

RAO

BULLETIN

15 November 2018



PDF Edition

THIS RETIREE ACTIVITIES OFFICE BULLETIN CONTAINS THE FOLLOWING ARTICLES

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

*** ATTACHMENTS ***

Attachment – Delaware Vet State Benefits
Attachment – Military History Anniversaries 16 thru 30 NOV
Attachment – Fractured Jaw | Plan for Tactical Nuclear Weapons Use in Vietnam

*** DoD ***



DoD Budget 2020 Update 01 ► Potential 5% Cut Impact on Active Duty/Retirees

President Trump's recent call for a 5 percent cut across every federal department includes the Defense Department, Defense News confirmed in a 27 OCT report. What does all of this mean for servicemembers and retirees? Potential reductions could mean:

- A military pay raise for fiscal year 2020 that is below the Employment Cost Index (ECI)

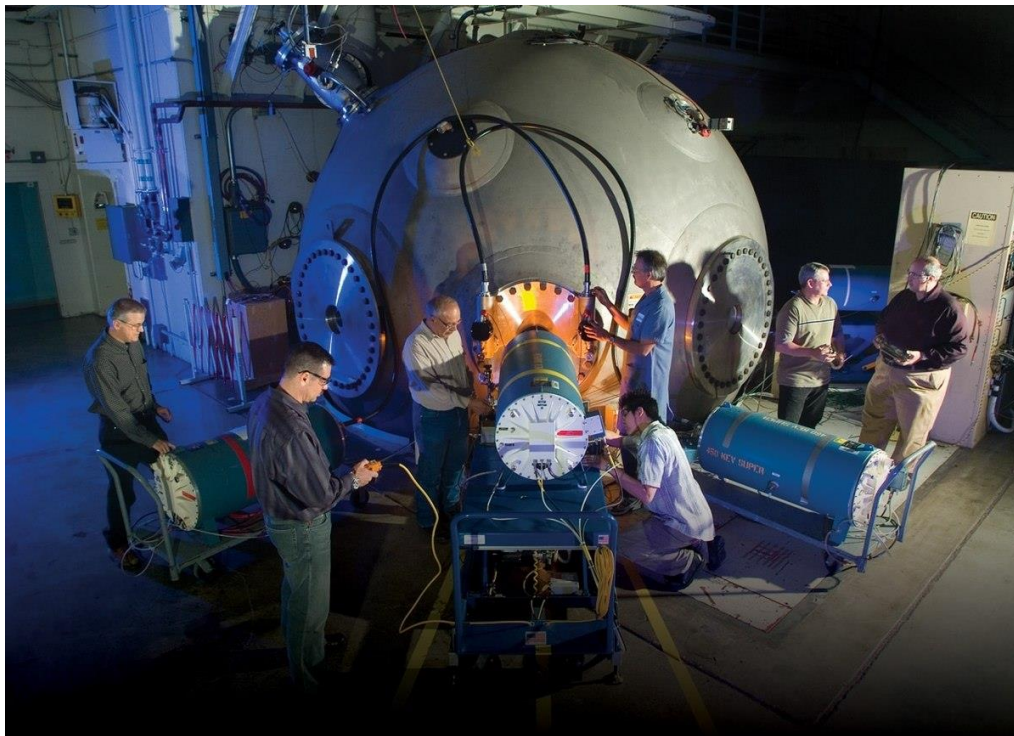
- Another possible push to reduce the calculation for Basic Allowance for Housing (especially with regard to dual military couples)
- And increases in TRICARE fees for beneficiaries.

Defense News reports the new topline defense budget will be \$700 billion, not the \$733 billion that the Pentagon had been planning for most of the past year. The new topline number is down from the \$716 billion approved in the FY2019 defense budget. Deputy Defense Secretary Pat Shanahan on 26 OCT indicated that this will not be a one year blip, but rather part of a flattening of budgets. At the Military Reporters and Editors News Conference, Shanahan said, “When you look at the \$700 billion, it’s not just for one year drop down, [or] a phase, it’s a drop and then held constant over the future years defense program, a five year projection included in every budget.”

Congress will have the final word in the outcome of the FY2020 defense budget, once the administration’s proposal hits the Hill early in the New Year, and after the upcoming 2018 midterm elections. As a new Congress will be seated, no outcome is certain. Also requiring congressional action in FY2020 are the reductions that would come with a return of the mandated sequestration cuts required under the 2011 Budget Control Act. Without further legislative action by Congress, these reductions will also directly impact the FY2020 defense budget.

All of this portends that after two years of sustained growth in the defense budget, there will now be proposed reductions and cutbacks to defense spending and programs. This means that reductions will have to be found and those cuts can often start with pay and benefits. Earlier this month, MOAA reported the Employment Cost Index could be driving another big pay increase in 2020, but the prospect of cuts means the actual raise could come in below ECI next year. [Source: The MOAA Newsletter | Mike Barro | November 1, 2018 ++]

DoD Nuclear Mission Update 02 ► **New Warhead’s Projected Cost & Availability**



NNSA scientists are responsible for maintaining and supporting America's nuclear arsenal.

Estimates for the cost of America's nuclear warheads have gone up in the last year, as the government prepares to develop and maintain as many as nine new systems in the next 25 years. The National Nuclear Security Administration's fiscal 2019 Stockpile Stewardship and Management Plan, released 31 OCT lays out the investments that could be needed for the NNSA over the next two and a half decades. The NNSA is a semiautonomous department within the Department of Energy. While the Defense Department manages the delivery systems of the nuclear force — ships, planes and missiles — NNSA oversees the development, maintenance and disposal of nuclear warheads.

However, NNSA costs are not just about the warheads, as requirements range from upgrading aging infrastructure, to increasing the production of plutonium pits, to securing facilities. The agency expects capital investments during this period could require spending between \$61.1 billion and \$90.7 billion, for example. And the overall cost of replacing America's nuclear arsenal will be much higher when factoring in the development of new cruise missiles, intercontinental ballistic missiles and bomber aircraft. Kingston Reif of the Arms Control Association said the report "highlights the enormous scope of work already on NNSA's overburdened plate, and the additional work that the Nuclear Posture Review proposes to pile on top."

He pointed to a chart in the report showing NNSA's budgetary estimate for the next 25 years has grown significantly in the year since the FY18 estimate — by about \$75 billion over the previous estimate. "NNSA claims that this increase 'is generally affordable and executable,' but that's wishful thinking," Reif said, noting previous concerns raised by the Government Accountability Office that NNSA could not meet its requirements with its planned budget. The cost increase is partly driven by the Trump administration's Nuclear Posture Review. Released early this year, the NPR called for two new nuclear warhead designs as well as an overall recommitment to the nuclear triad. Here are the major warhead programs the agency is tracking as it assesses the nuclear stockpile for the next 25 years:

W76-1 — The W76-1, which is placed on the re-entry vehicle for the submarine-launched Trident II ballistic missile, will be the first completed program, with production slated to be finished during this fiscal year, NNSA estimates. Completing that program is a major milestone, not just because of the capability it will provide, but because it is the first of the major life-extension programs NNSA has underway — something of a proof-of-concept for the agency going forward.

W76-2 — A new [low-yield nuclear warhead](#) first announced in the Nuclear Posture Review, the W76-2 is the newest design, and hence in the earliest stages. The agency does not offer up an estimated price tag for the program, but the administration [repurposed \\$65 million in funding](#) during FY19 to begin development on the weapon, a variant on the W76-1. Production for the W76-2 is slated to go into FY24, but whether it gets there depends on the outcome of next week's midterm elections. Democrats oppose the warhead design, and Rep. Adam Smith of Washington, who is expected to become chairman of the House Armed Services Committee should Democrats take the House, said he will [look to kill the development](#) and use those funds elsewhere.

B61-12 — The B61-12 program, which will replace the B61-3, -4, -7 and -10 variants with a new warhead design, will deliver its [first production unit](#) in FY20 and complete production by FY24. NNSA estimates the program will cost between \$7.3 and \$9.5 billion. The B61 is America's nuclear gravity bomb, and its upgraded variant will be certified on the B-2 the future B-21, America's F-15, and F-16 fighter aircraft, and British and German Tornado aircraft under a NATO agreement. The F-35 is also planned to go through certification on the weapon at some point in the next decade.

W88 Alt 370 — This program, another warhead update for the Trident II ballistic missile, will deliver its first production unit by December 2019, with complete alternations by FY24. The life-extension program adds new fuzes and other technology to update the warhead. The program faces "a continued risk of late component design changes," in part because the warhead is a co-design between the Air Force and Navy. NNSA estimates the program will cost between \$2.4 billion and \$3.1 billion, with \$2.6 billion as the more likely cost.

W80-4 — This warhead design is for the Air Force’s long-range standoff weapon, or LRSO, a new air-launched nuclear cruise missile. Because the warhead is being designed at the same time as the LRSO delivery system — the first time in 30 years the two have been done in parallel — the program faces “unique” risks, the NNSA report says. In addition, the program “experienced a loss of \$120 million in productivity due to delays associated with Continuing Resolutions since the beginning of FY 2016. As a result, ramp-up of management and operating program staffing was constrained for 3 years across the entire nuclear security enterprise,” leading to a four-month delay from where the program ideally should be, the report states. Overall, the agency estimates a program cost of \$7.6 billion to \$11.7 billion.

W78 replacement warhead — Designed to go aboard the Air Force’s next-generation ICBM, currently being competed as the [Ground Based Strategic Deterrent program](#), it is the furthest out of the programs. The system was originally scheduled to go live in FY25, but a decision made in 2014 pushed the delivery date to FY30. Notably, NNSA now seeks to advance the program by a year in order to best sync up with the GBSB development schedule. “Production is predicated on all newly manufactured components and a nuclear material manufacturing modernization strategy that relies on large, multi-year investments in component and material capabilities,” the report notes. “Program success is contingent on the development of new technologies to address antiquated design, material obsolescence, and performance expectations.” The agency estimates the cost of the program will be between \$9.9 billion and \$15.1 billion.

Other future systems — NNSA says it will support the Pentagon as it launched an analysis of alternatives on a still-unnamed sea-launched cruise missile, the second new system announced in the Nuclear Posture Review. Until that program is completed, however, the agency will not start a formal program. And like the W76-2, the future of this system may depend on election outcomes. NNSA also has space for two systems labeled Ballistic Missile Warhead (IW or BM-Y) and Ballistic Missile Warhead (IW or BM-Z), essentially two future warhead designs that could replace the W78. The cost estimate for the BM-Y ranges from \$12.7 billion to \$18.9 billion, with production starting around FY35; the estimate for BM-Z ranges from \$14.2 billion to \$20.6 billion, with production starting around FY41.

[Source: DefenseNews | Aaron Mehta | November 2, 2018 ++]

DoD Audits Update 02 ► **Audit Results of \$2.4 Trillion in Assets Due 15 NOV**

The results of the Pentagon’s first-ever audit could generate public backlash against boosting defense spending, according to Comptroller David Norquist. After years of congressional and public criticism, the Defense Department is conducting an audit of its more than \$2.4 trillion in assets. The audit findings will be released on Nov.15 or Nov. 16, Norquist said. The audit is widely expected to find significant problems. Defense Secretary Jim Mattis earlier this year dared investigators to find problems and said Pentagon officials are committed to fixing them.

Still, Norquist said there’s a “legitimate concern” that the publicized problems could generate an uproar akin to the mid-1980s \$435 claw hammer that became a symbol for runaway, bloated defense spending during President Ronald Reagan’s first-term military buildup. Annual national security spending, the vast majority of which is comprised of Pentagon outlays, has more than doubled since the September 2001 attacks on New York and Washington. “The way to prevent a \$435 claw hammer in the first place is the knowledge that something like that will be revealed to public scrutiny,” Steve Ellis, Vice President of Taxpayers for Common Sense, said in an e-mail. “Costs to get the Pentagon to a more fiscally transparent and accountable place will reap savings down the road.”

“I hope people understand, when you’re the team that said ‘hey, we’re going to go look, it’s because of our commitment to being good stewards,’” Norquist said 29 OCT at the Professional Services Council federal budget outlook conference. While Norquist said worry about public reaction may have been an argument to forgo an audit, he also said, from the taxpayers’ point of view, “it’s a very dangerous way to look at the world, which is — ‘they

might find something that is sufficiently of a problem that it would look bad to show it.” “The answer is ‘if they found it, we need to fix it,’” he said. Norquist said the audit will include “a laundry list of problems we are trying to solve.” But he said people should distinguish between accounting questions that may be raised and other types of issues. Accounting errors that relate to the production of financial statements, “which is different from our operations,” could produce numbers “that sound very dramatic but have zero effect on operations,” he said.

The Pentagon Inspector General will summarize the overall findings in a single audit, Norquist said, but the department will be broken down into 24 pieces, with each getting a stand-alone audit. “So if you work with Defense Logistics Agency, they actually have three audits,” he said. The Defense Department has failed for decades to conduct a full audit. One of the Pentagon’s most outspoken critics on the topic, Sen. Chuck Grassley (R-IA), has called the agency’s failure of 26 years of hard-core foot-dragging illustrates that internal resistance to auditing the books runs deep.

The Pentagon was expected to spend close to \$1 billion to carry out its first expansive audit and start fixing problems the auditors identify, Norquist told the House Armed Services Committee in January. The Pentagon’s negative audit findings, and ensuing criticism, can be mitigated “to a certain extent by pointing out that the job of an audit is to find problems so they can be fixed,” Todd Harrison, a budget expert at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, said in an email. “The alternative would be to continue blindly and allow problems to persist [Source: Bloomberg Government | Tony Capaccio & Roxana Tiron | October 29, 2018 ++]

DoD/VA CWA Planning Effort ► Chemical Warfare Agent Exposure

VA and the Department of Defense (DoD) and the Veterans Administration (VA) are currently engaged in a joint effort to develop long-term plans for addressing chemical warfare agents (CWA) and weaponized toxic industrial chemical exposure, including plans for medical follow-up, surveillance, risk communication, benefits, and outreach. DoD tested CWAs on thousands of service member volunteers between 1922 and 1975. They recruited service members on a volunteer basis, but the details of the associated risks were not fully understood at the time.

- DoD sent a letter to approximately 3,859 identified Veterans involved in testing, stating that medical care is available from the Army. This is in addition to any VA medical care that Veterans are already receiving or are entitled to receive. The Army will facilitate care at a VA facility if a Veteran wishes to continue using VA facilities.
- For those who may have been exposed to CWA during current operations, including Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), Iraqi Freedom (OIF), and New Dawn (OND), DoD has investigated any possible CWA contacts and identified 411 Service Members who may have been exposed.

Possible chemical warfare agents

Chemical weapons that OEF/OIF/OND Veterans may have been exposed to fall into four main categories: harassing, incapacitating, lethal, and blister agents. These vary in terms of onset and severity of symptoms and long-term health implications. Exposure to industrial chemicals that can be toxic if/when weaponized should also be considered for long-term follow up. The chemical and industrial agents most commonly encountered are:

- Nerve agents (e.g., Sarin, Tabun, VX)
- Blister agents (e.g., mustard, Lewisite)
- Respiratory agents (e.g., chlorine, phosgene, ammonia)
- Cyanides and blood agents (e.g., hydrogen cyanide)
- Harassing agents (e.g., tear gas)

[Source: DefenseNews | Aaron Mehta | October 26, 2018 ++]

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

Northrop Grumman – On 1 NOV the Department of Justice announced Northrop Grumman will have to pay the U.S. government \$30 million as a settlement for falsely billing hours to the Air Force between 2010 and 2013. But in an internal memo to employees obtained by Defense News, Northrop Chairman and CEO Wes Bush expressed his belief that the company followed its own internal procedures and appropriately handled the issue. Northrop will make a payment of \$25.8 million to the federal government. Additionally, the company will forfeit an additional \$4.2 million to the Criminal Division of the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Southern District of California, bringing the total of Friday’s settlement to \$30 million. (Northrop had previously been hit for \$1.65 million for the same issue.)

The issue stems from two Northrop contracts, the Battlefield Airborne Communications Node, an airborne communications relay, and the Dynamic Re-tasking Capability. Per the Justice Department, between July 1, 2010, and Dec. 31, 2013, Northrop employees stationed in the Middle East billed hours they did not work to the government. “Federal contracts are not a license to steal from the U.S. Treasury,” U.S. Attorney Adam Braverman said in a statement. “DOJ is firmly committed to vigilantly weeding out abuse and will swiftly pursue all available remedies when egregious fraud occurs.” Added John Brown, special agent in charge of the FBI’s San Diego Field Office: “Uncovering this immense fraud against the government and returning the funds to the American taxpayer is vitally important to ensuring our military receives the honest services they are due.”

In a statement, Northrop Grumman spokesman Tim Paynter said the company identified the issue and reported it to the government in 2013. After the DOJ announcement, Bush sent an internal memo to staff, saying: “There should be no doubt, the misconduct of these former employees does not reflect who we are as a company, nor the values we embrace.” “We took disciplinary action against those who we found acted improperly and violated company policy, and we took corrective action to strengthen our time-charging processes even further. We cooperated with the government as it investigated the issues over the following years,” Bush wrote in his memo. “I am proud of the responsible way the company acted — investigating, reporting and fixing issues as they arose. As always when we experience a disappointing situation such as this, we are using this opportunity to learn and further improve,” Bush continued. “This provides a strong reminder of the importance of adhering to our values in everything we do. It also serves as a reminder to us all that we each have a responsibility to speak up if we have any concerns.” [Source: DefenseNews | Aaron Mehta | November 3, 2018 ++]

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Abdul Amen -- A former recruiter of U.S. military language interpreters is accused of recruiting unqualified language interpreters for deployment alongside U.S. combat forces in Afghanistan in 2011 and 2012. WBAL-TV cites a U.S. Department of Justice release that says 34-year-old Abdul Amen of Fairfax, Virginia, was indicted 7 NOV on one count of conspiracy to commit mail fraud and wire fraud and one count of major fraud against the United States. He’s charged in the District of Maryland. The release says he had a close associate take language tests on behalf of candidates he knew couldn’t meet minimum language proficiency standards. He worked for a subcontractor on a multimillion-dollar Department of Defense contract, and received financial bonuses based on the number of successful candidates he recruited. [Source: The Associated Press | November 8, 2018 ++]

POW/MIA Recoveries & Burials ► Reported 01 thru 15 NOV 2018 | Nineteen

“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

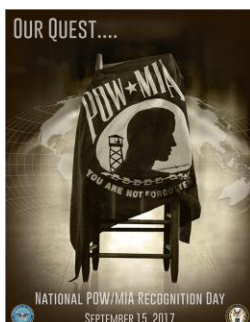
of Americans who remain missing from conflicts in this century are: World War II 73,025, Korean War 7730, Vietnam War 1604, Cold War (126), Iraq and other conflicts (5). Over 600 Defense Department men and women - both military and civilian -- work in organizations around the world as part of DoD's personnel 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. Martin F. O'Callaghan, Jr.**, 22, of Memphis, Tenn., whose remains were previously identified, will be buried Nov. 5 in his hometown. O'Callaghan was a pilot with the 96th Fighter Squadron, 82nd Fighter Group. In February 1945, during a mission to strafe targets near Maribor, Yugoslavia, O'Callaghan's P-38 Lightning aircraft was struck by anti-aircraft fire. As he was attempting to land, the aircraft inverted, crashed and burst into flames. Because Yugoslavia was an occupied territory at the time, no immediate search for his remains could be conducted. [Read about O'Callaghan.](#)

-- **Army Air Forces Pfc. Joseph I. Natvik**, 20, of Madison, Wis., whose remains were previously identified, will be buried Nov. 25 in Columbus, Wis. Natvik was a flight engineer assigned to the 1330 Army Air Force Base Unit, Air Transport Command. On July 17, 1945, his aircraft crashed in a remote area en route from Jorhat, India, to Hsinching, China. All four passengers were declared deceased after an extensive search effort failed to identify the crash site. [Read about Natvik.](#)

-- **Army Cpl. Albert E. Mills**, 20, of Dallas, whose remains were previously identified, will be buried Nov. 12 in his hometown. Mills was a member of Company F, 2nd Battalion 5th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division, blocking the Korean People's Army

from advancing along a corridor linking the cities of Taejon and Taegu, South Korea. On July 23, 1950, enemy forces attacked his unit and Mills was reported missing in action on July 25, 1950. [Read about Mills.](#)

-- **Army Cpl. Edward M. Jones**, 20, of Lake Charles, La., whose remains were previously identified, will be buried Nov. 9 in his hometown. Jones was a member of Company D, 1st Battalion, 38th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Infantry Division, supporting Republic of Korea Army attacks against units of the Chinese People's Volunteer Forces near Hoengsong, South Korea. On Feb. 12, 1951, Jones was reported missing in action when he could not be accounted for by his unit. [Read about Jones.](#)

-- **Army Cpl. Frederick E. Coons** was declared missing in action in the vicinity of Geochang, South Gyeongsang Province, South Korea, on July 29, 1950, when he couldn't be accounted for after a unit withdrawal action to set up a roadblock against North Korean Forces. Interment services are pending. [Read about Coons.](#)

-- **Army Pfc. Mathis O. Ball**, 20, of Collin County, Texas, whose remains were previously identified, will be buried Nov. 18 in Bokchito, Okla. Ball was a member of Company M, 3rd Battalion, 21st Infantry Regiment, 24th Infantry Division. In July 1950, his unit was engaged in combat operations against North Korean forces near Choch'iwon, South Korea. Ball could not be accounted for and was declared missing in action on July 12, 1950. [Read about Ball.](#)

-- **Army Pfc. Morris R. Worrell**, 20, of Lincoln, Neb., whose remains were previously identified, will be buried Nov. 10 in his hometown. Worrell was a member of Company F, 2nd Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment. Worrell was among those reported captured after the surrender of Corregidor Island on May 6, 1942, and one of the thousands who were eventually moved to the Cabanatuan POW camp. More than 2,500 POWs perished in this camp during the remaining years of the war. [Read about Worrell.](#)

-- **Army Pvt. Charles G. Kaniatobe**, 21, of Idabel, Okla., whose remains were previously identified, will be buried Nov. 17 in his hometown. Kaniatobe was a member of Company A, 1st Battalion, 21st Infantry Regiment, 24th Infantry Division. In July 1950, his unit was engaged in combat operations against the North Korean People's Army near Chonui, South Korea. Kaniatobe could not be accounted for and was declared missing in action on July 10, 1950. [Read about Kaniatobe.](#)

-- **Army Pvt. Robert J. Sipes, Jr.** was a member of Company L, 3rd Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division. He was killed in action on Nov. 30, 1950, during heavy fighting between the Chinese People's Volunteer Forces (CPVF) and the 7th Cavalry Regiment near the village of Unsan, North Korea. Interment services are pending. [Read about Sipes.](#)

-- **Army Sgt. Eugene G. McBride**, 20, of Lincoln, Neb., whose remains were previously identified, will be buried Nov. 14 in his hometown. McBride was a member of Company I, 3rd Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment, 78th Infantry Division. On Jan. 30, 1945, while engaged in an attack against enemy forces near Huppenbroich, Germany, McBride was killed by a blast from an enemy artillery shell. His remains were not identified by American forces after the battle. [Read about McBride.](#)

-- **Army Staff Sgt. Karl R. Loesche**, 22, of Monroeville, N.J., whose remains were previously identified, will be buried Nov. 17 in Elmer, N.J. Loesche was a member of the 3rd Pursuit Squadron, 24th Pursuit Group. On Dec. 8, 1941, Japanese forces invaded the Philippine Islands and forced the surrender of the Bataan peninsula on April 9, 1942. Loesche was among those reported captured, and one of the thousands who were eventually moved to the Cabanatuan POW camp. More than 2,500 POWs perished in this camp during the remaining years of the war. [Read about Loesche.](#)

-- **Marine Corps Reserve Pfc. Joe Lukie**, 19, of Harvey, W.Va., whose remains were previously identified, was buried Oct. 27, in Oak Hill, W.Va.. Lukie was assigned to Company K, 3rd Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division. On Nov. 20, 1943, Lukie's unit landed on the small island of Betio in the Tarawa Atoll against stiff Japanese resistance. Lukie died on the first day of the battle, one of approximately 1,000 Marines and sailors killed in the intense fighting. [Read about Lukie.](#)

-- **Marine Corps Reserve Pfc. Robert L. Zehetner**, 19, of Brooksville, Fla., whose remains were previously identified, will be buried Nov. 30 in Bushnell, Fla. Zehetner 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. [Read about Zehetner.](#)

-- **Marine Corps Reserve Pfc. William E. Brandenburg** was a member of Company A, 1st Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, Fleet Marine Force, which landed against stiff Japanese resistance on the small island of Betio in the Tarawa

Atoll of the Gilbert Islands. Over several days of intense fighting at Tarawa, approximately 1,000 Marines and Sailors were killed and more than 2,000 were wounded. Brandenburg died on the third day of the battle, Nov. 22, 1943. Interment services are pending. [Read about Brandenburg.](#)

-- **Marine Corps Reserve Pvt. Fred E. Freet** was assigned to Company F, 2nd Battalion, 8th Marines, 2nd Marine Division, Fleet Marine Force, which landed against stiff Japanese resistance on the small island of Betio in the Tarawa Atoll of the Gilbert Islands. Over several days of intense fighting at Tarawa, approximately 1,000 Marines and Sailors were killed and more than 2,000 were wounded. Freet died on the first day of the battle, Nov. 20, 1943, during the first waves of the assault. Interment services are pending. [Read about Freet.](#)

-- **Marine Corps Sgt. Dwight W. Randall**, 22, of Fresno, Calif., whose remains were previously identified, will be buried Nov. 20 in his hometown. Randall was a member of Company C, 2nd Amphibian Tractor Battalion, 2nd Marine Division, Fleet Marine Force, which landed against stiff Japanese resistance on the small island of Betio in the Tarawa Atoll of the Gilbert Islands, in an attempt to secure the island. Over several days of intense fighting at Tarawa, approximately 1,000 Marines and sailors were killed and more than 2,000 were wounded, but the Japanese were virtually annihilated. Randall died on the first day of the battle, Nov. 20, 1943. [Read about Randall.](#)

-- **Navy Aviation Radioman 3rd Class Walter E. Mintus**, 22, of Portage, Penn., whose remains were previously identified, will be buried Nov. 10 in his hometown. Mintus was aboard a torpedo bomber from U.S. Navy Torpedo Squadron Fifty One on a mission targeting the Japanese base at Malakal Harbor. Witnesses observed an object, believed to be an aircraft, on fire in Malakal Harbor. All three servicemen on board, including Mintus, were reported missing in action and subsequently presumed dead on Feb. 4, 1946. [Read about Mintus.](#)

-- **Navy Carpenter's Mate 3rd Class William L. Kvidera**, 22, of Traer, Iowa, whose remains were previously identified, will be buried Nov. 16 in his hometown. Kvidera was stationed aboard the USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft on Dec. 7, 1941. The battleship sustained multiple torpedo hits, which caused it to quickly capsize. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 429 crewmen, including Kvidera. [Read about Kvidera.](#)

-- **Navy Fireman 1st Class Gerald H. Pirtle**, 19, of El Dorado, Kan., whose remains were previously identified, will be buried Nov. 17 in Wichita, Kan. Pirtle was stationed aboard the USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft on Dec. 7, 1941. The battleship sustained multiple torpedo hits, which caused it to quickly capsize. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 429 crewmen, including Pirtle. [Read about Pirtle.](#)

-- **Navy Molder First Class Kenneth B. Armstrong**, 36, of Seattle, whose remains were previously identified, will be buried Nov. 30 in the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific in Honolulu. Armstrong was assigned to the USS Oklahoma, which was moored off Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when Japanese aircraft attacked his ship on Dec. 7, 1941. Armstrong was one of 429 crewmen killed in the attack. [Read about Armstrong.](#)

-- **Navy Seaman 1st Class Kirby R. Stapleton** was stationed aboard the USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft on Dec. 7, 1941. The battleship sustained multiple torpedo hits, which caused it to quickly capsize. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 429 crewmen, including Stapleton. Interment services are pending. [Read about Stapleton.](#)

-- **Navy Seaman 2nd Class Carl Nichols**, 20, of Glen Alum, W.Va., whose remains were previously identified, will be buried Nov. 14 in Bland County, Va. Nichols was stationed aboard the USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft on Dec. 7, 1941. The battleship sustained multiple torpedo hits, which caused it to quickly capsize. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 429 crewmen, including Nichols. [Read about Nichols.](#)

-- **Navy Steward Mate 1st Class Ignacio C. Farfan**, 21, of Agana, Guam, whose remains were previously identified, will be buried Nov. 8 in the Guam Veterans Cemetery. Farfan was stationed aboard the USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft on Dec. 7, 1941. The battleship sustained multiple torpedo hits, which caused it to quickly capsize. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 429 crewmen, including Farfan. [Read about Farfan.](#)

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

Washington DC's Lesser Known Memorials ► Worth Visiting

Washington, D.C., is home to many renowned memorials. However, there are many lesser-known memorials in our nation's capital that have a rich history and honor many important groups and events. The next time you visit our nation's capital, swing by these memorials and see the below first hand.



The African American Civil War Memorial

Dedicated in 1998, honors the 209,145 members of the United States Colored Troops (USCT) that served during the Civil War. It was dedicated under the leadership of Frank Smith Jr. and Colin Powell and titled the *Spirit of Freedom*. It depicts soldiers and sailors who served in the Army and Navy in the Civil War, helping to end the war and ensuring the freedom of four million slaves. Surrounding the actual statue are three walls with all the names of those who served. The statue and surrounding walls are located in the “U” street district that was historically the center of African-American culture and history in Washington D.C. There is also a museum near the statue that honors the sacrifice of the African-American servicemen and helps promote the often ignored history of African Americans’ contribution to the war effort.

The Spanish-American War Monument

Located in Arlington National Cemetery. It was erected in 1901 and unveiled in 1902 upon the request of Winifred Lee Lyster, Chairman of the Executive Committee for a Spanish War Memorial and Marker. The statue consists of a 50-foot-high Corinthian column with a bronze eagle on the top. At the rear of the memorial are four cannons, two of which were Spanish cannons captured by the Americans during the Spanish-American War. The memorial honors those who perished in the Spanish-American War and draws attention to a lesser-known American war. As the tablet at the rear reads, the memorial ensures the remembrance of those who gave “their lives for our country that freedom might live.”

The Seabees Memorial

Dedicated in 1972, it honors the contributions of the Naval Construction Battalions (CBs) during war and peace. It is one of a series of memorials that line the entrance to Arlington National Cemetery. The memorial consists of a statue in front depicting a Seabee holding out a helping hand to a child. Inscribed below the statue is “with compassion for others we build—we fight for peace with freedom.” The statue and its inscription emphasize the qualities that the Seabees represent, namely that of compassion. Behind the statue is a bronze relief showing the various tasks the Seabees perform. These include constructing bases, bulldozing and paving thousands of miles of roadways, and building airstrips to support the military in times of war and peace since World War II. The memorial is also inscribed with the Seabees motto, “Can Do.” Many do not know the important role the Seabees play in the military and this memorial honors their service.

Pershing Park

Dedicated to Gen. John J. Pershing, leader of the American Expeditionary Forces (AEF). The park is located in a position of high importance on Pennsylvania Avenue, leading up to the White House. This positioning indicates the importance of World War I in American history. The park is a peaceful place located in the busy city center of D.C., representative of the peaceful fields of France and Belgium that were quickly transformed into fields of battle. Important aspects of the park include the statue of Pershing and the memorial to his forces. The statue of Pershing depicts the general as he was remembered by his troops, an iron-jawed man with a fierce visage, holding field glasses in hand and looking out over the field of battle. Pershing was the only general besides George Washington to be awarded the rank General of the Armies, ranking him above the five-star generals of World War II. Pershing's statue reminds the viewer of the importance of his leadership during World War I. The memorial consists of two high walls which are intended to make the viewer feel as if they are in a World War I trench. It captures the isolation of the battlefield and how the vibrant French countryside was transformed into a lifeless landscape of trenches.

Vietnam Memorial

When one thinks of it, one tends to picture the wall inscribed with the names of the dead. However, there are two other important pieces to the Vietnam Memorial that are less well known.

- One of these is the **Three Soldiers Memorial**. This memorial depicts three soldiers of different ethnicities and races. One is Euro-American, one African American and one Latin-American, symbolizing the diversity of the American military during the Vietnam War. One soldier is actually a Marine while the other two are Army infantrymen. They carry the typical supplies of a Vietnam service man such as the 1911 .45 and the first generation M16. The three soldiers look in solemn tribute upon the wall, remembering their dead comrades. This memorial was supposed to complement the wall and provide a more standard and conventional memorial of a statue depicting soldiers, as some were upset with the nontraditional design of the wall.
- Another part of the Vietnam Memorial is the **Women's Memorial**. This memorial was dedicated in 1984 along with the Three Soldiers Memorial. It depicts three women who served in Vietnam, all of them nurses tending to a wounded soldier. The memorial honors the 26,500 women who served in the Vietnam era whose sacrifice is often unknown or forgotten. Approximately 11,000 women were stationed in Vietnam during the war and many lost their lives in the cross fire. This memorial remembers all the women who served as part of the Army or as civilians and was the first memorial in the District's to honor women's service. The women of the statue are positioned next to their brother soldiers indicating their sacrifice deserves to be recognized alongside the sacrifice of their male comrades.



[Source: Vantage Point | November 14, 2018 ++]

* VA *



VA Lawsuit | Unpaid ER Bills ► LoopHole Allowing VA Not to Pay Insurance Copay

Two weeks after WSAR-TV7 Investigates exposed a new loophole leaving veterans across the nation liable to pay their own emergency room bills, the National Veterans Legal Services Program has filed a class action lawsuit in the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims against the Secretary of Veterans Affairs Robert Wilkie. The suit, filed on behalf of U.S. Coast Guard Veteran Amanda Wolfe, claims the VA is failing to comply with the Emergency Care Fairness Act of 2010, which ordered the VA secretary to cover emergency medical bills veterans are "personally liable" for.

In Sept. 2016 Wolfe, who served for six years, with postings in Washington and Michigan, as well as, service during Hurricane Katrina response and recovery, was experiencing abdominal pain. Since her nearest VA hospital was three hours away from her Illinois home, she drove herself to the closest non-VA emergency room and underwent an emergency appendectomy. Wolfe recovered and filed a claim with the VA for reimbursement for \$2,558.54, which was the amount of her \$22,348.25 hospital bill not covered by her employer-sponsored health insurance. "If I needed emergency care, I thought the VA would still take care of me. But the VA didn't do that and left me hanging," Wolfe said in a statement. "There's power in numbers and I hope other veterans feel that way and will step forward if they have also been denied. This is not right, and many of the veterans who need this help from the VA are old and sick and not able to fight this battle."

Wolfe said if she had not signed up for employer-sponsored health insurance, the VA would have paid the entire \$22,348.25 hospital bill. This is the second time that NVLSP has filed suit over VA's failure to comply with the Emergency Care Fairness Act of 2010. As WSAR-TV7 Investigates has previously reported, for years the VA refused to reimburse another NVLSP client, Minnesota Veteran Richard Staab, for any portion of his \$48,000 emergency open-heart surgery bill, because Medicare covered part of his emergency care bill. "And for the VA to call that non-emergent, that's just ridiculous," Staab's Minnesota-based lawyer Jacqueline Schuh told TV7 Investigates in January. Staab became the face of this loophole when he sued and won his appeal. However, the VA kept appealing until last year.

In January, Schuh thought the legislative fix, now called the '**Staab Rule**,' meant thousands of veterans could finally be reimbursed for their emergency room bills. Wisconsin lawmakers also told TV7 Investigates they hoped veterans would not have future billing problems. However, Wolfe's suit alleges the VA continued to violate the Staab Rule by denying her reimbursement claims, which were submitted after the rule was put into place. "By absolving the VA from reimbursing veterans who must visit non-VA hospitals for emergency treatment and are then left with expensive bills that are not covered by the veteran's insurance, and by providing a disincentive for veterans to obtain or continue health insurance," the suit says.

As TV7 Investigates first reported, and is now shown in the NVLSP's lawsuit, a loophole in the way the Staab Rule was written means the VA is interpreting the language to mean it is forbidden from reimbursing a veteran "for any co-payment, deductible, coinsurance or similar payment" incurred during emergency treatment at non-VA hospitals. "After you subtract the co-payment and deductible, there's usually a quite large bill," attorney Bart Stichman, executive director and co-founder of NVLSP, told 7 Investigates. "And the insurance companies, typically, in a co-insurance situation, says we'll pay 50 percent. And you have to cover the remaining 50 percent mister veteran."

"The limited exception for co-payments refers to a form of cost-sharing that is typically a minimal, fixed amount. Coinsurance, on the other hand, typically requires the veteran to pay a relatively high percentage of the remaining portion of the bill," Stichman said. "The VA is trying to drive a Mack truck through the narrow phrase 'co-payments or similar payments' to once again avoid its legal obligations." "I do not believe the Court intended to allow the VA to circumvent Staab's ruling by now declaring that most of the expenditures for which Veteran's are seeking coverage or reimbursement for are co-pays or come under "other insurance," Staab's lawyer Schuh said in a statement to 7 Investigates. "Perhaps another way to look at this, sadly, is that Staab addressed an issue which now opens up another issue. I wonder if the Veteran's Affairs Committee is aware of all of these loopholes," Schuh said. "The Staab Rule

fixed an inconsistency or illegality in the manner in which the VA was addressing claims and now the VA will rely on the loopholes to avoid payment.”

While the VA estimated in January the Staab Rule meant 5,442 Wisconsin veterans would be reimbursed for their emergent care, when TV7 Investigates asked for an update this month an unnamed VA spokesperson said those pending claims became part of their normal workload. And the final outcome was not tracked separately. Stichman told TV7 Investigates he hopes the lawsuit will be able to make the VA reveal the numbers of denials and encourage other veterans to join the litigation.

“What I’m worried about is there are a lot of veterans who don’t know about the fact that the VA is violating the law by not paying your deductible or coinsurance. And they assume the VA must’ve done the right thing, because they said they did the right thing. And they don’t appeal. And so the denial of reimbursement becomes final. And that’s a major reason we filed this lawsuit as a class action,” Stichman said. “We want to ensure those people that don’t know enough file a notice of disagreement to appeal are not harmed by the VA’s violation of the law.”

In a statement to TV7 Investigates, Sen. Tammy Baldwin said “We need to make sure that when our nation’s veterans need emergency care, they can get the care they need and they aren’t stuck with excessive bills. I share NVLSP’s position because the Trump Administration should do right by our veterans, follow the intent of the law and stop severely limiting reimbursements to them.” Earlier this month, Baldwin’s office told TV7 Investigates as a result of the Trump Administration’s Veterans Affairs Department’s interpretation of what is a “similar payment,” the VA is denying emergency medical reimbursements. Sen Baldwin told TV7 Investigates the VA’s interpretation, “Is severely limiting reimbursements to our veterans.”

In an 15 OCT statement to TV7 Investigates, an unnamed VA Public Affairs spokesperson said, “Based on VA’s interpretation of Title 38 United States Code 1725(c)(4)(D), Reimbursement for Emergency Treatment, VA is prohibited by law from reimbursing an otherwise eligible Veteran’s copay, cost share or deductible he or she owes to a health-care plan. For VA to make such payments, Congress would need to amend this section of the law.” Stichman said the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims will now decide if the class action suit can proceed, based on a response from VA leaders. Rep. Sean Duffy and Sen. Ron Johnson have not responded to TV7 Investigates request for comment. [Source: WSAW-TV 7 Investigates | Matthew Simon | October 31, 2018 ++]

VA Lawsuit | Aaron Merritt ► \$2.5M Settlement in Wrongful Death Claim

Carol Merritt felt both intense pride and worry during the eight years of her son’s military service. During Aaron Merritt’s three combat deployments, two as an explosive ordnance disposal technician, she’d sometimes glance at her home phone wondering when it would ring with dreadful news. That call didn’t come and she felt she could finally breathe a sigh of relief when he was released from active duty in January 2014. But nine months later, on the afternoon of Oct. 28, 2014, her husband visited her at work and with a broken voice told her that their son had died. Aaron Merritt had gone to the emergency room of the Nashville Veterans Affairs Hospital seriously ill and was dead less than 24 hours later. He was 26.

In OCT, the VA agreed to pay \$2.5 million to settle a wrongful death lawsuit filed by the Lake Havasu City, Ariz., couple. The award is not an admission of fault. Aaron Merritt was the victim of a lack of communication between doctors and a failure to adhere to basic medical procedures, according to the lawsuit, which was filed in 2016. “He did three tours, one in Iraq and two in Afghanistan, and made it home but he died instead under the care of the VA. It’s unimaginable,” Carol Merritt said last week. “He protected all these people. Who protected Aaron?”

The immediate cause of death was the acid content of his blood, septic shock, and low levels of red and white blood cells and platelets, according to the death certificate. But his family says the death was the culmination of a string of medical mishaps that could have easily been prevented, said Frank B. Thacher, the family’s lawyer. “Aaron slipped

through the cracks in something that was very simple as giving a blood test,” Thacher said. Our hope is the suit does affect some change in the VA. There’s no amount of money that can compensate Aaron for what he had to endure during the last moments of his life or what his parents lost.” The VA did not respond to multiple requests for comment from Stars and Stripes.



U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Aaron Merritt

Service and mistreatment

Following in the footsteps of his grandfather, a World War II veteran, Aaron Merritt enlisted in the Army after high school. He volunteered to become an EOD technician after his Iraq tour and then deployed twice to Afghanistan. “He was just really a great kid,” his mother said. “In Afghanistan he was always getting everyone to laugh and tried to keep everyone happy while he was there. He told me joking that he ‘was having a blast.’” He was twice awarded the Army Commendation Medal with Valor, including once for saving the life of an Afghan soldier, and he planned to use his military bomb detection knowledge in the civilian world working for the Transportation Security Administration. He was in the process of applying when he died, his parents said.

