

RAO

BULLETIN

15 August 2018

PDF Edition



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MAVNI Program Update 11 ► Rep. Mike Coffman | Program Needs to Be Fixed

The greatest strength of our nation's military has always been, and remains, our exceptional service members. The military services have the privilege of drawing from a large and diverse talent pool, including dedicated and talented immigrants. Today, there are thousands of immigrants serving with distinction. Immigrants serving today are a valued and integral part of our military's readiness. Every day, noncitizens with legal permanent resident status join the military. However, recent news reports would lead you to believe otherwise. These news reports conflate the large number of legal permanent residents who continue to enter the military with a relatively small number of individuals who were identified as security risks after applying under a special program that was suspended in 2016. This special program, referred to as the Military Accessions Vital to the National Interest program, was designed to authorize enlistment of non-U.S. citizens who possess certain critical language and medical skills.

In 2016, the Obama administration suspended the MAVNI program because of serious security concerns; no new applicants have been allowed since then. A 2016 Defense Department inspector general's investigation confirmed what several other classified assessments found: The MAVNI program was vulnerable to an unacceptable level of risk from insider threats such as espionage, terrorism and other criminal activity. Every individual, regardless of citizenship, who applies for military service must pass background checks. Depending on the individual's

background and military career field, additional vetting may be required. It is during these checks that DoD uncovered troubling information on a small number of MAVNI applicants. In some cases, these checks were not completed, and the threats not identified, until after the individual had already been enlisted in the military.

Recently, DoD officials shed additional light on this issue when they publicly released more details about those security concerns. The document, which is a court filing in an ongoing MAVNI lawsuit, identifies several specific examples of individuals who were allowed into the military and then found to have been security risks. Some examples:

- Multiple individuals enlisted in the military based on fake visas to attend universities that did not exist.
- Several MAVNI recruits attended and falsified transcripts from universities owned by a foreign state-sponsored intelligence organization.
- A MAVNI recruit who enlisted after entering the U.S. on a student visa professed support for 9/11 terrorists and said he would voluntarily help China in a crisis situation.

These cases clearly illustrate the dangers associated with inadequate security vetting for military enlistees. As the chairman of the House Armed Services Committee’s subcommittee on military personnel, I understand the vital role the MAVNI program plays in bringing individuals with skills vital to the national interest into the military. While the MAVNI program has experienced problems, the military must have a capability to enlist individuals with these important skills. In recognition of this need, this year’s National Defense Authorization Act contains a provision that would put in place common-sense limitations on the program, while allowing the secretary of defense the discretion he needs to recruit individuals with these critical skills.

The contributions immigrants make to our nation’s defense cannot be overstated. We must re-double our efforts to ensure that background investigations are completed thoroughly and expeditiously so that qualified applicants can continue their long tradition of service.

[Rep. Mike Coffman, R-Colo.](#), is a Marine combat veteran and the only member of Congress to have served in both Iraq wars. He serves on the House Veterans Affairs Committee as well as the House Armed Services Committee, where he is the chairman of the military personnel subcommittee.

[Source: MilitaryTimes | Rep. Mike Coffman | July 31, 2018 ++]

Hack-The-Pentagon Program ► War On Flaws And Bugs In Its Websites

The Pentagon is opening a new front in its war on flaws and bugs in its websites. On 11 & 12 AUG, about 100 hackers from around the world went to town on the Marine Corps’ public-facing sites, finding more than 75 security vulnerabilities in just a few hours, the Defense Digital Service announced 13 AUG. It’s the latest hack-the-military bug-bounty program, the brainchild of DDS director Chris Lynch. The first one, Hack the Pentagon, launched in 2016, found 138 bugs. Then came Hack the Army, which found more than 118; Hack the Air Force, versions one and two, found 315 collectively, and this year’s Hack the Defense Travel System, which found more than 100. DDS is working with San Francisco-based bug-bounty company HackerOne on the programs.

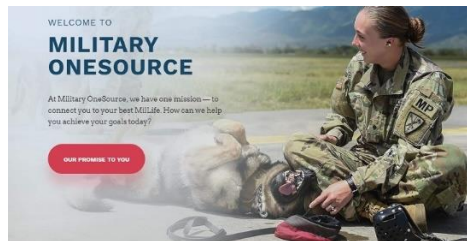
The hack-the-Pentagon efforts are helping to fix non-sensitive Defense Department sites. It was a push to get the Pentagon to experiment with the concept at all, Lynch told Defense One on the sidelines of the DEFCON hacker conference here. Lynch says he is still struggling with aspects of Pentagon acquisition that are too weighted toward established players at the expense of innovation and the timely fixing of problems. “The old-school approach was, we would have this really large vendor and they would sell you some terrible piece of software—probably—and they would say, ‘This is 100 percent going to do the job of securing your networks, certifications, and systems and it’s all going to be great. Perfect.’...That doesn’t really work. You need a broader community.”

Just by telling the world that the Defense Department was open to tips, DDS officials received reports that they wouldn't otherwise have gotten. Lynch said they also learned how hard it is for outsiders to report problems to the Defense Department related to public websites. He recounted one of the more interesting experiences he had reaching out to the larger hacker community. "Someone in a foreign country, I can't remember where they were, sent us an email with a vulnerability that they knew about. They said, 'I don't even know how to report a [website] vulnerability to the DoD'" he said.

This was before the DDS began working the issue, according to a spokesperson. "There was no way to just say 'Hey, I saw something. I'm just going to report it.' I think that's crazy. It was a big wakeup call. This person was scared to report to the DoD. I say, let me know. I want to know." It's now easier and there is an [established process](#) for disclosing those, according to DDS. [Source: Defense One | Patrick Tucker | August 13, 2018 ++]

Military One Source Update 02 ► Now Available For A Full Year After Separation

The Department of Defense announced it will extend eligibility for Military OneSource benefits from the current 180 days to 365 days after separation or retirement from military service to ensure all service members and families have access to comprehensive support as they transition to civilian life. This change goes into effect today in accordance with the John S. McCain National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2019. Military OneSource provides information, resources and support for active-duty, National Guard and reserve service members, their families and survivors. Provided at no cost, Military OneSource gives exclusive access to programs, tools, and benefits designed to help ensure service members and their families are mission-ready and able to thrive in both their military and post-military lives. Military OneSource services are accessible 24/7, service members and family members can call Military OneSource at 800-342-9647 or go to www.militaryonesource.mil. To explore additional benefits that may be available through the Department of Veterans Affairs, go to <https://explore.va.gov>. [Source: TREA Newsletter Update | August 14, 2018 ++]



UCMJ Update 03 ► Domestic Violence Added As A Separate Crime

Domestic violence will officially become a separate crime under the Uniform Code of Military Justice when President Donald Trump signs the annual defense authorization act into law next week. Military officials have prosecuted such crimes in the past, but under more general justice categories such as assault. They carry severe penalties including jail time and dismissal from the armed forces. But analysts say that doesn't always convey the seriousness of the offense. The change was included in the massive military policy measure after outside advocates noted the lack of domestic violence as a specific crime under military law has ramifications for how outside law enforcement can keep track of those troops after they leave the ranks.

Those types of convictions in the civilian world can trigger restrictions on future firearms purchases and ease the path to protection from abuse orders. But since military officials don't separate domestic abuse crimes separately from other assaults in their record keeping, reporting those crimes to outside agencies is often incomplete. The issue drew national attention a year ago, when former airman Devin Kelley gunned down 26 people at a Texas church. Kelly was kicked out of the military after being convicted of assaulting his wife and child, but civilian authorities were not properly notified of the crimes that would have disqualified him from buying firearms. In the months that followed, military officials added more than 4,000 former service members to the list of individuals ineligible for gun purchases because of crimes while serving.

In a statement, Rep. Jackie Rosen (D-NV) and one of the sponsors of the amendment, said the change will "close a dangerous loophole" facing military families. The authorization bill also includes language expanding the eligibility of victims' counsel in domestic violence cases and changes to how information on those crimes are recorded throughout the military. Additionally, it requires defense leaders to standardize policies for safely transferring victims of domestic violence or sexual assault away from accused troops. Trump is expected to sign the legislation into law 13 AUG at an event including military members at Fort Drum in New York. [Source: MilitaryTimes | Leo Shane III | August 9, 2018 ++]

Space Force Update 01 ► First Steps

Defense Secretary Jim Mattis seems to have reversed course on his previous stance against a Space Force, telling reporters on 7 AUG that the Defense Department is supportive of establishing a new combatant command for space. "We need to address space as a developing war fighting domain and a combatant command is certainly one thing that we can we can establish. This is a process we're in," Mattis said on the steps of the Pentagon before an honor cordon to welcome the U.K. Secretary of State for Defence Gavin Williamson. "We are in complete alignment with the president's concern about protecting our assets in space to contribute to our security to our economy and we're going to have to address it as other countries show a capability to attack those assets," he added.

Mattis' comments appear to align with a recent Defense One report stating that the Defense Department intends to stand up U.S. Space Command as the eleventh unified combatant command. Defense One, which saw a draft of the Pentagon's report on how best to restructure its space infrastructure, also reported that the department plans to set up a new joint agency for space procurement and a "Space Operations Force" that would bring together expertise from all four services and the contractor community. The public roll-out of the report, is expected as early as this week. The actions proposed by the Pentagon are seen as the first steps toward developing a brand-new, space-centric service, as President Donald Trump has directed. However, only Congress can approve the creation of a new branch of the armed forces.

Trump ordered the creation of an independent Space Force in a June speech after a meeting of the National Space Council. The directive ran counter to the on-record opinions of Mattis, Air Force Secretary Heather Wilson and Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Dave Goldfein, who had all urged Congress to keep space functions inside the Air Force in order to optimize space warfighting operations. Asked directly whether he supported a separate service for space, Mattis said 7 AUG that he and the president are "in complete agreement" and are "working our way through all of this," with Vice President Mike Pence serving as the point man for the White House. "We are working closely daily with his office and with supporters on Capitol Hill and the relevant committees," he said. "What that actual organization will look like, it will be fit for purpose is what I can assure you. But I don't I don't have all the final answers yet. We're still putting that together."

By creating a unified space command, the Defense Department will be going even further than the congressional armed forces committees in the fiscal year 2019 defense policy bill. That legislation calls for making a U.S. Space Command that would be a "subunified combatant command" falling under U.S. Strategic Command. The Pentagon's

proposal would put STRATCOM and U.S. Space Command on even footing. [Source: Defense News | Valerie Insinna | August 7, 2018 ++]

NDAA 2019 Update 13 ► Finalization Anticipated by Early AUG

U.S. Senate lawmakers are expected to finalize Congress' annual defense authorization bill early next week following the House's passage of the measure 1 AUG. The House easily adopted the compromise draft of the annual military policy bill by a vote of 359-54. The \$716 billion, 1,800-page legislation includes a 2.6 percent pay raise for troops next January, a boost in military end strength of 15,600 service members, more aircraft and ships than the Pentagon requested and an overhaul of the military's officer promotion system. On the geopolitical side, the bill delays delivery of the F-35 joint strike fighters to Turkey, amid the country's authoritarian drift. It also bars Chinese telecom firms ZTE and Hauwei and companies it does business with from doing business with the U.S. government and — with China in mind — strengthens scrutiny of deals between foreign investors and U.S.-based businesses for national security concerns.

On 31 JUL, Sen. Jim Inhofe (R-OK) and the second-ranking Republican on the Senate Armed Services Committee, predicted House passage of the measure and said he anticipates it coming to the Senate floor for final congressional approval 8 AUG. If that happens, it will mark a significant legislative victory for defense lawmakers, who typically labor through the conference process of the massive policy bill for most of the fall before final adoption. The defense authorization bill is one of the few remaining reliable, bipartisan efforts in an increasingly polarized Congress. It has been adopted by lawmakers for 57 consecutive years, but the last time it was passed by Congress before the start of the new fiscal year was 2009.

This year, the measure could be signed into law as early as the first full week of August. House Armed Services Committee Chairman Mac Thornberry (R-TX) earlier this week noted if that is the case, it will be quickest the military authorization process has finished in 41 years. "This bill continues to make readiness a key focus for if we send our men and women out on missions, they deserve to have the best equipment, the best training, and the best support that this country can provide," Thornberry said on the House floor before the vote, adding the bill better prepares the nation to counter Russia and China. The legislative victory allows House members to head home for their summer break with at least one major portion of their routine congressional work complete, giving them a talking point in town halls and community speeches leading up to November's mid-term elections.

The defense budget measure authorizes a base defense budget of \$639 billion and \$69 billion more for overseas contingency operations. The totals match previously agreed upon spending plans for fiscal 2019. The spending authority includes \$40.8 billion to "overcome the crisis in military aviation" by purchasing more equipment, \$17.7 billion to rehabilitate worn out Army equipment, and \$23.5 billion to upgrade and repair "crumbling military buildings and other infrastructure." For aviation, lawmakers backed administration plans for 77 F-35s, with limitations on software upgrades pending cost and schedule information. They're also letting the Air Force kill its JSTARS recapitalization, but restricting retirement of the legacy E-8C Joint Surveillance Target Attack Radar System until the follow-on program is ready.

Unlike past years, the authorization bill is largely devoid of controversy. Provisions to shutter several Defense Department offices were dumped during the conference process, and lawmakers pushed off President Donald Trump's stated plans to create a new "space force" within the military. HASC Ranking Member Adam Smith (D-WA) made his customary pitch for fiscal responsibility and predictability, crediting Congress' two-year budget deal for setting in advance the top-lines for defense and non-defense, the main hindrance to on-time budgeting. "We face Russia and China and Iran and North Korea and terrorist organizations spread out all other the globe," Smith said. "It is incredibly complicated and difficult and it's going to be very expensive unless we make some smart choices."

The 2.6 percent pay raise falls in line with the expected rise in civilian wages in 2019, but is the largest for the military in a decade. The end strength increase comes after boosts in troop numbers totaling more than 25,000 over the last two years. The measure also includes an overhaul of the Defense Officer Personnel Management Act, to allow for more flexible promotion schedules and more expansive recruiting and retention tools for service leaders. The Defense Information Systems Agency and other so-called “fourth estate” agencies were spared the ax, but a potpourri of Pentagon organizational changes have made it into this year’s massive, must-pass defense authorization bill. The bill is named for SASC Chairman John McCain, who is battling cancer at home in Arizona but had a hand in crafting it. [Source: Defense News | Leo Shane III | August 1, 2018 ++]

NDAA 2019 Update 14 ► Where's The Money To Pay For It

Now that the FY 2019 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) has been sent to the White House for President Donald Trump's signature, one might be inclined to ask, “Where's the money to pay for the \$717 billion legislation touted to rebuild and modernize our military force?” Great question. Like most major advocacy efforts these days on Capitol Hill, victory often is clouded by some obstacle, usually having to do with congressional wrangling over how to prioritize federal spending. The sweeping defense bill made its way through the halls of Congress in record time. In remarks on the Senate floor, Sen. Jim Inhofe (R-OK), a senior member of the Armed Services Committee, said the last time the annual defense bill made it to the president's desk this early was in 1996. More often than not, though, the bill ends up being a source of contention as it bumps up against other national priorities.

Vet organizations are grateful for Congress's swift and speedy resolve this year to complete the bill ahead of the August recess. While the FY 2019 NDAA is poised to change the course of military readiness and the all-volunteer force for years to come, DoD can't pay for the things Congress authorized without first getting appropriate funding. The legislation to fund the bill is stalled, along with a number of other appropriations bills for now, and not likely to see any movement in the short-term as lawmakers left town to return to their home districts.

The House is expected to be out the full month, and the Senate is taking a mini-recess, returning in mid-August to play catch-up on unfinished business. However, lawmakers left town surrounded by a flurry of mixed messages as to what to expect upon their return, leading to questions about what they actually might be able to accomplish before the midterm elections. Once Congress returns in September, the pressure will intensify as lawmakers have only about nine working days to act on passing a budget for the upcoming fiscal year.

Meanwhile, mixed messages on a government shutdown continue to cause consternation with congressional leadership. Trump has indicated he's considering a government shutdown either before or after the election. The president is keen on pressing hard to get funding for a border wall and immigration reform before the end of the year. In spite of the president's talk of a government shutdown, some headlines, like GOP leaders yawn at Trump's shutdown threats, dismiss the possibility of a shutdown and signal lawmakers' intent to pass a series of spending bills before the midterm elections to prevent a lapse in funding for most of the federal government. So there is a lot of “wait and see” as to what happens next with the defense appropriations bill. [Source: MOAA Newsletter | Rene Campos | August 7, 2018 ++]

NDAA 2019 Update 15 ► President Signs Bill Into Law

President Donald J. Trump today signed the \$717 billion Fiscal 2019 National Defense Authorization Act at a ceremony at Fort Drum, New York. The act – named for Arizona Sen. John S. McCain – authorizes a 2.6 percent military pay raise and increases the active duty forces by 15,600 service members. “With this new authorization, we

will increase the size and strength of our military by adding thousands of new recruits to active duty, Reserve and National Guard units, including 4,000 new active duty soldiers,” Trump told members of the Army’s 10th Mountain Division and their families. “And we will replace aging tanks, aging planes and ships with the most advanced and lethal technology ever developed. And hopefully, we’ll be so strong, we’ll never have to use it, but if we ever did, nobody has a chance.”

Services’ End Strength Set

The act sets active duty end strength for the Army at 487,500 in fiscal 2019, which begins Oct. 1, 2018. The Navy’s end strength is set at 335,400, the Marine Corps’ at 186,100 and the Air Force’s at 329,100. On the acquisition side, the act funds 77 F-35 joint strike fighters at \$7.6 billion. It also funds F-35 spares, modifications and depot repair capability. The budget also fully funds development of the B-21 bomber. The act authorizes \$24.1 billion for shipbuilding to fully fund 13 new battle force ships and accelerate funding for several future ships. This includes three Arleigh Burke-class destroyers and two Virginia-class submarines. There is also \$1.6 billion for three littoral combat ships. In addition, the act authorizes 24 F/A-18 Super Hornets, 10 P-8A Poseidons, two KC-130J Hercules, 25 AH-1Z Cobras, seven MV-22/CMV-22B Ospreys and three MQ-4 Tritons.

Afghanistan, Iraq

There is \$5.2 billion in the budget for the Afghanistan Security Forces Fund, and another \$850 million to train and equip Iraqi security forces to counter Islamic State of Iraq and Syria terrorists. The budget accelerates research on hyperspace technology and defense against hyperspace missiles. It also funds development of artificial intelligence capabilities. “In order to maintain America’s military supremacy, we must always be on the cutting edge,” the president said. “That is why we are also proudly reasserting America’s legacy of leadership in space. Our foreign competitors and adversaries have already begun weaponizing space.” The president said adversaries seek to negate America’s advantage in space, and they have made progress. “We’ll be catching them very shortly,” he added. “They want to jam transmissions, which threaten our battlefield operations and so many other things. We will be so far ahead of them in a very short period of time, your head will spin.”

He said the Chinese military has launched a new military division to oversee its warfighting programs in space. “Just like the air, the land, the sea, space has become a warfighting domain,” Trump said. “It is not enough to merely have an American presence in space; we must have American dominance in space, and that is why just a few days ago, the vice president outlined my administration’s plan to create a sixth branch of the United States military called the United States Space Force.”

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The 2019 Authorization Act does not fund the military. Rather, it authorizes the policies under which funding will be set by the appropriations committees and then voted on by Congress. That bill is still under consideration. [Source: DoD News, Defense Media Activity | Jim Garamone | August 13, 2018 ++]

DoD Deployable Policy ► ‘Deploy Or Get Out’ Exemptions

Service members wounded in combat will be exempt from the Defense Department’s new policy to be deployable in 12 months or face separation from the military, the Pentagon announced this week. The policy tweak came after criticism that DoD was going to remove personnel who were only in non-deployable status because of their combat injuries, when the overall goal of the program was to target the thousands of military personnel who for fitness, health or other administrative reasons have not been deployable. The initiative is part of Defense Secretary Jim Mattis’ effort to improve the lethality and readiness of the services.

“Service members whose injuries were the result of hostile action, meet the criteria for awarding of the Purple Heart, and whose injuries were not the result of their own misconduct” are approved for retention, DoD said in its 30

JUL policy. The policy also allows the service secretaries to identify individuals that they wish to exempt from the 12-month deployability requirement, "if determined to be in the best interest of the military service." The exemptions, as outlined in the policy, are:

- **Combat wounded.** "These are service members whose injuries were the result of hostile action, meet the criteria for awarding of the Purple Heart, and whose injuries were not the result of their own misconduct." The policy goes on to say that "disapproval of retention for non-deployable combat wounded service members, who wish to be retained and whose reason for non-deployability is a direct result of their combat wounds, may not be delegated."
- **Pregnant and post-partum service members.** Females are exempt for pregnancy-related health conditions during pregnancy through the post-partum period. Under the policy, pregnancy is considered a temporary non-deployable status, and the duration of that status after childbirth is left to the individual service secretaries.
- **Case-by-case exemptions.** The service secretaries may grant exemptions on a case-by-case basis if the service member is filling in a specific position critical to the service.
- **Soon-to- retire.** The service secretaries may grant exemptions for active duty service members who are three years away from regular retirement, or reserve component personnel who have accumulated 17 years of reserve service.

DoD said in February that about 11 percent, or 235,000, of the 2.1 million personnel serving on active duty, in the reserves or National Guard were non-deployable. Of that total, about 99,000 were non-deployable for administrative reasons, such as not having all their immunizations or their required dental exams. About 20,000 were not deployable due to pregnancy, and 116,000 were not deployable due to either short- or long-term injuries, DoD said. The numbers since DoD announced the new policy have improved, said Pentagon spokesman Air Force Maj. Carla Gleason.

Approximately 6.8% percent, or 143,000 of the total force-active duty, National Guard, and Reserve-were non-deployable as of May 31, 2018. This includes temporary as well as permanent non-deployable service members. The reasons vary, but they are predominantly medical, Gleason said. Service members who are not exempted will be processed for administrative separation, DoD said. [Source: MilitaryTimes | Tara Copp | August 1, 2018 ++]

DoD Fraud, Waste, & Abuse ► Reported 01 thru 15 AUG 2018

Raleigh, NC -- A judge demanded to know 31 JUL why a North Carolina man repeatedly used an Army general's uniform to fool others, asking if "it was like Halloween every day," as he sentenced him to six months' imprisonment for an impersonation that ended with an alarming helicopter ride. Christian Desgroux, 58, also received a year of supervised release for wearing a three-star general's battle dress uniform when he unexpectedly landed in a chartered helicopter at a technology company late last year. While authorities say he was trying to impress a female employee, the case was so serious that federal terrorism investigators launched a probe.

That November landing at SAS Institute wasn't the only time Desgroux pretended to be a general despite never serving in the U.S. military, prosecutor Barbara Kocher said Tuesday. She told the judge that Desgroux had convinced a now-estranged wife that he was going on fake deployments and had worn a military uniform while getting kicked out of strip clubs. "He liked the sense of importance he gained by masquerading as a general," Kocher said, adding that Desgroux "has used this persona for years." Federal sentencing guidelines called for no more than six months' imprisonment, U.S. District Judge Terrence Boyle made clear how serious it is to impersonate a military officer.

- "You can be a danger to people," Boyle said. "What made you think you could act like a general?"
- Wearing an orange jumpsuit, Desgroux apologized, saying he hadn't realized what he was doing was illegal.

- "So it was like Halloween every day of the week?" Boyle asked. "Why not wear a top hat and a tuxedo?"
- The defendant then meekly added, "It was a mental issue, sir." He said he bought the uniform from a surplus store.



Christian Desgroux

¹ Desgroux had previously been ruled competent to proceed with the case, a finding his attorney didn't contest. Federal prison officials oversaw a mental health exam that showed he had a personality disorder with narcissistic traits as well as alcoholism, Kocher said, but his offense wasn't the result of psychosis. Boyle said he would credit Desgroux for the more than five months he's been jailed since his arrest. He also ordered him to stay away from alcohol and undergo mental health treatment. Defense attorney Andrew McCoppin told the judge that prior to the November arrest, his client had previous inpatient psychiatric treatment. "There definitely is a mental health component to all this that he's going to need to continue to work on," said McCoppin, who declined a reporter's request for further comment.

Desgroux had pleaded guilty in June to a single count of impersonating a military officer when he convinced a charter helicopter pilot to land at the company's sprawling headquarters in Cary. When Desgroux landed at the SAS corporate campus on 6 NOV, he was approached by security officers. Homeland Security Special Agent Tony Bell has previously testified that Desgroux saluted the security officers and that some saluted him back. Still, the suspicious guards called local authorities who got federal agents involved.

Federal agents have said he hoped to impress the woman with the nearly \$3,000 chartered flight and claims he was on a mission authorized by President Donald Trump himself. The woman, however, was married and not romantically interested. She was expecting him to arrive by car, but instead they went on a 30-minute helicopter ride around Raleigh, authorities said. She and the pilot appear to have been swept up in Desgroux's strange behavior and were not charged. Desgroux, a native of Chile who worked out of his North Carolina home as a mechanic, has lived in the Raleigh area for several decades and became a U.S. citizen in 2016. [Source: The Associated Press | Jonathan Drew | July 31, 2018 ++]

MCRD Undercooked Meat Lawsuit ► \$500K for Recruit's Health-Wrecking Results

One of the Marine Corps recruits who was exposed to undercooked meat and fell ill, allegedly contracting a deadly syndrome that caused kidney failure and seizures that led to his medical discharge, is suing the company that allegedly provided the West Coast boot camp with the tainted ground beef. Vincent Grano, 19, was discharged from the Marine Corps on June 29, and a month later filed the federal lawsuit seeking \$500,000 in damages for the health-wrecking results that prematurely ended his military career, according to court documents. Grano was one of 302 patients treated in late October for exposure to E. coli at both Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego and Camp Pendleton, California. A Centers for Disease Control and Prevention investigation identified two strains of E. coli present and traced the exposure to undercooked ground beef served to recruits at the dining facilities.

Attorneys for Grano allege in their lawsuit that the investigation, “showed that SODEXO, INC. employees routinely undercooked ground beef served to recruits, and only intermittently checked the temperature of foods, including ground beef, using an appropriate thermometer.” Maryland-based Sodexo Inc. oversees Andrew & Williamson Fresh Produce Inc., the company that provided the meat to the depot. Grano was days away from beginning the culminating event of the Corps’ 13-week indoctrination known as “the Crucible” when he allegedly was hit with stomach cramps, nausea, diarrhea and vomiting on Oct. 23, 2017. Three days later he allegedly was passing “bloody diarrheal stools,” a symptom at least 120 recruits experienced, according to the CDC.

But his luck got worse. He was one of 15 recruits with severe symptoms who allegedly later contracted Hemolytic-uremic syndrome. The syndrome can cause kidney failure, which it did reportedly did in Grano’s case. His attorneys also allege that it led to a diagnosis of epilepsy after he had experienced multiple seizures. Grano was treated on 26 OCT , but three days later allegedly lost consciousness and woke up the next day in Balboa Naval Medical Center, having had an apparent seizure. In December he was transferred to San Diego’s Alvarado Hospital to begin rehabilitation. But by February he allegedly had been diagnosed with epilepsy, a disqualifying condition for military service, which allegedly led to his June discharge. Sodexo did not respond to Marine Corps Times for comment. [Source: MarineCorpsTimes | Todd South | August 1, 2018 ++]

GI Bill Update 260 ► 15 Forever GI Bill Provisions Implemented

The Department of Veterans Affairs has begun implementing new provisions of the Harry W. Colmery Educational Assistance Act of 2017, better known as the "Forever GI Bill." In one of his first actions since taking the oath of office Monday, new VA Secretary Robert Wilkie said the provisions to expand GI Bill coverage were put into effect 1 AUG. The VA said the new provisions "will have an immediate and positive impact on veterans and their families using VA benefits to pursue their educational goals."

"We are excited to get the word out about implementation of the provisions," Wilkie said in a statement.

"From the day the Forever GI Bill was signed into law, VA, in collaboration with Veterans Service Organizations, state approving agencies and school certifying officials, has taken an expansive approach to ensure earned benefits are provided to veterans in a timely, high-quality and efficient way."

The VA said 15 new provisions of the GI Bill went into effect 1 AUG, in addition to 13 that were already in place. Among the new provisions is one making recipients of the Purple Heart awarded on or after Sept. 11, 2001, eligible for full post-9/11 GI Bill benefits for up to 36 months, if they were not already entitled. Another new provision expands the "Yellow Ribbon Program," in which degree-granting institutions of higher learning can agree to make additional funds available to a veteran's education program without an additional charge to the GI Bill entitlement. This program is to be implemented by Aug. 1, 2022. A few other of the new provisions were:

- Military and Veteran families who have lost a family member can now reallocate transferred Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits.
- Additional Guard and Reserve service now counts toward Post-9/11 GI Bill eligibility.
- Post-9/11 GI Bill students may now receive monthly housing allowance for any days they are not on active duty, rather than having to wait until the next month; and

More provisions are scheduled related to science, technology, engineering and math benefit extensions; increased benefit levels; a pilot program for high-technology training geared toward "upskilling" Veterans to enter the workforce quickly. For more information, visit the [Forever GI Bill - Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act page](#).

At a House Veterans Affairs Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity hearing last month, the VA said it had to overcome numerous Information Technology (IT) challenges to ready the new provisions to be put in place. "This is a complex, heavy-lift effort," retired Maj. Gen. Robert Worley II, director of VA education services, said in his testimony. The VA had hoped to begin implementation on July 16 but had to delay until August, he said. The VA estimated that putting systems in place to accommodate the new provisions would cost about \$70 million. [Source: MilitaryTimes | Richard Sisk | August 3, 2018 ++]

POW/MIA Update 111 ► DPRK 55 Box Turnover May Take Years to Analyze

When North Korea handed over 55 boxes of bones that it said are remains of American war dead, it provided a single military dog tag but no other information that could help U.S. forensics experts determine their individual identities, a U.S. defense official said Tuesday. The official, who discussed previously undisclosed aspects of the remains issue on condition of anonymity, said it probably will take months if not years to fully determine individual identities from the remains, which have not yet been confirmed by U.S. specialists to be those of American servicemen. The official did not know details about the single dog tag, including the name on it, or whether it was even that of an American military member. During the Korean War, combat troops of 16 other United Nations member countries fought alongside U.S. service members on behalf of South Korea. Some of them, including Australia, Belgium, France and the Philippines, have yet to recover some of their war dead from North Korea.

The 55 boxes were handed over at Wonsan, North Korea last 27 JUL and flown aboard a U.S. military transport plane to Osan air base in South Korea, where U.S. officials catalogued the contents. After a repatriation ceremony at Osan on 1 AUG, the remains will be flown to Hawaii where they will begin undergoing in-depth forensic analysis, in some cases using mitochondrial DNA profiles, at a Defense Department laboratory to attempt to establish individual identifications. Defense Secretary Jim Mattis said last week that the return of the 55 boxes was a positive step but not a guarantee that the bones are American. "We don't know who's in those boxes," he said. He noted that some could turn out to be those of missing from other nations that fought in the Korean War. "They could go to Australia," he said. "They have missing, France has missing, Americans have. There's a whole lot of us. So, this is an international effort to bring closure for those families."

North Korea provided the 55 boxes in a delayed fulfillment of a commitment its leader, Kim Jong Un, made to President Donald Trump at their Singapore summit on 12 JUN. Although the point of the summit was for Trump to press Kim on giving up his nuclear weapons, their joint statement after the meeting included a single line on an agreement to recover "POW/MIA remains, including the immediate repatriation of those already identified." North Korea had told U.S. officials more than once in recent years that it had about 200 sets of U.S. war remains, although none was "already identified." It remains unclear whether the boxes provided on July 27 include all of the bones North Korea has accumulated over the years. In the past, the North has provided bones that in some cases were not human or that were additional bones of U.S. servicemen already identified from previously recovered remains.

The Pentagon estimates that of the approximately 7,700 U.S. MIAs from the Korean War, about 5,300 are unaccounted for on North Korean soil. Many were buried in shallow graves near where they fell on the battlefield; some others died in North Korean or Chinese-run prisoner of war camps. Efforts to recover remains in North Korea have been fraught with political and other obstacles since the war ended on July 27, 1953. Between 1990 and 1994, North Korea unilaterally handed over 208 caskets to the U.S., which turned out to contain remains of far more than 208 individuals, although forensics specialists thus far have established 181 identities. In addition, a series of U.S.-North Korean recovery efforts, termed "joint field activities," between 1996 and 2005 yielded 229 caskets of remains, of which 153 have been identified, according to the Pentagon.

The Trump administration, as part of the Singapore agreement, is pursuing discussions with North Korea on resuming those "field activities," for which past administrations have paid millions of dollars in donated vehicles,

equipment, food and cash at the request of the North Koreans. The U.S. official who discussed aspects of the return of the 55 boxes on condition of anonymity said the U.S. is considering the possibility of including South Korea in future searches for remains in North Korea. It's not clear whether negotiations for such an arrangement are under way.

Richard Downes, whose father, Air Force Lt. Hal Downes, is among the Korean War missing, says this turnover of remains, having drawn worldwide attention, has the potential to put the U.S. back on track to finding and eventually identifying many more. Downes, 70, was 3½ when his father's B-26 Invader went down on Jan. 13, 1952, northeast of Pyongyang, the North Korean capital. His family was left to wonder about his fate. Downes, now executive director of the Coalition of Families of Korean and Cold War POW/MIAs, which advocates for remains recovery, said he hopes the boxes that arrived in Hawaii prove to be a vanguard that leads to a fuller accounting for families. [Source: The Associated Press | Robert Burns | July 31, 2018 ++]

POW/MIA Recoveries ► Reported 01 thru 15 AUG 2018 | Sixteen

“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

- **Army Air Forces 2nd Lt. Hulen A. Leinweber**, 22, of Fort Bend County, Texas, was a P-51 Mustang pilot with the 40th Fighter Squadron, 35th Fighter Group. On June 10, 1945, while on a strafing mission in the Philippines, his aircraft reportedly was struck by anti-aircraft fire, causing the right wing to break off and his aircraft to crash. Interment services are pending. [Read about Leinweber.](#)
- **Army Air Forces 2nd Lt. Martin F. O’Callaghan Jr.** was a P-38 Lightning pilot with the 96th Fighter Squadron, 82nd Fighter Group. In February 1945, O’Callaghan was on a strafing mission near Maribor, Yugoslavia, now Slovenia, when his aircraft was struck by anti-aircraft fire. While attempting an emergency landing, his aircraft crashed and burst into flames. Interment services are pending. [Read about O’Callaghan.](#)
- **Army Air Forces Capt. Lawrence E. Dickson**, 24, from Bronx, N.Y., was a P-51D Mustang pilot with the 100th Fighter Squadron, 332nd Fighter Group, the famed Tuskegee Airmen. On Dec. 23, 1944, while on an aerial reconnaissance mission, his aircraft suffered massive engine failure and was seen crashing near the mountainous border of Italy and Austria. His remains were unrecoverable at the time and he was subsequently declared missing in action. Dickson’s name is recorded on the Tablets of the Missing at the Florence American Cemetery in Italy, along with other MIAs from World War II. A rosette will now be placed next to his name to indicate he has been accounted for. Interment services are pending. [Read about Dickson.](#)
- **Army Air Forces Flight Officer Richard W. Lane**, 21, of Beatrice, Neb., was buried yesterday in Gage, Neb. In December 1944, Lane served with the 815th Bombardment Squadron, 483rd Bombardment Group (Heavy), 15th Air Force. He was killed on Dec. 27, 1944, when the B-17G aircraft he was copiloting was shot down on a bombing mission over Austria. [Read about Lane.](#)
- **Army Cpl. Terrell J. Fuller**, 20, accounted for this spring, will be buried Aug. 11 in his hometown of Toccoa, Ga. In February 1951, Fuller was a member of Company D, 1st Battalion, 38th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Infantry Division, fighting in an area known as the Central Corridor in South Korea. During a unit withdrawal to Wonju, Fuller was reported missing. [Read about Fuller.](#)
- **Army Master Sgt. Carl H. Lindquist**, 32, of Willmar, Minn., was a member of Headquarters Company, 3rd Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment, 7th Infantry Division. In late November 1950, his unit engaged with forces of the Chinese People’s Volunteer Forces on the east side of the Chosin Reservoir in North Korea. He was reported missing in action on Nov. 29, 1950. Interment services are pending. [Read about Lindquist.](#)
- **Army Pfc. John A. Taylor** was a member of Company C, 2nd Battalion, 24th Infantry Regiment, 25th Infantry Division, stationed in South Korea. On Aug. 11, 1950, his regiment encountered a Korean People’s Army unit near the village of Haman. Taylor’s company was ordered to move southwest, where they were ambushed and forced to disperse. Taylor was reported killed in action on Aug. 12, 1950, but his remains were not recovered. Interment services are pending. [Read about Taylor.](#)
- **Army Pfc. Leslie Shankles**, 34, of Vernon County, Mo., was a member of Company C, 1st Battalion, 60th Infantry Regiment, 9th Infantry Division, when he was killed Oct. 14, 1944, by enemy fire in the Raffelsbrand sector of the Hürtgen Forest in Germany. Shankles’ name is recorded on the Tablets of the Missing at the Netherlands American Cemetery, along with the others missing from World War II. A rosette will now be placed next to his name to indicate he has been accounted for. Interment services are pending. [Read about Shankles.](#)
- **Army Sgt. 1st Class Rufus L. Ketchum**, 38, will be buried Aug. 14 in his hometown of Superior, Wis. In late November 1950, Ketchum was a member of Medical Detachment, 57th Field Artillery Battalion, 31st Regimental Combat Team, 7th Infantry Division, deployed east of the Chosin Reservoir in North Korea, when they were forced to withdraw south due to overwhelming numbers of Chinese forces. McKinney was reported missing in action on Dec. 6, 1950. [Read about Ketchum.](#)

- **Army Sgt. William A. Larkins**, 20, of Pittsburgh, accounted for last year, will be buried Aug. 10 in nearby Bridgeville, Pa. In late November 1950, Larkins was a member of A Battery, 503rd Field Artillery Battalion, 2nd Infantry Division, fighting in the Ch'ongch'on River region of North Korea. On Dec. 1, his battalion began moving under continuous fire toward the town of Sunchon. Larkins was reported as missing in action. It would be later learned he had been captured and died at a POW camp in January 1951. [Read about Larkins.](#)
- **Marine Corps Cpl. Claire E. Goldtrap**, 21, of Hobart, Okla., was assigned to Company A, 2nd Amphibian Tractor Battalion, 2nd Marine Division, which landed against stiff Japanese resistance on the small island of Betio in the Tarawa Atoll. Goldtrap died on the first day of the battle, Nov. 20, 1943. His name is recorded on the Courts of the Missing at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific, more commonly known as the Punchbowl, in Honolulu, along with others who are missing from World War II. A rosette will now be placed next to his name to indicate he has been accounted for. Interment services are pending. [Read about Goldtrap.](#)
- **Marine Corps Reserve Pfc. Merton R. Riser**, of Sanborn, Iowa, was a member of Company K, 3rd Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, which landed against stiff Japanese resistance on the small island of Betio in the Tarawa Atoll. Riser died on the first day of the battle, Nov. 20, 1943. His name is recorded on the Courts of the Missing at the Punchbowl, in Honolulu, along with the others who are missing from World War II. A rosette will be placed next to his name to indicate he has been accounted for. Interment services are pending. [Read about Riser.](#)
- **Marine Corps Reserve Pfc. Robert L. Zehetner**, of Brooksville, Fla., was a member of Company F, 2nd Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, which landed against stiff Japanese resistance on the small island of Betio in the Tarawa Atoll. Zehetner died on the first day of the battle, Nov. 20, 1943. His name is recorded on the Courts of the Missing at the Punchbowl, in Honolulu, along with others who are missing from World War II. A rosette will now be placed next to his name to indicate he has been accounted for. Interment services are pending. [Read about Zehetner.](#)
- **Marine Corps Reserve Pvt. Emil F. Ragucci**, 19, will be buried Aug. 14 in his hometown of Philadelphia. In November 1943, Ragucci was assigned to Company E, 2nd Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, which landed against stiff Japanese resistance on the small island of Betio in the Tarawa Atoll of the Gilbert Islands. Ragucci died on the first day of the battle, Nov. 20, 1943. [Read about Ragucci.](#)
- **Navy Fireman 1st Class Chester E. Seaton**, 20, of Omaha, Neb., accounted for last year, will be buried Aug. 8 in Tacoma, Wash. On Dec. 7, 1941, Seaton was assigned to the USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship sustained multiple torpedo hits and quickly capsized, resulting in the deaths of 429 crewmen, including Seaton. [Read about Seaton.](#)
- **Navy Seaman 2nd Class Wilbur C. Barrett** of Kansas, was assigned to the battleship USS Oklahoma, which on Dec. 7, 1941, was moored at Ford Island in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, when it quickly capsized after sustaining multiple torpedo hits. Interment services are pending. [Read about Barrett.](#)

[Source: <http://www.dpaa.mil> | August 15, 2018 ++]

* VA *



VA Secretary Update 83 ► Wilkie Promises New Leadership Style to Face Challenges

New Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary Robert Wilkie used his first day on the job 31 JUL to remind the much-criticized workforce of more than 360,000 of their "noble calling" and pledged to work with them rather than over them in improving services to nine million veterans annually. "I'm Robert Wilkie, and it is an overwhelming honor to serve alongside you," he said in a video message to staff nationwide. He did not point fingers at the political infighting among top managers who preceded him, but said he would in expanding private health care options, speeding up the appeals claims process, putting in place new electronic records systems, and cutting wait times for appointments.

