailors who died in the crash should they attempt to sue for compensation. In its lawsuit, which is being addressed in New York federal court, Energetic Tank says the collision was not caused by “any fault, neglect or want of care” of its company or its tanker, the Alnic.
- **Justice.** Two men in hiding have been rearrested for the death of U.S. Marine George Anikow killed in the Philippines more than five years ago. Alicano Datu III and Crispin dela Paz were charged after the case was

downgraded from murder to homicide but were given probation. The judge in the initial case was later dismissed and had his retirement benefits stripped as a result of his “oppressive disregard” for evidence in that and other trials, leading to new arrest warrants.

- **Gift Cards.** Almost impossible to trade in for cash from the seller but you may be able to trade in for a Target Gift Card. Go to <https://targettrade-in.com/Online/Home/GiftCardProgram.rails> to locate participating stores and cards that will be accepted. If you want cash for your gift card check out [Cardpool.com](http://Cardpool.com) or [Raise.com](http://Raise.com) for its discounted value.
- **Miss America.** 2011 Miss America Teresa Scanlan announced on Instagram that she's joined the United States Air Force. Scanlan is now an Airman First Class in the Air National Guard. She's also a law student at UC Berkley.
- **Vet Suicide.** The VA has revealed in its VA National Suicide Data Report that the average daily number of veteran suicides (20 per day) has always included deaths of active-duty servicemembers and members of the National Guard and Reserve, not just veterans.
- **Postmodern Jukebox: Bad Romance.** Check out <https://biggeekdad.com/2017/06/postmodern-jukebox-bad-romance> for a little different music video presentation.
- **Clarification.** In a tweet 21 JUN, President Trump said his wife's 'I REALLY DON'T CARE, DO U?' statement written on the back of her jacket was not about the immigrant children. It was about the dishonest media, which Melania has apparently grown tired of.
- **9-Volt Batteries.** Fire hazard if terminal are left exposed. Never stow in your house or garage unless they are in their original packaging, you have covered the exposed terminal with electrical tape, or in your pocket where keys or coins can short the terminals of the battery. If in doubt as to what can happen check the video at <https://youtu.be/QGcuUrliEwQ>.
- **Eggs-act-lee What you Need.** For the kitchen-shy check out [www.youtube.com/watch?v=maoFISpmlYA](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=maoFISpmlYA) & [www.youtube.com/watch?v=0BNNjZpMKRI](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0BNNjZpMKRI) for numerous ways to handle, test, and cook eggs.
- **Air Passenger Safety.** Check out <https://youtu.be/qOw44VFNk8Y> for Air New Zealander's different approach of informing their passengers what they should be aware of.
- **Illegal Immigrant Children.** Genetic testing companies 23andme ([www.23andme.com](http://www.23andme.com)) and MyHeritage ([www.myheritage.com](http://www.myheritage.com)) have said they want to use DNA tests to help reunite children with their parents who have been separated from them by immigration officials.
- **Daylight Saving time.** A bill that would allow California voters to make Daylight Saving Time permanent passed the state legislature last week and is awaiting Gov. Jerry Brown's signature.
- **Bathrooms Cleaning Tips.** Check out <https://youtu.be/P6H2OKwPtdQ> for 15 Genius Tips for Cleaning the Bathroom. For other bathroom tips check out <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d9E2yqwRpxs>.
- **Civil Service.** Chemist GS-15 Daniel Horowitz received his \$161,000 annual federal salary for three years while he was barred from working during a misconduct investigation. He was fired from the Chemical Safety Board 22 JUN. He is now appealing to the Merit Systems Protection Board on the grounds that the misconduct charges are vague. He said during his off time he abided by the restriction against him doing other paying work.
- **Gardening Warning.** Gardeners can be prone to tetanus infections? Tetanus lives in the soil and enters the body through breaks in the skin, especially when using sharp tools, digging in the dirt, or handling plants with sharp points. Before you start gardening this season: Make sure your [tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis \(Tdap\) vaccination](#) is up-to-date. Medicare prescription drug coverage (Part D) generally covers shots needed to prevent illness. [Contact your Medicare drug plan](#) for more information about coverage.

[Source: Various | June 30, 2018 ++]

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## Online Piracy Update 01 ► California Consumer Privacy Act of 2018

California is imposing a privacy law giving consumers more control over how their personal data is collected, used, and sold by corporations. Broadband providers, tech companies, and advertising groups had been fighting against a ballot initiative that contained consumer protections similar to what's in the new law. The California Consumer Privacy Act of 2018 was approved unanimously by the state Senate and Assembly 28 JUN and was signed by Gov. Jerry Brown.

A legislative bill summary says the law will give Californians "the right to know what PI [personal information] is being collected about them and whether their PI is being sold and to whom; the right to access their PI; the right to delete PI collected from them; the right to opt-out or opt-in to the sale of their PI, depending on age of the consumer; and the right to equal service and price, even if they exercise such rights." The bill is set to take effect on January 1, 2020. Businesses could be penalized up to \$7,500 for each violation.

Personal information is defined as anything that is "capable of being associated with, or could reasonably be linked, directly or indirectly, with a particular consumer or household." This includes Internet browsing and search history, biometric data, geolocation data, job and education information, and various types of identifiers such as names, aliases, postal addresses, Internet Protocol addresses, email addresses, account names, Social Security number, driver's license numbers, and passport numbers. Anything that is otherwise publicly available would not be protected by the law. Consumers would have the right to request all the data collected about them from a business up to twice a year, and businesses would be required to disclose the information free of charge. Consumers would have "the right to request that a business delete any PI about the consumer which the business has collected from the consumer."