Military doctors had diagnosed him with ulcerative colitis, a bowel disease that causes inflammation and sores in the digestive tract and had put him on the drug mesalamine in early 2014, just before he left the Army. That May, VA doctors in Nashville treated him for the first time and added a prescription for azathioprine, an anti-inflammatory drug with side effects that suppress the immune system. For months, however, VA doctors largely ignored the drug manufacturer’s recommendation of regular blood work, according to court documents, until the vital blood components needed to fight infection were so low his blood had been poisoned.

Before being admitted to the ER on Oct. 27, 2014, Aaron Merritt sent an email to his doctor at the VA describing his symptoms, including flare-ups of the ulcerative colitis, high temperatures, and ulcers in his mouth that were making it painful to eat and drink. “I’m also finding it difficult to keep food and water down,” he wrote. “I was wondering if this was something I should be seen for or if I could get new medications to treat this or improve my quality of life.” He came to the ER with sepsis, a life-threatening complication of infection that doctors treating him at the time said “was likely due to bone marrow suppression caused by azathioprine.” He was sent to the intensive care unit.

By early morning the next day, he was critically ill and his red blood cells, white blood cells and platelets were all being destroyed by blood poisoning that was nearly impossible to treat because of his compromised immune system. “Aaron coded four times,” court records state, referring to the number of times his heart or breathing stopped that morning. “During the fourth code, his body could no longer fight the overwhelming infection.”

Going to court

The family took up the fight for more information after his death, but the hospital administration would not release anything meaningful about his case, Thacher said. It was only after the late Arizona Sen. John McCain opened an

investigation that the family was able to view the medical records. Carol Merritt then spent nights and weekends going through his records for weeks, underlining doctor's entries and making notes in the margins. To her, the evidence that her son hadn't been treated properly was overwhelming. "I could just see they didn't have any blood work," she said.

The couple sued for \$6.1 million with the hope of learning more about how their son had died, to seek justice for his death and to raise awareness on how veterans are treated in the VA hospital system. "There just needs to be changes at the VA, the way vets receive medical treatment," Steve Merritt said. The couple hopes that their efforts will help prompt change. "How do you get justice for your son dying?" Carol Merritt said. "I guess we want to know when the VA will start being held accountable for the care and treatment of our veterans."

[Source: Stars & Stripes | Will Morris | November 7, 2018 ++]

VA Research Update 03 ► Medical Experiment Dog Use Will Continue

Veterans come first, and if dogs have to be sacrificed in potentially fatal VA medical experiments to find cures for sick and disabled veterans, so be it, VA Secretary Robert Wilkie said 9 NOV. "The previous management authorized it. I will re-authorize it," Wilkie said of the research program that now involves a total of about 92 dogs at several VA facilities. He did not give any figures on the number of dogs that may have been killed or harmed in the experiments. According to a USA Today report published this month, at least some of the experiments involve removing a portion of the dogs' brains before killing them by lethal injection.

"So I'm going to do everything that's ethical to make sure that our veterans come first. I love canines. I was raised with them. I've seen them in the military life perform miracles," Wilkie said in response to questions after an address at the National Press Club. "But we have an opportunity to change the lives of men and women who have been terribly hurt, and until somebody tells me that that research does not help in that outcome, I will continue."

The VA's experiments on dogs are supported by veterans service organizations, including the American Legion and the Disabled American Veterans, Wilkie said. There have, however, been periodic attempts in Congress to stop the practice. "My charge is to make life easier for those who have borne the battle and there is nothing more tragic to me in 2018, at this stage in the development of medical science, that we haven't been able to find that cure to address spinal cord injuries and paralysis, and early death from that," Wilkie said. The research complies with all legal standards and "is conducted under strict supervision," Wilkie said.

Wilkie pointed out that the VA was not alone in using -- and killing -- dogs in the interest of medical research. "Let me put this in perspective first," he said. "We have 92 canines. Every day, 2,000 dogs are euthanized in this country." In addition, the VA has a long history of research that has produced medical breakthroughs, such as the development of the pacemaker and the first liver transplant, Wilkie said. He did not directly relate those breakthroughs, though, to experiments involving dogs. [Source: Military.com | Richard Sisk | November 9, 2018 ++]

VA Medical Marijuana Update 53 ► Wilke Opposed Until Federal Law Changes

If marijuana is federally legalized, the Department of Veterans Affairs will consider letting benefits go toward medical cannabis for veterans, VA Secretary Robert Wilkie said on 9 NOV. But until then, the issue is a non-starter. Asked whether medical marijuana was among the alternative therapies the VA would explore for patients, Wilkie said flatly that cannabis "is against federal law." "If that changed, would you be OK with it?" a moderator at a National Press Club forum asked. "If the laws change and there's medical evidence there, of course we look at that," Wilkie said. "But the law is pretty clear at the federal level."

While there have been legislative attempts to force the VA to allow its doctors to recommend cannabis, none of those proposals have been enacted into law, and internal department policy currently prohibits such activities, even at facilities that operate in legal marijuana states. For now, the most VA doctors can do is discuss cannabis with patients, but they can't fill out state forms to help veterans obtain it. A new condition can now be treated with medical marijuana in Connecticut. But if things do change at the federal level (and some insiders are under the impression that cannabis reform will soon be on the White House agenda), it looks like medical cannabis will at the very least get a second look from VA officials. [Source: Marijuana Moment | November 12, 2018 ++]

VA Budget 2020 ► Veterans Affairs Secretary Anticipates Congress Will Increase

Veterans Affairs Secretary Robert Wilkie said 9 NOV that his department won't be exempted from President Donald Trump's planned spending cuts, but he is also confident that Congress will ultimately increase the VA budget to ensure programming needs are met. "I am convinced that the veterans budget, by the time it gets through both chambers of Congress, will replace this last veterans budget as the largest in history," Wilkie said at a speech on the state of his department at the National Press Club. The comments came just a few weeks after Trump announced plans to request a 5 percent budget cut from all federal agencies for fiscal 2020, to help rein in the size of government.

The president did say that the Defense Department wouldn't see the same requirement, but would aim for a slimmer \$700 billion spending plan instead of another increase. Many veterans groups also wondered if VA would be similarly exempted, given Trump's past promises to fix and fully fund veterans programs. But Wilkie said he is already in the process of looking for ways to meet the request, which would amount to about \$10 billion in reduced spending. The fiscal 2019 VA budget topped \$200 billion for the first time in department history, and has seen steady increases since fiscal 2002.

Wilkie said he is taking the cost-cutting task seriously, but also indicated he is unsure if the president intends for VA spending to go down. "I will present the case for the Department of Veterans Affairs," he said. "In the last presidential campaign, the president committed everything he had to making sure the Department of Veterans Affairs was the most robust it has ever been." He also said he is optimistic that the congressional appropriations committees will see the value in more spending to support veterans, not less.

The size of the department's budget has raised concerns among fiscal conservatives in recent years, especially in light of complaints about health care access and delayed benefits payments. In fiscal 2001, the VA budget totaled \$45 billion. It has grown by almost \$100 billion in the last decade alone. But veterans groups have argued that isn't a sign of government wastefulness but instead proof that the needs of the country's veterans population have been underserved for years. Wilkie's speech was billed as a report on the state of VA, coming two days before Veterans Day and about 100 days after his confirmation. He described the agency as calmer and more focused now, and moving past the leadership woes of the first half of the year. [Source: MilitaryTimes | Leo Shane III | November 9, 2018 ++]

VA Website Update 04 ► Reformatted Under Digital Modernization Effort

As part of a multi-year digital modernization effort, VA has reformatted VA.gov to consolidate information about VA programs. The consolidated website enables veterans to use their HealtheVets, DS Logon, or ID.me account to track the status of benefits and claims, refill prescriptions, message their doctors, and request a Veterans ID Card. Visit the new website at <https://www.va.gov>. Go to https://youtu.be/6wCOcK_Fmms?t=63 to listen to a video on why the change was made [Source: VFW Action Corps | November 9, 2018 ++]

VA Unions Update 03 ► Contract Repudiation | Employees to Return to Medical Duties

On 8 NOV the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs announced that it will be moving nearly 430 medical professionals from taxpayer-funded union work back to health care jobs serving Veterans. The move, which will improve VA's ability to deliver health care to Veteran patients, will take effect 15 NOV when VA repudiates certain provisions of master collective bargaining agreements VA accepted during the Obama administration with the following unions: American Federation of Government Employees, National Federation of Federal Employees, National Association of Government Employees and National Nurses United. VA has a separate employment system under title 38 of the U.S. Code for medical employees. The repudiation will apply to all of VA's nearly 104,000 title 38 employees, eliminating all forms of taxpayer-funded union work for the following professions:

- Physician
- Dentist
- Podiatrist
- Chiropractor
- Optometrist
- Registered Nurse
- Physician assistant
- Expanded-Duty Dental Auxiliary

"It's common sense," VA Acting Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration Jacquelyn Hayes-Byrd said. "Allowing health care workers to do taxpayer-funded union work instead of serving Veterans impacts patient care negatively. President Trump has made it clear – VA employees should always put Veterans first. And when we hire medical professionals to take care of Veterans, that's what they should do at all times. No excuses, no exceptions." As an example of the negative effect taxpayer-funded union time has on Veteran care, one VA registered nurse who was elected as a local union official receives 100 percent taxpayer funded union time. Although she no longer provides patient care, she continues to receive a nurse's salary, which at VA averages more than \$90,000 per year.

Department-wide in fiscal year 2016, VA employees spent more than a million hours doing taxpayer-funded union work at a total cost of more than \$49 million. VA is in the process of renegotiating several of VA's national collective bargaining agreements to ensure official time allocations are putting Veterans first. The negotiations are guided by federal law that permits VA to set taxpayer-funded union work (also known as official time) amounts contractually that are reasonable, necessary and in the public interest. [Source: VA News Release | November 8, 2018 ++]

VA Unions Update 04 ► Plan to Fight the VA Official Move Time in Court

The move by Veterans Affairs official's plans on 8 NOV to end "official time" status for more than 400 department employees drew an immediate rebuke from the unions, who called it dangerous and potentially illegal. "Today, the Trump administration and VA Secretary Robert Wilkie have committed a grave disservice to our nation's veterans," AFGGE National President J. David Cox Sr. said in a statement. "Silencing (these employees') voices endangers our veterans." At issue are provisions in federal law and the unions' contracts with the government allowing certain employees to perform union duties during work hours. The activities do not include efforts to recruit or support the union itself, but do include advocacy work like filing grievances or mediating conflicts.

Supporters have said the arrangement allows workers’ representatives in many cases to head off serious workplace problems before they become protracted legal issues. But VA officials under President Donald Trump have taken aim at the practice, calling it a misuse of federal money that hurts veterans by bottling up key positions with workers not performing clinical duties. “It’s common sense,” said VA acting Assistant Secretary for Human Resources Jacquelyn Hayes-Byrd in a statement. “Allowing health care workers to do taxpayer-funded union work instead of serving veterans impacts patient care negatively. “President Trump has made it clear: VA employees should always put veterans first. And when we hire medical professionals to take care of veterans, that’s what they should do at all times. No excuses, no exceptions.”

The change goes into effect on 15 NOV. Among the positions prohibited from performing “official time” will be physicians, dentists, podiatrists, chiropractors, optometrists, registered nurses, and physician assistants. Other job classifications will still be permitted to do the union-related activities. Cox said that if department leaders were worried about staffing levels, they’d address the nearly 35,000 vacant health care positions inside VA medical centers instead of focusing on several-hundred union-linked jobs. “The administration needs to stop playing politics with our veterans’ care and fill the vacancies,” he said.

A May 2018 executive order limited the amount of official time that any federal employee could use to 25 percent of their total work hours, in an attempt to cut back on the number of employees that use the entirety or majority of their time to conduct union work. That order also gave agency supervisors the authority to oversee and approve official time in advance. But in August, a U.S. District Court judge ruled that major components of that order as well as two others signed the same day overstep presidential authority, which forced the Office of Personnel Management to rescind guidance to agency leadership on official time.

OPM officials have said despite the legal concerns, department leaders should use those orders as guidance when bargaining with federal employee unions in the future, as the total official time hours available to union representatives at any particular agency are subject to contract negotiations between the unions and agency. Union representatives said they plan to fight the VA move in court. VA officials said they plan to make the issue a key focus with the groups in upcoming collective negotiations. The two sides have sparred over a host of issues over the last two years, including Trump-backed plans to shift more veterans health care funding to private-sector doctors. [Source: MilitaryTimes | Leo Shane III & Jessie Bur | November 9, 2018 ++]

VA AI ► Reducing Patient Wait Time Utilizing Arterial Intelligence

Veteran Affairs (VA) has received a lot of scrutiny for its inefficiency in providing timely medical treatment, with stories coming to light of veterans waiting months to receive care. And while there are no immediate solutions to correct the agency’s perennial wait time problem, the VA is turning to artificial intelligence (AI) for at least a few answers. “AI is very important to us in a lot of different ways, [including] healthcare claims and processing,” explained Dr. Paul Tibbits, program executive officer for the VA’s Financial Management Business Transformation Special Program Office in a media interview.” We envision that [these technologies] will, or in fact already are, improving services to veterans.”

Waiting for Care

The VA’s inefficiencies first came to light in 2014, when managers at a Phoenix VA facility revealed an elaborate scheme to hide the fact that several veterans waited many months to see a doctor. In 2015, the VA Office of Inspector General reported a web of complications in the VA’s management of healthcare enrollment data, including inadequate procedures to oversee records, software glitches, and inconsistencies in identifying veterans who had died waiting for medical treatment. Now, the latest U.S. Government Accountability Office report finds that the Veterans Choice Program — set up to reduce wait times by allowing veterans to go to a private sector doctor at the VA’s expense —

has not helped either. The report states that in many cases veterans could still face wait times of up to 70 days to receive care. “Delays in care have been shown to negatively affect patients’ morbidity, mortality, and quality of life,” report researchers wrote.

According to a statement issued by the VA, it has been a challenge to maintain a large staff of well-trained agents to handle the depth and breadth of questions veterans and caregivers face, especially during peak days and times. As a result, veterans and caregivers are unable to receive immediate assistance because agents are actively assisting other customers. For Tibbits, what is clear is that AI can improve the VA’s wait-time issue, as well as diagnostic and other therapeutic accuracies, making fewer mistakes and picking the right treatment for the right illness. The process is already underway when it comes to phone service and addressing claims.

The VA is currently looking for an AI as a service (AIaaS) solution — off-the-shelf and cloud-based — with features such as natural language processing (NLP) so that people can make requests and hold discussions with the AI technology (much like a chatbot). Leaders at the VA also want the AIaaS system to evaluate the words of users to detect their emotional state and respond accordingly. Once the AI system is trained and put into production, the VA said, it can use machine learning to expand and improve upon its own capabilities over time.

AI Emerges in Veteran Healthcare

Yet the AIaaS solution won’t be the agency’s first brush with AI. The VA has already partnered with London-based Alphabet subsidiary DeepMind to explore how machine learning can help predict patient deteriorations. Together, the VA and DeepMind will analyze patterns from over 700,000 historical, depersonalized medical records to determine if machine learning algorithms can accurately identify the risk factors of patient deteriorations and predict their onset. Dominic King, clinical lead at DeepMind Health, emphasized that the data used in the partnership research has been stripped of any identity before DeepMind receives it — an important feature for the VA after a recent privacy concern. Last year, the VA terminated an agreement with the San Francisco-based startup Flow Health after realizing the agreement would violate current VA policy and regulations, as well as its commitment to protecting veterans’ data. The research would have used genomic data from over 500,000 volunteer participants from the Million Veteran Program.

The Prevention Game

In partnership with DeepMind, the VA first plans to focus its work on identifying the most common signs of acute kidney injury (AKI), a problem that can lead to dialysis or death, but is preventable if detected early. “Not only is the onset of AKI sudden and often asymptomatic, but the risk factors associated with it are commonplace throughout hospitals,” King explained in a recent blog post. “AKI can also strike people of any age and frequently occurs following routine procedures and operations like a hip replacement.” The goal, according to King, is to find ways to improve the algorithms currently used to detect AKI and allow doctors and nurses to intervene sooner. Eventually, the VA plans to apply similar approaches to other signs of patient deterioration.

As the VA explores more AI-powered approaches, leaders in the organization expect the growing technology will provide improved care and shorter wait times for many more patients — with fewer people developing serious infections and conditions and, as the VA press release noted, “ultimately saving lives.” [Source: Dell Technologies | Pragati Verma | November 5, 2018 ++]

VA Claim Filing Update 11 ► Suggestions for A Successful Outcome

Many Veterans filing a disability claim with VA simply fill in the [21-526EZ, Application for Disability Compensation and Related Compensation Benefits](#), list the disabilities they are filing a claim for, cross their fingers and hope for the best. Unless you are just leaving the military, with well-documented and easily accessible service treatment records,

this isn't the best approach. Here are some suggestions to help you be successful with your claim the first time it's submitted.

Intent to file.

It may take some time for you to gather the information to support your fully developed claim, such as private treatment records and written statements. You can hold your effective date by filing a [VA Form 21-0966, Intent To File A Claim For Compensation and/or Pension, or Survivors Pension and/or DIC](#). The date this form is received by VA is used as your potential effective date for payment purposes. You have a year after it's received by VA to file your completed claim application.

To receive VA disability compensation, you must meet three criteria: 1) an event in service that caused or aggravated a disability or illness; 2) a current diagnosed medical disability or illness; and 3) a medical opinion connecting the two. Without all three items, a claim can't be granted. It's like a three legged stool – without any one of these legs, the stool will fall over. If you provide evidence of the first two items, the VA exam will provide the doctor's opinion for the third. Be aware that just because a doctor's opinion is requested on service connection, doesn't mean that the opinion will be favorable to you.

There are some things you need to know about the people rating your claims. First, most are Veterans, or family members of Veterans. They should always give the benefit of the doubt to the Veteran. This is by regulation, by training, and frankly, that's what they want to do. But, you have to give them something to work with. The rater's motto is, "Approve if you can, deny if you must."

Write a Statement in Support of Claim.

When filing your claim, include a [VA Form 21-4138, Statement in Support of Claim](#). Do a separate paragraph for each disability you are claiming, and explain the event in service (be specific) and your current disability or symptoms related to your injury or illness. Provide any evidence available on the event, such as personnel records, award narrative, and medical records. If you don't think this event is in your service personnel or medical records, see if you can find someone you served with to fill out a form to provide their witness statement for the event. While a witness statement alone usually is not enough to grant a claim, it can be combined with other evidence to strengthen a claim for service connection.

Your statement is considered evidence, just like your military or treatment records, and the rater will use it to make the decision. It also tells the rating team where to look, and the timeframe for information to validate your claim.

Include medical records.

VA can access treatment records from other VA and military medical facilities. Just make sure you include where you've been treated on your application (name of treatment facility) so the records can be found and added to your electronic record. It may take some time to retrieve service personnel and treatment records from the military archives, and records from private physicians. If you can include copies of your service records showing treatment or an event in service, and private physician records, including lab results, showing your current diagnosis, it may eliminate weeks or even months of processing time. Providing all of this information with your claim will help the rating team process your claim more quickly.

Compensation and Pension (C&P) Exam.

Even if you submit all of your medical records, you may be scheduled for a C&P exam. This is not a typical doctor's exam, and in some cases, the doctor may just review your records – including any statements in your file – and ask you a few questions. While this may seem unusual for an exam, the doctor is actually filling in a Disability Benefits Questionnaire (DBQ), which the rater will use to determine if your claim can be granted, and at what percentage. Some information for the form will come from your medical records, and additional information is gathered from you.

Part of the DBQ is a statement from the doctor that your disability is either more or less likely than not connected to your service. That's the third leg of the stool. Be honest and specific with your answers. For example, if the doctor

asks about an injury, instead of saying, “I hurt my back in the service,” be specific and say, “I was getting something off of a shelf in the warehouse and fell off a ladder. There is an accident report. My back has given me problems ever since.” This allows the doctor to connect an incident in service to the current disability.

To check on the status of your claim, sign on to [eBenefits](#) and review your messages. When your status is updated, or if additional information is needed, a message will be posted. By providing a more complete picture of your situation to the rating team when you file your application, you not only make it easier for the raters to find your information and process your claim, you increase your chances of having your claim granted. Although it will take a little more effort on your part, it can pay off with faster VA processing and will increase your chances of a successful claim the first time. Remember, the rating team is on your side, but you can help them by including everything they need to approve your claim. [Source: Post-9/11 Vet Newsletter 2018 | November 5, 2018 ++]

Depleted Uranium ► VA DU Follow-up Program

You may have heard about “depleted uranium,” and while you probably are aware that uranium has some radioactivity associated with it, you probably do not know what it means to have the word “depleted” in front of it. The process of manufacturing enriched uranium used in nuclear reactors or weapons starts with natural uranium found in the earth’s crust and involves removing some of the radioactivity from the natural uranium to concentrate it for the ‘enriched’ product. What remains of the natural uranium is called “depleted” uranium (DU). DU has 60 percent of the radioactivity of natural uranium (hence, the word “depleted”), and since it is a heavy metal, it has the same chemical toxicity as natural uranium. Because of DU’s density, easy availability, and relatively low cost, the U.S. military found it to be useful in manufacturing tank armor and some bullets to penetrate enemy armored vehicles. The large-scale use of DU for this purpose began during the Gulf War.



M101 spotting round showing depleted uranium in black.

While DU that enters the body can become a potential health hazard because of its radiation properties, the potential for long-term risks from its chemical toxicity are also of concern. Veterans who may have been exposed to DU include those who were on, in, or near vehicles hit with “friendly fire.” When a projectile made with DU penetrates a vehicle, small pieces of DU can scatter and become embedded in muscle and soft tissue. Also, these service members may have inhaled or swallowed small airborne DU particles. Other Veterans who may have been exposed to DU were near burning vehicles, near fires involving DU munitions, or involved in salvaging damaged vehicles. Simply riding in a vehicle with DU weapons or DU shielding will not expose a service member to significant amounts of DU or external radiation. Veterans may have been exposed to DU during the first Gulf War, Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), or Operation New Dawn (OND), or deployment to Bosnia.

VA has been conducting a surveillance program for Gulf War Veterans exposed to DU through “friendly fire” incidents for more than 25 years. Some Veterans enrolled in this program have ongoing DU exposure resulting from DU fragments embedded in their bodies. It is important to note that, to date, no health effects related to DU exposure have been found. Nevertheless, the potential for long-term effects remains, and this group continues to be under surveillance.

VA also maintains a registry for Veterans who are concerned about possible DU exposure during their service. If you think you were exposed to DU and would like to enroll in this registry, talk to your local Environmental Health Coordinator. Refer to <https://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/coordinators.asp> to locate your nearest one. You will be asked to submit a urine sample and to fill out an exposure questionnaire to screen for DU exposure. A prerequisite for enrollment is active duty service in any of the conflicts listed below to qualify for the DU Follow-up Program:

- Gulf War
- Bosnia
- Operation Enduring Freedom
- Operation Iraqi Freedom
- Operation New Dawn

[Source: Post-9/11 Vet Newsletter 2018 | November 5, 2018 ++]

VA Disability System Update 01 ► Circumstantial Presumed Service-Connected Disabilities

Prisoners Of War

Veterans who were prisoners of war (POW) and suffered ailments such as anxiety, post-traumatic osteoarthritis and frostbite are presumed to have a connection between the injury and military service. Veterans that were prisoners for more than thirty (30) days and developed conditions such as irritable bowel syndrome, malnutrition, osteoporosis and liver cirrhosis are presumed to have a service connected disability.

Cancer

Veterans who were exposed to radiation during their military service (nuclear testing) and have developed certain cancers are presumed to be service-connected for the disability. Or veterans that were exposed to herbicide agents such as Agent Orange and developed diseases or disabilities such as prostate cancer, multiple myeloma or non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma are presumed to have a service-connected disability.

Gulf War

Chronic symptoms and health concerns that lasts longer than six (6) months may also be presumed as service-connected for veterans who served during the Gulf war. Also, many chronic symptoms which are unexplainable, if the veteran served in the Middle East during the Gulf War period, the condition or disability may be presumed to be service-connected.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

A veteran applying for disability benefits for PTSD does not need to provide evidence of traumatic event(s) that caused the PTSD condition, as the VA has streamlined the rule for this disorder. However, the veteran must have a confirmed PTSD diagnosis from a VA psychiatrist, psychologist or Licensed Clinical Social Worker confirming that the disorder is linked to a military event that caused the PTSD condition. The event must be related to terrorist activity or fear of hostile military action and was likely to have happened during the veteran’s time of service.

[Source: U.S. Veteran Compensation Programs | November 5, 2018 ++]

VA Life Insurance (S-DVI) Update 04 ► Eligibility & Application

Veterans who are granted a service-connected disability but are otherwise in good health may apply to VA for up to \$10,000 life insurance coverage. If you have questions about Government Life Insurance, you can call = toll-free at 1-800-669-8477. Insurance Specialists are available from Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., EST. You can also visit website www.insurance.va.gov. The following is a summary of Service Disabled Veterans Insurance:

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Service-Disabled Veterans Insurance

The Service-Disabled Veterans Insurance (S-DVI) program was established in 1951 to meet the insurance needs of certain veterans with service connected disabilities. S-DVI is available in a variety of permanent plans as well as term Veterans who are granted a service-connected disability but are otherwise in good health may apply to VA for up to \$10,000 in life insurance coverage at standard insurance rates within two years from the date VA notifies the veteran that the disability has been rated as service-connected. This insurance is limited to veterans who left service after April 24, 1951. Veterans who are totally disabled may apply for a waiver of premiums. For those who are eligible for this waiver, an additional policy of up to \$20,000 is available. Premiums, however, cannot be waived on the additional insurance.

Eligibility for S-DVI Insurance

You are eligible if you if:

- You were released from active duty under other than dishonorable conditions on or after April 25, 1951
- You were rated for a service-connected disability (even if only 0%)
- You are in good health except for any service-connected conditions
- You apply within 2 years from the date VA grants your new service-connected disability

You can apply for basic S-DVI using VA's [S-DVI Online Application](#). You can also download [VA form 29-4364, Application for Service-Disabled Veterans Life Insurance](#). Be sure to also download [VA Pamphlet 29-9](#) from this site for premiums rates and a description of the plans available.

Eligibility for Supplemental S-DVI

The Veterans' Benefits Act of 2010, provided for \$30,000 of supplemental coverage to S-DVI policyholders. Premiums may not be waived on this supplemental coverage. S-DVI policyholders are eligible for this supplemental coverage if:

- They are eligible for a waiver of premiums.
- They apply for the coverage within one year from notice of the grant of waiver.
- They are under age 65

To apply for Supplemental S-DVI, you must file VA Form 29-0188, Application for Supplemental Service-Disabled Veterans (SRH) Life Insurance (<https://www.vba.va.gov/pubs/forms/VBA-29-0188-ARE.PDF>) or send a letter requesting this insurance over your signature. You must apply for the coverage within one year from notice of the grant of waiver of premiums.

Gratuitous S-DVI

Gratuitous Service-Disabled Veterans Insurance (S-DVI) is granted posthumously to Veterans who:

- Met the basic eligibility requirements for S-DVI
- Did not apply for S-DVI because of a continued mental incompetence due to a service connected disability
- Died before the appointment of a guardian or within two years of such appointment

Veterans Affairs (VA) must receive an application for payment of Gratuitous S-DVI within two years from the date of the Veteran's death. If the person making the claim is mentally or legally incompetent, and did not file the claim in time, VA can receive the application within one year after incompetency ends.

Premiums for S-DVI Insurance

Premiums are based on your age and amount of coverage you purchase. Before you apply for S-DVI coverage, you should compare the premium rates to commercial insurance companies. If your disability is not serious, you may be able to find better rates from a commercial company. Under certain conditions, the basic S-DVI policy provides for a waiver of premiums in case of total disability. Policyholders who carry the basic S-DVI coverage and who become eligible for a waiver of premiums due to total disability can apply for and be granted additional Supplemental S-DVI of up to \$30,000.

[Source: Military.com | November 5, 2018 ++]

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

Jackson, MS – Undrey L. Jones, 48, Jackson, pled guilty 29 OCT before United States District Judge Carlton W. Reeves to threatening to bomb the Veterans Administration Regional Office in Jackson, Mississippi. Jones was charged in a one-count federal indictment on May 2, 2018. A superseding indictment was filed on June 12, 2018. On February 27, 2018, Jones called the Veterans Benefits Administration Call Center, located in Salt Lake City, Utah. Jones identified himself by name and angrily demanded to talk to the Director of the Veterans Administration Medical Center and Regional Office in Jackson, Mississippi. Jones became increasingly agitated during the call, and stated that he would "come up there and blow the building up," referring to the Veterans Administration Regional Office in Jackson. Jones used several expletives during this call. Jones was arrested on February 28, 2018.

Jones is set for sentencing on January 22, 2019 at 10:00am and faces a maximum sentence of 10 years in federal prison and a \$250,000 fine. "These charges underscore the Veterans Affairs Office of Inspector General's commitment to the safety of the Veteran Affairs' patient population, as well as its employees, guests, and facilities," said Special Agent in Charge James Ross. [Source: U.S. Attorneys | Southern District of Mississippi | October 29, 2018 ++]

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Bell County, TX – Three residents have each pleaded guilty in federal court for their roles in an alleged scheme to defraud the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. **Christopher Sebek** and **Melissa Sebek**, both of Temple, and **Jeffrey Pearson**, 55, of Killeen, were charged in September for their alleged roles to defraud the Temple VA of about \$250,000. Pearson — owner and operator of Whitetail Industrial Parts and Service, a Temple VA contractor — and Christopher Sebek, 55, operations supervisor in the Engineering Department at the Olin E. Teague Veterans' Medical Center in Temple, were both charged with one count of conspiracy to defraud the government and one count of theft of government property.

Pearson pleaded guilty 30 OCT before U.S. Magistrate Judge Jeffrey C. Manske in a U.S. District Court, Western District of Texas, in Waco. He remains free on a \$25,000 appearance bond before his sentencing, which is scheduled for Jan. 29, 2019, before U.S. District Judge Alan Albright. Christopher Sebek pleaded guilty during an arraignment hearing Oct. 23 and Manske ordered a pre-sentencing report. Christopher Sebek is scheduled to be sentenced on Jan. 16, 2019. Melissa Sebek, also 55, owner and operator of MS. Bookkeeping Services, faced a separate but related charge of one count of theft of government property. She pleaded guilty on Oct. 16, court records show. Melissa Sebek is scheduled to be sentenced on Dec. 4, according to a court docket.

The charges were announced in late September by Waco-based U.S. Attorney John F. Bash of the Western District of Texas and Special Agent in Charge James Ross of the VA Office of Inspector General Criminal Investigations

Division, South Central Field Office. The charges resulted from VA investigations that uncovered a scheme at the Temple VA motor pool to secretly profit from VA purchase orders. "It was a part of the conspiracy that (Christopher) Sebek used his position as Operations Supervisor for the Department of Engineering for VAMC-Temple to divert United States Government property and money so that he could use the property and money for his own personal gain, including the payment of personal bills, loans, college tuition and personal credit card bills," according to the federal complaint in U.S. District Court in Waco.

According to a preliminary report obtained by the Austin American-Statesman in November, investigators claimed they uncovered a complex scheme involving the VA motor pool that had funneled business to a Killeen firm, Whitetail Industrial Parts and Service that made at least \$400,000 by padding purchases with 30 percent surcharges. More than \$1.3 million reportedly was funneled through Whitetail. The report, which also detailed alleged abuses of power and other possible criminal actions, prompted U.S. Rep. John Carter (R-Round Rock) to demand answers on questionable activities at the Temple VA, part of the Central Texas VA Medical Center. Carter sent a letter to Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary David Shulkin and VA Inspector General Michael Missal last year and said he expected changes. "Our military men and women have bravely served our nation, and I expect the VA system to provide the very best care when they return to civilian life," Carter wrote. "I am encouraged by Central Texas VA Health Care System Director Christopher Sandles' strong condemnation of the behavior by these employees, including his comment that a 'day of reckoning' has come for those employees that have mistreated veterans.

The scheme to defraud the Temple VA began in February 2012, according to court records. Christopher Sebek and Pearson allegedly agreed to steal money from the Temple VA. Over a five-year period, they allegedly submitted fraudulent invoices for payment reportedly for goods and services designated for the VA medical center. Sebek reportedly presented bogus invoices to the VA from his wife's company. Those invoices, however, were used by Sebek to pay for personal items and to cover Pearson's 30 percent commission on each invoice. Court records allege that Sebek stole two VAMC credit cards and used them to pay for personal expenses. If convicted, the defendants each face up to five years in federal prison on the conspiracy charge and up to 10 years in federal prison on the theft charge. [Source: tdtnews.com | Eric E. Garcia | October 31, 2018 ++]

VAMC Oklahoma City Update 04 ► Surgeon Shortage

The Oklahoma City Veterans Affairs Health Care System is working to fill positions after the unexpected departure of two employees left the hospital without a general surgeon on call or available for overnight emergencies for a number of days this month. Paul Munden, the hospital's chief of surgery, informed staff and administrators in an email on Oct. 31 that his team was down to a single full-time surgeon, The Oklahoman reported. One surgeon left because of unspecified personal reasons, while the other departed because of a completed visa process. Munden's email indicated that the facility would be short-staffed during several periods, including Nov. 1-5, Nov. 12-13 and Nov. 21-27.

The hospital still performs general surgery, but lacks a provider to cover all evening hours, according to Director Wade Vlosich. Some veterans will be transferred elsewhere during the surgeon shortage. The Department of Veterans Affairs has programs that allow for veterans to receive care outside of VA hospitals, so patients who are transferred won't be billed extra. "We actually met with (the University of Oklahoma) and they knew this workload would be coming and knew about our loss of staff. So, it was not a surprise to them," Vlosich said. A new surgeon starts 13 NOV and another will start 25 NOV, Vlosich said. He said the surgeon shortage is "a fairly common thing" and is "a mini blip." The VA is also seeking to fill another surgery position to avoid a similar shortage in the future, Vlosich said. [Source: The Associated Press | November 12, 2018 ++]



Homeless Vets Update 90 ► 5.4% Decrease in 2018 & Nearly 50% Since 2010

Veteran homelessness in the U.S. continues to decline, according to a new national estimate announced today by U.S. Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Secretary Ben Carson. HUD’s Annual Homeless Assessment Report finds the total number of reported Veterans experiencing homelessness in 2018 decreased 5.4 percent since last year, falling to nearly half the number of homeless Veterans reported in 2010.

In announcing the latest annual estimate, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Secretary Robert Wilkie and HUD Secretary Ben Carson noted that local communities are reporting reductions in the number of Veterans in their shelter systems and on their streets. [View local estimates of Veteran homelessness at this link.](#) “The reduction in homelessness among Veterans announced today shows that the strategies we are using to help the most vulnerable Veterans become stably housed are working,” said VA Secretary Wilkie. “This is good news for all Veterans.” “We owe it to our Veterans to make certain they have a place to call home,” said HUD Secretary Carson. “We’ve made great strides in our efforts to end Veteran homelessness, but we still have a lot of work to do to ensure those who wore our nation’s uniform have access to stable housing.”

“In **‘Home, Together,’** the new federal strategic plan to prevent and end homelessness, we redouble our commitment to ending homelessness among Veterans and among all Americans,” said Matthew Doherty, executive director of the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness. “Working together at the federal, state and local level, we can and will continue to make progress until all Americans have a stable home from which they can pursue opportunity.” Each year, thousands of local communities around the country conduct one-night “Point-in-Time” estimates of the number of persons experiencing homelessness — in emergency shelters, transitional housing programs and in unsheltered locations. This year’s estimate finds 37,878 Veterans experienced homelessness in January 2018, compared with 40,020 reported in January 2017. HUD estimates among the total number of reported Veterans experiencing homelessness in 2018, 23,312 Veterans were found in sheltered settings, while volunteers counted 14,566 Veterans living in places not meant for human habitation.

HUD also reports a nearly 10 percent decline among female Veterans experiencing homelessness. In January 2018, local communities reported 3,219 homeless female Veterans compared with 3,571 one year earlier. The decrease in Veteran homelessness can largely be attributed to the effectiveness of the [HUD-VA Supportive Housing \(HUD-VASH\) Program](#), which combines permanent HUD rental assistance with case management and clinical services provided by the VA. HUD-VASH is complemented by a continuum of VA programs that use modern tools and technology to identify the most vulnerable Veterans and rapidly connect them to the appropriate interventions to become and remain stably housed. Last year alone, more than 4,000 Veterans, many experiencing chronic forms of homelessness, found permanent housing and critically needed support services through the HUD-VASH program. An additional 50,000 Veterans found permanent housing and supportive services through VA’s continuum of homeless programs.

To date, 64 local communities and three states have declared an effective end to Veteran homelessness, creating systems to ensure that a Veteran’s homelessness is rare, brief, and one-time. Go to <https://www.usich.gov/tools-for-action/communities-that-have-ended-homelessness/> for a map of the communities that have ended homelessness.

HUD and VA have a wide range of programs that prevent and end homelessness among Veterans, including health care, housing solutions, job training and education. More information about VA's homeless programs is available at VA.gov/homeless. Go to https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/comm_planning/homeless for more information on HUD's program. Veterans who are homeless or at imminent risk of becoming homeless should contact their local VA Medical Center and ask to speak to a homeless coordinator or call the National Call Center for Homeless Veterans at 877-4AID-VET (877-424-3838). [Source: VA News Release | November 1, 2018 ++]

Vet Lawsuits | Richard Stayskal ► \$10M Army Gross Medical Malpractice

Sgt. 1st Class Richard Stayskal was deployed to Ramadi, Iraq, in 2004 when he was shot by a sniper. The round, which he kept as a souvenir, pierced his left lung and nearly killed him. The round is "a reminder of how fragile life is," he told Charlotte's Fox 46. "Something could change everything in an instant." Despite beating the odds of such a grievous wound in combat, something else did change in an instant for the 37-year-old Green Beret when, following a June 2017 visit to a civilian doctor to address severe breathing issues the Army told him was a simple case of pneumonia, he received terrible news. "Did a biopsy and when I woke up my wife was crying," Stayskal told Fox 46. "And he [the doctor] was telling her that I had cancer."



Sgt. 1st Class Rich Stayskal, left, with his wife, Megan, and Rep. Richard Hudson, R-Concord. Stayskal was diagnosed with stage four lung cancer months after Army doctors at Fort Bragg, N.C., allegedly told him he was fine.

The tumor in Stayskal's lungs had been egregiously misdiagnosed by Army doctors, the report said, allowing it to double in size and spread to other vital organs — and into stage four terminal lung cancer. Now, the father of two daughters, ages 9 and 11, said doctors have given him a life expectancy of at least a year. This outcome, the report said, could have been significantly altered had Army medical practitioners observed what board-certified radiologist Dr. Louis Leskosky argued even an inexperienced, "[first year] resident would have seen."

Stayskal began experiencing extreme breathing problems in January 2017, the report said. "While I was sleeping I felt like I was drowning," he told Fox 46. Alarmed by his condition, he checked himself into the hospital at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, where doctors took a CT scan and casually sent him home. "They didn't tell me anything," he said. "They said my physical was fine." Instead, his condition rapidly deteriorated, and by May 2017, a barely-conscious Stayskal had to be rushed by his wife, Megan, to Womack Army Medical Center on post. "They had to crack down on his chest to get him to pop his eyes open," Megan Stayskal told Fox 46, adding that all she could think at the time was, "Why is he not breathing?" Records from that emergency visit to the hospital reportedly show that doctors re-

evaluated Stayskal's January CT scan and noticed an irregularity that needed to be addressed, calling what they saw a "possible mediastinal mass" and recommending a "transbronchial biopsy," the investigation said.

Inexplicably, Stayskal and his wife were reportedly relayed none of this critical information, and were instead sent home after being told it was simply a case of pneumonia. "They checked my heart and said everything was fine," Stayskal said. Once again, the reported diagnosis of "fine" proved to be a heinous miscarriage of medical care. Stayskal began coughing up blood soon after being diagnosed with pneumonia. Observing his worsening symptoms, he called an on-post pulmonologist, but as a new patient, was reportedly told he would have to wait at least a month just for an appointment. "I said, 'Something isn't right. I need to be looked at. Somebody needs to take me seriously. Somebody needs to help me,'" he told Fox 46. "And I just kept getting told, 'Sir, new patients are not a priority.'"

After the terminal cancer diagnosis one month later, Stayskal made contact with attorney Natalie Khawam of the Whistleblower Law Firm, who agreed to represent the special operations soldier and pursue a "\$10 million lawsuit against the government alleging medical malpractice," the Fox 46 report said. Leskosky, who was hired by the Whistleblower Law Firm to review the CT scans performed by the Army, was astonished that Army doctors missed blatant indicators, allowing the tumor to spread aggressively without treatment. "It was completely obvious," Leskosky told Fox 46. "I can't fathom how any experienced radiologist missed this case. ... If I were testifying in court, I would call it a case of gross malpractice." Asked how an earlier detection of the tumor could have changed present circumstances, Khawam replied, "We don't have a man who's dying."

Despite the egregious nature of alleged malpractice, Stayskal's case is unlikely to ever go to trial. The 1950 Supreme Court decision known as the "Feres Doctrine" prevents active duty military personnel from suing the government for injuries sustained as a result of military service. Conversely, civilians are well within their rights to sue for cases of medical malpractice. Many, however, argue that the government's application of the Feres Doctrine, a move primarily designed to prevent personnel from suing for war-related injuries, is excessively broad. "Soldiers signed up to fight for our country, fight for our freedom," Khawam told Fox 46. "They didn't sign up to be malpracticed on."

North Carolina Rep. Richard Hudson (R-Concord) is among those who think the Feres Doctrine is unfairly applied. After hearing Stayskal's story, Hudson drafted legislation with the intent to change the parameters of the Feres Doctrine to allow service members the right to sue the government under specific circumstances. "My internal sense of fairness tells me there ought to be some limited pathway for folks like Rich who can pursue this," Hudson told Fox 46. "He's a real American hero who put his life on the line for his country and to see what he's going through now is tough." When reached, Department of Defense officials would not comment on Stayskal's case.