Wilkie said he is not a top-down, crack-the-whip-style manager. Repeating a theme he stressed at his Senate confirmation hearing, he said, "We must have a bottom-up organization. The energy must flow from you who are closest to those we are sworn to serve." His first priority is customer service, Wilkie said, and that must start with all VA employees "not talking at each other but with each other across all office barriers and across all compartments." "If we don't listen to each other, we won't be able to listen to our veterans and their families," he said, and "we won't be able to provide the world-class customer service they deserve." The main message to the workforce on his first day, Wilkie said, was one of thanks, "whether you are at a health care facility, on the benefits team, serving at our cemeteries, or here as part of our staff at the headquarters." "You may not hear enough, but I want you to hear it from me. Thank you for your tireless work and devotion to our veterans," he said.

Wilkie, 55, of North Carolina, came to the VA from the Pentagon, where he served as undersecretary for personnel and readiness. He was sworn in 30 JUL by Vice President Mike Pence as the fifth VA secretary in the last five years, succeeding Dr. David Shulkin, who was fired in March by President Donald Trump. The Washington Post has reported that Wilkie is intent on weeding out Trump administration political appointees who allegedly were cracking down on staffers seen as "disloyal" to Trump, but a VA spokesman said 30 JUL there are no personnel changes anticipated "at this time." "I'm deeply grateful to President Trump for the opportunity to serve for him and for America's veterans," Wilkie said in his message.

The major veterans service organizations have been supportive of Wilkie, while remaining wary of private health care options being expanded too rapidly and possibly threatening the "privatization" of VA health care. "We congratulate him on becoming secretary, and we look forward to him bringing stable leadership to the department and strong advocacy for America's veterans," Veterans of Foreign Wars National Commander B.J. Lawrence said in a statement.

Wilkie has spent much of these first weeks on the road, including visiting Florida VA medical centers in Tallahassee, Orlando and Tampa. He was the keynote speaker for both the national AMVETS conference in Orlando and the Jewish War Veterans convention in Tampa. He said to the national AMVETS convention 8 AUG he's promised to protect the VA from politics and total privatization during his address. "I think there are two departments in the federal government that should be above any partisan bickering and that is Department of Defense and VA," Wilkie said. "Partisan politics shouldn't impact anything a veteran experiences. That's my pledge."

He also said his top priority is to implement an electronic medical records system that is seamless, so it includes a veteran's medical history from the VA, Department of Defense and private physicians and pharmacies. "We're in the midst, nationally, of a terrible opioid crisis," he said. "What this gives VA the ability to do is it will take a veteran's record and if he has an opioid given to him by VA and someone in the private sector gives him something else – the combination of those two streams will alert VA that that individual is now on a spectrum for trouble.. He estimates it will take five to 10 years to fully implement an electronic medical records system. The VA is partnering with the Department of Defense in the state of Washington to set up a pilot program.

Wilkie was quick to defend against lingering fears that he or the Trump Administration will privatize the VA. "First of all, that is a legislative impossibility. The only way the VA is privatized is if our board of directors on Capitol Hill say it will be privatized," Wilkie said. "But that doesn't mean that we cannot come up with a mix of VA and private

care for our veterans.” He reiterated his support of the current system. "The private sector cannot replicate the VA's expertise in many things like spinal cord injury, traumatic brain injury, rehabilitative services, prosthetics, audiology, services for the blind, and suicide prevent". The new VA Secretary is a history buff, and he was quick to reference a predecessor, the former WWII Army General Omar Bradley, who is credited with reshaping the VA. “In his day, right after World War II, 30 percent of the care was in the private sector,” Wilkie said. [Source: Military.com & Off The Base | Richard Sisk & Bobbie O'Brien| July 31 & August 10, 2018 ++]

VA Outside Influence ► Mar-A-Lago Policy-Making Decisions Role

Lawmakers in both chambers of Congress are looking to shine a light on the individuals who, according to a recent report, have played a covert, yet significant, role in policy-making decisions at the Veterans Affairs Department. Rep. Tim Walz (D-MN), the top Democrat on the House Veterans' Affairs Committee, wrote a letter to VA Secretary Robert Wilkie saying he was “deeply concerned” that three men with no official connection to the department were involved in daily decision making. Their involvement first came to light in a ProPublica report that examined internal emails and documents, as well as accounts from former officials that demonstrated the deeply entrenched roles the three individuals have enjoyed.

Ike Perlmutter, CEO of Marvel Entertainment; **Bruce Moskowitz**, an internal medicine specialist; and **Marc Sherman**, an attorney, are the men in question. All of them are members of Mar-a-Lago, a Florida resort owned by President Trump. Walz noted that the outsiders were allegedly making personnel decisions, pushing for new programs and potentially personally benefiting from the positions for which they advocated. The ranking member said he was opening an investigation into their influence at VA and requested “unredacted copies of any and all documents, records, memoranda, and correspondence to include electronic correspondence via email and text messages” between Perlmutter, Moskowitz, Sherman and current or former VA employees.

Walz also asked for notes from any meeting in which they participated, as well as information, including associated costs, related to any taxpayer-funded trips by VA employees to Mar-a-Lago. A VA spokesman declined to say whether the department would provide Walz with the information he requested, which the congressman asked for by the end of August. "We appreciate Rep. Walz's views and will respond to him directly," said Curt Cashour, the spokesman. A spokesman for VA's inspector general, meanwhile, said the office was aware of the reports and is "monitoring the situation." The individuals told ProPublica they have “no direct influence” at the department, a denial echoed by spokespeople at VA and the White House.

A spokeswoman for Rep. Phil Roe (R-TN), who chairs Walz's committee, said she was hopeful Wilkie would lead VA in a new direction. "Chairman Roe's efforts to reform VA have not been influenced by anything or anyone mentioned in the story," said Tiffany Haverly, the spokeswoman. "The article reiterates yet another reason why the department needs permanent, strong leadership and the chairman is confident Secretary Wilkie will be just that." Amanda Maddox, a spokeswoman for Sen. Johnny Isakson (R-GA), Roe's counterpart in the Senate, similarly said the Mar-a-Lago group had no influence on his committee's reform efforts. She added, however, that Isakson "is aware of the individuals mentioned in the story and has concerns about the effect that outside individuals may have had on the VA." Democrats swiftly condemned the Mar-a-Lago group's arrangement at VA.

- “The VA needs a high-level housecleaning to stop improper interference by Trump political insiders and cronies,” said Sen. Richard Blumenthal, (D-CT), a member of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee. “Immediate reforms are vital to assure that veterans’ interests are put first. The VA must be permanently protected from all improper interference.”
- Rep. Mark Takano (D-CA), who sits on the House VA panel, called on Wilkie to “put an end to the undue influence” of outside individuals at the department. “It seems that for the Trump administration, having a

Mar-a-Lago membership and being one of President Trump's millionaire friends makes you qualified to make decisions and shape policies that affect the VA and our veterans,” Takano said. “This level of outside influence on the VA is inappropriate and completely unacceptable.”

- Sen. Maggie Hassan, (D-NH) said Wilkie should listen to experts in VA’s responsibilities and not individuals with “no experience in the U.S. military or government.” “As he takes on his new role at the helm of the Department of Veterans Affairs,” Hassan said, “I urge Secretary Wilkie to disregard the input of the ‘Mar-a-Lago Crowd,’ stop the practice of spending taxpayer dollars to ‘kiss the ring’ of dues-paying members of the president’s golf club, and work with those who have an actual understanding of what our veterans need to thrive in civilian life.”

The American Legion did not fault VA for consulting individuals outside the department, but said it should rely only on those with demonstrated expertise. “We are not about to tell President Trump who he can or cannot take advice from, but we hope that he carefully considers the qualifications and motivations of those offering that advice when it comes to the treatment and well-being of America’s veterans,” said Denise Rohan, the Legion’s national commander. She added that her congressionally chartered organization, which counts 2 million veterans among its members, was “uniquely qualified” to offer solutions to improve VA services. [Source: GovExec.com | Eric Katz | August 9, 2018 ++]

Wartime Pension Benefits ► Non-Service-Connected Pension

The VA provides a non-service-connected pension (<https://benefits.va.gov/pension>) for wartime veterans with low incomes and who are over 64 years old, or to wartime veterans who are totally and permanently disabled for reasons not related to their military service. The pension is intended to provide a guaranteed minimum income for veterans who qualify. For example: If the veteran has a countable income of \$6000 per year with no deductible medical expenses and no dependents, in 2017 the VA would have provided \$13,166 – \$6000, or \$7,166 paid in 12 equal monthly payments.

A veteran who is eligible for the Wartime Veterans Pension may also be qualified for the Aid and Attendance or Housebound supplement. These supplements are paid in addition to the basic pension, and provide a small additional income for persons who either need daily assistance with everyday living tasks or are substantially confined to their home. *A veteran can only be eligible for either Aid and Attendance or Housebound, not both.*

“Countable Income”

Countable Income is a complex matter. For pension purposes, countable income is most sources of income received by the veteran or his/her dependents. This includes earnings, disability and retirement income, interest, dividends, rental income, net income from any business or farm, and normally any income from a dependent child. An example of an uncountable income is public assistance (such as SSI). Additionally, unreimbursable medical expenses and educational expenses can be deducted from countable income. There are other specific incomes that are deductible, so if the “Countable Income” as you calculate it is even in the ballpark of the income rates, you should apply for the pension and report all income sources. The VA is required to deduct all income allowed by law.

Pension Eligibility Criteria for Wartime Veterans Pension

- The veteran was discharged from service under conditions other than dishonorable, AND
- The veteran served at least 90 days of active military service 1 day of which was during a war time period. If the veteran entered active duty after September 7, 1980, generally the veteran must have served at least 24 months or the full period for which called or ordered to active duty (There are exceptions to this rule), AND
- The veteran’s countable family income is below a yearly limit set by law (The yearly limit on income is set by Congress), AND

- The veteran is age 65 or older, OR,
- The veteran is permanently and totally disabled, not due to his/her own willful misconduct.

Aid and Attendance Eligibility -- The veteran is eligible for a Pension, and:

- The veteran requires the aid of another person in order to perform personal functions required in everyday living, such as bathing, feeding, dressing, attending to the wants of nature, adjusting prosthetic devices, or protecting himself/herself from the hazards of his/her daily environment, OR,
- The veteran is bedridden, in that his/her disability or disabilities requires that he/she remain in bed apart from any prescribed course of convalescence or treatment, OR,
- The veteran is a patient in a nursing home due to mental or physical incapacity, OR,
- The veteran is blind, or so nearly blind as to have corrected visual acuity of 5/200 or less, in both eyes, or concentric contraction of the visual field to 5 degrees or less.

Wartime Veterans Pension and Housebound Eligibility -- The veteran is eligible for a Pension, and:

- The veteran has a single permanent disability evaluated as 100-percent disabling AND, due to such disability, he/she is permanently and substantially confined to his/her immediate premises, OR,
- The veteran has a single permanent disability evaluated as 100-percent disabling AND, another disability, or disabilities, evaluated as 60 percent or more disabling.

How to Apply for Wartime Veterans Pension

The NVF strongly recommends that you seek out the assistance of a [Veteran Service Officer](#) when filing a Wartime Veterans Pension claim. The VSO will assist you in filling out the paperwork, gathering the required documentation, and tracking the status of the claim at no cost. Most Veterans Organizations, like the VFW, American Legion, Order of the Purple Heart, etc. have VSOs. The veterans affairs departments for each state also have Veteran Service Officers. If you would like some assistance in finding a VSO near you, please call us at **888 777-4443**. You can apply for the Wartime Veterans Pension by filling out [VA Form 21-526](#), Veterans Application for Compensation and/or Pension.

If you have applied previously, you should use [VA Form 21-527](#). If you have any of the following material, attach it to your application:

- Discharge or separation papers (DD214 or equivalent, click [here](#) to apply for a replacement DD214)
- Dependency records (marriage & children's birth certificates)
- Medical evidence (doctor & hospital reports)

You can also use the VA's [online application](#). The VA's benefits hotline number is 1-800-827-1000. For more information about the Wartime Veterans Pension feel free to call NVF at 888-777-4443 or submit a request for assistance at <https://nvf.org/veterans-request-assistance>.

[Source: <https://nvf.org/wartime-veterans-pension> | August 2018 ++]

Wartime Pension Benefits Update 01 ► VA Improved Disability Pension Rates

If you are a U.S. veteran who served during specific wartime periods or are the surviving spouse of one, you may be eligible for the little-known Wartime Pension Benefits. The pension is intended to provide a guaranteed minimum income for veterans over 65 or their survivors who qualify. A veteran or his/her survivor who is eligible for the Wartime Veterans Pension may also be qualified for the additional Aid and Attendance Supplement or the Housebound Supplement. These supplements are paid in addition to the basic pension, and provide a small additional income for persons who either need daily assistance with everyday living tasks or are substantially confined to their home. VA Improved Disability Pension Rates for 2017 for Veteran(s) and/or Child & Spouse are:

- Without Spouse or Child.....\$13,166
- With One Dependent.....\$17,241
- Permanently Housebound, No Dependents.....\$16,089
- Permanently Housebound, One Dependent.....\$20,166
- Needing regular aid and attendance, No Dependents.....\$21,962
- Needing regular aid and attendance, One Dependent.....\$26,036
- Two Veterans Married to Each Other.....\$17,241
- Two Veterans Married to Each Other – One housebound.....\$20,166
- Two Veterans Married to Each Other – Both housebound.....\$23,087
- Two Veterans Married to Each Other – One needing A & A.....\$26,036
- Two Veterans Married to Each Other – One housebound and one needing A & A... \$28,953
- Two Veterans Married to Each Other – Both needing A & A.....\$34,837
- Increase for each additional dependent child.....\$ 2,250

Under current law, VA recognizes the following wartime periods to determine eligibility for VA Pension benefits:

- Mexican Border Period (May 9, 1916 – April 5, 1917 for Veterans who served in Mexico, on its borders, or adjacent waters)
- World War I (April 6, 1917 – November 11, 1918)
- World War II (December 7, 1941 – December 31, 1946)
- Korean conflict (June 27, 1950 – January 31, 1955)
- Vietnam era (February 28, 1961 – May 7, 1975 for Veterans who served in the Republic of Vietnam during that period; otherwise August 5, 1964 – May 7, 1975)
- Gulf War (August 2, 1990 – through a future date to be set by law or Presidential Proclamation)

[Source: https://www.benefits.va.gov/PENSION/current_rates_veteran_pen.asp | August 2018 ++]

VA Blue Water Claims Update 48 ► Officials Oppose Plans to Extend Benefits

Veterans Affairs officials strongly opposed legislative plans to extend disability payouts to roughly 90,000 veterans who claim exposure to Agent Orange during the Vietnam War, saying the move could set a problematic precedent for future benefits awards. “The science is not there, and what we do depends upon science,” said Paul Lawrence, under secretary for benefits at the Department of Veterans Affairs. But advocates for so-called “blue water Navy” veterans argued that VA officials are willfully ignoring an abundance of evidence showing veterans’ exposure to toxic chemicals, and demanding evidence that could only have been collected more than four decades ago. “These people were exposed, how much they were exposed doesn’t make a difference,” said Rick Weidman, executive director at the Vietnam Veterans of America. “And you can’t put that all together 40 years later.”

At issue is a change in VA policy 15 years ago that excluded veterans serving on ships off the coast of Vietnam — known as “blue water Navy veterans” — from being included in a class of former service members presumed to be exposed to Agent Orange. For troops who served on the ground or in inland rivers, exposure to the chemical defoliant is assumed, which speeds up the medical and disability benefits process when those veterans later contract a host of illnesses related to chemical contamination. But the blue water veterans still must prove they were directly exposed to Agent Orange for their illnesses to be labeled as service-connected. Legislation passed by the House last month would force VA to extend the presumptive benefits to veterans who served aboard those ships, and use a new VA home loan fee to pay for the estimated \$1 billion in costs it would incur.

Lawrence said forcing VA to go against their established “scientific” standards would set a dangerous precedent in future benefits disputes. He also said processing the new claims could add \$500 million in new costs over the next decade, and cast doubt over whether the new VA home loan fees would cover the costs. VA officials also testified that they already have a “liberal” policy for Vietnam War veterans who may have been exposed to chemical defoliants. Cancers and severe illnesses found among the blue water veterans, they argued, may simply be the result of aging or unrelated health issues. Several senators took exception to that idea. “This bill wouldn’t be needed if these veterans were getting the care they needed after showing symptoms (of toxic exposure),” said Sen. Joe Manchin (D-WV). “We should have taken care of our veterans.”

Administration officials and veterans groups offered contrasting views on scientific studies regarding ship-based veterans’ exposure to the chemicals, and whether runoff from the coastline could have contaminated drinking water for miles out to sea. Veterans also complained that VA summarily rejects claims even when evidence suggests those ships visited inland ports, an accusation that Lawrence said is an unfortunate exception if it happens at all. Along with the blue water veterans, the House-passed bill extends presumptive exposure status to veterans who served in the Korean Peninsula demilitarized zone beginning in September 1967 and lasting until August 1971, the same end date for the Vietnam War.

Senate Veterans’ Affairs Committee Chairman Johnny Isakson (R-GA) indicated he is hopeful a fix can be found for the issue, but also promised a thorough examination of the issue before the Senate moves ahead. Several lawmakers have pushed for quick passage of the House measure, but Isakson appears opposed to that idea. That likely means several more months of waiting before any resolution on the legislation. The Senate is scheduled to go on recess next week before working on nominations issues for the rest of August. House lawmakers aren’t scheduled back in Washington until September, and both chambers will break again in October in advance of the November mid-term elections. [Source: MilitaryTimes | Leo Shane III | August 1, 2018 ++]

VA Blue Water Claims Update 49 ► **Senate Concerns | Cost & The Science Behind It**

When the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee held a hearing last week regarding the blue-water Navy bill that passed the House in late June by a vote of 382-0, it did not seem as convinced as the House was about the bill. Two primary opposition points were discussed during the hearing: the “science” behind proving blue-water Navy veterans were exposed to Agent Orange and the way an expansion of benefits will be paid for.

The “science”

The VA continually has beat the drum to Congress that it should not expand the presumption of Agent Orange exposure to blue-water Navy veterans because the “science” does not support it. The VA asked Congress to disregard a 2002 Australian study that found Australian sailors who served off the coast of Vietnam likely were exposed to Agent Orange. The VA's argument to Congress was that the Australian study tested water within 12 miles of the Vietnam shoreline, while U.S. forces were instructed to draw water onto their ships only outside of 12 miles. The VA's argument did not take into account the eventuality ships might have violated those regulations, something blue-water Navy veterans claim happened quite frequently but was not documented. The VA offered no proof to Congress that every single ship that served off the coast of Vietnam during the conflict strictly complied with the 12-mile rule.

While the VA asked Congress to disregard the Australian study, it has never successfully performed a study of its own to counter the Australian one, despite the fact it has been dealing with this issue since the 1970s. In 1981, following an act of Congress directing it, the VA gave the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) \$70.4 million to perform an Agent Orange study. The Government Accountability Office later found the CDC squandered much of the funds on unnecessary costs and poor or questionable contract administration practices. The CDC did, however, manage to conduct a “validation study” that merely confirmed military records could not establish Agent

Orange exposure because of their inherent inaccuracy. So, when Congress tried to force the VA to perform a study of its own, the outcome was completely useless.

What is clear, therefore, is this is not a “science” problem but rather a record-keeping problem. There is no question scientifically what Agent Orange does to the human body; it is classified in the same category as arsenic, asbestos, and gamma radiation and is now a banned substance.

There is a question of who was exposed. The military did not keep accurate records of who was exposed to Agent Orange, and it did not keep accurate records of where ships were taking on water off the coast of Vietnam to rule out it did not occur within 12 miles of shore. Indeed, the Institute of Medicine stated in 2011, “Given the lack of measurements taken during the war and the almost 40 years since the war, this will never be a matter of science but instead a matter of policy.” Thus, VA's tired argument of “the science isn't there” is no longer relevant and should be replaced with “the record keeping isn't there” to which Congress should move forward in support of the legislation which recognizes this difference and holds the government responsible.

The “pay for”

As MOAA has noted in past articles, Congress is either unable or unwilling to pass any legislation related to additional benefits for servicemembers or veterans with an offset of the same amount of funds being identified to pay for it. After years of painstaking negotiations, veterans service organizations relented to allow VA home loan funding fees to be increased to pay for the increased cost of providing disability compensation and health care to blue-water Navy veterans, which is included in the bill the Senate currently is considering.

The ironic part of this compromise, though, is it most likely was not necessary at all because the cost of providing those benefits for blue-water Navy veterans was arguably already accounted for in 1991. In 1991, Congress passed and President George H.W. Bush enacted the Agent Orange Act of 1991, which required the VA to award benefits to a veteran manifesting specified diseases if they, “during active military, naval, or air service, served in the Republic of Vietnam.” The VA passed implementing regulations defining service in Vietnam as “service in the waters offshore” of Vietnam. In 1997, the VA general counsel opined that service offshore should be excluded from the definition, and that change made its way into the VA's formal regulations in 1994. Congress, however, already had passed the legislation in 1991, without such a restriction and presumably the funds to cover the benefits for that cohort.

Nonetheless, Congress now demands veterans either suffer cuts in their benefits or endure increased fees to pay for the same groups' disability and health care. Despite the fact the bill already includes a way to pay for this, the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee speculated the funds would not be enough even though the Congressional Budget Office calculated it would be and with funds to spare.

The committee also theorized paying for this cost would be better borne out by rounding down periodic COLAs to the next lowest dollar to veterans' disability compensation checks. This is an idea MOAA has opposed in the past when it was proposed to pay for the VA CHOICE program. Although MOAA does not favor VA home loan funding fees rising either, that is a fee veterans with even so much as a 10-percent disability rating are exempted from, while reducing COLAs directly would impact disabled veterans.

While the Senate Veterans Affairs' Committee gave the impression at last week's hearing it had serious concerns about the blue-water Navy bill and hinted it potentially could make some significant changes to it, this would be a disappointing move for the Senate to make. The bill passed unanimously through the House and has unanimous support across veterans service organizations. For the Senate to now question the will of veterans and their representatives with nothing but its own speculation would be a major setback following decades of goodwill negotiations.

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MOAA remains engaged with Congress as this bill works through the Senate and will provide additional updates as they occur. If you would like to share your thoughts with MOAA, email legis@moaa.org. To read MOAA's statement to the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, [go here](#). [Source: The MOAA Newsletter | Aneila Szymanski | August 7, 2018 ++]

VA Lung Cancer Care Update 01 ► Smoker Screenings Lower Chance vice Risk of Death

Regular cancer screenings can lower the chance of death from lung cancer. But they cannot reduce the risk of developing lung cancer for people who smoke. Patients who smoke seem to be confused about the actual benefits and limitations of lung cancer screenings, according to a study by the VA Center of Innovation for Veteran-Centered and Value-Driven Care in Seattle. Researchers asked smokers a series of questions about smoking and lung cancer screening. Their answers showed that most patients were mistaken about the benefits of such screenings and smoking in general. Only 7 percent of patients answered all five questions correctly.

In light of these findings, Dr. Jaimee L. Heffner, lead author on the paper on the subject, emphasized the importance of communicating to patients the importance of quitting rather than just relying on screenings to protect them from cancer. “Quitting smoking is by far the most important thing a person can do to prevent lung cancer as well as a host of other diseases caused by tobacco use, and it’s important that this message doesn’t get lost in the discussion of lung cancer screening,” he said. Heffner, with the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center in Seattle, collaborated with the VA team on the study. The [results](#) appeared online June 7, 2018, in the Annals of the American Thoracic Society.

In 2011, the National Cancer Institute released the results of its National Lung Screening Trial. The trial screened more than 53,000 current or former heavy smokers for lung cancer using either a standard chest X-ray or low-dose computed tomography (LDCT). LDCT uses X-rays to take multiple scans of the entire chest, providing a more detailed image of the lungs than a single chest X-ray. The study revealed that patients who had LDCT scans had a 15 to 20 percent lower risk of dying from lung cancer than those who had a standard chest X-ray. By giving a more complete picture of the chest and lungs, LDCT gives doctors a chance to catch and treat lung cancer more effectively than the old method. As a result of this study, more LDCT lung cancer screenings have been implemented nationwide, including in VA. But while this type of screening can reduce deaths from lung cancer, it is unclear how well patients understand the benefits and limitations of LDCT scans.

To test patients’ actual knowledge about lung cancer, the researchers surveyed 83 smokers after they had an LDCT screening at one of four VA medical centers. Each participant was asked five questions:

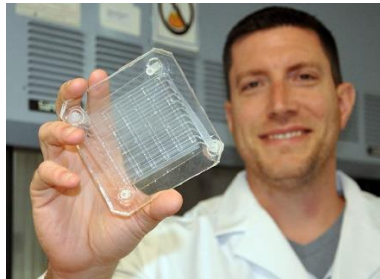
- 1) Does having a lung cancer screening test decrease your chances of getting lung cancer? (Correct answer: No.)
- 2) Which disease is the leading cause of death in Americans who smoke cigarettes? (Correct answer: Heart disease [a list of diseases was provided].)
- 3) True or false: If nothing abnormal or suspicious is found on your lung cancer screening test, it means you are safe from lung cancer for at least 12 months. (Correct answer: False.)
- 4) True or false: All nodules or spots found in the lungs eventually grow over time to be life threatening. (Correct answer: False.)
- 5) For people over age 55 who are current smokers, which is more likely to prevent the most premature deaths—lung cancer screening or quitting smoking? (Correct answer: Quitting smoking.)

Almost all participants got at least one answer wrong. For the first question, 39 percent answered incorrectly. The majority (66 percent) got question two wrong. Thirty-nine percent answered question 3 wrong, and 49 percent answered question four wrong. Perhaps most disturbing, nearly half (47%) answered the last question incorrectly,

meaning they thought lung cancer screenings were at least as good as, if not better than, quitting smoking as a way of protecting against death. [Source: Vantage Point | Tristan Horrom | August 3, 2018 ++]

VA Lung Cancer Care Update 02 ► 3D-Printed Artificial Lung Research

A scientist is working to create a 3D-printed artificial lung that they tout as having the potential to revolutionize the treatment of Veterans affected by lung disease. One such lung disorder—chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)—is one of the most prevalent and costliest ailments in the Veteran population. Dr. Joseph Potkay, a biomedical engineer at the VA Ann Arbor Health Care System in Michigan, is leading the VA-funded research. It calls for making a prototype of the 3D-printed artificial lung. Potkay and his team hope to build what they call the first wearable artificial lung that is compatible with living tissue and is capable of short- and long-term respiratory support. The lung is seen initially as a temporary measure, a bridge to help patients awaiting a lung transplant or an aid for those whose lungs are healing. Future versions could have longer-term applications, the researchers say.



Potkay works with a test print of artificial capillaries that will be part of a 3D artificial lung now in production.

Potkay says this is the first time high-resolution 3D polymer printing is being used to create microfluidic lungs with three-dimensional blood flow networks. Microfluidic artificial lungs, a new class of artificial lungs, mimic the structure of the natural lung better than conventional artificial lungs. Tiny blood channels, some thinner than a human hair, are closer in shape and dimension to those in a person, allowing for blood flow similar to that in the human body. The biocompatible coatings on the lung's surface are equally important. Anytime blood comes in contact with an artificial surface, an immune response leads to hardening of the blood and clotting. Biocompatible coatings will help curtail that immune reaction.

“We hope that these microfluidic flow paths and biocompatible coatings will be more compatible with living tissue, thereby reducing the body's immune response and increasing the lifetime of the device,” says Potkay, who is also a researcher at the University of Michigan. “The flexibility in design afforded by 3D printing gives us more freedom and thus the ease to build artificial lungs with a small size and pressure drops that are compatible for operation with the body's natural pressures.” Potkay envisions the human 3D device fitting in a backpack or a small butt pack, with potential use of more than a week. After more development, he expects longer-term use will be possible. He says it's impossible to gauge how many years away the 3D-printed lung is from implantation, noting that it must first be tested on animals and people. “We'll see how well it does in terms of lifetime,” he says. “To be implantable, it needs to be able to operate for months without being swapped out.”

Exposure to burn pits, sand, diesel exhaust, and chemicals are some of the most commonly cited factors that lead to lung problems for active-duty military. About 20 percent of patients with severe traumatic brain injury also have acute lung injury. In 2011, Potkay unveiled a prototype of a 2D-printed artificial lung that used traditional microfabrication techniques. It was a collaborative effort between Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland and the Advanced Platform Technology Center at the Louis Stokes Cleveland VA Medical Center. Potkay was affiliated with that VA facility at the time. The prototype was unique in how it copied nature. Because of its intricate silicon

tubing and ultra-thin gas diffusion membrane, the device was efficient enough to use air as the ventilating gas—as opposed to pure oxygen stored in a tank. It thus created new possibilities for portability and possibly implantation.

The 3D-printed lung will provide the same basic advantages of the 2D, Potkay says. “But with the freedom afforded by being able to design the device in three dimensions instead of two, 3D printing should result in artificial lungs with a smaller overall footprint and with increased efficiency,” he says. “Thus, portability and performance will potentially improve using 3D printing.” The 2D project is ongoing in Potkay’s lab at VA Ann Arbor. He’s currently testing the device in rabbits and is pursuing the next stage of funding to scale the 2D lung up to sizes that apply to human use. Why continue with the 2D project if the 3D lung appears to be more adaptable to the goal of creating a microfluidic artificial lung? “Although the 3D artificial lung is more promising, it is earlier in development and still not guaranteed to work,” Potkay says. “We’re further along in developing the 2D device, and we have plans to work around the challenges with that device.”

Lab testing of the 2D artificial lung has provided a glimpse of what Potkay and his colleagues are capable of achieving in a 3D format. In tests with animal blood using traditional microfabrication techniques, the small-scale artificial lungs achieved the highest gas efficiency exchange of any artificial lung to date, according to Potkay. He expects the “excellent performance” to translate to the 3D lung. In addition, he says, the initial expected lifetime of the 2D lung of more than a week—identical to the 3D lung—“significantly improved” because of the biocompatible surface coatings that mimic the cell wall. He expects those findings to also apply to the 3D device. In terms of lifetime, “We believe the 3D-printed device should be better than the 2D version, but we don’t have proof yet,” he says. When the study ends next year, Potkay and his colleagues hope to test a prototype of their high-resolution 3D-printed artificial lung in a large animal model, most likely sheep.

In addition to COPD, Potkay says the 3D lung could be used as a temporary measure for people with lung diseases such as acute respiratory distress syndrome. That condition is a leakage of fluid into the lungs that makes breathing difficult or impossible. “It will depend largely on the needs of the patient,” he says. “The removal of CO2 in the blood is the first Veteran application we’re aiming for because it’s the simplest in terms of patient use, the required components, and the size of the device. CO2 removal is a critical need for many Veterans with COPD.” [Source: VA Office of Research & Development | Mike Richman | August 1, 2018 ++]

VA Appeals Update 30 ► RAMP Option Behind Schedule

Among the many challenges facing new Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary Robert Wilkie is the long-standing backlog in disability claims appeals, which currently totals more than 400,000 cases. As acting secretary at the VA in May, Wilkie said, "VA is committed to transforming the appeals process" through the Rapid Appeals Modernization Plan (RAMP). However, Congress was told last week that the technology improvements needed to make the new system work are behind schedule. RAMP is a pilot program under the Veterans Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act signed by President Donald Trump last summer, which has a deadline for being in place of February 2019.

However, Rep. Phil Roe (R-TN), chairman of the House Veterans Affairs Committee, said, "The VA has been fairly famous for not delivering on time." At a committee hearing last week, VA officials testified that the original plan was to have about 75 percent of the information technology (IT) updates in place by August; instead, only about 35 percent of the improvements will be ready. Despite the IT delay, Paul Lawrence, the VA's new undersecretary for benefits, said the agency is on track to meet the February deadline for reforming the extremely complex appeals process. He said the IT systems should be ready to go, but should there be more delays, the Veterans Benefits Administration is prepared to implement the new process manually.

"We are very confident in our delivery schedule right now," said Lloyd Thrower, deputy chief information officer and benefits account manager for the VA's Office of Information and Technology. He said the 35 percent figure for August involves the "heavy-lift pieces" of the new system and the process should go more quickly in the fall. "It will be challenging" for the VA to meet the February deadline, Elizabeth Curda, director of education, workforce and income security at the Government Accountability Office, told the committee. "As it stands now, I'm a little concerned about the lack of detail." When asked by Rep. Amata Coleman Radewagen, the Republican delegate from American Samoa, to grade the progress on implementing RAMP, Lawrence said he would give the VA an "A-minus." Curda said she would give it a "C."

Roe said, "Realistically, VA is running out of time to address these issues if the department hopes to implement the new system by February 2019. We all agree that the success of this reform is critical because the current appeals process is failing veterans miserably." Noting the backlog of more than 400,000 appeals, he said, "Many veterans will end up waiting at least six years just for the decision on their appeal. Veterans and their families deserve better." Under the RAMP program, veterans can choose to withdraw their existing claim and transfer to two new "lanes" for a quicker decision. According to the VA, the "Supplemental Claim Lane" is for veterans with additional evidence to present on their initial claim. The "Higher Level Review Lane" is for veterans with no additional evidence to present, but who feel there was a mistake in the initial claims decision. [Source: Military.com | Richard Sisk | July 31, 2018 ++]

VA Appeals Update 31 ► Rural Vet Video Hearing Access

Ranking Member of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee Jon Tester (D-MT) and U.S. Senator Mike Rounds (R-SD) are fighting to make it faster and easier for rural veterans to appeal their claims for disability benefits within the VA. Tester and Rounds are calling on the VA and Board of Veterans' Appeals to make sure that rural veterans are able to appeal their disability rating using video hearings in local VA facilities when they can't travel hundreds of miles to be at their hearing in person or at a video hearing at a VA Regional Office. Under the Senators' bipartisan Veteran Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act, which guarantees veterans have a speedy and thorough appeal of their disability rating, veterans can take advantage of video hearings at certain VA facilities. For veterans in rural states this often means still traveling great distances to a Regional Office when there are other VA facilities that are closer but do not currently offer video hearings.

"Not all veterans have the ability to travel and appear at the Board of Veterans' Appeals in person when they believe that a detrimental mistake has been made on their claim," the Senators wrote. "Unfortunately, in many rural states, like Montana and South Dakota, veterans are still forced to drive a considerable distance to a qualified location for video hearings. Traveling a great distance for a video hearing or a greater distance for an in person hearing are not acceptable options when it comes to veterans' right to a fair and speedy appeal. The VA has a duty to dedicate considerable effort to finding solutions to this issue that will better serve the needs of rural veterans." In a letter to Board of Veterans' Appeals Chairwoman Cheryl Mason, the Senators urged her to work with the VA to identify facilities in addition to VA Regional Offices that are suitable to hold video hearings, such as Community-Based Outpatient Clinics, Vet Centers, or field offices. [Source: TREA Update Newsletter | August 14, 2018 ++]

VA Exposure ED App ► Health Care Provider Tool

Exposure Ed Delivers Information on Military-Related Exposures to Health Care Providers. Veterans may have been exposed to a range of chemical, physical, and environmental hazards during service, and providers can use this tool to have an informed discussion with veterans about their individual exposure-related concerns and potential impacts

on their health. Providers can also access information on exposure-related programs and benefits offered by the Department of Veterans Affairs and help veterans assess their participation eligibility. This application should not be used for diagnostic purposes. This tool was created by the Veteran's Health Administration - the nation's leading provider of veterans' health care. Go to <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-yUptkiXb9A&feature=youtu.be> for information on what the app covers and how to access it. [Source: VVA Web Weekly | August 3, 2018 ++]

VA Fraud, Waste & Abuse ► Reported 01 thru 15 AUG 2018

Newark, NJ – A Somerset, New Jersey, man was sentenced 31 JUL to 20 months in prison for defrauding the Veterans Affairs program by billing for services he never performed, U.S. Attorney Craig Carpenito announced. **Apostolos Voudouris**, 44, previously pleaded guilty before U.S. District Judge William H. Walls in Newark federal court to an information charging him with health care fraud. Voudouris also entered into a civil settlement agreement with the government, under which he will pay \$476,460 to resolve the government's claims under the False Claims Act.