Businesses that sell consumers' personal information to third parties would have to let people opt out of those sales at any time. The rule is stricter for children, as businesses would not be allowed to sell personal information related to people under the age of 16 unless they receive an "opt-in" from the child or child's parent or guardian. The parent or guardian's consent would be needed for children under the age of 13. Businesses would also be prohibited from discriminating against a consumer because the consumer exercised any of the consumer's rights under this bill, such as by charging different prices or rates, or providing a different level or quality of goods or services. "Google executives have warned that the measure could have unintended consequences but have not said what those might be," Reuters wrote. "The Internet Association, which also represents Facebook and Amazon, has also opposed the bill, as have the California Chamber of Commerce and the Association of National Advertisers."

The law was spurred by an ongoing ballot initiative that was on track to hit the state ballot in November. Ballot question sponsor Alastair Mactaggart agreed to pull the question if the state passes the bill by June 28, the last day in which the question could be pulled from the ballot. "This legislation, like the initiative, would provide simple, powerful rights to Californians: tell me what you know about me. Stop selling it. Keep it safe," Mactaggart, a real estate developer and privacy activist, said last week. "We are content either way, as we feel that both the legislative solution and our initiative, provide tremendously increased privacy rights to Californians." The ballot question was opposed by Amazon, Facebook, Google, Microsoft, Uber, Comcast, AT&T, Cox, Verizon, and several advertising lobby groups, all of whom donated to a campaign against the initiative.

ISPs successfully lobbied Congress to prevent implementation of broadband privacy rules last year. At the time, ISPs argued that they shouldn't have to face different rules than Google and Facebook. But they opposed the California rules even though they apply equally to ISPs and other tech companies. "State-specific laws will stifle American innovation and confuse consumers," said CTIA, the mobile broadband industry's lobby group, according to Reuters.

The bill differs from the initiative in the way that companies would be held accountable for breaches to address an industry concern. The ballot measure exposed companies to litigation regardless of the state attorney general's action. The bill would allow the attorney general to levy fines for data breaches, after which consumers could then

sue over them. The bill also adds provisions that go beyond the ballot measure, like requiring parental consent for companies to sell data on children younger than 16. And it would include provisions of Europe's privacy laws such as consumers' right to compel companies to delete all their private data. Mactaggart said in an interview last week that "they both accomplish the same goals broadly." Legislators preferred enacting the bill themselves because it allows them to make changes later without another statewide ballot question. This "makes it easier to tweak the law to fix unintended consequences," The Mercury News wrote. [Source: ARS Technia | Jon Brodtkin | June 28, 2018 ++]

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## **Soccer Dad Loses Control ► Navy Chief Plummets 14-yr Old With Fist**

A Navy chief was arrested this month after he allegedly charged into his son's sand soccer match and pummeled an unsuspecting 14-year-old boy with his fists after the teenager jostled with the enraged sailor's son. Chief Engineman Jordan Lee Grinnell, 38, was arrested by Virginia Beach Police after he reportedly knocked Timothy Vickerie, 14, to the ground and began punching him in the face, according to the Virginian-Pilot. Vickerie was hospitalized and received four stitches, his mother, Nicole Vickerie, told the Pilot. He also suffered a concussion and bloody lip. The teenager returned to watch the tournament and cheer on his teammates the following day, doing so with one eye that was completely swollen shut, the report said.

"I still can't get it out of my mind," Jennifer Moss, the mother of another player who witnessed the beating, told the Pilot. "I didn't sleep for two days and I'm still having trouble sleeping. The kids who witnessed it are all shaken." Toward the end of the game, the boys started shoving each other as they fought for possession of the ball, witnesses said. It was then that Grinnell, a 17-year Navy veteran, stormed the scene to join the fracas. "I'm thinking he's coming over to break the boys up," Moss told the Pilot, only to see "him strike him at least twice." Vickerie's coach finally got the incensed father off the boy by tackling Grinnell, who was then pulled away by several others, the report said.

Nicole Vickerie confronted the irate chief after he'd been pulled off her son. "I asked him did he feel better now," she told the Pilot. "'Does that make you feel like a big man?' He said, 'No it doesn't, I'm sorry.'" Grinnell, a Colorado native, currently works with Navy Recruiting District Richmond, Virginia. He has no prior criminal record, the Pilot stated, and his Navy records show that he's the recipient of five Good Conduct Medals. [Source: NavyTimes | J.D. Simkins | June 27, 2018 ++]

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## **NATO ► Trump's 'America First' Impact**

The bonds between Europe and North America are under strain and there's no guarantee the trans-Atlantic partnership will survive, the head of NATO warned 21 JUN. NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg called for an effort to shore up the military alliance amid the divisions between Europe and the United States over trade, climate change and the Iran nuclear deal. "It is not written in stone that the trans-Atlantic bond will survive forever," Stoltenberg said during a speech in London. "But I believe we will preserve it." NATO has been shaken by U.S. President Donald Trump's "America First" stance and mistrust of international institutions. Trump once called NATO obsolete and has repeatedly berated other members of the 29-nation alliance of failing to spend enough on defense.