"Reversal of the Feres Doctrine would destroy the premise of the no-fault compensation system currently applicable to all workers' compensation programs, including military compensation programs," Pentagon spokesperson Maj. Carla Gleason told Fox 46. Khawam, meanwhile, insists the case for Stayskal, who nearly gave up his life for his country without objection, has nothing to do with workers' comp, a sentiment echoed by Hudson. "It violates a sense of right and wrong," he said.

Amid the whirlwind of legal procedures and medical treatment plans, Stayskal remains steadfast in trying to be the best husband and father he can be — for as long as he can. "I try to set examples for my kids of, you gotta do the right thing, you gotta fix the things that are broken," he said. "If you don't do it, who else is going to do it?" While trying to prepare his wife and children for a future that doesn't include him, Stayskal simultaneously goes about his days trying to maintain a positive outlook, often ignoring that the cancer even exists. "If it's false hope, it's still hope," he said. "But there's days I just really try not to believe that I have it. And, some days, I'm good at convincing myself." No matter how thorough the convincing, however, questions of one's own mortality are bound to creep in, a factor the Purple Heart recipient who cheated death in Ramadi those many years ago confronts often. "Sometimes you just stare at the things you never stared at before," he said. "Wondering how many more times you'll get to see them. "Things like this I don't think should happen. It's unfair." [Source: ArmyTimes | J.D. Simkins | November 7, 2018 ++]

Veterans in Congress Update 09 ► Initial Mid-Term Election Results

While a handful of races could remain undecided for days, or longer, the membership of the 116th Congress took shape the night of 6 NOV - and it could include more than 100 military veterans. Here's a quick look at some of the races involving servicemembers of all stripes, and what else those following military and veterans issues) should know about the fallout from the 2018 midterms:

1. The numbers game. With 77 veterans winning House or Senate elections Tuesday night, per Military Times, the next Congress will boast at least 92 former servicemembers and as many as 102, depending on some races that remained deadlocked as the sun came up. The current Congress began its session with 102 veterans, the Times reported, pointing toward another likely downturn in overall representation.

2. Awardees in Arizona. A recipient of MOAA's 2018 Colonel Arthur T. Marix Congressional Leadership Award will represent Arizona in the Senate ... it's just not clear who it'll be. Air Force veteran Rep. Martha McSally holds a slim lead over Rep. Kyrsten Sinema, and both were honored by MOAA earlier this year for their efforts in the House on behalf of veterans. Learn more about the award here.

3. Senators in service. McSally would join fellow veteran Rick Scott (Navy) as narrow victors in Tuesday night's Senate sweepstakes. Other veterans, had easier times retaining their Senate posts, with big wins by Thomas Carper (D-Del., Navy Reserve) and Roger Wicker (R-Miss., Air Force).

4. House committees. With Democrats capturing control of the House, they take over leadership of the key House committees of Armed Services, Veterans Affairs and Appropriations. The Armed Services Committee helps shape policy and spending at the Pentagon, while the Veterans Affairs committee handles issues facing former servicemembers and the Appropriations Committee directs funding to the Pentagon.

5. So ... now what? A handful of media outlets fired up their crystal balls when it comes to the election's impact on military and/or veterans policy: Defense News outlines how a divided Congress likely means a tougher time agreeing on a defense budget, let alone passing one. The future could bring more government shutdowns, this report speculates. Stars and Stripes discusses the new, Democratic leadership of key military- and veteran-related committees: Armed Services, Veterans Affairs, and Appropriations, to name a few. Defense One looks at some early steps those new leaders might take: The House could try to derail plans for a Space Force, for instance, or pull out of Yemen or cut defense spending, Defense One News Editor Ben Watson predicts.

[Source: MOAA | November 07, 2018 ++]

Vet Jobs Update 239 ► Google to Have 21,000 military Hires by 2021.

Comcast NBCUniversal plans to hire an additional 11,000 veterans, military spouses, and National Guard and Reserve members, bringing its total to 21,000 military hires by 2021. Comcast's previous commitment, made in 2015, was to hire 10,000 military community members by the end of 2017, which it exceeded. "Comcast NBCUniversal has greatly benefited since we began our focus on hiring members of the military community in 2010, and we are pleased with our progress," said Dave Watson, president and CEO of Comcast Cable. "We now have thousands of military employees across the country who have translated their valuable experiences in the armed forces to our workforce. We are so thankful that these individuals chose to serve our country, and we are proud to call them teammates as they now help to serve our customers and make a meaningful difference in our company."

Comcast NBCUniversal has an expansive program to support veterans who recently have transitioned into the workforce, including peer-to-peer mentorship with other veteran employees, digital and in-person professional development opportunities designed specifically for veteran and military spouse employees, and opportunities to stay engaged with the military through volunteering with local veteran-serving organizations. The company also has an 8,400 member strong VetNet employee resource group dedicated to supporting our military workforce. “I’m incredibly proud that the entire Comcast NBCUniversal family embraced our commitment, showing our support for the military community through not only our hiring efforts, but also through support of veteran-serving non-profit organizations and work with veteran-owned businesses,” said Brigadier General (Ret.) Carol Eggert, senior vice president of Military and Veteran Affairs at Comcast NBCUniversal.

In August, the company announced that its Internet Essentials program expanded eligibility to low-income veterans, nearly one million of whom live within the Comcast’s service area. The expansion will be furthered through new nationwide partnerships with the Elizabeth Dole Foundation and the PsychArmor Institute, two of America’s leading veteran-serving non-profit organizations that will help support the creation of veteran-specific digital skills training videos and supplementary materials, which will be made available online and delivered in classrooms at Comcast-sponsored computer labs in 10 markets.

The goal is to connect more low-income veterans to Internet resources, including: online social support networks, health benefits, access to colleges and scholarship programs, digital and technical skills training programs, as well as news, games, and entertainment. This year the company became a founding partner of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation’s Hiring 100,000 Military Spouses campaign, which is raising awareness of military spouse unemployment and encouraging employers to make military spouse hiring commitments, ultimately resulting in a combined 100,000 military spouses hired by the end of 2021. Military spouses are still unemployed at a rate of 16 percent, over four times the rate of their civilian counterparts, and Comcast NBCUniversal is committed to helping to close that gap. [Source: The Philadelphia Tribune | November 6, 2018 ++]

Soldiers Memorial St. Louis MO Update 02 ► Renovation Complete

In 2015, the St. Louis city signed over control of the museum to the Missouri Historical Society but retained ownership of the building and artifacts. Subsequently, on 28 FEB 2016 it closed for renovation, Now, after a more than two-year-long, \$30 million renovation that touched nearly every part of the building and grounds, the Soldiers Memorial reopened downtown 3 NOV with fanfare and a host of new exhibits. Years of soot and grime have been scrubbed away. The first level of the museum now houses “St. Louis in Service,” which explores the St. Louis area’s role in conflicts dating to the American Revolution. The lower level hosts “World War I: St. Louis and the Great War.” The top floor has meeting space and offices. The interior of the once-overlooked building is now climate-controlled, and the hundreds of exhibits now on display are better protected from the sun and extremes of temperature and humidity. A basement renovation has more than doubled exhibit space, and the building is now fully ADA-compliant, with a new wheelchair ramp and other improvements. Workers have matched and replaced hundreds of missing tiles from the Gold Star Mothers ceiling mosaic and improved exterior lighting.

Chestnut Street, which runs along the south side of the memorial, has also been redesigned and reduced to one vehicle lane and one bike lane, better highlighting both the museum and the Court of Honor across the street. The court was created as St. Louis’ World War II memorial in 1948 and has been expanded to honor those killed in more recent conflicts. The Korea and Vietnam War memorials have also been given their own spaces, along with other improvements. In a series of speeches before the memorial officially reopened, emcee Tom Irwin, a U.S. Marine Corps veteran and community leader, called the occasion “solemn,” but also “joyous” to celebrate the “public-private partnership” that made it happen. Irwin and others praised the cooperation of public officials and donations from the

Crawford Taylor Foundation, the Guth Foundation and the family of Enterprise Rent-A-Car founder Jack C. Taylor, a World War II fighter pilot who died in 2016.

Several speakers on Saturday quoted or referenced President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s speech to tens of thousands in front of Soldiers Memorial on its Oct. 14, 1936, dedication, and his words: “We in America do not build monuments to war. We do not build monuments to conquest. We build monuments to commemorate the spirit of sacrifice in war — reminders of our desire for peace.” The building was under construction at the time and opened on Memorial Day in 1938. St. Louis Mayor Lyda Krewson said that one person who heard Roosevelt 82 years ago was also present Saturday — Tom Gilmore — who was 4 at the time and went on to serve with the Marine Corps. Krewson said that at a visit a handful of years ago, she was “embarrassed” that better care had not been taken of the building and the artifacts, but she praised the renovation and welcomed the crowd to come enjoy the museum, “which in St. Louis fashion, is free and open to the public.”

The keynote speaker on Saturday was Brigadier Gen. Jeannie M. Leavitt of the Air Force, who said the “museum will continue to capture the stories and memories” of veterans so they will be available for “generations to come.” Leavitt, a St. Louis native became the first female fighter pilot in the U.S. in 1993 and would go on to become the first woman to command a combat fighter wing. She is now commander of the Air Force Recruiting Service at Joint Base San Antonio-Randolph in Texas and drew a crowd of well-wishers and autograph-seekers after the ceremony. [Source: St. Louis Post-Dispatch | Robert Patrick | November 5, 2018 ++]

National Veterans Memorial and Museum ► Now Open



Inspiring and one-of-a-kind: New memorial and museum at 300 West Broad Street, Columbus, Ohio 43215, honors all veterans. "We have museums across the country that focus on branches and conflicts, but our museum houses universal stories of patriotism and service from all branches and all conflicts under one roof," said retired Army Lt. Gen. Michael Ferriter, the institution's president and CEO. "The emotional core of the experience lies within the individual stories of each and every one of the people featured throughout the exhibition program." The stories represent the more than 40 million veterans - about half of them still alive - from throughout U.S. history, from all five branches of the military, in all conflicts, including those that happened before the 13 colonies became the United States of America.

It's not just a memorial and museum about the military, it's about the United States and its place in the world. More than \$82 million was raised through public and private philanthropy for this 53,000-square-foot museum and 2.5-acre memorial grove that sits on 7 acres in downtown Columbus. It uses interactive exhibits and displays with large

photographs and numerous video clips to tell these stories. One of the interactive exhibits is a visually compelling touch screen featuring an image of a parachute. You can select years between 1950 and 2018 and learn the history of the modern military with a few words, some numbers and highlighted maps. Visitors who select 1950, for example, will find out that there were 1.46 million people serving in the military that year, primarily in Japan, Germany and the Panama Canal zone. Tap 1953 next, and you'll see that the number of troops had increased to 3.5 million people, and Korea was at the top of the list of deployments. For 2018, that number is 1.3 million people - less than 1 percent of the U.S. population - with the largest numbers serving in Japan, Germany and South Korea.

As you walk through the museum, heading upward through the curved concrete interior, you pass different thematic spaces that feature different parts of the narrative. Among them are "Why We Serve," "In Combat," "Transformation" and "Service and Citizenship," each with its own short film. The museum, designed by Allied Works Architecture, was named one of the 12 most-anticipated buildings of 2018 by Architectural Digest, which described the building as understated and dignified. Inside, visitors walk through a light-filled spiral processional ending at the top of the building and its rooftop sanctuary, designed for ceremonies and reflection. Outside, across from the building entrance, OLIN landscape architects designed the memorial grove with American elm trees, a curving pathway and a stone wall

Ohio native Sen. John Glenn, the Marine pilot and astronaut who died in 2016, was instrumental in planning the ambitious venture. He led the committee that determined the museum's foundational pillars: honor, connect, inspire and educate - examples of which are found throughout the building. Glenn was especially focused on the inspiration part, according to Amy Taylor, who has been working on the project as part of the Columbus Downtown Development Corp., a private, nonprofit organization. She said Glenn wanted to inspire people to serve, not necessarily in the military, but in whatever way they chose.

"When you go through the museum and see the selflessness and sacrifice that so many of our veterans have made, you're looking for opportunities to do the same kinds of things in your own life," Taylor said. "Every time, I leave inspired. Every time, I have goosebumps, and that's really what Sen. Glenn wanted." One of the artifacts at the museum is a presentation sword given in 1852 by Maj. Daniel McCook to his son, Alexander McCook, at his graduation from West Point. More interesting than that gift, though, is the story of the McCook family. More than a dozen of them, cousins and brothers known as the Fighting McCooks, served in the Union Army during the Civil War. Six rose in the ranks to become brigadier generals or higher; five died during the war.

There's no question that the exhibits will draw an emotional response. How can they not, with video of soldiers like Joshua Mantz, the West Point dreamer, describing his Iraq combat experience when a sniper bullet severed his femoral artery? "I could feel myself starting to die. I woke up about two days later in the Green Zone to learn that I flat-lined for 15 minutes straight. I also learned something that still gives me chills to this day, and the medical team just pulled off a miracle. ... They got a faint pulse back. And as they were taking me to the Black Hawk helicopter ... my scouts were waiting out there. They stopped the medical team and they took the stretcher from them and said, 'He's our lieutenant, we're putting him on that bird.'"

It has been decided the facility won't charge U.S. military veterans admission following public criticism of earlier plans to have them pay entrance fees. The Columbus Dispatch reports that the museum in Columbus originally said adult admission was \$17, while veterans would pay \$12. The decision to charge veterans drew criticism, and officials decided to let them in free. Lt. Gen. Michael Ferriter said in a statement the museum was "committed to providing free entry to all American Military Veterans." Former Secretary of State Colin Powell recently gave a keynote address at the museum before it opened to the public 31 OCT. [Source: Chicago Tribune | Terri Colby | November 5, 2018 ++]

Bladensburg WWI Vet Memorial Update 06 ► Supreme Court Will Hear Case

The U.S. Supreme Court announced 2 NOV that it will hear The American Legion’s case regarding the Bladensburg Veterans Memorial in Prince George’s County, Md. The Bladensburg World War I Veterans Memorial was erected in 1925 by Gold Star mothers and an American Legion post to honor 49 Prince George’s County men who gave their lives during World War I. “In an example of The American Legion’s quest to honor and remember our brothers and sisters in arms, we’re pleased with the recent decision by the U.S. Supreme Court to hear our case,” American Legion National Commander Brett Reistad said.



The Gold Star mothers who designed the memorial in 1919 chose a cross shape to recall the cross-shaped grave markers standing over American graves in Europe. The memorial stood peacefully for almost 90 years until the American Humanist Association filed a lawsuit in February 2014. In 2015, the U.S. District Court for the District of Maryland ruled the memorial was constitutional, citing the use of crosses to mark the graves of fallen American servicemen overseas. Later, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit reversed the District Court’s decision, declaring the cross shape of the memorial violates the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

The American Legion, represented by First Liberty Institute and the international law firm Jones Day, is asking the Supreme Court to reverse the Court of Appeals ruling that could lead to the bulldozing of the Bladensburg Veterans Memorial. “There are some who want to erase the memory of the service and sacrifice of these 49 fallen servicemen of Prince George’s County,” said Kelly Shackelford, president and CEO of First Liberty. “If this monument is bulldozed to the ground, it’s only a matter of time before the wrecking ball turns on Arlington National Cemetery and the thousands of memorials like this one across the country.”

Each of the 49 World War I heroes’ names are on a bronze plaque on the memorial. On each side of the memorial a word captures its spirit: Valor, Endurance, Courage, Devotion. The American Legion emblem can be found on two sides of the memorial. “For nearly a century, The American Legion has focused on preserving the memories of our fallen brothers and sisters,” Reistad said. “And that’s why it is so critical that we – veterans and civilians alike -- never forget those honored on the Bladensburg Veterans Memorial.” [Source: The American Legion | November 03, 2018 ++]

Vet Legal Assistance Update 02 ► Improved Access to Free Services

On 5 NOV the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) together with representatives from the departments of Labor, Justice, Defense, Homeland Security, the U.S. Navy and others, signed a joint statement aimed at improving access to free legal services for Veterans in need. Federal agencies and the Veterans legal services community came together at VA headquarters in Washington D.C. to celebrate [VA’s Medical Legal Partnerships](#) and to recognize volunteers who serve at VA-based free legal clinics.

Currently, VA hosts at least 170 free legal clinics in its VA Medical Centers, Community Based Outpatient Clinics and Vet Centers across the country, by partnering with external legal service providers, such as local bar associations, legal aid organizations and law school clinics. “Legal assistance stands high on the list of many Veterans’ important but unmet needs,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “Our goal is to make sure our Veterans have access to not only health care and disability benefits, but to community legal services that are central to their overall well-being.”

Veterans often face stressful legal situations — such as eviction, foreclosure, child support or driver’s license revocations — that can affect their ability to gain or maintain employment and housing, or focus on medical treatment. At the VA-hosted event today, VA and other federal agencies committed to encourage and further the provision of volunteer legal services to Veterans. As a prime example of the VA-based legal clinics nationwide, attorneys and paralegals from VA and 13 other federal agencies have provided pro bono legal assistance on their own time to Veterans at the Washington, D.C., VA Medical Center’s legal clinic, run by the [Veterans Pro Bono Consortium](#).

During the past year, the legal clinic at that facility has served more than 800 Veterans. For more information about VA’s coordination of legal services for Veterans at VA facilities visit <https://www.va.gov/OGC/LegalServices.asp>. [Source: VA News Release | November 5, 2018 ++]

Veterans Month ► **NOV Designated National Veterans and Military Families Month**

President Donald Trump issued a proclamation 2 NOV designating November 2018 as National Veterans and Military Families Month. "I encourage all communities, all sectors of society, and all Americans to acknowledge and honor the service, sacrifices, and contributions of veterans and military families for what they have done and for what they do every day to support our great Nation," the president said in a press statement posted to the White House's website <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/presidential-proclamation-national-veterans-military-families-month-2018>.



Trump issued the proclamation while also championing his commitment to the veterans community. "I was pleased to sign into law the landmark VA MISSION Act of 2018, which revolutionizes the way veterans receive healthcare and other services vital to their lives," he said in the statement. For full coverage of Veterans Day and veterans' affairs events this month, visit Military Times' Veterans Month Salute page <https://www.militarytimes.com/military-honor/salute-veterans>. [Source: NCOAdvocate | November 2, 2018 ++]

Veterans Day Tribute Update 01 ► Taps & The Last Post Events

On November 11, 2018, at precisely 11:00 am (local times), buglers and trumpeters from the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and other countries were scheduled commemorate the 100th anniversary of the end of the First World War with a worldwide sounding of Taps and The Last Post, sponsored by Taps for Veterans. Each performer sounded their call at a location of their choosing. Those locations included WWI monuments, memorials, public squares, churches, and Veterans Day and Remembrance Day ceremonies.

‘Taps’ is a bugle call played at dusk, during flag ceremonies, and at military funerals by the United States Armed Forces. The official military version is played by a single bugle or trumpet, although other versions of the tune may be played in other contexts. At <https://www.marineband.marines.mil/Audio-Resources/Ceremonial-Music> the U.S. Marine Corps Ceremonial Music site has recordings of two bugle and one band version. ‘The Last Post’ is a bugle call within British infantry regiments and is used at Commonwealth military funerals, and ceremonies commemorating those who have been killed in war. Its duration varies typically from a little over one minute to nearly three minutes.

As of late October more than 300 buglers from 39 states and 5 countries had already signed up to participate and organizers hoped to eventually have more than 1000 participants registered. The videos they submit of their sounding of Taps or The Last Post on November 11 will also be posted on the website <https://www.tapsforveterans.org> and all participants will be receiving a commemorative patch from Taps for Veterans following the event. In addition one participant, whose name was chosen from the registered list, will receive an original World War One era bugle. [Source: Taps for Veterans organization | Jari Villanueva | November 6, 2018 ++]

Vet Unemployment Update 17 ► Fell From 3.4 to 2.9 Percent in OCT

Veterans of all service periods fared better in the workforce in October compared to the [previous month](#), even as unemployment among nonveterans remained stagnant, the latest federal data show. The veteran unemployment rate fell from 3.4 to 2.9 percent last month, the lowest it’s been since October 2017, according to Bureau of Labor and Statistics figures released Friday. For post-9/11 veterans, the unemployment rate was 3.1 percent, down from 3.9 percent in September. The unemployment rate for nonveterans was 3.5 percent for the second month in a row. Experts warn against putting too much stock in the monthly employment figures, especially for veterans, whose data is drawn from a much smaller sample size than the overall population. Still, annual averages show a downward movement since 2010, when veteran unemployment in the 21st century was at its peak, and so far, the average for 2018 continues that trend. The national unemployment rate in October was unchanged at 3.7 percent, as the U.S. added 250,000 jobs, primarily in the healthcare, manufacturing, construction, transportation and warehousing industries. [Source: MilitaryTimes | Natalie Gross | November 2, 2018 ++]

Vietnam Vets [32] ► R. Lee Ermey

California plans to pay tribute to “Full Metal Jacket” actor and Marine icon R. Lee Ermey by naming a road after him. A seven-mile stretch of road in Palmdale, California, known as Avenue N will be renamed R. Lee Ermey Avenue, in honor of the acclaimed actor and Marine veteran, according to a fundraising page associated with Ermey’s supporters. Stars and Stripes reported that the stretch of road will also play the “The Marines’ Hymn” when driving over special grooves in the road. California officials with Palmdale and Lancaster, Los Angeles County and California

Department of Transportation approved the effort to rename the avenue but lack the funding to put the endeavor into action.



Supporters of Ermev have since sprung into action by launching a GoFundMe page to raise \$150,000 to pay for street signs, highway signs and memorial plaques, according to the fundraising page at <https://www.gofundme.com/r-lee-ermey-memorial-ave>. The stretch of road to be renamed was closest to Ermev’s home of nearly 20 years, the Antelope Valley Press reported. The legendary Marine passed away at the age of 74 in April due to complications of pneumonia. He is best known for his role as the hard charging drill instructor Gunnery Sgt. Hartman in the 1987 hit movie “Full Metal Jacket.” The movie earned the former Marine a Golden Globe nomination for best supporting actor. Ermev had left the Corps as a staff sergeant in 1972 after serving nearly 11 years of service. He picked up the rank of gunny as an honorary promotion in 2002 from then-Commandant Gen. James Jones. The newly renamed road will be unveiled at a public ceremony during the Corps’ 243rd birthday on Nov. 10, the Antelope Valley Press reported. [Source: MarineCorpsTimes | Shawn Snow | November 1, 2018 ++]

Stolen Valor Update 112 ► Actor Cut Off Own Arm to Get Roles



One of the most bizarre — and gruesome — cases of stolen valor came to light this week when an actor who recently appeared on a popular TV show admitted to cutting off his own arm and lying about being a wounded war veteran. **Todd Latourette**, who most recently appeared in season 4 of AMC’s “Breaking Bad” prequel series, “Better Call Saul,” told Albuquerque’s KOB 4 that he sawed off and cauterized his own arm 17 years ago out of desperation to earn more acting roles. “I severed my hand with a Skilsaw,” he said, adding that he had stopped taking medication for bipolar disorder at the time. “The state of my mind was a psychotic episode.”

The actor did wind up landing a number of smaller supporting roles afterward while maintaining a story that he had been wounded in combat overseas. “The film industry obviously took a different angle,” he said. “I was different. And so they liked that.” But the actor now says he realizes he was only hired because of the ongoing deception, a revelation he said is tough to live with. “I was dishonorable,” he told KOB 4. “I’m killing my career by doing this. If anyone thinks this was for personal edification, that’s not the case. I’m ousting myself from the New Mexico Film Industry. And gladly so, just to say what I’ve said.”

Latourette insisted he doesn’t expect anyone to forgive him, but does hope his experience might be a lesson to someone else struggling with a mental illness. “The power is in your hands to take your medication in the morning, or at night,” he said. “This discourse of my life doesn’t need to necessarily be yours, because it happens quick... it happens quick.” Latourette’s other on-screen appearances included the George Clooney and Ewan McGregor film, “The Men Who Stare at Goats,” and the Netflix show, “Longmire.”

[Source: MilitaryTimes | J.D. Simkins | November 1, 2018 ++]

Obit: Stan Lee ► 12 NOV 2018 | Marvel Superheroes Creator

Stan Lee, the creative dynamo who revolutionized the comic book and helped make billions for Hollywood by introducing human frailties in Marvel superheroes such as Spider-Man, the Fantastic Four and the Incredible Hulk, died Monday. He was 95. Lee was declared dead at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles, according to Kirk Schenck, an attorney for Lee's daughter, J.C. Lee. As the top writer at Marvel Comics and later as its publisher, Lee was widely considered the architect of the contemporary comic book. He revived the industry in the 1960s by offering the costumes and action craved by younger readers while insisting on sophisticated plots, college-level dialogue, satire, science fiction, even philosophy.

Millions responded to the unlikely mix of realistic fantasy, and many of his characters, including Spider-Man, the Hulk and X-Men went on to become stars of blockbuster films. He won the National Medal of Arts in 2008. Recent projects Lee helped make possible range from the films "Avengers: Infinity War," "Black Panther" and "Guardians of the Galaxy" to such TV series as "Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D" and "Daredevil." Lee was recognizable to his fans, having had cameos in many Marvel films and TV projects, often delivering his trademark motto, Lee considered the comic-book medium an art form and he was prolific: By some accounts, he came up with a new comic book every day for 10 years. "I wrote so many I don't even know. I wrote either hundreds or thousands of them," he told The Associated Press in 2006.

He hit his stride in the 1960s when he brought the Fantastic Four, the Hulk, Spider-Man, Iron Man and numerous others to life. "It was like there was something in the air. I couldn't do anything wrong," he said. His heroes, meanwhile, were a far cry from virtuous do-gooders such as rival DC Comics' Superman. The Fantastic Four fought with each other. Spider-Man was goaded into superhero work by his alter ego, Peter Parker, who suffered from unrequited crushes, money problems and dandruff. The Silver Surfer, an alien doomed to wander Earth's atmosphere, waxed about the woeful nature of man. The Hulk was marked by self-loathing. Daredevil was blind and Iron Man had a weak heart.

Some of Lee's creations became symbols of social change — the inner turmoil of Spider-Man represented '60s America, for example, while The Black Panther and The Savage She-Hulk mirrored the travails of minorities and women. "I think of them as fairy tales for grown-ups," he told The AP in 2006. "We all grew up with giants and ogres and witches. Well, you get a little bit older and you're too old to read fairy tales. But I don't think you ever outgrow your love for those kind of things, things that are bigger than life and magical and very imaginative." Lee scripted most of Marvel's superhero comics himself during the '60s, including the Avengers and the X-Men, two of the most enduring. In 1972, he became Marvel's publisher and editorial director; four years later, 72 million copies of Spider-Man were sold. "He's become our Mickey Mouse," he once said of the masked, web-crawling crusader.



Stan Lee served in the U.S. Army Signal Corps during World War II from 1942 to 1945. Died at age 95.

Lee also published several books, including "The Superhero Women" in 1977 and "How to Draw Comics the Marvel Way" the following year, when he was named publisher of the year by the Periodical and Book Association of America. CBS turned the Hulk into a successful TV series, with Bill Bixby and Lou Ferrigno portraying the doomed scientist from 1978-82. A Spider-Man series ran briefly in 1978. Both characters were featured in animated TV series as well.

The first big-budget movie based on Lee's characters, "X-Men," was a smash in 2000, earning more than \$130 million at North American theaters. "Spider-Man" did even better, taking in more than \$400 million in 2002. A Marvel movie empire would emerge after that, one of the most lucrative mega-franchises in cinema history, with the recent "Avengers: Infinity War" grossing more than \$2 billion worldwide. In 10 years, the Marvel Cinematic Universe film shave netted over \$17.6 billion in worldwide grosses.

Stanley Martin Lieber was born Dec. 28, 1922, in New York. He grew up a fan of "Hardy Boys" adventure books and Errol Flynn movies, and got a job at Timely Comics after graduating from high school. Within a few months, the editor and art director quit, leaving the 17-year-old Lee with creative control over the company, which grew and was renamed Atlas Comics and, finally, Marvel. Lieber changed his name, thinking Lee would be used for "silly little comics" and his real name would be reserved for novels. His early work largely reflected popular movies — westerns, crime dramas, romance, whatever was the rage at the time. He worked for about 50 cents per page.

Lee joined the Army in 1942 and was assigned to the Signal Corps. His duties included repairing telegraph wires and communications. Once the Army became aware of his writing ability he was transferred to Training Film Division writing for training films where he was given the military classification "Playwright". He was one of only nine men given that classification. When World War II ended he returned to a Marvel and began a long and admittedly boring run of assembly line comic book production. Comics in the 1950s were the subject of Senate hearings pushed by the Comics Code Authority, which frowned on gore and characters that questioned authority. Major comic book companies adopted the code as a form of self-regulation to avoid sanctions. Lee said he was also working for a publisher who considered comics as fare only for children. "One day I said, "This is insane," Lee told the Guardian in 1979. "I'm just doing the same type of stories as everybody else. I wasn't taking pride in my work and I wanted to quit. But my wife said, 'Look, why don't you do the kind of comics you want for a change?'"

The result was the first issue of "The Fantastic Four," in 1960, with the characters, plot and text from Lee and the illustrations by famed Marvel artist Jack Kirby. The characters were normal people changed into reluctant superheroes through no fault of their own. Writing in "Origins of Marvel Comics," Lee described the quartet this way: "The characters would be the kind of characters I could personally relate to; they'd be flesh and blood, they'd have their faults and foibles, they'd be fallible and feisty and — most important of all — inside their colorful, costumed booties they'd still have feet of clay." "The Amazing Spider-Man" followed in 1962 and before long, Marvel Comics was an industry behemoth.

Lee knew his work was different, proudly noting that stories were drawn out over several issues not to make money but to better develop characters, situations and themes. He didn't neglect his villains, either. One, the Moleman, went bad when he was ostracized because of his appearance, Lee wrote, adding it was "almost unheard of in a comic book" to explain why a character was what he was. Lee's direct influence faded in the 1970s as he gave up some of his editorial duties at Marvel. But with his trademark white mustache and tinted sunglasses, he was the industry's most recognizable figure. He lectured widely on popular culture. Lee moved to Los Angeles in 1981 to head Marvel Productions, an animation studio that was later purchased, along with Marvel Comics, for \$50 million by New World Entertainment. As sales of comics declined, Marvel was forced into bankruptcy proceedings that meant it had to void a lifetime contract prohibiting Lee from working for anyone else. Lee later sued Marvel for \$10 million, saying the company cheated him out of millions in profits from movies based on his characters.

In 2000, Lee agreed to write stories for DC Comics, reinventing Superman, Batman, Wonder Woman and other signature characters for Marvel's one-time rival. The dapper, friendly comic book genius continued to work into his 90s on numerous projects, including comics, films and DVDs. In the late 1990s, he looked to capitalize on the Internet craze, offering animated "Webisodes" of comic-like action. Stan Lee Media also sought to reach out to Web-savvy youth through deals with pop artists the Backstreet Boys and Mary J. Blige. The company went bankrupt, and three men were indicted for allegedly defrauding the business in a check kiting scam. Lee wasn't implicated. After that initial failure, Lee formed the successful Pow! Entertainment Company to launch animated Internet-based projects.

Lee's wife and partner in nearly everything, Joan Lee, died on July 6, 2017, leaving a void that made her husband, by then in mental and physical decline, vulnerable to hangers-on who began to surround him. Lawsuits, court fights and an elder abuse investigation all emerged in the fight over who spoke for the elderly Lee. Lee is survived by his daughter, Joanie, and a younger brother who also worked in comics, Larry Lieber.

[Source: Stars & Stripes | November 12, 2018 ++]

Vet Hiring Fairs ► Scheduled As of 15 NOV 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 | November 15, 2018 ++]

Military Retirees & Veterans Events Schedule ► As of 15 NOV 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\vetterans 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.

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

Please report broken links, comments, corrections, suggestions, new RADs and\or other military retiree\vetterans related events to the Events Schedule Manager, Milton.Bell126@gmail.com

[Source: Retiree\Veterans Events Schedule Manager | Milton Bell | November 15, 2018 ++]

State Veteran’s Benefits ► Delaware 2018

The state of Delaware provides several benefits to veterans as indicated below. To obtain information on these plus discounts listed on the Military and Veterans Discount Center (MCVDC) website, refer to the attachment to this Bulletin titled, “**Vet State Benefits & Discounts – DE**” for an overview of the below benefits. Benefits are available to veterans who are residents of the state. For a more detailed explanation of each of the below benefits refer to <https://portal.ct.gov/dva>.

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

[Source: <http://www.military.com/benefits/veteran-state-benefits/delaware-state-veterans-benefits.html> | Oct 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.

None. Congress in Recess

* Military *



Camouflage Netting ► USMC Protection From Robotic Eyes

With the number of robotic eyes in the sky increasing daily, humans were bound to find a new way to mask their presence from overhead interlocutors. While it isn't as flashy as dazzle paint or as iconic as juggalo makeup, camouflage netting has a long history of success in concealing people, buildings and vehicles from aerial surveillance. Swedish defense giant Saab has a camouflage netting just for individuals, designed to keep them hidden from the special cameras carried by drones. Earlier this year, Marines tested the Barracuda Individual Warfighter Net, according to remarks Steve Simmerer of Saab Defense and Security gave at the Modern Day Marine event in late September. The tests took place at the East Coast School of Infantry.



The Tomcat is a spring-into-place camouflage netting tent. Saab also makes a camouflage suite for individuals to wear all the time, and presumably the Barracuda Individual Warfighter Net fits somewhere between the two

The net, which weighs 6 pounds and packs up into a pouch, is designed to mitigate certain kinds of radar and thermal imaging, as well as the general visual obfuscation that comes with a mess of netting thrown over a person. Like all netting, it works best when the person using it isn't moving. That, combined with a design focus on applying the camouflage netting in the field when a threat is detected, make it somewhat more of a niche item, and one dependent on how well other forces can detect a drone to signal the change. With drones designed to fly silently and resemble wildlife, even troops equipped to hide could be caught unaware. [Source: [C4ISRNET](#) | Kelsey Atherton | October 30, 2018 ++]

Camouflage Netting Update 01 ► U.S. Army ULCANS

The Army has finally selected a company to provide it with the next generation of ultra light-weight, general-purpose camouflage. The Army's Ultra-Light Camouflage Netting System, or ULCANS, will be an all-weather, state-of-the-art signature concealment system that provides multi-spectral protection for troops and equipment. The program aims to replace the legacy woodland and desert camouflage variants developed in the 1990s, and will be developed in light and dark woodland, snow and alpine, desert, and urban variants. The Army hopes ULCANS will better conceal the signatures of troops and equipment from high-end sensor threats on the battlefield. The contract to produce the next-generation camouflage was awarded to Fibrotex USA Inc., according to a company statement provided to Army Times. The contract is a 10-year, indefinite delivery and indefinite quantity award, with a total value of \$480 million.



ULCANS is the result of nearly two years of testing, trials and data collection conducted by the U.S. Army's Natick Soldier Systems Center in Massachusetts. Natick tested camouflage technologies from major global manufacturers against the Army's most advanced battlefield surveillance sensors. Many of the technologies underpinning ULCANS are based on developments by Fibrotex's Israel-based parent company over the last two decades, but have been specially modified for the U.S. Department of Defense. The Fibrotex system will provide multi-spectral camouflage, which conceals objects from detection across several portions of the electromagnetic spectrum at the same time. Traditional military camouflage simply hides an object in the visible spectrum, but the multi-spectral design obscures detection in the infrared, thermal and radar spectrum as well.

"Today more than ever, military forces and opposition groups are using night vision sensors and thermal devices against our troops, but by using Fibrotex's camouflage, concealment and deception solutions, we make them undetectable again, allowing them to continue keeping us safe," said Eyal Malleron, CEO of Fibrotex USA. Fibrotex will also deliver the ULCANS material in reversible designs — allowing for the first time a different pattern and capability on each --side, enabling soldiers, vehicles and systems to disappear into light or dark woodland, snow or

alpine and desert or urban environments in any operational theater. “We have more than 50 years of experience, with thousands of hours in the field and a deep understanding of conventional and asymmetric warfare,” Malleron said. “The U.S. Army tested our best camouflage solutions, and the camouflage repeatedly demonstrated the ability to defeat all sensors known to be operating in the battlefield and throughout the electromagnetic spectrum.”

ULCANS will also be manufactured stateside, in a new state-of-the-art facility in McCreary County, Kentucky, creating hundreds of new skilled American jobs over the next decade, according to Fibrotex. “I firmly believe we have the best workforce in the country, and that their hard work and dedication has earned these new jobs, helping deliver a vital new military contract from McCreary County,” Rep. Hal Rogers (R-KY) said in a press statement. “I take great pride in knowing that our people are crafting these products to keep our warfighters and allies safe, giving them an edge on the battlefield.” The new facility is being established next to Outdoor Venture Corporation, which is a strategic partner to Fibrotex USA and already designs modular personnel tents and command post tents for the Army. [Source: ArmyTimes | Kyle Rempfer | November 7, 2018 ++]

Navy Recruitment ► **Challenges On The Horizon | War For Talent**

A new era is dawning in great power competition, with the Navy preparing to fight a large-scale war at sea. But to win a great sea battle, the Navy’s leaders first must win the homefront battle for the best recruits. “We are clearly in a war for talent,” Vice Adm. Robert Burke, the Navy’s top personnel official, told Congress earlier this year. “Current forecasts based on leading economic indicators suggest difficult times ahead.” A dynamic economy not only deters some teenagers from enlisting in the Navy but it attracts sailors away from the fleet and into the civilian workforce. Although Burke said the Navy’s enlistment efforts are shipshape for now, his service is taking steps to expand the potential pool of recruits.

Burke is revamping the service’s recruiting policies, ramping up the numbers of recruiters in the field and expanding heavily into cyber-recruiting young digital natives online. Navy leaders have hiked enlistment bonuses and continue to scrub medical requirements to scrap outdated policies that might block otherwise good recruits from enlisting. Navy officials say that retention is a key part of their manpower strategy, too. And for those who do leave, the Navy is looking for ways to entice them back into uniform. Those challenges are compounded by the Navy’s drive to build a 355-ship fleet, a nearly 25 percent jump over today’s warship roster. Burke estimates up to 35,000 new sailors will be needed to operate, support and sustain the new ships.

During an interview with Navy Times, Burke was proud that his service reached its goal of recruiting all 39,000 of its recruits by May — only eight months into Fiscal Year 2018. But he warned the Navy continues to monitor critical specialties such as the nuclear fields, special operations, advanced electronics, aviation and cyber warfare. “So I challenged Recruiting Command to keep going because I have to get 7,500 more in end strength in [FY19], so everything I can make in FY18 takes down that ramp for ’19 and makes their mission lower,” Burke said. “So they’ve made even another 1,000 toward the already steep goal that I got for them.” Burke’s head start means that the Navy will edge close to being 2,000 recruits over the end strength authorized by Congress. But that’s allowed by law and the surplus helps to prime the service for reaching its goal of enlisting 44,000 new sailors in Fiscal Year 2019.

Rear Adm. Brendan R. McLane, who took the helm of Navy Recruiting Command in July, is waging his own war against teenage America’s disinterest in military service. “One of the top challenges Navy Recruiting encounters now is a declining propensity to serve among our young people,” McLane told Navy Times. “We expect this trend to continue into the future unless we take action now.” McLane pointed to Pentagon surveys of the 21 million young adults between the ages of 17 and 21. Only about 20 percent of them — roughly 4.5 million people — are qualified to serve, he said. And only about 375,000 even want to do so. Interest in joining the military is waning. Conducted in late 2017, the most recent internal Defense Department research reveals that only 11 percent of young adults say they are likely to join the military, the lowest rate in nearly a decade.

When asked about their interest in specific services, only 7 percent of young Americans indicate a likelihood of enlisting in the Navy, a rate similar to those eyeing the Army and Air Force. “The Navy competes with the other services as well as colleges, universities, and private sector employers for the top talent among this group,” McLane said. “The bottom line: There’s a lot of stiff competition out there for a very limited pool of candidates.” But he sees some bright spots gleaming in the darkening data. For example, many young people who are qualified are not opposed to military service; they just lack the awareness, motivation or encouragement to join, he said. “I call these 1.7 million qualified men and women the ‘fence-sitters,’ and we are increasing our recruiting efforts to reach them,” McLane said. “Our marketing strategies are increasingly tailored towards providing these individuals with the right data points to make an informed decision on how the benefits of the Navy can bring them closer to their goals and aspirations.”

The bulk of the eligible population are the generation nicknamed the “Centennials,” those born around or after the turn of the century. They’ve never known life without the internet or hand-held technology. As a result, they’re most comfortable, and tend to get their information from digital and social media. “Centennials live in the digital domain more than any prior generation, and we’ve recalibrated which mediums to meet them in,” he said. “We have now 70 percent of our marketing aimed at digital platforms, which are more familiar to today’s young people ... where they are most comfortable, so we can increase their propensity to serve.”

To meet future recruiting mission numbers, Burke said they’re expanding the recruiting force, including hiking the numbers of recruit division commanders whose job it is to turn raw recruits into sailors at Recruit Training Command in Great Lakes, Illinois. In 2009, during the most recent economic recession, the Navy began trimming its force of 4,200-strong active-duty recruiters. The ranks dwindled to 2,900 in 2016 and began to inch up. There are 3,100 recruiters now. “Navy Recruiting is expecting a ramp-up of 200 recruiters per year for the next two years,” said Lt. Cmdr. Jessica L. McNulty, spokeswoman for Navy Recruiting Command. “Once the 400 plus-up is complete, the total active-duty production recruiters will be 3,364 in FY 2019, which is still 836 less than FY 2009. We are projected to be at 3,550 in FY 2020.” The Navy has sweetened the pot for those opting for recruiting duty. They’re raising Special Duty Assignment pay, allowing sailors to collect between \$300 and \$525 extra per month, depending on the recruiter’s skill level. They also offer many other perks such as quarterly meritorious advancements and extra uniform allowances.