According to the documents filed in the case and statements made in court: Voudouris is a physician specializing in cardiology and electrophysiology. Beginning in 2006, Voudouris provided services to eligible veterans at the Veterans Affairs Medical Center in East Orange, New Jersey, pursuant to his contract with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Voudouris admitted that on more than 350 occasions between 2011 and 2015, he submitted documentation to the VA claiming to have performed procedures he never performed. As a result, Voudouris fraudulently received \$238,230 from the VA. In addition to the prison term, Judge Walls sentenced Voudouris to two years of supervised release and fined him \$7,500. As part of his plea agreement, Voudouris must pay restitution of \$238,230 to the VA in addition to the \$476,460 civil settlement, for a total of \$714,690. [Source: Department of Justice, U.S. Attorney's Office, District of New Jersey | July 31, 2018 ++]

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Leominster, MA – A woman pleaded guilty 3 AUG in federal court in Worcester to stealing Social Security and Veterans Affairs benefits. **Joyce Progin**, 71, pleaded guilty to two counts of theft of public funds. U.S. District Court Judge Timothy S. Hillman scheduled sentencing for Nov. 2, 2018. Progin was arrested and charged in January 2018. In November 2009, Progin's former father-in-law passed away. At the time of his death, the father-in-law was receiving monthly retirement benefits from Social Security and monthly benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs. Neither agency was advised of his death and continued to deposit his benefit payments into a bank account he held jointly with Progin, who was his caregiver. Although she admitted knowing that she was not entitled to the money, from November 2009 through March 2017, Progin received approximately \$55,267 in Social Security benefits, and from November 2009 through November 2017, she received approximately \$269,978 in benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs, in total, stealing over \$300,000 in public funds. The charge of theft of public funds provides for a sentence of no greater than 10 years in prison, three years of supervised release, and a fine of \$250,000 or twice the gross gain or loss, whichever is greater. Sentences are imposed by a federal district court judge based upon the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory factors. [Source: DoJ District of Massachusetts | U.S. Attorney's Office | August 3, 2018 ++]

VAMC Tampa FL Update 10 ► \$149M Project to Add 250K Square Feet

A major project is underway at the VA Hospital in Tampa. The huge project, totaling about \$149 million, is set to add about 250,000 square feet of additional space to the James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital adjacent to the University

of South Florida campus. A groundbreaking took place 31 JUL. Construction will take about three years to fully complete the project and will add additional hospital bed space, a new cafeteria and an outdoor dining area. The four-story addition also will include about 5,000 square feet of renovated space in the hospital.



James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital

Some veterans who use the facility said the addition of private rooms at the hospital will be the most beneficial and will ultimately mean they'll have to spend less time in the hospital. "Right now, we have crowded quarters into the patients," said veteran Mary Ann Keckler. "What we see today with the two beds versus the single bed, we have very few private rooms here and it makes a major difference for those recuperating from an illness to be able to get themselves up out of bed and get themselves going." The bed tower expansion is expected to be completed in 2021. The new bed tower at the hospital is the first major construction project managed by the US Army Corp of Engineers for the VA under recently approved federal legislation. [Source: Spectrum Bay News 9 | Fallon Silcox | July 31, 2018 ++]

VAMC Washington DC Update 10 ► Performance Deteriorating | Recent Progress

The performance of the troubled Washington DC VA Medical Center has further “deteriorated” in recent weeks, drawing additional scrutiny from agency leaders, according to a 17 JUL memo obtained by the News4 I-Team. The VA memo said agency leaders have the “greatest concern” about mishaps, employee dissatisfaction and mental health programs at the medical center. The memo said VA leaders also are concerned about “large deterioration” in the length of stays by patients who use the medical center. The VA memo is the latest in a series of rebukes against the DC VA Medical Center.

In February, the agency publicly announced the medical center was among the lowest-performing VA facilities in the nation. Weeks later, the VA Office of Inspector General released a scathing report detailing mismanagement, squandered taxpayer money and unsafe conditions inside the medical center. The inspector general also found shortages of supplies and unsanitary conditions in storage areas. The 17 JUL memo said medical center leaders must attend “monthly executive briefings” with senior agency leadership. If improvements are not made, the memo said the medical center’s status will be further “escalated.” VA provides internal scores for its medical centers. The memo indicates the DC VA Medical Center is at risk of falling to a lower score, the lowest of which would result in “receivership,” a takeover of the facility of by agency administrators. The agency did not respond to questions from the I-Team about the formal score and the risk of receivership.

In a statement, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs said, “Earlier this week a team of experts from VA's Strategic Analytics for Improvement and Learning Office were on-site at the DC VAMC. "They worked with our clinical and administrative leaders to identify opportunities to improve our services in a range of areas, including access, mental health and employee satisfaction. We believe the DC VAMC is on track to improve its performance in

the areas identified by the (team). We will continue to partner with regional and national VA leaders as we work to provide Veterans with the safest, highest-quality health care possible.”

The time period discussed in the agency memo includes the first six months of 2018, when the medical center was largely under the direction of former acting director Larry Connell. Connell was reassigned in April. Internal agency records obtained by the News4 I-Team in 2017 showed a longstanding problem of delayed surgical procedures at the DC VA Medical Center. Some were delayed because of supply shortages, including a hip surgery and a urological procedure. Recent News4 I-Team reports revealed a string of other problems and incidents, including the postponement of at least nine surgeries in November 2017 because of concerns about the safety of some surgical equipment. A report by the I-Team also revealed the agency hired a contractor to fix potentially unsafe floor cracks in the facility’s surgery department in March 2017. VA officials also ordered repairs of holes in the walls of the facility’s “center core areas.” The facility suffered a cockroach infestation and a lack of sanitary conditions in its food service areas in 2015, according to reporting by the I-Team in 2017.

The agency fired the medical center’s former longtime director in 2017. The VA has since hired three interim directors to lead the facility. The most recent, Dr. Adam Robinson, was appointed for a four-month term, which is scheduled to end in mid-August. [Source: NBC Washington News 4 I-Team | Scott MacFarlane | July 31, 2018 ++]

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On 6 AUG, U.S. Secretary of Veterans Affairs Robert Wilkie visited the Washington DC VA Medical Center where he met with facility and regional leaders and received updates on recent progress in Veterans’ care and plans for further improvements at the facility. Of the 25 recommendations made to the facility in a recent Inspector General report, the facility announced it has addressed or resolved six, and is working to resolve the remaining 19. The DC VAMC has now put in place changes/improvements in six broad areas:

- Bringing in skilled leaders in quality improvement, purchasing, a new deputy chief of staff and others;
- Assuring reliable availability and sterilization of instruments for surgical procedures;
- Establishing and maintaining an electronic inventory to identify needed equipment rapidly and in a timely fashion;
- Implementing financial controls for purchasing supplies to maximize use of taxpayer dollars;
- Building and maintaining effective systems that facilitate audit of current and future progress;
- Assuring timely access to Veteran appointments, particularly in prosthetics.

VA has identified a new permanent director for the facility, who will be announced and begin serving there in the near future. In the interim, VA announced that, beginning in two weeks, DC VAMC Chief of Staff Charles Faselis will serve as acting director of the facility. The current acting director, Adam M. Robinson Jr., will return to his previous position as director of the VA Maryland Health Care System.

“We had a good visit today, and I appreciated hearing from facility and regional leadership on the important work that has been done to address the Inspector General’s concerns, as well as plans for resolving all its remaining recommendations,” Secretary Wilkie said. “There have been substantial improvements over the past few months in practice management, logistics and prosthetics in particular, and leaders have a strong plan ahead for even more progress in the coming weeks.” [Source: VA News Release | August 6, 2018 ++]

VAMC Bay Pines FL Update 03 ► Modernization Efforts

The Bay Pines VA Healthcare System (VAHCS) is working to transform and improve the delivery of care for Veterans through initiatives aimed at modernizing facilities, programs and services. The work is direct result of intensive strategic planning and feedback from Veterans, their loved ones, and other stakeholders from an array of methods available to capture, “the voice of the customer.” One such initiative is the complete renovation and upgrade to existing

acute medical/surgical wards located at the C.W. Bill Young VA Medical Center. Activation of 5D, an acute inpatient ward and now home to the stroke unit, has been completed. The newly renovated ward opened to serve Veterans in May 2018. The new unit creates efficiency for both patients and staff, promotes an environment where patients can focus on their well-being and treatment, and provides additional patient privacy.

The 24-bed inpatient unit features both private and semi-private rooms, state-of-the-art medical equipment, decentralized nurse stations, computers for charting in each patient’s room, home-like furnishings, upgraded telemetry capabilities and guest Wi-Fi. The patient rooms are also fully equipped with an interactive patient education and entertainment system. In addition, the new unit contains six negative pressure rooms and provides access to a family room, two consult rooms for interdisciplinary team use with families and caregivers, a conference room and an equipment room with two accessible areas to enter from either side of the unit to help with expediting patient care needs.

According to Alyssa Maily, activations coordinator, Bay Pines VAHCS, the new ward will help develop new and efficient ways of providing care for Veterans. “A lot of thought went into the overall design of this unit,” she explained. “Patient-centered care, the Veteran’s overall experience, and additional privacy were some of our most important considerations.” 5D was the second major ward renovation completed in the main hospital building in the last two years. Ward 3D was the first to undergo the transformation in May 2016 ([Watch a video](#) about the 3D activation).



Upgraded acute medical/surgical ward (left) and an aerial photo of the new Mental Health Center (right) at the C.W. Bill Young VA Medical Center

One of the most significant improvements at the C.W. Bill Young VA Medical Center campus is the new 155,000 square foot Mental Health Center. The new facility features three patient care floors and a wide array of services for Veterans seeking mental health care. Outpatient services and residential programs located on the first and second floors opened to serve Veterans in late 2017 ([Watch a video](#) about the grand opening). Activation of the inpatient psychiatry unit located on the third floor is expected to occur later this summer. The third floor will provide Veterans and staff with access to administrative spaces, clinics, units for acute patients and support spaces.

On the north side of the campus, a new 17,375 square foot cancer infusion/chemotherapy center is currently being constructed. The new center will augment and be connected to the existing radiation oncology center. The new facility will feature 26 chemotherapy stations and an onsite compounding pharmacy. Construction is expected to be completed in fall 2018. When construction is complete, that part of the medical center campus will effectively become a “one-stop shop” for cancer care where Veterans can receive a full range of state-of-the-art cancer treatment. On the west side of campus, construction of a new 12,440 square foot research addition is nearly complete that will allow for the expansion of the Bay Pines VAHCS’s Research and Development programs. Construction of the new building is scheduled to be complete this summer with activation occurring in the months following. A medical center campus enhancement includes an upgraded feature to the health care system’s existing VetLink kiosk system. The new feature allows family and friends to monitor a Veteran patient’s progression through a procedure or surgery taking place at the C.W. Bill Young VA Medical Center Operating Room or Outpatient Surgery Center (OSC). [Read more](#) about the VetLink kiosk surgery feature.

Another modernization effort being tackled by the health care system is the relocation and expansion of the Naples Community Based Outpatient Clinic. In October 2016, the health care system entered into a new 10-year lease agreement that will relocate the clinic from its current location at 2685 Horseshoe Drive South to 800 Goodlette Road North. The new building is more than double the size of the existing clinic and is expected to open later this summer. Read more about the new facility. All health care services currently available at the Naples CBOC will transition to the new facility. These services include primary care, mental health, women’s health, anticoagulation clinic, electrocardiograms (EKG), nutrition counseling, phlebotomy (blood draws and specimen collection), social work and pharmacy consultation.

Suzanne Klinker, director, Bay Pines VA Healthcare System, continues to emphasize the importance of modernizing the health care system for Veterans. “As Veterans are presented with new health care options, we must transform our delivery of care to ensure that we are able to provide for our Nation’s heroes. That is why modernizing the health care system is so important,” she said. “Partnering with patients and providing personalized and patient-driven health care is essential in the health care industry. It is what health providers need to do to stay relevant to patients, create better patient relationships and long-term outcomes and provide timely, safe and effective care. We continue to make significant progress for the heroes we serve across southwest Florida.” To learn more about Bay Pines VA Healthcare System’s modernization efforts, please visit www.baypines.va.gov, or follow them on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#). [Source: Vantage Point | Melanie L. Thomas | July 27, 2018 ++]

*** Vets ***



AFRH Update 14 ► Temporary Reprieve On Fee Increase

Residents of the Armed Forces Retirement Home will have a temporary reprieve from a proposed fee increase, which now will be phased in over three years, officials announced. And for the first time, married couples may soon be able to live in the AFRH. The pending defense authorization bill would give the green light to a number of AFRH officials' requests designed to increase revenue for the financially strapped retirement home, which serves certain retired and former enlisted members. But they did slow down officials' plans to increase fees 1 OCT, requiring them to phase in the increases. The pending legislation would open the door to more residents, including married couples as well as former enlisted members who suffered a service-connected disability, regardless of whether they're incapable of earning a living. The House has approved the bill; the Senate is expected to vote this month.



Many residents at the Armed Forces Retirement Home will still pay higher fees, but they'll be increased gradually over three years.

In January, fees will increase to 46.7 percent of a resident's income or a maximum of \$1,990 a month, up from 40 percent of income and \$1,458 maximum, said retired Army Maj. Gen. Steve Rippe, who took over as chief executive officer of the retirement home in November. He announced the changes to residents 25 JUL. By January 2021, residents will pay 60 percent of their gross income, or a maximum fee of \$3,054 per month, for the independent living unit and associated services such as three meals a day, health care services, transportation and other activities. That maximum fee for those units, where about three-fourths of the residents live, had been scheduled to take effect 1 OCT; a number of residents contacted their members of Congress with concerns about the increases. The cost of operating those independent units is \$3,054 a month, AFRH officials said. The phased in approach gives residents more time to make financial plans to adjust, Rippe said.

He said much of the pushback was from residents whose income is more than \$4,583 a month, and whose fees would double, reaching the max amount, under the planned rate hike. "The thinking was, they ought to pay what it costs us to operate," Rippe said. He said feedback from the new fee schedule has been good, as residents are pleased the increase isn't happening Oct. 1. One resident described the change as a "small reprieve," but said the increase is "still a bit draconian." "I unfortunately am one of the casualties and have chosen to relocate until such time as I can have my financial house in order by fully paying off past consumer debt," he said in an email. "I do intend to reapply and once again become an AFRH resident if (when) space is available. "Every resident's situation is different. However, for the average 84-year-old resident, it is a heck of a position to be put in."

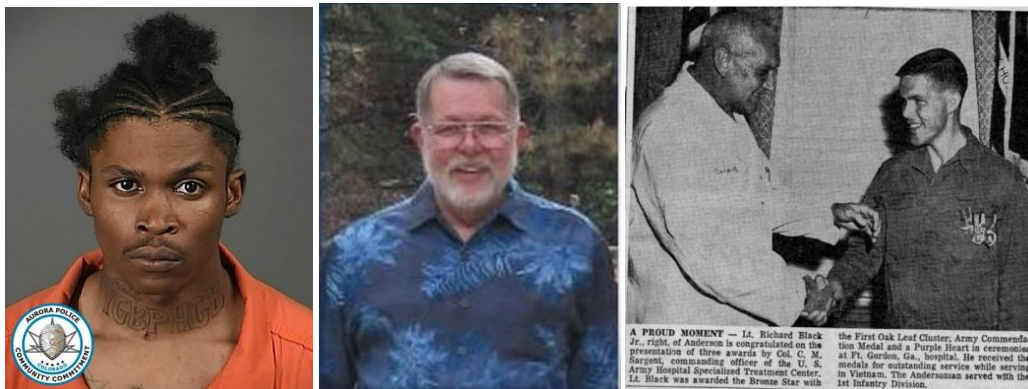
Residents won't be evicted if they're unable to pay, Rippe said, noting that officials will work with residents individually. All AFRH residents are retired or certain former enlisted members. AFRH has about 858 residents on two campuses, one in Washington and one in Gulfport, Mississippi. It can accommodate more than 1,100 residents. For residents in the higher levels of care of assisted living, long-term care and memory support, the income percentage limits will drop from an 80 percent of income to 70 percent with the new fee structure. The fee increase is part of the efforts of AFRH and Defense Department officials to turn around a deficit of about \$22 million a year at AFRH, a shortfall that's being funded by taxpayers. The home's trust fund dropped from \$186 million in 2010 to \$46 million in 2015, where it remained at the end of 2017. The AFRH operating budget is about \$64 million a year. In addition to money from the trust fund, the AFRH relies on the 50-cent-a-month deduction from active-duty enlisted service members' paychecks, and fines imposed on enlisted members for disciplinary violations.

The pending legislation would also allow spouses to be residents if they were married when the service member left the military. Details are being sorted out "as we speak," Rippe said. AFRH has ramped up efforts to generate additional revenue. For example, officials reached an agreement June 28 with the Veterans Affairs Department to lease several hundred parking spaces on AFRH property, which had been used for free by the VA. nAll told, the efforts underway are estimated to bring in more than \$15 million in extra revenue by 2021. The increased residence fees would bring in another \$6 million. That's aside from another larger plan for more revenue. AFRH plans for the mixed-use development of more than 4 million square feet of space in 35 buildings on the Washington campus. That campus is listed on the National Register of Historic Places as a historic district. Among those buildings is the historic hospital complex, built in the early 1900s. Officials issued a request for proposals in May, and proposals are due in September. [Source: MilitaryTimes | Karen Jowers | August 1 2018 ++]

Vietnam Vets [32] ► Richard Black | Hero Mistakenly Killed by Police

A veteran who fatally shot a naked intruder as the man attacked his grandson in his suburban Denver home early 30 JUL was killed by responding officers, according to investigators and news reports. Police received multiple calls

about a break-in at the home at about 1:30 a.m., and when officers arrived, they heard gunshots inside, The Aurora Sentinel reported. Aurora police, who described the scene in a statement as "very chaotic and violent," said they encountered an armed man and fatally shot him. That man turned out to be the person who lived in the home. A second man, the suspected intruder, was found dead during a search. A child also suffered serious but non-life-threatening injuries at the hands of the intruder, but police did not release additional details, citing an ongoing investigation.



Dajon Harper, Age 26 and Richard "Gary" Black, Age 73

"This is a very heartbreaking and tragic situation for everyone involved," Police Chief Nick Metz said. "We are providing assistance through our victim advocates to help the family of the deceased resident through this very difficult time." Investigators had not released the names of the resident or the suspected intruder. But family attorney Siddhartha Rathod identified the homeowner to CBS Denver as 73-year-old Richard "Gary" Black, a Vietnam veteran. Black, reportedly the recipient of a Bronze Star and a Purple Heart, was a retired IRS agent who neighbors call a family man. "This is a horror movie scenario," Rathod told the Denver Post. "There's no question Mr. Black is a hero, that Mr. Black saved his grandson's life. This truly is a tragedy."

Rathod told the Denver Post that the intruder had been attending a party at nearby home before he ran across a five-lane road onto the Black's property. Others from the party reportedly followed him and at some point he entered the home. Black, his wife, a stepson and the grandson were all asleep when the intruder kicked in the door, Rathod told the paper. The intruder grabbed the boy, choked him and then tried to drown him in a bathtub, Rathod said. Black and his stepson tried unsuccessfully to stop the attacker, and Black then reportedly retrieved his gun and shot the intruder in the chest, killing him. At some point during the altercation, Black's wife reportedly called dispatchers and described what was happening, saying that the intruder was naked and describing what her husband was wearing.

Rathod told the Denver Post the stepson was in the bathroom with the boy and Black's wife was outside talking to dispatchers when they heard more gunfire. Black was standing in his living room when he was shot, and he later died at a hospital. "Mr. Black did everything right. His actions saved his grandson's life. He should be in the mayor's office getting a commendation for his heroism. Instead he's in the morgue," Rathod said. Many questions remain unanswered about Black's death, Rathod said. The officer who fired the shot has been placed on administrative reassignment with pay, according to the Denver Post, and the 17th Judicial District Attorney's Office and Denver Police are investigating. Late Tuesday night (31 JUL), police confirmed the officer who shot Black was involved in another deadly shooting in late June, the station reports.

In a statement on Facebook, Aurora police said they are planning a press conference for 2 AUG and the district attorney's office had requested they not release more information so as not to compromise the integrity of the investigation, which they called "extremely complex." "In order to conduct a comprehensive investigation, we continue to methodically collect evidence, interview witnesses, and review all available recordings, to include the body worn cameras of all involved officers," the statement said. "This incident was not only tragic, but incredibly heartbreaking for the involved family, the community, and our Department," the statement said. "This makes it even more difficult in not being able to provide information at this time as we are committed to being transparent and

sharing information as soon as possible after a critical incident." [Source: CBS/AP | Crimesider Staff | August 1, 2018 ++]

Freedom Hard ► Effort to Reduce Veteran Suicide Through Humor

The world became a better place 27 JUL when Chris White made the decision to leap from the outfield stands at Houston's Minute Maid Park and make his way across the outfield after the final strike of a game between the Astros and the Texas Rangers. As he touched down on the field, the Marine Corps veteran ditched his restrictive pants, blessing the eyes of the 42,592 in attendance by revealing a pair of freedom-emitting American flag silkies. And while White's excursion concluded with him surrendering to authorities, as most streaking displays do, the incident afforded him a platform to discuss an organization, Freedom Hard, he created to use humor to curb the glaring trend of veteran suicide, according to a Click 2 Houston report.



Aerodynamically prepared for maximum sprint ability, White then commenced his outfield jaunt, breaking the tackle of the first security guard and making the second look like a shoe-in for Saturday remedial PT. Heisman!

"If I can make you laugh for at least five minutes, then you're not thinking about that dark space that you can potentially be in," White told Click 2 Houston. "And if I can gear it toward patriotism, to me, I consider that the holy grail." Once apprehended, White was arrested and charged with trespassing, the Houston Police Department confirmed. Shortly after his arrest, a GoFundMe was created to bail the silky-wearing Marine out of jail, the report said. The effort generated \$550, which White then donated to Camp4Heroes, a 184-acre retreat in North Carolina that aims to help veterans rebuild and readjust to civilian life. White provided Click 2 Houston with the donation receipt as proof. "There are organizations out there that support the prevention of veteran suicides and if you are a veteran that's struggling, there is hope," he said. "I can assure you that." Whether any future streaking endeavors are in White's future remains to be seen, but his unique methods of raising awareness appear to be here to stay. For a vimeo of Whites antic refer to <https://www.facebook.com/cory.strouth.7/videos/2127922647489869>. [Source: MarineCorpsTimes | J.D. Simkins | August 1, 2018 ++]

Vet Fraud & Abuse ► Reported 01 thru 15 AUG 2018

The Justice Department has successfully won a guilty conviction against a former federal employee who illegally schemed against the government during stints at two different agencies. **Kenneth Richard Devore** was convicted in a U.S. District Court in Tennessee of wire fraud, mail fraud, financial conflict of interest, theft of public money, and making false statements in connection to jobs he held at the Veterans Affairs Department and Office of Personnel Management. Devore's first offense came while at VA in 2015, where he worked as a field examiner to help veterans

unable to care for themselves protect their financial assets. While assisting a “disabled and incompetent veteran” in Knoxville, Tennessee, Devore “used his position to convince that veteran that he needed a Last Will and Testament,” according to the Justice Department. He made himself the sole beneficiary of that will, leaving all of the veteran’s \$680,000 in assets to himself. Devore forged the veteran’s initials onto the document and sent it to the individual’s bank.

The indictment against Devore found that he used his federal position to gain the veteran’s trust and learn about that individual’s assets. Those included the veteran’s guardianship checking, personal checking, savings, money market, government securities and other accounts. VA became wise to Devore’s activity and forced him to resign. He quickly applied for a job at OPM’s National Background Investigations Bureau, which assesses individuals applying for security clearances with the federal government. Devore withheld that he was forced to resign from VA and said he had received a degree from “Canterbury University,” an institution he made up. OPM failed to recognize the deceptions and hired Devore. He continued to work at the agency into 2017. All the while, Devore claimed to be a disabled veteran unable to work due to his injuries and received compensatory benefits from VA.

OPM and VA’s inspectors general investigated the case, leading to the Justice Department’s prosecution. The government dropped two charges of “frauds and swindles” and one count of “act affecting personal financial interest.” Devore—who was represented by a public defender—was released on \$20,000 bond last year, but will face sentencing in November. The cumulative maximum penalties of his various crimes could amount to 55 years in prison and fines of \$1 million. [Source: GovExec.com | Eric Katz | July 31, 2018++]

Burn Pit Toxic Exposure Update 57 ► Burn Pit Accountability Act Gains Momentum



Veteran service organizations are building momentum as they continue to call on federal lawmakers to approve a measure tracking troops' exposure to burn pits during time in service. Since its introduction in May, the Burn Pit Accountability Act has boosted its co-sponsors in the House and gained a complementary bill in the Senate. VSOs, including the Military Officers Association of America, Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, Reserve Officers of America, Vietnam Veterans of America and Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors, are calling on lawmakers to pass the bill this fall.

"We take this issue seriously because it affects so many - so many - veterans and currently serving servicemembers and family members, as well," said Army Col. (Ret.) Mike Barron, MOAA's director of Government Relations for currently serving and retired affairs. "We're going to keep pushing this hard. It's a very important issue to MOAA members and we hear that."

The number of co-sponsors has risen from six to 111, said Col. Barron, who served as an infantry officer in Iraq and has felt the effects of burn pits. They have been used as a way for servicemembers to dispose of waste at forward operating bases in theater. It was common for servicemembers to stand over metal drums, and stir the waste, which was set aflame by fuel. Although not as visible as other job-related risks, such as jumping out of aircraft or walking through minefields, military members have said exposure to toxic chemicals is just as perilous. The proposed legislation is a significant step since it would track known issues before a servicemember leaves the military. That information would be shared with the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The VA said research does not indicate evidence of long-term health problems from exposure to burn pits, but it continues to study the health of deployed veterans. The VA maintains an Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry for veterans and servicemembers to document their exposures and report health concerns. The burn pit issue has been compared to the Vietnam era Agent-Orange crisis. Agent Orange, an herbicide chemical sprayed by aerial troops to destroy vegetation used for enemy cover in Vietnam has caused illness to more than 3 million people, according to government data.

Col. Barron said he would continue working with VSOs to push the legislation. "The ultimate goal really is to get this into legislation and we'll continue to work with the Armed Services Committee as well as with the Veterans Affairs Committee," he said. "We want to get this into law and the target on that would be in the National Defense Authorization Act this next year. We feel really good about the momentum we have going right now and we'll keep that up going into the next Congress."

Are you on the Open Burn Pit Registry? At <https://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/burnpits/registry.asp> you can sign up online through the VA. Eligible veterans include those who served in:

- Operation Enduring Freedom
- Operation Iraqi Freedom
- Operation New Dawn
- Djibouti, Africa, on or after Sept. 11, 2001
- Operation Desert Shield
- Operation Desert Storm
- Southwest Asia theater of operations on or after Aug. 2, 1990

[Source: MOAA Newsletter | Amanda Dolasinski | August 2, 2018 ++]

Veteran Internet Access ► Online Health, Job, & Support Services Push

Federal and state agencies have made a concerted push to get more veteran [health, job and support services online](#) in recent years, in an effort to make the resources more widely available. Now a new effort is underway to make sure that all veterans have [access to the internet](#) to use those programs, after a series of recent studies has shown that tens of thousands still struggle to get online. Officials from Comcast announced 13 AUG they will expand their Internet Essentials program — designed to help low-income households get internet access — to include veterans facing financial challenges.

“There is a very big need here,” said David Cohen, senior executive vice president and chief diversity officer at the company. “For those of us who have access, it’s almost unimaginable to think about how to live without it ... but for a lot of veterans, it’s another barrier they have to overcome.” A Department of Commerce study released last fall found that veterans are more likely to use the internet than peers who didn’t serve, regardless of their age group. But a 2016 Veterans Affairs study found that nearly 30 percent of low-income veterans households did not have any reliable means to get online. Cohen noted that can be particularly problematic for veterans looking for a job after

leaving the military. Most Fortune 500 companies — including Comcast — only accept resumes via email or online submission.

Comcast officials estimate that roughly 1 million veterans in their 40-state coverage region will be eligible for the new service. Individuals who participate are eligible for high-speed Internet service for \$9.95 a month, laptop purchases for \$150, and free digital literacy training through local community partners. Company representatives made the announcement in Philadelphia, where they will work with the Veterans Multi-Service Center on outreach. Similar events are planned throughout the country in the next month. “We’ll be creating a whole new web of relationships in the veterans space,” Cohen said. “Working with parents of young children is a whole different population than working with seniors. So we’ll leverage those new partnerships to make sure we’re providing the appropriate support.” More information on the program is available on the [Internet Essentials web site](#). [Source: MilitaryTimes | Leo Shane III | August 13, 2018 ++]

Vet Hiring Fairs ► **Scheduled As of 15 AUG 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 | August 15, 2018 ++]

Military Retirees & Veterans Events Schedule ► **As of 15 AUG 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.
- PDF: http://www.hostmtb.org/RADs_and_Other_Retiree-Veterans_Events.pdf.
- Word: http://www.hostmtb.org/RADs_and_Other_Retiree-Veterans_Events.doc.

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\veteterans related events to the Events Schedule Manager, Milton.Bell126@gmail.com. [Source: Retiree\Veterans Events Schedule Manager | Milton Bell | August 15, 2018 ++]

Veteran State Benefits ► U.S. Virgin Islands

The U.S. Virgin Islands provides a number of benefits to their veteran residents in the categories listed below. They are addressed in greater detail in the attachment to this Bulletin titled, “**Vet State Benefits – VI**”. For a further explanation of each refer to <https://www.military.com/benefits/veteran-state-benefits/virgin-island-vet-benefits.html>.

- Housing
- Financial Assistance
- Employment
- Education
- Other Territory Veteran Benefits

[Source: <https://www.military.com/benefits/veteran-state-benefits/state-veterans-benefits-directory.html> | Aug 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.

Social Security Legislation Update 01 ► S.3345 | New Parent Option

A new bill from Senator Marco Rubio (FL) – the Economic Security for New Parents Act (S. 3345) – is gaining steam on Capitol Hill. If passed into law, this bill will allow new parents to claim paid family leave following the

birth or adoption of a child and cover the cost by borrowing against their future Social Security retirement benefits! At first glance, this may seem like a great idea. Something is better than nothing, right? Well, not really.... People who take this paid leave benefit would be required to delay the collection of their Social Security benefits in retirement. Parents who take 12 weeks of paid leave would see their full eligibility ages in retirement increase by around 25 weeks. Those who take two leaves would see their eligibility ages increase by almost a year! This bill is bad news for the Social Security program AND for the retirement security of future retirees because:

- This bill would lead to permanent Social Security benefit cuts in retirement of 3% or more for those who take paid leave by increasing their eligibility ages.
- This bill would cost more than \$200 billion and it would worsen the solvency of the Social Security Trust Fund, threatening the benefits of people who are already retired.
- This bill would undermine the mission of Social Security – to provide financial protection for OLDER and disabled Americans!

Allowing individuals to borrow against their future Social Security benefits for non-retirement purposes would set a dangerous precedent. If this bill is signed into law, similar programs offering education benefits or student loan forgiveness to young adults in exchange for reduced retirement benefits will likely follow. If you are opposed to this bill here is what you can do to defeat it. Dial the U.S. Capitol Switchboard toll free at 844-455-0045 and ask to be directed to your Senators' offices. Tell your Senator:

- You are one of their constituents and you vote.
- You are a senior and you are speaking on behalf of seniors.
- Add a personal message like the following: "I'm calling today to voice my opposition to the Economic Security for New Parents Act because it would worsen the solvency of the Social Security program and result in benefit cuts for future retirees. I know from experience that seniors living on fixed incomes cannot afford reduced benefits in retirement."

[Source: The Senior Citizen League | Art Cooper, Board Chairman | August 2, 2018 ++]

VA COLA for 2019 Checks ► S.3089 | Vet Compensation COLA Act of 2018

Senator Johnny Isakson (GA), Chairman of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, introduced S. 3089-the Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2018. This bill would authorize a cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for veterans in receipt of compensation and pension, and for survivors of veterans who died from service-incurred disabilities and are in receipt of Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC). The bill would provide an increase by the same percentage as Social Security, effective December 1, 2018. Receipt of annual COLA increments aids injured and ill veterans, their families, and their survivors to help maintain the value of their VA benefits against inflation. Without COLAs, these individuals, who sacrificed their own health and their family life for the good of our nation, may not be able to maintain a quality of life in their elder years.

DAV strongly supports S. 3089 as it is in accord with DAV Resolution 031. Earlier this year they asked for your support of H.R. 4958-the Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2018 in the House of Representatives. H.R. 4958 was passed by the House on May 21, 2018. DAV is now seeking your support of S. 3089. Readers are encouraged to use DAV' prepared electronic letter at [Take Action](#) or draft their own to urge your Senators to support and cosponsor S. 3089. Status of the bill can be tracked at <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/senate-bill/3089>. [Source: DAV National Commander | August 8, 2018 ++]

Vet Educational Assistance Update 03 ▶ S.3318 | Military Learning for Credit Act

Few student veterans receive academic credit for the training they received in the military, a problem that forces them to waste time and effort repeating work, vet advocates say. Now, a pair of senators are working across the aisle to fix that, by expanding veteran education benefits to include more proficiency exam fees and other costs related to documenting skills learned in uniform. The new Military Learning for Credit Act — introduced 2 AUG by Sens. Chris Coons (D-DE) and Joni Ernst (R-IA) — would allow veterans to use up to \$500 to cover the costs of tests such as the College Level Examination Program, Dantes Subject Standardized Test Program and ACT National Career Readiness Certificate, among others.

If veterans show proficiency on those tests, they can earn academic credit, which could help them graduate more quickly. “Our veterans receive intense and thorough training as servicemembers, often during the years when other Americans are attending college,” Coons said in a statement. “The least we can do is ensure that once they enroll in college, veterans have every opportunity to translate their military training into college credit.” According to research from Student Veterans of America, only about 36 percent of veterans enrolled in higher education received any credit for their military training. Of those, the median number of credits awarded was three, the equivalent of a single college class.

The senators believe that making it easier for student veterans to test out of classes could save time, money, and frustration for those transitioning troops. In addition, the measure includes a provision allowing those veterans to use federal education stipends for “portfolio assessments” presented to colleges as proof of existing experience worth academic credit. Although not every institution accepts those assessments, the senators argue that allowing veterans more resources to develop those skills review packages could help change perceptions among many school leaders about the value of military training and skills in the academic world. No timetable has been set for when the legislation may be considered by a Senate committee. Senators began a two-week summer recess on 1 AUG but will return to town to resume legislative business on 16 AUG. [Source: MilitaryTimes | August 2, 2018 ++]

POW/MIA Update 112 ▶ H.R. 5826 | Never Forgotten Korean War POW Act

American troops in war zones have received combat pay since 1952. Yet for one group of warfighters — Korean War POW-MIAs — the supplemental compensation was capped for their entire time in captivity. Now, a bill introduced by Rep. Sean Patrick Maloney, a Democrat who represents New York’s 18th Congressional District, aims to pay back the men who endured starvation, disease, freezing temperatures and the summary executions of fellow countrymen. Maloney introduced the Never Forgotten Korean War POW Act 15 MAY, starting the legislative process. It seeks to provide combat pay to all living Korean War POWs for each month spent in a captured or missing-in-action status, adjusting for inflation. Their payments had been previously capped, by law, at three months, the only group of combat veterans with those restrictions.

The bill has been sent to the House Armed Services Committee but has not been set for a vote. It would then have to be passed by the House and Senate and then be signed by the president to become law. “All of our [Korean War] POWs are heroes,” Maloney said in a statement to Stars and Stripes. “They deserve fair compensation for their honorable service like the veterans from every other war.” The issue was first brought to Maloney’s attention at a town hall meeting by a friend of Cornwall, N.Y., resident and former POW Ray Mellin, 89. Mellin later told Maloney that the combat pay restriction for POW-MIAs never felt right to him, especially since he languished in prisoner-of-war-camps for years. Maloney began to investigate, a spokesman for his office said.

In 1950, the Army submitted a proposal for legislation recommending that “hazard duty pay” be paid out “to personnel involved in combat,” according to the Defense Department website. They argued that it was unfair that

servicemembers engaged in combat did not receive supplemental income when others did for flying, submarine or parachute duty. Congress agreed and passed the Combat Duty Pay Act of 1952, which paid \$45 per month to servicemembers serving at least six days in designated frontline combat units or those wounded, injured or killed by “hostile fire,” the defense website said. It also banned other forms of supplemental compensation, such as flight or submarine pay, and limited the combat pay of POW-MIAs to “not more than three months.” Neither Mellin, Maloney’s office, nor the Army could say who was responsible for capping the pay for Korean War POW-MIAs.

After the conflict, the Navy and Air Force protested the combat pay law as they were effectively frozen out, and “broad, geographically based zonal eligibility” was instituted, the defense website said. It is a system that endures to this day, effectively leaving Korean War POW-MIAs as the only group excluded from full compensation. “We were in the prison camp two years already when they [decided] they weren’t going to pay us more than just the three months for combat pay, and in all that time, we were getting strafed, we were bombed, guys were dying every day and we just couldn’t figure out why,” Mellin told Stars and Stripes. “I think it was just terrible. Why they did it all of a sudden; I don’t know if it was to save money or whatever. It was very upsetting ... It’s not really a matter of the money, it’s a matter of why it was done.”

Mellin said he found out about the cap on combat pay as soon as he got out of the military. It was a slight that bothered him even as he married, had children and worked until retirement in a laboratory. “My fervent wish is to have this injustice made right, not for the monetary reasons, but to honor the remaining few Korean War POWs,” Mellin said in a statement released by Maloney’s office. Mellin and Maloney’s attempt to get full combat pay for Korean War POWs is not the first. Fellow 24th ID soldier and POW Wilbert “Shorty” Estabrook, 87, worked with now-retired California Democratic Sen. Barbara Boxer for years to try to accomplish the same thing, according to Estabrook and Mellin. Estabrook said ultimately, the Army stood in the way. Army officials declined to comment.