Ahead of a NATO summit in July, Stoltenberg said "we may have seen the weakening" of some bonds between North America and Europe. But he insisted that "maintaining the trans-Atlantic partnership is in our strategic interests." Stoltenberg said the world faced "the most unpredictable security environment in a generation" due to terrorism, proliferating weapons of mass destruction, cyberattacks and an assertive Russia. "We must continue to

protect our multilateral institutions like NATO, and we must continue to stand up for the international rules-based order,” he said. After meeting Prime Minister Theresa May in Downing St., Stoltenberg praised Britain, one of a minority of NATO countries to meet a target of spending 2 percent of GDP on defense.

NATO Secretary General said that despite differences between the U.S. and Europe, NATO delivered “trans-Atlantic unity” every day. “We have had differences before, and the lesson of history is that we overcome these differences every time,” Stoltenberg said. Some European officials worry the Trump administration is cool on efforts to hold Russia to account for misdeeds including election meddling and the nerve-agent poisoning of former spy Sergei Skripal in England, which the U.K. blames on Moscow.

At a G-7 summit this month, Trump suggested that Russia should be readmitted to the group of industrial powers, from which it was expelled over its annexation of Crimea in 2014. Some U.S. allies are concerned by reports that Trump plans to meet Russian President Vladimir Putin when the American leader travels to Europe for the NATO summit next month. But Stoltenberg said meeting Putin does not contradict NATO policies. “We are in favor of dialogue with Russia,” he said. “We don’t want a new cold war. We don’t want a new arms race. We don’t want to isolate Russia.” [Source: The Associated Press | Jill Lawless | June 21, 2018 ++]

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## **Postal Service Update 07 ► Trump’s Privatization Proposal**

The White House’s proposal to privatize the U.S. Postal Service is unlikely to find much traction in Congress, with lawmakers on both sides of the aisle criticizing the suggested fundamental overhaul of the mailing agency. Lawmakers across the ideological spectrum who have expressed an interest in postal issues showed little interest in Trump’s transformation, defending the Postal Service as an essential government service. They pointed instead to reform proposals they have themselves put forward and refined after years of tense negotiations among an array of stakeholders.

The proposal came in President Trump’s plan to reorganize the federal government. It followed an executive order Trump issued in April, creating a task force to recommend a path to put the cash-strapped agency on firmer financial footing. The reorganization plan preempted that process, however, as the task force is currently meeting with stakeholders and plans to issue a report by Aug. 10. The White House suggested the Postal Service institute those recommendations to get itself into better shape before it is sold off to the private sector.

“Instead of working with us, President Trump unilaterally appointed a task force to review options for the Postal Service,” said Rep. Elijah Cummings (D-MD) who cosponsored a bipartisan bill to overhaul USPS that is awaiting a vote on the House floor. “Then, without even waiting for his own task force’s results, President Trump rushed to propose eliminating the Postal Service entirely. Like so many other ideas that come out of this White House, President Trump’s proposal to privatize the Postal Service is disorganized, unilateral, nonsensical, and frankly, incompetent.” Cummings’ bill, as well as a similar measure in the Senate, would shore up USPS’ finances in large part by shedding many of its obligations, including shifting most retirees to Medicare for their health coverage. Those measures would aim to expand postal services, however, and firmly keep the agency in place as a government entity.

A spokesman for Sen. Jerry Moran (R-KS), who cosponsored the Senate bill, pointed to a letter the senator wrote to the Trump administration imploring it to maintain and strengthen a public postal agency. In it, Moran called the 2018 Postal Service Reform Act a “finely tuned piece of legislation” and suggested Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin, who is heading up Trump’s postal task force, use it as a “blueprint for your work.” Rather than pushing USPS to the private sector, Moran said the agency should grow and expand its offerings. “The Postal Service can only find its way out of its current financial situation with more and better quality service,” Moran said. He suggested maintaining mandatory six-day delivery and keeping the current level post offices and mail processing facilities.

Sen. Tom Carper (D-DE), who wrote the bill Moran lent his name to, pushed his legislation and said Trump's proposal was dead on arrival. "A plan to privatize the Postal Service would be laughable except for the fact that it will hit American consumers, especially those living in rural areas, the hardest," Carper said. "Privatization efforts have been repeatedly and resoundingly rejected by Congress, industry and stakeholders alike because it is so obvious that it will not work."

Sen. Heidi Heitkamp (D-ND) another cosponsor on Carper's bill, called Trump's proposal a "careless solution" that runs counter to "the best interests of rural communities and small town businesses." "I've long said that there is no substitute for the Postal Service in rural America, so I'm deeply concerned that privatizing this critical agency would put timely and affordable mail delivery in North Dakota in jeopardy," Heitkamp said. "Families and businesses depend on accessible and affordable mail service to obtain everything from daily newspapers to life-saving medications—and while the administration may think a privatized Postal Service would be a sustainable business model, it would also endanger a vital lifeline for North Dakota's rural residents."

Postal employee unions and coalitions representing large-scale mailers have similarly denounced the White House's proposal. The Postal Service itself, meanwhile, expressed a surprising openness to the plan. Postmaster General Megan Brennan said her primary concern was only that Congress allowed her agency to fix its "flawed business model." "Ultimately, it will be for Congress to decide whether the best path to financial sustainability is to preserve the Postal Service status as a government institution focused on our mission of public service, while giving us more authority to meet our responsibilities, or whether a profit-maximizing corporate model is preferable," Brennan said. [Source: GovExec.com | Eric Katz | June 26, 2018 ++]

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## **Great Britain** ► **No Longer A 'Tier One' Military Power**

Britain's Prime Minister Theresa May this week asked Britain's defense secretary to justify the UK's role as a "tier one" military power, causing dismay in the Ministry of Defence. Underlying the statement is a realization that the UK can no longer economically compete with top powers, defense experts told Business Insider. "It's a reflection of our economic status - times are tough," said Tim Ripley, a defense analyst, adding: "It's all about money... if you don't have money you can't spend it."