And then there are the “cyberspace recruiters,” sailors who are physically located at Navy Recruiting Command headquarters in Millington, Tennessee, but who ply their persuasive trade online, where the Centennials spend much of their free time. “Through the website, prospective applicants are able to chat directly with a cyberspace recruiter,” McLane said. “The Centennial generation are digital natives and expect to communicate with others in this medium versus talking on the phone.” These chat sessions are considered to be an initial basic interview — called a “blueprint” — to ensure that the applicant meets the Navy’s basic eligibility requirements. If the applicants meet entry requirements — including education levels and height and weight standards — the cyber recruiter passes the information to field recruiters near where the young people live, McLane said.

In an effort to boost their available pool of potential recruits, Vice Adm. Burke ordered his staff take a hard look at all the Navy’s recruiting policies. But he refused to budge on what he considers what’s most important to the Navy — their armed services entry test scores. “We’re not going to sacrifice quality,” Burke said. “What we’ve done, though, is taken a good hard look at self-imposed policies that limit the spectrum of candidates that we look at.” That included medical requirements that seemed to disqualify many otherwise good potential recruits. “We’re engaging with our medical experts to make sure that our medical standards — the Navy’s side of the medical standards are up to date with societal norms, making sure that we’re not negatively impacting fleet readiness,” he said. “For example, were doing creative things such as waivers where our medical policy was ‘old school,’ such as ADHD [attention-deficit-hyperactive disorder] when you were little or an asthma inhaler when you were 5 — outdated medical policy thinking that [the Navy’s Bureau of Medicine] was really helpful as we thought these through.”

Burke told lawmakers that Navy leaders continue to see how far they can stretch existing policy on age limits, working with Congress to allow the service to commission older officers with critical skills with critical skills, such

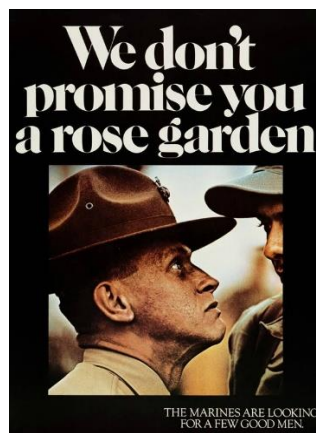
as doctors. Some jobs won't garner waivers, such as pilots and officers joining the nuclear programs. "But, everywhere else, we've opened them up to the full latitude in enlisted programs, as well," Burke testified. The Navy's pushing to modernize single-parent policies, too. "Where you have an older single parent, where they've demonstrated they can responsibly care for those children and could translate that into military service," Burke told Congress. "So we've opened up our doors to those sorts of situations, as well.

Burke's plan of attack also includes increased enlistment bonuses. The Navy's budget for extra recruiting enticements this fiscal year is nearly \$82 million, up from about \$26 million in Fiscal Year 2014. That's expected to jump next year to \$92 million. Some bonuses target recruits for specific occupations, including up to \$30,000 for nuclear power specialties and \$25,000 for SEALs, divers, explosive ordnance technicians and air rescue swimmers. Another area the Navy's has begun to mine is the ranks of veterans, those who separated from the service but might not realize that they can return to the fleet. Navy recruiters have offered some enlisted sailors what they call a "Golden Ticket" that's good for immediate re-entry for up to two years after they separate, provided they remain affiliated with the reserves.

But Burke said there are more sailors out who simply wanted to reenter civilian life, only to grow to regret the decision a year or two after exiting the Navy. "We work to keep track of many of these sailors and engage with them occasionally to let them know what the opportunities are that are open to them," Burke told Navy Times. Recruiters also are hunting for veterans of the Navy and other services who earned college degrees or learned advanced skills while civilians. Over the past five years, the service has wooed 314 Navy veterans — and 195 vets from the sister services — to join the fleet.

It's all part of a creative approach to filling out the all-volunteer force, and Burke wants to keep working with Congress to tweak existing laws and Navy policy to recruit an increasingly complex talent pool. Take, for example, those Navy veterans who didn't get a "Golden Ticket," never stayed affiliated with the reserves, and later developed a medical problem that would not have affected reenlistment but which would disqualify a new recruit from joining. Burke believes he can substitute the standard that works fine for new 18-year-old recruits and apply the Navy's retention standards better suited for veterans in their 30s and want to put the uniform back on again. "To the maximum extent we are looking at them through the retention standards, rather than through the accession standards," Burke said. "We value those folks." [Source: NavyTimes | Mark D. Faram | November 2, 2018 ++]

USMC Recruitment Update 03 ► Corps Is Finding New Marines Despite Challenges



A Marine recruiting poster from the 1970s captured the spirit of the Corps' attitude and pitched what would entice young Americans to join the Corps for generations: "We don't promise you a rose garden." The Corps historically has

dangled fewer cash bonuses and offered less incentives than the other services to drive its recruitment efforts. For the past six years, the Corps hasn't offered more than a \$9,000 enlistment bonus. There's even a whopping \$5,000 bonus for young motivators who sign up for six-year infantry contracts — that's less than a grand a year — and after taxes, the pie slice gets even smaller. But, as with most years, the Marines again hit its recruiting goals only promising future Marines misery in boot camp. That, and the fun of living in austere environments around the globe, the transformation process into a Marine and chance to help win the nation's battles, in a new recruiting campaign dubbed "Battles Won."

However, to meet ascension goals and fill the holes of first-termers who exit the Corps, the Marines need to shuffle over 30,000 new recruits every year onto its famous yellow footprints, which herald the beginning of a recruit's transformation into a Marine aboard the recruit depots. It's an effort now inundated with a slew of new challenges and a young recruitment pool that views the Corps in its least popular light in nearly a decade, according to Defense Department data. Overall, interest in joining the military is waning. The most recent internal Defense Department surveys, conducted in late 2017, show the percentage of young people who say they will likely join the military is at 11 percent — the lowest point in nearly 10 years.

When asked about specific services, surveys show the Marine Corps is the least popular among young people — only 5 percent of young people say they will likely join the Marine Corps, compared with 7 percent for the other three Defense Department services. "We face a challenging recruiting environment in which our Marine recruiters have to overcome the fact that to begin with, 75 percent of age-qualified youth are unqualified for service due to medical, moral or educational issues," said Gunnery Sgt. Justin Kronenberg, a spokesman for Marine Corps Recruiting Command.

The high percentage of Americans unfit for military service is alarming for Marine Corps officials. "That should scare you," Gen. Robert B. Neller, the commandant of the Marine Corps, told reporters at a media roundtable event in October. "Additionally, market research shows that more than 90 percent of America's youth are disinterested in military service and fewer than 17 percent of parents of those in our target demographic have served in the military, which means our recruiters have to work hard to bridge the so-called civil-military gap," he said. To make ends meet, the Corps has approved more waivers in recent years. In 2017, Marine recruiters handed out 5,133 waivers, up about 27 percent from two years earlier, when the Corps granted 4,028 waivers in 2015. The majority of the waivers were for medical conditions and a small percentage were for misconduct, according to Marine Corps data.

But the Corps says its waiver numbers are relatively modest. "Some improvements were made to the medical screening process that made it more efficient and allowed more applicants' medical history to be individually considered by the Naval Bureau of Medicine and Surgery," Kronenberg told Marine Corps Times. The additional scrutiny on the screening process has meant that some people with previously "disqualifying" conditions, like a healed broken bone or acne, could be cleared to join, which has resulted in a slight uptick in waivers, Kronenberg explained. The Corps also has embarked on an aggressive media blitz to entice a diverse demographic, to include more women and Americans with vital skills like cyber to join its rank and file.

The Commandant of the Marine Corps Gen. Robert B. Neller has oft repeated a goal of the Corps to grow its ranks to nearly 10 percent women. Couple that with Neller's desire to retool a force once stuck in the quagmire of counterinsurgency conflict, it's a pretty big hill for the Corps to climb. The Corps simply wants it all: more women, smarter Marines and future grunts that can operate in mission sets once the purview of the military's special operations community. But the recruitment pool to obtain that talent is dwindling, and the Corps has to compete with other services all in the same arena. "The strategy has not changed," Kronenberg said, "Though some of the tactics employed have evolved." "We first seek those who share the desire to serve our nation, communities and Corps — those who want to become U.S. Marines. The aggressive commitment we demand from applicants is to the Corps rather than to a job," he said.

"Battle's Won" is the current Marine Corps marketing pitch. It is focused on the "irreducible essence of the Marines, individually and collectively, which is the willingness to engage and the determination to defeat an opposing force — whether personal or on behalf of our nation and its communities," Kronenberg said. To grow the number of

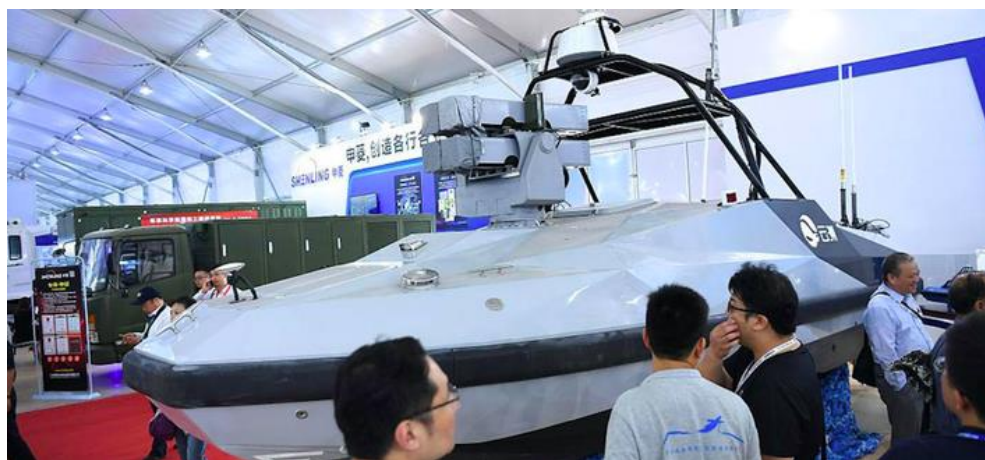
women in the ranks, the Corps took a spin on its “Battle’s Won” campaign in 2017 with “Battle Up,” which was the first commercial to feature a female protagonist. “These commercials feature women in a more authentic and representative manner alongside their male counterparts and clearly communicates who we are as Marines, what we do in support of our nation’s interests, and why it should be important and aspirational to our country’s citizens,” said Jim Edwards, a spokesman with Marine Corps Recruiting Command.

But the Corps has also embarked on innovative “targeted marketing engagements” like the “Hack the Corps” event recently held in Las Vegas to help recruit top tier talent from high-demand skillsets. The event also helps the Corps mitigate some cyber vulnerabilities with its public facing sites. But Kronenberg notes that one major change is afoot. Since October, “all applicants will be tested for potential in offensive and defensive cyber operation skills,” Kronenberg said.

“Service in the Marine Corps is an aspirational, viable option for those few who share our fighting spirit and are mentally, morally and medically qualified and young men and women interested in service to the nation should visit Marines.com to request more information,” Kronenberg said. But if the Corps can’t continue to stack its force with skilled young Americans “it really won’t matter,” Neller warned. Human capital is the “critically capability” that the military has to be able to sustain, he added. [Source: MarineCorpsTimes | Shawn Snow | November 2, 2018 ++]

Seagoing Drones ► China’s Liaowangzhe-2 Robo-boat Fires Up to 4 Guided Missiles

China has developed an autonomous boat that can conduct reconnaissance and fire up to four guided missiles, state-run media reported. Manufactured by Zhuhai Yunzhou Intelligence Technology, the 7.5-meter, 3.7-ton Liaowangzhe-2 was displayed for the first time at the China International Aviation and Aerospace Exhibition in Zhuhai, in southern China this week. Operating autonomously or by remote control, Liaowangzhe-2 appears similar in function to Israel’s Protector, which in March 2017 became the first unmanned boat to fire a missile, and which tested its capabilities against naval swarm threats with NATO earlier this week.



State-run media reported that China test-fired the boat’s missiles in October. The missiles have a range of up to 5 kilometers, project director Su Zhen told Global Times, but the boat’s real strengths are its stealth and its 45-knot speed. Su also said a human would make any decisions to fire a missile, even when the boat was operating autonomously. China has been developing its unmanned naval capabilities, such as artificially intelligent submarines, primarily for patrol missions.

The U.S. has been the leader in highly autonomous ocean vessels since August 2014, when the Office of Naval Research staged a breakthrough demonstration on Virginia’s James River. Some 13 self-driving boats conducted a series of complex, coordinated maneuvers to protect a high-value ship and harass enemy vessels. Unlike aerial drones such as the Reaper that still require a human operator, the small rigid-hulled inflatable boats handled advanced swarming tricks with virtually no human guidance. The whole coordinated maneuver drill required just one person, who relayed targeting information from a helicopter.

What goes into a robotic boat? In the ones used in the 2014 test, very little. Their brains consisted of a small, easily produced computer dubbed the Control Architecture for Robotic Agent Command and Sensing, or CARACaS. “Any boat can be fitted with a kit that allows it to act autonomously and swarm on a potential threat,” Adm. Matthew Klunder, then the head of the Office of Naval Research, said in a press conference. In 2016, Navy testers followed up with a demonstration that proved the boats could identify threats — no human necessary.

The Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, or DARPA, followed the Navy’s experiment with a 2015 demonstration of a very different sort of robot boat: a 42-foot self-driving vessel that showed it could conduct autonomous maneuvers while following the Convention on the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea, essentially the naval laws that govern how ships are to behave on the open water. It was part of a program to develop a 132-foot autonomous ship for the high seas, now a Navy program called Sea Hunter. “We might be able to put a six-pack or a four-pack of missiles on them. Now, imagine 50 of these distributed and operating together under the hands of a flotilla commander,” former Deputy Defense Secretary Bob Work said in April at a CNAS event. “This is going to be a Navy unlike any navy in history, a human-machine collaborative battle fleet that will confound our enemies.” [Source: Defense One | Paulina Glass | November 7, 2018 ++]

Combat Drones ► **America Seems to Have Squandered A 10-Year Head Start**

The mockup of China’s CH-7 combat drone unveiled at Zhuhai Airshow in early NOV looks a lot like one the U.S. Navy was developing — until it dropped the project, allowing China to position itself to beat the U.S. and other allies in fielding a long-range, high-altitude combat drone. That’s despite the fact that—in the words of one expert—the United States had a “ten-year head start.” If the CH-7 makes its first flight next year and stays on track, it “will be the sole option for buyers wanting to field stealth combat drones” in 2022, crowed China Daily, citing “sources.” It will also be the sole option for buyers looking to purchase an aircraft carrier-capable combat drone (according to China’s state-run Global Times) that looks like the X-47B, an experimental drone that U.S. weapons-maker Northrop Grumman developed for the Navy.



Under a program originally called Joint Combat Air Strike and later Unmanned Combat Air System, the Navy sought a stealthy drone that could take off from an aircraft carrier, perform reconnaissance deep inside enemy territory and, if necessary, fight it out with enemy aircraft. The X-47B performed well in testing, but in 2015 the Navy decided it wanted an unmanned aerial refueling tanker instead, citing cost. Culture and technophobia may have played a role as well, said Paul Scharre, a senior fellow and director of the Technology and National Security Program at the Center for a New American Security.

“The main driver, especially for the Navy for which carrier deck space is limited, has been a cultural resistance by pilots to using uninhabited aircraft in combat roles,” Scharre said. That’s despite “ways using protected, jam-resistant communications to maintain communications with UCAVs in contested environments, permitting human oversight. U.S. policy in no way limits or constrains the military from building and fielding operational UCAVs.” Instead, the Navy solicited bids for a tanker drone that it dubbed the MQ-25 Stingray. In August, Boeing won the contract. One industry representative said recently that all three bidders built their tanker drones to be convertible into combat aircraft, in the expectation that the Pentagon will eventually want that.

Of the contenders for it, General Atomics is the only company whose drones have demonstrated air-to-air combat capability, equipping MQ-9 Reaper aircraft with Sidewinder missiles. But the Reaper was developed to gather intelligence and strike ground targets while reaching about 300 miles per hour less than half as fast as the X-47B. The main takeaway from the CH-7 announcement was that the Pentagon made a mistake in shelving its program, experts said.

“China has once again demonstrated its ability, at least in form, to replicate U.S. drone designs. Whether the systems works as advertised is a different story, however,” said Michael Horowitz, a professor of political science and the associate director of Perry World House at the University of Pennsylvania. “While the United States publicly shelved the deployment of a UAV capable of operating in denied airspace, shifting the funds to an air-to-air-refueling UAV, China appears more interested in pushing the envelope now. China’s reveal once again highlights that American military technical leadership is not inevitable. China and others are actively competing, and it will take sustained American effort to stay ahead.”

Sam Brannen, who runs the Risk and Foresight Group at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, said, “We were a leader and now we are a laggard, stuck with expensive manned options and not doing nearly the experimentation and learning we need to. We’ll need to watch and learn from China and others now.” Scharre added, “It’s truly disappointing to see that China is now poised to pass the United States in fielding an operational uninhabited combat air vehicle. The United States had a decade-plus head start on UCAV technology with the X-45 and then X-47B programs and has unfortunately squandered that lead. If the Navy had continued to mature the X-47B demonstrator into an operational combat aircraft, as originally intended, the United States could be well on its way to fielding a 21st-century carrier air wing capable of long-range surveillance and strike. Instead, the U.S. Navy has opted for the increasing irrelevance of aircraft carriers in high-end conflicts.”

Elsa Kania, a fellow at the Center for New American Security, said that the drone might even allow China to partially catch up to the U.S. in carrier-based combat. “The new CH-7 may be useful for not only reconnaissance and targeting but also precision strike, thus augmenting what are characterized as anti-access/area denial capabilities. The PLA may be more inclined to explore an option that the U.S. military had declined to pursue because it is seeking to compensate for relative shortcomings in this regard,” she said.

Of course, it remains to be seen whether the Chinese UAV functions as well as its shelved American counterparts. But its performance doesn’t have to be superior, or even equal, to gain customers. “China has given the world a ‘Huawei option’ when it comes to next-gen drones. It’s a far cry from what the U.S. or Europeans would offer, but it’s going to be on the market for sale. The countries likely to buy it aren’t ones the U.S. would probably sell to.” said Brannen. The development tracks well with China’s rapid development and fielding of machine learning, autonomy, and robotics in warfare. Said Kania, “The Chinese military has been quite enthusiastic — seemingly more so than the

U.S. military in some respects — in its rapid development and increasing employment of advanced unmanned and autonomous systems.”

There’s no word yet on how autonomous the new platform will be, but it does give China an advantage in fielding a lethal flying combat robot, something that the U.S. is reluctant to do. “There’s no question that China will be less hesitant to use robotic weapons for autonomous targeting. Autonomous weapons that could target on their own without human oversight are not prohibited by U.S. policy. The policy simply requires they go through a more stringent approval process prior to development and again prior to fielding. However, senior defense leaders have said on several occasions that their intention is to keep humans ‘in the loop’ for use of force decisions,” Scharre said. [Source: Defense One | Patrick Tucker | November 6, 2018 ++]

Base Housing ► Tenants Living At Whims of Private Landlords

U.S. military families living on base housing find themselves at the whims of powerful private landlords as they battle mold, mice, mushroom and cockroach infestations, a blockbuster Reuters investigation details. On the sprawling Marine Corps base at Camp Pendleton, California, one Marine family complained of a mice infestation to the Lincoln Military Housing, a private company that controls most of Pendleton’s base housing, Reuters reported. The couple subsequently was billed \$1,084 from Lincoln to clean up a contaminated carpet after several attempts to rid the property of mice — Lincoln claimed the infestation was a result of the Marine family’s poor housekeeping, Reuters reported.

It’s one example of more than 100 families across Navy, Army, Marine Corps and Air Force bases that detailed to Reuters their hardships in dealing with private companies and landlords controlling the military base housing industry, which is estimated to bring in \$3.9 billion in military housing stipends in 2018. The problem: Military families have few rights and resources to take on mega private companies like Lincoln, according to Reuters. Tenant rights are set by contracts between the military and private landlords that can give control of base housing for 50 years, Reuters reported. But those contracts lack basic protections generally afforded to civilians. In California, for example, tenants can get out of leases in substandard housing or have their rent reduced to pay for damages and repairs.

A couple of the biggest problems military families faced living in base housing was rodents and mold, and nearly twenty families described outbreaks of mold, Reuters detailed in its investigation. One Army family living in base housing at Fort Belvoir, Virginia, from 2016-2017, said they were fighting cockroaches, a leaky ceiling and mice, according to Reuters. “They are in our ventilation system through our air vents, peeing and pooping everywhere,” Kimberly Strauf, the wife of an Army officer, told Reuters. The infestations can pose serious health issues.

Some of the families on Camp Pendleton living in base housing operated by Lincoln shared letters from doctors with Reuters asking housing officials to investigate. One 3-year-old had been in the doctor’s office “7 times with respiratory related illnesses,” a doctor’s note said, as reported by Reuters. “I am concerned that the mold in the home is a contributing factor,” the note said. Reuters reported that commanders at Camp Pendleton are relatively powerless to solve some of the housing issues and lack enforcement powers. [Source: MilitaryTimes | Shawn Snow | November 4, 2018 ++]

DARPA Update 06 ► ALIAS Robot Copilot

Army aviators recently ran helicopters through missions with a kind of robot co-pilot for the first time, using technology a company says will be demonstrated in coming months on Black Hawk helicopters. The pilots directed

an “optionally piloted helicopter” through mission scenarios ranging from obstacle avoidance to contour flight, according to a release. The pilots used the technology to move a modified commercial helicopter, the S-76B Sikorsky, known as Sikorsky Autonomy Research Aircraft or SARA, through the scenarios designed under a Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency program with Lockheed Martin



The automated capabilities are part of the Army’s larger Future Vertical Lift program, which aims to revolutionize how helicopters are employed by the services. “Future vertical lift aircraft will require robust autonomous and optimally piloted systems to complete missions and improve safety,” said Chris Van Buiten, vice president of Sikorsky Innovations. While personnel with the company have been developing and testing the technology for some time and flown more than 300 hours of autonomous flight, the 29 OCT event at Fort Eustis, Virginia, was the first time non-company pilots operated the aircraft. “These aviators experienced the same technology that we are installing and testing on a Black Hawk that will take its first flight over the next several months,” Buiten said.

The autonomous software and hardware, part of a tailorable package aimed to fit existing manned helicopters such as the Black Hawk, executed specific scenarios, including:

- Automated takeoff and landing: The helicopter autonomously executed takeoff, traveled to its destination, and autonomously landed.
- Obstacle avoidance: The helicopter’s LIDAR and cameras enabled it to detect and avoid unknown objects such as wires, towers and moving vehicles.
- Automatic landing zone selection: The helicopter’s LIDAR sensors determined a safe landing zone.
- Contour flight: The helicopter flew low to the ground and behind trees.

“We’re demonstrating a certifiable autonomy solution that is going to drastically change the way pilots fly,” said Mark Ward, Sikorsky chief pilot. “We’re confident that MATRIX Technology will allow pilots to focus on their missions. This technology will ultimately decrease instances of the number one cause of helicopter crashes: Controlled Flight Into Terrain (CFIT).”

DARPA Program Manager Graham Drozeski said that with the **Aircrew Labor In-Cockpit Automation**, or ALIAS, they’re trying to balance human and autonomous contributions through work with the software and pilots. Lt. Col. Carl Ott, chief of flight test at the Army’s Aviation Development Directorate, echoed that comment, saying that the Army refers to the type of capability being pursued as “mission adaptive autonomy.” “It’s there when the pilot needs the aircraft to fly itself, keep it free of obstacles, so the pilot can focus on more of a mission commander-type role, but the pilot’s also able to interact with system to re-suggest or re-route or re-plan on the fly,” Ott said. Being able to do that seamlessly without shutting down the system are key capabilities for complex flight.

Dave Baden, the Marine Corps’ Future Vertical Lift program manager, said the technology is important to reduce pilot workload. “Let the mission crews concentrate on what they’re really there to do,” Baden said. That includes

medevac, close air support or other tasks. This doesn't replace pilots, though. Ott was quick to mention that basic piloting skills and "air sense" to avoid obstacles and maneuver the aircraft remain crucial to piloting. "And that just comes with time and experience," Ott said. The system includes a user interface that Ott said is easily replicable in a simulator for training. Drozeski said that the next step will be to fully integrate the ALIAS system will go beyond just "wiggling the sticks" and to allowing the autonomy to operate like a co-pilot with access to the entire system. [Source: ArmyTimes | Todd South | October 31, 2018 ++]

Air Force BMT ► Changed to Increase Readiness And Lethality

The Air Force's Basic Military Training (BMY) recently expanded from 7.5 weeks to 8.5 weeks. The BMT changes — which also include a renewed focus on Air Force history and heroes, increased physical training sessions, and possibly a full weapons qualification program — are part of the Air Force's effort to increase the readiness and lethality of the new airmen it produces. But Air Education and Training Command officials also hope the updates to BMT will accelerate the pace at which airmen adopt the service's core values and principles — and think of themselves as airmen first. "When Marines graduate, they identify themselves with being a Marine," said Master Sgt. Robert Kaufman, a military training instructor at Joint Base San Antonio-Randolph in Texas, said. "When an airman graduates, they identify themselves with their career field, or they identify themselves with their rank. We want to make sure that when the airmen leave [BMT], they have the mindset that, 'I'm an airman, with a capital A.'"

The Air Force previously followed the 7.5-week BMT course with another program called Airmen's Week, which covered classes on life skills. But now, those lessons — on matters such as character development, leadership skills, self-discipline and motivation, how to handle finances, sexual assault prevention, the honor code, and how to strike the balance between professional and personal life — will be peppered throughout the 8.5-week BMT program. All the same content will be taught as was during Airmen's Week. But Lt. Col. Jose Surita, commander of the 326th Training Squadron, said teaching it throughout the two-month program will allow military training instructors to go back and re-emphasize lessons several times on things like Air Force core values. "It's driving those points home, weaving the curriculum throughout the 8.5 weeks," Surita said.

The Air Force is also increasing the number of physical training sessions from 31 to 44. Even with the longer BMT period, that will mean more PT — nearly every morning — as the Air Force seeks to teach trainees to think of fitness as a lifestyle and a mindset, not just something to get through. "There are a lot of health benefits that go along with being physically fit," Kaufman said. "We want them to go to their first base ready to roll, and pass that fitness test, and make that a lifestyle." Chief Master Sgt. Lee Hoover, superintendent of the 737th Training Group, said that AETC looked at its entire BMT schedule and found early morning appointments that could be rescheduled for later in the day to allow more PT time. This includes a mix of cardiovascular exercise, strength training, and interval training, Kaufman said.

And as part of a renewed focus on Air Force history and its heroes, BMT will now have a "memorial run" every Saturday, dedicated to famed airmen such as recent Medal of Honor recipient Master Sgt. John Chapman. Those memorial runs will begin with a reading of heroes' citations and career highlights, and then trainees will run in their memory. Kaufman said that when AETC has dedicated runs to legendary airmen before, it's pushed airmen to excel. "When you give that story of what Sgt. Chapman did before the session starts, and then you revisit it in the middle of the PT session, and then at the end, when the airmen are required to give their last bit of effort, you can hear the trainees say, 'Let's do this for Sgt. Chapman, Sgt. Chapman didn't give up.' That's increasing their performance, because they don't want to give up if this individual didn't give up."

AETC will also weave lessons on Air Force history and "Highlighted Airmen" — focusing primarily on enlisted airmen — into classroom and physical training each day. And the 326th Training Squadron developed a new MTI

Heritage Handbook featuring heroes that every trainee will be given. And AETC plans to dedicate each obstacle on its obstacle course during Basic Expeditionary Airman Skills Training, or BEAST, to an Air Force hero. “We want to make sure airmen who come in a month from now, or a year from now, fully understand the sacrifices and the service of heroes who have gone before us,” like Chapman, Hoover said. “So when they graduate, they know what it means to be an airman. ... When they leave here, they’ll know whose footsteps they’re following.”

AETC has also moved the BEAST course from the fifth week, when it is currently held, to the very end of BMT to make it the final event before graduation. And the current self-aid and buddy care course is being replaced with a new Tactical Combat Casualty Course. It will continue to cover the same basic first aid and life-saving skills, such as how to apply a tourniquet and properly bandage a wound, and will still take four hours. But the new course will aim to more closely simulate a battlefield environment. AETC is also considering beefing up its current weapons familiarization course with a full weapons qualification program. But there are still a lot of details on that to be decided.

Today, basic trainees fire off a few rounds on an M-16 rifle to get familiar with the process and how it feels, but they don’t have to qualify by hitting a certain number of targets. Airmen only qualify on their weapon after they have left basic training, though when that happens varies by career field. Hoover said AETC’s goal is to have a program where they qualify at basic training, although it hasn’t been decided if BMT’s weapons qualification course would have the same qualification requirements as the rest of the Air Force. Hoover also said AETC hopes to eventually move to the M-4 rifle. [Source: AirForceTimes | Stephen Losey | November 5, 2018 ++]

Robot Mule ► **USMC Adds to Xmas List**

The Marines want an unmanned vehicle capable of keeping up with its rifle squad and conducting squad resupply to unburden the grunt. A Request For Information recently posted on the Federal Business Opportunities website keeps options open, telling interested industry partners that the mode could be a “robotic applique” on existing systems, a remote-controlled vehicle or a fully autonomous transport. The system must carry between 500 and 1,000 pounds to outfit up to a 15-Marine unit. While the main objective is for the vehicle to move with the squad through inconsistent terrain, a nice bonus would be if it could manage intra-squad resupply, according to the posting.

It must run on rough roads and off road, go for between eight hours and three days, fit inside an MV-22 Osprey when fully loaded, and fit on a light tactical trailer in ground transport. The system also must push out 1- to 3-kW of power to recharge and run squad systems. The Marine Corps Rapid Capabilities Office wants information from industry by 13 NOV. Marines participating in the Advanced Naval Technologies Exercise at Camp Pendleton, California, in May saw vehicles that might fit some of the requirements in operation during urban training sessions. As far back as 2016, Marines were testing a tracked version of the Multi-Utility Tactical Transport, which could carry weapons systems or gear but at a lower rate than this current request. At the time, the MUTT could haul 600 pounds on land and 300 pounds while running amphibious for about 15 miles before power ran down.



A Multi-Utility Tactical Transport (MUTT) demonstrates its capabilities during the Advanced Naval Technologies Exercise 18

This latest posting falls closely in line with an existing program in the Army known as Squad Multipurpose Equipment Transport, or SMET. The SMET program has accepted four submissions of similarly capable vehicles for testing by the 10th Mountain Division, 101st Airborne Division and an unidentified Marine unit at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. All four of those submissions are standalone vehicles that use either wheeled or tracked methods of movement. The Army expects to pick the contract winner by 2020 after extensive field tests. [Source: MarineCorpsTimes | Todd South | October 31, 2018 ++]

USCG Icebreakers Update 06 ► Polar Security Cutter Funding Needed

With House and Senate appropriators still at odds over funding a new icebreaker in 2019, the Coast Guard is hoping a new name — ‘**Polar Security Cutter**’ — and a clearer emphasis on national security missions will help convince the House to fund the ship. “In the past, we’ve talked about them as heavy icebreakers,” the new Coast Guard commandant, Adm. Karl Schultz, told me after a speech to Friday’s Military Reporters & Editors conference. (He took over from Adm. Paul Zukunft in June). But that didn’t adequately distinguish the new design from “yesteryear’s heavy icebreaker that we’ve hung onto for decades,” Schultz told me frankly, “(so) one of the things that we did early in my tenure was we changed (it to) Polar Security Cutter as we were trying to get the funds from the Congress, from our own department, the administration.”

“When you’re an agency that resides in the Department of Homeland Security, you need to think about how your capabilities align under that umbrella,” Schultz said. With Russian and even Chinese activity on the rise as the ice shrinks, he said, “the Arctic is an emerging space that’s about national security.” The new icebreakers will even have space, weight and power set aside for armaments such as cruise missiles, just in case of a new and colder war, although there’s no plan to actually arm them. “I can tell you, right now, (for) the current plans on this first Polar Security Cutter that we’re hoping to award in ’19, armament is not part of that discussion,” Schultz told me. “That’s not where my head is here in 2018. We’re looking at the Arctic as peaceful, cooperative, collaborative... but to be frank, it’s a competitive space as well.”

Icebreaker On Thin Ice

The president’s request for fiscal year 2019 included \$750 million to replace the 42-year-old Polar Star, the nation’s only heavy icebreaker capable of year-round operations in both Arctic and Antarctic. The newer and smaller Healy can only break thinner ice, Schultz told me, so it’s limited in its Arctic operations and rarely ventures to the Antarctic at all. Instead, the increasingly creaky Polar Star must make the annual run to open supply routes to McMurdo research station.

Future wars will require decision superiority in a time of fast-paced conflicts across multiple domains. Raytheon exec Rick Yuse outlines 5 advanced technology enablers to gain critical advantage. In fact, Adm. Schultz told the MRE conference, the icebreaker funded in 2019 will have to spend a lot of time in the Antarctic. “It’ll be the second hull that will enable us to push more... presence up north in the Arctic,” he said, “(because) it’ll actually be working full time up there.” All told, the Coast Guard says it needs at least three new heavy icebreakers and three new mediums. The National Academy of Sciences, however, estimates that building six heavies would be cheaper than developing two different designs.

The Senate appropriations committee approved the \$750 million, but their House counterparts axed it in favor of building President Trump’s vaunted wall along the southern border. Currently, with fiscal year 2019 almost a month old and the Coast Guard, like much of government, still operating under a stopgap Continuing Resolution, the full House and Senate haven’t even passed their respective bills, let alone taken them to conference to resolve the differences.



**USCG Cutter Polar Star (left), Healy (center) and the Chinese icebreaker Xue Long (Snow Dragon) right.
Go to <https://youtu.be/DmPHG-AA3r8> to view Polar Star in operation**

Relooking the Overlooked

The Defense Department got its 2019 funding on time this September — for the first time in nine years — but the Coast Guard isn’t part of the Pentagon. Instead, it’s an armed service nestled in the Department of Homeland Security. That means it’s consistently left behind by bipartisan pushes to keep defense funds flowing. It can also get caught up in budget hawks’ efforts to cut non-defense spending, as when the Trump Administration briefly proposed a \$1.3 billion cut for 2018. In his seven years working legislative affairs, he’s found Congress appreciates the Coast Guard “almost to a member in both chambers,” Adm. Schultz said. The problem? “We do sit in that discretionary, non-defense part of the budget, so we’re competing with a lot of national priorities,” he said. “We have an array of 11 statutory missions, so it’s not an easy three-bullet elevator pitch.” And while the Coast Guard routinely saves voters’ lives, with many Alaskans in particular dependent on the service to get them to emergency medical care, a lot of congressional districts are, well, inland: “We don’t rescue people from land-based locations,” Schultz said.

In recent years, the Coast Guard has had remarkable success in securing shipbuilding funds, with its annual procurement budget breaking \$2 billion for the first time in 2018. Schultz sounds cautiously optimistic that modernization money will stay above \$2 billion in future, allowing the service to recapitalize not only a fleet of aging cutters but also obsolescent aircraft like the MH-65 rescue helicopter. “Where we haven’t been as successful is on the operating side of the budget,” Schultz said. “When you tie the building of a National Security Cutter, which happens at HII in Mississippi, (for example) to former Senator Cochran’s congressional (role) as a senior appropriator, you have momentum.... On the operating side, you really can’t tie that to an industry base in a state.”

But Coast Guard operations support national security worldwide, Schultz argued, using its unique legal authorities to operate in the “grey zone” short of open conflict. It’s stopping drug shipments, searching ships in the Persian Gulf, and even training the Vietnamese coast guard, which is rapidly expanding to counter Chinese claims in the South China Sea. In fact, Schultz said, while the Coast Guard has gotten \$340 million in “defense operations” every year since 2002, the actual cost has risen to over a billion. Overall, Coast Guard operations and sustainment funding rose four percent in 2018 — less than half the comparable figure for the Defense Department — and will rise only two percent in 2019 — once the budget passes. Schultz says the service needs about five percent growth to catch up with demand. “We need to stop thinking in terms of just defense spending and non-defense spending,” Schultz said. “We need to start thinking about security and non-security.” [Source: Breaking Defense | Sydney J. Freedberg Jr. | October 29, 2018 ++]

Diver Propulsion Device (DPD) ► USMC Wants A Faster, More Stable Model

The Marines want a faster, more stable way to get combatant divers moving through the water on autopilot. Marine Corps Systems Command officials recently posted a request for information from industry to enhance their existing diver propulsion device. The Corps wants the changes to increase performance of the device, which has been in the Marine Corps' inventory since 2005. The old gear required modifications as recently as two years ago due to problems

Marine divers were seeing when they tried to use the system. Most Marines with combatant diver certification are either in the Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command or amphibious reconnaissance communities.



Marines assigned to Force Reconnaissance Platoon, Maritime Raid Force, 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit, navigate a diver propulsion device while conducting an amphibious insertion onto maritime infrastructure.

“A lot of Marines don’t use it because it doesn’t perform the way they want it to,” at the time said Jake Feeney, lead engineer for boat and dive equipment for the Reconnaissance and Amphibious Raids Team at MARCORSYSCOMM. “By putting the upgrades out there and saying, ‘This isn’t the DPD you’re used to; this is something better,’ we’ll hopefully get them back to using it and training on it,” Feeney said in the release. The team tested an upgraded version of the DPD with a brushless motor and new bow plane configuration in 2016 to improve on stability problems divers reported when changing depth or direction. The posting for the enhanced DPD or E-DPD has specific requirements for weight, speed and operability.

- As with current configurations, it must carry two divers in SCUBA gear with two, 100-pound rucks. It has to run a minimum distance of 5 nautical miles with 180 minutes while carrying a 700-pound payload.
- The system needs to weigh no more than 275 pounds and be rugged enough to drop from a helicopter for helocast operations, which drop from about 10 feet altitude at 10 knots speed.
- It should emit no bubbles within five minutes of submersion.
- They also want the E-DPD to be capable of autonomous navigation. That way the diver can plug in preset waypoints and the system will control depth and heading, but the operator can still turn the autonomous features on and off manually.
- The autonomous operation feature must include obstacle avoidance.

It’s not a complete overhaul, though. Officials still want the enhanced version to fit within the current device’s shell and use the Brentronic battery that’s used with the existing system. Marines expect to buy between 20 and 115 of the E-DPDs over the course of the contract. They want the information by 30 NOV. [Source: MarineCorpsTimes | Todd South | November 2, 2018 ++]

Aircraft Carriers ► Huge, Hulking Targets | Can They Remain Viable?

The HMS Hermes arrived too late to change the course of the First World War. But it arrived just in time to change the course of world history. One hundred years ago, the W. G. Armstrong-Whitworth shipbuilding company laid down the hull of the world’s first aircraft carrier at Walker, U.K. World War I, which saw the introduction of fighters, bombers, and bomb-dropping airships, was in its final months. The modest Hermes was just 600 feet long and carried

just 15 Swordfish torpedo bombers. But the revolutionary idea behind it shaped the next Great War and the next century of the world's navies. A century later, hundreds of carriers patrol the world's oceans. These mega-vessels are still considered the pinnacle of sea power, but they are also, in a way, giant floating targets. New anti-carrier weapons threaten their existence—as do the spiraling costs to build them in the first place. Has the age of aircraft carriers ended? Or has it just begun?



HMS Hermes, the world's first purpose-built carrier, 1924.

There's a reason the first carrier came out of the U.K. While the Royal Navy was convinced this blazing new technology had a big future, the United States Navy resisted the idea of carriers as a decisive weapon at sea. To the American navy, planes based at sea were scouts, the eyes and ears of fleets equipped with battleships and cruisers. Those big ships had dominated the seas with their big guns, which measured up to 18 inches in diameter in the case of Japan's Yamato class, with ranges of up to 20 nautical miles. A single Iowa-class battleship packed nine 16-inch guns, each hurling 2,700-lb shells. Gunships located the enemy, closed on it, and bombarded it with overwhelming firepower.

Airpower advocate Gen. Billy Mitchell, one of the architects of the U.S. Air Force, turned the tide. He demonstrated in a series of tests in 1921 (including the sinking of the captured German battleship Ostfriesland) that planes could locate and destroy enemy ships. The Navy began to see the possibilities for planes as a separate striking arm, one that could see farther and attack at greater ranges. The death knell for the battleship age came on the day that will live in infamy. In the years leading up to World War II, the Imperial Japanese Navy had gone all-in on the carrier concept. Six aircraft carriers led the strike force that hit the U.S. Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor with a surprise attack on December 7, 1941. In one day, carriers proved they could do what battleships could not: cripple a fleet hundreds of miles away. The range difference doomed battleships, which went from being the hunters to the hunted. Only one battleship, HMS Vanguard, was commissioned after the end of World War II.

Aircraft carriers have reigned supreme since 1945, and those in the United States' fleet have not faced a mortal threat since V-J Day. U.S. Navy carriers have provided crucial air support in the Korean War, Vietnam, Grenada, Desert Storm, the Balkans, Afghanistan, the invasion of Iraq, and the war against the Islamic State. None of America's adversaries have had the power to even remotely threaten her carriers.

What if the next enemy does? Today, the United States faces two navies with the potential to threaten U.S. aircraft carriers. Russia's new Yasen-class guided missile submarines, with their ability to launch salvos of Klub anti-ship missiles, along with China's growing fleet of aircraft carriers, destroyers, submarines, and anti-ship ballistic missiles,

represent the greatest threats to American carriers since the end of the Cold War. To win the future, the designers and builders of carriers must amplify their strengths and come up with clever ways to mitigate their weaknesses.