Estabrook — captured July 15, 1950, by the North Korean Army and held about 38 months in captivity — said he believes Maloney’s bill does not go far enough. He wants to see the next of kin of those deceased receive their loved one’s combat pay as well. But he hopes Congress will finally set things right. He believes the overall amount due the POWs would be small. “This issue can be settled with little cost,” he said. “Combat pay was \$45 a month in those days. Perhaps a statutory amount could be established to speed up the process.” Estabrook is not optimistic that Mellin and Maloney will succeed. “If the chair is of one party and the one introducing from another party it could remain in limbo forever,” he said. “The Army would not budge on this issue when I worked for its approval for years. Why would they change now?” The website www.govtrack.us, which monitors legislative activity, puts the chances of the bill passing at just 2 percent, citing Skopos Labs.

Despite long odds, Maloney attempted to attach the bill to the 2019 National Defense Authorization Act being hashed out this summer but it was ruled to be out of order by the House rules committee. He has reached out to the Congressional Budget Office to score the bill but that has not happened. His office says he remains optimistic despite his busy future: He will run for New York attorney general while also mounting a re-election campaign. “Rep. Maloney ... will keep pushing for this bill’s passage no matter what,” a spokesman said. Maloney said that for too long the Korean War has been thought of as the “forgotten war.” “That has to change,” he said. “It’s like Ray says — this is about a lot more than money — it’s about making sure our Korean War vets know how much we appreciate their service — and that they’re not forgotten.” [Source: Stars & Stripes | Matthew M. Burke | August 6, 2018 ++]

Military Training College Credit ► **S.3318 | Military Learning for Credit Act of 2018**

U.S. Sen. Joni Ernst (R-IA) on 1 AUG introduced bipartisan legislation that would provide more American military veterans with the chance to gain college credits for their previous military training. “Our servicemembers and their families deserve the opportunity to use their military training educational assistance for college credit,” Sen. Ernst said. “Allowing all veterans to use veterans education assistance funds to cover portfolio assessments and fees for

standardized examinations will reduce the expenses covered by federal funding, while simultaneously increasing veteran graduation rates.” Sen. Ernst is the original cosponsor of the Military Learning for Credit Act of 2018, S. 3318, introduced by main sponsor U.S. Sen. Chris Coons (D-DE).

By law, institutions of higher education (IHEs) are required to review student veterans’ joint services transcript, which document a veteran’s prior military learning and training. Colleges and universities, which are actively recruiting veterans, currently receive \$10 billion a year from the GI bill funds that veterans collectively spend, according to a one-page summary of S. 3318 released by Sen. Coons’ office. However, schools aren’t required to grant any credits for prior military learning — and according to the senator’s staff, research shows many IHEs do not grant such credits. “Our veterans receive intense and thorough training as service members, often during the years when other Americans are attending college,” Sen. Coons said. “The least we can do is ensure that once they enroll in college, veterans have every opportunity to translate their military training into college credit.”

S.3318 would not authorize any new funds, but instead provides another use for existing veteran educational assistance entitlements, according to the lawmakers’ summary. In addition to several other provisions, S. 3318 would expand veterans’ eligibility to use veterans educational assistance funds to cover up to \$500 of the fees required to take the College Level Examination Program and the Dantes Subject Standardized Test Program credit exams, which are a group of standardized tests that assess college-level knowledge in 38 subject areas, and the ACT National Career Readiness Certificate Examination. The bill has been referred for consideration to the U.S. Senate Veterans’ Affairs Committee. [Source: Ripon Advance News Service | August 13, 2018 ++]

*** Military ***



Army Enlistment Update 02 ► Waivers/Bonuses Increased to Fill Ranks

Under the gun to increase the size of the force, the Army is issuing more waivers for past drug use or bad conduct by recruits, and pouring an extra \$200 million into bonuses this year to attract and retain soldiers. According to data obtained by The Associated Press, nearly one-third of all the waivers granted by the Army in the first six months of this fiscal year were for conduct and drug problems, mainly involving marijuana use. That number is significantly higher than the other three military services, and represents a steady increase over the past three years. At the same time, the Army increased bonuses by more than 30 percent this year, with enlistment money going to recruits for high-tech jobs such as satellite communications and cryptologists. Recruits in those jobs can get up to an additional \$30,000 for a five-year enlistment.

The enlistment bonuses grew by \$115 million this year over last year, while money to entice soldiers already in the service to stay grew by almost \$100 million, according to the Army. Army leaders said there has been no move to reduce enlistment standards in order to meet recruitment goals. They said there are more waivers in part because of the increased competition for recruits as they try to add another 8,000 soldiers to the force this year. Waivers have long been used to enlist young people who might otherwise be unqualified for military service due to a wide array of medical, conduct or other reasons. Historically, the bulk of the waivers approved by all four military services involve a broad range of medical issues.

The Marine Corps, Navy and Air Force provided their waiver data upon request in April, but Army officials refused to do so. Ultimately the Defense Department provided totals to The Associated Press for all the services. The data shows that the Army has increasingly brought in recruits that need conduct or drug waivers. In 2016, nearly 19 percent of the waivers were for drug use and conduct, In 2017 that grew to almost 25 percent, and for the first half of 2018 it exceeded 30 percent. Those totals far exceed the other three services. According to the Pentagon data, the Navy, Marine Corps and Air Force did not approve any waivers for drug use in the last three years. And their use of conduct waivers is significantly less than the Army - hovering between 2-13 percent of all the waivers they approve, depending on the service.

The Army's annual recruiting mission is 76,500 this year, an increase of 8,000, said Maj. Gen. Joe Calloway, director of military personnel management. The overall size of the Army, now about 992,000, is being increased to more than 1.03 million by late next year. "It is an exceedingly competitive environment," said Calloway, adding that the Army will not lower standards to meet the goal. "We will miss a number before we will do that." He said the Army has met about 90 percent of its recruitment goal so far this year. Army officials defend the conduct waivers, saying that while a small number may be for major crimes, most involve recruits who faced misdemeanor charges or were ultimately were found guilty of lesser charges or never convicted at all. A waiver is required, for example, even if the recruit was a juvenile and the charge was dismissed after restitution, community service or other conditions were met. Recruits who get waivers are then required to pass all other military standards for their job.

The Marine Corps has faced the same battle for recruits. "It is definitely more challenging now than it has been in the last five years. As unemployment approaches 5 percent, we are in direct competition with the private sector for the same talent," said Marine Maj. Gen. Paul Kennedy, who until recently headed Marine recruiting command. The Marines, however, have maintained about the same level of waivers for bad conduct since 2016, which has been roughly 8 percent of approved waivers. And the Marine Corps, the smallest military service, has also cut back on enlistment bonuses - from about \$8.2 million in 2017 to \$8 million this year. "If you enlist for money, it's harder for them to remain committed when the chips are down," said Kennedy. "We sell intangibles. Our signing bonuses are so small, and it's spread out over the four year enlistment, so they're only getting a few hundred dollars extra."

The Navy slightly increased its waivers for bad conduct over the past three years, but it still equals less than 13 percent of the total. Meanwhile, the Navy also is tripling the amount of enlistment bonuses this year, to about \$100 million. The largest incentives are for sailors going to jobs in the nuclear or cryptology fields or for SEALs and other special operations forces. Just 7 percent of the Air Force waivers have been for bad conduct this year, also a small increase. And the Air Force has cut back on enlistment bonuses, from about \$19 million to almost \$14 million. Instead, bonuses are given more to encourage airmen to stay in the service. Retention bonuses increased a bit this year to \$280 million.

Medical hurdles make up the majority of enlistment waivers across the military. They range from issues as routine as asthma, eyesight, or skin problems to more complex health conditions, such as previous sports injuries that may have healed, but still must be evaluated. For example, if someone received medication for attention deficit disorder in their youth, they need a waiver. Anyone still on the medication would not be allowed to enlist. Army leaders this week tightened some waiver restrictions, adding several crimes to the list of offenses that disqualify a person from enlisting, and requiring higher ranking officers to review waivers for certain medical and psychological conditions. [Source: The Associated Press | Lolita C. Baldor | August 1, 2018 ++]

Military Recruiting Update 11 ► Narrow Media Portrayal Does the Military a Diservice

As the American military becomes more isolated from society and society more disconnected from war, public understanding of its military will continue to impact the interest among young people to serve and the burden of war on military members and families. The familiarity gap between the military and society exacerbates contradictory

attitudes towards the military community: the military as an institution enjoys incredible public support, but the emergence of 'generations of war' given high service rates among children of service members are met with shrinking family related connections to the military. Similarly, public views label veterans as community assets and leaders, but also assume veterans experience PTSD and homelessness. The military is easy to love from afar, but the disconnect ultimately threatens national security.

One way to increase understanding and knowledge about the military among an uninformed public is to leverage the influence of media and entertainment. But both media coverage and the growing ecosystem charity and advocacy campaigns often confuse rather than comprehensively educate the public on the issues facing service members. As a result, the public is left with the cognitive difference in agreement between narratives that service members and veterans are simultaneously heroes and broken individuals - and this misrepresentation of service members, veterans, and the military experience only serve to perpetuate and compound the so-called 'civil-military divide.'

While PSA (Portrayal of Service) efforts to graphically describe veterans as civic assets with high rates of volunteering, voting, and leadership can shift perceptions about veterans, the most accessible and pervasive depictions of military service and veterans appear in television and film. A recent episode of *VICE News*-focusing on VET Tv (a dark comedy channel for veterans) is one illustration of an uninformed public. Self-branded as the "first veteran television network full of dark, perverted, inappropriate, controversial, and irreverent military humor," the relative popularity of VET Tv among veterans highlights the need for varied media options for the veteran community as well as increased public engagement in the effects of recent conflicts.

However, *VICE's* reporting took VET Tv at face value as a "dark, depraved" depiction of military life rather than addressing the subtleties of military branches, the struggles of grunt life, the cultural differences between enlisted troops and officers, or even just the experience of combat. Such oversimplification of service members and veterans is common: VET Tv's founder believes the "biggest misrepresentation in mainstream media is the language that is used amongst military personnel." While VET Tv offers a different extreme of military service (one specific to infantrymen and a direct foil to the Hollywood hero narrative) it highlights the lack of options for veterans and how little the American public and mainstream media understand about its military.

Despite some recent attempts by networks to launch military television shows, almost all have been cancelled after one season. Unlike after WWII-when long-running shows like *M.A.S.H.*, the *A-Team*, and *Major Dad* were a mix of sitcom, social commentary, and military humor-storylines today tend to be high-octane heroics. *Generation Kill*, a standout mini-series about the Iraq war, was firmly grounded in a reporter's observation of the hurry-up-and-wait realities of war.

By contrast, CBS created three shows each with a few seasons in the post-9/11 era (*JAG*, *The Unit*, and *SEAL Team*), while other networks canceled shows (*Valor*, *Enlisted*, and *The Brave*) after one season. *Enlisted*, a comedy about enlisted soldiers on a military base, was cancelled in its first season due to low ratings despite positive reception in the military community. All the other shows fit into the Hollywood combat hero stereotype. The modest success, limited following, and lack of critical acclaim of these shows points to a broader lack of understanding among the American public necessary to engage with it or laugh at it.

In addition to the lack of nuanced military-themed shows, television is sorely lacking in complex depictions of military service or complex, multi-faceted veteran characters. Nearly all the notable military/veteran television characters fall into three categories: military service as an explanation for certain skills and abilities (*Bones*, *True Blood*, and *NCIS*), PTSD from military service (*Sherlock* and *True Blood*), and questionable characters with military service (*Homeland* and *Mad Men*).

Critical work by *RethinkVets* and *Got Your 6* has been designed to challenge misconceptions and narratives. *RethinkVets*, an arm of the Heinz Endowment, works in the Pennsylvania region to drive better outcomes for service members and to change the belief that service members are broken heroes. Analysis by *Got Your 6* showed that American perceptions and narratives of post-9/11 veterans shift most compellingly not when veterans are promoted

as heroes but as community assets. *Got Your 6* backed up these studies by creating *6 Certified*, a program to evaluate and encourage more normalized media depictions of veterans. To broaden knowledge and combat the familiarity gap, such initiatives need to expand or become nationwide programs advocating for the full investment of Hollywood writers and producers.

Media and entertainment companies may have been able to profit from depictions of the military, but they've done so without challenging stereotypical narratives. Somewhere between “patriotic correctness” and “the sea of goodwill,” society has determined that expressions of respect and thanks without true engagement or depth of understanding is enough. The familiarity gap often means service members and veterans are expected to conform to existing stereotypes. Public denialism that favors the patriotic action hero image of the military often refuses to acknowledge the varied and complex identities and experiences of those who serve: pervasive misconceptions both imagine and expect the military to be something it often is not.

To address further isolation of the military, American society needs more nuanced conversations about military service, military members, and their families, and what it means to be a veteran in all arenas-especially media and entertainment. Without it, America's current mode of patriotism will remain an empty gesture that continues to narrow the burden of conflict on a select few. [Source: Task & Purpose | Emma Moore | August 2, 2018 ++]

Navy 2nd Fleet ► **Reactivated | China & Russia North Atlantic Presence Concerns**

Chinese military vessels are now operating in the Northern Atlantic, and Russian submarines are prowling those same waters at a pace not seen since the end of the Cold War, the Navy's top admiral told VOA in an exclusive interview. Chief of Naval Operations Adm. John Richardson said China's military movements from the North Atlantic into the Mediterranean Sea create a "new dynamic." "Even five years ago, we wouldn't have seen anything like this," Richardson said.



According to Richardson, the Chinese navy is a global one that is both "ready and capable" of operating wherever Beijing wants. “They're certainly a pacing competition for us in terms of the naval threat,” he told VOA. However, Chinese operations near the United States' eastern shore are not as threatening as Russian vessels lurking below the ocean's surface. NATO allies from North America to Europe are increasingly concerned about the uptick of Russian submarine activity in the North Atlantic. “We're talking about more (activity) than we've seen in 25 years,” Richardson said. U.S. officials worry that Moscow may try to use its submarines to cut or tap into undersea cables that connect the two continents.

Due to these increased complexities in the North Atlantic, the United States has recently reactivated a command to secure the ocean on its eastern coast. The U.S. 2nd Fleet helps fulfill new guidelines under Secretary of Defense

Jim Mattis's National Defense Strategy, which makes great-power competition, rather than terrorism, the primary focus of U.S. national security. The fleet was deactivated in 2011 because the Navy needed the funds for acquisitions. It was reactivated in Norfolk on 1 JUL. Richardson will preside over the fleet's formal establishment ceremony aboard an aircraft carrier in Norfolk on 24 AUG. The 2nd Fleet commander will also head NATO's Joint Forces Command Norfolk. Richardson said the dual-hatted command structure allows the U.S. and its allies to adapt together as they confront the rising Russian challenge.

Russian jamming. As the U.S. Navy adjusts its geographic commands, Richardson said it also must stay ahead in the competitive realm of information warfare. Navy sailors on the high seas are having to defend themselves from Russian electronic jamming devices much like those used against U.S. ground troops operating in Syria. Richardson said sailors had "absolutely" encountered Russian jamming devices while operating in international waters. "This is an emerging part of our business now," he told VOA. Richardson did not elaborate on how the jamming affects the Navy. Electronic warfare attacks have the potential to disturb navigation and communication systems. "Those disruptive technologies...are really going to be decisive in the future fight, and we've got to make sure that we're investing in those as well," Richardson said. [Source: VOA | Carla Babb | August 6, 2018 ++]

Navy Submarine Program ► Columbia Class Ballistic Missile Concerns

The U.S. Navy's \$122.3 billion Columbia-class ballistic missile submarine program is off to an inauspicious start after faulty welding was discovered in several missile tubes destined for both the Columbia and Virginia-class programs, as well as the United Kingdom's follow-on SSBN program. In all, 12 missile tubes manufactured by BWXT, Inc., are being scrutinized for substandard welds. Seven of the 12 had been delivered to prime contractor General Dynamics Electric Boat and were in various stages of outfitting, and five were still under construction. The Navy and Electric Boat have launched an investigation, according to a statement from Naval Sea Systems Command spokesman Bill Couch.

"All BWXT welding requiring volumetric inspection has been halted until the investigation is complete," Couch said. The bad welds came to light after discrepancies were discovered with the equipment BWXT used to test the welds before shipping them to GDEB, according to a source familiar with the issue. The discovery of a significant quality control issue at the very outset of fabrication of Columbia injects uncertainty in a program that already has little room for delays. The issue is made even more troubling because it arises from a vendor with an excellent reputation, and raises questions about whether the Navy can deliver Columbia on time, something the Navy says is vital to ensuring continuous nuclear deterrent patrols as the Ohio class reaches the end of its service life.

The issue with the missile tubes, part of the common missile compartment to be installed in both Columbia and the UK's Dreadnought submarine program, should not put the Columbia program behind schedule, Couch said. The impact on Royal Navy's Dreadnought program is less clear, Couch said. "Impacts to the delivery of missile tubes to the UK will be assessed upon completion of GDEB's efforts to define and scope next steps," Couch said. BWXT is one of three vendors sub-contracted to deliver tubes for Columbia and Dreadnought and one of two on contract for Virginia class, Couch said. The quality control issue not only impacts the U.S. and U.K. ballistic missile submarine programs, but might also impact the schedule for the Navy's next iteration of the Virginia class, Virginia Block V, which incorporates additional vertical-launch missile cells, known as the Virginia Payload Module. "The Navy is assessing the potential impact to Virginia-class submarines with VPM," Couch said. Early indications are the issue is contained to just tubes fabricated by BWXT, Couch said.

"The Navy/GDEB team is working to bound the scope of the problem and engineering assessments are ongoing to assess and determine remediation for the identified issues," Couch said. "Initial reports indicate that the other vendors do not have the same issue, and they continue to produce missile and payload tubes." The Navy awarded General Dynamics a \$101 million contract for SSBN missile tubes back in 2016. Design work for the common missile

compartment goes back nearly a decade. In September, the Navy awarded a \$5.1 billion contract to General Dynamics Electric Boat to finish design work for the boat ahead of beginning construction in 2021.

What impact the faulty welds will have on the cost of either Columbia class, already among the most expensive programs in Defense Department history, or Virginia class is unclear, said a Navy official familiar with the details speaking on background. A July Congressional Research Service report put the cost of acquiring the 12-ship Columbia class at \$122.3 billion. “It’s not a good sign for a program that has had a lot of attention, it’s the Navy’s number one acquisition priority,” said Bryan Clark, an analyst with the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments and a retired submarine officer. “It’s an early and pretty significant failure in a major component from a manufacturer with stellar reputation.”

In a statement, General Dynamics said the company was committed to limiting the impact on the U.S. and U.K. sub programs. “General Dynamics Electric Boat is investigating a weld issue identified by one of its subcontractors on missile tubes delivered to GDEB for use in the U.S. COLUMBIA and UK DREADNOUGHT SSBN programs and payload tubes for the VIRGINIA Class SSN program,” the statement reads. “GDEB is working closely with the subcontractor and the Navy to mitigate any potential impacts to these programs. As our customers expect the best from us, safety and quality are central to the culture at General Dynamics Electric Boat.”

The Navy needs to start construction on Columbia in 2021 to have the boat out on patrol by 2031, a schedule NAVSEA still thinks its on track to meet. “The Navy purposely planned for early construction of the Common Missile Compartment including missile tubes and first article quad pack, to mitigate risks such as these, and construction start for Columbia remains on schedule in FY2021,” Couch said. Ultimately, however, it is probably too early to tell if there will be any significant impact to the Columbia schedule, said Clark, the CSBA analyst. “The problem is that this causes challenges down the line,” he said. “The missile tubes get delayed, what are the cascading effects of other components down the line? It’s a pretty intricate dance at Electric Boat when it’s building two other fast attack boats at the same time so what the impact of a delay here will be might not be clear.”



A Navy rendering of the future ballistic missile submarine Columbia, the lead boat in the next generation of nuclear missile boats.

The question of whether the Navy can recover from the setback is still an open one, said Thomas Callender, also a retired submarine officer and analyst with the Heritage Foundation. “The Navy does not have a lot of margin in the time-frame for the class, especially in the first hull, so that is a worry.” [Source: DefenseNews | David B. Larter | August 7, 2018 ++]

USS Enterprise (CVN-65) Update 03 ► Could Cost \$1B to Dismantle

It could cost more than \$1 billion to dismantle the Navy’s first nuclear-powered aircraft carrier, the former USS Enterprise, according to the Government Accountability Office, an investigative arm for Congress that routinely

reviews U.S. agencies and programs. The GAO estimate was unveiled as the Navy is assessing its options to dismantle and dispose of the carrier, which has been inactive since 2012 and was decommissioned in 2017 after more than 50 years of service. The carrier’s “dismantlement and disposal will set precedents for processes and oversight that may inform future aircraft carrier dismantlement decisions,” the GAO report said in a 56-page report released 3 AUG.

The GAO wrote it found the Navy’s typical budget and reporting on the effort doesn’t give enough information to support oversight for a project of this size and cost. A Senate report accompanying the National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2018 included a provision for the GAO to review the Navy’s plans for the former carrier. In its report, the GAO made four recommendations, including the Navy take action to provide additional budget information and reporting to facilitate improved transparency and accountability. It also recommended the Navy obtain an independent cost estimate, complete a risk management assessment prior to the beginning of the project and approve a cost and schedule plan. The Defense Department agreed with all four recommendations. “I would like to commend the GAO in the thoroughness of this review,” Kevin Fahey, the assistant secretary of defense for acquisition, wrote in a 19 JUL letter in response to the report. “This is a complex topic that has not been previously addressed.”

Among its options, the Navy could go the commercial industry route to dismantle and dispose of the carrier, which could be beneficial for the service, according to the GAO. However, the Navy and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, which oversees the commercial nuclear industry, have yet to coordinate to fully explore the option, the agency said in its report. GAO wrote in the report that lawmakers should consider legislative action that would require the coordination. “Coordination between the two agencies ... would help ensure accountability, solidify cost estimates, and facilitate” a decision, the GAO said. “We suggested that Congress consider action to resolve this.”

The carrier was deployed during the Cuban missile crisis in 1962 and saw action in conflicts ranging from Vietnam War to the war in Afghanistan. It made its final port stop in Naples, Italy in 2012 before setting sail for its home port, Norfolk, Va., to be broken down. “This ship has served its time,” then-Rear Adm. Walter Carter, commander of the Enterprise Carrier Strike Group, told Stars and Stripes at the time. “It’s time to retire.” [Source: Stars & Stripes | Claudia Grisales | August 2, 2018 ++]

Navy Carrier Homeport Shifts ► Carl Vinson, Abraham Lincoln & John C. Stennis

Three aircraft carriers will change home ports in response to maintenance and refueling schedules, the Navy announced Thursday. The carriers Carl Vinson, Abraham Lincoln and John C. Stennis, along with their crews and families, will all be affected by the moves. Currently based in Norfolk, Virginia, the Lincoln will head to San Diego to join U.S. Pacific Fleet. The carrier was commissioned in 1989 and served under the Hawaii-based Pacific Fleet until 2011, when it moved to Norfolk for midlife refueling of its nuclear reactors. It will join the Theodore Roosevelt as San Diego’s second carrier. The 23-year-old Stennis will shift from Bremerton, Washington, to Norfolk for its own midlife refueling, which will take place roughly halfway through the carrier’s 50-year life. Meanwhile, the 36-year-old Vinson will sail to Bremerton in advance of its planned incremental availability maintenance stint at the Puget Sound Naval Shipyard.

The three-carrier homeport shift was first reported 2 AUG by U.S. Naval Institute News. When exactly all these moves will occur remains unclear. Naval Air Forces spokesman Cmdr. Ronald Flanders declined comment, citing operational security. But public records suggest the moves may commence next year. The Vinson is slated to begin its maintenance session in March, according to budget documents. Meanwhile, the port swap of the Stennis is expected to commence in May, according to Navy Personnel Command’s website. The Vinson will join the Navy’s oldest serving carrier, the Nimitz, in Washington State.

Whether the two carriers will operate together out of Bremerton remains unclear. The Navy announced in 2015 that the Nimitz would stay in Bremerton through Fiscal 2019 as part of an effort to avoid sailors and their families having to make three homeport changes over a four-year period. She was originally scheduled to shift her home port to Everett, Washington, in the summer of 2016 — returning to Bremerton two years later for maintenance before moving back to Everett in Fiscal 2019. The Nimitz entered the dry dock at Puget Sound Naval Shipyard in March for a 15-month maintenance availability. [Source: NavyTimes | Geoff Ziezulewicz | August 2, 2018 ++][

MCAS Futenma Okinawa Update 11 ► Dugong Endangerment Lawsuit Ruling

A U.S. judge has thrown out a lawsuit that challenged plans to relocate a U.S. military base in Okinawa, Japan, over concerns about an endangered marine mammal. Judge Edward Chen in San Francisco ruled late 1 AUG that the U.S. Department of Defense adequately considered the base's effects on the Okinawa dugong — a manatee-like animal associated with traditional creation myths in Japan. The years long legal fight concerns plans to relocate Marine Corps Air Station Futenma to a less dense part of Okinawa. Environmentalists say the construction of two aircraft runways as part of the construction plan will destroy critical feeding grounds and habitat for the dugong. Peter Galvin with the Center for Biological Diversity, one of the plaintiffs, said the ruling was wrong and would be overturned by an appeals court. [Source: The Associated Press | August 2, 2018 ++]

Navy HYT ► High Year Tenure E-7, 8 & 9 Waivers

The Navy will waive “up or out” limits for senior enlisted sailors willing to volunteer for unpopular sea duty billets, according to the latest [NAVADMIN 192/18](#) issued by Vice Adm. Bob Burke on 8 AUG. As part of the Sailor 2025 Up-And-Stay program, officials will grant more High Year Tenure (HYT) waivers to chiefs, senior chiefs and master chief petty officers who will serve at sea or other tough jobs in order to continue their Navy service. “This initiative to provide increased opportunity for our senior enlisted leaders to stay Navy will help us maintain the leadership experience and technical acumen we need at sea as we grow the force,” wrote Burke.

The Navy traditionally has used HYT as a tool to shape the size and composition of the force. The goal is to keep a steady flow of sailors moving through the personnel system. Officials erect “up or out” gates at each level of rank, usually by enforcing paygrade and service time limits. They help junior sailors trying to rise up the ranks who otherwise could be blocked by older service members filling the billets. At the same time, the Navy will try to retain some high-performing personnel with needed skills who otherwise would be forced to separate. And they do that by sometimes wielding waivers to mandatory “up or out” exits. Officials like to use waivers to fill empty slots requiring senior enlisted leaders at sea. They believe that the waivers benefit both deckplates who aren’t ready to retire and a Navy that values their leadership skills and technical knowledge.

Right now, the Navy needs more senior enlisted sailors to fill Type 2, 3 and 4 deployable sea duty billets. Type 2 applies to sea duty with units based in the continental United States. Type 3 is for tough overseas jobs ashore that count as sea duty rotations in the Navy’s personnel system. Type 4 means overseas shipboard service. The Navy over the past two years eased “stay or go” limits for Petty Officers, tacking on two years to the maximum time for each paygrade. That measure helped fill fleet vacancies, too. And now the Navy wants to add 25,000 sailors in the coming years as the service grows and more vessels are added to the fleet.

“Your opportunity to advance will continue and in our growing Navy is expected to remain high, especially for those sailors willing to do the hard jobs with sustained superior performance,” he (Adm. Burke) said. “Implementing this initiative will help maintain the vital leadership and technical experience necessary in manning the ‘Navy the

Nation Needs.' Sailors can expect improved retention incentives and leadership opportunities as the Navy continues to grow." [Source: NavyTimes | Mark D. Faram | August 9, 2018 ++]

Army Wrongful Death Lawsuit ► Failure To Use Kill Switch

A deputy killed during training on a South Carolina lake last summer was tangled by the boat propeller after going overboard and drowned inches under the surface while pleading for his life, according to a lawsuit filed by the officer's widow. Anderson County deputy Devin Hodges, a second officer, and a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers instructor driving the boat were all thrown into Lake Hartwell during a dangerous maneuver called an emergency stop. Instructor Jess Fleming wasn't using a safety device that would have killed the boat's motor when the driver was no longer at the wheel, according to the lawsuit.

The unmanned vessel turned in a "circle of death" and its propeller struck Hodges as he desperately tried to swim away, the lawsuit said. "As the boat beat the life out of him, Deputy Hodges' life vest became entangled in the propeller," lawyers wrote in the suit. "While Deputy Hodges was being held under water, within inches of the surface, he slowly drowned." Fleming and the other officer on the boat were not hurt. The Corps of Engineers didn't return a message seeking comment.

The South Carolina Department of Natural Resources charged Fleming with reckless homicide by boat, but prosecutors dropped the case two months later after determining the law doesn't allow a federal law enforcement officer to be charged with state infractions. Fleming first did the emergency stop at half speed, and then did it closer to full speed, according to the lawsuit filed Tuesday by Hodges' widow, which simply names the United States of America as the defendant. Fleming spent the day before discussing with the deputies the importance of using the "kill switch," which is a lanyard that stops the boat motor when the driver is no longer at the wheel. But the day of Hodges' death, Fleming didn't wear the lanyard and the kill switch was shut off, the lawsuit said.

Fleming "knew he was exposing his passengers to a potential circle of death, and yet he still attempted this improper, deadly maneuver. The consequence of his action were foreseeable and resulted in one of the exact outcomes kill switches are intended to prevent," according to the lawsuit. Hodges' widow filed the suit after federal officials did not act on the official form she filed claiming wrongful death for more than six months. [Source: The Associated Press | August 12, 2018 ++]

Afghan Vets [04] ► Robert Gutierrez | Air Force Cross Recipient

The situation was looking grim when a team of 30 U.S. Army Special Forces and Afghan commandos found themselves surrounded in a Taliban-sympathizing village in Afghanistan's Herat province on Oct. 5, 2009. The team, which was tasked with targeting a Taliban commander, began taking small arms and sniper fire as enemy fighters closed in on nearby rooftops, some only 10 feet away. A four-hour firefight ensued. Amidst the fury, the team's sole joint terminal attack controller, then-Staff Sgt. Robert Gutierrez, Jr., an Air Force Special Operations Command combat controller, was shot in the left shoulder by an armor-piercing round. Gutierrez returned fire and killed the insurgent before collapsing and calling for a medic.

A sucking chest wound rapidly filled Gutierrez's lungs with blood, collapsing his lung. Unable to breathe or speak, he remained on the ground as a medic jammed a needle and decompression tube into his chest to relieve the pressure. The round tore through Gutierrez's shoulder, triceps, chest and lateral muscles, breaking two ribs and a scapula, and leaving a softball-sized hole in his back. With time being of the essence, medics ordered Gutierrez to remove his

body armor to treat the rest of his wounds. Gutierrez refused, recognizing that doing so would also remove the radio he needed to coordinate air support. “I’ve seen those types of injuries before and time isn’t your friend,” Gutierrez said in an Air Force press release announcing his receipt of the Air Force Cross, the service’s second highest award for valor behind the Medal of Honor. “I thought — I have three minutes before I’m going to die. I’ve got to do something big. Based on that time frame, I’m going to change the world in three minutes.”



Then-Staff Sgt. Robert Gutierrez Jr., Air Force Special Operations Command combat controller

“Something big” came in the form of coordinating three danger close strafing runs with an A-10 Thunderbolt II pilot and calling in airstrikes from nearby F-16 Fighting Falcons, critical firepower that afforded the seriously wounded JTAC and others the opportunity to escape. “Combat controllers are the air-to-ground interface, bringing the firepower and communications links to the ground force commander,” Gutierrez said. “We bring an extraordinary amount of firepower in a small package (that is) able to shoot, move and communicate at the same time.” Despite losing five pints of blood and having to walk over a mile to an evacuation zone, Gutierrez remained on the hooks, coordinating the strikes along with his own medevac. His focus remained so precise that the A-10 pilot communicating with him couldn’t even tell he was wounded. “I realized he was shot after the third (and final) strafe pass,” then-Capt. Ethan Sabin, who was assigned to the 354th Expeditionary Fighter Squadron, said in the release. “He said he would be off of the ‘mic’ for a few to handle his

To top off the laundry list of injuries he sustained, the strafing runs of the A-10 ruptured both of Gutierrez’s eardrums. He also endured multiple blood infections that required three chest tubes, three blood transfusions and seven surgeries. “There is no doubt his heroic action under extremely dangerous circumstances and despite being wounded, saved the lives of his teammates,” then-Lt. Gen. Eric Fiel, the AFSOC commander, said. “His courage and character is unsurpassed. While I know he is a humble person that does not seek the spotlight, he is so deserving of the Air Force Cross. His actions are just a snapshot of what AFSOC Airmen are doing everyday in our current theater of operations.”

Gutierrez became just the second living recipient of the Air Force Cross in 2011, and cases have since been made to upgrade the award to the Medal of Honor. Now-Master Sgt. Gutierrez doesn’t concern himself with matters surrounding his award, however. “I’m more thankful to be alive actually than anything else,” he told reporters last month at the Pentagon. There has been only one airman approved for the Medal of Honor since the Vietnam War, and that determination came earlier this year. Technical Sgt. John Chapman, a combat controller who was killed during 2002’s Battle of Roberts Ridge in Afghanistan, will be posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor by President Donald Trump during a White House ceremony on 22 AUG. [Source: MilitaryTimes | J.D. Simkins | August 10, 2018 ++]

Navy Terminology ► Origins

Every profession has its own jargon and the Navy is no exception. For the Navy, it's *bulkhead*, *deck* and *overhead* and not *wall*, *floor*, and *ceiling*. Some nautical terminology has found its way into everyday use, and you will find the origins of this and Navy terminology below. More terminology will be added from time to time.

Above Board

The term today means someone who is honest, forthright. It's origin comes from the days when pirates would masquerade as honest merchantmen, hiding most of their crew behind the bulwark (side of the ship on the upper deck). They hid below the boards.

Ahoy!

This old traditional greeting for hailing other vessels was originally a Viking battle cry.

Between the Devil and the Deep

In wooden ships, the "[devil](#)" was the longest seam of the ship. It ran from the bow to the stern. When at sea and the "devil" had to be caulked, the sailor sat in a bo'sun's chair to do so. He was suspended between the "devil" and the sea -- the "deep" -- a very precarious position, especially when the ship was underway.

Chewing the Fat

"God made the vittles but the devil made the cook," was a popular saying used by seafaring men in the 19th century when salted beef was staple diet aboard ship.

This tough cured beef, suitable only for long voyages when nothing else was cheap or would keep as well (remember, there was no refrigeration), required prolonged chewing to make it edible. Men often chewed one chunk for hours, just as it were chewing gum and referred to this practice as "chewing the fat."

Crow's Nest

The raven, or crow, was an essential part of the Vikings' navigation equipment. These land-lubbing birds were carried on aboard to help the ship's navigator determine where the closest land lay when weather prevented sighting the shore. In cases of poor visibility, a crow was released and the navigator plotted a course corresponding to the bird's flight path because the crow invariably headed towards land.

The Norsemen carried the birds in a cage secured to the top of the mast. Later on, as ships grew and the lookout stood his watch in a tub located high on the main mast, the name "crow's nest" was given to this tub. While today's Navy still uses lookouts in addition to radars, etc., the crow's nest is a thing of the past.

Cup of Joe

Josephus Daniels (18 May 1862-15 January 1948) was appointed Secretary of the Navy by President Woodrow Wilson in 1913. Among his reforms of the Navy were inaugurating the practice of making 100 Sailors from the Fleet eligible for entrance into the Naval Academy, the introduction of women into the service, and the abolishment of the officers' wine mess. From that time on, the strongest drink aboard Navy ships could only be coffee and over the years, a cup of coffee became known as "a cup of Joe".

Devil to Pay



Today the expression "devil to pay" is used primarily to describe having an unpleasant result from some action that has been taken, as in someone has done something they shouldn't have and, as a result, "there will be the devil to pay." Originally, this expression described one of the unpleasant tasks aboard a wooden ship.

The "devil" was the wooden ship's longest seam in the hull. Caulking was done with "pay" or pitch (a kind of tar). The task of "paying the devil" (caulking the longest seam) by squatting in the bilges was despised by every seaman.

[Source: <http://www.navy.mil/navydata/traditions/html/navyterm.html> | August 2018 ++]

Warships That Will Change The Future ► TCG Heybeliada



The TCG Heybeliada is one of the Turkish Navy's pride and joys. Nicknamed "The Ghost of the seas," the ship's primary objective is patrolling the Sea of Marmara, located right off the coast of the city of Istanbul.

Corvettes earn their keep in modern navies of the world by exhibiting compactness in dimension, supplying appropriate firepower and showcasing considerable agility to contend with the ever-changing threats encountered on the high seas today. Corvettes are generally larger in size than their coastal patrol craft cousins and smaller than the typical frigate type vessels (though recently corvettes have blurred the line between corvette/frigate territory). They can serve in a myriad of roles (recognized as "multi-mission") and are often armed to counter air, surface and underwater threats through cannon, missile and torpedo armament. These vessel types are also provided with deep water capabilities that allow them to operate relatively far from friendly shores while featuring a draught shallow enough for "littoral zone" (near shore) operation.

For the Turkish Navy, the Ada-class has risen to fulfill the corvette role. The class was born from the MILGEN ("Milli Gemi" = "National Ship") initiative seeking to produce a modern surface warship for the Turkish Navy. Featuring all-modern facilities, systems and armament, the TCG Heybeliada (F-511) became the lead ship of the class in 2011 when the vessel was commissioned. Construction on the ship began on January 22nd, 2007 with two of the class being completed (as of 2013), three laid down and a full eight intended to stock the Ada-class in all (four frigates will also join the MILGEM project in time). The TCG Heybeliada earned her namesake from Heybeliada Island, home to the Turkish Naval High School and all vessels of the class will follow suit by being handed names after Turkish island holds. The TCG Heybeliada was constructed at the Istanbul Naval Shipyard by shipbuilder RMK Marine and officially launched for sea trials on September 27th, 2008, formally commissioned on September 27th, 2011. The second ship of the class is the TCG Buyukada (F-512) launched in 2011 with a planned commission date in August of 2013.

