

RAO BULLETIN

15 November 2020

PDF Edition



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National Security

Update 02: Where President-elect Joe Biden Stands

After five days of counting votes, former Vice President Joe Biden has been declared by the media the winner of the U.S. presidential election, unseating President Donald Trump. Biden, who was elected to the Senate exactly 48 years ago to the day he was named winner of the presidential election, is no stranger to international leadership and has a long track record on international relations and national security issues. Here are a few of his selected positions and how they differ from Trump.

The defense budget: Biden has said that Trump “abandoned all fiscal discipline when it comes to defense spending,” and while he doesn’t foresee major U.S. defense cuts if elected, he will be facing pressure from the left to scale back.

To affordably deter Russia and China, Biden said he would shift investments from “legacy systems that won’t be relevant” to “smart investments in technologies and innovations — including in cyber, space, unmanned systems and artificial intelligence.” He also wants to boost neglected nonmilitary investments, such as “diplomacy, economic power, education, and science and technology.”

Personal relationship to the military: Biden, a Blue Star father whose son deployed to Iraq while he served alongside President Barack Obama, made national unity and international cooperation key tenets of his campaign, along with a vow to better handle the ongoing coronavirus pandemic which has killed more than 250,000 Americans. In recent weeks, he also promised better treatment and more respect for troops and veterans, arguing that Trump has dismissed and devalued their sacrifices through his actions in office.

Afghanistan, Iraq and Iran: Biden has vowed to bring U.S. combat troops home from Iraq and Afghanistan, likely leaving residual counterterrorism forces. His camp favors small-scale operations (maybe led by special operations forces) rather than large, open-ended troop deployments, which he agrees would require the informed consent of the American people. Biden, who voted for the Iraq War when he was a senator, said during the recent campaign that he played a key role in the Obama administration’s drawdown of 150,000 U.S. forces from Iraq. On Iran, he said he would commit to preventing the country from acquiring a nuclear weapon, offer a diplomatic path while maintaining targeted sanctions, and work closely with Israel to ensure the American ally can defend itself against Iran and its proxies.

NATO and Europe: Biden and his advisers have drawn a contrast with Trump, pledging to rehabilitate frayed alliances. Biden hit Trump for straining relations between the U.S. and Europe. He said the next president must “salvage our reputation, rebuild confidence in our leadership, and mobilize our country and our allies to rapidly meet new challenges,” pledging that he would “take immediate steps to renew U.S. democracy and alliances, protect the United States’ economic future, and once more have America lead the world.” Biden plans to review troop movements out of Germany if he takes office, according to a top foreign policy aide.

Arms control: Favored by arms control advocates, Biden has promised to renew New START and would likely accept Russia’s offer to extend it five years without preconditions. He also said he would rejoin the Iran nuclear deal if it returned to full compliance described in the agreement. While Trump has loosened restrictions on the use of landmines by the U.S. military in conflict areas, Biden has said the move unnecessarily puts civilians at risk and that he would reverse it.

Nuclear weapons: Biden has signaled he would scale back Trump’s buildup of the nuclear arsenal. The Democratic nominee for president is opposed to the W76-2 and an SLCM. Biden would face pressure from the left to drop plans to build a new nuclear intercontinental ballistic missile force, replacing the Minuteman III fleet fielded in 1970, though he has not announced a position on it. Biden said he would review a policy reserving the option of using nuclear weapons first.

Weapon sales: While Biden hasn’t made his views clear about arms sales overall, he said he would end U.S. military and other support for the Saudi-led war in Yemen. As he reassesses the U.S.-Saudi relationship, he would end weapon sales to Riyadh (which has historically been the top partner for U.S. military sales). “We will make clear that America will never again check its principles at the door just to buy oil or sell weapons,” Biden said. On firearm exports, his campaign said he may reverse a Trump administration rule that moved jurisdiction from the State Department to the Commerce Department. One thing to watch: will a Biden admin go through with the sale of F-35s to the UAE, which has drawn opposition from Democrats in Congress?