The Prime Minister questioned defense secretary Gavin Williamson on whether money for the military should be reallocated to areas like cyber, and if Britain needed to maintain a Navy, Army, Air Force and nuclear deterrent all at once. Ripley called it a retreat from "grand ambitions." "No matter how we dress it up, this new-fangled cyber stuff is just an excuse for running away from funding hard power," Ripley said. "If you don't pony up the money and the hard power you don't get a seat at the top table. No matter how flash your cyber warfare is, people take notice of ships, tanks and planes."

There is a strong correlation between military power and economic status. The major powers including the US, China and Russia all demonstrate their strength through military posturing, and countries that don't have enough resources for defense often pool with others. Dr Jan Honig, a senior lecturer in war studies at King's College London, said that shared defense can be disrupted in times of nationalism, and called it "highly ironic" that Brexit could mean the UK can no longer fund its military. "You can't really do it by yourself even if you spent a lot more on defense which is not going to happen in this country with this measly economic growth and the uncertainty about international trade details," he said.

The Prime Minister's comments, which were first reported by the Financial Times, come in the context of her recent pledge of a fresh £20 billion for the National Health Service (NHS) and debate about where the money will come from. Governments need to ensure that their policies have support from the people, and pouring money into

the military is harder to sell than spending on the NHS and social welfare which are immediate issues, said Honig, adding that populations are now also more switched on to the horrors of war.

But Julian Lewis, Chair of the UK's defense committee told Business Insider that he's now concerned about whether May will be able to properly fund the military after the NHS pledge. "I am not won over ... by this jargon of calling it a 'tier one' military power... What I'm much more concerned about is whether Theresa May will be able to give defense the money it needs," he said, citing a "whole" of over £4.9 billion in the defense budget. May's comments will not lead to definitive action to pare down the military, but are a clear sign of the direction of travel said Ripley. [Source: Business Insider | Michael Selby-Green | June 25, 2018 ++]

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## **Lincoln Memorial** ► **\$25 Million Top-To-Bottom Makeover**



The errant antiaircraft round gouged the building in 1942. The gold Mylar confetti fluttered to the roof during the year 2000 festivities. The cracks in the huge marble blocks formed when the 2011 earthquake shook the massive structure. For almost a century the timeless Lincoln Memorial has stood exposed to the sun, wind and rain as Washington changed around it and marked it with evidence of the passage of time. Now it is getting a \$25 million top-to-bottom makeover, and on 14 JUN the National Park Service provided a glimpse of how the project is going and showed some of the work that has to be done.

Park Service experts trooped up a narrow internal stairway and then scaled several levels of construction scaffolding to reach the windy roof of the memorial and the "penthouse," a smaller structure that sits atop the memorial. They showed where the Aug. 23, 2011, magnitude-5.8 earthquake had nudged some of the giant blocks of Colorado Yule marble out of place, caused long, jagged cracks and broke off pieces of the stone. Much of the work underway now is aimed at replacing the failing, almost 30-year-old roof. When the old roof slates were removed, workers discovered numerous bits of gold confetti from the 2000 celebration marking the millennium. "There were just hundreds and hundreds of these," said Park Service spokesman Mike Litterst, noting that they were fired from some sort of confetti cannon.

Extensive work also is planned on the earthquake-damaged stone and deteriorated mortar between the blocks. Litterst also pointed out a baseball-size gouge in the marble of the penthouse's ornate outer wall that was made by an errant antiaircraft bullet in 1942. It was in the midst of World War II. The gun was set up near a local bridge to defend the city against air attack. And the gunner accidentally pulled the trigger, hitting the memorial's east side. "You don't have to stretch it too much to say the Lincoln Memorial's one of the few buildings in Washington, D.C., that came under attack in World War II," he said. From "friendly fire" no less, he said. The hole had been patched before, but the fix fell out. There are no plans to patch again.

The project is probably the biggest overhaul of the building since the structure was dedicated 96 years ago, officials have said. It is being funded largely through an \$18 million donation from billionaire philanthropist David

Rubenstein. Much of the rest of the work will take place inside, beneath the massive chamber that holds the statue. The current exhibit space will be greatly expanded, along with the memorial's tiny bookstore and antiquated restrooms. New exhibits will be added, and visitors will be able to see the massive pilings and foundation that support the memorial in its undercroft. The project began in 2016, and the Park Service would like it finished for the memorial's 2022 centennial.

The memorial, which attracts 7 million visitors a year, will remain open during the work, although parts of it may be closed off from time to time. The marble-columned edifice, which houses the 120-ton statue of a seated and contemplative Abraham Lincoln, is one of the most elegant and hallowed memorials in the country. Construction began in 1914. It was dedicated May 30, 1922, in the presence of Lincoln's 78-year-old son, Robert Lincoln. The 38,000-ton building sits on a man-made eminence vulnerable to freeze-thaw cycles and open to the elements, including wind off the adjacent Potomac River. It was built on fill dredged from the Potomac River. It is supported by huge concrete pilings sunk 44 to 65 feet through the fill down to bedrock. "It's a pretty punishing environment," said Justine Bello, a Park Service architectural conservator. "It's the highest thing around here. It's not getting screened by trees . . . or other buildings. For better or worse, it's a very prominent spot."