The Turkish Navy originally intended to license-produce the A-100 corvette based on a German Blohm & Voss design. However, the partnership and Turkish requirements were eventually altered with the Turks electing to pursue a locally-defined corvette/frigate initiative in an effort to have the nation become more self-sufficient militarily (similar endeavors have occurred in aircraft, artillery and UAV design). As a result, the new corvette would rely largely on local industry and engineering prowess to produce the required surface fighting ship - the end result becoming the TCG Heybeliada and her planned sisters.

The Heybeliada utilizes largely accepted "stealth" concepts concerning modern ship design - mainly the use of special coatings and enclosed structures and sides. Many hand rails and crevices detailed in ship designs prior are largely limited to help promote a cleaner profile and present a smaller radar signature. The exhaust funnel is wholly enclosed and kept low to the superstructure to further diminish radar returns while also representing a shallower side profile along the horizon. The mast is also enclosed and is home to the available systems and processing centers

utilized by the vessel. The forecastle is well tapered at the bow and home to a single Italian 76mm OTO-Breda deck gun with an unobstructed firing arc ahead and to the sides. The bridge is positioned well-forward in the superstructure and is capped by the aforementioned mast assembly. Beyond the bridge, heading aft, is the smoke funnel found at midships and aft of this is the full-service hangar which can house a single medium-type transport helicopter as well as support Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) as required. UAVs serve these type of warships by providing over-sea reconnaissance measures in addition to onboard systems.

The naval helicopter of choice is the American-made Sikorsky S-70B "Seahawk" series, a multi-mission platform stocking several naval forces around the world since the mid-1980s. Aircraft are recovered/launched through a conventional flight deck at the stern (limited to rotary-wing aircraft). The sides of the vessel feature boat launches for Rigid-Hulled Inflatable Boat (RHIB) craft useful in quick interception of enemy vessels (including pirate craft) or aiding in the recovery of persons (downed aviators, stranded civilians or similar). In addition to the 76mm deck armament, the TCG Heybeliada sports (or can be outfitted with) a bevy of weapons to suit the mission role. This includes 8 x Harpoon anti-ship missiles, 2 x 324mm Mk 32 triple-launch torpedo tubes (Mk 46 torpedoes), 21 x RIM-116 Rolling Airframe Missiles (RAMs), Mk 41 Vertical Launch Systems (VLSs) and 2 x 12.7mm Aselsan STAMP (Stabilized Machine gun Platform). The STAMP system utilized laser/Infrared/Television tracking for more precise engagement, either through an automated setting or through manual acquisition/fire. A traversing missile launcher is fitted over the hangar door.

Beyond her conventional armament means, the TCG Heybeliada is also fielded with highly-capable sensor equipment and processing suites for her various tracking and engagement facilities. This includes Satellite communications (SATCOM), Global Position System (GPS), protected communications data links, the SMART-S Mk 2 search radar and the G-MSYS (GENESIS) Combat Management System (CMS) - the latter used to control much of the onboard systems through one multi-processing suite. X-Band and a fire control radar are also standard fixtures and fitted to the mast. The vessel crew can call upon the ARES-2N for encrypted Signals Intelligence (SIGINT) and use various jammers and decoys to head off any potential, or active, launch threat from the air, from the surface or from below.

The Heybeliada displaces at approximately 2,500 tons and features a bow-to-stern length of 99.5 meters, a beam of 14 meters and a draught of 3.9 meters. Propulsion is obtained through a Combined Diesel and Gas (CODAG) arrangement made up of 1 x gas turbine and 2 x diesel engines driving 2 x shafts outputting 40,200 horsepower. This supplies the vessel with an optimal speed of 30 knots in ideal conditions (about 15 knots during normal cruise) and an operational range of 3,500 nautical miles (approximately 4,000 miles). The vessel can remain on station for up to ten days without resupply and this can then be bolstered to twenty-one days through regular resupply/refueling measures at-sea. Her full crew complement (including air wing) is listed at 93 personnel while the ship boasts living space for up to 106 persons under war time / humanitarian conditions. [Source: <https://www.militaryfactory.com> | August 4, 2018 ++]

* **Military History** *



WWI National Memorial Update 14 ► Moving forward

A century after the First World War, a project to build a national World War I memorial has taken a significant step forward. The latest design concept for the memorial has been approved by the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts. Plans call for the memorial to be built at Pershing Park along Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington by 2020. Designs for the memorial got a unanimous vote during a presentation by the commission's project team. The project was presented to CFA, the National Park Service and the National Capital Planning Commission. "We will continue to push forward in this effort. Our veterans deserve our best effort, and we owe it to them," said WWI Centennial Commission chair Terry Hamby in a release. Architect David Rubin and members of the commission said variations on the design may be developed further with the oversight organizations.



Illustrations of the planned memorial feature a long bronze wall with figures of troops leaving their families, fighting and falling in combat, suffering wounds and ultimately returning. The plan shows the structure in a wooded park setting with a reflecting pool.

Congress in 2014 designated the site of the new memorial, which is intended to honor the Americans who served in the war, numbering more than four million men and women. The memorial project is funded through private donations. Donations may be made at the commission's [website](#). A memorial to the war already exists on the National Mall, a small structure with columns supporting a dome, placed by the citizens of the District of Columbia in the 1930s. But a national World War I memorial was never built, while the nation's World War II memorial opened in 2004, and the site for the Desert Storm memorial was approved last month. [Source: MilitaryTimes | Kathleen Curthoys | July 20, 2018 ++]

Teddy Roosevelt's Rough Ride ► Hero of the Spanish American War

Among Theodore Roosevelt's many lifetime accomplishments, few capture the imagination as easily as his military service as a "Rough Rider" during the Spanish-American War. America had become interested in Cuba's liberation in the 1890s as publications portrayed the evil of Spanish Rule. No one favored Cuban independence more than Roosevelt. As Assistant Secretary of the Navy, he beat the war drum and prepared the Navy for war with Spain. The battleship USS Maine was dispatched to Havana, Cuba. After a few quiet months, anchored in Havana Harbor, the Maine suddenly exploded, killing 262 American sailors. Spain denied blowing up the Maine, but a US Navy investigation concluded that the explosion was caused by a mine. The cause of the explosion remains a mystery, but American journalists and Assistant Secretary Roosevelt, at the time, felt certain that it was a Spanish act of war. Shortly thereafter, war was declared.

Roosevelt served gallantly during this brief conflict, which lasted from May to July, 1898. An eager Roosevelt resigned his post of Assistant Secretary of the Navy and petitioned Secretary of War Alger to allow him to form a

volunteer regiment. Although he had three years of experience as a captain with the National Guard, Roosevelt deferred leadership of the regiment to Leonard Wood, a war hero with whom he was friendly. Wood, as Colonel, and Roosevelt, as Lt. Colonel, began recruiting and organizing the First U.S. Volunteer Cavalry. They sorted through twenty-three thousand applications to form the regiment! Roosevelt's fame and personality turned him into the de-facto leader of this rag-tag group of polo players, hunters, cowboys, Native Americans, and athletic college buddies. The regiment of "Roosevelt's Rough Riders" was born.

The Rough Riders participated in two important battles in Cuba. The first action they saw occurred at the Battle of Las Guasimas on 24 JUN, where the Spanish were driven away. The Rough Riders lost seven men with thirty-four wounded. Roosevelt narrowly avoided bullets buzzing by him into the trees, showering splinters around his face. He led troops in a flanking position and the Spanish fled. American forces then assembled for an assault on the city of Santiago through the San Juan Hills. Colonel Wood was promoted in the field, and in response, Roosevelt happily wrote, "I got my regiment." To read more about his participation in this battle, refer to the attachment to this Bulletin titled, **"Teddy Roosevelt's Rough Ride"**.

The Battle of San Juan Heights was fought on 1 JUL, which Roosevelt called "the great day of my life." He led a series of charges up Kettle Hill towards San Juan Heights on his horse, Texas, while the Rough Riders followed on foot. He rode up and down the hill encouraging his men with the orders to "March!" He killed one Spaniard with a revolver salvaged from the Maine. Other regiments continued alongside him, and the American flag was raised over San Juan Heights. Hostilities ceased shortly after Santiago fell to siege, and the Treaty of Paris gave the United States its first possessions: Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines.

[Source: <https://www.nps.gov/thrb/learn/historyculture/tr-rr-spanamwar.htm> | February 2015 ++]

Profile In Courage | James Risner ► Seven Year POW

James Robinson Risner was a man of humble origins, son of an Arkansas sharecropper, educated at secondary school level, not particularly ambitious, a common man save for two things: He could fly the hell out of an airplane; and, under terribly difficult circumstances as a Prisoner of War in North Vietnam, he rose to a level of heroic leadership matched by few men in American military history. To read about what he experienced and how he dealt with it go to the attachment to this Bulletin titled, **"James Robinson Risner's Courage"**. [Source: Together We Served Newsletter | April 2018 ++]

USS Indianapolis (CA-35) Update 03 ► 73rd Anniversary of Sinking

July marked the 73rd anniversary of the U.S. Navy's second-most-deadly warship loss of World War II: the July 30, 1945, sinking of heavy cruiser USS Indianapolis (CA-35) by a Japanese submarine. With a casualty roster of 880, the tragedy bookends the war, with the loss of 1,177 on USS Arizona (BB-39) at Pearl Harbor the other - and deadliest - loss. Arizona, however, had never fired a shot in anger. Indianapolis is the U.S. Navy's deadliest loss in combat and at sea, and it played a significant role in the Pacific theater, earning 10 battle stars.

"Most people look at the final mission and the losses," says Jack Barnes, a retired Navy chief from Texas who is leading efforts to secure the Congressional Gold Medal for the ship and its crew. But "you must look at what the Indianapolis accomplished during its service and for three years during the war. It took part in 10 major battle campaigns. It was the flagship of the president of the United States. It was the flagship of Admiral [Raymond] Spruance. "And yes, it was selected to take those atomic bomb parts - the Navy's most secret mission ever - to Tinian

at flank speed, a record that still holds today,” Barnes continues. “The crew did that. They deserve this medal. They've earned it. If the Indianapolis is not deserving of this medal, nobody in the history of World War II is deserving.”

The Path to Infamy

Indianapolis' war record began in 1942 with the Bougainville and Salamaua-Lae raids supporting Guadalcanal operations and the 1943 support of Kiska and Attu action in the Aleutians, followed by Gilbert Islands operations that same year. The next year, 1944, was full of action for the ship: engagements at the Marshall Islands, the Kwajalein and Majuro atolls, and the Eniwetok and Asiatic-Pacific Raids; Yap, Palau, Ulithi, Woleai, and the Battle of the Philippine Sea; the capture of Saipan, Guam, and Tinian; and operations in the Western Carolina Islands. In 1945, in the months leading up to its loss, the “Indy” participated in Japanese home islands raids, Honshu and Nansei Shoto, and the invasion of Okinawa.

On March 31, 1945, during the Battle of Okinawa, Indianapolis was severely damaged by a kamikaze. A bomb holed the hull, bent a propeller shaft, and killed nine sailors, wounding 26 others. It steamed on its own power back to Mare Island, Calif., for repairs, setting the stage for its final mission. After receiving extensive repairs, Indianapolis was tapped for a secret mission: to transport the atomic bomb to Tinian Island, where it would then be flown to Japan to be dropped on Hiroshima. No one on board - not even Capt. Charles McVay III, the ship's skipper - knew why Indianapolis, a “treaty” heavy cruiser whose displacement and power allowed it to slice through the water faster than just about any in service, was chosen. They were ordered to travel at flank speed, making the 7,500 mile passage to Tinian in 10 days at an average speed of 29 knots, setting a record that still stands.

“Obviously, the crew were aware of the rush in preps and the actual transit,” says Capt. John Woolston, USN (Ret), 93, an Indy survivor who lives in Hawaii. “I think that almost everyone connected our speed with the guarded boxes in the port hangar. I saw the bomb parts come aboard but did not see where they took it.” After delivering the guts of two atomic bombs, the ship was ordered to the Philippines for routine gunnery practice. Instead, it sailed into destiny. Halfway to the Philippines, Indianapolis encountered the Japanese submarine I-58, which fired six torpedoes. Two struck the starboard side; the first tore off its bow, and the second detonated near a magazine and a fuel bunker. The ship sank in 12 minutes, taking around 300 men with her. The almost 900 who survived - many clad only in skivvies or waterlogged life jackets - went into the Pacific, where they suffered for almost five days before rescue. Burns, exposure, delirium, salt-water ingestion, and shark attacks claimed the lives of at least 500 more men. In the end, only 316 made it home.

The Fight for Recognition

Capt. Bill Toti, USN (Ret), has written articles on the loss of the ship and the actions of its crew and skipper, McVay, who was turned into the scapegoat for the loss. He was court-martialed, the only such ship's commanding officer so punished, and it was only in 2001, after strenuous and vocal action by survivors, crew families, and historians, that his record was cleared. That was 33 years too late for McVay, who committed suicide in 1968.

“There's no question these guys suffered enormously,” says Toti, who was the last commander of the nuclear attack submarine USS Indianapolis (SSN-697), which was decommissioned in 1998. (A dozen Indianapolis survivors attended.) “The government would say, 'We do not give medals for suffering,' and for years, the government used that as the excuse for not giving the ship and the crew the Navy Unit Commendation [award]. “The Navy said, 'They were sunk and suffered, but that's not what these awards are all about.' But they earned 10 battle stars, and they delivered the atomic bomb. If it had never been sunk, [Indianapolis] would have merited that commendation [award]. A similar argument is being made today that the Congressional Gold Medal is for very special cases.”

Toti is quick to say the Navy has done a recent about-face with regard to the ship. “Since 2001, the Navy has been wonderful toward the survivors,” he says. “I want to make that clear. The issue is whether the Congressional Gold Medal is appropriate as a remediation for 65 years of bad treatment. I would argue that it is.”

Survivors Look Back

In August 2017, the civilian research vessel *Petrel*, owned by Microsoft co-founder Paul Allen, located the ship's hull more than 18,000 feet beneath the Pacific. The discovery of the wreck spurred Navy research into the sinking, reducing the total crew roster by one and also nudging the number of survivors down from the previously accepted tally of 317. Six years ago, there were 45 living survivors; as of press time, there were 16. (See sidebar beginning on page 46 for complete list.) “The Navy don't care very much for us,” says Cleatus Lebow, 94, who lives in Memphis, Texas, not far from Barnes. “We had a ... vice admiral speak at one of our reunions a few years ago, and he said ... 'I hadn't heard a word about the Indianapolis.' ”



Honoring the ship and its crew for wartime service “would be a wonderful gesture,” says Edgar Harrell, who, at 93, still travels the nation to talk to civic groups and schools about the ship on which he served as part of its Marine detachment. He’s the last Marine from that group alive. He and his son, David, penned *Out of the Depths: An Unforgettable WWII Story of Survival, Courage, and the Sinking of the USS Indianapolis* (Bethany House Publishers, 2014), a memoir about the loss of the ship and Harrell's ensuing spiritual voyage. “It would indeed be an honor for the some 18 survivors still alive” - a number that has decreased by two just since Military Officer spoke with Harrell in March - “plus the families of the [316] that survived,” Harrell says. “[They] and the families of those lost at sea has been much rejuvenated since they have found the Indianapolis. Any medal, even after some 73 years, shows appreciation for the crew, whether survivors [or] those lost at sea, plus the many families of the 1,197 ship's crew.”

Louis Erwin, 93, of Tennessee, said the discovery of the ship's hull “brings back memories of 72 years of the loss at sea, the lives of the men. I remember just about everything: I'd just come off the 8-12 watch on a five-inch open turret gun. I'd just laid down in my hammock slung under a 40-mm mount on the port side.” Everything he owned went down with the ship. “I kicked my shoes off, so the only thing I had on were my skivvies and my socks,” he recalls. Floating in the water for four days, under the beating sun, “I'd take my socks off and put them over my eyes.” When they finally were rescued, “the clothes were cut off you, and they turned the water hoses on us, because we were covered with oil.” He didn't send any photos home from his earlier service, he says. “My whole living room is plastered with stuff about the Indianapolis,” he says. “But I have nothing from the ship. I lost my uniforms, everything.”

Adolfo Celaya, 91, of Arizona, didn't speak about his experience for years. Not even his kids knew what he had gone through until they were teenagers and old enough to understand. “I stayed pretty quiet for years,” Celaya says. “Most of the veterans who came out of it didn't like to talk about it in the beginning.” He was near where the second torpedo struck and went into the water without a life jacket. “I was lucky to get out of there,” Celaya says. “I was lucky to get out with a few burns.”

Lebow is one of the few survivors who has a photo from his time on *Indianapolis* - a November 1944 picture from when he was in San Francisco. The photo was safe on land when the ship sank. “Everything else went down, including 69 silver dollars I got out of my locker to look at [before the torpedoes struck],” he said. With the recent discovery of the ship, “they said they're not going to raise anything, so I guess they won't be raising them any time soon. “I

don't see how anything might have survived five days in the water like we did," he says. "They'd be ruined - everything from the men on up." [Source: MOAA Newsletter | Andrew Prime | July 24, 2018 ++]

USCG Mirlo Rescue ► One Of The Most Daring In Coast Guard History

As strong winds blew in the afternoon of Aug. 16, 1918, an explosion offshore rattled windows in Rodanthe. A German U-boat had torpedoed the Mirlo, a British tanker loaded with gasoline, seven miles from shore. The British had been transporting badly needed fuel from the United States for the forces in Europe during World War I. The six-man U.S. Coast Guard lifesaving crew in Rodanthe led by Capt. John Allen Midgette Jr. pulled the surf boat from its shed to begin what would be a seven-hour rescue. "We call that boat the seventh hero," said Ralph Buxton, a board member with the Chicamacomico Historical Association, pointing to the 26-foot wooden vessel that still sits at the Chicamacomico Life-Saving Station. "It performed perfectly that day."

In earlier years, the crew had to row to foundering ships. But on that day in 1918, they turned to a boat with the latest 12-horsepower motor, Buxton said. "That made a huge difference," he said. "The motorized surf boats were state-of-the-art technology then." The crew launched it into 15-foot waves coming one set after another. It took four tries to get past the massive breakers. "That was like a semitruck coming at you at 30 miles an hour and another one coming just eight seconds after that," said Carl Smith, retired Coast Guard officer and a board member of the historical association.

The crew motored toward the tanker, now split in two from multiple explosions. The water was on fire with burning fuel. Midgette and his men maneuvered through flames as the heat charred the paint on the boat and singed the men's hair. One lifeboat and the captain's gig were launched with several tanker crew members aboard. A second lifeboat overturned, leaving men hanging on in the burning waters. Midgette first brought those men aboard his boat and then helped bring the other boats closer to shore. The surf boat safely unloaded its cargo of survivors, then made three more trips to get the others in the boats beyond the breakers. The crew rescued 42 of 51 aboard the Mirlo. Midgette later recorded in the log, "Crew very tired."

Midgette and his crew were awarded the Gold Lifesaving Medal. The King of England gave them gold medals. Two Coast Guard cutters have been named for Midgette. Every Thursday at 2 p.m., Carl Smith recounts the famous rescue on the porch of the original station house. Lifesavers either launched a surf boat for ships further offshore or fired a rope to vessels stranded closer to shore. When Smith concluded on a recent Thursday, local volunteers in period clothing demonstrated how a crew would send a rope to a beached ship using a Lyle gun. A crowd of more than 100 people watched the crew fire the cannon perfectly over a "wreck pole" a replica of a ship's mast buried in the dune behind the station.

Typically, the small cannon fired a weight with a rope attached about 700 yards. The ship's crew would tie off the rope and attach a breeches buoy that worked like a zip line to bring survivors to shore. The lifesaving crews of 100 years ago practiced this drill and that of launching a surf boat, every day, every week, no matter the weather, Smith said. [Source: The (Norfolk) Virginia-Pilot | Jeff Hampton | August 8, 2018 ++]

WWII VETS 172 ► Sam Folsom | Last Living WWII Marine Corps Pilot

Sam Folsom, born July 24, 1920 in Quincy, Massachusetts, was one of the first echelon of 17 Marine fighter pilots with Marine Fighter Squadron (VMF) 121 tasked with defending Guadalcanal. He is also the last living Marine Corps WWII combat pilot. It was the summer of 1941, while Folsom was attending a flight training program in Jacksonville,

Florida, that the unthinkable happened. "I was lying in my bunk in Florida," Folsom recalled. "I turned on the radio and it blared out 'Pearl Harbor has been attacked', so I did what any patriotic American would've done. I jumped to my feet, got dressed and ran to the door as fast as I could."



Folsom completed training at the end of 1942 and received orders to Miramar, California, where he checked into his new unit, VMF-122. Later, the squadron was combined with another to form VMF-121. Folsom's assigned fighter plane was a Grumman F4F Wildcat which he trained in for months before his unit was sent overseas to New Caledonia briefly, before being sent to Guadalcanal in early September, 1942. "I spent six or eight months on the west coast in a squadron with about 40 pilots and only eight or 10 planes, so as you can imagine none of us got much training," Folsom said. Folsom arrived to the Island 8 OCT.

The first few days of combat were rough for Folsom. In training the highest they had ever flown was roughly 10,000 feet and previously Folsom had only fired his guns once in a training exercise. Then suddenly his unit was sent on a mission dispatched at 30,000 feet where they found themselves above a Japanese formation of G4M Betty Bombers with an escort of fighter planes. When they dived down to attack Folsom lost control. After recovering and regaining control, he closed in on the bombers and pulled the trigger only to find out his guns wouldn't fire. Due to the lack of flying experience at this altitude the unit didn't realize that lubricating the weapons before flying would freeze the lubricant at this high of an altitude. "I never remember being frightened," he said. "Just mad as hell going through this with your life on the line and having my guns not firing." Folsom and the other pilots had to return to base considering the conditions of their weapons.

Towards the end of the squadron's tour, the pilots received more experience flying in support of combat operations than they ever did through their training. Later, Folsom and his squadron had found themselves above another bomber formation. The bombers had already attacked and were returning home when Folsom dived down and closed in on the two bombers. "I closed in on two Japanese bombers, one of which was directly in my sights and I shot him down," Folsom said. "I pulled over to the side and I shot down the other one. It was just like a training exercise." Eventually, Folsom was completely out of ammunition and flew back to base. The Japanese fighter planes escorting the bombers closed in on Folsom. Folsom found himself in a dogfight without any means of defense. His plane was shot multiple times, but he still managed to escape and make it back to base.

Folsom said that wasn't the only time he found himself in a dogfight without ammunition. On one occasion, Folsom was attacked by approximately six Japanese fighter planes, which damaged his plane and wounded his left leg. After his three-month tour in Guadalcanal he was transferred to Samoa, ending his time with VMF-121. During Folsom's time with VMF-121 he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross and the Purple Heart for his actions in Guadalcanal. In total, he shot down two Japanese Betty Bombers and one Japanese fighter plane. He continued his career in the Marine Corps and served nearly 18 years, retiring in 1960 as a lieutenant colonel. [Source: DoD News, Defense Media Activity | Ryan Persinger | July 23, 2018++]

PostWWI Photos ► German Wehrmacht General Anton Dostler Execution



German Wehrmacht General Anton Dostler is tied to a stake before his execution by a firing squad in a stockade in Aversa, Italy, on December 1, 1945. The General, Commander of the 75th Army Corps, was sentenced to death by a United States Military Commission in Rome for having ordered the shooting of 15 unarmed American prisoners of war, in La Spezia, Italy, on March 26, 1944. (AP Photo)

WWII VETS 173 ► Russell Gackenbach | Hiroshima Bombing Navigator

On Aug. 6, 1945, the United States dropped an atomic bomb on the Japanese city of Hiroshima. It was the first time a nuclear weapon had been used in warfare. There were three strike planes that flew over Hiroshima that day: the Enola Gay, which carried the bomb, and two observation planes, the Great Artiste and the Necessary Evil. Russell Gackenbach was a second lieutenant in the U.S. Army Air Corps and a navigator on the mission. Today, the 95-year-old is the only surviving crew member of those three planes.

Gackenbach enlisted in the Army Aviation Cadet Program in 1943. After completing his training, he was approached by Col. Paul Tibbets, who was recruiting officers for a special mission. Tibbets said it would be dangerous but if they were successful, it could end the war. The 509th Composite Group, lead by Tibbets, spent months training in Wendover, Utah, before being shipped off to an American air base on the Pacific island of Tinian. Their planes were reconfigured B-29 Superfortress bombers. They had different engines, fewer guns and a larger bomb bay.



Second Lt. Russell Gackenbach then (left) and now (right), crewmember of the Necessary Evil (center) one of three B-29 Superfortresses that flew over Hiroshima, Japan, on Aug. 6, 1945, when an atomic bomb was dropped on that city

The Enola Gay carried the weapon, nicknamed "Little Boy." It weighed nearly 10,000 pounds and could produce an explosive force equal to an estimated 15,000 to 20,000 tons of TNT. But at the time, Gackenbach didn't know any

of this. "I never heard the words 'atomic bomb,' " he tells Radio Diaries. "We were only told what we needed to know, and keep your mouth shut." The planes took off around 2 a.m. on Aug. 6, 1945. Gackenbach was part of the 10-man crew that flew on the Necessary Evil. "We were told that once the explosion occurred, we should not look directly at it, that we should not go through the cloud," he says. "We were not told anything about the cloud, just [told] don't go through it."

As they made their final approach to Hiroshima, they were flying 30,000 feet over the city. Then, the radio went dead: that was the signal from the Enola Gay that the bomb had been released. The first thing Gackenbach saw was a blinding light and then the start of a mushroom cloud. He got out of his seat, quickly picked up his camera and took two photographs out the navigator's side window. The plane circled twice around the mushroom cloud and then turned to head home. "Things were very, very quiet," Gackenbach says. "We just looked at each other; we didn't talk. We were all dumbfounded." The casualties on the ground were staggering. An estimated 80,000 people were killed instantly. Another 80,000 died from effects of the bomb in the months and years following. Hiroshima was destroyed.

Three days later, the U.S. dropped a second atomic bomb, on the city of Nagasaki. And on Aug. 15, Japan announced its surrender, bringing an end to World War II. Gackenbach was discharged in 1947 and went on to work as a materials engineer for 35 years. In 2011, he returned to Japan to visit the Hiroshima Peace Memorial. "After 73 years, I do not regret what we did that day. All war's hell," he said. "The Japanese started the war; it was our turn to finish it." [Source: NPR | August 6, 2018 ++]

WWII VETS 174 ► Robert Andrews | 31 Years & 3 Wars

Lt. Col. Robert Joseph Andrews was welcomed into the world by Agnes Cecilia and Roger Raynor Andrews on November 5, 1925. Robert, who usually went by his nick name 'Andy', grew up in Royal Oak, a small town in the suburbs of Detroit, Michigan, with his older sister Kathleen. During World War I, Andy's father joined the US Army, and the town got all their war stories and news from their bosses at Henry Ford's plant. When men like Roger returned from war, Royal Oaks celebrated with an official holiday and everyone rallied together to remember the fallen and embrace the men who returned home. However, excitement turned to fear as Michigan was hit with the Great Depression. Unemployment rates in Michigan were double compared to the rest of the nation. As such the Andrews family struggled to feed their two children; Andy loved when they got chicken pot pie though!

The Andrews family was not alone in their struggle; Royal Oak almost went bankrupt as the city could not collect taxes and workers went unpaid as banks and factories shut down. Luckily, the Andrews family was able to persevere and Andy was raised with a strong work ethic and desire to better the world. The start of World War II gave rise to Roosevelt's Arsenal of Democracy. President Roosevelt declared the United States would not enter the war; instead it would lift the embargo and provide weapons and material to Europe. This declaration brought life back to Royal Oak and the Andrews family. When all automotive factories in Detroit switched from civilian to military production, the economy began to turn around, and when the United States entered the war, Andy knew it was time to follow in his father's footsteps.

After talking with a neighborhood friend who was home on leave, Andy knew he wanted to be a pilot. The Air Force turned the seventeen-year-old boy away and Andy waited impatiently for his eighteenth birthday. Sure enough, in November the Air Force contacted Andy and sent him to pilot school. In 1945, Andy earned his silver wings at just nineteen years old. Young Andy was full of enthusiasm and excitement to fight the German Air Force he had heard rumors about. However, to Andy they would remain rumors because WWII ended before he completed training. Everybody in his cohort from pilot school was sent home except for him. He stayed with the Air Force and continued serving by escorting the remains of fallen veterans. Desperate for jet pilots, the Air Force sent Andy to jet pilot training in 1949. The Korean War was in full swing as Andy finished his training.

It wasn't long before Andy was deployed to Korea. He flew sixty-one missions in the war before he had to return home to the United States because he fell ill with malaria. While back home, Andy met his wife, Judy (Hansen) Andrews. The story of how they met is quite romantic. In 1952 there was a girl in Chicago dating one of Andy's friends and she planned a double date. Stationed at Selfridge AFB in Michigan, Andy and his buddy drove to Chicago where Judy and Andy fell in love. They married a year later and in 1956 had their son Brian. Now almost twenty-five years into his Air Force career, Andy was once again deployed.

In 1968 Andy headed to Vietnam where he remained for a year. Somehow through all the violence and pain Andy managed to keep his sense of humor. His son, Brian, recalls humorous stories that Andy told about his friend Matt Hendrikson, whom he fought with in Vietnam. Andy's favorite jet was the Phantom F-4, a two-seater jet, and Matt was his 'GIB' or "guy in back." At 43 years old Andy flew his last mission for the USAF and returned home to his family. Upon return Andy achieved the highest rank he could within the Air Force, Air Defense Command, and NORAD. He could not achieve any higher ranks because he had never received a college degree. After thirty years with the USAF Andy retired with over thirty honors and recognitions. Andy's awards include, "two Distinguished Flying Crosses, eight Air Medals, the Bronze Star Medal, a Joint Services Commendation Medal, two Meritorious Service Medals, and four Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards."



Lt. Col. Andrews with his Phantom F-4 II aircraft in the background.

Andy had a creative side that he shared with his son in a short story he wrote about his A2 pilot fighter jacket. Andy dedicated the jacket to his son with a summary of his career written from the point of view of the jacket: "Well, my day arrived on October 16, 1945; my brand new warrior took me off the hanger and put me on – we looked in a mirror and we were so proud of each other... We were at Moore Field, Mission, Texas, where my warrior (I'll call him Andy or Pop from here on) had just graduated from pilot training." Andy brilliantly lays out his military career from the eyes of his side kick: his jacket. Even after Andy passed on, his memory lives on through this beloved artifact. Although the story is enough to make one cry, it is the purpose of the story that is most beautiful.

Andy dedicated the jacket to his son and daughter-in-law, Brian and Lisa, and gave them a story they can pass on for generations. "I am quite valuable, but from a sentimental standpoint I'm much more valuable because my warrior Pop and I have been together for 50 years. So, Andy says that I may not be sold nor ever given away – I will remain with my two new young warriors – Brian and Lisa Andrews."

When Andy retired from the Air Force he continued to implement his attitude of hard work and appreciation for his country. He drove passenger vans for disabled veterans in Colorado Springs, Colorado, for eighteen years, while he was also a practicing real estate agent. He soon needed an oxygen tank to breathe in the thin Colorado air and changes needed to be made. Brian was living in Huntsville, Alabama, and encouraged his mom and dad to get an apartment close by to him and his wife Lisa. All the Andrews gave a lot of care to ensure the apartment would be

perfect for Andy. Andy was looking forward to the vibrant community of other veterans he would be introduced to in Huntsville. Unfortunately, a week after moving into his apartment in Huntsville, Brian and Lisa were bringing chicken pot pie for dinner when tragedy struck. While trying to open the door to his apartment, Andy fell and broke his hip. His health declined rapidly after the emergency surgery and he did not make it through the week. He passed on August 3, 2013. Brian, Lisa, and Judy were devastated and left with a fully furnished, but completely empty apartment. Rather than sell all of Andy's belongings the Andrews decided to donate them through Still Serving Veterans (<https://www.facebook.com/SSVeterans>). Even after his death Andy was still able to make a significant impact on the community.

Robert Joseph Andrews had an amazing career with the Air Force. He earned over thirty decorations and awards and flew hundreds of missions. He was a pilot for thirty-one years and continued to serve his country long into retirement. His family will remember him as "a walking encyclopedia of military aviation" and continue to honor his memory. A service was held in Huntsville after his passing but he was not buried there. Andy qualified for burial at the Arlington National Cemetery but Brian believed he would be better suited and closer to family in the Black Hills. Robert 'Andy' Andrews is buried in the Black Hills National Cemetery where Lisa's father is also buried. To this day Andy's memory is carried on through his family's donations and his dedication to this country. [Source: Veterans' Legacies <https://bhveterans.org/2018/06/07/robert-andrews> | Sidney May | August 13, 2018 ++]

Military History Anniversaries ► 16 thru 31 August

Significant events in U.S. Military History over the next 15 days are listed in the attachment to this Bulletin titled, "**Military History Anniversaries 16 thru 31 AUG.**" [Source: This Day in History www.history.com/this-day-in-history | August 2018 ++]

WWII Bomber Nose Art [12] ► Bail-Out Belle



Medal of Honor Citations ► Henry Gurke | WWII



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

Henry Gurke

Rank and organization: Private First Class, 3rd Raider Bn, U.S. Marine Corps

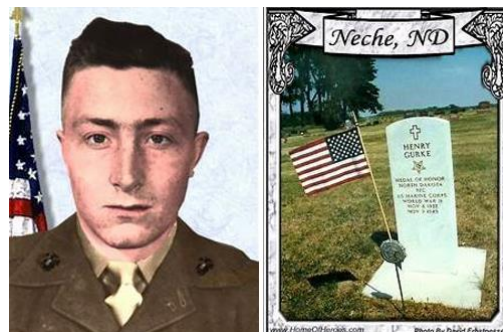
Place and date: Bougainville Island November 9, 1943

Entered service at: Neche, N.D. April 15, 1942

Born: November 6, 1922 Neche, North Dakota

Citation

For extraordinary heroism and courage above and beyond the call of duty while attached to the 3d Marine Raider Battalion during action against enemy Japanese forces in the Solomon Islands area on 9 November 1943. While his platoon was engaged in the defense of a vital road block near Empress Augusta Bay on Bougainville Island. Pfc. Gurke, in company with another Marine, was delivering a fierce stream of fire against the main vanguard of the Japanese. Concluding from the increasing ferocity of grenade barrages that the enemy was determined to annihilate their small, 2-man foxhole, he resorted to a bold and desperate measure for holding out despite the torrential hail of shells. When a Japanese grenade dropped squarely into the foxhole, Pfc. Gurke, mindful that his companion manned an automatic weapon of superior fire power and therefore could provide more effective resistance, thrust him roughly aside and flung his own body over the missile to smother the explosion. With unswerving devotion to duty and superb valor, Pfc. Gurke sacrificed himself in order that his comrade might live to carry on the fight. He gallantly gave his life in the service of his country.



Henry Gurke was born in Neche, North Dakota on November 6, 1922 to immigrant parents, Julius Gurke (1884-1968), a German-speaking carpenter from Dubno, a city on the Ikva River in the Rivne Oblast (province) of western Ukraine and his wife, Hulda Fischer Gurke (1890-1970). His parents had first immigrated to Canada from the Ukraine and then to the United States from Winnipeg, Manitoba in July 1912. The fifth of eight children, he was baptized in the Lutheran Church, and attended the local schools around Neche, a small town in the northwest corner

of North Dakota, one mile from the Canadian bordertown of Gretna, Manitoba. After graduation from high school in 1940, he entered the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in July and was stationed in Larimore, North Dakota. He stayed in the CCC until October 1941 and rose to the position of Assistant Leader, then returned to Neche where he drove a two-ton truck until his enlistment in the United States Marine Corps on April 15, 1942.

Private Gurke went through recruit training at the Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego, then went into the 2d Separate Pack Howitzer Battalion of the 22nd Marines and was in C Battery only one month before shipping overseas on the SS Lurline on July 30, 1942 — three and a half months after his enlistment in the Marines. He landed at Apia, Upolu, British Samoa, one month later. Within two weeks the 3rd Battalion, 22nd Marines, with Pvt Gurke's battery attached, went to Uvea Island of the Wallis Islands to relieve the 3rd Battalion, 7th Marines, which left to rejoin the 1st Marine Division then engaged in the grueling fight for Guadalcanal. In September 1942, Pvt Gurke was transferred to Company D, 3rd Raider Battalion. After four months at Wallis, the Raiders left for Pago Pago, American Samoa, stayed there about three weeks, then moved south to Espiritu Santo in the New Hebrides, landing there in January 1943.

The following month the Raiders went over to Guadalcanal for a few days en route to the Russell Islands. Pavuvu Island in the Russells was occupied without opposition by Pvt Gurke's battalion from February 21, to March 18, 1943. The battalion returned to Espiritu Santo in March. On August 1, 1943, Gurke was promoted to private first class. Transferred to Company M, 3rd Raider Battalion, 2nd Raider Regiment of the I Marine Amphibious Corps in June, PFC Gurke was at Nouméa, New Caledonia, in October and finally met the enemy at Bougainville in November. He "celebrated" his 21st birthday on November 6, 1943 and three days later gave his life for a fellow Marine and for the country he had served well for the past nineteen months.

The medal was presented to his parents at ceremonies in the Navy Department on May 31, 1944. The Assistant Secretary of the Navy made the presentation in the name of the President. In 1945, PFC Gurke's mother, Mrs. Julius (Hulda) Gurke, sponsored the destroyer USS Gurke (DD-783) that was named in honor of her son. The body of PFC Gurke was originally buried at Bougainville, later moved to Munda, New Georgia, and then to Finschhafen, New Guinea, and was finally returned for burial in Neche Union Cemetery in Neche, North Dakota.

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

*** Health Care ***



TRICARE Satisfaction Survey ► MOAA | Showed Increasing Dissatisfaction

Half a year into [major changes](#) in Tricare, a survey of more than 8,500 Tricare beneficiaries indicates that satisfaction is eroding with the Defense Department health care program. The online survey was conducted in June by the Military Officers Association of America, to provide a snapshot of what's happening in the wake of Tricare changes this year.

This survey showed increasing dissatisfaction with the Tricare program across all categories, including costs of medication, provider choice and access to providers. In February, costs for prescriptions increased at network retail pharmacies and through the online pharmacy program. And this year, with changes in the Tricare program and changes in regions, there have been fewer health care providers, and a number of families have had problems getting appointments for health care. Some families are also finding they're paying more for certain medical care.