Carriers can do what no other vessels can. As U.S. Navy admirals are fond of saying, carriers are “4.5 acres of sovereign American territory,” capable of operating from virtually any saltwater location on Earth. The U.S. Navy’s Nimitz and Ford-class carriers can accomplish counter-air (air-to-air), anti-ship, anti-submarine, land attack, reconnaissance, and disaster relief missions—and even potentially lead a nuclear strike. Thanks to mid-air refueling, there are few places carrier-based planes can’t go. An aircraft carrier is perhaps the most adaptable of any large military technology. Its ability to accommodate any plane is what keeps it at the top of the food chain. If flat-tops could only handle the Hellcat fighters of World War II, they’d be obsolete. Instead they carry an evolving array of aircraft that today includes F/A-18E/F Super Hornets and F-35 Joint Strike Fighters, planes far more capable than the prop-driven fighters of World War II. Unlike most military systems, the aircraft carrier stays relevant by taking on new technologies with ease.

Yet carriers face an increasing number of threats stemming from one big problem: They are huge, hulking targets. They concentrate firepower and capability, but they also concentrate people: each Nimitz-class carrier is home to more than 5,000 sailors and Marines meaning the sinking of a single one could see more Americans killed in action in a single event than were lost on 9/11. These great vessels now face threats from aircraft, anti-ship missiles, submarines, nuclear weapons, and even anti-ship ballistic missiles. Minimally armed, they must rely on their escorts to defend them.

And there is the issue of the ever-escalating cost to produce them. During World War II, the average Essex-class fleet carrier cost somewhere in the vicinity of \$75 million, and Hellcat fighter planes cost \$50,000 each. Adjusted for inflation to today’s dollars, that’s \$1 billion for the ship and \$690,000 for the plane. Today, a Ford-class carrier costs \$13 billion, and the modern equivalent of the Hellcat, the F-35C Joint Strike Fighter, costs \$121 million apiece. This is an unaffordable trajectory, making fewer carriers and planes affordable—and their loss in combat irreplaceable. The Carrier Continues?

America isn’t the only country still banking on carriers. China has built two aircraft carriers and is building two more. The United Kingdom is building two carriers, Italy has two carriers, France has one, and Russia is struggling hard to keep its lone carrier, Admiral Kuznetsov, in service. Japan, once the owner of the most powerful carrier force in the world, has a fleet of three helicopter-capable carriers and is investigating operating F-35 fighters from the two largest. As long as air power is viable, aircraft carriers will have a future, but they need a few key moves to remain relevant. One is the adaptation of unmanned aerial vehicles for most air missions. Drones are much cheaper than manned aircraft, and their loss in combat doesn’t result in a captured pilot. The Navy could also invest in smaller, cheaper carriers to bring costs down.

Another way would be to make them hard to kill. Rather than a colossal ship topped by a runway, picture a drone-operating submarine that surfaces only to launch and recover aircraft, which would be much harder to detect during wartime. Spreading air power among smaller submarine carriers networked by secure datalinks could disperse firepower while still concentrating it for key missions. If the Navy succeeds in countering these problems, carriers could sail on—above or below the waves—for another hundred years. If not, then the nation may be in for a rude shock the next time it goes up against another naval power. [Source: Popular Mechanics | Kyle Mizokami | November 5, 2018 ++]

Navy Terminology, Jargon & Slang ► 1MC thru Adrift

Every profession has its own jargon and the Navy is no exception. Since days of yore the military in general, and sailors in particular, have often had a rather pithy (dare say ‘tasteless’?) manner of speech. That may be changing

somewhat in these politically correct times, but to Bowdlerize the sailor's language represented here would be to deny its rich history. The traditions and origins remain. While it attempted to present things with a bit of humor, if you are easily offended this may not be for you. You have been warned.

Note: 'RN' denotes Royal Navy usage. Similarly, RCN = Royal Canadian Navy, RAN = Royal Australian Navy, RM = Royal Marines, RNZN = Royal New Zealand Navy, UK = general usage in militaries of the former British Empire

IMC - The basic one-way communications system on a vessel. Reaches all spaces on a ship. Used for general announcements, and to transmit general alarm system signals. Control stations are located on the bridge, quarterdeck, and central station. Other transmitters may be installed at additional points. There are other MC and JV circuits used for communications within the ship. They are typically system-specific, i.e. weapons systems, navigation communication, engineering systems, firefighting, etc.

130-rpm fish - A form of sea life (type unknown) which makes a sound very similar to a propeller turning at 130 rpm.

90-Day Wonder – Derisive term for a graduate of OCS. The derision arises from the lack of experience and naval knowledge of the typical graduate. Commonly seen as "90-Day Blunder."

99 – (USN aviation) Precedes a radio call which applies to a group of aircraft, e.g. "99 Guntrains" would address all aircraft with a Guntrain callsign.

Aback – Backing a sail is turning it so that the wind hits the front face; the effect is to slow a ship or boat. A sail which is being backed is said to be 'aback.' A sailing ship which accidentally goes aback when tacking loses its momentum and is said to be 'in irons.' A person is said to be 'all aback' when he is confused or surprised.

Abaft – Aft of a given point on a ship; e.g. the bridge is abaft the bow.

ABC – Atomic, Biological, Chemical. An early term since supplanted by NBC.

Accelerated Stall – (Aviation) A stall which occurs during accelerated flight, i.e. while the pilot is pulling G's. Generally a much more violent event than an unaccelerated stall.

Acey-Deucey – Backgammon, a board game traditionally played in off-duty hours.

Acey-Deucey Club – A club for E-5 and E-6 enlisteds (Second- and First-Class Petty Officers).

ACM - Air Combat Maneuvering. Dogfighting practice.

Acockbill – Out of alignment or awry. In original usage, if a sailing ship's yards were not all aligned, she was said to be "all acockbill." See also SQUARED AWAY.

Active Homing – A homing (guidance) method where the missile provides its own signal (typically either radar or sonar) transmissions and homes in on the energy reflected off the target.

Adrift – (1) Not secured; scattered about; not properly stowed, or out of place. (2) (RCN) Missing in action. "Oh no, I'm adrift for the meeting and the Bossman'll be there!"

Advance and Transfer – Two separate terms involving a ship's turn. Advance is the forward progress made between the time that the rudder is put over and the time the ship is steady on her new course. Transfer is the horizontal displacement of the ship during the same period of time. Advance is maximized in a turn of 90 degrees or more; transfer is maximized in a turn of 180 degrees or more.

AEF/A – (USN submarine) Auxiliary Electrician Forward/Aft.

[Source: <http://hazegray.org/faq/slang1.htm> | November 15, 2018 ++]

Warships That Will Change The Future ► Russian Corvette Boikiy



This is the Russian corvette Boikiy, and it is yet another one of the Steregushchy class of warships. However, despite the fact that it has a silly name, this ship packs a powerful punch. It is able to shoot anti-ship missiles right out of the air and can easily deploy its cargo of troops anywhere in the world. In fact, the ship spooked the British Navy so much in April 2017, Boikiy and sister Soobrazitelnyy were escorted through the English Channel by HMS Sutherland which they sent out to make sure that the corvettes wouldn't try anything fishy whilst sailing through British waters.

General characteristics

Class and type:	Steregushchy-class corvette
Displacement:	2,100 tons full load
Length:	104.5 m (343 ft)
Beam:	11.1 m (36 ft)
Draught:	3.7 m (12 ft)
Propulsion:	2 shaft CODAD, 4 16D49 diesels 24.000hp (17.9 MW), power supply AC 380/220 V, 50 Hz, 4x630 kW diesel genset
Speed:	26 knots (48 km/h; 30 mph)
Range:	4,000 nmi (7,400 km) at 14 knots (26 km/h; 16 mph)
Endurance:	15 days
Complement:	100
Sensors and processing systems:	Air search radar: Furke-E 3D, E/F band Monument targeting radar
Electronic warfare & decoys:	TK-25E-5 ECM, 4 x PK-10 decoy launchers
Aircraft carried:	Helipad for Ka-27 Helicopter
Armament:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1 × Arsenal A-190 100mm• 2 × MTPU pedestal 14.5 machine gun• 32 × 9M96E/M or 9M100 missiles (Redut system)[1]• 8 × 3M24 Uran missiles• 2 × AK-630M CIWS• 2 × 4 330mm torpedo tubes (for Paket-NK anti-sub/anti-torpedo torpedoes)



Arizona Memorial Update 10 ► Repairs Won't Be Finished Until March

Repairs to the USS Arizona Memorial's dock won't be finished until March, the National Park Service announced in a 29 OCT press release. That makes it impossible for officials to use the hallowed memorial to host this year's annual commemoration of the Dec. 7, 1941 attacks on Pearl Harbor that launched the United States into World War II. Dedicated on May 30, 1962, the memorial straddles the hull of the battleship Arizona. It's one of Hawaii's most popular tourist attractions. The ship's hull is considered a national shrine because it's the final resting place for 1,177 of the ship's crew of 1,512 who were aboard the warship when Japanese aircraft attacked it. Their deaths account for roughly half of the sailors lost during the raid.

"Not being able to welcome survivors and their families on the USS Arizona Memorial this coming December 7th is heartbreaking," said Jacqueline Ashwell, whose World War II Valor in the Pacific National Monument oversees the Arizona memorial, in the statement. "After exploring multiple options, we are working with our friends in the U.S. Navy to hold an intimate ceremony aboard a vessel adjacent to the USS Arizona." That private commemoration will allow survivors, their families, and other key dignitaries to pay their respects to the fallen. There also will be a public ceremony on land at the nearby Pearl Harbor Visitor Center.

Federal officials halted public access to the memorial in May, when workers first noticed damage to the visitor ramp to the Arizona. They later determined that the damage was caused by a failing anchoring system for the boat dock, which put extreme pressure on the loading bridge and triggered the cracks. The release said that designs for the repairs are completed and officials are developing a timeline for the work. "We are committed to restoring access to the memorial as soon as possible for all visitors, and it will remain a top priority," Ashwell said in the release. "We have condensed this project to the shortest amount of time necessary while also implementing solutions that will ensure a similar problem does not occur again." It's not the first time that damage has closed the memorial. In 2015, visitation to the memorial was temporarily suspended after the Navy's hospital ship Mercy collided with the dock. [Source: NavyTimes | Mark D. Faram | November 1, 2018 ++]

WWI Animal Participation ► Beasts of Burden and Their Fate

They were messengers, spies and sentinels. They led cavalry charges, carried supplies to the front, comforted wounded soldiers and died by the millions during World War I. Horses, mules, dogs, pigeons and even a baboon all were a vital — and for decades overlooked — part of the Allied war machine. Researchers have been hard-pressed to find official accounts of the services rendered by animals during the Great War. But if their labors once were taken for granted, four-legged and winged warriors have been acknowledged more recently as unsung heroes. France recently decided to recognize their wartime role. And in 2004, Britain installed a huge memorial on the edge of London's Hyde Park to "all the animals that served, suffered and died alongside the British, Commonwealth and Allied forces in the wars and conflicts of the 20th century." Here's a look at how they contributed.

What They Did

An estimated 10 million horses and mules, 100,000 dogs and 200,000 pigeons were enrolled in the war effort, according to Eric Baratay, a French historian specializing in the response of animals to the chaos, fear and smells of death in the mission that man thrust upon them. World War I marked the start of industrial warfare, with tanks, trucks, aircraft and machine guns in action. But the growing sophistication of the instruments of death couldn't match the dog tasked with finding the wounded, the horses and mules hauling munitions and food or the pigeons serving as telecommunications operators or even eyes, carrying "pigeongrams" or tiny cameras to record German positions. "They were quasi-combatants," said Serge Barcellini, comptroller general of the Armed Forces and head of *Le Souvenir Francais — The French Memory* — in a recent speech devoted to the role played by beasts of war.

Indeed, gas masks were fitted to the muzzles of four-legged warriors braving noxious battlefield fumes. In France, as in Britain and elsewhere, horses and mules were requisitioned. One typical sign posted in southern Paris ordered citizens to present their steeds and mules to the Requisition Committee by Nov. 14, 1914, or risk "prosecution by the military authority." It was becoming clear there would be no quick end to the war that ground on for four more years.

Feathered Heroes

Cher Ami, or Dear Friend, the carrier pigeon who wouldn't quit, lived up to her name, saving the lives of 194 American troops of the "Lost Battalion" of the 77th Infantry Division, isolated behind enemy lines during the 1918 Meuse-Argonne offensive in eastern France. About 550 men had held their ground against a far larger German force for days before coming under fire from American troops unaware the trapped soldiers weren't the enemy. On Oct. 4, Maj. Charles Whittlesey sent Cher Ami into the skies with a final message giving the U.S. battalion's location, followed by a plea: "For heaven's sake stop it." Cher Ami lost an eye and a leg from German gunfire, but kept flying, around 25 miles (40 kilometers) in about a half-hour, according to the U.S. World War I Centennial Commission. Survivors of the "Lost Battalion" returned to American lines four days later.

Another carrier pigeon named Vaillant, assigned to the French military, also performed extraordinary feats during the war. On June 4, 1916, he was released into the sky with the desperate message, "He's my last pigeon." French Commander Sylvain Eugene Raynal, encircled by Germans at the Fort de Vaux near Verdun, was counting on Vaillant to save his men. The feisty bird flew through toxic gas and smoke, reaching the Verdun pigeon loft choked by fumes. With no help arriving despite Vaillant's courageous effort, Raynal and his men surrendered three days later. Both Cher Ami and Vaillant were awarded France's Croix de Guerre, or War Cross.

Round 'Em Up

Horses are ancient warriors, but most of those conscripted during World War I weren't war-ready. They died by the millions, from disease, exhaustion and enemy fire, forcing the French and British armies to turn to America to renew their supply. A veritable industry developed with more than half a million horses and mules shipped by boat to Europe by fall 1917, according to the American Battle Monuments Commission. So important was the commerce that the Santa Fe Railroad named a station Drage, after British Lt. Col. F.B. Drage, the commander of the British Remount Commission in Lathrop, Missouri, a major stockyard for the future beasts of war. "So the war business in horses and mules is good," read an article in the December 1915 issue of *The Santa Fe Magazine*, for employees of the railway system. Good for the farmer, contractor, supplier and railroads, it said, but "not good for the animals."

Service By Exotics

Among the more exotic animals called into service was a baboon named Jackie, who served with the 1st South African Infantry Brigade in then British-occupied Egypt and later in the trenches in France and Belgium. His acute hearing and keen eyesight helped warn soldiers of enemy movement or possible attacks when he would screech and tug on their clothing. Jackie was wounded in Flanders Fields when the South African brigade came under heavy shelling in April 1918 and his leg had to be amputated. Lt. Col. R.N. Woodsend, of Britain's Royal Medical Corps, described that procedure: "He lapped up the chloroform as if it had been whiskey, and was well under in a remarkably short time. It was a simple matter to amputate the leg with scissors."



Man’s best friend helped soldiers survive. Dogs served, firstly, as spotters of the wounded, learning to identify ally from enemy. They also served as sentinels, messengers, transporters and chasers of rats — the bane of the trenches along with lice and fleas. The French military created a service devoted to dogs of war in December 1915. Less official, but crucial to soldiers' morale, was the role of dogs and other creatures in the trenches, and as mascots. Stray dogs running from fighting were adopted as companions along with other animals, including a Royal Air Force fox mascot adopted by British pilots. These dogs and other mascots helped soldiers “think of life ... and the life they hoped to find again,” said Baratay, the French historian, in a speech last month in Paris.

[Source: The Associated Press | Elaine Ganley | November 11, 2018 ++]

Civil War Burials ► Whitfield Evans | No Veteran Ever Dies

Countering the waning support for the Civil War in the summer of 1862, President Abraham Lincoln called for 300,000 volunteers to serve in the Union Army for three years or for the duration of the rebellion. Whitfield Evans, a 29-year-old farm laborer—and recently wedded to Charlotte Robinson—answered that call. Evans volunteered in Wyoming, Illinois, on Aug. 15, 1862, and was assigned to a regiment of ten companies, made up of 940 men from Stark and Henry counties. Originally known as the “Henry County Regiment,” the governor of Illinois later numbered the unit as the 112th volunteer infantry.

The 112th mustered into federal service in September 1862, from Peoria, Illinois. Sylvester Otman, businessman, farmer and surveyor from Stark County, was commissioned captain commanding the Wyoming volunteers, Company E, numbering three officers and 89 enlisted men, including Whitfield Evans. Assigned to the Department of the Ohio, the 112th spent its first winter in Kentucky. In mid-March 1863, Confederate Brig. Gen. John Pegram launched a large raid into Kentucky from Tennessee. The 112th regiment moved by both rail and foot 35 miles south to Danville, Kentucky, to block the Confederate’s advance. Company E was assigned to guard the bridge used by to cross the Dix River, five miles north of town. As Pegram’s force closed on Danville, the Union troops withdrew to the north. However, Company E was overlooked and not issued the necessary movement orders. Only when Confederates were beginning to surround them did the company realize their plight and undertake a hard night march to escape entrapment and rejoin the regiment.

For the next several months, the 112th patrolled surrounding areas and raided into Tennessee as far as Knoxville. On July 28, 1863, Company E was part of a 200-man force ordered to Richmond, Kentucky, 35 miles east, to intercept Confederate troops advancing in that direction. Once there, the company discovered 1,500 enemy cavalrymen. The cavalry surrounded Richmond and opened heavy artillery fire on the Union troops. Ordered to charge the Confederate line, several soldiers of Company E, including Evans, were captured. The Confederates had orders to keep moving north and no means to hold prisoners, so Evans and his comrades were released on parole after being held less than 24 hours. Refusing to honor the paroles, the commanding general of the Department of Ohio declared them invalid and ordered the soldiers to immediately report back their regiment.

In August 1864, the Union's Army of the Ohio, under the command of Gen. Ambrose Burnside, moved troops into southeast Kentucky to prepare for the permanent occupation of east Tennessee (a portion of the state with strong Union sympathies). By 1 SEP Burnside's force established headquarters in Knoxville, Tennessee. The Army's 1st Brigade, including the 112th, was stationed in Athens, Tennessee, 50 miles to the southwest of Knoxville, arriving on 10 SEP. Following the Battle of Chickamauga, the Confederates captured the military hospital in Athens on 27 SEP, which had 11 men from the 112th Illinois infantry including Whitfield Evans. Realizing that in the eyes of the Confederates, he was a parolee who had taken up arms without having been exchanged, Evans most likely feared for his life. From capture until his death, Evans assumed his brother-in-law's name, John Robinson. His companions never revealed the deception.

Due to the overflow of their main prison in Richmond, Virginia, the Confederates opened a new prison in Danville, Virginia, in November 1863. The Danville prison was comprised of six unused tobacco warehouses plus several small outlying facilities, including two camp hospitals. One hospital was established solely to contain an outbreak of smallpox and was disestablished in February 1864, as the outbreak subsided. Among the most common ailments noted among the prisoners were rheumatism and chronic diarrhea. The latter of these is listed as Evan's cause of death on March 21, 1864. His personal possessions were noted as one shirt and cap. Evan's was buried under the name of "J Robinson" in Grave No. 646 in what would later become the Danville National Cemetery.

John Quincy Robinson, the brother-in-law whose identity Evans assumed, also volunteered for service at the same time as Evans. As part of Company C, 81st Illinois Volunteer Infantry, recruited from Peoria County, Robinson served throughout the war, including the siege of Vicksburg, and discharged in August 1865. Robinson is buried in a private cemetery in Nebraska. Following many years of diligent research, Evans' distant family was able to work with National Cemetery Administration (NCA) historians to verify the subterfuge. Finally, on October 12, 2018, a new headstone was placed on Grave No. 646 in the Danville National Cemetery. While the front inscription still reads "J. Robinson", the obverse now has the important addition of "a.k.a. Whitfield Evans."



"This story of service illustrates so much about NCA and its commitment to ensure "No Veteran Ever Dies" said Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs Randy Reeves. Thanks to NCA's historians who worked to validate and document Whitfield Evans' service and sacrifice. Also, this story so profoundly demonstrates just how important it is for America to accurately memorialize its Veterans. And finally, it underscores the fact, that as a nation, we will never forget and we will never give up looking for those who are missing, no matter how long it takes." [Source: Vantage Point | November 6, 2018 ++]

WWI U.S. Clout ► Kept Increasing Right up to Armistice Day

On the final morning of World War I, U.S. Gen. John J. Pershing was not eager to stop fighting. After all, if one nation had momentum after the first global war's four years of unprecedented slaughter, it was the United States. U.S. troops would push forward on several fronts in France until the minute a cease-fire took effect at 11 a.m. on Nov. 11, six hours after it was negotiated. With more time, the Americans might even have entered Germany soon after, establishing themselves as the world's ascendant military power.

When Pvt. Jose De La Luz Saenz was awoken along the front lines of the Meuse-Argonne offensive in northeastern France on Nov. 11, 1918, the pre-dawn instructions were not only about sealing the imminent cease-fire. "The orders called for continuing the artillery fire with the same intensity until eleven in the morning," Saenz noted in his published diary. And despite the promise of the armistice, "the day seemed like all others because the artillery duel appeared to be continuing with even greater intensity," he wrote. In addition to military reasons, there was also a political point to be made, said Nicolas Czubak, a French military historian specializing in northeastern France, where U.S. troops fought. "For the Americans, it really is to show that they have played as important a role in victory as the other armies," Czubak said.



A photo of the statue of three soldiers at the World War I Navarin Memorial in Souain-Perthes-les-Hurlus, France. Located in the spot where the Battle of Champagne raged and depicts three patrolling soldiers in the guise of Gen. Gouraud, Lt. Quentin Roosevelt, the son of U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt, who died in 1918 in the Tardenois, and the brother of the sculptor who fell on the Chemin des Dames.

After the United States declared war on Germany in April 1917, its standing army of 127,500 became an armed force of 2 million within 1½ years. On Nov. 11, 1918, allies like Britain and France were exhausted, Germany was as good as defeated and Pershing had another 2 million troops ready to come over. "If war had continued into 1919, the No. 1 army in the world fighting at the front would have been the U.S. Army — without a doubt," Czubak said. "It is also why he wanted to continue even after Nov. 11."

Near the place where Saenz heard bombshells explode a century ago now stands the Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery at the French town of Romagne-sous-Montfaucon. American soldiers who died on that Armistice Day — 100 of them — are buried there along with 14,146 fellow U.S. troops. The cemetery holds the largest number of U.S. military dead in Europe. By the time World War I ended, Americans had been in enough battles that they were interred in a half-dozen cemeteries dotted across northern France. In a war where the dead would be counted in millions — 1.4 million for France, 1.1 million for British imperial forces — the United States had 126,000 dead to mourn.

When U.S. President Donald Trump joins other world leaders at World War I armistice events hosted by French President Emmanuel Macron this weekend, he plans to visit some of the burial sites. And standing among the white crosses, Trump will see that the pre-eminent military force he commands had its roots in French soil, where U.S. troops were instrumental in turning the tide after their nation shed its isolationism and stood by its European allies. If

the Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery symbolizes America's coming-of-age in the war, the Aisne-Marne cemetery at the Belleau Wood battleground marks its beginning.

When the war started in 1914, most Americans considered it "Europe's war." A hit song in 1915 was titled "I Didn't Raise My Boy To Be A Soldier" and President Woodrow Wilson won re-election in 1916 with the campaign slogan "He kept us out of war." German belligerence soon had Americans rethinking the wisdom of isolation, said Bruce Malone, a historian and superintendent of the Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery. "Unrestricted warfare, sinking ships with Americans on them or American ships" and the infamous Zimmermann telegram in which Germany promised to give Mexico some American territory if it kept the U.S. engaged shifted the momentum, he said. "Even President Wilson, who did not want to be in the war, had no choice," said Malone.

On April 6, 1917, the U.S. declared war, much to the relief of its European allies. "It wasn't going well in Europe at the time, and the Germans were actually gaining some momentum. The Allies were essentially running out of men to fight the war," Malone said. There was one problem though, he added. "We join the war. We've made promises, but we don't have an army. Certainly not of the European standard," he said. Speed was of the essence. Russia left the war in March 1918 and Germany had sent its troops to the Western front for a final full onslaught. Just in time, U.S. soldiers started arriving en masse.

Pershing, disregarding British and French pleas to use U.S. troops to beef up depleted lines under British and French command, always wanted his men to fight as an independent American force. A major breakthrough came at Belleau Wood, when U.S. forces stopped a German advance on Paris against heavy odds. It proved their mettle to the enemy and allies alike. The Americans kept building on their newly acknowledged grit through the end of the war. Saenz was there to record it. "The bloody fighting and our victory was the decisive blow that finished the Teutonic pride and dispelled forever the Germans' false dream of global conquest," he wrote after a 2 NOV victory. Instead, the United States could start dreaming of making the next century its own. [Source: The Associated Press | Raf Casert | November 6, 2018 ++]

WWI Last Hours ► 10,900 on 11 NOV | A Terrible Toll

Augustin Trebuchon is buried beneath a white lie. His tiny plot is almost on the front line where the guns finally fell silent at 11 a.m. on the 11th day of the 11th month in 1918, after a four-year war that had already killed millions. A simple white cross says: "Died for France on Nov. 10, 1918." Not so. Like hundreds of others along the Western Front, Trebuchon was killed in combat on the morning of 11 NOV — after the pre-dawn agreement between the Allies and Germany but before the armistice took effect six hours later. His death at almost literally the eleventh hour only highlighted the folly of a war that had become ever more incomprehensible to many in nations drawn into the first global conflict.

Before 11 NOV, the war had killed 14 million people, including 9 million soldiers, sailors and airmen from 28 countries. Germany came close to a quick, early victory before the war settled into hellish trench fighting. One battle, like the Somme in France, could have up to 1 million casualties. The use of poison gas came to epitomize the ruthlessness of warfare that the world had never seen. For the French, who lost up to 1.4 million troops, it was perhaps too poignant — or too shameful — to denote that Trebuchon had been killed on the very last morning, just as victory finally prevailed. "Indeed, on the tombs it said 'Nov. 10, 1918,' to somewhat ease the mourning of families," said French military historian Nicolas Czubak.

There were many reasons why men kept falling until the call of the bugler at 11 a.m.: fear that the enemy would not abide by the armistice, a sheer hatred after four years of unprecedented slaughter, the ambition of commanders craving a last victory, bad communications, the inane joy of killing. As the hours ticked down, villages were taken, attacks were thwarted with heavy losses and rivers were crossed under enemy fire. Questions remain whether the gains

were worth all the human losses. Historian Joseph Persico estimated the total dead, wounded and missing on all sides on the final day was 10,900.

Other nations also endured such casualties. With two minutes to go, 25-year-old Canadian Pvt. George Lawrence Price was slain by a German sniper. About 150 miles away in France, a 23-year-old American, Henry Gunther, was killed by German machine-gun fire one minute before the armistice. Trebuchon, 40, also was shot minutes before the cease-fire. He was running to tell his comrades where and when they would have a meal after the armistice. All three are considered their nations' last men to fall in active combat.

American KIA Henry Gunther. Anti-German sentiment ran high after the United States declared war in April 1917, and Gunther and his family in Baltimore were subjected to the kind of prejudice and suspicion that many of German descent faced at the time. "It was not a good time to be German in the United States," said historian Alec Bennett. Gunther had little choice when he got drafted. He was given the rank of sergeant, but he later was demoted when he wrote a letter home critical of the conditions in the war. Soon after, he was thrown into the biggest U.S. battle of the war, the Meuse-Argonne offensive in northeastern France. There were reports he was still brooding over his demotion right on 11 NOV.

When he emerged from a thick fog in the valley around Chaumont-devant-Damvillers, he and his comrades faced a German machine gun nest on the hillside. Indications are that the Germans fired one salvo over his head as a warning, knowing the war was almost over. But he still charged onward. "His time of death was 10:59 a.m., which is just so haunting," Bennett said. Gunther was recognized by Pershing as the last American to die on the battlefield. Questions remain whether it was a suicide run, an attempt at redemption or an act of true devotion. "It is just as puzzling now as it was 100 years ago," Bennett said, adding that one thing is clear: "Gunther's act is seen as almost a symbol of the futility of the larger war." But there was one more cruel twist for his family: They were unaware he had been killed. Upon his expected return "they went to the train station to meet Henry — not there!" said Bruce Malone, superintendent of Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery, the final resting place for 100 Americans who died Nov. 11.

Canadian KIA Pvt. George Lawrence Price. The death of Price was an utterly senseless loss of life. He was a farm laborer in Saskatchewan when the swirl of history plucked him off the land in October 1917 as the Allies sought ever more manpower for the Western Front. The summer after he was drafted, he was part of the surge of victories that seized villages and cities right up to 11 NOV. By that time, Canadians were retaking Mons in southern Belgium, where soldiers from the British Commonwealth had their very first battle with the Germans in August 1914. It was especially sweet for the Commonwealth commanders to retake the city, bringing the war full circle where they lost their first soldier, English Pvt. John Parr, on Aug. 21, 1914.

Price decided to check out homes along the canals while civilians in the center of Mons had already broken out the wine and whiskey they had hidden for years from the Germans to celebrate with the Canadians. Suddenly, a shot rang out and Price collapsed. "It really was one man, here and there, who was driven by vengeance, by a need to kill one last time," said Belgian historian Corentin Rousman. The final minutes counted not just for the casualties but also for the killers. "There are rules in war," Rousman said. "There is always the possibility to kill two minutes before a cease-fire. Two minutes after, the German would have had to stand before a judge. That's the difference." At the St. Symphorien cemetery just outside Mons, Price, the last Commonwealth soldier killed in the war, lies a stone's throw from Parr, the first. "He is not forgotten," Rousman said of Price. "It's a soldier whose tomb is often draped in flowers."

French KIA Augustin Trebuchon. Trebuchon's grave stands out because of the date, underscoring the random fortunes of war. He was a shepherd from France's Massif Central and could have avoided the war as a family breadwinner at age 36. "But he was part of this great patriotic momentum," said Jean-Christophe Chanot, the mayor of Vrigne-Meuse, where he died. Trebuchon knew misery as part of France's most brutal battles — Marne, Somme, Verdun. He survived right up to his last order — to tell soldiers where to gather after the armistice. Instead, his body was found with a bullet wound to the head. He was recognized as "the last French soldier killed during the last French attack against the Germans," Chanot said. The date on his grave — Nov. 10, 1918 — remains controversial, even if it was meant to soothe a family's sorrow. "It was a lie, without a question," said Czubak, the French historian.



The grave marker (left) of French WW I soldier Augustin Trebuchon in Vrigne-Meuse, France. His tiny plot is almost on the front line where the guns finally fell silent at 11 a.m. on the 11th day of the 11th month in 1918. A memorial (right) to U.S. soldier Henry Gunther is perched on a hill where he died in Chaumont-devant-Damvillers, France.

[Source: The Associated Press | Raf Casert | November 6, 2018 ++]

WWI Poem ► In Flanders Fields

One of the most enduring and haunting pieces of literature to come out of WWI was this poem by John McCrae. It is why today poppies are associated with Veterans' Day.

**In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.**

**We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders fields.**

**Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields.**

[Source: TREA Washington Update | November 6, 2018 ++]

WWI Military Technology ► How Prepared Was the U.S.?

On April 6, 1917, the United States declared war against Germany and entered World War I. Since August 1914, the war between the Central and Entente Powers had devolved into a bloody stalemate, particularly on the Western Front. That was where the U.S. would enter the engagement. How prepared was the country's military to enter a modern conflict? The war was dominated by industrially made lethal technology, like no war had been before. That meant

more death on European battlefields, making U.S. soldiers badly needed in the trenches. But America's longstanding tradition of isolationism meant that in 1917 U.S. forces needed a lot of support from overseas allies to fight effectively.

In Europe, American combat troops would encounter new weapons systems, including sophisticated machine guns and the newly invented tank, both used widely during World War I. American forces had to learn to fight with these new technologies, even as they brought millions of men to bolster the decimated British and French armies. In certain areas of military technology, the United States was well-prepared. The basic infantrymen of the U.S. Army and Marine Corps were equipped with the Model 1903 Springfield rifle. Developed after American experience against German-made Mausers in the Spanish American War, it was an excellent firearm, equal or superior to any rifle in the world at the time. The Springfield offered greater range and killing power than the U.S. Army's older 30-40 Krag. It was also produced in such numbers that it was one of the few weapons the U.S. military could deploy with to Europe.

Machine guns were another matter. In 1912, American inventor Isaac Lewis had offered to give the U.S. Army his air-cooled machine gun design for free. When he was rejected, Lewis sold the design to Britain and Belgium, where it was mass-produced throughout the war. With far more soldiers than supplies of modern machine guns, the U.S. Army had to adopt several systems of foreign design, including the less-than-desirable French Chauchat, which tended to jam in combat and proved difficult to maintain in the trenches.

American soldiers fared better with the Great War's truly new innovation, the tank. Developed from the need to successfully cross "No Man's Land" and clear enemy-held trenches, the tank had been used with limited success in 1917 by the British and the French. Both nations had combat-ready machines available for American troops. After the U.S. entered the war, American industry began tooling up to produce the French-designed Renault FT light tank. But the American-built tanks, sometimes called the "six-ton tank," never made it to the battlefields of Europe before the Armistice in November 1918. Instead, U.S. ground forces used 239 of the French-built versions of the tank, as well as 47 British Mark V tanks. Though American soldiers had never used tanks before entering the war, they learned quickly. One of the first American tankers in World War I was then-Capt. George S. Patton, who later gained international fame as a commander of Allied tanks during World War II.

Also new to Americans was poison gas, an early form of chemical warfare. By 1917 artillery batteries on both sides of the Western Front commonly fired gas shells, either on their own or in combination with other explosives. Before soldiers were routinely equipped with gas masks, thousands died in horrific ways, adding to the already significant British and French casualty totals. Scientists on both sides of the war effort worked to make gas weapons as effective as possible, including by devising new chemical combinations to make mustard gas, chlorine gas, phosgene gas and tear gas. The American effort was substantial: According to historians Joel Vilensky and Pandey Sinish, "Eventually, more than 10 percent of all the chemists in the United States became directly involved with chemical warfare research during World War I."



All the manpower coming from the U.S. would not have meant much without safe transportation to Europe. That meant having a strong navy. The U.S. Navy was the best-prepared and best-equipped of all the country's armed forces. For many years, it had been focusing much of its energy on preparing for a surface naval confrontation with Germany. But a new threat had arisen: Germany had made significant progress in developing long-range submarines and devising attack tactics that could have posed severe threats to American shipping. German Navy U-boats had, in fact, devastated British merchant fleets so badly by 1917 that British defeat was imminent.

In May 1917, the British Royal Navy pioneered the convoy system, in which merchant ships carrying men and materiel across the Atlantic didn't travel alone but in large groups. Collectively protected by America's plentiful armed escort ships, convoys were the key to saving Britain from defeat and allowing American ground forces to arrive in Europe nearly unscathed. In fact, as military historian V.E. Tarrant wrote, "From March 1918 until the end of the war, two million U.S. troops were transported to France, for the loss of only 56 lives."

Some of those Americans who made it to Europe climbed above the rest – right up into the air. The U.S. had pioneered military aviation. And in 1917, air power was coming into its own, showing its potential well beyond just intelligence gathering. Planes were becoming offensive weapons that could actively engage ground targets with sufficient force to make a difference on the battlefield below. But with fewer than 250 planes, the U.S. was poorly prepared for an air war in Europe. As a result, American pilots had to learn to fly British and French planes those countries could not man.

Despite often lacking the weapons and technology required for success, it was ultimately the vast number of Americans – afloat, on the ground and in the air – and their ability to adapt and use foreign weapons on foreign soil that helped turn the tide of the war in favor of the Allies. [Source: NavyTimes | David Longenbach | November 8, 2018 ++]

Killing Admiral Yamamoto ► WWII Operation Vengeance

Not only did the Pearl Harbor attack of December 7th, 1941 deal a devastating blow to the United States' Navy and draw the nation into World War II, but it also gave the Japanese Imperial Navy some six months to further their control of the Pacific without U.S. interference. This was, of course, the plan. Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto was the architect of the Pearl Harbor pre-emptive assault. So, when U.S. Naval Intelligence initiative code-named "Magic" intercepted communications that Yamamoto would be doing an inspection tour of his forces on the Solomon Islands, the U.S. seized the opportunity for vengeance. "Get Yamamoto," commanded President Franklin D. Roosevelt. Operation Vengeance was a go.

Magic had long since broken the cipher of the Japanese navy, JN-25D, which had reaped a lot of disaster upon their fight in the Pacific. This was through the efforts of Navy cryptographers and Japanese-Americans translating the complicated and very context-based language. On April 14, 1943, messages detailing Yamamoto's tour of the Solomon Islands were intercepted. Eighteen P-38G Lightnings of the 339th Fighter Squadron, 347th Fighter group, were chosen as the aircraft for the mission. They would be flying out of Guadalcanal, South, and West of the Solomon Islands and rounding back North East again to intercept Yamamoto flying from Rabaul to Bougainville.

The mission would be about 1,000 miles round trip with more fuel expended in the firefight with the two Mitsubishi G4M Betty bombers and six Mitsubishi A6M Zero Navy fighters. Only the P-38G's, equipped with drop tanks with extra fuel could make the trip. The mission would have to be flown in radio silence, to avoid detection. Major John W. Mitchell, therefore, requested that each plane was outfitted with a ship's compass to navigate. At 7:25 in the morning on April 18, the Lightnings took off for two hours of silent flight, 50 feet above the waves to avoid radar detection.

Odd as it may sound, the man they were going to shoot down was one of Japan's most outspoken opponents of war with the U.S. In fact, Yamamoto had spent many years in the country he was now fighting, including for two years as a naval attaché in Washington, from 1926-28. He was critical of Japan's ongoing war with China and with the drive to engage in combat with the U.S., a stance that led to powerful pro-war interests in Japan calling for his head. Admiral Yonai Mitsumasa, to save Yamamoto's life, promoted him to commander-in-chief of the Combined Fleet and sent him out to sea in 1939. Yamamoto had also warned the Japanese government that war with the U.S. could only be successful for six months to a year before the tides turned, but he was given no choice.



He planned the Pearl Harbor attack to bide time for Japan to wrest control of the Pacific before drawing the U.S. Navy into a decisive battle that would force them to negotiate for peace. Yamamoto convinced the Naval General Staff to move for this great battle after the Doolittle Raid of April 1942 struck Tokyo. He sailed for Midway Island with four aircraft carriers. However, by this point, the U.S. had broken the Japanese cipher and, with a force of three aircraft carriers, counter-attacked and sunk all four of the Japanese ships. The tides in the Pacific had already taken a massive turn.

At the time Operation Vengeance was set in motion, Yamamoto had been trying, and slowly failing to control the Solomon Islands. After landing troops on Guadalcanal, he was met by U.S. forces landing in August 1942 in what would be a long and very costly battle, ending in a U.S. victory in February the next year. Thus, in April 1943, the inspection tour of forces on the Solomon Islands was planned to invoke a very much needed morale boost. At 9:34 a.m. on April 18th, after two hours of navigating by flight plan and, as Mitchell puts it, "dead reckoning," the 18 P-38Gs spotted Yamamoto's transport and escorts. The planes jettisoned their extra fuel tanks and tore into a power climb to engage the enemy.

The "killer flight" group, consisting of Lt. Thomas G. Lanphier, Jr., Lt. Rex T. Barber, Lt. Besby F. Holmes, and Lt. Raymond K. Hine headed for the bombers. Holmes' auxiliary fuel tanks didn't detach, and he had to draw back. Lanphier turned to engage the escort Zero fighters diving to defend Yamamoto and his staff while Barber chased down the bombers. As Barber came around, he fired his .50-caliber machine guns into the right engine, fuselage, and tail assembly of the bomber Yamamoto was flying in, which crashed into the jungle. Barber also hit the second bomber, which crash-landed in the water. Chief of Staff Vice Admiral Matome Ugaki and two others in the second bomber survived.

According to the search and rescue party who found Yamamoto, his body had been thrown from the plane, still in his seat, his hand on his katana and two bullet holes in his shoulder and head. Operation Vengeance was the longest fighter-intercept mission of the war. Lt. Hine lost his life when his plane was shot down by a Japanese Zero. It is well agreed, now, that Lt. Barber is credited with shooting down Yamamoto, but Lanphier claimed it was he until the day he died. This discrepancy was fought over between the two for many years. Forensic evidence of bullet trajectory in the wreckage of Yamamoto's downed bomber concurs with Barber's account. [Source: Together We Served Dispatch | OCT 2018 ++]

Mussolini's Rescue ► Credited to Otto Skorzeny

Otto Skorzeny was born in Vienna into a middle-class Austrian family which had a long history of military service. His surname is of Polish origin, and Skorzeny's distant relatives came from a village called Skorzecin in Greater Poland region. In addition to his native German, he spoke excellent French and was proficient in English. In his teens, Skorzeny once complained to his father about the austere lifestyle the family was enduring; his father replied, "There is no harm in doing without things. It might even be good for you not to get used to a soft life." He was a noted fencer

as a member of a German-national Burschenschaft as a university student in Vienna. He engaged in fifteen personal combats. The tenth resulted in a wound that left a dramatic dueling scar - known in academic fencing as a Schmiss (German for "smite" or "hit") - on his cheek.

In 1931 Skorzeny joined the Austrian Nazi organization and soon became a member of the Nazi SA. A charismatic figure, Skorzeny played a minor role in the Anschluss on March 12, 1938, when he saved the Austrian President Wilhelm Miklas from being shot by Austrian Nazis. After the 1939 invasion of Poland, Skorzeny, then working as a civil engineer, volunteered for service in the German Air Force (the Luftwaffe), but was turned down because he was considered too tall at 6 ft 4 in and too old at 31 years old in 1939 for aircrew training. He then joined Hitler's bodyguard regiment, the Leibstandarte SS Adolf Hitler (LSSAH) as an Officer Cadet.