An initial task was fixing the old roof, which had been installed in 1990 and was failing, said Audrey Tepper, a historical architect with the Park Service. "It should have lasted longer than it did," she said. "And the key to a healthy building is having a tight roof. Once the roof fails, everything else fails." "And this isn't just any building," she said. "This is a building that is very, very important to Washington, to the country, to the world." Much of the old roof has now been removed, and the new one is about to be installed. The problems, which led to poor drainage, have been discovered and will be addressed in the new roof, she said. As for the marble blocks around the roof, all of the mortar will be replaced, Bello said. "That is every joint between every stone that you see here," she said as she stood on the roof Thursday.

The cracks and missing pieces of stone from the earthquake are mostly at the corners, where the structure is most exposed to the weather. They will all be repaired. Pins will be installed to stabilize the stone. "We don't want to allow any further movement," Bello said. "We can accept that the movement happened, but we don't want it to move anymore. . . . Holes will be drilled, and stainless-steel rods will be inserted with an epoxy adhesive." The quake also moved several of the blocks out of alignment. Some of the discoloration in the stone stems from natural elements in the marble that have emerged over time, and little can be done about that, Bello said. And after all these years, Litterst said, "the warranty's up. . . . We signed off on it." [Source: The Washington Post | Michael E. Ruane | June 14, 2018 ++]

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## **DPRK Nuclear Weapons Update 21 ► No Steps Yet on Denuclearization**

Defense Secretary James Mattis on 20 JUN said he is "not aware" of any steps North Korea has taken yet to denuclearize following the historic summit between President Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un. "I'm not aware of it," Mattis told reporters outside the Pentagon when asked if there are any military indications North Korea has done anything to denuclearize. "Obviously, at the very front end of the process," he continued. "The detailed negotiations have not begun. I wouldn't expect that at this point."

Trump and Kim met in Singapore last week. The two leaders signed a joint statement that committed North Korea "to work toward complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula." The statement included no specifics on how that will be achieved, including no timeline for nuclear dismantlement and steps for verification. Following the summit, Trump declared that North Korea was "no longer a nuclear threat" despite the exact terms of the agreement remaining unclear. The document named Secretary of State Mike Pompeo as the lead U.S. negotiator going forward. On 18 JUN, Pompeo, who twice traveled to Pyongyang in the lead up to the summit, said he'd "likely travel back before too terribly long." On 20 JUN, Mattis said he will travel to Beijing and Seoul next week.



“Usual close coordination, ongoing as we sort out the way ahead,” Mattis said. “Everything is going fine between us and Republic of Korea, specifically between the chairman [of the Joint Chiefs of Staff] and his counterpart, between myself and my counterpart.” He also said a meeting with national security adviser John Bolton to discuss joint U.S.-South Korea military exercises will happen 22 JUN at the Pentagon. The Defense Department announced it was suspending planning for the August exercise in line with Trump’s announcement after the summit. Asked about the suspension’s effect on military readiness, Mattis said, “we’ll sort it all out.” “I need to sort it out before I start talking about it,” he said.

The Trump-Kim statement also committed to recovering the remains of U.S. service members killed in the Korean War. The Pentagon estimates there are about 7,700 unaccounted-for Americans who fought in the war, which is still technically ongoing because it ended with an armistice in 1953. Of that, about 5,300 are believed to be in North Korea. Mattis said discussions about returning the remains are “ongoing.” “I don’t have any update for you,” he said. “I know that we’re engaged on it.” [Source: The Hill | Rebecca Kheel | June 20, 2018 ++]

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## Flag Etiquette Update 03 ► Do’s & Don’ts

The U.S. Flag Code formalizes and unifies the traditional ways in which we give respect to the flag, also contains specific instructions on how the flag is not to be used. The following is a list of Do’s and Don’ts associated with Old Glory, the U.S. Flag.

### When displaying the flag, DO the following:

- Display the U.S. flag from sunrise to sunset on buildings and stationary flagstaffs in the open. When a patriotic effect is desired the flag may be displayed 24-hours a day if properly illuminated during the hours of darkness.
- When placed on a single staff or lanyard, place the U.S. Flag above all other flags.
- When flags are displayed in a row, the U.S. flag goes to the observer’s left. Flags of other nations are flown at same height. State and local flags are traditionally flown lower.
- When used during a marching ceremony or parade with other flags, the U.S. Flag will be to the observer’s left.
- On special days, the flag may be flown at half-staff. On Memorial Day it is flown at half-staff until noon and then raised.
- When flown at half-staff, should be first hoisted to the peak for an instant and then lowered to the half-staff position. The flag should be again raised to the peak before it is lowered for the day. By "half-staff" is meant lowering the flag to one-half the distance between the top and bottom of the staff.
- When the flag is displayed over the middle of the street, it should be suspended vertically with the union (blue field of stars) to the north in an east and west street or to the east in a north and south street.
- When placed on a Podium the flag should be placed on the speaker’s right or the staging area. Other flags should be placed to the left.
- When displayed either horizontally or vertically against a wall (or other flat surface), the union (blue field of stars) should be uppermost and to the flag’s own right, that is, to the observer’s left.
- When displayed in a window it should be displayed in the same way -- with the union or blue field to the left of the observer in the street.
- When the flag is displayed on a car, the staff shall be fixed firmly to the chassis or clamped to the right fender.
- When the flag is used to cover a casket, it should be so placed that the union is at the head and over the left shoulder. The flag should not be lowered into the grave or allowed to touch the ground.