MOAA conducted a similar survey in December, to determine a baseline of sorts for perceptions about Tricare, before the changes took effect in January. About 4,000 people responded to that survey. In the latest survey:

- More than 50 percent of those who responded said they were “somewhat” to “very” concerned about being able to afford their medications. This is a “dramatic increase” from the December survey, when beneficiaries were “largely unconcerned” about being able to afford their prescriptions, said retired Navy Capt. Kathy Beasley, MOAA’s director of government relations for health affairs.
- Of those who participated in this online survey, 91 percent were retired service members and/or their spouses, and 4.5 percent were active duty. About 75 percent were current or former officers. About half were Tricare for Life beneficiaries — those 65 or older are enrolled in Tricare for Life, which wasn’t affected by the Tricare changes on the medical side. These beneficiaries showed the greatest overall satisfaction — 80 percent — with their health care, Beasley said.
- About 50 percent of survey respondents who were using Tricare Select were very or mostly satisfied. Like other Tricare beneficiaries, Tricare for Life beneficiaries have been affected by Tricare pharmacy co-pay increases in February at retail pharmacies and in the Tricare Pharmacy Home Delivery program.
- Of those surveyed, 17 percent reported shifting from the retail pharmacy to home delivery, which is cheaper, and 8 percent shifted from home delivery to their military treatment facility, where prescriptions are available at no cost.
- This survey showed a decline in satisfaction with choices of health care providers available, possibly reflective of some issues contractors have had this year in getting enough health care providers in their Tricare networks. In this survey, 53 percent reported they were very satisfied with their choice of providers, down from 58 percent in December. Most of the dissatisfaction was among those under age 65, who have experienced changes in their Tricare plans this year.

Co-pays for health care have also been a concern. Fifteen percent of survey respondents said they had canceled or postponed medical appointments in the previous year because of cost concerns, compared with 6 percent in the survey six months ago. But Beasley said she’d expected to see more dramatic numbers. “People may not experience a lot of dissatisfaction with cost shares with medical appointments until it hits them, until they have to pay these cost shares,” she said. “We got a lot of comments from people with children. They talked about their special needs child needing a series of appointments, ... which are becoming cost-prohibitive for them.

“The leading indicators are those who have these series of appointments,” she said, such as specialty appointments. She highlighted one representative comment: “Because the co-pays went from \$12 to \$30, it is hard for me to afford therapies for my 4-year-old son. He is supposed to receive speech therapy twice a week and occupational therapy once a week. Under the old way, it was \$36 every week. Now I am paying \$90 every week. We only do speech and occupational once a week because it has put a financial strain on us. It is hard to provide the adequate care for my son who has special needs that should be met.”

MOAA expects to field another survey in six months, Beasley said, in an ongoing effort to monitor emerging trends in the Tricare benefit. [Source: MilitaryTimes | Karen Jowers | August 2, 2018 ++]

TRICARE Providers Update 04 ► How to Choose/Change One

Whether you're looking to change your primary care manager (PCM) or find a specialty care provider, you have options with TRICARE. With directories at your fingertips, you can take command of your health and your TRICARE benefit.

TRICARE Prime: Getting Your PCM

When you enroll in [TRICARE Prime](#), you either choose or get assigned a PCM who will manage all of your routine, non-emergency, and urgent health care. You may choose a military or network provider as your PCM, depending on your location and availability. In most cases, when you live near a military hospital or clinic, you'll be required to have a PCM at that facility. If you don't list a PCM on your enrollment form, TRICARE will choose one for you. Active duty service members (ADSMs) will be assigned a PCM at their military hospital or clinic.

[TRICARE Prime Remote](#) ADSMs and family members will be assigned a TRICARE network provider to serve as their PCM when available. If no network providers are available, then you may choose a TRICARE-authorized non-network provider. You'll see that provider for most of your care and must seek a referral for specialty care. You can use the [TRICARE East Region](#) and [TRICARE West Region](#) online directories to find a provider. Call first to confirm the provider is accepting new patients. Remember that your PCM will refer you to a specialist for specialty care.

TRICARE Overseas Program (TOP) Prime: Getting Your PCM

When you enroll in [TOP Prime](#), you're assigned a PCM and get most of your care from that PCM at a military hospital or clinic, or in the TRICARE civilian provider network. If you don't have an assigned PCM, your TOP Regional Call Center will coordinate your care. If you're enrolled in [TOP Prime Remote](#) and don't have an assigned PCM, then International SOS Government Services, Inc. will assist you with your health care needs. Referrals and prior authorizations are required for certain services.

TRICARE Prime: Changing Your PCM

If you already have a PCM, depending on the capacity of your military hospital, you may [choose a new PCM](#). This may not apply to ADSMs because duty station and military unit affects PCM assignments. All other beneficiaries should check to make sure the PCM you choose is accepting new patients. If choosing a civilian PCM is an option for you, or you wish to change to another PCM at your military hospital, there are three ways to submit your change.

1. By Phone

- If you live in the East Region call Humana Military at 1-800-444-5445. Under the new regional contracts, the East Region is a merger of the North and South Regions and includes: Alabama, Arkansas, Connecticut, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa (Rock Island area), Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri (St. Louis area), New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas (excluding El Paso area), Vermont, Virginia, West Virginia, and Wisconsin.,
- If you live in the West Region call Health Net Federal Services, LLC at 1-844-866-9378. West Region includes Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Iowa (excludes Rock Island arsenal area), Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri (except St. Louis area), Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Texas (southwestern corner including El Paso), Utah, Washington and Wyoming.,
- If you live overseas and you're seen at a military hospital or clinic, then changing your PCM depends on the military hospital or clinic's guidelines. If your PCM is civilian, call your [TOP Regional Call Center](#) for guidance on changing your PCM.
- For US Family Health Plan (USFHP), call 1-800-74-USFHP (1-800-748-7347).

2. Online

- Go to the [Beneficiary Web Enrollment](#) website. (*Not available overseas*).

- Click on the red “Log On” button at the top of the page.
- Lastly, click on the “Change Primary Care Manager” button in the Actions Menu.

3. By Mail

- Print, fill out, and mail a *TRICARE Prime Enrollment, Disenrollment and PCM Change Form* to your regional contractor with the new PCM’s name and address (mailing address is found on the form).
- You only need to complete the part of the form related to the PCM change.
- Find the forms on the [TRICARE East](#), [TRICARE West](#), and [TRICARE Overseas](#) websites. For USFHP, select the [form for your USFHP provider](#).

Note: The change is effective the date you submit the change, or a date you specify up to 90 days in the future.

TRICARE Select: Finding a Provider

- [TRICARE Select](#) enrollees can seek care from any TRICARE-authorized provider. An authorized provider is any individual, institution/organization, or supplier that is licensed by a state, accredited by national organization, or meets other standards of the medical community, and is certified to provide benefits under TRICARE. There are two types of TRICARE-authorized providers: Network and Non-Network., either in or out of network. You may choose any TRICARE-authorized provider as a primary care provider, and you’ll make your own specialty appointments without a referral. Use the [search directory to find providers who accept TRICARE](#). Using a TRICARE network provider generally will save you the most money.
- [TOP Select](#) enrollees may also choose from any TRICARE-authorized network provider. Some care may require a referral, so you must coordinate care with your TRICARE overseas contractor. To find a provider near you, use the overseas [Provider Search](#) tool. Confirm the type of provider listed in the provider directory by contacting your [TOP Regional Call Center](#). Press option 6 to speak with a member of the TOP Select Customer Service Team.

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Use these TRICARE resources to make finding or changing providers simpler for you and your family. And check out the TRICARE website for more help on [finding a provider](#) or [changing a primary care manager](#). [Source: TRICARE Communications | August 14, 2018 ++]

Medicare Drug Procurement Update 02 ► New Step Therapy Requirement to Lower Cost

Insurers participating in Medicare Advantage will be able to negotiate directly with drugmakers in an effort to lower the cost of prescription medications under a new policy announced by the Trump administration. The policy aims to allow Medicare Advantage plans access to the same tools as private insurers to try to lower the costs of treatments delivered in a physician's office or hospital under Medicare Part B. The change will impact more than 20 million people enrolled in Medicare Advantage plans. In 2017, Medicare Advantage plans spent \$11.9 billion on Medicare Part B drugs, according to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS).

Administration officials said the new policy will help increase competition and help lower the price of prescription drugs. It’s a key part of President Trump’s blueprint to lower drug costs, which he released in May. “By allowing Medicare Advantage plans to negotiate for physician-administered drugs like private-sector insurers already do, we can drive down prices for some of the most expensive drugs seniors use,” Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar said in a Tuesday statement. Government programs often pay higher prices than necessary for drugs because they lack the tools needed to negotiate discounts, HHS said in a fact sheet. For many physician-administered drugs covered by Medicare Part B, private insurance plans negotiate discounts of 15 to 20 percent or more, while Medicare essentially pays full price.

Under the new guidance, health plans will be able to require patients try cheaper drugs first, and will cover more expensive ones only if necessary — a process called step therapy. According to CMS Administrator Seema Verma, this can create leverage for insurers to push for higher rebates from manufacturers in exchange for not steering patients to cheaper treatments from rival companies. Plans will be allowed only to apply step therapy to new prescriptions, not to people who already use the drug. Patients will also be able to ask their plan for an exception if they feel they need access to a specific drug. Plans will be required to pass on to patients more than half of the savings generated from the negotiations. Patients can receive benefits in the form of gift cards and other rewards programs, Verma said. [Source: The Hill | Nathaniel Weixel | August 7, 2018 ++]

Sleep Update 09 ► Healthy Sleep For Healing

Sleep is an important factor in health. In addition to aiding in the healing of the body after injury, studies suggest that sleep can help boost the immune system, prevent disease, and ease depression. Yet a common complaint among service members and veterans with traumatic brain injury is difficulty sleeping. Many people with brain injuries also experience sleep disorders. Sleep disorders and sleep disturbances are two different things.

A concussion and a sleep disorder can present with similar symptoms such as irritability, headaches, anxiety, and inability to focus. Treatment of TBI starts with the treatment of sleep to help determine which symptoms are related to poor sleep and which are injury related. “For instance, something like short-term memory is very impacted by sleep loss,” said Dr. Janna Mantua principal investigator studying sleep at Walter Reed Army Institute of Research. “Ruling out sleep disorders that might be undetected is really critical.” For those with a TBI, sleep disturbances or poor sleep can actually slow recovery and worsen symptoms, according to DVBIC officials. Those who are not getting adequate sleep report more pain, irritability, memory loss and functional problems. Mantua said historically people with brain injuries were kept awake to monitor symptoms, but that is no longer the guidance. “The general recommendation is the opposite: to rest, to stay in the dark, to not look at any screens,” she said.

Sleep can be sabotaged by choosing to sleep at the wrong time, getting too much screen time before bed, or self-medicating. “[A Better Night Sleep](#)” podcast, produced by the Defense Health Agency, gives practical tips on sleep disorders and information on the evidence-based treatments that really work. “The number one nonprescription drug people are taking to help them get to sleep at night is a beer or a glass of wine, or other kinds of alcohol,” said Dr. Julie Kinn, research psychologist at DHA. “But then, you’re putting a lot of sugar into your body, you’re going to metabolize it in a few hours and need to get up and go to the bathroom, and then you’re going to be wide awake. Plus drinking alcohol doesn’t help you learn other good ways of getting to sleep like meditating, purposefully relaxing or turning off all your screens, etc.”

Patients and healthcare providers have access to resources for learning healthy sleep habits. The Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center (DVBIC) recently released a [Sleep Interactive Provider Training](#) to teach military providers the evaluation and management of sleep disturbances following concussion in a deployed and non-deployed primary-care setting. “[Management of Sleep Disturbances Following Concussion/Mild TBI Clinical Recommendation](#)” and [companion clinical support tool](#). DVBIC also provides guidance to help primary care managers assess and manage sleep disturbances associated with concussion, including specific recommendations for managing symptoms of insomnia, circadian rhythm sleep-wake disorder, and obstructive sleep apnea. The [healthy sleep fact sheet](#) offers tips and exercises for patients to help get a better night sleep.

Mantua encourages anyone with sleeping difficulties to speak to your doctor. “We know how to treat bad sleep. Sometimes it takes people a long time to get there – for instance insomnia is difficult to treat – but we know treatments that work.” Listen to the full interview on the [TBI Family Podcast](#). [Source: Health.mil | August 8, 2018 ++]

Hospice Care Update 07 ► Vulnerabilities Impacting Current Medicare Program

When beneficiaries elect hospice care, they are choosing to receive care that will not cure their terminal illness, but should provide comfort and relief from pain. All services related to their terminal illness become the hospice's responsibility. Yet hospices do not always provide the care beneficiaries need to control pain and manage symptoms. Hospice care can provide great comfort to beneficiaries, families, and caregivers at the end of a beneficiary's life. It is an increasingly important benefit for the Medicare population; 1.4 million beneficiaries received hospice care in 2016 with Medicare paying \$16.7 billion. However, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General (OIG) has identified vulnerabilities in the program which should be acted on. OIG found that:

- Hospices do not always provide needed services to beneficiaries and sometimes provide poor quality care.
- In some cases, hospices were not able to manage effectively symptoms or medications, leaving beneficiaries in unnecessary pain for many days.
- Beneficiaries and their families and caregivers do not receive crucial information to make informed decisions about their care.
- Hospices' inappropriate billing costs Medicare hundreds of millions of dollars. This includes billing for an expensive level of care when the beneficiary does not need it.
- A number of fraud schemes in hospice care negatively affect beneficiaries and the program. Some fraud schemes involve enrolling beneficiaries who are not eligible for hospice care, while other schemes involve billing for services never provided.
- The current payment system creates incentives for hospices to minimize their services and seek beneficiaries who have uncomplicated needs. Within each level of care, a hospice is paid for every day a beneficiary is in its care, regardless of the quantity or quality of services provided on that day. While CMS has made some changes to payments, the underlying structure of the payment system remains unchanged

Specific discrepancies noted in OIG's report include:

- Hospices provided inadequate nursing, physicians, or medical social services in 9% of general inpatient stays in 2012.
- Hospices did not meet requirements of plans of care in (a) 85% of general inpatient care stays in 2012, and (b) 63% of claims in nursing facilities several years earlier.
- The number of hospices providing only the lowest of four levels of hospice care—routine home care—increased from 429 in 2011 to 665 in 2016. The neglected higher levels of care are general inpatient care for pain control or symptom management that cannot be addressed in other settings, continuous home care during brief periods of crisis, and inpatient respite care to provide care normally provided by an informal caregiver.
- Hospices frequently bill Medicare for a higher level of care than the beneficiary needs. Medicare sometimes pays twice for physician services and drugs for hospice patients. Physician services and drugs are part of the Medicare Part A hospice benefit and should not also be billed through Medicare Part B (medical insurance) and Part D (drugs).
- Common fraud schemes include: (a) paying recruiters to target beneficiaries who are not eligible for hospice care, and (b) physicians falsely certifying beneficiaries as terminally ill.
- The current payment system creates incentives for hospices to minimize their services and seek beneficiaries who have uncomplicated needs. An example is that payments to hospices are based on time spent in care, not services provided.
- Hospices typically provide less than 5 hours of visits per week and seldom provide services on weekends.
- Hundreds of hospices, especially for-profit companies, target beneficiaries in settings such as assisted living and nursing facilities where patients are already receiving personal care services and who require less complex care than patients with cancer typically require.

- From 2007 to 2012, the median hospice payment in assisted living facilities was twice the median hospice payment for home care.

What OIG Recommended and How the Agency (CMC) Responded

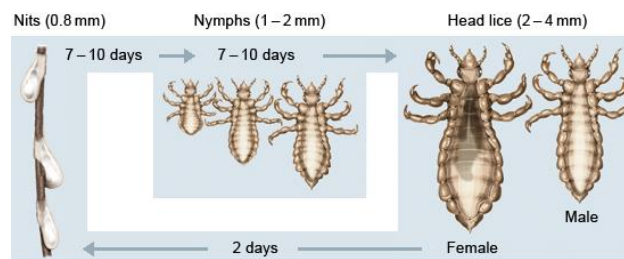
OIG recommended that the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) implement 15 specific actions that relate to 7 areas for improvement.

- CMS should strengthen the survey process —its primary tool to promote compliance —to better ensure that hospices provide beneficiaries with needed services and quality care.
- CMS should also seek statutory authority to establish additional remedies for hospices with poor performance.
- CMS should develop and disseminate additional information on hospices, including complaint investigations, to help beneficiaries and their families and caregivers make informed choices about hospice care.
- CMS should educate beneficiaries and their families and caregivers about the hospice benefit, working with its partners to make available consumer-friendly information
- CMS should promote physician involvement and accountability to ensure that beneficiaries get appropriate care.
- To reduce inappropriate billing, CMS should strengthen oversight of hospices. This includes analyzing claims data to identify hospices that engage in practices that raise concerns.
- CMS should take steps to tie payment to beneficiary care needs and quality of care to ensure that services rendered adequately serve beneficiaries’ needs, seeking statutory authority if necessary

CMS concurred with six recommendations and did not concur with nine. To read the entire OIG Report refer to <https://oig.hhs.gov/oei/reports/oei-02-16-00570.pdf> [Source: Consumer Health Digest #18-31 | Stephen Barret | August 5, 2018 ++]

Lice ► The Things Lice Carry: Stigma & Hassle, But No Harm

Add lice to the list of four-letter words that make people cringe. The wingless parasites are itchy and bothersome, and an infestation is often embarrassing to admit and challenging to conquer. But at least lice have something going for them that a lot of other bugs don’t: They’re harmless. “Ticks can transmit Lyme disease; mosquitoes transmit West Nile virus and malaria, among other things,” said Navy Capt. Kevin O’Meara, a physician and chief of pediatrics at Fort Belvoir Community Hospital in Virginia. “But lice – those guys are pretty benign,” O’Meara said. “They’re not dangerous. They’re just annoying.”



Three types of lice afflict humans. *Pediculus humanus capitis*, or the head louse, is common in childhood. Up to 25 percent of all school-age children will have head lice at some point, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, with anywhere from 6 million to 12 million cases reported each year in the United States in children ages 3 to 11. As O’Meara explains, lice don’t jump or fly. Instead, they crawl from one person’s head to another person’s. Less commonly, lice also can be transmitted through sharing personal items, such as towels at swim meets and pool parties, and pillows and other bedding at sleepaway camps.

Lice live on the human scalp, where they eat meals of human blood and attach their eggs, or nits, tightly to the hair shaft. It takes seven to 10 days for the nits to hatch into baby lice, scientifically known as nymphs. The nymphs mature into adult lice anywhere from nine to 12 days after hatching, the CDC says. The sesame-seed-sized critters can live up to about a month on a person’s head. “It may not be readily apparent that you have lice,” O’Meara said. “Once you become sensitized to their saliva, you’ll start feeling very itchy. But that may be weeks after that first louse has crawled onto your scalp.”

O’Meara said it’s fine to see a health care provider for help getting rid of lice, but effective over-the-counter medications are also available. “Basically, you massage the medication into your hair, let it sit for at least 10 minutes, and then wash it out,” O’Meara said. “Generally, you don’t need to be treated again, but a lot of people do so after seven days because of fear of reinfestation.” For those who want to avoid medication, [combing out lice](#) is another way to get rid of them. The combing method is effective, O’Meara said, but it’s time-consuming. “You usually have to do it several times for 15 to 20 minutes each time, to make sure you get everything out,” he said. The CDC offers more information for [preventing](#) and [treating](#) head lice. [Source: Health.mil | July 31, 2018 ++]

Tenosynovitis Update 01 ► Too Much of Anything Is A Bad Thing

Heavily used areas of tendons are covered by a protective tendon sheath. If a tendon sheath becomes inflamed, it is known as tenosynovitis. Tendons connect bones and muscles with each other, they pass on the muscle power, allow your body to move and provide stability. Some areas of tendons – such as areas that cover protruding bones – are protected by tendon sheaths made of connective tissue. Tendon sheaths are filled with a lubricating fluid, so tendons can easily slide through them. If a tendon sheath is overused, it can become inflamed and swollen. Sometimes the tendon becomes swollen too. The medical term for a tendon sheath inflammation is tenosynovitis. This kind of inflammation can be very painful and greatly reduce movement in the affected part of the body. It most commonly occurs in the hands, arms and feet. At first, the affected area often only hurts when you move it. It is then important to rest that part of the body so as not to make the symptoms worse.



Hand (left) with tendons and tendon sheaths (palm of the hand). Tendons are protected by tendon sheaths (right)

Symptoms

Tenosynovitis typically causes pain, particularly during movement. The inflamed area may also be swollen and sensitive to pressure. After some time, tenosynovitis might hurt without movement, too – for instance, at night. The painful inflammation sometimes causes the tendon sheath tissue to become stuck together in places. The tendon can then no longer slide through the sheath smoothly. Instead, movements are accompanied by a noticeable rubbing, grating or grinding feeling. Tenosynovitis can cause the sheath to become too narrow, making it hard to move the affected area freely. Known as stenosing tenosynovitis, this is particularly likely in the wrist and fingers. If it affects the wrist or thumb, it’s known as De Quervain’s tenosynovitis. If it affects the tendons that make fingers bend, it can lead to a condition known as “trigger finger,” where it is difficult to straighten out your finger again after bending it.

The tendons on the palm side of the fingers are normally held in place by arch-shaped ligaments known as “annular ligaments” or “A pulleys.” In trigger finger, the tendon and/or tendon sheath there is swollen, forming a small lump. When you bend the finger, this lump slides down through an annular ligament. If you then try to straighten your finger

again, you need more force in order to pull the lump in the tendon back up through the annular ligament. This usually happens abruptly – the finger suddenly snaps back into the straight position. It is estimated that about one third of all people who have trigger finger also have carpal tunnel syndrome at the same time. Tendon sheath inflammations can irritate nearby nerves, too, leading to problems like abnormal sensations.

Causes and risk factors

Tenosynovitis is usually caused by unfamiliar or frequently repeated movements involving the affected tendon or tendon sheath. For instance, walking or running long distances without training beforehand, or wearing unsuitable or new shoes, can lead to tendon sheath inflammations in the feet or lower legs. Some jobs or hobbies are associated with a higher risk of tenosynovitis. For example, working at a computer for a long time or playing a musical instrument a lot can put strain on the fingers, wrist and forearm. Tenosynovitis in the wrist is often caused by repeating movements that involve stretching your thumb out and away from the other fingers – for instance, writing on your smartphone a lot, or lifting and carrying a child around a lot.

The likelihood of having inflamed tendons (tendinitis) or tenosynovitis is also greater in people who have diseases like diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis and gout. These inflammations are more common in women who are pregnant or breastfeeding, too. Germs such as bacteria usually aren't involved in tenosynovitis. Tenosynovitis is common, particularly in the hands and wrists: For instance, 2 to 3 out of every 100 people have a trigger finger at some point in their lives. Tendon sheath inflammations tend to be more common in women. Tenosynovitis generally clears up within a few weeks if the affected area is kept as still as possible.

Diagnosis & Treatment

Tenosynovitis can usually be diagnosed following a brief doctor's examination. After talking with you, the doctor looks at the painful area and feels it. He or she also checks which movements trigger the pain or make it worse. In most cases, further examinations or tests aren't needed. If it is thought that a different medical problem could be causing the symptoms, you may also have blood tests or scans such as an ultrasound scan or x-ray. The main purpose of blood tests here is to find out whether the symptoms are being caused by a bacterial infection.

It is usually treated conservatively (without surgery) at first. This mainly involves resting the affected area. It's still important to avoid overusing it once the inflammation has gone away, too, in order to prevent the inflammation from coming back. If the tendon sheath inflammation was caused by a work-related activity, it can be a good idea to make changes in the workplace, such as using an ergonomic mouse for computer work. If you aren't sure whether making changes would be helpful, you can ask for advice – for instance, from an occupational health specialist. Wearing special braces or plaster casts can help keep the affected part of the body still. Other things that can help include physiotherapy – such as stretching exercises and massages – and anti-inflammatory painkillers. If these treatments don't help, doctors can try to relieve the symptoms by injecting a local anesthetic and a steroid. Surgery is sometimes considered too. This involves removing or cutting the obstructing tissue to give the tendon more room to move again.

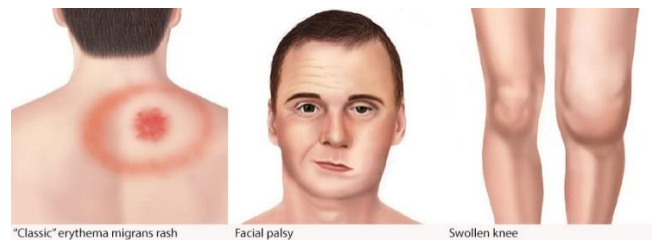
[Source: Informedhealth.org | July 26, 2018 ++]

Lyme Disease Update 01 ► Protect Your Family This Summer

For many, summer heat brings more outdoor play for the entire family. But being outside also increases your risk of getting a tick-borne disease. You can protect your loved ones and pets from the dangers of Lyme disease. Know how to decrease your risk of tick bites and recognize the symptoms of Lyme disease. And should you or a family member get Lyme disease, your TRICARE benefit can help you get the care you need. Every year, roughly 30,000 Americans contract Lyme disease from a blacklegged tick. Lyme disease risk is highest in the Northeast, mid-Atlantic, and upper Midwest, with pockets of reduced risk along the west coast. Be aware of the risk where you travel this summer.

The best way to prevent Lyme disease is by avoiding ticks. Be sure to wear long pants and socks, especially when walking through the woods. If you spend your day working in the garden or playing in the yard, check your skin for ticks. Make this a part of your daily routine, especially for small children who may not be as careful. For extra protection, use an Environmental Protection Agency-registered insect repellent when outdoors. Check with Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for more [tips to prevent tick bites](#).

The most [common symptoms](#) of Lyme disease are fever, headache, fatigue, or a bullseye-shaped rash around a tick bite. If left untreated, Lyme disease can also cause joint pain, chronic fatigue, and in extreme circumstances, heart and nervous system complications. You may experience symptoms several days or months after getting the disease and may not observe all symptoms. The CDC recommends you seek medical attention if you observe any symptoms and have noticed a tick bite, live in an area known for Lyme disease, or have recently traveled to an area where the disease occurs.



A diagnosis requires a positive blood test. Your TRICARE benefit covers this test if ordered by a TRICARE-authorized provider. An authorized provider is any individual, institution/organization, or supplier that is licensed by a state, accredited by national organization, or meets other standards of the medical community, and is certified to provide benefits under TRICARE. There are two types of TRICARE-authorized providers: Network and Non-Network. If diagnosed early, your doctor may treat Lyme disease with a standard round of antibiotics covered by your benefit when medically necessary. To be medically necessary means it is appropriate, reasonable, and adequate for your condition. If diagnosed, your provider can determine the appropriate antibiotic to fight the disease. If the disease remains untreated, more intensive courses of medication may be required in the future.

If you think you've been bitten, contact your primary care manager or Military Health System [Nurse Advice Line](#) for assistance. This summer, take command of your health and keep your family safe from the dangers of Lyme disease. For more about bug-borne diseases, check out [Bug Week](#) at the Military Health System. For more on your benefits and what TRICARE covers, check out the [TRICARE website](#). [Source: TRICARE Communications | August 2, 2018 ++]

[Vet Toxic Exposure | New Mexico](#) ► [Manhattan Project Trinity Test Site Study](#)

A long-anticipated study into the cancer risks of New Mexico residents living near the site of the world's first atomic bomb test likely will be published in 2019, the National Cancer Institute announced. Institute spokesman Michael Levin told The Associated Press that researchers are examining data on diet and radiation exposure on residents who lived near the World War II-era Trinity Test site, and scientists expect to finish the study by early next year. The study will then be published in a peer-reviewed scientific journal and could be available by next spring, Levin said.

The announcement comes as descendants of families who lived in nearby communities are pressuring Congress to include them in the federal Radiation Exposure Compensation Act. Descendants say the Trinity Test caused generations of families to suffer from rare cancer and economic hardship. Currently, the law only covers areas in Nevada, Arizona and Utah that are downwind from a different test site. Scientists working in Los Alamos, New

Mexico, developed the atomic bomb as part of the Manhattan Project, which provided enriched uranium for the weapon. The secret program also involved facilities in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, and Hanford, Washington.

The bomb was tested in a stretch of desert near towns with Hispanic and Native American populations. Residents did not learn that the test had involved an atomic weapon until the U.S. dropped bombs on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the war ended. Tina Cordova, co-founder of the Tularosa Basin Downwinders Consortium, said descendants have been anxiously waiting for results from the National Cancer Institute study. But Cordova said she worried the questions researchers used were "culturally insensitive" and for months the institute wasn't communicating about the study's progress. "We had been kept in the dark," Cordova said.

Steve Simon, the principal investigator of the study and a staff scientist in the institute's epidemiology and biostatistics program, said researchers made it a priority to include expertise from New Mexico residents in the study design process. "To keep the communities well informed about the status of the study, the NCI team has sent regular email updates," Simon said. The institute said it may release the study's findings to descendants before the study's publication depending on the scientific journal's policy. [Source: The Associated Press | Russell Contreras | August 6, 2018 ++]

Vet Toxic Exposure | Wurtsmith AFB Update 02 ► Drinking Water

Drinking water laced with high levels of poisonous chemicals may be to blame for cancer and other chronic disease among veterans and families who lived at Wurtsmith Air Force Base in northern Michigan, according to a new federal health report draft. In July 2018 the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR), set the table for Congress to consider legislation that would force the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to extend health benefits to base veterans without making them prove their illnesses are linked to chemical exposure. The presumptive disabilities from contaminated water at Wurtsmith AFB would lead to automatic compensation to potentially thousands of veterans.

The chemicals, notably benzene and trichloroethylene (TCE), were documented at extremely high levels in Wurtsmith AFB water many times when the former Strategic Air Command (SAC) base was active and home to B-52 Bomber Wings. To gain a measure of the extremely high levels of contaminated drinking water, according to the ATSDR, TCE levels in a well at the corner of Arrow Street and N. Skeel Avenue were as high as 5,173 parts-per-billion (ppb) during 1977, 1978, & 1979 tests, which is more than 1,000 times the EPA's current limit of 5-ppb for TCE in drinking water. TCE in another well on Jet Street near the present day Wurtsmith AFB museum was 1,739-ppb.

For years Wurtsmith, which closed in 1993, has been recognized as one of the most polluted places in Michigan. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency proposed designating the base as a national Superfund site in 1994, but it was never officially listed. The EPA withdrew its oversight in 2016, leaving the Air Force and state agencies to handle the cleanup while the town and county redeveloped parts of the base. The public library is located there, as are homes, churches, play fields, a plastics manufacturer, an airplane maintenance company, and a healthcare facility. But groundwater contamination from PFAS and other toxic substances below the new facilities spreads largely unchecked. The steady dose of chemicals into the area's natural riches has upended lives in Oscoda. The Michigan Department of Environmental Quality says that people should not eat fish that live year-round in the lower Au Sable River and in Clark's Marsh, a wetland adjacent to the base where some of the highest chemical concentrations have been measured.

The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services has told more than two hundred households near Van Etten Lake that are on private wells not to drink their tap water. The state is providing bottled water or faucet filters, and the town is using federal grant money to extend public water to some of the homes. But even the public water supply is at risk. Traces of the chemicals are now found downstream, in Lake Huron, the source for the regional water system. It is even in the treated water, at a few parts per trillion, that is supplied to 14,000 homes.

Current and former Oscoda residents and veterans who served at Wurtsmith have stories of odd cancers and a profusion of illnesses that have stumped doctors looking for a cause. They wonder if their ailments are connected to the relatively unstudied toxic residues in soil and water. They hope to be included in an upcoming Centers for Disease Control and Prevention assessment of PFAS exposure on military bases that could confirm or reject their fears. [Source: <https://www.circleofblue.org/2018/world/fear-and-fury-in-michigan-town-where-air-force-contaminated-water> & USVCP | Brett Wilson | April 11 & August 8, 2018 ++]

TRICARE Podcast 461 ► Bug Week Checklist – Mosquitoes – Lyme Disease

Bug Week Travel Checklist -- Many bugs and insects can carry harmful diseases. Whether you're traveling across the world or across the state, get familiar with common symptoms and learn how TRICARE covers you should you run into creepy-crawlers this summer. When preparing for a trip, follow this five step checklist:

- **Bug-proof yourself** - TRICARE covers age-appropriate vaccines recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, or the CDC. Confirm that your routine vaccines are up to date, especially before traveling overseas. Talk to your doctor about CDC-recommended vaccines depending on your travel plans.
- **Know your benefit** - You can use your TRICARE benefit while traveling. Know your rules for getting urgent and emergency care depending on your plan. Visit TRICARE.mil/urgent for more information.
- **Bring important phone numbers** - Download a stateside or overseas wallet card form TRICARE.mil/publications. When traveling, you can contact the Military Health System (MHS) Nurse Advice Line for help 24/7.
- **Schedule routine care** - Make sure you and your family get routine care covered by your benefit before you leave on your trip. And fill any prescriptions you may need while traveling ahead of time.
- **Learn bug-off tips** - Prevention tips will help keep you and your family safe from insect-transmitted diseases and parasites while traveling. Learn more to prevent bug bites at cdc.gov/travel.

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Mosquitoes -- Did you know that disease epidemics from mosquito-borne viruses are on the rise? Protect yourself against mosquitos, and know how TRICARE covers you if you suffer more than the usual itchy bite this summer. While some mosquitoes only cause itchy bites, some carry disease. Common diseases spread by mosquitoes include malaria, yellow fever, Zika, and the West Nile virus. If traveling to Central America, South America, parts of Africa and Asia, speak to your doctor about options to prevent malaria. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends if you haven't received the yellow fever vaccine, postpone travel to Brazil, where there's currently an outbreak.

TRICARE covers the yellow fever vaccine or other vaccines required for overseas travel for active duty family members traveling with their sponsor on official travel or permanent change of station orders. The Zika virus presents additional risks for pregnant women. If you're pregnant, consider postponing travel to areas where the virus is active, such as hotter climates. Last year, the West Nile virus affected more than 2,000 Americans and caused over 120 deaths. To prevent mosquito bites and reduce your chances of getting sick:

- Wear long sleeves and pants when exploring outdoors, especially at night.
- Use an insect repellent registered with the Environmental Protection Agency and reapply frequently when outdoors.
- And sleep in an air-conditioned or well-screened room.

Take command of your health this summer and stay alert in the fight against mosquito-borne disease. For more information on your benefit, check out TRICARE covered services at TRICARE.mil/coveredservices.

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Lyme Disease -- Roughly 30,000 Americans contract Lyme disease a year. Lyme disease risk is highest in the Northeast, mid-Atlantic, and upper Midwest regions. Be aware of the risk and arm yourself with protection when traveling this summer. The best way to prevent Lyme disease is by avoiding ticks. Wear long sleeves and pants when walking in wooded areas or working outside. And for extra protection, use an Environmental Protection Agency-registered insect repellent when outdoors. Symptoms of Lyme disease include fever, headache, fatigue, or a bullseye-shaped rash around a tick bite.

If left untreated, Lyme disease can cause joint pain, chronic fatigue, and in extreme circumstances, heart and nervous system complications. If you think you've been bitten, contact your primary care manager or call the Military Health System Nurse Advice Line for assistance. A diagnosis requires a positive blood test. TRICARE covers this test if ordered by a TRICARE-authorized provider. If diagnosed early, your doctor may treat Lyme disease with a standard round of antibiotics when medically necessary. For more tips to prevent tick bites, visit www.cdc.gov/lyme.

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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> | August 2, 2018 ++]

TRICARE Podcast 462 ► OHI - Preventive Health Month - "ASK TRICARE" Webinar

Other Health Insurance -- Any health insurance you have in addition to TRICARE is called "other health insurance," or OHI. If you have OHI, it becomes your primary insurance and pays any claims before TRICARE, except in certain cases such as having Medicaid. TRICARE supplements are not considered OHI. If TRICARE receives your claim before your other health insurance processes it, TRICARE will deny it. If TRICARE pays first and later discovers you had other health insurance, TRICARE will take back any payments made and will reprocess the claim after your OHI has processed it.

Typically, having OHI can affect you if you're a retired TRICARE beneficiary who also uses Medicare, or if you're a spouse of an active duty beneficiary who also gains coverage through their employer. If you have Medicare, TRICARE pays after Medicare and your other health insurance for TRICARE-covered services. OHI never applies to active duty service members. If you're on active duty, TRICARE is your only coverage. If you lose your other health insurance, TRICARE becomes your primary payer. If you have TRICARE For Life, TRICARE becomes the second payer. Report any changes to your OHI to your regional contractor and your provider. You can do this online, by phone, or in person. If you don't update the information, you risk the chance of TRICARE denying your claim altogether.

When you have OHI with pharmacy benefits, your OHI pays first and TRICARE pays second. If you have OHI prescription coverage, you can't use TRICARE Pharmacy Home Delivery unless the drug isn't covered by your OHI or you've hit the OHI benefit cap. And you can still use a TRICARE retail network pharmacy with your OHI. Your other plan pays first and TRICARE pays second. For more information on OHI, visit www.TRICARE.mil/OHI.

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Preventive Health Month -- August is Preventive Health Month — an ideal time to address your health. TRICARE covers many preventive health care services with no out-of-pocket costs to you. TRICARE Prime enrollees can get preventive care from their primary care manager or any TRICARE network provider. You can use a non-network TRICARE-authorized provider with no copayments if you have a referral and authorization. TRICARE Select enrollees pay nothing for covered preventive services if they see a TRICARE network provider. Here are some keys to keeping preventive health a priority!

- Routine checkups should be a part of your child’s life from an early age. TRICARE covers primary care, dental, and eye exams for children. Coverage depends on the sponsor’s plan.
- TRICARE also covers preventive health exams for both women and men. One health promotion and disease prevention exam is available yearly to TRICARE Prime and TRICARE Select beneficiaries.
- Eating a balanced diet improves your overall health while maintaining a healthy weight. Being active lowers your risk of developing chronic conditions like obesity, high blood pressure, diabetes, and high cholesterol.

Learn more about your TRICARE preventive health care benefits to help you and your family take command of your health now and for years to come. Visit www.TRICARE.mil/healthwellness to learn more.

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“ASK TRICARE” Webinar -- Join TRICARE on Thursday, August 23rd, from 1 to 2 p.m. Eastern Time for another “Ask TRICARE” webinar. The Q&A webinar will include a panel of subject matter experts from various TRICARE offices and programs to answer your questions. Panelists include representatives from TRICARE Policy and Benefits, TRICARE Overseas Program, and TRICARE Dental Plans, just to name a few. The August 23rd webinar is one of many TRICARE resources to help you get answers to your questions about your TRICARE benefits. Visit TRICARE Publications at www.TRICARE.mil/Publications for a look at additional resources. You must be registered and in the webinar platform to submit a question electronically. If you call in by phone, you’ll only be able to listen to the webinar. Registration is limited. To register go to militaryonesource.mil/webinars.