He took part in the invasion of the Soviet Union with the SS Division Das Reich and subsequently fought in several battles on the Eastern Front. In October 1941, he oversaw a "technical section" of the German forces during the Battle of Moscow. His mission was to seize important buildings of the Communist Party, including the NKVD headquarters at Lubyanka, and the central telegraph office and other high priority facilities before they could be destroyed. He was also ordered to capture the sluices of the Moscow-Volga Canal because Hitler wanted to turn Moscow into a huge artificial lake by opening them. The missions were canceled as the German forces failed to capture the Soviet capital.

In December 1942, Skorzeny was hit in the back of the head by shrapnel; he was evacuated to the rear for treatment. He was awarded the Iron Cross. While recuperating from his injuries he was given a staff role in Berlin, where he developed his ideas on unconventional commando warfare. Skorzeny's proposals were to develop units specialized in such warfare, including partisan-like fighting deep behind enemy lines, fighting in enemy uniform, sabotage attacks, etc.



In April 1943 Skorzeny's name was put forward by Ernst Kaltenbrunner, the new head of the RSHA, and Skorzeny met with Walter Schellenberg, head of Amt VI, Ausland-SD, (the SS foreign intelligence service department of the RSHA). Schellenberg charged Skorzeny with command of the schools organized to train operatives in sabotage, espionage, and paramilitary techniques. Skorzeny was appointed Commander of the recently created Waffen Sonderverband z.b.V. Friedenthal stationed near Berlin (the unit was later renamed SS Jagdverband 502, and in November 1944 again to SS Combat Unit "Center," expanding ultimately to five battalions). The unit's first mission was in mid-1943, Operation Francois. Skorzeny sent a group by parachute into Iran to contact the dissident mountain tribes to encourage them to sabotage Allied supplies of material being sent to the Soviet Union via the Trans-Iranian Railway. However, commitment among the rebel tribes was suspect, and Operation Francois was deemed a failure.

Skorzeny arranged a meeting with the leaders of the former administration in Byelorussia, all of whom had beat a hasty retreat to Berlin in June and July 1944. These men, Radislaw Ostrowsky, V.I. Rodko and Mikola Abramchyk, agreed to cooperate in finding recruits and staff for several sabotage schools that could train infiltrators. Such line-crossers, it was felt, could serve as rallying points for partisans who had already fled to the woods. Two SD facilities were established, one at Dahlwitz, near Berlin, and a second at Walbuze, in East Prussia. Radio communications, encoding, demolitions and assassination techniques were taught at these schools. FAK 203 also established a

Byelorussian camp at Insterburg, which was run by Major Gerullis. This facility was later evacuated to Boitzenburg, in Pomerania, and was eventually transferred to Jagdverband Ost.

On the night between 24 and 25 July 1943, a few weeks after the Allied invasion of Sicily and bombing of Rome, the Italian Grand Council of Fascism voted a motion of no confidence against Mussolini. On the same day, the king replaced him with Marshal Pietro Badoglio and had Mussolini arrested. Hitler's common procedure was to give similar orders to competing organizations within the German military. So, he ordered Skorzeny to track Mussolini, and simultaneously ordered the paratroop Gen. Kurt Student to execute the liberation.

Mussolini was being transported around Italy by his captors (first to Ponza, then to La Maddalena, both small islands in the Tyrrhenian sea). Intercepting a coded Italian radio message, Skorzeny used the reconnaissance provided by the agents and informants (counterfeit notes with a face value of 100,000 pounds forged under Operation Bernhard were used to help obtain information) of SS-Obersturmbannführer Herbert Kappler to determine that Mussolini was being imprisoned at Campo Imperatore Hotel, a ski resort at Campo Imperatore in Italy's Gran Sasso massif, high in the Apennine Mountains.

On September 12, 1943, Skorzeny and 16 SS troopers joined the Fallschirmjäger to rescue Mussolini in a high-risk glider mission. Ten DFS 230 gliders, each carrying nine soldiers and a pilot, towed by Henschel Hs 126 planes started between 13:05 and 13:10 from the Pratica di Mare Air Base near Rome. The leader of the airborne operation, paratrooper-Oberleutnant Georg Freiherr von Berlepsch entered the first glider, Skorzeny and his SS troopers sat in the fourth and fifth glider. To gain height before crossing the close-by Alban Hills the leading three glider-towing plane units flew an additional loop. All following units considered this maneuver unnecessary and preferred not to endanger the given time of arrival at the target. This led to the situation that Skorzeny's two units arrived first over the target.

Meanwhile, the valley station of the funicular railway leading to the Campo Imperatore was captured at 14:00 in a ground attack by two paratrooper companies led by Major Otto-Harald Mors, who was commander-in-chief of the whole raid. They also cut all telephone lines. At 14:05 the airborne commandos landed their ten DFS 230 gliders on the mountain near the hotel; only one crashed, causing injuries. The Fallschirmjäger and Skorzeny's special troopers overwhelmed Mussolini's captors (200 well-equipped Carabinieri guards) without a single shot being fired; this was also because General Fernando Soleti of the Polizia dell'Africa Italiana, who flew in with Skorzeny, told them to stand down. Skorzeny attacked the radio operator and his equipment and stormed into the hotel, being followed by his SS troopers and the paratroopers. Ten minutes after the beginning of the raid, Mussolini left the hotel, accompanied by the German soldiers. At 14:45 Major Mors accessed the Hotel via the funicular railway and introduced himself to Mussolini.

Subsequently, Mussolini was to be flown out by a meanwhile arrived Fieseler Fi 156 STOL plane. Although under the given circumstances the small plane was overloaded, Skorzeny insisted to accompany Mussolini, thus endangering the success of the mission. After an extremely dangerous but successful lift-off, they flew to Pratica di Mare. There they continued immediately, flying in a Heinkel He 111 to Vienna, where Mussolini stayed overnight at the Hotel Imperial. The next day he was flown to Munich and on September 14 he met Hitler at Führer Headquarters Wolf's Lair in near Rastenburg.

The landing at Campo Imperatore was in fact led by First Lieutenant Georg Freiherr von Berlepsch, commanded by Major Otto-Harald Mors and under orders from General Kurt Student, all Fallschirmjäger (German air force paratroop) officers; but Skorzeny stewarded the Italian leader right in front of the cameras. After a pro-SS propaganda coup at the behest of Reichsführer-SS Heinrich Himmler and propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels, Skorzeny and his Special Forces (SS-Sonderverband z. B. V. "Friedenthal") of the Waffen-SS were granted much of the credit for the operation.

In 1970, a cancerous tumor was discovered on Skorzeny's spine. Two tumors were later removed while he was staying at a hospital in Hamburg, but the surgery left him paralyzed from the waist down. Vowing to walk again,

Skorzeny spent long hours with a physical therapist; and, within six months, he was back on his feet. Skorzeny died of lung cancer on July 5, 1975, in Madrid. He was 67 years old. He was given a Roman Catholic funeral Mass in Madrid on 7 August 7, 1975. His body was cremated afterward, and his ashes were later taken to Vienna to be interred in the Skorzeny family plot at Doblinger Friedhof. [Source: Together We Served Dispatch | OCT 2018 ++]

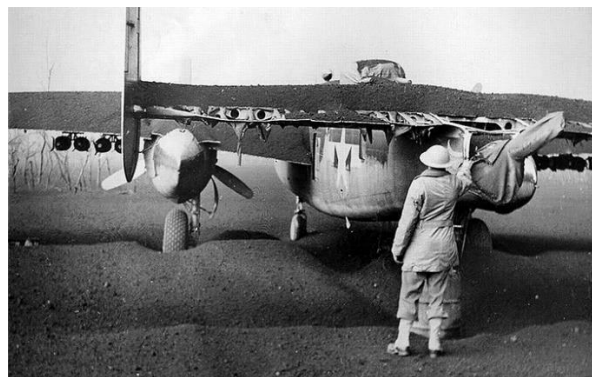
Fractured Jaw ► **How Close Did the U.S. Get to Using Nuclear Weapons in 1968**

In their critically acclaimed comic book series, *Watchmen*, Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons render an alternate, dystopian 1985 America in which the United States won the Vietnam War after obliterating North Vietnamese forces through the deployment of Dr. Manhattan, a one-time nuclear physicist transformed into a supernatural being by a radiation experiment gone awry. Within weeks of unleashing Dr. Manhattan’s destructive powers on the battlefield, North Vietnamese soldiers laid down their arms in defeat. “Often they surrender to me personally,” Dr. Manhattan recalls, “their terror of me balanced by an almost religious awe. I am reminded of how the Japanese were reported to have viewed the atomic bomb, after Hiroshima.”

In an eerie twist on life imitating art, recent news coverage suggests just such a reality could have come to pass. The publication of Michael Beschloss’ new book, *Presidents of War*, shined light on declassified documents describing the efforts that President Lyndon Johnson’s senior military officers undertook without presidential authorization in early 1968 to prepare for the use of tactical nuclear weapons in Vietnam.

How close did the United States actually get to deploying nuclear weapons in Vietnam in 1968? Who initiated this plan, codenamed “Fracture Jaw,” and when did the president become aware of it? What can today’s leaders learn from this incident, and what implications does this episode have for command and control of nuclear weapons during wartime and the so-called “nuclear taboo” that purportedly dissuades their use? The answers to these questions can be found in the attachment to this Bulletin titled “**Fractured Jaw**” [Source: War On the Rocks | Theo Milonopoulos | October 24, 2018 ++]

Every Picture Tells A Story ► **Engulfed in Ash**



Designers and operators of military aircraft expect to have to deal with things like battle damage, rough handling by inexperienced pilots and the odd snow or hail storm—but being weighed down by thousands of pounds of hot ash was not in the manual. Between 18 and 23 March 1944, Mount Vesuvius, the one-time destroyer of Herculaneum and Pompeii, erupted and spewed ash, rocks and hot cinders southeast across a wide swath of the coast of the Bay of Naples, all the way to the Gulf of Salerno. Here a B-25 of the 340th Bomb Group at Pompeii Airfield sits forlornly under many inches of heavy hot ash following the eruption. There was nothing the 340th could do until the eruption

had ended. Embers burned away fabric-covered control surfaces, etched Perspex in turrets and cockpits, entered interiors and caused considerable damage. The weight of the ashes on the horizontal stabilizers caused many of the B-25s to tilt aft, burying their tail guns even deeper under ash. The soldier in the foreground is wearing a helmet and heavy jacket to protect him from falling ash and rocks.

Post WWII Photos ▶ **Brandenburg Gate**



Red Army photographer Yevgeny Khaldei (center) in Berlin with Soviet forces, near the Brandenburg Gate in May of 1945. (Waralbum.ru)

WWII Bomber Nose Art [18] ▶ **Sugar's Blues**



Military History Anniversaries ► 16 thru 30 November

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 30 NOV**.” [Source: This Day in History www.history.com/this-day-in-history | October 2018 ++]

Medal of Honor Citations ► William David Halyburton | WWII



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

WILLIAM DAVID HALYBURTON, Jr.

Rank and organization: Pharmacist's Mate 2nd Class, U.S. Naval Reserve 2d Bn, 5th Marines, 1st Marine Div

Place and date: Battle of Okinawa May 10, 1945,

Entered service: August 4, 1943

Born: August 2, 1924 in Canton, North Carolina

Citation

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty while serving with a Marine Rifle Company in the 2d Battalion, 5th Marines, 1st Marine Division, during action against enemy Japanese forces on Okinawa Shima in the Ryukyu Chain, 10 May 1945. Undaunted by the deadly accuracy of Japanese counterfire as his unit pushed the attack through a strategically important draw, Halyburton unhesitatingly dashed across the draw and up the hill into an open fire-swept field where the company advance squad was suddenly pinned down under a terrific concentration of mortar, machinegun and sniper fire with resultant severe casualties. Moving steadily forward despite the enemy's merciless barrage, he reached the wounded marine who lay farthest away and was rendering first aid when his patient was struck for the second time by a Japanese bullet. Instantly placing himself in the direct line of fire, he shielded the fallen fighter with his own body and staunchly continued his ministrations although constantly menaced by the slashing fury of shrapnel and bullets falling on all sides. Alert, determined and completely unselfish in his concern for the helpless marine, he persevered in his efforts until he himself sustained mortal wounds and collapsed, heroically sacrificing himself that his comrade might live. By his outstanding valor and unwavering devotion to duty in the face of tremendous odds, Halyburton sustained and enhanced the highest traditions of the U.S. Naval Service. He gallantly gave his life in the service of his country.



Halyburton attended Canton Presbyterian Church before moving to Wilmington, North Carolina where he graduated from New Hanover High School. He entered seminary at Davidson College in Davidson, North Carolina, but left to enlist in the U.S. Naval Reserve.

He completed recruit training at the Naval Training Center, Bainbridge, Maryland, and was promoted to seaman second class in the fall. Remaining in the area, he attended the U.S. Navy Hospital Corps School and was rated a pharmacist's mate third class upon graduation. He studied at other training centers and was advanced to pharmacist's mate second class on August 1, 1944. After completing the Fleet Marine Force Field Medical Service School at Camp Pendleton, California for combat field training, he departed on December 14 for the Pacific war zone on board the transport USS General M. M. Patrick and joined the 2nd Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division.

On April 1, 1945, Halyburton landed with the 5th Marines on Okinawa. On May 10, 1945, Halyburton was serving with a Marine rifle company against the Japanese on Okinawa when they suffered numerous casualties after advancing into Awacha Draw. Exposed to enemy fire, he rushed to aid a fallen Marine the furthest away and was subsequently KIA at age 20. He was one of two people from Haywood County, North Carolina, to receive the medal in World War II, the other being Max Thompson. Halyburton is buried at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific Section O, Grave 274 at Honolulu, Hawaii.

The USS Halyburton (FFG-40), a guided missile frigate commissioned on January 4, 1984, was named in his honor. A number of other military structures have been named for him, including Halyburton Quarters in Charleston, South Carolina; a road at the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland; and a barracks at Naval Air Station Pensacola, Florida. A public park in Wilmington is named for him, and in his birth city of Canton, Halliburton Street was re-spelled Halyburton Street in his honor.

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

*** Health Care ***



Medication Obtainment Update 01 ► Abandoned Prescriptions | Too Expensive

Nearly half of consumers have abandoned a medication prescribed by their physician because it was too expensive, according to a survey released today by DrFirst (<https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/truven-health-analytics-npr-health-poll-finds-cost-is-top-cause-of-unfilled-prescriptions-300516467.html>). At a time when the federal government is pushing a variety of measures to make prescription drug prices more transparent to consumers, the national survey revealed that 73 percent of consumers would change pharmacies if they knew that doing so would save them money on a prescription.

Respondents to the online survey of 200 consumers were nearly evenly divided between male (50.5%) and female (49.5%). Eighty-seven percent reported having health insurance. The largest age group represented was between 25 and 34 years old (27%), followed by 35-44 (23%) and over 54 (23%). Respondents were pre-selected for having filled at least one prescription in the last year. They tend to be heavy users of prescription medications. Sixty-two percent reported filling a prescription once each month, while 23% do so once every 3-4 months, and 14% fill an order every week.

According to the findings, as little as \$10 in savings would motivate 38 percent of respondents to switch pharmacies. If the savings rose to between \$11 and \$25, nearly 70 percent of them would choose a different pharmacy. Those results are consistent with recent studies that found a high correlation between drug costs and medication adherence, or the likelihood that patients will follow their doctor's prescribed therapy. A 2017 Truven Health Analytics-NPR Health Poll found that 67 percent of patients who failed to fill their prescriptions in the last 90 days reported high costs as their reason.

With medication adherence a critical factor in patients' long-term health, physicians are under increasing pressure to discuss costs with patients when they write prescriptions. Yet according to the survey, just 44 percent of consumers say their physician advised them about medication costs or offered lower-cost therapeutic alternatives. Even fewer, 41 percent, reported receiving advice from their doctor or pharmacist about possible cost-saving coupons or having a prescription filled at a less expensive pharmacy. Respondents' willingness to change pharmacies to save money indicates that such advanced notice of prescription costs, coupon options, or lower-cost pharmacies would be highly valuable.

Addressing high drug prices and increasing price transparency are among the stated priorities for the Trump administration and Congress, which passed two bills recently that prohibit pharmacy gag clauses on drug prices. The legislation allows pharmacists to tell customers when they could save money by paying for a prescription out-of-pocket instead of using insurance and paying their copay amount. Results from the survey, however, indicate that participants would like notification about drug pricing options before picking up prescriptions. [Source: Healthcare Finance | Jeff Lagasse | October 30, 2018 ++]

Shingles Update 10 ► Dealing With the Vaccine Shortage

Older Americans who want an important inoculation against a painful medical condition are having a tough time getting it due to a shortage of a new vaccine. As reported previously, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that folks 50 or older — even those who are healthy — should get a new shingles vaccine sold under the name **Shingrix**. The CDC says shingles afflicts about 1 in 3 Americans in their lifetime, and the risk increases with age. Last year, the CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices reported that clinical trials found the Shingrix vaccine to be more than 90 percent effective in preventing shingles in folks ages 50 and older. By contrast, an older vaccine — **Zostavax** — is anywhere from 38 percent to 70 percent effective, depending on age.

Thanks to the CDC's recommendation, countless Americans have been requesting Shingrix, which is given in a pair of doses two to six months apart. However, HealthDay reports that demand for Shingrix — which was introduced

in October 2017 — has outpaced supply for months. Although the vaccine shortage has caused much frustration, good news appears to be on the horizon. Late last month, British pharmaceutical company GlaxoSmithKline — which makes Shingrix — announced it was shipping a large volume of the vaccine to health care providers and pharmacies, HealthDay reports. That should make it easier to get your two doses of Shingrix. GlaxoSmithKline has even set up a website at <https://www.shingrix.com/shingles-vaccine-locator.html> to help you find providers in your area that have the vaccine. If you have had one dose of the drug, don't worry if your second dose is delayed. HealthDay reports that you will not have to start the vaccination process over. Also, HealthDay says providing written proof that you have already had one dose of the vaccine may move you to the front of the line once your provider receives its next shipment of Shingrix.

In case you are not aware Shingles is a painful, blistering rash. The rash typically clears up within a few weeks, although it can lead to prolonged complications. According to the CDC, the most common complication is postherpetic neuralgia, a pain that can last for months or years after the rash is gone. Shingles, also known as herpes zoster, is caused by the varicella zoster virus (VZV), the same virus that causes chickenpox. After a person recovers from chickenpox, the virus lies dormant in the body and can reactivate years later, causing shingles. So if you've had chickenpox, you're at risk for shingles. [Source: MoneyTalksNews | Chris Kissell | November 13, 2018 ++]

Medicare Part B Premiums Update 06 ► 2019 Increase Impact on Benefits

The Social Security Administration recently announced that the annual cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) will raise benefits by 2.8% for 2019. The average retirement benefit of \$1,400 will increase by \$39.20 per month, to \$1,439.20. The Medicare Part B premium increase for 2019 will be \$135.50 per month — just \$1.50 per month more than the \$134 in 2018. The COLA, the highest in 7 years, and a low Medicare Part B premium increase, should mean most retirees can finally expect a modest boost in net Social Security benefits.

But 2 million retirees receiving Social Security benefits of less than \$600 per month in 2018, won't see an increase after the deduction for their Medicare Part B premiums. Part B premiums will increase by more than \$1.50, for this group of retirees because they are paying less than the current Part B premium of \$134 today. This is due to the effects of the Social Security "hold harmless" provision.

Recently The Senior Citizen League (TSCL) heard from Barbara B. of Indiana who was affected in a similar way last year, but will finally catch up in 2019. Barbara's net Social Security benefit, after deduction for Part B premium, has remained exactly the same for the past three years. She hasn't seen an increase in her benefits since 2015, despite a 2% cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) in 2018. The Social Security hold harmless provision prevents reductions in net Social Security benefits, when the dollar amount of an individual's Medicare Part B increase is greater than the dollar amount of their COLA. In 2019, Barbara may finally see a small boost of about \$19 per month after the deduction for her Part B premiums.

Here's how we got here: The hold harmless provision was triggered nationally in 2016 when the Social Security Administration announced that there would be no COLA payable, due to a drop in inflation. Barbara's Medicare Part B premium stayed the same as it was the year before, at \$104.90, even though Medicare Part B premiums in 2016 jumped to \$121.80 for about 30% of beneficiaries, such as new enrollees who were not protected by the hold harmless provision.

In 2017, the COLA was almost zero again, just 0.3%. The Medicare Part B premium rose to \$134 for people not protected by hold harmless. Again the Part B premium of Barbara and the majority of Social Security recipients was adjusted. Barbara's monthly Medicare premium was adjusted to \$108, taking every penny of her tiny COLA boost.

In 2018, the Part B premium remained \$134 per month. To cover that premium, Barbara, whose Part B premium was \$108.00, needed a COLA of at least \$26.00. That was more than the 2% COLA boosted her Social Security benefits. Once again her Part B premium was adjusted and in 2018 she pays a Part B premium of \$127.00 per month. In 2019 her COLA will be high enough to catch up to the Part B premium of \$135.50 and still leave a small boost for her net Social Security benefits.

As much as the protection against reduction of Social Security benefits is appreciated, Barbara has been frustrated about high Medicare premium costs after years of low or no COLA growth. “It’s been 36 months since I’ve had any raise in my net operating Social Security, but my actual household costs continue to go up,” Barbara told us. “This isn’t fair to retirees,” she adds. TSCL supports legislation that would strengthen the COLA three ways:

- Use a consumer price index that better reflects the costs of retirees — the Consumer Price Index for the Elderly (CPI-E).
- Provide a modest boost in monthly benefits to retirees to make up for years when no COLA, or only a negligible COLA, was payable.
- Guarantee a minimum COLA of no less than 3 percent.

[Source: TSCL | November 7, 2018 ++]

Medicare Part D Update 36 ► Doughnut Hole Gap in 2019

While little progress was made this year to lower overall drug costs, some changes made by the Bipartisan Budget Act (BBA) of 2018 are helping an estimated 5 million Medicare beneficiaries with the highest annual out-of-pocket drug costs. Provisions of the BBA reduced Part D enrollees’ out-of-pocket co-insurance for brand-name drugs in the “doughnut hole” which is also called the coverage gap phase of coverage.

In 2018, people who hit the Part D coverage gap pay a co-insurance of 35% for discounted brand-name drugs and 44% of the cost of generics. That will decline to 25% for brand name drugs and 37% for generics in 2019, a year sooner than scheduled under previous legislation. Also, in 2018, once drug plan enrollees enter the coverage gap phase, they remain there until they spend a total of \$5,000 out-of-pocket. This out-of-pocket threshold is calculated entirely on drugs covered by the enrollee’s drug plan formulary. If a drug isn’t on the plan formulary, beneficiaries must pay 100% of the cost of drugs and those out-of-pocket costs do not count toward the out-of-pocket threshold for catastrophic coverage.

In 2019, that out-of-pocket threshold will increase to \$5,100. Once that threshold is reached, the catastrophic phase of coverage begins, when beneficiaries pay 5% co-insurance, or \$3.40 for generics and \$8.50 for brand name drugs, whichever is greater. The lower co-insurance in 2019, however, comes as the annual out-of-pocket threshold, the amount beneficiaries must spend before the coverage gap ends and catastrophic phase begins, is projected to take a stunning leap. The threshold is scheduled to increase by \$1,250 in 2020, from \$5,100 to \$6,350. In fact, the catastrophic threshold is forecast to almost double over the next 9 years rising from \$5,000 in 2018 to \$9,450 in 2027.

According to TSCL’s 2018 Senior Survey, 62% of survey participants support capping out-of-pocket spending on prescription drugs. Only 8% are opposed to the idea. TSCL supports legislation that would eliminate beneficiary cost - sharing in excess of the Medicare prescription benefit’s annual out-of-pocket threshold. In addition, TSCL supports legislation to allow Medicare to negotiate drug prices to benefit all beneficiaries. [Source: TSCL | November 7, 2018 ++]

Surprise Medical Bills ► Proposed Legislation

After 44-year old Drew Calver had a heart attack last year, his health plan paid nearly \$56,000 for a four-day emergency stay in a hospital that was not in his insurance plan's network. The hospital then charged Calver another \$109,000 — a bill for the balance, which is the difference between what the hospital and his insurer thought his care was worth. Calver's bill was reduced to \$332, but only after Kaiser Health News and National Public Radio recently published his story. Surprise bills like Calver's can occur almost any time to any of us — including Medicare beneficiaries. Often, the surprise bill is nothing more than a simple billing error when the provider doesn't have correct billing information, such as your Medicare number, Medicare Advantage or Medigap insurance info. (Stay calm and call your provider.)

Surprise balance billing, on the other hand, is no mistake. It happens after you've satisfied your deductible, co-insurance or co-payment, and your insurance company (such as a Medicare Advantage plan insurer) pays everything that it's obligated to pay. However, if there's still a balance owed, the bill gets sent to you. Surprise balance billing is especially a problem for Medicare beneficiaries who unknowingly get care from a doctor that isn't part of their health insurance plan's provider network, or who doesn't accept Medicare's payment as payment in full. This happens all too frequently, even to people who have carefully selected in-network providers and hospitals for their care. Among the worst offenders are the doctors we don't tend to see or interact with, including anesthesiologists in surgery, pathologists, radiologists (who interpret X-rays and scans), and those providing ambulance services.

The problem is so common, and frustration over exorbitant prices for medical treatment so great, that a bipartisan group of Senators has proposed legislation to protect patients from surprise bills and high charges from hospitals or doctors who are not in their insurance networks. The proposal targets three top concerns:

- Treatment for an emergency by a doctor who is not part of the patient's insurance network, at a hospital that is also outside the network. Patients would be required to pay the out-of-pocket amount required by their insurance plan. The hospital or doctor could not bill the patient for the remainder.
- Treatments by an out-of-network doctor or other provider at a hospital that is in the patient's insurance network. Patients would pay only what is required by their plans.
- Notification of emergency patients, once stabilized, that they are receiving out-of-network care and could run up excess charges.

While legislation has not yet been introduced, The Senior Citizens League (TSCL) supports this common-sense proposal, and plans to endorse legislation once introduced in 2019. [Source: TSCL | Mary Johnson | November 7, 2018 ++]

TRICARE Open Season Update 01 ► Q & A

Open season began 12 NOV and will end 10 DEC 2019. TRICARE Open Season is for enrollment in a TRICARE Prime or TRICARE Select health plan. Federal Benefits Open Season is for vision coverage or retiree dental coverage through the Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program (FEDVIP). If you're enrolled in a TRICARE health plan and don't want to make any changes, you don't have to do anything. If you have TRICARE Retiree Dental Program (TRDP), provided by Delta Dental, and want dental coverage in 2019, you will need to choose a FEDVIP dental plan. TRDP ends on Dec. 31, 2018.

Take the time now to learn about eligibility, plan options, and enrollment. Learn more on the Open Season page <https://tricare.mil/openseason>. If you and your family want to make changes to your TRICARE health benefit, take action during the 2018 open season. Here are a few frequently asked questions about open season.

(Q) Does TRICARE Open Season affect me?

A: TRICARE Open Season affects you if you're eligible to enroll in a TRICARE Prime or TRICARE Select health plan. The TRICARE Open Season doesn't apply if you're using:

- TRICARE For Life
- TRICARE Reserve Select
- TRICARE Retired Reserve
- TRICARE Young Adult
- Continued Health Care Benefit Program

(Q) What happens if I don't change health plans during the TRICARE Open Season?

A: If you don't change health plans during the TRICARE Open Season and remain eligible, you'll stay in the plan you're in now.

(Q) Will I still get eye exam coverage through TRICARE Prime?

A: TRICARE Prime eye exam coverage isn't changing. Routine eye exams are covered as needed for active duty service members, once a year for active duty family members, and every two years for all other TRICARE Prime beneficiaries. Diabetic patients with TRICARE Prime coverage get routine eye exams once a year. For more information, visit the TRICARE Eye Exams page <https://tricare.mil/EyeExams>. Vision plans available through FEDVIP are in addition to TRICARE vision coverage. If you're eligible and choose to enroll, your FEDVIP vision coverage will be your primary vision insurance. TRICARE will pay second after FEDVIP.

(Q) Am I required to enroll in both dental and vision plans with FEDVIP?

A: No. FEDVIP dental and vision plans are optional. However, enrollment in a TRICARE health plan is required in order to enroll in a FEDVIP vision plan.

(Q) How do I enroll in FEDVIP?

A: Enroll in a FEDVIP plan online through the BENEFEDS enrollment portal <https://www.benefeds.com>.

(Q) If I'm currently paying my premium by allotment to Delta Dental through the TRICARE Retiree Dental Program, how do I transfer my allotment?

A: Delta Dental will terminate your allotment for your 2018 TRDP coverage after your December premium is paid. You don't need to do anything to start an allotment for FEDVIP. When you enroll in a FEDVIP plan, you'll answer questions about your eligibility, payments, and allotments.

(Q) Will I have a waiting period for services like orthodontics?

A: Each FEDVIP dental plan is unique. Some plans may have waiting periods for orthodontics or other specialty services. Some plans offer orthodontic coverage without a 12-month waiting period or age limit. Visit the FEDVIP website <https://www.benefeds.com> for more information.

[Source: TRICARE Communications | November 9, 2018 ++]

Gulf War Syndrome Update 45 ► New Device Improves Balance

Gulf War veterans with unexplained illnesses that cause fatigue, headaches, respiratory disorders and memory problems can improve their balance with a device developed by Rutgers University researchers. The study is the first to examine how Gulf War illnesses affect veterans' vestibular systems, which are integral for balance, memory and brain blood flow. The findings are being presented at the annual meeting of the Society for Neuroscience the week of 5 NOV.

This prominent condition affecting Gulf War veterans includes a cluster of medically unexplained chronic symptoms that can also include joint pain, indigestion, insomnia, and dizziness, according to the U.S Department of Veterans Affairs, which supported the study. The disorder affects about 25 percent of the 700,000 veterans who served in Operation Desert Storm/Desert Shield in 1990-1991. "Although it's been more than 25 years since the conflict, we still do not understand the underlying cause of these symptoms and have yet to develop an effective treatment," said lead author Jorge M. Serrador, associate professor in the departments of pharmacology, physiology and neuroscience at Rutgers New Jersey Medical School and a scientist at the New Jersey War Related Illness and Injury Study Center.

The researchers examined vestibular function in 60 veterans who participated in Operation Desert Storm/Shield, of which 54 suffered with Gulf War illnesses and six of whom were healthy -- as well as 36 civilians who were of the same age and sex. They found that reduced vestibular function and poor balance appear to be prevalent in veterans with Gulf War Illness. To examine if vestibular function and balance could be improved, the researchers developed an electrical stimulator clipped to the earlobe and attached to a Walkman-size box that generated a low-level, random electrical noise pattern that was imperceptible to the wearer.

"The electrical stimulation added a random noise pattern into the veterans' vestibular systems that travelled through the earlobes into the inner ear, which acts like the body's accelerometer," Serrador said. "This added noise improved balance in 100 percent of the veterans with Gulf War Illness." The findings suggest that correcting the vestibular system may treat other conditions associated with Gulf War illnesses. "For these veterans, it's like walking on a balance beam all day," Serrador said. "When they're trying to figure out where they are in space to stay balanced, it's sapping cognitive reserves for other functions like memory."

The researchers are now testing to see how long the effects last after removing the device. They also will try to determine whether using a portable version of the stimulator helps relieve other symptoms of Gulf War illnesses. Serrador said the technology also could be applied to other populations, such as the elderly who are prone to age-related balance issues. [Source: Science Daily | Rutgers University | November 5, 2018 ++]

Pharmacy Rankings ► Those that Provide the Best Customer Service

If you like to pick up prescription medications while shopping for groceries, you've got a few great options. Four of the top five pharmacies in the country for customer satisfaction are located in supermarkets or a wholesale club, according to J.D. Power's 10th annual U.S. Pharmacy Study. The marketing research firm polled more than 10,700 pharmacy customers who had recently filled a prescription. The study covered four types of pharmacies. Wegmans, a supermarket chain in the Northeast, ranked No. 1 among all brick-and-mortar supermarket pharmacies included in the study, earning an overall satisfaction score of 906 out of 1,000 points. Not all grocery sellers have high-rated pharmacies, though. Some of the worst-ranked pharmacies included in the study were those of supermarkets, as the following rankings show.

Supermarket pharmacies

Among supermarket chains' pharmacies, the average overall customer satisfaction score was 863 out of 1,000. That was the highest average of any type of pharmacy included in the study. Seven chains in this category scored at least that high. They were:

- Wegmans: 906
- H-E-B: 897
- Publix: 891
- Winn-Dixie: 874
- ShopRite: 873
- Stop & Shop: 869

- Kroger: 863

Publix and ShopRite are also among supermarkets that offer free medications. Five more chains in this category earned below-average scores. Safeway was the worst of the bunch, with an overall satisfaction score of 819 — the second-lowest score of any pharmacy in the study. To view all of the supermarket pharmacies with below-average scores, check out the charts at the end of this report on [J.D. Power’s study](#).

Mass merchandiser pharmacies

The average satisfaction score among the pharmacies of mass merchandisers was 845, with three chains scoring at least that high. They were:

- Sam’s Club: 892
- Costco: 860
- CVS inside Target: 859

Walmart scored below the average, with an overall satisfaction score of 833. Note that you do not necessarily have to be a member of a wholesale club to use its pharmacy. “Anyone can buy prescription medications from Sam’s Club pharmacies, according to the retailer’s website. Prescription drugs are also exempt from the nonmember surcharge.”

Drugstore pharmacies

The average customer satisfaction score among drugstore pharmacies was 846. CVS and Walgreens scored slightly below average with 843 and 840, respectively. Three chains scored higher than average. They were:

- Good Neighbor Pharmacy: 903
- Health Mart: 890
- Rite Aid: 846

Mail-order pharmacies

The average satisfaction score among mail-order services was 859. The operations that scored at least that high were:

- Humana Pharmacy: 885
- Kaiser Permanente Pharmacy: 866
- Express Scripts: 862
- OptumRx: 861

Five additional mail-order services ranked below-average. Walgreens’ mail-order service was the worst of them, with an overall customer satisfaction score of 817 — the lowest score of any pharmacy included in the study. To view all of the mail-order pharmacies with below-average scores, check out the charts at this link about J.D. Power’s study. [Source: MoneyTalksNews | Karla Bowsheer | November 6, 2018 ++]

End of Life Care ► Options | Palliative Or Hospice

Many Americans die in facilities such as hospitals or nursing homes receiving care that is not consistent with their wishes. To make sure that doesn't happen, older people need to know what their end-of-life care options are and state their preferences to their caregivers in advance. For example, if an older person wants to die at home, receiving end-of-life care for pain and other symptoms, and makes this known to healthcare providers and family, it is less likely he or she will die in a hospital receiving unwanted treatments. Caregivers have several factors to consider when choosing end-of-life care, including the older person's desire to pursue life-extending or curative treatments, how long he or she has left to live, and the preferred setting for care.

Palliative Care

Palliative care is a resource for anyone living with a serious illness, such as heart failure, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, cancer, dementia, Parkinson's disease, and many others. Palliative care can be helpful at any stage of illness and is best provided from the point of diagnosis. In addition to improving quality of life and helping with symptoms, palliative care can help patients understand their choices for medical treatment. The organized services available through palliative care may be helpful to any older person having a lot of general discomfort and disability very late in life. Palliative care can be provided along with curative treatment and does not depend on prognosis.

Doctors can provide treatment to seriously ill patients in the hopes of a cure for as long as possible. These patients may also receive medical care for their symptoms, or palliative care, along with curative treatment. A palliative care consultation team is a multidisciplinary team that works with the patient, family, and the patient's other doctors to provide medical, social, emotional, and practical support. The team is made of palliative care specialist doctors and nurses, and includes others such as social workers, nutritionists, and chaplains.

Palliative care can be provided in hospitals, nursing homes, outpatient palliative care clinics and certain other specialized clinics, or at home. Medicare, Medicaid, and insurance policies may cover palliative care. Veterans may be eligible for palliative care through the Department of Veterans Affairs. Private health insurance might pay for some services. Health insurance providers can answer questions about what they will cover. Check to see if insurance will cover your particular situation.

In palliative care, you do not have to give up treatment that might cure a serious illness. Palliative care can be provided along with curative treatment and may begin at the time of diagnosis. Over time, if the doctor or the palliative care team believes ongoing treatment is no longer helping, there are two possibilities. Palliative care could transition to hospice care if the doctor believes the person is likely to die within 6 months ((see [What does the hospice 6-month requirement mean?](#)). Or, the palliative care team could continue to help with increasing emphasis on comfort care.

Hospice Care

Increasingly, people are choosing hospice care at the end of life. Hospice can be provided in any setting—home, nursing home, assisted living facility, or inpatient hospital. At some point, it may not be possible to cure a serious illness, or a patient may choose not to undergo certain treatments. Hospice is designed for this situation. The patient beginning hospice care understands that his or her illness is not responding to medical attempts to cure it or to slow the disease's progress. Like palliative care, hospice provides comprehensive comfort care as well as support for the family, but, in hospice, attempts to cure the person's illness are stopped. Hospice is provided for a person with a terminal illness whose doctor believes he or she has 6 months or less to live if the illness runs its natural course.

Hospice is an approach to care, so it is not tied to a specific place. It can be offered in two types of settings—at home or in a facility such as a nursing home, hospital, or even in a separate hospice center. ([Read more about where end-of-life care can be provided](#)). Hospice care brings together a team of people with special skills—among them nurses, doctors, social workers, spiritual advisors, and trained volunteers. Everyone works together with the person who is dying, the caregiver, and/or the family to provide the medical, emotional, and spiritual support needed. A member of the hospice team visits regularly, and someone is always available by phone—24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Hospice may be covered by Medicare and other insurance companies; check to see if insurance will cover your particular situation.

It is important to remember that stopping treatment aimed at curing an illness does not mean discontinuing all treatment. A good example is an older person with cancer. If the doctor determines that the cancer is not responding to chemotherapy and the patient chooses to enter into hospice care, then the chemotherapy will stop. Other medical care may continue as long as it is helpful. For example, if the person has high blood pressure, he or she will still get medicine for that.

Some Differences Between Palliative Care and Hospice

Palliative Care

Hospice

Who can be treated?	Anyone with a serious illness	Anyone with a serious illness whom doctors think has only a short time to live, often less than 6 months
Will my symptoms be relieved?	Yes, as much as possible	Yes, as much as possible
Can I continue to receive treatments to cure my illness?	Yes, if you wish	No, only symptom relief will be provided
Will Medicare pay?	It depends on your benefits and treatment plan	Yes, it pays all hospice charges
Does private insurance pay?	It depends on the plan	It depends on the plan
How long will I be cared for?	This depends on what care you need and your insurance plan	As long as you meet the hospice's criteria of an illness with a life expectancy of months, not years
Where will I receive this care?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home • Assisted living facility • Nursing home • Hospital 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home • Assisted living facility • Nursing home • Hospice facility • Hospital

[Source: National Institute on Aging | November 5, 2018 ++]

FEDVIP Update 01 ► Retiree Dental Care | Is A Train Wreck on the Way?

Are military retirees getting the word about looming changes to their dental coverage, and do older retirees in particular have the tools they need to make that decision? Some advocates are concerned about the upcoming transition from the Tricare Retiree Dental Program, which ends 31 DEC. It's being replaced by the Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program (FEDVIP), traditionally available to federal civilian employees, retirees and their families. But retirees are not automatically enrolled in the new FEDVIP coverage. They must enroll between Nov. 12 and Dec. 10, or they won't have coverage on Jan. 1.

"My biggest fear is that there are going to be so many retirees who are not going to get the word until they try to go to the dentist," said Frank Yoakum, a retired Army sergeant major who is executive director of the Enlisted Association of the National Guard of the United States. "They'll find out they have no dental coverage. They missed the boat ... so they have to wait until next year's open season to make a choice for 2020. They'll go without dental care for a year." About 1.6 million beneficiaries are currently enrolled in the Tricare Retiree Dental Program, and another 1.3 million are eligible retirees who aren't currently enrolled in that program. All of those nearly 3 million beneficiaries are eligible for FEDVIP.

DoD and Office of Personnel Management officials have taken a variety of steps to push out the word on social media and other avenues. While Defense Department officials have sent letters and postcards to military retirees about the change, there may be some who didn't open the mail, or their current address hasn't been updated in the DoD

system, Yoakum said. “I think that train wreck is on its way,” he said. Active duty families and retirees are also eligible for vision coverage. Military retirees also have choices now — everyone has at least 10 dental plan choices available.

Military retirees have been used to a one-size-fits-all plan, said Kathy Beasley, a retired Navy captain who is director of government relations for health affairs at the Military Officers Association of America. Making the choice about which option best fits their dental needs and wallet “has been overwhelming for some,” she said. For information about the FEDVIP plans and choices, click <https://tricare.benefeds.com/InfoPortal/indexAction>. Yoakum, Beasley and other advocates are concerned that many older retirees who are not computer-savvy may not be able to access the information they need to make those choices. Yoakum said older retirees who are EANGUS members want to be able to lay out printed comparisons of plans side by side, to make their decisions. Yoakum said he has been going to the Tricare.benefeds.com site, and plugging in ZIP codes of some members who have contacted him, and mailing the side-by-side comparisons to them.

BENEFEDS administers FEDVIP enrollment and premium payment processes. According to an OPM spokesman, retirees can call toll-free 877-888-3337 to request a plan comparison, and BENEFEDS will provide a table based on the retiree’s ZIP code, placed in the mail the day after the phone call. The table will show each plan available, the plan’s phone number and website, and the rate for each plan, specific to the retiree’s ZIP code. However, it was not immediately clear whether the printed plan comparison would also include other features of each available plan, such as amount of co-pay and the annual maximum benefit, similar to what the website comparison tool provides. “Just because I have the rates, doesn’t mean I have sufficient information,” Yoakum said.