**When saluting the flag DO the following:**

- All persons present in uniform (military, police, fire, etc.) should render the military salute. Members of the armed forces and veterans who are present but not in uniform may render the military salute.
- All other persons present should face the flag and stand at attention with their right hand over the heart, or if applicable, remove their headdress with their right hand and hold it at the left shoulder, the hand being over the heart.

**When stowing or disposing of the flag, DO the following:**

- Fold in the traditional triangle for stowage, never wadded up.
- The VFW offers the following instructions for properly disposing of a worn flag:
  - The flag should be folded in its customary manner.
  - It is important that the fire be fairly large and of sufficient intensity to ensure complete burning of the flag.
  - Place the flag on the fire.
  - The individual(s) can come to attention, salute the flag, recite the Pledge of Allegiance and have a brief period of silent reflection.
  - After the flag is completely consumed, the fire should then be safely extinguished and the ashes buried.
  - Please make sure you are conforming to local/state fire codes or ordinances.

**Quick list of Flag Etiquette Don'ts:**

- Don't dip the U.S. Flag for any person, flag, or vessel.
- Don't let the flag touch the ground.
- Don't fly flag upside down unless there is an emergency.
- Don't carry the flag flat, or carry things in it.
- Don't use the flag as clothing.
- Don't store the flag where it can get dirty.
- Don't use it as a cover.
- Don't fasten it or tie it back. Always allow it to fall free.
- Don't draw on, or otherwise mark the flag.
- Don't use the flag for decoration. Use bunting with the blue on top, then white, then red.

[Source: Military.com | June 15, 2018 ++]

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**Plumbing Tips ► 5 You Should Know**

When faced with a plumbing issue, there are many DIY plumbing fixes a homeowner can try before calling in a professional. Check out these plumbing “myths” for the best ways to deal with a clogged sink, flushable wipes and more.

**1. “Use hot water to flush down grease.”**

This is a common misconception. Grease sticks to pipes, drains and hot water. Even boiling water doesn't remove grease or help it ‘flush’ down your drain. When hot water cools over the grease, the grease hardens and it actually creates a thick coating inside of your pipes. This can cause long-term issues, including backed-up or even burst pipes. Instead, wipe the grease out of pans or pour it into a disposable jar and place in the garbage.

2. **“Clogged sink? I’ll just use the plunger.”**

Not so fast. DIY blockage-unclogging is not as straightforward as you may first think. It may also prove to be hazardous. After a few unsuccessful tries with the plunger, you may think that pouring a household chemical cleaner or drain cleaner into the sink is the logical next step. After waiting and seeing that nothing has happened, you may then reach for your plunger again. Here’s where you really need to be careful! Splash-back from plunging can cause irreversible skin damage, and if contact is made with the eyes, it can cause blindness. NEVER use a plunger after using a chemical to clear a blockage. Always use a plunger in a safe way — without any chemical agent. Consider making your own natural drain cleaner using a half cup of baking soda and vinegar, which is much less harsh than chemical cleaners.

Something to be aware of: even if you are using a plunger safely, but you have a double sink, once the blockage is dislodged, the pressure from plunging can actually cause the blockage to come up the other drain. To prevent this, be certain you’ve covered the second drain opening completely with duct tape. Unblocking one drain to simply block another will give you more than you bargained for.

3. **“It’s okay to flush if it fits down the pipe.”**

Wrong. Just because the object might seem to fit down the pipe, it does not mean it’s OK to flush. Take articles, such as scraps of food or female sanitary products, for example. These objects could fit down a sink or toilet from the entry point, but in reality, most pipes are no more than 4” wide. So, flushing even small bits of food down the sink can result in a buildup of debris and risks a clog in the piping. In a similar way, female sanitary products may disappear down the pipe but then quickly absorb water and expand. This may cause blockages, which can lead to bigger drainage problems for the whole plumbing system. It’s always best to remember that unless it’s a liquid (not grease or oil), then it’s always best to use your trash can to dispose of such items.

4. **“Flushable wipes are flushable.”**

Not as obvious as it sounds. Most wipes, including ones advertised as flushable, really cannot be eliminated by the sewer or septic system. The fact is, they just do not break down fast enough to truly be flushable. Consumer Reports’ own study agrees. Mixed with other debris, they can snag on pipes and block the system, causing serious damage. Toilets are designed to remove human waste. Use your trash can for everything else.

5. **“Pipes can handle all my weekend guests.”**

Think again. You might be able to handle an overflow of house guests and in-laws, but your sewer or septic line might not be. This line conducts all waste water from your home, including the kitchen, showers, AND toilets. So, if you have extra guests staying over for an extended period of time, ensure that everyone staggers shower and bathroom time to make certain that the lines have enough time to clear (this is especially important if you have slow drains.) By asking your guests to be mindful with their water usage during their stay, you can help you save yourself a stinky, sippy backyard, or a flooded basement.