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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> | August 10, 2018 ++]

*** Finances ***



Drug Cost Increases Update 15 ► Importation Explored to Fight High Domestic Prices

It came as something of a surprise when Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar announced that the administration was exploring the importation of prescription drugs to fight high domestic prices. Azar and Scott Gottlieb, commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration, who also endorsed the new proposal, had previously opposed the idea. But drug prices in the U.S. have continued to rise and more than 80 percent of Americans say the government should take action. President Donald Trump has said drugmakers are “getting away with murder” and has angrily tweeted at companies about individual price hikes. Although the candidate Trump supported the idea of allowing patients to import medicines, since he was elected he has not mentioned that option — which is strongly opposed by drug companies.

Now, determined to explore more avenues to curb price hikes, the administration is signaling that it is willing to consider what the industry regards as something of a nuclear option to address a recalcitrant problem. Carefully tailored to focus solely on specific situations where a high-priced drug is made by one company, it is finding support where broader proposals have failed. “They’re approaching it incrementally and wisely, they’re focusing on prices where there’s a need,” said Dan Mendelson, the founder of health care consultant company Avalere and an official in

the Clinton White House. “It is certainly more narrow than the way others have conceptualized it.” Far from a blanket legalization of imported medicines, the working group Azar convened will study importation to combat sudden price increases in specific drugs. The focus is on temporarily bringing in cheaper similar or identical drugs to introduce competition into the U.S. market. The medicines must be off-patent and have only one manufacturer here.

Azar’s memo said the effort is designed to avoid the kind of overnight increases seen with Daraprim in 2015. That price hike was engineered by “pharma bro” Martin Shkreli, then CEO of Turing Pharmaceuticals. He purchased the rights to the single-sourced medication that treats parasitic infections and began charging \$750 for a pill that formerly cost \$13.50 and costs a little more than a dollar in much of the world. Turing was the only U.S. producer. “This is a workable solution to a discrete problem,” said Ameet Sarpatwari, an instructor in medicine at Harvard Medical School in Boston. But those who support more sweeping importation policies decried the plan’s limited scope and suspected the announcement was part theatrics and part a threatening signal to drugmakers. “This could just be a dog-and-pony show, where they’re calling in an expert group to explore avenues of importation — but when all is said and done, they find that they don’t want to do this,” said Gabriel Levitt, the co-founder of PharmacyChecker.com, a private company that verifies international online pharmacies and compares prescription drug prices for consumers. “At that point, we’ll learn that the exercise was lip service,” he added. “Frankly, there’s a good chance that that is the case.”

This isn’t the first time officials have suggested importing drugs from other countries to find better prices. Bills have been offered in Congress to allow it, and George W. Bush administration officials investigated the issue and produced two reports questioning the safety of such efforts in 2004. Overall, the measure is by no means a silver bullet to the larger problem of rising drug prices, said Rachel Sachs, an associate professor of law at Washington University School of Law in St. Louis. “It’s a really smart move to solve one of the many drug pricing problems we observe, but, of course, it won’t address every problem,” Sachs said. Mendelson suggested this working group might be an effort to placate patients who have seen little movement to bring down drug costs, despite the president’s repeated promises to provide help. “If the goal is to make policy changes that are visible and help with the 2018 and 2020 election, I think it’s right up there with a lot of the things they’re doing,” Mendelson said. “If the goal is truly to help consumers with drug prices, not so much.” In addition, since the group’s work applies primarily to the generic drug market, a new policy would stop short of taming the price spirals and high launch prices of blockbuster brand-name drugs, which Harvard’s Sarpatwari said were the “elephants in the room” of the drug pricing debate.

Levitt pointed out that while a big overnight increase on a drug might trigger action to allow importation, the move would do nothing to stop the yearly increases that drug companies tack on to medicines. Depending on how possible regulations are written, such increases might even be encouraged. The administration has been pressuring pharmaceutical makers to hold down those rising prices but finding tepid support among the companies. Even if the policy targets just a slice of the overall problem, it could still make a difference for Americans struggling to pay for off-patent drugs and provide more competition. “If Azar is serious about this proposal, even though it’s very limited in scope, it could help deter the most egregious forms of drug price gouging where there are single-source meds,” Levitt said. [Source: Kaiser Health News | Rachel Bluth | August 1, 2018++]

Military Lending Act of 2016 Update 01 ► Proposed Protection Changes

The Trump administration is taking aim at a law designed to protect military service members from getting cheated by shady lending practices. NPR has obtained documents that show the White House is proposing changes that critics say would leave service members vulnerable to getting ripped off when they buy cars. Separately, the administration is taking broader steps to roll back enforcement of the Military Lending Act. The MLA is supposed to protect service members from predatory loans and financial products. But the White House appears willing to change the rules in a way that critics say would take away some of those protections. "If the White House does this, it will be manipulating the Military Lending Act regulations at the behest of auto dealers and banks to try and make it easier to sell overpriced

rip-off products to military service members," says Christopher Peterson, a law professor at the University of Utah, who reviewed the documents.

The product Peterson is referring to is called gap insurance. Here's how it works: Cars lose some of their value the moment they are driven off the lot. Dealers often tell customers that if their car gets wrecked in a crash they could be financially harmed because regular insurance may not pay out the entire amount owed on the loan. Peterson says some car dealers push this insurance product really hard. "They convince people they've got to have this gap insurance," he says. That kind of insurance can actually be inexpensive. Peterson, who helped write the regulations for the Defense Department, says it often costs as little as \$20 to \$30 a year and is available from a car buyer's regular insurance company. "But if you buy it from your car dealer, they may mark it up. ... I've seen gap insurance policies being sold for \$1,500" over the course of the loan, he says.

The rules to protect service members effectively block auto dealers from tacking on an extra product — such as overpriced gap insurance — and rolling it into their car loans. The industry has been lobbying to change that, and the White House appears to be sympathetic. The administration just sent the latest version of a proposal to the Defense Department, and documents show that it would give car dealers what they want. Peterson says the revised rules could also allow dealers to roll in all kinds of other add-on products. "Service members certainly should have the same access to credit protection that their civilian counterparts have," says Paul Metrey, vice president of regulatory affairs and chief regulatory counsel for the National Automobile Dealers Association. Now when service members buy cars and get loans at the dealer, he says, this "valuable" gap insurance product "is effectively not available to them."

But Peterson says service members can still get this kind of insurance elsewhere, and often at a much better price. "If somebody really wants to have some gap insurance to protect them from this situation, they should just go to their insurance company and buy it," he says. Meanwhile, critics say that another change in the works would more broadly weaken the enforcement of the Military Lending Act. It involves Mick Mulvaney, the Trump administration's acting director of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. Under Mulvaney, the bureau is planning to halt regular monitoring of payday lenders and other firms to see whether they are violating the act and cheating military personnel.

Retired Army Col. Paul Kantwill recently left a position at CFPB, where he worked on issues facing service members. "I am very concerned about" the prospect of weaker oversight, he says. The bureau says it would investigate complaints of abuse. But Kantwill says that is not enough. He compared the proposed changes to "removing the sentries from the guard posts guarding your military installation or your compound." He says the troops need protection. Before the MLA was put in place, many service members got stuck in damaging high-cost loans, he says. Kantwill says that going back to his days as a U.S. Army lieutenant in the 1990s, predatory lending was a big problem. He remembers there were 21 high-cost lenders and vehicle title-loan businesses just outside the main gate at Fort Campbell, Ky. "The Military Lending Act and the regulations that implement it have gone a long way toward eliminating a lot of those practices," he says.

Kantwill says when people in the service get mired in debt and high-cost loans, that creates problems for military readiness. They can lose security clearances or just get distracted by financial trouble at home. "And it can get even more serious than that," he says. "Service members are kicked out of the service for reasons that involve their inability to handle their financial affairs." All that is why Congress passed these special protections. So why would the CFPB pull back on enforcement this way?

Under Mulvaney, the bureau is claiming it might not have the legal authority to actively go looking for violations of the Military Lending Act. The CFPB is planning to ask for Congress to give it express permission to do this active monitoring of lenders' MLA compliance if that is what lawmakers intended. That's according to a draft document circulating within the bureau obtained by NPR. It is unclear if Congress would do that to spur the CFPB to return to its previous level of enforcement. Kantwill disagrees with that interpretation. "There is broad specific authority for the bureau to be able to examine for these sorts of issues," he says.

As for the changes requested by the auto dealers, allowing them to roll products such as extra insurance into car loans, the Defense Department says the issue is still in the proposal stage. In a statement, the department says any changes will be made "only if necessary and in a way that does not reduce the MLA protections afforded Service members and their families." [Source: National Public Radio | August 13, 2018 ++]

Children of Fallen Patriots Foundation ► Go To College/Trade School Debt Free

If you know a young person who has lost a parent either in line of duty or due to a service connected disability you should tell them to look at the Children of Fallen Patriots Foundation. They say they serve "the families of servicemembers from all branches of the armed forces who have died as a result of combat casualties, military training accidents, service-related illnesses, suicide, as well as other duty-related deaths as ruled by the Department of Veterans Affairs." In addition to those on active duty they cover Pre- and Post- 9/11 veterans and they support all post-secondary education including trade schools. The children who qualify for help include biological, adopted children as well as step and foster children. Once they reach college age they can receive aid and there is no maximum age to enroll.

After VA and other aid (which they will help families find) the foundation will cover all the additional costs including college application costs; registration fees, tuition, room and board, a living stipend of \$1750 a semester, a computer stipend of \$1,000, books, tutoring, study abroad and all other miscellaneous expenses. Students may even be able to get retroactive funding for already paid out of pocket college related expenses. This year they are giving \$1.6 million to 305 students across the country who are attending 218 different schools. Twenty one of those students will be are graduating this year. If you know someone who would qualify for help by this program go to www.fallenpatriots.org where they can enroll in just a few minutes. [Source: TREA Newsletter Update | August 14, 2018 ++]

Retirement Planning Update 14 ► Why Your Parents Had it Easier Than You Will

Regardless of how old you are now, you'll probably have a harder time pulling off a financially secure retirement than your parents did. A great many of us haven't planned and saved well. Besides that, fundamental changes in American life make it harder for today's generations to achieve a comfortable life after work. Here are eight reasons why the last decades of life are harder now — and some things you can do to bolster your own retirement.

1. We're living longer -- In 1935, the average 65-year-old could expect to live 12 more years. Today, the Social Security Administration says, the average person who is 65 can expect to live another two decades. Living that long without working takes a lot more money.

Tip: Find a trusted adviser. A fee-only Certified Financial Planner — preferably someone recommended by a friend or family member — can help you plan for retirement and make the most of your resources. Take time to [find someone superb](#).

2. Seniors can't shake the recession -- The Great Recession of a decade ago robbed workers of earning power. It hit men and women in their 50s and early 60s especially hard. Home values and investment savings also plummeted. Some people are still digging out from that hole. You can seek help by talking with a credit counselor through the nonprofit [National Foundation for Credit Counseling](#), or a bankruptcy attorney through the [National Association of Consumer Bankruptcy Attorneys](#). Money Talks News can also guide you to the help you need. Visit our [Solutions Center](#) to [discover sources of free debt help](#).

Tip: Don't wait, take action. If you are still recovering from the last economic downturn, don't let pride prevent you from getting help. And don't spend retirement savings or home equity trying to repay unmanageable debt.

3. Private pensions are nearly extinct -- Only a few decades ago, many large employers offered “defined-benefit” pensions that guaranteed retirees and their spouses a fixed monthly payment for life. But times have changed, and traditional pensions are going the way of the dinosaurs.

Tip: Save more. Without a pension, you simply need to save more for retirement. Follow the basic rules for retirement savings, including minimizing taxes and expenses, working longer, investing regularly and keeping on top of your investments.

4. Social Security is still under pressure -- Unless Congress acts, Social Security Trust Fund reserves are expected to run out in 2034, according to the Social Security Administration. Even if lawmakers address that issue, the amount you receive might depend in part on when you start claiming it. Want to get a larger monthly check? Read “[14 Ways to Get Bigger Checks From Social Security](#).”

Tip: Be strategic about claiming Social Security. Most people claim their Social Security benefits at age 62, which is as soon as they can. But that is not always the best strategy.

5. Interest rates are low -- Retirees in previous generations earned higher interest on their savings and low-risk investments. But interest rates now are near historic lows. That means many of today’s retirees must take on riskier investments to generate income. And don’t settle for low returns. You can [find a better savings rate](#) in our Solutions Center.

Tip: Don’t dip into retirement savings. Lower interest rates mean your savings may disappear more quickly as you spend. But no matter how tight things get, shun the temptation to borrow from your retirement savings. Don’t do it for any reason, not even to pay off debt.

6. Seniors have more debt -- Earlier generations tried to enter retirement with a paid-off home and no debts. That’s harder to do today. Check our [Solutions Center](#) for more help getting out of credit card debt.

Tip: Get help. Debt won’t go away on its own. For help in getting out of debt, read “Ask Stacy: What’s the Single Best Way to Pay Down Debt?”

7. Folks might have to retire sooner than they hoped -- Many workers today are counting on working into their late 60s and early 70s. But poor health, a job loss or the need to care for loved ones can force people to retire before then. So, put your retirement savings ahead of paying for your children’s college. The kids have more time than you do to make up financial losses.

Tip: Let the kids fend for themselves. Unemployment and low wages have made it hard for many young adults to launch their independent lives. But funding a child’s lifestyle can doom your own retirement.

8. More seniors are single -- About 12 million adults age 65 and older live alone, according to Pew Research Center. Many find freedom in being single, but it can be difficult for one person to support a household financially.

Tip: Don’t touch home equity. If your retirement is looking shaky, don’t even consider using home equity for nonessentials like remodeling. Treat the equity like an emergency fund.

[Source: MoneyTalksNews | Marilyn Lewis | August 1, 2018 ++]

Retirement Planning Update 15 ► Will You Have enough to Retire

Whether or not you will have enough to retire is a question we’ll all face sooner or later. To answer it you need to consider three things -- what you have, how much you need, and when are/did you start preparing for retirement (The sooner, the better).

Thing No. 1: Figure out what you have

You know what you have in the bank, and you know what you have in your retirement plans. Add them together. Are you going to continue contributing the same amount to your savings every month between now and the day you retire?

If so, add that in. Now you've got the total you'll have to work with when that day comes. Once you know your total savings, divide that number by your life expectancy. Example: Say you're going to retire at 65 and based on the math above, you expect to have a total of \$200,000 in savings. Your life expectancy at 65 is 20 years. Divide \$200,000 by 20 years and there you have it: \$10,000 a year. Now you've got a very rough estimate of how much monthly money your savings will generate, providing you are willing to spend down your capital. Add to that Social Security, pensions and any other income you'll have, and you'll have an idea of how much you'll be living on.

Keep in mind that you could add to your savings. For example, maybe you're planning to sell your house and downsize. Or, maybe you'll be inheriting. Or, maybe you'll work part-time in retirement. Think it through. But at least you've got a quick back-of-the-envelope way to estimate what you'll have. Some will say, "Wait a minute! Aren't my savings going to be earning interest while I'm retired?" Sure, but you've also got inflation to take into account. So, for a quick, down-and-dirty computation, let inflation and interest cancel each other out. Simply take what you'll have in savings, divide it by your life expectancy, add what you'll get from other sources, and you've got a quick number to work with.

Thing No. 2: Figure how much you need

If you don't know how much you're spending now, this is a great time to figure it out. Use some sort of [budgeting app](#), or simply write down everything you spend until you have a handle on it. All things being equal, you're not going to need as much income in retirement as you're spending now. When you're working, you're paying payroll taxes, commuting, buying clothes you probably won't need in retirement — things like that. On the other hand, depending on how you intend to spend your retirement years, you could be spending more than you are now. Either way, confront your future. After going through these two exercises, you'll have an idea of how much your income and expenses will be in retirement. Of course, this was an exceedingly simple look. You can — and should — drill down a little more. There are calculators online that can help, but at least now you've got a starting point.

Thing No. 3: The sooner, the better

When approaching retirement, many people bury their heads in the sand. They're afraid they're not going to have enough and don't want to confront it. So, they don't do anything. Dumb idea. Do something. Use online calculators, use the simple computation provided above — but whatever you do, do something. Don't feel like an idiot as retirement approaches and you don't have enough. Now is the time to plan, because now you have options. Maybe you can put away more. Maybe you can get a side job and make more money, or maybe you can think about where you might be able to live for less when you retire. The sooner you start confronting your retirement reality, the better off you're going to be.

[Source: MoneyTalksNews | Stacy Johnson | August 8, 2018 ++]

Fixed Index Annuities ► What They Are

Fixed Index Annuities (FIAs) are a type of interest-bearing savings account within an insurance product. They might be pitched as a safe investment to entice sales, but they are not an investment. Technically, FIAs are deferred annuities - deferred meaning you don't have to take a stream of lifetime income from the product until you choose to do so in the future, or not. Annuities are insurance companies' versions of savings or investment accounts that have guarantees (insurance) and some tax benefits. The FIA interest rate floats based on the performance of an outside measurement. Most use the S&P 500 Index (a stock portfolio) as their outside measurement. You are not invested in the S&P 500 Index; it is used as the basis of the interest rate.

The typical FIA has a guaranteed minimum rate of interest like 1 or 2 percent - the floor you are guaranteed to earn. The upper limit of interest paid is a portion of the outside measurement. So as the sales pitch goes, you capture some of the stock market's highs while being protected from the stock market's lows. Best to think of these accounts

as principal protection and not wealth creation. If this isn't your objective, these are probably not for you. You get a portion of the outside measurement's return on the upside. The FIA has “cap rate” and a “participation rate” (terms might vary).

Cap rate is the most interest you can earn. For example: Say the S&P 500 Index gains 15 percent in a year. Your cap rate might be 6 percent. In this case, you gave up 9 percent of the S&P 500 upside to insure your safety. The cap rate can be decreased by the participation rate. Let's say you have a participation rate of 80 percent and the S&P 500 Index goes up 6 percent in a year. Your cap rate is 6 percent, so you get the 6 percent right? In this case, your participation rate kicks in and limits you to 4.8 percent; 80 percent of the S&P 500 return. So, in this example, you have an interest-bearing account that pays between 1 and 6 percent.

Tax-wise, annuities are tax-deferred until withdrawal - your gains are not taxed as long as they sit in the annuity. You pay regular income tax rates upon withdrawal for all amounts that are not a return of principal. You will not get more favorable capital gains tax rates upon withdrawal. When considering an FIA, ask about fees, surrender charges, whether you are limited to one lump-sum deposit or contributions over time, your need for a lifetime income option, your time horizon, your other interest rate account options, income needs, emergency withdrawal options, and your ability to close the account. [Source: MOAA Newsletter | Shane Ostrom | August 8, 2018 ++]

IRS Fraud ► Employee Admits to Criminal Identity Theft

The Justice Department announced on 9 AUG that IRS contact representative **Stephanie Parker**, based in Atlanta, admitted to at least five instances between September 2012 and March 2013 in which, after taking calls from taxpayers seeking help, she “used the taxpayers’ personal information to electronically file fraudulent tax returns in their names without their authorization.” She used the callers’ Social Security numbers and home addresses to file phony tax returns and then directed the refund checks to be deposited in bank accounts controlled by her friends. “Parker, in turn, had the money withdrawn from at least one of those accounts and deposited a portion of the money into her own bank account and used it for personal expenses,” said Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General Richard Zuckerman of the Tax Division and U.S. Attorney Byung Pak of the Northern District of Georgia.

Parker faces a mandatory sentence of two years in prison, as well as a period of supervised release, restitution and monetary penalties. The department commended the work on the case by special agents of IRS–Criminal Investigation and the Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration, who conducted the investigation, and Trial Attorneys Michael Boteler, Alexander Effendi and Melanie Smith of the Tax Division. [Source: GovExec.com | August 10, 2018++]

Travel Card Scam ► DFAS Warning

The Defense Finance Accounting Service (DFAS) is warning Defense Travel System users of a new phishing scam targeting government travelers. Phishing is the deceptive practice of sending emails that appear to be from a reputable sender in order to dupe the recipient into revealing personal information, such as personally identifiable information and banking information. The finance center says that scammers are sending an official-looking email notifying some members that they weren't paid correctly for their last TDY, and that the person should click on a link to update their information. The text of the bogus email reads as follows:

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From: noreply@defensetravel.osd.army

Sent: Wednesday, February 28, 2018 8:48 AM
To: Traveler, Joseph CIV USARMY joseph.traveler.civ@mail.mil
Subject: [Non-DoD Source] Defense Travel System Refund Notification

Dear joseph traveler,

Due to a system error you were not paid correctly for your last temporary duty travel. We are contacting you to correct your account information. A refund process was initiated but could not be completed due to errors in your current unit information.

REF CODE: 0572

After your information has been validated, you should get a refund to your bank account within 3 business days. For additional information on this topic, please eMail your concerns or questions to: dfas.indianapolis-in.jft.mbx.in-army-dts-inquiries@mail.mil

Thank you for your service and we apologize for any inconvenience.

Defense Travel System Fort Belvoir, VA

-o-o-O-o-o-

Defense Travel System advises that they would never solicit information directly from a traveler. Should it ever need to update any records, DTS would advise the traveler to update the user information in the DTS application rather than providing an external link to update a record. Also, the correct DTS email address is: box-name@defensetravel.osd.mil (not .army). Consider all other addresses as suspicious, especially those ending in .army or .com. As always, pay attention, the scammers are getting smarter every day. When in doubt contact DTS through the travel portal or delete the email. If it really is important, they will send you another one. [Source: Military.com | Jim Absher | March 14, 2018 ++]

Imposter Scams ► **Don't Be Fooled by "Guarantees" or Money-Making Pitches from "Regulators"**

There is nothing like an iron-clad guarantee to make you feel secure about a purchase. Sadly, financial fraudsters know what a psychological balm the word "guarantee" can provide, and use it as a tactic to make their investment pitches look more appealing.

The Financial Industry Financing Authority (FINRA) issued an alert to warn investors that scammers are posing as regulators to separate you from your money. They want you to know that neither FINRA, nor any of its executives, will ever provide a "guarantee" on an investment or offer to facilitate your participation in any sort of money-making scheme. Never.

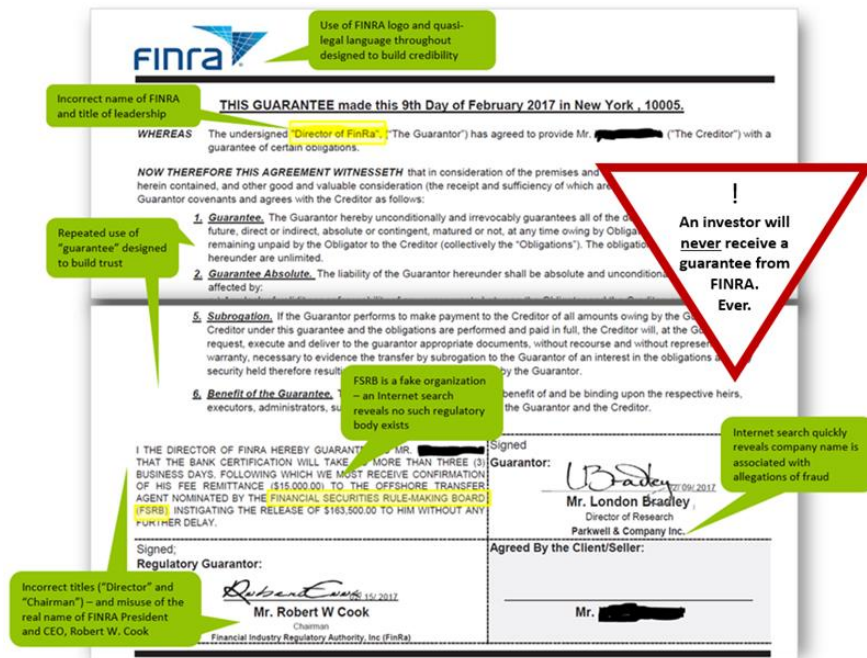
What Do Imposter Scams Look Like?

- Fraudsters who impersonate FINRA or a current or former executive can look surprisingly real. Recently, swindlers used FINRA's name and logo—going so far as to pose as Robert Cook, FINRA's CEO—in correspondence suggesting that FINRA provided guarantees related to an investment pitch that is in fact an advance-fee scam. FINRA, its officers and employees do not offer investment guarantees.
- A common advance-fee scam seeks to entice investors to send money to cover administrative or regulatory charges associated with a buy back of shares of stock that are currently virtually worthless or "underperforming." Once you send money, you never see it—or any of the money promised from the stock buyback—again.

- Con artists use shareholder lists of defunct companies or other lists that contain names, phone numbers and financial holdings of potential targets. Through repeated phone calls, the financial fraudster builds a personal relationship with the investor. In addition to the phone calls, scammers often send investors official-looking documents, complete with logos and seals—another ploy to legitimize their pitch.
- The fraudster continues to keep in touch with the investor until the investor sends money. At that point, the scammer may ask for additional money, or simply disappear.

Fabrication of FINRA's Role

FINRA received a call from an investor involved in a scheme to buy back shares of nearly worthless stock. The scammer emailed him the letter below, purportedly from FINRA's CEO, and sought to use the letter to build trust, trading on FINRA's role as a securities regulator. The letter might look official to someone who isn't familiar with FINRA or advance-fee scams. But it contains many telltale signs of fraud.



A Play for Personal Information

In a separate fraud, email pitches that purport to originate from FINRA's President and CEO have portrayed FINRA as a "recognized financial manager of the IMF," notifying people that "approval has been granted for the release and payment of your outstanding inheritance fund." No, and no. But it gets worse. Claiming the substantial "inheritance" requires the recipient to fly to another country—in other words, beyond the jurisdiction of any U.S. regulator or law enforcement officer. Recipients are asked to provide personal information, including a copy of their passport. The play for personal information is a hallmark of phishing scams. These are imposter emails—and the real IMF has issued warnings to that effect. If you receive one, do not call or correspond. Doing so risks being scammed.

What Can You Do?

- The best way to avoid losing money in advance-fee, phishing or other types of scams is simply to hang up or not respond. This is easier said than done, since correspondence can be well crafted and callers are con artists highly skilled at delivering their fraudulent pitches.
- FINRA's [Scam Meter](#) can help you assess whether an opportunity is too good to be true, and their [Risk Meter](#) reveals whether you share characteristics and behavior traits that have been shown to make some investors particularly vulnerable to investment fraud.

- If you're suspicious about an offer or if you think the claims might be exaggerated or misleading, contact FINRA at <http://www.finra.org/investors/investor-contacts>.

[Source: BBB Military & Veterans Initiative | August 1, 2018 ++]

Pet Adoption Scam Update 01 ► How It works

Puppy scams are now targeting people who want to rescue a dog, not just purchase through a breeder. If you are looking to adopt a dog, use extreme caution with online services.

How the Scam Works

- You are looking to adopt a dog, and you find an organization or individual online wanting to rehome a puppy. You message them for more information and receive a convincing, heart-tugging backstory. In one recent [BBB Scam Tracker report](#), a scammer claimed to be looking for a new home for her English bulldog after discovering her son's pet allergy. Although this scam mostly involves dogs, it can also include cats and other pets.
- The scammer doesn't charge an adoption fee, but they do request payment to ship the pet to your home. Most scammers ask you to wire the money or send it in a pre-paid debit card or gift card. After "shipping" the pet, problems arise. Common scenarios include emergency vet visits or additional shipping fees. The scammers ask for more money to resolve the problem, often promising to refund it after the pet is delivered. They may even claim that the pet will be euthanized if you don't pay up. Once they've gotten your money, scammers disappear. The dog never existed.

How to Avoid Pet Adoption Scams

- Never buy or adopt a pet without seeing it in person. This is the best way to ensure you aren't caught in a con.
- Do an internet search of the pet's image. If you do find a puppy online, upload the pet's photo to a reserve image search. If you find multiple pet adoptions sites using the same picture, it's probably a scam.
- Be cautious with pre-paid debit or gift cards and wire transfers. Money sent this way cannot be refunded.

For More Information

For more information on puppy scams, see BBB's full report at BBB.org/PuppyScam. If you've been the victim of a puppy scam, help others avoid falling victim by reporting what happened on the [BBB Scam Tracker](#).

[Source: BBB Scam Alert | August 3, 2018 ++]

Tax Burden for Illinois Retired Vets ► As of August 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 Illinois:

Sales Taxes

State Sales Tax: 6.25% (1% on qualifying food, prescription & non-prescription drugs, medical appliances). Local government taxes can raise the total to a high of 11%).

Gasoline Tax: 52.41 cents/gallon (Includes all taxes)

Diesel Fuel Tax: 59.72 cents/gallon (Includes all taxes)

Cigarette Tax: \$1.98 /pack of 20 (In Chicago, the state and local rate is \$6.16).

Personal Income Taxes

Tax Rate Range: Flat rate of 4.95 percent of federal taxable income.

Personal Exemptions: The state allows you to take a \$2,175 deduction for each exemption you claimed on your federal tax return. You'll also receive an additional \$1000 exemption if you or your spouse is age 65 or older, legally blind or both, and if your total household income is less than \$65,000 as of 2017. Income thresholds can change periodically to keep pace with inflation. Your total exemption amount is then deducted from your base income to arrive at your net income, and the 4.95% tax rate is applied to your net income. Beginning June 1, 2017, taxpayers cannot claim the personal exemption if their adjusted gross income exceeds \$250,000, or \$500,000 for those filing jointly.

Standard Deduction: None

Medical/Dental Deduction: Health insurance and long-term care insurance premiums are deductible.

Federal Income Tax Deduction: None

Retirement Income Taxes: Illinois does not tax distributions received from qualified employee benefit plans, including 401(K) plans; an Individual Retirement Account, (IRA) or a self-employee retirement plan; a traditional IRA that has been converted to a Roth IRA; the redemption of U.S. retirement bonds; state and local government deferred compensation plans; a government retirement or government disability plan, including military plans; railroad retirement income; retirement payments to retired partners; a lump sum distribution of appreciated employer securities; and the federally taxed portion of Social Security benefits. For more information refer to <http://www.revenue.state.il.us/individuals/pension.htm>.

Retired Military Pay: Not taxed. (Note: Illinois considers all forms of retirement pay tax exempt).

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

Taxes are imposed by local government taxing districts (counties, townships, municipalities, school districts, and special taxing districts. Most property in the state is assessed at 33.33% of its market value, except farmland which is based on its ability to produce income. Cook County has different criteria. Single family residences are assessed at 16%. There are seven major homestead exemptions and some that are limited in the application. For more information go to:

- <http://tax.illinois.gov/Publications/PIOs/PIO-16pdf>.
- <http://www.revenue.state.il.us/LocalGovernment/PropertyTax/taxrelief.htm>.

The exemption categories are:

- **General Homestead** -- Exemption is available annually for owner-occupied residential property. The amount of exemption is the increase in the current year's equalized assessed value (EAV), above the 1977 EAV, up to a maximum of 6,000.
- **Senior Citizens Assessment Freeze Homestead** -- Exemption allows senior citizens who have a total household income of less than \$55,000, and meet certain other qualifications to elect to maintain the equalized assessed value (EAV) of their homes at the base year EAV thereby preventing any increase in that value due to inflation.
- **Homestead Improvement** -- Exemption is limited to the fair cash value that was added to the homestead property by any new improvement, up to an annual maximum of \$55,000. The exemption continues for four years from the date the improvement is completed and occupied.
- **Senior Citizens Homestead** -- Exemption allows a \$4,000 reduction in the EAV of the property that a person 65 years of age or older is obligated to pay taxes on, and owns and occupies, or leases and occupies as a

residence. Exemption is limited to the fair cash value that was added to the homestead property by any new improvement, up to an annual maximum of \$45,000. The exemption continues for four years from the date the improvement is completed and occupied.

- **Disabled Veterans' Homestead** -- Exemption of \$2,500 exemption is available to a veteran with a service-connected disability of at least 30% but less than 50%; a \$5,000 Homestead Exemption is available to a veteran with a service-connected disability of at least 50% but less than 70%; veterans with a service-connected disability of at least 70% are exempt from paying property taxes on their primary residence. This exemption is available to the unmarried surviving spouse of a service-connected veteran provided that the veteran was in receipt of the exemption prior to his/her death.
- **Senior Citizens Real Estate Tax Deferral Program** -- Allows persons age 65 or older, who have a total household income of less than \$50,000 and meet certain other qualifications, to defer all or part of their real estate taxes and special assessments. The deferral is similar to a loan against the property's market value and a lien is filed on the property in order to ensure repayment to the deferral. The state pays the property taxes and then recovers the money, plus 6 percent annual interest, when the property is sold or transferred.
- **Disabled Persons' Homestead** -- Exemption provides a \$2,000 reduction in a property's equalized assessed value to a qualifying property owned by a disable person. An application must be filed annually for this exemption.

Information on the state's Circuit Breaker and Pharmaceutical Assistance programs can be found in the state's Web site at <http://www.illinois.gov/aging/BenefitsAccess/Pages/default.aspx>.

Inheritance and Estate Taxes

Illinois saw its estate tax disappear on January 1, 2010 due to repeal of the federal estate tax, and despite the retroactive reinstatement of the federal estate tax, Illinois' tax did not come back automatically. Nonetheless, the Illinois legislature acted quickly at the beginning of 2011 to reinstate the Illinois estate tax for the 2011 tax year with a \$2,000,000 exemption. However, in December 2011 the Illinois legislature acted to increase the exemption to \$3,500,000 in 2012 and \$4,000,000 in 2013 where it remains.

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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At <http://www.revenue.state.il.us/TaxForms/IncmCurrentYear/Individual/IL-1040.pdf> Illinois tax form IL-1040 can be downloaded. For general guidelines refer to <https://www.thebalance.com/illinois-individual-state-income-tax-3193262>. For further information call the Illinois Department of Revenue site at 800-732-8866 or visit their website <http://www.revenue.state.il.us/#&panel1-1>

[Source: <http://www.retirementliving.com/taxes-alabama-iowa#ILLINOIS> | August 2018 ++]

*** General Interest ***



Notes of Interest ► 01 thru 15 AUG 2018

- **Big Brother.** This may help you to understand what surveillance the government is able to do without a legal warrant. You'd think it would be easy to disappear in a large crowd like the one in the photo at photo at <http://www.gigapixel.com/mobile/?id=79995> which was taken in Canada and shows about 700,000 people. Place your cursor arrow on a small part of the crowd, left-click, and see how clear each individual face will become each time. Or roll the wheel forward on your mouse. The picture was taken with a 70,000 x 30,000 pixel camera (2100 Mega Pixels.) These cameras are not sold to the public and are being installed in strategic locations.
- **Thule AFB Greenland.** A meteor that struck 25 JUL miles from a key U.S. early warning air base did not hit or damage the facility, the Air Force said Friday, slightly exasperated. It was a significant strike, with the explosive force of 2.1 kilotons, according to NASA's jet propulsion laboratory.
- **Alternate Salt Uses.** Watch this video from [HouseholdHacker](#), and you'll learn how plain old table salt can effectively — and cheaply — clean up tons of messes.
- **Workforce Average Age.** According to an analysis by data scientist and blogger Randal Olson, the oldest profession in the U.S. workforce is funeral home employee (53.1) and the youngest is shoe salesperson (25.6). Public servants' median age is (45.6) and public finance employees have the eighth-oldest median age of all workers in the labor force.
- **Trump Interview.** Regardless of what you think of him take 4 minutes to view Rona Barrett's unaired 1980 interview with 34 year old Donald Trump at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nAgJAxkALyc> regarding the American presidency.
- **Doggie Fountain.** Go to <https://www.facebook.com/LADbible/videos/4815208328526319> to see what is available to keep your dog hydrated while outside.
- **Nuclear Weapons.** Russia's new Poseidon nuclear weapon is now entering sea trials. Formally known as Ocean Multipurpose System Status-6, it's an underwater drone designed to cross the oceans undetected, with no humans aboard, carrying a two-megaton warhead, and detonate with the force of 133 Hiroshimas in a naval base or coastal city.
- **POW/MIA.** The lone military identification tag that North Korea provided with 55 boxes of human remains last month belonged to Master Sgt. Charles H. McDaniel, an Army medic from Indiana who was killed in the opening months of the Korean War.
- **USMC.** At 1:45 pm on 5 AUG the windows of the Marine Corps Recruiting Center (64 Shattuck Square) in Berkeley CA were vandalized. From videos <https://youtu.be/ePHSPdxYIqQ> seen on social media, the suspects appeared to have repeatedly hit the windows with a hammer or tire iron — causing an estimated \$2000 worth of damage." No Marines were present at the station during the incident and the recruiting station is continuing to conduct business as normal.
- **USPS.** The U.S. Postal Service announced a net loss of \$1.5 billion in the third quarter of fiscal 2018 as its revenue grew over the April-June period by \$400 million. The cash inflow grew by 2.4 percent to \$17 billion, and has increased by \$600 million year-to-date. The total losses were also a 36 percent decrease from the same quarter in fiscal 2017.
- **Okinawa Military Base.** Tens of thousands of protesters in Okinawa vowed to stop the planned relocation of U.S. Marine Corps Air Station Futenma, saying they want it off the southern Japanese island entirely. Opponents of the relocation from a crowded neighborhood to a less populated coastal site would not only be an environmental debacle but also ignore local wishes to remove the base.
- **Iran.** For the first time in more than a year, Iran test-fired a ballistic missile in a brazen display of defiance months after President Trump pulled the United States out of a landmark nuclear deal and days before his administration slapped new sanctions on the Islamic Republic.

- **Sun.** NASA successfully launched humanity’s first probe to the sun on 12 AUG, kicking off a daring seven-year mission to better understand Earth’s closest star. It may have to contend with temperatures upwards of 2,500 degrees Fahrenheit when it reaches the sun’s atmosphere – also known as the corona. But it won’t get its wings singed. Advanced carbon composite shielding will keep its delicate instruments cooler than many a New York August afternoon, at 85 degrees.
- **Vet Training.** West Virginia has been awarded a \$400,000 federal grant to provide [agriculture training for military veterans](#). The state Department of Agriculture says in a news release the grant from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs aims to [improve veterans' health](#).
- **Drones.** Airbus’s Zephyr solar-powered drone flew for 25 days straight during a test-flight over Yuma, Arizona beginning on July 11, 2018. The flight represented a record for aircraft endurance, breaking the previous 14-day record also set by a Zephyr back in 2015. The long flight has big implications for military surveillance

[Source: Various | July 31, 2018 ++]

Korean War End ► Why U.S. is Wary of Making A Declaration

As a reward for its broader foray into diplomacy, North Korea wants a formal and official declared end to the decades-long Korean War that settled into an uneasy truce in 1953. South Korea wants this, too. But the United States, which first sent military forces to the Korean Peninsula in 1950 and still keeps 28,500 troops there, is not ready to agree to a peace declaration. No doubt the issue will be high on the agenda when the leaders of the two Koreas hold their third summit meeting next month, in Pyongyang. Both want the end of the war to be declared this year with the United States and, possibly, China. And North Korea insists on securing the declaration before moving forward with denuclearization.