Military retirees who call the toll-free BENEFEDS number should wait for the prompt for uniformed services retirees; then say “rates”; then say “agent” to reach someone who can take your information and mail the plan comparison. The customer service agents can answer enrollment questions, but they can’t recommend a plan nor discuss benefits or dental and vision providers. Unlike military retirees who aren’t familiar with the plethora of FEDVIP plans, federal employees who retire are already accustomed to the plans and choices in FEDVIP that were available to them when they were working. [Source: MarineCorpsTimes | Karen Jowers | November 1, 2018 ++]

Diabetes Update 15 ► Gestational

Gestational diabetes is a form of the disease that happens to women during gestation, more commonly known as pregnancy. Like other types of diabetes, gestational diabetes is a very serious illness, and women who have it should be under a doctor’s care. Gestational diabetes works the same way as other types of diabetes, namely, changing how your body breaks down glucose. When you eat food, your body uses digestion to convert that food into sugar, or glucose. This glucose gets into your bloodstream where it is met by insulin, which helps to break down the glucose and move it into the cells of your body where it can then be used for energy.

Some woman can produce enough insulin to make up for the problems that the hormones being produced are causing, but some women aren’t. These risk factors will let you know how likely you are to experience diabetes during your pregnancy

- Women 25 and Older
- Family History of Diabetes
- Women Who Previously Had Gestational Diabetes
- Women Who Are Overweight
- Woman of Certain Races - Caucasians are at the lowest risk of developing this disease, but in particular, the high risk races include black, Hispanic, Asian and Native American.

Up to one in every 10 pregnancies in the United States is affected by gestational diabetes. Women with a history of gestational diabetes have a lifelong risk for developing type 2 diabetes and need to take steps to care for their health for years to come. Although gestational diabetes usually goes away after the baby is born, many women who develop gestational diabetes are not aware of the need for follow-up testing for diabetes. Yet research has shown that high blood glucose (sugar) during pregnancy can have lifelong health effects — for both the mother and her baby.

Recent results of the Hyperglycemia and Adverse Pregnancy Outcomes (HAPO) Follow-up Study, funded by The National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK), found that women who had higher-than-normal blood glucose during pregnancy are significantly more likely to develop type 2 diabetes later in life than women with normal blood glucose levels. Children born from pregnancies affected by gestational diabetes are also at increased risk for obesity later in life. Further, women with prediabetes, whose blood glucose levels are higher than normal but not high enough to be diabetes, are at higher risk for developing type 2 diabetes if they had gestational diabetes during pregnancy than those who did not. The National Institutes of Health (NIH) funded Diabetes Prevention Program and its follow-up study have shown that by making lifestyle changes that result in modest weight loss, or by taking metformin, women with prediabetes and a history of gestational diabetes can reduce their risk of progression to type 2 diabetes.

This research underscores the importance of understanding risk factors for type 2 diabetes, such as having a history of gestational diabetes, and the steps that can be taken to delay or prevent type 2 diabetes. For women with a history of gestational diabetes:

- Get tested for diabetes within 12 weeks of giving birth.
- Even if your diabetes goes away after birth, continue to get tested for diabetes. If you have prediabetes, get tested for diabetes every year. If the test is normal, get tested every 3 years.
- Keep up healthy habits after the baby is born. Staying physically active and making healthy food choices can help reduce or delay a person’s risk for developing type 2 diabetes. Getting the entire family involved can yield a lifetime of healthy rewards.

NIDDK and other NIH institutes support critical, ongoing research into multiple forms of diabetes and many diabetes-related conditions. Scientists are working to find ways to prevent or delay [type 1 diabetes](#) through studies such as [TrialNet \(link is external\)](#). The [Restoring Insulin Secretion \(RISE\) study](#) is exploring ways to improve treatment of prediabetes and type 2 diabetes in both adults and youth. And NIH-supported researchers are studying ways to prevent conditions that often lead to diabetes, such as obesity, as well as diabetes-related health problems such as heart disease, stroke, kidney disease, and eye disease. To join them in fighting diabetes, visit NIDDK’s free [health information](#) to learn more about how you can promote health for you, your family, and your community. [Source: NIH News Release | November 1, 2018 ++]

TRICARE Podcast 474 ► Healthy Dental Habits – TRICARE/Federal Benefits Open Season

Healthy Dental Habits -- After Halloween, are you left with a mound of candy to tempt your sweet tooth? Halloween is just the beginning. With the holiday season right around the corner, the next few months will likely include even more treats. It’s important to be mindful of your dental health and not let healthy habits slip during this annual time of celebration. TRICARE dental coverage, and good dental habits will help keep your teeth healthy year-round. Here are a few tips from the American Dental Association to keep your family’s dental health a priority:

- Remove any excess Halloween candy from the house.
- Avoid sticky candy.
- Say “no” to sugary beverages, like soda, sports drinks, and flavored waters.
- Brush your teeth two times a day for two minutes. Floss at least once a day to remove plaque and food particles where toothbrush bristles can’t reach.

- Keep up your regularly scheduled dental appointments, and inform your dentist of any concerns.

For more tips, read the TRICARE article, “Will Your Dentist Scream or Beam After Halloween?” at www.TRICARE.mil/news. For details on TRICARE dental options, visit www.TRICARE.mil/dental.

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TRICARE Open Season & Federal Benefits Open Season -- Open season is almost here. From November 12th to December 10th, TRICARE beneficiaries will experience open season. But, does open season apply to you? TRICARE Open Season is for enrollment in TRICARE Prime or TRICARE Select coverage. It doesn’t apply to premium-based plans or TRICARE For Life. Federal Benefits Open Season is for enrollment in the Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program, known as FEDVIP.

During TRICARE Open Season, you have three options:

- If you want to stay with your current plan, you don’t have to take any action.
- If you’re not enrolled in a TRICARE Prime or TRICARE Select plan, but eligible to do so, you may enroll.
- Lastly, if you’re already enrolled in TRICARE Prime or TRICARE Select, you can switch from TRICARE Prime to TRICARE Select, or switch from individual to family coverage.

During Federal Benefits Open Season:

- Retirees and their family members may enroll in FEDVIP dental, FEDVIP vision, neither, or both.
- Active duty family members can enroll in a FEDVIP vision plan. You must be enrolled in a TRICARE health plan to be eligible for FEDVIP vision coverage.

Remember, TRICARE Open Season and Federal Benefits Open Season are separate events, requiring separate enrollment. To learn more about open season, visit www.TRICARE.mil/openseason.

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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> | November 2, 2018 ++]

TRICARE Podcast 475 ► Federal Benefits/TRICARE Open Season Q&A

The Federal Benefits Open Season and TRICARE Open Season are both taking place from November 12th to December 10th for coverage which will begin on January 1, 2019.

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(Q) What’s the difference between Federal Benefits Open Season and TRICARE Open Season?

A: Federal Benefits Open Season and TRICARE Open Season both take place from November 12th to December 10th. However, they are two separate events requiring separate enrollment. Federal Benefits Open Season is for enrollment in the Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program, known as FEDVIP. FEDVIP dental plans offer coverage after the TRICARE Retiree Dental Program, or TRDP provided by Delta Dental, ends on December 31st. FEDVIP also offers vision coverage for those eligible. TRICARE Open Season is for enrollment in a TRICARE Prime or TRICARE Select healthcare plan. Visit TRICARE.mil/openseason for more information on the difference between the two open seasons.

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(Q) Am I required to enroll in both a dental and vision plan with FEDVIP?

A: No. FEDVIP dental and vision plans are optional. However, enrollment in a TRICARE health plan is required in order to enroll in a FEDVIP vision plan.

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(Q) Is FEDVIP offered by TRICARE?

A: No. FEDVIP is offered by the U.S. Office of Personnel Management.

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(Q) How do I enroll in FEDVIP?

A: Your opportunity to enroll in a FEDVIP dental and/or vision plan is during this year's Federal Benefits Open Season, which runs from November 12th to December 10th. You'll enroll in a FEDVIP plan through the BENEFEDS enrollment portal at BENEFEDS.com. Learn more at TRICARE.benefeds.com.

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(Q) How much will it cost?

A: Rates for the 2019 FEDVIP plans are available at TRICARE.benefeds.com. On the website, you can review 2019 plan information for each carrier and compare costs. There are 10 dental carriers and four vision carriers.

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(Q) Will I have a waiting period for services like orthodontics?

A: Each FEDVIP dental plan is unique. Some plans may have waiting periods for orthodontics or other specialty services. Some plans offer orthodontic coverage without a 12-month waiting period or age limit. Visit TRICARE.benefeds.com to learn more.

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(Q) If I'm currently paying my premium by allotment to Delta Dental through the TRICARE Retiree Dental Program, how do I transfer my allotment?

A: Delta Dental will terminate your allotment for your 2018 TRDP coverage after your December premium is paid. You don't need to do anything to start an allotment for FEDVIP. When you enroll in a FEDVIP plan, you'll answer questions about your eligibility, payments, and allotments.

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(Q) What if I already have FEDVIP through another family member? Can I have dual insurance?

A: No, you can't have two FEDVIP plans. You must choose to use FEDVIP based on either the civilian employee, retiree, or based on your military sponsor's status.

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(Q) Will I still get eye exam coverage through TRICARE Prime?

A: TRICARE Prime eye exam coverage is not changing. Routine eye exams are covered as needed for active duty service members, once a year for active duty family members, and every two years for all other TRICARE Prime beneficiaries. Diabetic patients with TRICARE Prime get routine eye exams once a year. The vision plans available through FEDVIP are in addition to the TRICARE vision coverage. If you qualify for a FEDVIP vision plan and choose to enroll, it will be your primary vision insurance. TRICARE will pay second after FEDVIP. To learn more, visit TRICARE.mil/eyeexams.

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(Q) Does FEDVIP offer plans overseas?

A: Yes. Six dental carriers provide nationwide and international dental coverage. All four vision carriers provide nationwide and international vision coverage. Go to tricare.benefeds.com for a list of the dental and vision carriers, as well as contact information.

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The above is from the TRICARE Beneficiary Bulletin, an update on the latest news to help you make the best use of your TRICARE benefit. [Source: <http://www.tricare.mil/podcast> | November 8, 2018 ++]

* Finances *



Car Buying Update 01 ► **Websites You Should Check Before Buying Any Car**

Shopping for a car is exciting, but plunking down so much cash can also rattle your nerves. The more you know about your purchase, the less anxiety you are likely to feel. Fortunately, you can learn a tremendous amount about a car without spending a dime. All you need is an internet connection and the right websites. The following sites are among those recommended to always check when researching or shopping for a new or used vehicle. Use the information here — combined with a vehicle history report from a service like Carfax — before you purchase your next set of wheels.

1. NHTSA.gov/recalls

This listing of safety issues and recalls can be found on the website of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. The NHTSA is a federal agency tasked with keeping folks safe on the road. That includes monitoring safety recalls to make sure auto manufacturers remedy vehicle recalls properly. So, always check NHTSA's recalls webpage <https://www.nhtsa.gov/recalls> before buying a vehicle. Simply enter the vehicle identification number (VIN), and NHTSA will tell you about any vehicle safety recalls that:

- Are incomplete.
- Were conducted over the past 15 years.
- Were conducted by certain major light automakers, including motorcycle manufacturers.

2. NICB's VINCheck

The National Insurance Crime Bureau (NICB) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to fighting insurance fraud. The organization provides its VINCheck service at <https://www.nicb.org/how-we-help/vincheck> to help the public determine if a vehicle has been reported stolen but not recovered or if it has been reported as a salvage vehicle by the insurance companies that work with NICB. Just enter a VIN to use the service.

3. iSeeCars.com's VIN Lookup

If you're thinking about buying a used car — which you probably should — use iSeeCars.com's VIN Lookup service at <https://www.iseecars.com/vin> to get a VIN report that includes up to 200 data points. According to the website, those data points can include:

- Price Analysis — estimation of how much we think is a fair value for the car based on analyzing similar cars for sale or cars sold in the same local area.
- Price History — a log of price changes and when each price was changed.
- Listing History — a record of the dates and places the car was historically listed for sale.

- Condition — analysis of mileage, positives and negatives about the vehicle, and other resources like vehicle history, theft record, and recalls.
- Dealer Scorecard — comparison of the dealer with other dealers in terms of price competitiveness, responsiveness and transparency.
- Projected Depreciation — estimation of how much the car will depreciate over 1, 2 and 3 years and in comparison with similar cars.
- Best Time to Buy (and Sell) — as with houses, cars also exhibit seasonal fluctuations. We analyze when or what months may get you a better price.

4. VehicleHistory.com

This website offers vehicle history reports that are based on information from public databases. You can look up a vehicle by VIN or by make and model.

5. Kelley Blue Book

Kelley Blue Book, which has been around since 1926, is best known for its car price data. Its website <https://www.kbb.com> also features reviews and data on cars for sale. Pricing tools on KBB.com include:

- Car Values
- Get a New Car Price
- 5-Year Cost to Own

6. Consumer Reports

This nonprofit organization does exhaustive and independent testing of all kinds of products, including vehicles. So, you should check its website <https://www.consumerreports.org/cro/index.htm> before sinking much money into any purchases, and certainly one as large as a car. You will need a subscription to access all Consumer Reports reviews, but your local library may already subscribe. If so, library members likely can access Consumer Reports publications for free.

[Source: MoneyTalksNews | Karla Bowsler | October 27, 2018 ++]

Ticket Fees ► **Tired of Being Ripped Off – Take Action**

Everybody’s been there. That moment right before you hit the “Checkout” button and you see this:

Tickets (x2)	\$49.99
Processing fee	\$ 4.99
Venue fee	\$ 4.99
Subtotal:	\$59.97
Tax:	\$ 5.99
Grand Total	\$65.96

And then you mutter to yourself, “What the Fee!?” Somehow, your concert tickets just went from a \$49.99 advertised price to \$65.96! Add-on fees that aren’t disclosed until the very last moment have become the norm in the entertainment industry. It’s time to fight back! The Federal Trade Commission just began collecting comments from consumers on this very issue. If enough of us speak out in opposition to these hidden fees and share our experiences in dealing with them, we have a good shot at reining in these obnoxious fees.

Submit a comment right now and tell the FTC about your experience with ticket fees, and urge them to crack down on hidden add-on fees in the entertainment industry. Take Action by telling you FTC your story of this ripoff at https://action.consumerreports.org/wtfee20181109b4fcp83?utm_campaign=20181113whatthefee&utm_medium=email&utm_source=cr. It may seem like just a few dollars here and there, but venue fees and ticket fees add up over time,

and can dramatically increase ticket prices. Corporations are making billions of dollars each and every year, charging fees on top of their disclosed prices, hiding them in small print or until the very last minute before purchase. And they're betting we won't care enough to hold them accountable.

The time has come for a change. Add your comment now to tell the FTC how these fees have impacted you. If you have been hit by hidden or excessively high fees, or had other problems buying tickets, let the FTC know about it. Any details you can provide about how you searched for the tickets, where you bought them from, and what you paid, will help them understand the absurdity of this marketplace and give them the information they need to address it. After you've submitted your comment, share this action and forward this email to your friends and family. The more information and public frustration we're able to channel towards the FTC, the better our chances at making a real substantive change in these deceptive corporate practices. [Source: Consumer Reports | Kimberly Fountain | November 13, 2018 ++]

Home Upgrades ► What They Really Cost

We tend to enter remodeling projects a little (or a lot) too optimistic about cost. Avoid an expensive surprise with this dose of reality. Tempted to take down a wall, open up a space or otherwise give your home a facelift? Before you do, get an accurate picture of the cost. Don't make it a money pit! In a recent report, HomeAdvisor analyzed data gathered from surveying 1,012 homeowners to determine how much people expect to pay for remodeling projects and what the costs actually could be. According to their True Cost Report, some jobs could wind up costing four times as much as homeowners had thought. Here are 10 of the most popular projects with dollar amounts for what homeowners anticipate spending on them and what they will most likely cost in the real world.

1. Bathroom remodel -- Anticipated cost: \$2,406 vs. Actual cost: \$9,723

Shiny new tiles, modern fixtures, sleek vanities ... homeowners can dream big about fixing up their bathrooms, but a quick consultation with a contractor usually will bring expectations back down to earth. As with kitchens, you can go really expensive or really affordable and — as with most home remodeling projects — labor costs likely will be the biggest expense.

2. Kitchen remodel -- Anticipated cost: \$4,773 vs. Actual cost: \$22,134

Expenditures for a kitchen re-do can vary wildly, depending on the quality of cabinets, appliances and countertop you choose. Add in details such as sink fixtures, cabinet hardware and possibly new flooring, and what might have seemed like a fast and cheap project can rapidly rise into the five-digit range.

3. Adding a deck -- Anticipated cost: \$2,930 vs. Actual cost: \$7,086

It's one of the most attractive additions to enhance summer living, but there is more to it than nailing a bunch of planks together. Are you going cedar, redwood, pine or vinyl? How big is it? Do you want bench seating? Lights? All these decisions can make the cost of a deck skyrocket, but there's also a lot of room to scale the project up or down, depending on what you can and want to invest.

4. Landscape installation -- Anticipated cost: \$1,188 vs. Actual cost: \$3,272

There are myriad ways to transform a bland yard into a stunning space: concrete patios, walkways, plantings, new fencing ... the list is endless. A landscape redo can make outdoor living that much more enjoyable and enhance your chances of selling your home. But beware of the DIY — doing a fence, laying pavers and installing plants yourself can save a lot of money, but it can also look, well, DIY, if you don't know what you're doing.

5. Exterior painting or staining -- Anticipated cost: \$1,056 vs. Actual cost: \$2,770

A brand new paint job is one of the quickest ways to dramatically improve the look of a drab house. But be aware that painting the outside of a house is more involved than painting a room. Prepping will take much more time, and of

course there's a lot more surface area to paint. And all that will hike up a professional painter's bill. But done right, this is a relatively small investment for a major improvement.

6. New flooring installation -- Anticipated cost: \$1,985 vs. Actual cost: \$2,863

There are many types of flooring, including hardwood, vinyl, laminate and tile, and also a dizzying array of colors and styles that can either keep this project within budget or break it wide open. Also be aware that laying down a new floor may also require extensive prep work, depending on the condition of the flooring surface, which could add several hours — and more expense — to a contractor's bill.

7. Installing new countertops -- Anticipated cost: \$1,703 vs. Actual cost: \$3,232

You can spend \$12,000 on soapstone, or \$2,000 on Corian — and a ton of options in between, including granite, quartz, even concrete. Of course, part of that cost depends on how much surface you have to cover. But the surface material is only part of the cost. Grouting, staining and other details will add to the expense. However, a brand-new countertop done right and within budget can be a fabulous addition to your kitchen, bathroom or bar.

8. New appliance installation -- Anticipated cost: \$1,051 vs. Actual cost: \$189

Some stores will install some appliances at no charge, including refrigerators, microwaves and electric dryers. Other appliances, such as gas dryers, dishwashers and gas ranges, require more than just plugging them in. If the job requires a water or gas connection, then installation will likely cost extra.

9. Interior painting -- Anticipated cost: \$734 vs. Actual cost: \$1,744

Thankfully, adding a fresh coat to the inside of the house is a project most homeowners can do themselves. But if you have a lot of rooms to repaint, know that paint can be much more expensive than you might imagine. And all paints are not created equal. Lower-quality brands might cost \$20 per gallon, but higher-end and designer-quality brands can cost as much as \$100 per gallon.

10. Install a toilet -- Anticipated cost: \$405 vs. Actual cost: \$370

Most homeowners won't touch this job with a 10-foot plunger, but fortunately the cost of replacing a toilet can be very manageable. Separate from the cost of the toilet itself, a basic toilet installation probably won't take more than two hours, and — barring any unforeseen issues — won't give you sticker shock.

[Source: MoneyTalksNews | Alex Valdes | November 9, 2018 ++]

Social Security Q & A ► 181101 thru 181115 | File and Suspend

(Q) *My wife and I were born in 1953, so next year we both qualify for full retirement benefits. If I am still employed, will I be able to file and suspend my Social Security benefit?*

A: The right Social Security claiming strategy can get you thousands of dollars more in lifetime benefits. Some strategies no longer work, but others do. Unfortunately, the file-and-suspend option no longer exists. It was eliminated in 2016. Prior to 2016, many couples used the file-and-suspend option to pick up many thousands of dollars in extra Social Security benefits. Here's an example of how the strategy worked: When you reached your full retirement age, you could file for your benefits, but suspend receipt of them. That allowed your benefits to grow at 8 percent a year up to age 70. If that option still existed, filing and suspending would have allowed your wife to claim spousal benefits on your record while letting her own retirement benefits continue to grow. But, the option is gone. That's the bad news.

There is a similar option that is still available for those — like you and your wife — who were born prior to 1954. One of you can claim and receive retirement benefits, even prior to your full retirement age. (Suspension of benefits plays no role here.) Then, the other spouse can claim spousal benefits when he or she reaches full retirement age. The other spouse can let his or her own retirement benefits grow at 8 percent up to age 70. The spouse then claims the

higher benefit. This option is usually referred to as the “**restricted application**” option. It has that name because whoever is claiming spousal benefits is restricting his or her application only to spousal benefits.

Who should file? The following question naturally arises: Should you be the one filing the restricted application, or should your wife do it? There’s no easy answer to this question. The answer depends on your relative amounts of retirement benefits and your anticipated life expectancies, among other things. There’s a good chance that your Social Security benefits would be optimized by having your wife claim retirement benefits at 66 while you file a restricted application for spousal benefits at age 66. But that’s nothing more than an educated guess. To get the best answer as to who should claim which benefit, and when they should do it, you probably should seek [professional advice](#).

Some financial planners understand the ins and outs of Social Security claiming issues, but many do not. Your best bet — and the least expensive one — is to use one of the internet-based Social Security advisory firms which provides custom reports outlining your optimal claiming strategy for less than \$50. You can check for one [here](#). Finally, you raised the question about how continuing to work would affect your situation. Once you reach your full retirement age, there is no benefit penalty for continuing to earn income. So, you don’t need to be concerned about the work issue.

[Source: MoneyTalksNews | Jeff Miller | November 8, 2018 ++]

Home Prices Update 01 ► **Average Cost in U.S. Metro Cities**

Buying a home is becoming harder and harder for many Americans, and in some cities it’s out of reach for many. Just how much do you need to earn to consider buying your own home in America’s major cities? Mortgage research website www.HSH.com dug into the most recent data, and discovered that while some cities are indeed making homeownership seem about as likely as Martian citizenship, others are more reasonable. HSH analyzed data from the National Association of Realtors, Freddie Mac and the Mortgage Bankers Association of America to determine the annual base cost of owning a home in the largest U.S. metropolitan areas — including principal and interest on a 30-year mortgage, plus property taxes and homeowners insurance. From that cost, they calculated the income required to own a home.

Californians don’t have a lot of good news in the report. Residents of the Golden State pay for all that sunshine — at least if they live in major cities. The four most expensive metro areas in which to buy a home are all in California. If money is an issue, perhaps you should seek your sun in Phoenix, Arizona, or Tampa, Florida — those sunny spots show up on the list of least-expensive areas. For a look at what income you need to have to buy a home in the 50 top metro areas refer to <https://www.hsh.com/finance/mortgage/salary-home-buying-25-cities.html>. For a look at what the average home cost in the top 100 metro areas refer to <https://www.kiplinger.com/tool/real-estate/T010-S003-home-prices-in-100-top-u-s-metro-areas/index.php>. There is a considerable range in average home prices. The lowest in Youngstown Ohio is \$75,000 vs, this highest in San Jose, CA at \$1,000,000. [Source: MoneyTalksNews | Gael F. Cooper | November 7, 2018 ++]

Life Insurance Update 03 ► **You Can Sell Your Policy If You Don’t Need It Anymore**

If you have a life insurance policy you no longer want or can’t afford, stopping payments or simply cashing it in aren’t your only options — or even your best ones. Many people have sold their policies in a life settlement sale and come out the other side with cash in hand — but it isn’t easy.

How it works

You can convert your life insurance policy into cash now, but the process is complicated. First, you'll need to have your life insurance policy appraised to determine the selling value. Then, you'll need to find a buyer. Once you have a buyer in place, you'll receive a cash settlement and the buyer will pay any premiums and collect the benefit when you die. Finding a buyer on your own can be complicated, if not impossible. That is why many people choose to either sell their policy to a settlement company or to a third party through a life settlement broker. If you sell to a settlement company, you'll receive a percentage of your policy's value in cash. If you use a broker, you may also pay a commission to the broker. However, a broker may be able to find a better deal than you would on your own. There are a few things you should consider before selling your policy. For example:

- Your life insurance policy may not have much value on the market.
- You won't get the full face value. A 2010 report from the U.S. Government Accountability Office found that sellers received about 13 percent to 21 percent of the value of their policies.
- Brokers charge a commission. The GAO report says that in 2009, commissions were about 9 percent.
- Buyers don't want every policy. Buyers may be looking for people over the age of 65 with chronic or terminal illnesses. If you're young and healthy, your policy won't be as attractive to a buyer.
- You may have tax complications. Your settlement could be subject to income tax.
- It isn't your only option. If you're selling because you need cash, you may have other options, such as taking a loan against your life insurance policy, accelerating your payout date or selling the policy to a family member. However, keep in mind that these options also have pitfalls and should be discussed with a financial adviser.

How to sell

Selling isn't all bad, especially if you no longer want the policy or you can't afford the premiums. If you do decide to sell, take these steps to make sure you get the most money:

- Understand the rules. Your life insurance policy has rules about selling, and your state laws regulate the process. Make sure you understand these before you try to sell. If you don't fully understand, an independent financial adviser can help sort things out.
- Don't take the first offer. There are no set values for life insurance policies, and the offers you receive from buyers can vary widely. Review several to make sure you're getting the best deal.
- Talk to an expert. Consult an accountant to see what tax liability and eligibility changes you will face after the sale.
- Check your debts. If you have large debts, your creditors may have a claim to any cash you receive from your life insurance settlement. If you have debts, discuss them with a financial adviser before you sell.

The bottom line: If you don't want your life insurance policy, it's worth a call to find out what you could get, but be cautious about going through with it. Make sure you're getting the best possible deal before you sign off. [Source: MoneyTalksNews | Angela Colley | November 1, 2018 ++]

Thrift Savings Plan 2018 Update 02 ► TSP Tumbled in October

Nearly all of the funds in the federal government's 401(k)-style retirement savings program tumbled last month, mirroring a month of volatility in the financial markets.

- The Thrift Savings Plan's G Fund, which is made up of government securities, was the only portfolio in the black in October, gaining 0.26 percent. That brings its total 2018 earnings to 2.38 percent.

- The S Fund, composed of small- and mid-size businesses, lost the most value last month, falling 10.06 percent. That brought the portfolio 0.30 percent into the negative since January. The international stocks of the I Fund fell 7.94 percent in October, bringing its 2018 losses to 8.92 percent.
- The common stocks of the C Fund lost 6.84 percent last month, although the fund remains 2.98 percent in the black for 2018. And the fixed income (F) Fund fell 0.78 percent in October, bringing its losses so far this year to 2.26 percent.
- All of the lifecycle (L) funds, which shift investments into more stable portfolios as participants get closer to retirement, lost value last month. The L Income Fund, for those who have already started withdrawing money, lost 1.40 percent; L 2020, 2.24 percent; L 2030, 4.60 percent; L 2040, 5.54 percent; and L 2050, 6.35 percent.
- Since January, the L Income Fund has grown 1.52 percent; L 2020, 1.21 percent; and L 2030, 0.12 percent. The L 2040 Fund has fallen 0.35 percent this year, and the L 2050 is down 0.74 percent.

[Source: GovExec.com | Erich Wagner | October 1 2018 ++]

Homeowners Insurance Update 04 ► Get It right

Most standard homeowners insurance policies cover common hazards like a fire or a burglary, but some of Mother Nature's work, like flood or wind and hail, are deemed “excluded perils” and might not be covered. In simple terms, wind and hail damage to your home is covered when it's caused by a toppled tree or blown-off roof; damage from flooding is defined as due to rising waters and requires different coverage. You might remember many people, to their surprise, were not covered for floods during Hurricane Katrina. Flood insurance, offered primarily through FEMA, is not overly expensive, but coverage maxes out at \$250,000 (you're not insuring your land). If your house is worth more, you can turn to companies like Lloyd's of London (that famously insures body parts like Keith Richards' hands).

- If you live in an area where a January nor'easter is more common than a September hurricane, check how your policy handles damage related to ice and snow, like collapsed roofs and ice dams.
- Earthquakes usually are excluded, but you might ask, “Who needs it outside of California?” Well, every state has fault lines. Before 9/11, it was almost laughable to think about damage from the “perils of war,” which almost always is excluded but available through specialty companies
- Structures like your shed or pool might require a special policy endorsement, as does jewelry and money above a certain dollar amount. If you hide your cash under your mattress, make sure you cover it with insurance, too.
- It's important to ask what your responsibilities are in protecting your property. Although most insurance companies don't require you to board up your house or have a security system, if you turn off the heat for a week in your Chicago home in January and your pipes freeze, they might claim you were negligent and deny your claim. An empty house, perhaps due to a military PCS move, requires special coverage, as well.

Bottom line, policies vary with respect to coverage, exclusions, and requirements. They can represent a nice chunk of your budget, so make sure you get it right. [Source: The MOAA Newsletter | Vera Wilson | November 1, 2018 ++]

Personal Budget ► Steps To Get Back On Track

You've cheated on your budget. Relax. It happens to everyone. People cheat on their budgets for many reasons, so find the courage to go home and tell your spouse, and then take these simple steps to get back on track.

- Take a reality check. For some of us, it's not the occasional splurge that's the problem, but rather staying within budget is a constant struggle. If you're limiting your spending and still can't stay on track, it might be that your budget isn't realistic. Discover what categories are giving you trouble and make the necessary adjustments, even if it means reducing your savings or investment contributions.
- Set reasonable goals. Budgets often are devised for a reason, like eliminating a debt or saving for a car. Work on achieving one goal at a time and set sensible timelines, or you're setting yourself up for failure.
- Is budget burnout a problem? For months, you've been pinching every penny and obsessively tracking every dollar you've spent. But letting your budget take over your life might just cause you to give up altogether, so ease up.
- Consider sharing money-management responsibilities. Is it possible you're just feeling overburdened with all your money-tracking responsibilities and have to free yourself from those budget shackles? If other members of your household are willing and able to take over, even for a short time, hand over the baton to them. A fresh pair of eyes might even provide some valuable insight.
- Expect the unexpected. This won't be the last purchase that tempts you, so revise your budget to include some splurges here and there. Believe it or not, it's better to make it a semi-substantial purchase like a nice dinner out or new winter boots. Treating yourself to a daily pumpkin spice latte might not have the reward value your psyche needs, and before you know it, you've spent \$1,800 in one year on coffee.

[Source: The MOAA Newsletter | Vera Wilson | November 1, 2018 ++]

Cruise Scam ► How it Works

As temperatures turn cool, cruise season is just starting to heat up. Millions of Americans enjoy cruise vacation packages as an escape from winter each year. But to keep from getting burned this travel season, would-be vacationers may need more than just sunscreen to protect themselves. If you want to escape the deep freeze, keep on the lookout for scammers pushing the many variations of the free cruise scam. The allure of a free trip may be strong, but it is important to know what scams are out there so that you can be on alert and ensure that the great deal you have been offered isn't too good to be true.

How the Scam Works:

- **The long-distance free cruise scam --** In this scam, a victim receives a piece of mail notifying them that they won a free cruise. All they need to do is call a number in the envelope to claim it. Unbeknownst to the consumer, the number, which appears to be American, is really from a foreign country, and calls to claim the prize can cost as much as \$5.00 per minute. The scammers on the other end of the line will try to extract as much personal information as they can from their victim--like their Social Security number and bank account info--so that they can steal their victim's identity or sell their information to other scammers. In the end, there is no cruise. Instead, the victim is left with an astronomically high phone bill and an increased risk of becoming a victim of identity theft.
- **The hidden sales pitch scam --** In this scam, the fraudster uses the offer of a free cruise to lure their victim into a lengthy, high-pressure sales pitch for a timeshare. Under the ruse of coming in to pick out their accommodations, the "lucky winner" will be subjected to an hours-long timeshare presentation. In some cases, these pitches may even take place on the cruise ship, where attendees are held captive and have no other choice but to be subjected to lengthy pitches for an overpriced timeshare. Many consumers who are able to endure these high-pressure sales tactics and actually receive their free trip are then subjected to more high-pressure sales tactics to upgrade their trip. These passengers often report dismal cruise conditions and ships that lack common amenities like air conditioning.

- **The not-so-free “free” cruise offer --** In this iteration of the free cruise scam, a consumer is informed that they have won a cruise, and they just need to provide their credit card number for “incidentals” like port fees and taxes. These “incidental” costs, however, quickly add up to more than what they would have paid had they purchased a trip through a respected travel agent or directly from a cruise line. To make matters worse, the cruise they purchased may be on a very old and outdated ship that is woefully in need of a renovation. While it is certainly possible to win a free cruise, it is important to keep these tips in mind to navigate around any potential scams:

How to Deal With a Free Cruise Offers:

- *You cannot win a prize from a contest that you did not enter.* If you don’t remember entering any contest where a cruise was a prize, you are probably talking to a scammer.
- *Do your homework.* If you are offered a free cruise from a contest you entered, ask for the name of the travel agency and then check their online reviews and Better Business Bureau rating. Some state Consumer Protection departments may also have business-lookup services that share data about complaints. As a big destination for cruising, [Florida’s lookup service](#) is especially useful. If a cruise operator or travel agent has received a lot of complaints, if they aren’t registered in the state they say they are, or if consumer reviews describe hidden sales pitches or complain about additional fees, it is probably a scam.
- *If you purchase any upgrades, pay with a credit card.* By paying with a credit card, you have more options to dispute the charge if it turns out to be a scam. Avoid a business that asks for payment through a wire transfer or cash, which leave you no way of getting your money back if it turns out to be a scam.
- *Never pay for a prize.* If you really won a cruise, it should be free and include all taxes and fees. You may be offered to book a night at a hotel the night before your trip or to upgrade your room, but the base prize (and fees) should be free.
- *Be wary of high-pressure tactics.* If the prize giver is pressuring you to make a decision or to act quickly, there’s probably a catch. Carefully study the documents they provide and ask them to clearly explain any vague fees, your accommodation class, the ship’s name, and cruise line, etc. If they refuse to provide you with the details you request, it is probably a scam.

Follow-Up Action

When you find a too-good-to-be-true deal on a cruise, it probably is. If you believe that you may have fallen victim to a cruise scam, report it! You can file a complaint at www.Fraud.org via their [secure online complaint form](#). They will share your complaint with their network of more than 90 law enforcement and consumer protection agency partners who can help put fraudsters behind bars.

[Source: Fraud!Org | November 1, 2018 ++]

Fake Invoice Scam ► Don’t Pay Them

BBB Scam Tracker has gotten dozens of reports about a popular scam that preys on businesses. The trick? Deceive companies into paying for unperformed SEO work... without ever being noticed.

How the Scam Works

- Your accounting department receives an email or a piece of snail mail with an invoice for search engine optimization (SEO) services that were supposedly performed. The amount owed is usually under a thousand dollars, and scammers hope your business pays without further investigation. In one recent report, a business received an \$829 invoice from a company using the name "National Media Group" seeking payment for "Business SEO Service."

- Invoices for SEO services are currently the most popular ploy, but BBB has also received reports of phony invoices for domain names, directory listings, and other internet services. These are a contemporary version of the old office supply and directory advertising scams that have plagued businesses for years.

How to Avoid Falling Victim

- Double-check your invoices. Invoices may appear professional, but if you don't recall hiring the person or company in question, verify the source and the services before sending payment.
- Train your employees. If you have an accounts department, train your employees to recognize a scam. Set up a system for verifying invoices so your employees can make the right call when approving payments for goods or services.
- Research the company online. If you receive an invoice that seems fishy, research the company. Make sure they have a legitimate website and working contact information.

For More Information

To learn more about scams, go to www.BBB.org/ScamTips. If you've been targeted by this scam, help others avoid the same problem by reporting your experience at www.BBB.org/ScamTracker. [Source: BBB Scam Alert | November 2, 2018 ++]

Insurance Scams ► Fake Florida Blue Agents

Open enrollment is underway for affordable care act marketplace health insurance plans - as well as some individual and family health plans. But Florida Blue is one of the insurance companies warning consumers about fishy phone calls from fake insurance agents. The automated messages incorrectly refer to the company as “Blue Cross” or “Blue Cross and Blue Shield.” The callers may also try to sell plans from other insurers, which Florida Blue would never do. Christie Hyde DeNave, a spokeswoman with Florida Blue, said they're investigating the calls. "We don't want any of our members, or any other consumers, becoming a victim of identity theft or fraudulent marketing, or anything else that could compromise their financial information," DeNave said.

DeNave said official Florida Blue agents will never ask for banking information - or a full social security number. If consumers are skeptical about whether a call is legitimate, they should call Florida Blue – or their insurance company – directly. "Hang up, and then call (888) 996-0526 or the number on the back of your membership card - or if there is an agent that you typically deal with that has a local office - call that person back. Don't ever continue to have a phone call if you feel uncomfortable." DeNave said if you get one of these phone calls, record this information and report it to Florida Blue or the insurance company the caller claims to represent:

- Whether the caller tried to reach you on a landline or mobile phone
- Caller's phone number
- Time of day
- What the caller said (be as specific as possible)
- Whether you spoke to a live person or if it was a recorded message

[Source: WUSF 89.7. | Daylina Miller | November 6, 2018 ++]

Tax Burden for Michigan Retired Vets ► As of NOV 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 Michigan:

Sales Taxes

State Sales Tax: 6% (food and prescription drugs exempt; home heating fuels are taxed at 4%)

Gasoline Tax: 44.70 cents/gallon (Includes all taxes)

Diesel Fuel Tax: 50.70 cents/gallon (Includes all taxes)

Cigarette Tax: \$2.00/pack of 20

Personal Income Taxes

Tax Rate Range: Flat rate of 4.25% of adjusted gross income

Personal Exemptions: None however qualified disabled vets can claim \$400

Standard Deduction: Multiply \$4,000 by the number of exemption claimed on U.S. form 1040 or 1040A

Medical/Dental Deduction: None

Federal Income Tax Deduction: None

Retirement Income Taxes: Social Security retirement income that is considered taxable on a federal income tax return can be subtracted from a taxpayer's adjusted gross income (AGI) when filing state taxes in Michigan. Military, federal, and state/local government pensions may be partially exempt, based on the year you were born and the source of the pension. For a complete breakdown of retirement and pension taxes, go to the Michigan Info for Seniors & Retirees. For a complete breakdown of retirement and pension taxes, go to the Michigan Info for Seniors & Retirees.

Retired Military Pay: Not taxed. Survivor benefits are exempt if the amounts are exempt from federal income tax or classified as military compensation or military retirement pay. Military retirement benefits that pass to the spouse of a deceased member of the military are exempt. Retirement benefits passing to other beneficiaries are taxed.

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

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

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

Property Taxes

Property in Michigan is generally assessed at 50% of its true cash value. Some seniors, disabled persons, veterans, surviving spouses of veterans, and farmers may be able to delay paying property taxes. It depends on the county of residence and your income level. If you own the home you live in, you may be exempt from a portion of local school taxes under the Homeowner's Principal Residence Exemption Program, formerly known as the Michigan Homestead Exemption Program. It allows homeowners an exemption from their local school operating millage. In accordance with Public Act 237 of 1994, homeowners that occupy their property as their principal residence may exempt up to 18 mills. A Homestead Property Tax Credit is available to homeowners or renters. The credit is based on the property tax on a homestead that is subject to local property taxes or your household income. Only those whose household income is less than \$135,000 are eligible. For information on the [Homestead Credit](#) or other property tax matters, call 517-636-4486. To view the state's property tax estimator, [click here](#).

Inheritance and Estate Taxes

There is no inheritance tax and a limited estate tax related to federal estate tax collection.

Other State Tax Rates

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

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

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

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For Penalty and Interest rates on Michigan unpaid taxes refer to <https://www.michigan.gov/taxes/0,4676,7-238-43513-156387--,00.html>. For further information, visit the [Michigan Taxes](#) web site. Seniors are invited to [click here](#) or call a special assistance number: 800-487-7000. [Source: <https://www.retirementliving.com/taxes-kansas-new-mexico#MICHIGAN> | NOV 2018 ++]

* General Interest *



Notes of Interest ► 01 thru 15 NOV 2018

- **Facebook.** Despite a year filled with scandal and scrutiny Facebook is now boasting more than 2.6 billion users for its entire suite of products. This includes Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger. The core Facebook app now has 1.49 million daily active users, a nine percent increase from the same time in 2017. And all those users mean one thing: lots and lots of money. To be exact, the company has pulled in \$13.78 billion in revenue.
- **Solid Potato Salad.** At <https://youtu.be/61cY1ILv60k> the Ross Sisters perform their Potato Salad song in this classic clip that will leave you amazed at the talent and skill they display. It gets really interesting around the one minute mark as some of the moves they perform are just plain freaky. They would have done very well on America's Got Talent if it had been around back then.
- **Drone Weaponry.** They used to say guns don't kill people, people do. Well people don't. They get emotional, disobey orders, and aim high. Let's let drone weapons make the decisions. They can take out your entire enemy virtually risk free. Dumb weapons drop where you point them. Smart Weapons consume data and with it target whatever you want to take out. They have made nuclear obsolete. To see what drone weaponry is now capable of watch the clip at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f_6xHXXeNkg.
- **Interesting developments.** Check out <https://biggeekdad.com/2018/11/a-smart-paper-clip> and see video on development of some new common day use items and some unusual events.
- **The Hump.** Retired Lt. Col. Dick Cole, now 103, best known as the last surviving member of the famous Doolittle Raiders, later flew "the hump"—the Himalaya Mountains—supplying US troops in China during World War II. You can listen to him talk about his experiences while doing it in a video at http://www.airforcemag.com/Features/PublishingImages/2018/November%202018/Richard_Cole_DR_MA_G_PROMO.jpg.
- **DoD Rust.** Rust costs the Pentagon more money annually than many of its most expensive weapons systems—up to \$21 billion per year, according to a Defense Department-commissioned audit released in March. The problem is so large, in 2002, the department established the Office of Corrosion Policy and Oversight to ensure big-dollar weapons systems weren't taken offline by oxidation and to help branches determine how much money ought to be spent on rust prevention.
- **California wildfire.** Naval Air Station Point Mugu remained under mandatory evacuation orders 9 NOV as a raging wildfire was burning in the hills near the Southern California base and threatened a key naval communications site.