[Source: <https://slwablog.com> | June 15, 2018 ++]

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**Shark Finning ► Prohibited by Florida Law**

A Coast Guard crew from Station Islamorada stopped a commercial fishing vessel in the Upper Keys 20 JUN that was loaded with dismembered sharks and 11 fins. Federal law has prohibited the practice of shark finning — where the fin is cut off the shark and the rest of the body discarded — since 2000. The 40-foot vessel, the Miss Shell, was stopped near South Sound Creek, which is near John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park in Key Largo, said Petty Officer 3rd Class Brandon Murray. The initial stop was for improper display of navigational lights, according to a Coast Guard press release.

Crew from a Coast Guard patrol boat, which included an officer with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, boarded the Miss Shell and found the fins and shark carcasses. The National Marine Fisheries Service, part of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, has taken over the investigation into the case. There is no immediate information about arrests. "This is an active investigation in the very early stages," said Allison Garrett, spokeswoman for NOAA Fisheries. "We are not able to discuss the case at this time."



**Dismembered sharks (left) lie on the deck of the commercial fishing vessel Miss Shell. The joint-boarding performed by the Coast Guard, NOAA and FWC resulted in the vessel being escorted to Port Largo and the catch being seized. Shark migration season, especially "snowbird" blacktip sharks, has begun in South Florida (right). But researchers say there are fewer than ever and the reduction in visiting sharks could have ecological effect.**

According to the Coast Guard press release, charges pending against the operator of the Miss Shell include failure to maintain a shark in its proper form and failure to maintain naturally attached shark fins through offloading. Under the Shark Conservation Act of 2010, removing shark fins, including tails, at sea is illegal. It is also illegal to possess removed fins on board a fishing vessel, and it is illegal to take sharks back to shore "without such fins naturally attached." The sharks have been sent to a lab to determine their species. Based on those results, more charges could be pending, including possession of prohibited species, according to the Coast Guard press release. The Miss Shell is registered to Miss Shell Seafood Incorporated in Tavernier, according to the National Marine Fisheries Service website. The owner of the company, according to the Florida Department of State website, is Scott Vaeth, of Tavernier, FL. Vaeth could not be reached for comment.

Shark fins are sought after in Asia for shark fin soup. While it's illegal to cut fins off sharks and throw away the rest of the body in the states, commercial anglers here more and more often are legally selling shark meat on the domestic market while sending the fins abroad, said Liza Merly, a lecturer with the University of Miami's Shark Research and Conservation Program. "People are still finding a way to get fins there," Merly said. "The sharks are landed and the fins are cut off, putting fins on the market. It's most recently become a problem in Florida and elsewhere" given the state's high shark population. [Source: Miami Herald | David Goodhue & Gwen Filosa | June 20, 2018 ++]

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## **RP Military Modernization Plan ► Wish List**

The Philippine government has confirmed that the second phase of its military modernization plan has been approved by President Rodrigo Duterte, clearing the way for the southeast Asian nation to replace some of its elderly and obsolete equipment. The confirmation by Philippine Department of National Defense spokesman Arsenio Andolong on Wednesday will now allow the country to implement sorely needed recapitalization of some of its equipment, the oldest of which dates back to World War II. Andolong also confirmed that the budget for the five-year Horizon 2 modernization program, which will run from 2018-2022, has been set at some 300 billion Philippine pesos (U.S. \$5.6 billion).

According to sources in the Philippines, this amount will be split into \$890 million for the Army, \$1.44 billion for the Navy and \$2.61 billion for the Air Force, with the rest of the budget going to the military's General Headquarters and the government's arsenal. The list of equipment the Philippines is seeking to acquire under the Horizon 2 program includes multirole fighters, airlifters, maritime patrol aircraft and heavy lift helicopters for the Air Force, while the Army is seeking more artillery, light tanks and multiple rocket launchers. The budget for the Air Force includes an amount set aside for combat utility helicopters. A contract signed in February with the Canadian government for Bell 412 helicopters was canceled after Canadian politicians raised concerns about the Duterte administration's human rights record in its ongoing war on drugs.

The country is reportedly now seeking to acquire the helicopters through a commercial sale, while an alternative option of buying the South Korean Korea Aerospace Industries Surion helicopter has also been floated. The Navy's priority will be the acquisition of two corvettes and a similar number of multirole offshore patrol vessels. Other items on its wish list include more anti-submarine helicopters and amphibious assault vehicles, the latter for the country's Marine Corps. Andolong also confirmed that the Navy wants to acquire an unspecified number of submarines under Horizon 2. However, this could prove difficult under a limited budget and because the country's has no experience operating and sustaining a submarine capability.

The Philippines, which is an archipelagic nation made up of more than 7,600 islands, faces a myriad security challenges ranging from disputes with China and other southeast Asian countries over the ownership of islands and features in the South China Sea, to ongoing insurgencies with communist guerrillas and Muslim separatists that includes Islamic State-linked militants. In May 2017, the latter seized control of the city of Marawi in the southern Philippine island of Mindanao, leading to a five-month siege by government forces, which resulted in large parts of the city being badly damaged during operations to recapture it. During the operation, the United States, which has a mutual defense treaty with the Philippines, provided intelligence and surveillance assistance to government forces with its manned and unmanned aircraft. [Source: DefenseNews | Mike Yeo | June 21, 2018 ++]

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## **Innovative Technology** ► **Transparent Toaster**



You love toast, but you always burn it? Then, this invention is for you. This transparent toaster allows you to see the bread while it is toasting so you just have to take it out when the color is right. This idea is based on a transparent heating glass technology.