But there is a range of reasons American officials have refused so far to embrace a formal peace declaration. The Trump administration wants North Korea to first halt its nuclear weapons program — a tough line that could create a divergence between the United States and South Korea, its ally. In turn, analysts said, that gives an opening to North Korea — and maybe China and Russia — to exploit the gap between Washington and Seoul. “You have South Korea moving so quickly on these projects to push for reconciliation with North Korea, and in Washington you have people pushing for denuclearization before anything else happens,” said Jean H. Lee, director of the Wilson Center’s center for Korean history and public policy. “They have very different end games and very different time frames. It’s very problematic.”

The Trump administration, like those of Presidents Barack Obama, George W. Bush and Bill Clinton, is focused on North Korea’s nuclear weapons program above all else. That’s in large part because North Korea has been developing an intercontinental ballistic missile that would give Pyongyang the ability to strike the United States mainland with a nuclear warhead. In a joint statement released after the Singapore summit meeting in June, the United States and North Korea said Pyongyang “commits to work toward complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.” But the two sides didn’t agree on the definition of denuclearization. For President Trump’s top foreign policy officials — Mike Pompeo, the secretary of state, and John R. Bolton, the national security adviser — denuclearization means North Korea halting and dismantling its nuclear weapons program.

Mr. Bolton said last week that North Korea had not taken steps necessary for denuclearization, a process that American officials have said should include turning over a list of Pyongyang’s atomic weapons stockpiles, nuclear production facilities and missiles. North Korea has not agreed to do so and, according to Mr. Pompeo, is still producing fissile material at plants. Separately, American intelligence officials have concluded that North Korea is

continuing to make long-range missiles at a site north of Pyongyang, according to news reports. South Korea wants the United States to give Kim Jong-un, the North Korean leader, something significant — ideally an end-of-war declaration — to build domestic political will for denuclearization.

South Korean officials also have noted that North Korea is focused on the order of points made in the joint statement from Singapore. The commitment to denuclearization was third, while the first and second points called on the United States and North Korea to establish new relations and to build “a lasting and stable peace regime on the Korean Peninsula.” For the North Koreans, that means prioritizing an end-of-war declaration and peace treaty, analysts said. Joseph Y. Yun, the former senior diplomat on North Korea at the State Department, said in an interview that Washington and Pyongyang could try for a “declaration-for-declaration” agreement: North Korea would declare its nuclear assets in exchange for the United States’ supporting a declaration to end the Korean War.

For the declaration, the two Korean governments are working on a year’s end deadline at the latest, but ideally by the 18 SEP start of the annual United Nations General Assembly meeting in New York. It is widely believed that United Nations officials might invite Mr. Kim to attend the assembly and deliver a speech. “The best-case scenario is that Kim Jong-un visits the United Nations with a peace declaration in hand,” said John Delury, a professor at Yonsei University in Seoul who writes on the Korean conflict and Chinese history. The Koreans had originally considered putting together an end-of-war declaration in July, but that did not happen. Given their skepticism over North Korea’s commitment to denuclearization, American officials said the timeline was much too fast.

As always, the wild card is Mr. Trump. He insisted that the Singapore summit meeting be held in June, even though American officials wanted more time to prepare. Mr. Trump might aim for a similar foreign policy extravaganza in the fall, timed to the United Nations assembly and before the crucial November midterm elections in the United States. Although a peace declaration is not the same as a binding peace treaty, it would start the process for one. That would mean talking about how many American troops are needed in South Korea. Before the Singapore meeting, Mr. Trump ordered the Pentagon to prepare options for drawing down the troops there now. For some American officials, the troop presence in South Korea is not just a deterrent toward North Korea. It also helps the United States maintain a military footprint in Asia and a grand strategy of American hegemony.

China has already begun challenging the United States’ military presence in Asia, which will only be reinforced as China becomes the world’s biggest economy and modernizes its military. The officials also worry that President Moon Jae-in of South Korea might try to push for a lesser American military presence, or a weakening of the alliance, after an end-of-war declaration. “For the United States, an end-of-war declaration or a peace declaration or a peace treaty has always had a broader context,” Mr. Yun said. [Source: The New York Times | Edward Wong | August 13, 2018 ++]

Senior Transportation Issues ► Coping w/Inability to Obtain A Driver’s License

Even though Hank Ramak is no longer able to drive, that doesn't stop the 72- year-old from finding a way to see the lady he loves. Two days a week, Ramak sets out from his home in Byron to catch a ride to Powell. Ramak used to make the 32-mile round-trip daily, when he was still able to drive himself. But all that changed on 30 MAY — the Vietnam veteran's birthday — when his driver's license came up for renewal. "I have macular degeneration," explained Ramak. "It has gotten worse. I couldn't even see well enough to fill out the form for my driver's license." So, he started looking for rides — including by hitchhiking. The fact that I couldn't drive any more wasn't about to stop me from seeing Joyce," he said.

Joyce Jackson and Ramak have been a couple for more than three decades. To be exact: "34 years, 1 month and 26 days," Ramak said on a recent day. "The good, the bad, and everything in between." The past eight of those years, Jackson has been a resident of the Powell Valley Care Center and Ramak has faithfully traveled from Byron to Powell

to visit her. She'll turn 83 next month. Ramak met Jackson in 1980, while he was managing the Downtowner Liquor and Lounge in Cody. "Joyce would come in after work every day," he recalled. "She doesn't drink, but she loves her Pepsi. We hit it off." Jackson had just lost her first husband to M.S. "In one week, I lost my husband, my mother and my son. Then I met Hank," Jackson recalled, smiling at Ramak from her care center bed. "He's the most wonderful person there is."

Married to someone else at the time, Ramak divorced in 1983. He and Jackson got together in 1984 and have been a couple ever since. Nine years ago, Jackson suffered a stroke. For the first seven months, Ramak tried to take care of her in their Byron home, but Jackson's health continued to decline. In 2010, Ramak made the difficult decision to transfer Jackson to the Powell Valley Care Center and began driving from Byron to visit her. "I bought a new car," said Ramak. "The old one had given up the ghost; I was driving back and forth every day." Ramak said he began experiencing difficulties with his vision several years ago and has been told he needs corneal transplant surgery. The Department of Veterans Affairs will pay for the surgery, but not for the transportation to Salt Lake City, where he needs to go for the procedure, he said.

Unable to drive, Ramak now relies on the kindness of strangers to travel between Byron and Powell. "It usually takes 1 1/2 to 2 hours to get to Powell," said Ramak. "Sometimes I have to walk 4-5 miles before getting a ride." Typically, it doesn't take long to catch a ride back to Byron, said Ramak, but one recent afternoon he was having difficulty and started walking from the care center. He made it to Pizza Hut when a woman pulled over and asked if he was OK, telling him that he'd been staggering in the 97-degree heat. "I said I was hot," recalled Ramak. The woman called her boss to say she was going to be late getting back from lunch, then drove Ramak to his home in Byron. More recently, Ramak said he's been fortunate to catch rides with nurses as they drive through Byron on the way to morning shifts in Powell and Cody. Jackson is thankful Ramak comes to visit her at Powell Valley Care Center, "but I worry about him when he hitchhikes," she added. With few if any other options available,

Ramak plans to continue catching rides from Byron to Powell to visit Jackson. It's not the first time in his life he's had to hitch a ride. Ramak recounted one particularly memorable journey. It was 1968, the height of the Vietnam War and anti-war protests. Ramak had just arrived back in the U.S. after serving in Vietnam as a paratrooper in the 101st Army Airborne Division. Landing at Fort Ord, California, after an 18-hour flight, Ramak had to hitchhike the remaining 300-plus miles south to his hometown of Artesia. Ramak recalled standing by the side of the road in his uniform, trying to catch a ride. "Someone threw a beer bottle at me," he said. "It was a different time then."

Ramak had enlisted in the U.S. Army at the age of 18 and spent three years in the service — including 10 months in Vietnam — even though he wasn't a U.S. citizen. "I figured if the country was good enough to take me in, the least I could do was fight for it," Ramak said. Born in Holland in 1946, Ramak immigrated to America with his parents and five siblings as a young child. Hank Ramak's story highlights the unique transportation challenges faced by Big Horn Basin residents who don't drive. "There is a large number of unserved individuals in the Big Horn Basin, whether they be senior citizens or anyone else, who need non-emergency transport," said Denise Anderson, Director of the North Big Horn Senior Center in Lovell. "It's a huge issue." "There's no bus line, no taxi. I don't think there's even an Uber you can call," added Anderson.

Both Byron and Powell provide transportation to senior citizens through their Senior Centers, but their services are limited to prescribed areas and there is no connecting service between the two towns. The North Big Horn Senior Citizens Center provides transportation between the communities of Lovell, Byron, Deaver and Frannie. The Powell Senior Center operates a van, but its service area only extends 10 miles outside of the city limits. Because Ramak is visually impaired, he is potentially eligible for transportation assistance from the Rural Transportation Voucher (RTV) program, administered by Wyoming Services for Independent Living (WSIL).

"The RTV program is designed to provide assistance to people in rural areas that have a disability that is a barrier to their driving," explained Marcia Henthorn, WSIL RTV Program Manager. Funded by the Wyoming Department of Transportation (WYDOT), the RTV program provides vouchers that qualifying individuals with disabilities can use to reimburse a volunteer driver's mileage expenses. "But we have a limited amount of money, and a long wait

list for new enrollment," Henthorn added. The current wait time is approximately two years, she said. [Source: Powell Tribune via AP | Donna Shippen | August 12, 2018 ++]

Drones | Bomb Carrying Update 01 ► U.S. Has Few Tools To Prevent

The drones rigged with high explosives used in a plot targeting Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro highlight the risk of drone-enabled attacks that the U.S. has few tools to prevent. Federal law enforcement and security agencies are prohibited by a variety of laws from using new technologies that can track or disable small drones that pose a threat. Legislation pending in Congress aims to provide agencies with new authorities to mitigate nefarious drones, which security experts say are sure to become a more frequent threat in the future. "There's a huge heap of trouble in our future in the form of off-the-shelf drones, and we're not taking it seriously enough," said Hugh Gusterson, a professor at George Washington University's Elliott School of International Affairs.

Two drones rigged with explosives detonated near Maduro while he delivered a speech in Caracas on 4 AUG, causing a panic in a military parade. Maduro, who was unharmed, claimed afterward that the attack was an assassination plot backed by political rivals. Venezuelan officials said two small unmanned aircraft were each carrying a kilogram of C-4 plastic explosive, and that six people were arrested. The attack is the kind of threat that security experts and U.S. officials alike have long warned was on the horizon, and could embolden other bad actors, said Jeff Price, an aviation security consultant and professor at Metropolitan State University of Denver. "Now that's been tried I think we're going to see a lot more people trying it," he said.

The Secret Service has electronic jamming capabilities as part of the U.S. presidential motorcade, Price said. That prevents drones from flying too close to the president, but, he added, "it's very likely that if they can't take control of it then it's going to drop out of the sky onto somebody's head." Senior Homeland Security officials said the Venezuela attack reinforces why the department needs new authorities to combat threatening drones. One official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity, said they have not encountered instances of explosive or otherwise dangerous payloads delivered by drone in the U.S., while terror groups and criminal organizations have conducted such actions overseas.

At the same time, the department has seen increasing use of drones along the southern U.S. border by drug traffickers and instances of unmanned vehicles interfering with U.S. Coast Guard operations, the official said. The agency acknowledged the threat in written testimony for a hearing of the Senate Homeland Security Committee in June signed by David Glawe, undersecretary for intelligence and analysis, and Hayley Chang, the department's deputy general counsel. "This is a very serious, looming threat that we are currently unprepared to confront," the officials wrote. "Today we are unable to effectively counter malicious use of drones because we are hampered by federal laws."

Gusterson said the Venezuelan incident exemplifies the risk of drones being used to target individuals. The threat could come from hobbyists using small drones available in retail stores or by state actors targeting enemies with advanced drones equipped with facial recognition software that state actors, including the U.S., could use to target their enemies, he said. "I don't know that we're there yet but it's not hard to imagine being there within a few years," he said.

Venezuelan officials said the plot was partly foiled by government signal blockers to jam nearby airwaves used by drones and other devices, including cell phones. Other technologies can force a threatening drone to the ground with electro-magnetic signals sent from rifle-like devices, or ensnare them in nets fired from the ground or deployed by another drone, but those but have not yet been approved for widespread use beyond military applications, Price said. "We need to see more certification and deployment of the anti-drone technologies, but that's something that the U.S. has really been dragging its feet on."

The Venezuelan attack comes after drones have already been used by terrorist organizations to deliver explosive payloads in the Middle East and by criminals to smuggle drugs into prisons. In 2015, Secret Service agents recovered a small drone flown by a hobbyist that had crashed on the grounds of the White House. Legislation introduced by Senator Ron Johnson (R-WI) would lift restrictions on drone countermeasures that are currently in place. The bill, co-sponsored by Democrats Claire McCaskill (D-MO), Heidi Heitkamp (D-ND) and Doug Jones (D-AL) was approved by a committee and could be included in the upcoming Federal Aviation Administration re-authorization bill. The bill would give the Department of Homeland Security and the Justice Department the authority to monitor and track drones without consent of the operator. It also would allow the agencies to “seize or exercise control” of the devices, if necessary.

The Venezuela plot shows how small unmanned aircraft systems could be used to target individuals, Gusterson said. Drone-enabled attacks targeting large public gatherings such as sporting events or political rallies are an even bigger concern, he said. “One of the first steps in combating this is making sure that any drone in any airspace can be identified, and the U.S. has not taken any measure to do that,” he said. Brian Wynne, president of the Association for Unmanned Vehicle Systems International, a Virginia-based trade group for drone manufacturers, said in a statement the industry is working with policymakers on ways to ensure drones are used safely. Drones must “be equipped with remote identification technology, which will enhance the security of the national airspace and allow law enforcement officials to quickly identify, track and apprehend operators acting carelessly, recklessly, maliciously or illegally,” Wynne said.

Law enforcement and homeland security agencies have demanded the drone-identification tools before allowing more widespread uses, such as permitting flights over people. The FAA is finalizing a proposal for an identification requirement and expects to release it for public comment later this year. Having a mandatory identification beacon is key to protecting against intentional attacks and inadvertent flights into prohibited areas, the law enforcement groups argued to FAA. [Source: Bloomberg | Ryan Beene & Alan Levin | August 7, 2018 ++]

Marijuana Update 02 ► Colorado’s Legal Pot Market Overtaking Black Market Sales

A comprehensive new study released 2 AUG by the state’s Department of Revenue suggests shows Colorado’s legal pot market is overtaking black market sales. The report relies on new analytical methods to provide one of the clearest pictures to date about trends in Colorado’s marijuana market, according to the state. Recreational and medical marijuana sales together totaled about \$1.5 billion in Colorado in 2017. The state’s [total operating budget](#) for fiscal year 2017-2018 was about \$28.8 billion. “The results of the study indicate that the illicit market for resident and visitor marijuana has been largely, if not entirely, absorbed into the legal market,” the report says.

Mike Hartman, executive director of the state’s Department of Revenue said in a statement that the study gave him comfort “that the licensed, regulated commercial marketplace is working well.” The report shows pot consumption plateaued in Colorado over the past two years, after rising briskly between 2014 and 2016. Legalized adult recreational sales began in 2014. Colorado residents consumed around 189 metric tons of marijuana in 2017, the report says. Visitors consumed 19 metric tons. Consumption figures are based on demographics, responses to surveys, and other research, and must be estimated, the report explains.

In addition to consumption estimates, the study authors calculated demand for marijuana based on state inventory tracking data. They estimate that total marijuana demand in the state was 301 metric tons of “marijuana flower equivalent” last year. The state says the methodology behind the “flower equivalent” measure is first-of-its-kind and allows for more accurate comparisons of supply, demand, potency and pricing across different kinds of marijuana products.

The report notes that “edibles,” such as cookies and brownies, make up an increasing share of regulated marijuana sales in the state, as do “concentrates,” which include oils that can be consumed using vaping devices. While overall marijuana sales increased by about 51 percent between 2015 and 2017, concentrate sales were up 114 percent and edible sales rose by about 67 percent. Edibles made up 13 percent of the overall recreational market, but nearly 25 percent in tourist areas. Across the board, prices are also down. From 2014 to 2017 the price for marijuana in flower form, in the recreational market, fell from \$14.05 to \$5.34 per gram weighted average. Per gram prices for concentrate products fell from \$41.43 to \$21.57. Edible prices have been steady at about \$18 per 100 milligram package.

The report also says the amount of marijuana getting seized or destroyed, or that does not meet quality standards, has decreased, indicating improved regulatory compliance in the industry. A full copy of the study, Market Size and Demand for Marijuana in Colorado can be found [here](#). [Source: Route Fifty | Bill Lucia | August 2, 2018 ++]

Quiet Skies ► **How To Get On TSA’s Watch List**

Next time you board a commercial airliner, be careful not to sweat too much, glance out the window nervously, visit the bathroom more than once, or [if you are a male passenger] permit your Adam’s apple to bob excessively. Failure to control such movements may land you on a secret government watch list as a suspected terrorist. The foregoing factors are not lifted from a screenplay for an upcoming episode of Sacha Baron Cohen’s “Who is America.” They are part of an actual list of characteristics included in a previously secret federal government program, code named “Quiet Skies,” administered by the TSA (Transportation Security Administration) and the federal Air Marshal Service, in cahoots with airline personnel.

As noted in recent news reports, the program was launched in 2010 and has steadily evolved into an expanded version of the TSA’s earlier and much-maligned SPOT program (“Screening of Passengers by Observation Techniques”). Like SPOT, a Boston Globe report of the Quiet Skies program confirms that passengers are flagged for all manner of “suspicious” behavior, including but not limited to those noted above. In a testament to the program’s faulty premises, and as noted also in the Boston Globe analysis, previous targets of this surveillance include a flight attendant and a federal law enforcement officer. “[J]eez we need to have an easy way to document this nonsense,” one Air Marshal texted his colleague; concluding that, “Congress needs to know that it’s gone from bad to worse.”

The program detailed in this latest revelation is not the first time federal agents or agencies have engaged in profiling people as an easy way to identify lawbreakers. In the late 1970s and into the early ‘80s at the height of the War on Drugs, “drug courier profiling” was all the rage. Atlanta’s international airport became Ground Zero for the practice of identifying suspects who were believed to be hiding illegal drugs in their bags or on their persons. This was back in the pre-cell phone era, remember; and making a call from a public phone at an airport right after deplaning was one of several characteristics on which federal drug agents relied in deciding whether a person fit the “drug courier profile” and would be further surveilled, interrogated, arrested, and eventually charged. While some courts allowed drugs thus seized to be admitted into evidence, the practice of subjectively profiling individuals as the basis for prosecution, was deemed by many federal judges to run afoul of the Fourth Amendment’s prohibition against unreasonable searches and seizures.

Law enforcement’s interest in profiling criminal suspects as a shorthand way to nab lawbreakers, however, remains alive and well; especially in the post-9/11 world. While such methodology may in many respects be sound, the key to constitutionally permissible profiling is to incorporate articulable characteristics in such way as is consistent with the Fourth Amendment, and without injecting factors touching on racial, religious, or other protected criteria. The goal of TSA’s most recent profiling gambit does not appear to be so much the arrest of individual passengers based on observed behavior (although that could happen), as was the goal in the earlier “drug courier profile” program. However, there remain inherent and insidious problems with surveillance programs like “Quiet Skies.”

When passengers are “watched” surreptitiously by government agents, or by airline employees at the behest of those agents, what information is noted, in what form is it collected, where is it maintained, and for how long? Might a law-abiding, but excessively nervous passenger find himself unwittingly on a watch list; a list that becomes part of a vast database of information subject to algorithmic manipulation that might show up in the future as a flag identifying the individual as untrustworthy, or perhaps even unfit to purchase a firearm or engage in other endeavors? These are not crazy, hypothetical questions; and citizens have a right to know whether, how, why and to what extent, their movements are being surveilled and cataloged by government agents simply because they have decided to travel by air.

In addition to asking these important questions of TSA and other federal agencies, the Congress should demand to know why such programs are even considered necessary at all. After all, haven’t all passengers on commercial air carriers already been subject to background checks and physical screening procedures to ensure they do not possess the tools that would be needed in order to endanger the security of the plane they already have boarded? Flying aboard commercial airlines already is fraught with discomfort and tension. Must we now also have to be concerned that an overactive sweat gland, a jittery Adam’s apple, or a second trip to the Lilliputian restroom might land us on a secret watch list? [Source: Self-Reliance Central | Robert Laurence Barr | July 2018 ++]

Hurricane Season 2018 ► **NOAA Predicts Below-Normal Storm Activity**

Federal forecasters revised their hurricane season outlook 9 AUG, calling for below-normal storm activity in the Atlantic Ocean thanks partially to the predicted development of El Niño. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s new seasonal outlook indicated a 60 percent chance of below-normal storm activity, up from 25 percent in May, said Gerry Bell, lead seasonal hurricane forecaster at the agency’s Climate Prediction Center. Forecasters had originally predicted “near-normal or above-normal” activity during hurricane season, which stretches from June to November. “Fortunately, the chance of an above-normal season has dropped to only 10 percent,” Bell said on a call about the updated outlook.

The revised outlook calls for between nine and 13 named storms, four to seven of which could strengthen to hurricanes. Up to two of those could become major hurricanes, defined as storms rated category 3 or higher, Bell said. Those ranges include four named storms that have already formed in the Atlantic Ocean this year. In May, NOAA had predicted 10 to 16 named storms, with five to nine hurricanes, one to four of them category 3 or higher. An average six-month hurricane season produces 12 named storms, six of which strengthen to hurricanes, according to NOAA.

The lowered prediction is partially due to the increased likelihood—70 percent, up from 45 percent in May—that El Niño will form. The weather pattern, which warms the ocean surface, will likely be severe enough to deter hurricane activity, Bell said. “We’re expecting El Niño to develop in the next few months, and the models are predicting that it will become strong enough to suppress the hurricane activity,” he said. “Exactly when it develops will be a factor in determining exactly what we get for the season as a whole.” Also at play: cool sea-surface temperatures in the main storm development region, “coupled with stronger wind shear, drier air and increased atmospheric stability,” he said.

Despite the downgraded forecast, NOAA and the Federal Emergency Management Agency urged residents in coastal areas to stay prepared and vigilant for storms. “Today’s updated outlook is a reminder that we are entering the height of hurricane season and everyone needs to know their true vulnerabilities to storms and storm surge,” FEMA Administrator Brock Long said in a statement. “Now is the time to know who issues evacuation orders in their community, heed the warnings, update your insurance and have a preparedness plan. Don’t let down your guard, late season storms are always a possibility, always keep your plans updated.” [Source: Route Fifty | Kate Elizabeth Queram | August 9, 2018 ++]

Happy Hour Origin ► U. S. Navy

Today, the term “happy hour” is ingrained in communal cocktail thought. In the 1920s, the phrase “happy hour” was used by the U. S. Navy for a period of scheduled athletic activity or other entertainment. The first mention in print of “happy hour” in this context came in a 1959 Saturday Evening Post article. But it was earlier, in the 1920s, thanks to the failed experiment called Prohibition, when brave citizens gathered for pre-dining hours specifically focused on consuming then-illegal cocktails at a speakeasy or home bar. Eventually, the ideas merged, and people began using the phrase frequently to refer to a jolly time had when drinking with friends during the late-afternoon and early-evening hours. But I believe the notion of ebullient tipping with pals and gals before dinner dates back even farther. For example, in Shakespeare’s Henry IV, Part II, enthusiastic imbibers Falstaff says, “Come, I will go drink with you, but I cannot tarry dinner.”

It only makes sense that such a time would be revered. You’ve just completed a hard day’s work and aren’t quite ready to head home or to weigh yourself down with a meal. But you need to shake off the day and kick up those heels. What can possibly be better than going into the perfect establishment to partake of cocktails and convivial chatter? Picking that perfect place, though, can be a little tricky; it must be a bar, lounge, saloon, tavern or watering hole that meets some very specific criteria.

- For one, the bartender must be approachable and amiable.
- Second, that bartender must make a dandy drink—one that doesn’t overwhelm the taste buds, but rather, entrances, and one that isn’t served in a trough-size receptacle. As celebrated wine writer André Simon wrote in his 1948 book, *Drink*: “The cocktail is intended to be like unto a bugle call to meals.”
- Third, the place in which you’re spending a happy hour should allow for conversation both intimate and joyous. And, finally, the establishment should have a different atmosphere at happy hour than at other times, adding to the uniqueness of those hours. The downtown lounge that’s cuddly early on and a cattle yard later, the out-of-the-way nook that’s candlelit after work, but then hosts (shudder) an open jazz night, and the hip restaurant bar that shifts to serious food service after 7 p.m.—they all call to me and rarely disappoint during those peak hours of cheer.

If you’ve had a bad day at the salt mine, happy hour must lift the weight from your shoulders and put you right for the evening. If you’re getting ready to have dinner with a set of new in-laws, happy hour is necessary to steady the nerves. Happy hour has to remind us that whatever came before or whatever might come afterward, right here and right now, for these few hours, all is well—and well shaken—with the world. Especially in the Northwest, where the very atmosphere outside can seem to be against us with pelting rain and unrelenting clouds, the right happy hour is a beacon of light and laughter. Remember, as Joseph Spence said a few hundred years ago, “There’s always sunshine in a pub.” Just be sure to pick the right pub. [Source: Seattle Magazine | April 2012 ++]

Mexican Inventions ► 10 Amazing Ones



Chocolate - The first recorded evidence of chocolate was found in Mesoamerica, in the region that later became Mexico. You have Mexico to thank for Belgian chocolates, Hershey’s kisses, Abuelita hot cocoa, German chocolate cake, and French silk pie.

TACOS - While the precise origins of the taco are unknown, Jeffrey M. Pilcher, a professor at the University of Minnesota and taco expert, believes that they date back to 18th century Mexico when men working in the silver mines invented the delicious food.

Flamin’ Hot Cheetos - These were invented by Richard Montañez, a Mexican immigrant and janitor at the Frito-Lay plant in California. He pitched his idea for a chili powder coated chip to the president of the company, who loved the idea. Now, Montañez leads the Multicultural Sales & Community Promotions branch of the company!

Color Television - The inventor of the color television was a Mexican. Guillermo González Camarena was the first person to patent the product when he developed an “improved chromoscopic adapter” for color television transmissions in 1940.

Tequila - It’s believed that tequila was first produced in the 16th century, although the Aztec people had previously brewed an alcoholic beverage made from the agave plant — long before the Spanish arrived on this continent.

Pinata - Originally piñatas are from China, but the tradition took on new meaning when it was introduced into Europe in the 14th century and later brought to Mexico. Mayan tradition called for a pot filled with decorative feathers to commemorate the birthday of Huitzilopochtli. The Mayans would then blindfold themselves and break the pot with a stick or club, causing the treasures to fall to the floor. This festive ritual later became the basis for the piñata as we know it today.

Caesar Salad - An Italian immigrant named Caesar Cardini operated restaurants in both the United States and Tijuana, Mexico. During one Fourth of July rush, he depleted the kitchen supplies and had to make do with what he had on-hand. Thus, the Caesar Salad was born on the Mexican border.

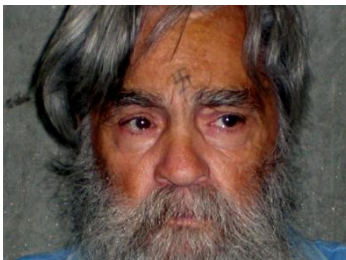
Margarita Cocktail - The margarita was invented in 1938 by Carlos “Danny” Herrera at his restaurant “Rancho La Gloria”, halfway between Tijuana and Rosarito, Baja California, Mexico; created for customer and former “Ziegfeld” dancer Marjorie King, who was allergic to many spirits, but not to tequila.

Maiz (Corn) - The Olmec and Mayan Indians who first cultivated the vegetable in Mexico.

Birth control - When Mexican Luis Ernesto Miramontes Cardenas was just 25-years-old, he co-discovered the compound which became the chemical basis for the first oral contraceptive. In other words: he invented the world’s first birth control!

[Source: The Yucatan Times | August 8, 2015 ++]

Interesting Facts ► Charles Manson



Charles Manson died of natural causes on November 19, 2017, at a hospital in Kern County, California. The California Department of Corrections issued a news release confirming Charles Manson's death at 8:13 pm. on that date. Corcoran California State Prison had held Manson in a protective housing unit since 1989. He would have next been eligible for parole in 2027. Manson has captured the public's attention since he led "the Manson Family" cult in committing a series of murders in the 1960s. Most notably, the cult murdered five people, including actress Sharon Tate and her unborn baby, in August 1969. Over the years, Charles Manson and his followers have been the subjects of rampant speculation and false or misleading reports. False reports that Charles Manson had been granted parole circled the web in June 2017. Credible reports about pending decisions related to the release of Manson Family followers from prison likely fueled false reports of Manson's parole. There was also a false report of Manson's death in September 2018. So, following years of speculation and false reports, Charles Manson died at 83 in November 2017. [Source: <https://www.truthorfiction.com/shit> | July 20, 2018 ++]

One Word Essays ► Hope



Have You Heard? ► High School Teacher | Rabbi's Wife | Important Mistake | 1917 Stats

NEW High School Teacher -- After retiring, a former Marine Corps Gunnery Sergeant took a new job as a high school teacher. Just before the school year started, he injured his back. He was required to wear a light plaster cast around the upper part of his body. Fortunately, the cast fit under his shirt and wasn't noticeable when he wore his suit coat.

On the first day of class, he found himself assigned to the toughest students in the school. The smart-a** punks, having already heard the new teacher was a former Marine, were leery of him and he knew they would be testing his discipline in the classroom. Walking confidently into the rowdy classroom, the new teacher opened the window wide and sat down at his desk. With a strong breeze blowing it made his tie flap. He picked up a stapler and stapled the tie to his chest. Dead Silence.

The rest of the year went smoothly.

-o-o-O-o-o-

Rabbi's wife -- At Friday night services, Morris went to his friend Irving and said, "Irving, I need a favor - I'm sleeping with the rabbi's wife. Can you hold him in temple for an hour after services for me?"

Irving not very fond of the idea, but being Morris' lifelong friend, he reluctantly agreed. After services, he struck up a conversation with the rabbi asking him all sorts of stupid questions in an effort to keep him occupied. After some time, the wise rabbi became suspicious and asked, "Irving what are you really up to with all this?"

Irving, filled with feelings of guilt and remorse, confessed to the rabbi "I'm sorry Rabbi, my friend Morris is sleeping with your wife right now and asked me to keep you occupied." The wise rabbi smiled and, putting a brotherly hand on Irving's shoulder, said "Irving I think you'd better hurry home, my wife died two years ago!"

-o-o-O-o-o-

Impolant mistake -- It seems that a young man volunteered for Navy service during World War II. He had such a high aptitude for aviation that he was sent right to Pensacola skipping boot camp.

The very first day at Pensacola he solos and is the best flier on the base. All they could do was give him his gold wings and assign him immediately to an aircraft carrier in the Pacific.

On his first day aboard he took off and single-handedly shot down 6 Japanese Zeroes. Then climbing up to 20,000 ft. he found 9 more Japanese planes and shot them all down, too. Noting that his fuel was getting low, he descended, circled the carrier and came in for a perfect landing on the deck.

He threw back the canopy, climbed out and jogged over to the captain. Saluting smartly he said, "Well sir, how did I do on my very first day?"

The captain turned around, bowed, and replied, "You make one velly impolant mistake!"

-o-o-O-o-o-

1917 Stats -- One hundred years ago. What a difference a century makes! Here are some statistics for the Year 1917 in America:

- The average life expectancy for men was 47 years.
- Fuel for cars was sold in drug stores only.
- Only 14 percent of homes had a bathtub.
- Only 8 percent of homes had a telephone.
- The maximum speed limit in most cities was 10 mph.
- The tallest structure in the world was the Eiffel Tower.
- The average US wage in 1910 was 22 cents per hour.
- The average US worker made between \$200 & \$400 per year.
- A competent accountant could expect to earn \$2000 per year.
- A dentist \$2,500 per year, A veterinarian between \$1,500 - \$4,000 per year, and, a mechanical engineer about \$5,000 per year.
- More than 95 percent of all births took place at home.
- Ninety percent of all Doctors had NO COLLEGE EDUCATION! Instead, they attended so-called medical schools, many of which were condemned in the press AND the government as "substandard."
- Sugar cost four cents a pound, Eggs were fourteen cents a dozen, and Coffee was fifteen cents a pound.
- Most women only washed their hair once a month, and, used Borax or egg yolks for shampoo.
- Canada passed a law that prohibited poor people from entering into their country for any reason.
- The American flag had 45 stars ...

- The population of Las Vegas, Nevada was only 30.
- Crossword puzzles, canned beer, and iced tea hadn't been invented yet.
- There was neither a Mother's Day nor a Father's Day.
- Two out of every 10 adults could not read or write, and, only 6 percent of all Americans had graduated from high school.
- Marijuana, heroin, and morphine were all available over the counter at local corner drugstore. Back then pharmacists said, "Heroin clears the complexion, gives buoyancy to the mind, regulates the stomach, bowels, and is, in fact, a perfect guardian of health!"
- Eighteen percent of households had at least one full-time servant or domestic help...
- There were about 230 reported murders in the ENTIRE U.S.A.!

Retirement Planning Update 16 ► Surprising Things About it Nobody Told You

Most of us spend decades working and dreaming of a day when we can retire. But when we finally arrive at our post-work destination, it's not unusual to find ourselves in a world of surprises. Knowing what to expect in advance can help you prepare for — and adjust to — life in your golden years. Following are some key things no one tells you about before you retire.

Housing will remain your biggest expense

Many retirees dream of paying off their mortgage so they will be free to spend their money on travel and other activities. But the reality is that housing likely will remain the biggest expense in your budget for as long as you live. Retirees in four separate age cohorts all said they spent more money on maintaining a home than anything else, according to a survey by the [Employee Benefit Research Institute](#). In every age group, housing was cited as the top cost by at least 42 percent of respondents. No other expense — not even health care — was even close. Some of this cost pain may be self-inflicted. Merrill Lynch and Age Wave [surveyed](#) 3,000 retirees and found that 30 percent of those who moved during retirement purchased a larger — and presumably, more expensive — home than their previous digs.

Work will not end — it will simply change

You will probably work in retirement — and not just because you have to. More than 70 percent of people say they want to work during retirement, according to the findings of “[Work in Retirement: Myths and Motivations](#),” a joint study by Merrill Lynch and Age Wave. As you age, chances are good that the nature of work will change, though. The study found that 3 in 5 retirees plan to launch a new line of work that differs from what they have done in the past. Working retirees also are three times more likely than pre-retirees to own their own business.

If you've never volunteered before, you won't start in retirement

About 90 percent of Americans say they would like to do volunteer service for someone or some cause that needs their help. But just 25 percent actually do so, according to the [Stanford Center on Longevity](#). When asked why they don't follow through on the wish to help, Americans most commonly cite a lack of free time. Yet, retirees — with plenty of time on their hands — do not volunteer at rates that are any higher than those of workers. And among people who never volunteered during their working years, just one-third finally begin volunteering during retirement.

Retirement can be lonely for single men

In some ways, retirement is more challenging for women. Because they live longer than men, they will have to stretch the funds from their nest eggs over a longer period. To make matters worse, women generally start with [less](#) in retirement savings than men do. But women who are single have one big advantage over their male counterparts: They are less likely to be lonely. Just 48 percent of retired men who live alone say they are very satisfied with the

number of friends they have, according to an analysis of Pew Research Center [survey findings](#). However, a robust 71 percent of women who live alone are satisfied with the number of friends they keep.

Health issues likely will catch you by surprise

Slightly more than one-third of retirees — 34 percent — say health problems have put a damper on their retirement years, according to a survey from the [Nationwide Retirement Institute](#). And 75 percent of those folks say their health problems emerged sooner in life than they expected. To make matters worse, one-quarter (24 percent) say health-related expenses keep them from living the retirement of their dreams. Such sobering numbers underscore why many people would benefit from [opening](#) a health savings account and stashing as much cash as possible into that HSA.

As you grow older, you will feel younger

Everyone has heard the cliché: “You’re only as old as you feel.” If that is true, here is some good news for retirees: Paradoxically, the older people get, the younger they are likely to feel, according to “Growing Old in America: [Expectations vs. Reality](#),” a paper from the Pew Research Center. For example, among people ages 18-29, about half say they feel their age, one-quarter feel older than their age and another one-quarter feel younger. However, among those 65 and older, 60 percent say they feel younger than their age and 32 percent say they feel exactly their age. Just a scant 3 percent say they feel older than their age.

Your early golden years might not gleam as you had hoped

Nearly one-third of recent retirees — 28 percent — say life is worse in retirement than it was during their working years, according to the Nationwide Retirement Institute survey. What is the source of this gloom and doom? Money — or lack thereof. Among those who lament post-work life, 78 percent cite a lack of income and 76 percent cite a high cost of living as the top factors in giving them the blues during their golden years. The message to future retirees is obvious: Save early, save often and keep saving. For more tips, check out “Ready to Rescue Your Retirement in 2018? [Here’s How](#).”

Initial disappointment will give way to later satisfaction

If you are among those disappointed with retirement, take heart: As with so many things, retirement is what you make it. You can take steps to boost your overall satisfaction with life during your golden years. For example, researchers at the [University of Exeter](#) in the United Kingdom found that people who volunteer are less likely to be depressed and more likely to be satisfied with life. There is even evidence that volunteers live longer. So, if retirement has got you down, stop gazing at your navel and start looking outward at ways to help others. A lot of other research has found that a happy marriage and spending time with close family and friends can greatly boost retirement satisfaction. Even if you don’t take steps to make yourself happy, you might just end up feeling joyous anyway. The Pew Research Center found that 45 percent of adults 75 and older believe life has turned out better than they expected. Just 5 percent say it has turned out worse.

[Source: MoneyTalksNews | Chris Kissell | August 13, 2018 ++]

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When you think you're having a bad day, just think about this horse



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