- **U.S. Navy.** Admiral-to-Ship Ratio: “In 1944 there were 256 flags for 6,084 ships; today there are 359 flag officers for 280 ships.”
- **Vets.** The American Veteran – Episode #1202 at <https://youtu.be/o0qhaycsYzU> reports on a Navy Veteran who, with help from a VA prosthetist, regains something lost; and a look inside how VA’s recovery-oriented approach that empowers Veteran’s to take charge of their treatment and live a full and meaningful life. Also included is a recount of the Normandy Invasion by a vet who was in the first wave.
- **RAF.** It’s the end of an era for Britain’s Royal Air Force: Its only bomb disposal squadron, the 5131 Bomb Disposal Squadron, is being disbanded, 75 years after it was formed to disarm unexploded German bombs. The storied squadron was formed in 1943 during World War II and made safe 176,000 weapons in its first two years.

[Source: Various | November 15, 2018 ++]

Traffic Tickets ► How To Minimize Or Eliminate Them

Get stopped by a cop for something as minor as not using your turn signal, and you could end up with a ticket. And fines are just the beginning of your problems. Points on your license can lead to hikes in your insurance premiums that last for years. If you drive for a living, citations can even cost you your job. Yes, tickets have potentially serious consequences. Following are four ways to minimize — or even eliminate — a traffic citation.

Talk your way out of it

If you are pulled over, the officer might let you off with a warning. Whether that happens can depend on how you act. For starters, remain still. Sit with your hands on the top of the steering wheel until the officer comes to the window. If you rummage around in your car, you could create suspicion and security concerns. When the officer asks for your ID, make sure you present it to him or her. Never drive without your driver’s license, proof of insurance, registration and any other document your state requires. Keep them up-to-date and located somewhere in your car where you can immediately lay your hands on them when asked to produce them.

Above all, be polite. Traffic cops — like airline ticket agents — often deal with frustrated, angry or impatient people. Being antagonistic won’t take you where you want to go. Give the officer your information when asked, and keep a pleasant tone. Don’t wheedle or whine, but there’s nothing wrong with looking the officer in the eye and saying, “I’d really appreciate you issuing a warning rather than a citation. My driving record is clean, and I’d really like to keep it that way.” Remember that once the officer goes back to the patrol car with your license, your opportunity to negotiate is over.

Prepare for court

If you do get a ticket, the game’s not over. You can still fight it. Before you pull away from the scene of the ticket, take a few notes. Record what time you were pulled over, what the officer said you did, what you thought you did and anything else worth remembering. For example, if the officer said you were driving at 42 mph and you thought you were going 35, make a note. Take a few pictures of the scene if you can. Check your ticket for errors. Judges sometimes drop tickets because of inaccurate or incomplete information. Make sure everything is correct down to the spelling of your name.

It also might help to ask for a continuance. The more time that passes between the day you were pulled over and your court date, the less likely it is that the officer will remember you and the details of the event. And if the officer doesn’t show up in court? Case dismissed. If you fight and lose, it’s time to negotiate again — this time with the judge. Say something like, “Your honor, the points for this ticket will make my insurance increase to a level that would create a real financial hardship. My record has been clean. Would you waive the points?”

Consider hiring a lawyer

The problem with pleading not guilty and going to trial is that even if you win, you'll lose a lot of time. Because traffic court is typically crowded, it's not unusual to sit for hours waiting for your case to be called, especially in urban areas. Hiring an attorney who specializes in traffic citations solves this problem, and could radically enhance your odds that the judge will dismiss the tickets or reduce the fines and waive the points. Of course, the availability, price and success rate of lawyers can vary widely. Do a search for "traffic ticket defense (your city)" and see what comes up.

Enroll in traffic school

If all else fails and you have to pay fines, you may still be able to avoid points that could cause your insurance rates to rise. In some states, signing up for traffic school allows you to skip the points in exchange for taking a driver's education course. Your opportunities typically are limited — for example, you can only choose driving school once a year. Also, you'll have to pay for the school in addition to your fine. But it's still a better option than points. You can get a list of traffic school options at your local courthouse.

[Source: MoneyTalksNews | Angela Colley| November 12, 2018 ++]

Afghan Failures Update 04 ► Afghans Place Blame on Americans

When U.S. forces and their Afghan allies rode into Kabul in November 2001 they were greeted as liberators. But after 17 years of war, the Taliban have retaken half the country, security is worse than it's ever been, and many Afghans place the blame squarely on the Americans. The United States has lost more than 2,400 soldiers in its longest war, and has spent more than \$900 billion on everything from military operations to the construction of roads, bridges and power plants. Three U.S. presidents have pledged to bring peace to Afghanistan, either by adding or withdrawing troops, by engaging the Taliban or shunning them. Last year, the U.S. dropped the "mother of all bombs" on a cave complex.

None of it has worked. After years of frustration, Afghanistan is rife with conspiracy theories, including the idea that Americans didn't stumble into a forever war, but planned one all along. Mohammed Ismail Qasimyar, a member of Afghanistan's High Peace Council, wonders how U.S. and NATO forces — which at their peak numbered 150,000 and fought alongside hundreds of thousands of Afghan troops, were unable to vanquish tens of thousands of Taliban. "Either they did not want to or they could not do it," he said. He now suspects the U.S. and its ally Pakistan deliberately sowed chaos in Afghanistan to justify the lingering presence of foreign forces — now numbering around 15,000 — in order to use the country as a listening post to monitor Iran, Russia and China. "They have made a hell, not a paradise for us," he said.

Afghanistan is rife with such conspiracy theories. After last month's assassination of Kandahar's powerful police chief, Gen. Abdul Raziq, social media exploded with pictures and posts suggesting he was the victim of a U.S. conspiracy. Recent insider attacks, in which Afghan forces have killed their erstwhile U.S. and NATO allies, have attracted online praise. "In 2001 the Afghan people supported the arrival of the United States and the international community wholeheartedly," said Hamid Karzai, who was installed as Afghanistan's first president and twice won re-election, serving until 2014. "For a number of years things worked perfectly well," he said in a recent interview. "Then we saw the United States either changed course or simply neglected the views of the Afghan people and the conditions of the Afghans." He blames the lingering war on the U.S. failure to eliminate militant sanctuaries in neighboring Pakistan, the bombing of Afghan villages and homes, and the detention of Afghans in raids.

Others blame the notoriously corrupt government, which Karzai headed for more than a decade, and which is widely seen as yet another bitter fruit of the American invasion. "All the money that has come to this country has gone to the people in power. The poor people didn't get anything," said Hajji Akram, a day laborer in Kabul's Old City who struggles to feed his family on around \$4 a day. "The foreigners are not making things better. They should go." It's

not just Afghans. The United States' own inspector general for Afghanistan's reconstruction offered a blistering critique in a speech in Ohio earlier this month. John Sopko pointed out that the U.S. has spent \$132 billion on Afghanistan's reconstruction — more than was spent on Western Europe after World War II. Another \$750 billion has been spent on U.S. military operations, and Washington has pledged \$4 billion a year for Afghanistan's security forces. "Even after 17 years of U.S. and coalition effort and financial largesse, Afghanistan remains one of the poorest, least educated, and most corrupt countries in the world," Sopko said. "It is also one of the most violent."

Hamidullah Nasrat sells imported fabrics in the capital's main bazaar on the banks of the Kabul River, a fetid trickle running through a garbage-filled trench. He remembers welcoming the overthrow of the Taliban, who had shut down his photography studio because it was deemed un-Islamic. "After the Taliban we were expecting something good, but instead, day by day, it is getting worse," he said. "How is it that a superpower like the United States cannot stop the Taliban? It is a question every Afghan is asking."

The U.S. and NATO formally concluded their combat mission in 2014. Since then, the Taliban have carried out near-daily attacks on rural checkpoints and staged coordinated assaults on major cities. Authorities stopped publishing casualty figures earlier this year, deeming them classified. An Islamic State affiliate has meanwhile carried out massive bombings against the country's Shiite minority. Afghans who have recently served on the front lines complain of faulty equipment, inadequate supplies and reinforcements that show up late and ill-equipped, if at all. Tameem Darvesh served in the Afghan army for nearly five years in the southern Helmand province. This year he went on holiday and never returned, trading his \$180 monthly salary for work as a day laborer making much less. He said morale is at an all-time low, with many soldiers expressing sympathy for the Taliban.



In this Oct. 26, 2018, photo, Jawad Mohammadi, a former member of the Afghan National Security Forces, sits with his children as he gives an interview to The Associated Press, at his home in Kabul, Afghanistan. Mohammadi served for more than seven years in the security forces until 2015, when he stepped on a land-mine he was tasked to clear and lost both his legs. He was just 25 years old.

Jawad Mohammadi served for more than seven years in the security forces until 2015, when he stepped on a land-mine he was tasked to clear and lost both his legs. He was just 25 years old. He recalls how the foreign instructors told him to always check his mine detector by waving it over a piece of metal before heading out into the field. But whenever a device failed to respond, his Afghan commander would tell him to use it anyway. "I was told that's all we have. That's what we were given, you just have to use it," he said. The next time he went out with a faulty device, his foot found a bomb the detector had missed. "I felt myself being thrown through the air. I looked and I saw my legs were near me and there was so much blood. I yelled: 'Please help me.'" [Source: Associated Press | Kathy Gannon & Amir Shah | November 14, 2018 ++]

NATO Defense Spending Update 03 ► Only 5 Countries Have Met 2% GDP Payments

President Donald Trump on 12 NOV unloaded on the U.S.'s European allies, and appeared to threaten to pull out of NATO, upon returning home from a World War I memorial event in Paris, where French President Emmanuel Macron openly rebuked Trump's political philosophy in a speech the day before. Trump returned to his old talking points — that the U.S. is treated unfairly within NATO while maintaining trade deficits with those countries — as Macron talked up the idea of a European army that would, in part, serve to protect the continent from the U.S. Trump described the idea, which Macron floated before the U.S. president's visit to Europe as “very insulting.”

“Just returned from France where much was accomplished in my meetings with World Leaders,” Trump tweeted Monday morning.

“Never easy bringing up the fact that the U.S. must be treated fairly, which it hasn't, on both Military and Trade,” he continued. “We pay for LARGE portions of other countries military protection, hundreds of billions of dollars, for the great privilege of losing hundreds of billions of dollars with these same countries on trade.”

Trump typically condemns any kind of trade deficit with any country, though the metric often indicates the U.S. has a strong economy that can afford to buy more from a given country than that country can buy from the U.S. “I told them that this situation cannot continue,” Trump said of the military and trade relationships with some of the U.S.'s closest allies. He described the situation as “ridiculously unfair.” The U.S. by far spends the most in NATO, both on its own defense budget and on programs to increase the readiness and capabilities of its European allies.



President Donald Trump, right, and NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, left, speak during a bilateral breakfast on July 11 in Brussels, Belgium, at the start of a two-day summit on alliance priorities. Trump used the event to again criticize NATO countries for not spending enough on their defense budgets.

In 2014, NATO countries agreed to raise their defense spending to 2 percent of gross domestic product by 2024. So far, only five countries — mainly in eastern and central Europe where the threat of Russia looms large — have met that pledge. Since his campaign days, Trump has demanded NATO countries meet that 2 percent figure, or even double it, immediately. Germany, Europe's biggest economy, has expressed little interest in hitting that benchmark. The metric of percentage of GDP spent on the military can also be deceptive. Defense spending has broad and differing definitions around the globe. Greece is one of the few NATO countries that meet the 2percent spending mark, but it spends much of that on pensions. NATO's newest member, Montenegro, could spend 2 percent of its GDP on defense, which would be only \$95 million, little more than the cost of one U.S. Air Force F-35.

Trump also in the 12th lamented the money the U.S. has spent protecting other countries, saying the U.S. gained nothing from the alliances other than “Deficits and Losses.” “It is time that these very rich countries either pay the

United States for its great military protection, or protect themselves ... and Trade must be made FREE and FAIR!" Trump concluded, appearing to wave the idea of a U.S. pullout from NATO. Article 5 of the NATO treaty, the alliance's key clause that guarantees a collective response to an attack on a member state, has been invoked only once in NATO's history: after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the U.S. The result was a collective response from NATO countries that still have forces fighting and dying alongside U.S. forces in Afghanistan today. [Source: NavyTimes | Alex Lockie | November 13, 2018 ++]

U.S. China Military Tensions Update 01 ► U.S. Will Not Stop Transiting Disputed Reefs

China bluntly told the United States to stop sending ships and military aircraft close to islands claimed by Beijing in the South China Sea, during talks 9 NOV that set the stage for a meeting between President Donald Trump and President Xi Jinping later this month. The U.S. pushed back, insisting it will continue to "fly, sail and operate wherever international law allows." In late September, U.S. and Chinese vessels nearly collided near a disputed reef.

Despite the frank airing of differences at the meeting in Washington of the two nations' top diplomats and military chiefs, both sides stressed the need to tamp down tensions, which have flared amid a bitter trade dispute that Trump and Xi are expected to tackle at the Group of 20 summit in Argentina. "The United States is not pursuing a policy of Cold War containment with China," Secretary of State Mike Pompeo told reporters following the U.S.-China Diplomatic and Security Dialogue. "Rather we want to ensure that China acts responsibly and fairly in support of security and prosperity of each of our two countries." The talks were due to be held in Beijing last month but were postponed after Washington announced new arms sales to Taiwan, and after a Chinese destroyer came close to the USS Decatur in late September in what the U.S. Navy called an "unsafe and unprofessional maneuver." Beijing has sweeping but disputed sovereignty claims in the area.

"The Chinese side made it clear to the United States that it should stop sending its vessels and military aircraft close to Chinese islands and reefs and stop actions that undermine Chinese authority and security interests," said Pompeo's Chinese counterpart, Yang Jiechi, who also had sharp words over U.S. support for Taiwan. However, Yang and Chinese defense minister Wei Fenghe spoke of the need to improve cooperation, including between the U.S. and Chinese militaries, to ease the risk of conflict as the two powers jockey for pre-eminence in the Asia-Pacific. "Cooperation is the only option for us," Wei said. "Confrontation and conflict between the two militaries will spell disaster for us all."

Defense Secretary Jim Mattis asserted U.S. rights to freedom of navigation but also said the two sides should work together on areas of common interest. "Competition does not mean hostility. Nor must it lead to conflict," Mattis said. Although the rescheduling of the dialogue signaled an effort by the two sides to contain the slide in the relationship, it did not address the core dispute on trade. Trump has slapped tariffs on \$250 billion in Chinese products, in a push to narrow the U.S. trade deficit and push back against what the U.S. views as predatory Chinese tactics on the high technology industry. Beijing has retaliated with tariffs on \$110 million worth of U.S. goods.

Yun Sun, a China expert at the Stimson Center think tank, said Beijing is uncertain about what exactly Trump wants out of a trade deal, but hopes that with U.S. midterm elections out of the way, the mercurial American president may be more inclined to reach a compromise. "Their top priority is to stabilize relations," she said. On human rights, Pompeo voiced concern over China's treatment of religious minorities, including the mass detention of minority Uighur Muslims. But overall, the tone of the U.S. officials' public comments was milder than that of the Chinese. Yang insisted that Chinese people have freedom of religion, and that "foreign countries have no right to interfere." [Source: The Associated Press | Matthew Pennington | November 9, 2018 ++]

Vietnam Security Alert ► Travelers Heads Up

The U.S. Embassy Hanoi advises U.S. citizens of the High Crime rating for Vietnam. Recent reports of criminal activities include unwanted sexual advances, targeting children in public places for potential kidnapping, and reports of wrongdoing by taxis and ride-sharing services, including sexual harassment and theft of personal items. Actions to Take:

- Maintain situational awareness and be aware of your surroundings.
- Do not display signs of wealth, such as wearing expensive jewelry or watches and keep the amount of valuables on your person to a minimum.
- Do not physically resist if confronted by an armed or unarmed robber as robbers may resort to violence.
- Use caution when walking or driving at night.
- Stay alert in locations frequented by tourists.

If U.S. Citizens living or traveling in Vietnam need assistance from U.S. Embassy Hanoi - Consular Annex, contact them per the following:

- From outside Vietnam: +84-24-3850-5000
- From the U.S.: 011-84-24-3850-5000
- From landline within Hanoi: 3850-5000
- From mobile or landline within Vietnam: 024-3850-5000 (acsghanoi@state.gov)

OR

If U.S. Citizens living or traveling in Vietnam need assistance from U.S. Consulate Ho Chi Minh City, contact them per the following:

- From outside Vietnam: +84-28-3520-4200
- From the U.S.: 011-84-28-3520-4200
- From landline within Ho Chi Minh City: 3520-4200
- From mobile or landline within Vietnam: 028-3520-4200S (hcmcacsmail@state.gov)

Other points of contact or information sources on Vietnam are:

- State Department's Bureau of Consular Affairs - 888-407-4747 or 202-501-4444
- Vietnam Country Information <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel/International-Travel-Country-Information-Pages/Vietnam.html>
- Follow us on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#)
- Enroll in the [Smart Traveler Enrollment Program \(STEP\)](#) to receive security messages and make it easier to locate you in an emergency.

[Source: HCMCACSmial@state.gov | November 7, 2018 ++]

Vietnam Agent Orange ► Danang Airport Cleanup Completed

Vietnam and the United States said 7 NOV they have finished the cleanup of dioxin contamination at Danang airport caused by the transport and storage of the herbicide Agent Orange during the Vietnam War. The 30 hectares (74 acres) of land cleansed of the toxic chemical were handed over to Vietnam at a ceremony. Vice Defense Minister Nguyen Chi Vinh praised the U.S. government's involvement in the cleanup. "It is proof that we are opening a future of good cooperation between the governments of Vietnam and the United States," Vinh said. "Today marks the day that

Danang airport is no longer known as a dioxin hotspot, the day that Danang people can be assured that their health will not be destroyed by chemicals left over from the war."

Large amounts of Agent Orange, which contains dioxin, were stored at Danang airport during the war and sprayed by U.S. forces to defoliate the countryside and deny communist fighters jungle cover. Vietnamese still suffer from the effects of the spraying. U.S. Ambassador Daniel Kritenbrink called the joint cleanup a significant milestone in the expanding partnership between the two countries. "This project truly is a hallmark of our countries' shared vision to be honest about the past, deal responsibly with remaining legacy issues and turn a point of contention into one of collaboration," he said. Kritenbrink said working together on the issues of the past "builds strategic trust and enables us to further strengthen our forward-looking partnership that advances shared interests and strong people-to-people ties."

Between 1962 and 1971, the U.S. military sprayed roughly 11 million gallons of Agent Orange across large swaths of southern Vietnam. Dioxin stays in the soil and in the sediment at the bottom of lakes and rivers for generations. It can enter the food supply through the fat of fish and other animals. Vietnam says as many as 4 million of its citizens were exposed to the herbicide and as many as 3 million have suffered illnesses caused by it — including the children of people who were exposed during the war.

The U.S. government says the actual number of people affected is much lower and that Vietnamese are too quick to blame Agent Orange for birth defects that can be caused by malnutrition or other factors. Last month, U.S. Defense Secretary Jim Mattis visited Bien Hoa air base north of Ho Chi Minh City, the former Saigon, another dioxin hotspot. The U.S. Agency for International Development will soon begin a soil restoration project at the base that is estimated to take several years and cost \$390 million. [Source: The Associated Press | November 7, 2018 ++]

Iran U.S. Sanctions Update 01 ► Resumption Reaction | War Situation Declared

Iran greeted the re-imposition of U.S. sanctions on 5 NOV with air defense drills and a statement from President Hassan Rouhani that the nation faces a "war situation," raising Mideast tensions as America's maximalist approach to the Islamic Republic takes hold. The sanctions end all economic benefits America had granted Tehran for its 2015 nuclear deal with world powers, though Iran for now continues to abide by the accord that saw it limit its enrichment of uranium. While at the moment not threatening to resume higher enrichment, Iranian officials in recent months have made a point to warn the controversial process could resume at any time, faster than before. The new American sanctions particularly hurt Iran's vital oil industry, a crucial source of hard currency for its anemic economy. Its national currency has plummeted over the last year, sending prices for everything from mobile phones to medicine skyrocketing.

"Today, Iran is able to sell its oil and it will sell," Rouhani vowed 5 NOV as the sanctions kicked in. However, the noose of American sanctions appeared to be tightening. Iranian officials, meanwhile, reported a cyberattack targeting the country's communication infrastructure, blaming the purported attack on Israel. Iranian state television aired footage of air defense systems and anti-aircraft batteries in two-day military maneuvers underway across a vast stretch of the country's north. It included surface-to-air missiles shooting down a drone. The drill was to continue through 6 NOV. Iranian army Gen. Habibillah Sayyari said both the national army and the country's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard were taking part in the exercise.

Rouhani, meanwhile, pledged to government officials in comments aired on state TV that Iran would overcome the sanctions. "We are in the war situation," Rouhani said. "We are in the economic war situation. We are confronting a bullying enemy. We have to stand to win." He further stepped up the rhetoric, comparing Iran's situation in the 1980s war against Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein with the current one and President Donald Trump's move to reinstate

U.S. sanctions. “Yesterday, Saddam was in front us, today Trump is front of us. There is no difference. We must resist and win,” he said.

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo stressed that U.S. pressure on countries to stop buying Iranian oil had already reduced its exports by more than a million barrels of crude per day, and predicted an effect on the country’s nuclear ambitions. “Rest assured, Iran will never get close to obtaining a nuclear weapon under President Trump’s watch,” Pompeo said. Iran is already in the grip of an economic crisis. Its national currency, the rial, now trades at 150,000 to one U.S. dollar, down from when it traded around 40,500 to \$1 a year ago. The economic chaos sparked mass anti-government protests at the end of last year which resulted in nearly 5,000 reported arrests and at least 25 people being killed. Sporadic demonstrations still continue.

Rouhani separately said leaders from "four powers" met with Iran on the sidelines of the September meeting of the United Nations General Assembly to try to save the deal, including brokering a possible meeting with Trump. He did not name those countries, but was likely referring to China, France, Russia and Britain, which along with Germany made up the world powers involved in the 2015 nuclear deal. "This issue does not require a mediator," Rouhani said, blaming America for unilaterally pulling out of the accord. Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Ghasemi also predicted the sanctions will actually work against America's interests. "Many countries from Europe to Russia and China have opposed the sanctions," Ghasemi told journalists, adding that Iranians "have experienced more extensive sanctions" and that they are "not a new issue."

The United States says the sanctions are not aimed at toppling the government, but at persuading it to radically change its policies, including its support for regional militant groups and its development of long-range ballistic missiles. However, Trump’s personal lawyer Rudy Giuliani and John Bolton, the president’s national security adviser, both have made public statements supporting overthrowing Iran’s theocratic government.

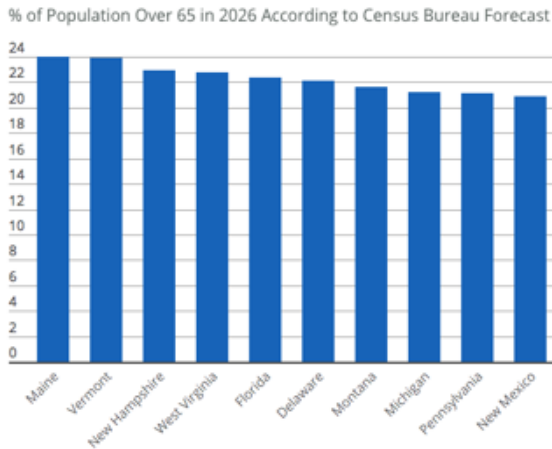
Also on 5 NOV, Iran's Telecommunication Minister Mohammad Javad Azeri Jahromi and his deputy, Hamid Fatahi, both tweeted about a cyberattack targeting the country's communications infrastructure, without elaborating. They blamed Israel for the attack and both referenced Stuxnet, which destroyed thousands of centrifuges involved in Iran's contested nuclear program in 2011. Stuxnet is widely believed to be an American and Israeli creation, though neither country has acknowledged being behind the attack.

Israel's Foreign Ministry declined to comment on the Iranian claim. Last week, Gen. Gholam Reza Jalali, the head of country's military unit in charge of combatting sabotage, said Rouhani's cell phone was tapped recently. Israel's Defense Minister Avigdor Lieberman welcomed the newly restored U.S. sanctions in a tweet, saying they will deal a "critical blow" to Iran's military presence around the Middle East. The Trump administration's decision to restore sanctions "is the sea change the Middle East has been waiting for," he said. [Source: The Associated Press | Nasser Karimi,& Amir Vahdat | November 5, 2018 ++]

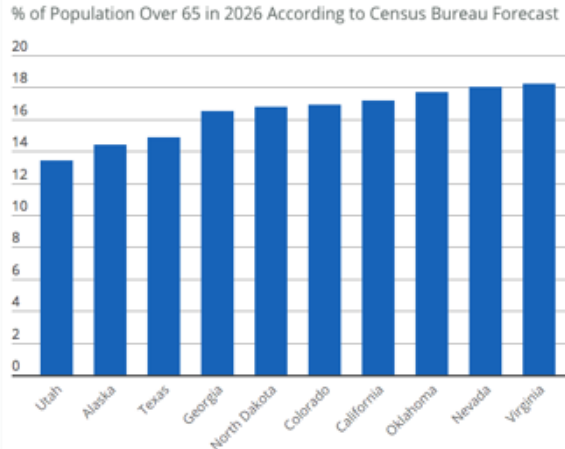
Superaged States ► None Yet But There Will Be 17 in 10 Years

Federal, state and local government officials haven’t been talking much during the midterm election cycle talk about the fiscal stresses governments face from aging populations, but it will be difficult not to discuss it more in the coming years. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, by 2026 unprecedented aging demographics will push 17 U.S. states into a category none are currently in: “superaged.” That includes Florida, Michigan, Pennsylvania and Ohio. Fitch Ratings, in a statement released on 1 NOV, noted that societal aging in the United States “is expected to accelerate over the next twenty years as population growth slows and the baby boomer generation reaches retirement age.

2026 Most Aged States



2026 Least Aged States



While there will be marked variation between states, general demographic trends point to more aging and slower working age population growth in almost every state.” That also means “knock-on effects for state revenue and expenditure profiles,” as Fitch describes the prospects many state governments face. According to the United Nations, “super aged” is defined as a population where 20 percent is over the age of 65 and the number of working-age people is contracting. Fitch notes: Smaller states such as Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire and West Virginia are forecast by the Census Bureau to have the highest percentage of population aged over 65 by 2026. They are also likely to continue to be among the states with the largest working age population decline.” But there are some larger-population states facing “significant demographic challenges,” including New Jersey and New York. [Source: Route Fifty | Michael Grass | November 1, 2018 ++]

U.S. Citizenship Birthright ► Should This 14th Amendment Right Be Ended?

President Trump drew attention on 31 OCT to one of the deepest questions about American life: who gets to be a citizen. The president told “Axios on HBO” that he intends to end birthright citizenship by executive order. That right, which has been guaranteed by the Constitution for 150 years, ensures that anyone born in the United States is automatically a citizen. “All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the state wherein they reside,” the 14th Amendment declares.

Under Trump’s proposed idea, however, such would not be the case for children of non-citizens and unauthorized immigrants, even if they are born in the United States. Many — including House Speaker Paul Ryan — have questioned whether such a change is even possible by executive order. But the fact that the idea is being tested is not so surprising. The question of citizenship has been a constant point of debate in American History. Martha S. Jones is a professor of history at Johns Hopkins University and the author of Birthright Citizens: A History of Race and Rights in Antebellum America, from Cambridge University Press. She spoke to TIME about the origins of the 14th Amendment, fights over citizenship and the implications of President Trump’s executive order. Her responses to Time’s questions follow:

Has the birthright citizenship idea ever been challenged in court?

Yes, in the 1890s, in a case brought by a gentleman named Wong Kim Ark. Ark is the child of Chinese immigrants and was born in San Francisco. His parents were ineligible to be citizens but he understood his right to be a birthright citizen pursuant to the 14th Amendment. He left San Francisco on business and when he returned at the border he was detained and said to be a non-citizen because his parents were not citizens. Ark’s case was taken to the Supreme Court

where the Supreme Court reviewed the facts and said “Wong Kim Ark is born in the United States and hence is a birthright citizen.” This is the case we have relied upon for guidance, insight and understanding into how birthright citizenship is intended to work and in particular how it works for immigrant children.

What are some arguments that have been made for or against the idea, historically?

As best I understand, birthright citizenship really has only come under attack in the last generation. For some people it’s just too broad and they advocate substituting a new kind of citizenship regime for birthrights — like a regime with blood, [or] linked to allegiance or affirmations. Other people generally permit the 14th amendment to stand but they want to narrow the small provision in the amendment that excludes from birthright citizenship persons who are not subject to the jurisdiction of the United States. In the 19th century those were principally the children born to soldiers of occupying armies or the children of foreign diplomats, but more recently the argument has been that children of unauthorized immigrants are not “subject to the jurisdiction” of the United States and hence can be excluded from the protections of birthright citizenship. That is the argument driving what we are seeing today with the president’s proposed executive order.

As you understand it, how exactly could it work if birthright citizenship were revoked under this proposed executive order?

You could imagine a machine that scrutinized people under this question could scrutinize all of us on this question, any time we came into contact with officials. What if, for example, each time we came into contact with the United States, you could not simply show a passport [but] you also had to prove the origins of your parents? That is a regime that could be effectuated. It’s not practical, it’s inhumane but it could be. Imagine you go apply for a driver license or you apply for social security benefits — all of these interactions with officials are opportunities for all of us to be scrutinized based on not only our own births but the births of our parents.

In light of this news, what should we know about the origins of the 14th Amendment?

In the wake of the Civil War, the 13th Amendment emancipates all those people held as slaves in the United States — some 4 million people — but even if they are free there’s an open question about their standing before the law and before the Constitution. Congress recognizes the incompleteness of freedom and goes ahead to, among other things in the 14th Amendment, make these former slaves citizens by virtue of this clause. And so the primary purpose of the 14th Amendment is to make former slaves citizens and to incorporate them into the body politic. But because its language is so broad, it not only determines the citizenship status of former slaves but affirms the citizenship status of everyone born in the United States.

So what do you think about the constitutionality of Trump’s proposed Executive Order?

I think he has the latitude to try. But what I do know is that in our scheme it is the Supreme Court of the United States that has the last word on the constitutionality of any official act, be it a law passed by Congress or an executive order, and what we can look forward to should the president in fact issue this executive order is that we will be in front of the Federal Courts very quickly with cases brought by those that are affected by the law.

Are there any misconceptions about the 14th Amendment for which people should watch out?

In this climate people think that the 14th Amendment is too broad, that it opens the door to citizenship too wide. And my view is that this 14th Amendment birthright citizenship provision is one of our great assets in a democracy. It makes sure that no one can deny us citizenship based on race, based on religion, based on dissent or national origin of one’s family. No one can deny our citizenship even if we are adherents of unpopular political views, and this has kept an important part of citizenship free of the influence of xenophobia or bigotry. Birthright creates an entryway that is far more even keeled than many other aspects of the law.

If Trump does sign this Executive Order what do you expect will be the consequences?

It's hard to say, but certainly we're in for a season of litigation. If ultimately the Supreme Court were to deem it unconstitutional then it's hard to say what the next move might be in the broader project of curbing immigration. And my sense is, as a historian of citizenship, that the fight around citizenship will continue. In fact it's very difficult to point to any era in our history when there wasn't a fight over citizenship. It is a permanent dimension of our democracy — who is in, who is out and on what terms. I don't think the question will disappear even should the court resolve it. That wasn't true for African Americans in the early 19th century. They continued to struggle for citizenship even when courts said they were not and I think we can expect people today to do very much the same.

[Source: Time | Gina Martinez | October 31, 2018 ++]

Household Item Longevity Update 01 ► 8 Items That Go Bad or Become Dangerous

Before you stock up, know that some common household items go bad -- even if you thought they would last forever. All good things must come to an end, including a lot of the stuff filling your home. While stocking up can seem like a smart move, not everything can be stored indefinitely. Following are some items that might be about to go bad in your stockpile.

1. Cleaning products

How many of you have ancient cleaning supplies buried under your sink? It's OK. You can admit it. You won't be judged. After all, when I moved into my first house, the previous owner had left some bottles under the sink. When I moved out 15 years later, some of those same bottles were still under the sink. Part of the reason I never tossed them was because I thought cleaning supplies lasted indefinitely, and my frugal self couldn't say goodbye to something potentially useful. Turns out I probably should have ditched those already old-looking bottles as soon as I moved in. According to Good Housekeeping, cleaning supplies can degrade over time and lose their effectiveness. The plastic containers they're stored in may also affect their formulas over time. The magazine says you can use these rules of thumb when it comes to deciding when cleaning supplies expire:

- Laundry detergent — six to 12 months
- Fabric softener — one year
- Multisurface cleaners — two years
- Cleaners with antibacterial ingredients — one year
- Disinfectants — two years
- Dishwasher detergent — three months
- Dish soap — 12 to 18 months

If you use bleach in homemade cleaners, be aware it can lose its effectiveness quickly once diluted. The Scripps Research Institute says a 10 percent bleach solution is potent for only a day. Even in its original bottle and undiluted, bleach can start to degrade after six months.

2. Fire extinguishers

A fire extinguisher is a classic get-it-and-forget-it item — until you need it to put out a stove-top flame and it doesn't work. As it turns out, fire extinguishers do expire. Here's what the International Association of Certified Home Inspectors says: Fire extinguishers expire and they do this for a few different reasons. One common way is that, over time, the seal on the neck will weaken and allow compressed gas to escape. Extinguishers that have lost much of their pressure will not operate. . . . Expensive extinguishers that have expired, especially those designed for commercial use, can be refilled and resealed by companies who specialize in this service. Inexpensive models are disposable.

3. Car seats

If your baby is in the same car seat your 10-year-old used, it's time to go shopping. Car seats are another unexpected item that will expire. You can usually find the expiration date printed on the label on the side of the seat, and my

personal experience has been that most are good for five to six years. The seats may expire because the plastic degrades over time, but safety innovations are another reason manufacturers put a shelf life on their products. Technology is constantly evolving, and 10 years from now, a better and safer car seat should have been developed.

4. Motor oil

With the fluctuating cost of oil, it may be tempting to buy a lifetime supply when you find a great deal. But you could end up with oil that doesn't perform well if you pull out a bottle that's been in storage for years. Some oils have additives that can break down over time. In addition, open or unsealed bottles can absorb moisture. The shelf life may vary depending on the manufacturer.

5. Toiletries and cosmetics

Just because your dentist gives you a new toothbrush every six months doesn't mean you can use that brush the entire time between visits. To keep your pearly whites clean and healthy, you should change brushes every three months. Toothbrushes are just one example of how many bathroom essentials expire. In fact, most of the beauty and hygiene products in your cabinets will eventually go bad. In some cases, they may simply not work as well, but some cosmetics may collect bacteria over time and may pose a health risk. Clean My Space has put together a comprehensive list of expiration dates for common cosmetic products and toiletries. You can find the complete list on their site <https://cleanmyspace.com/cosmetics-toiletries-expiry-guide>, but here are some sample expiration dates:

- Mascara — three months
- Lipstick — two to three years
- Oil-free foundation — one year
- Cleanser — two years
- Deodorant — three years
- Shampoo/conditioner — three years unopened
- Bar soap — three years

6. Paint

Paint is another item that hangs out in many houses indefinitely. You use half a can and then put the rest in the basement, where it sits until the inspiration to do touch-up work hits you 10 years later. By that time, your paint has probably gone bad. Glidden says its unopened latex or oil-based paints should have a shelf life of two years. However, that's assuming you don't let them freeze and store them away from heat sources like the furnace. The [Home Repair Resource Center](#) gives these recommendations for other home repair and renovation products:

- Oil-based stains — one year opened, two to three years unopened
- Water-based stains — one year opened, two years unopened
- Oil-based varnishes — one year, opened or unopened
- Caulk — two months opened, one year unopened
- Glazing compounds — one year opened, two years unopened

Of course, some paints and products may last longer, depending on their formulation and storage. Click [here](#) for some tips to help you decide if your old paint is still good or needs to be pitched.

7. Wine, beer and liquor

While fine wine gets better with age, the same can't be said for all forms of alcohol. Even bottled wine will go bad if stored improperly, and boxed wine is only good for about a year after packaging. Mass-produced beer has an expiration date on it, and while drinking past that date won't hurt you, it might be a less than tasty experience. As for craft beers, food website [The Kitchn](#) reports that their flavor peaks a few months after bottling. However, when stored out of the light and at a stable temperature, they should last a year before the taste begins to really go bad. There is even a limit to how long the hard stuff will last. Again, we'll go back to The Kitchn. The site says unopened bottles of liquor will last indefinitely, but once opened, they begin to lose potency. It's best to use up that whiskey, vodka and bourbon within a year after your first sip.

8. Batteries

Finally, we wrap up our list with batteries. Today's batteries usually have a fairly prominent expiration date listed somewhere on the package, but in case you missed it, we're here to remind you the batteries you stored for Y2K are probably no longer any good. Batteries can begin losing small amounts of energy from the moment they're manufactured. As a result, old batteries could be completely depleted or corroded before you ever crack open the package. The shelf life for batteries can vary significantly depending on how they're made. For example, Energizer says its ultimate lithium batteries will last 15 years, while advanced lithium batteries have a shelf life of 10 years. Meanwhile, the company's rechargeable batteries lose 1 percent of their deliverable energy every day, giving them a short shelf life before they need to be recharged. Stocking up at low prices can be a smart financial move, but only if you can use what you buy before it goes bad.

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If you have a bathroom full of old cosmetics or a garage filled with paint and oil, it may be time to purge and be a little more mindful about what you buy in the future. [Source: MoneyTalksNews | Maryalene LaPonsie | October 27, 2018 ++]

Thought for the Week:

"Knowledge comes, but wisdom lingers. It may not be difficult to store up in the mind a vast quantity of facts within a comparatively short time, but the ability to form judgments requires the severe discipline of hard work and the tempering heat of experience and maturity." — **Calvin Coolidge**

One Word Essays ► Curiosity



Interesting Ideas ► Homemade Lawn Sprinkler



You only need a few things. A push pin, a bamboo skewer, a clean empty 2-liter soda bottle, a 3/4 inch female x 3/4 female swivel hose adapter and some washers. Put one of the red washers inside one side of the adapter (the side that is going to fit over the bottle) and twist it on and secure tightly to the 2-liter bottle. Next get a push pin and poke 8 holes along one side of the bottle only (the top). Then take a bamboo skewer and widen each of the holes a bit. Adjust water pressure for spray length.

Have You Heard? ► Serenity | Firearm | Is Sex Work?

Serenity

- Just before the funeral services, the undertaker came up to the very elderly widow and asked, 'How old was your husband?' '98,' she replied....'Two years older than me'. 'So you're 96,' the undertaker commented.. She responded, 'Hardly worth going home, is it?'
- Reporters interviewing a 104-year-old woman: 'And what do you think is the best thing about being 104?' the reporter asked... She simply replied, 'No peer pressure.'
- The nice thing about being senile is you can hide your own Easter eggs and have fun finding them.
- I've sure gotten old! I've had two bypass surgeries, a hip replacement, new knees, fought prostate cancer and diabetes. I'm half blind, can't hear anything quieter than a jet engine, take 40 different medications that make me dizzy, winded, and subject to blackouts. Have bouts with dementia. Have poor circulation; hardly feel my hands and feet anymore. Can't remember if I'm 85 or 92. Have lost all my friends. But, thank God, I still have my driver's license.
- I feel like my body has gotten totally out of shape, so I got my doctor's permission to join a fitness club and start exercising. I decided to take an aerobics class for seniors. I bent, twisted, gyrated, jumped up and down, and perspired for an hour. But, by the time I got my leotards on, the class was over.
- My memory's not as sharp as it used to be. Also, my memory's not as sharp as it used to be.
- Know how to prevent sagging? Just eat till the wrinkles fill out.
- It's scary when you start making the same noises as your coffee maker.
- These days about half the stuff in my shopping cart says, 'For fast relief.'

- The Senility Prayer: Grant me the senility to forget the people I never liked anyway, the good fortune to run into the ones I do, and the eyesight to tell the difference.

-o-o-O-o-o-

Firearm

A woman pulled into the gas station to get some gas and went to pay inside. As she was walking in, she noticed these two cops watching a customer who was smoking while pumping gas. She saw him and thought, "is this man drunk, stupid, or just crazy?!! With the police standing right there! Anyway, she went inside and paid. As she was walking out, she heard someone screaming, looked and saw the man's arm was on fire! He was swinging his arm and running around going... crazy! She went outside, and the two officers literally had to take him to the ground and they put the fire out! Then they handcuffed him and threw him in the police car. Being the person that she was she asked the cops what they were arresting him for. This cop looked her square in the eyes and said ... "WAVING A FIREARM IN PUBLIC"

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Is Sex Work?

A U.S. Marine Colonel was about to start the morning briefing to his staff. While waiting for the coffee machine to finish its brewing, the colonel decided to pose a question to all assembled. He explained that his wife had been a bit frisky the night before and he failed to get his usual amount of sound sleep. He posed the question of just how much of sex was "work" and how much of it was "pleasure?"

- A Major chimed in with 75-25% in favor of work.
- A Captain said it was 50-50%.
- A lieutenant responded with 25-75% in favor of pleasure, depending upon his state of inebriation at the time.

There being no consensus, the colonel turned to the PFC who was in charge of making the coffee. What was HIS opinion? Without any hesitation, the young PFC responded, "Sir, it has to be 100% pleasure." The colonel was surprised and, as you might guess, asked why.

"Well, sir, if there was any work involved, the officers would have me doing it for them." The room fell silent.

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