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## **Old Goat Quiz** ► **For Those Over 60**

Great mental exercise for the over-60 crowd. Which of the following names are you familiar with?

1. Monica Lewinsky
2. Spiro Agnew
3. Benito Mussolini
4. Adolf Hitler
5. Jorge Bergoglio
6. Alfonse Capone
7. Vladimir Putin
8. Linda Lovelace
9. Saddam Hussein
10. Tiger Woods

You had trouble with #5, didn't you?

You know all the liars, criminals, adulterers, murderers, thieves, sluts, and cheaters, but you don't know the Pope??  
Lovely, just lovely...

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## **Have You Heard? ► Texas cowboy | Admiral's Aide | Blonde Men Stories**

A cowboy, who just moved to Wyoming from Texas, walks into a bar and orders three mugs of Bud. He sits in the back of the room, drinking a sip out of each one in turn. When he finishes them, he comes back to the bar and orders three more.

The bartender approaches and tells the cowboy, "You know, a mug goes flat after I draw it. It would taste better if you bought one at a time."

The cowboy replies, "Well, you see, I have two brothers. One is in Arizona, the other is in Colorado . When we all left our home in Texas, we promised that we'd drink this way to remember the days when we drank together. So I'm drinking one beer for each of my brothers and one for myself."

The bartender admits that this is a nice custom, and leaves it there. The cowboy becomes a regular in the bar, and always drinks the same way. He orders three mugs and drinks them in turn.

One day, he comes in and only orders two mugs. All the regulars take notice and fall silent. When he comes back to the bar for the second round, the bartender says, "I don't want to intrude on your grief, but I wanted to offer my condolences on your loss."

The cowboy looks quite puzzled for a moment, then a light dawns in his eyes and he laughs.

"Oh, no, everybody's just fine," he explains, "It's just that my wife and I joined the Baptist Church and I had to quit drinking."

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A young Naval Officer was in a terrible car accident, but due to the heroics of the hospital staff the only permanent injury was the loss of one ear. Since he wasn't physically impaired he remained in the military and eventually became an Admiral. However, during his career he was always sensitive about his appearance.

One day the Admiral was interviewing two Navy Master Chiefs and a Marine Sergeant Major for his personal staff. The first Master Chief was a Surface Navy type and it was a great interview. At the end of the interview the Admiral asked him, "Do you notice anything different about me?" The Master Chief answered, "Why yes. I couldn't help but notice you are missing your starboard ear, so I don't know whether this impacts your hearing on that side." The Admiral got very angry at this lack of tact and threw him out of his office.

The next candidate, an Aviation Master Chief, when asked this same question, answered, "Well yes, you seem to be short one ear." The Admiral threw him out also.

The third interview was with the Marine Sergeant Major. He was articulate, extremely sharp, and seemed to know more than the two Master Chiefs put together. The Admiral wanted this guy, but went ahead with the same question. "Do you notice anything different about me?" To his surprise the Sergeant Major said, "Yes. You wear contact lenses." The Admiral was impressed and thought to himself, what an incredibly tactful Marine. "And how do you know that?" the Admiral asked.

The Sergeant Major replied, "Well sir, it's pretty hard to wear glasses with only one f\*!\*\*\*g' ear."

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### *Shampoo*

A blonde man is in the bathroom and his wife shouts: "Did you find the shampoo?"  
He answers, "Yes, but I'm not sure what to do... it's for dry hair, and I've just wet mine."

### *Mail*

A blonde man spies a letter lying on his doormat.  
It says on the envelope "DO NOT BEND."  
He spends the next 2 hours trying to figure out how to pick it up.

### *Birth*

A blonde man shouts frantically into the phone, "My wife is pregnant and her contractions are only two minutes apart!"  
"Is this her first child?" asks the Doctor.  
"No! Dummy" he shouts, "this is her husband!"

### *Suicide*

A blonde man is in jail, the guard looks in his cell and sees him hanging by his feet.  
"Just WHAT are you doing?" he asks.  
"Hanging myself," the blonde replies.  
"The rope should be around your neck" says the guard.  
"I tried that," he replies, "but then I couldn't breathe."

### *Scuba Divers*

An Italian tourist asks a blonde man: "Why do scuba divers always fall backwards off their boats?"  
To which the blonde man replies: "If they fell forward, they'd still be in the boat."

### *Xmas*

A friend told the blonde man: "Christmas is on a Friday this year."  
The blonde man then said, "Let's hope it's not the 13th."

### *Grenades*

Two blonde men find three grenades, and they decide to take them to a police station.  
One asked: "What if one explodes before we get there?"  
The other says: "We'll lie and say we only found two."

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***RAO Bulletin Editor/Publisher:***

Lt. James (EMO) Tichacek, USN (Ret) Tel: (858) 842-1111 Email: [raoemo@sbcglobal.net](mailto:raoemo@sbcglobal.net)

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***RAO Baguio Director:***

SSgt Terrance (Terry) Parker, USAF (Ret), PSC 517 Box 4107, FPO AP 96517-1000, Tel: Smart 0921824728 or Globe 09454073380, Email: [rao.dir.baguio@gmail.com](mailto:rao.dir.baguio@gmail.com)

***RAO Baguio Office:*** Mountain Lodge, 27 Leonard Wood Road, Baguio City, 2600 Philippines  
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