Great power competition: While in the Senate, Biden pushed for better relations with China through increased commercial ties. But he now views China as “the greatest strategic challenge to the United States and our allies in Asia and in Europe,” one of the few areas in which he and Trump agree. Biden has called Chinese President Xi Jinping a “thug” and pledged “swift economic sanctions” against China if it tries to influence American companies or citizens. While Trump has bragged about having a good relationship with Russian President Vladimir Putin, expect a different

tone from Biden should he occupy the White House. The former vice president has described Trump as “subservient” to Putin,” and has talked about telling Putin directly: “I don’t think you have a soul.”

[Source: DefenseNews | Aaron Mehta, Joe Gould & Leo Shane III | November 8, 2020 ++]

SECDEF

Update 20: Trump Fires Mark Esper

U.S. Defense Secretary Mark Esper has been fired by President Donald Trump. Trump announced the move in a 9 NOV tweet, just days after the presidential election was called in favor of former Vice President Joe Biden. Christopher Miller, director of the National Counterterrorism Center, has been appointed acting defense secretary, Trump said. Esper, a West Point graduate and former Army lieutenant colonel, was vice president of government relations for Raytheon — the fifth-largest defense contractor in the United States — for seven years before becoming Army secretary. His most notable work leading the Army included a shake-up of the service’s acquisitions portfolio, a trend he brought with him to the top job.

Esper was confirmed as defense secretary in August 2019 and now becomes the third man to exit the top job at the Pentagon under the Trump administration, following Jim Mattis and, in an acting capacity, Patrick Shanahan. (Then-Navy Secretary Richard Spencer briefly filled in as defense secretary between Shanahan and Esper.) The announcement marks a meteoric rise for Miller, who served in the Army from 1987 through 2014, over the last year. From 2018 to 2019, Miller served as a special assistant to the president and senior director for counterterrorism and transnational threats at the National Security Council. In January, he was sworn in as deputy assistant secretary of defense for special operations and combating terrorism, a job four levels down from defense secretary, and then was quickly boosted to fill in as performing the duties of assistant secretary of defense for special operations. He was sworn into the National Counterterrorism Center role in August.



Defense Secretary Mark Esper at an Aug. 4 White House ceremony (left) and his replacement Christopher Miller (right)

Notably, Miller would be legally barred from taking the job through the traditional confirmation process. Under 10 U.S. Code § 113, an individual “may not be appointed as Secretary of Defense within seven years after relief from active duty as a commissioned officer of a regular component of an armed force.” As he retired from the military in 2014, Miller would not meet that threshold. However, it does not apply to acting officials, according to Joshua Geltzer, a former counterterrorism official with the Obama administration, who is now a professor of law at Georgetown University. Legal experts quickly raised questions about whether the appointment of Miller over David Norquist, the confirmed deputy secretary of defense, was an illegal move. A spokesperson confirmed that Norquist is still in his role at the department.

Mieke Eyoang of the Third Way think tank said “By passing over the Senate-confirmed DepSecDef, Trump is again showing he doesn’t care about the rules, continuity, or the smooth management of the largest military on earth.”

National security leaders have urged Trump to keep Esper for the duration of the lame duck presidency. “That’s the way it ought to work, that’s the way it’s always worked, and that’s why I’ve said very forcefully that we want to send a signal to our adversaries and allies alike that the chain of command is intact,” said National Defense Industrial Association Chairman Arnold Punaro, a former Marine Corps general and staff director of the Senate Armed Services Committee. Because Esper is respected, removing him might “create undue turbulence,” Punaro warned last week. “If the president decides to fire him there’s nothing we can do about it — but it would be a bad decision for national security.”

Esper’s removal was widely expected, as he appeared to fall out of favor with Trump following the 1 JUN incident when Esper joined Trump for a photo op at a church located near the White House. That incident involved crossing historic Lafayette Park, which at the time was occupied by protesters who were cleared out by law enforcement to make space for Trump and his retinue. The secretary’s participation, along with that of Gen. Mark Milley, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, was criticized about whether the two men were allowing the military to be used for political gain. Among those blasting the move was retired Adm. Mike Mullen, the 17th chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who attacked Esper’s statement on a call with governors in which the secretary said the government must “dominate the ‘battlespace.’”

On 3 JUN, Esper held a news conference in which he appeared to publicly split with Trump about the idea of invoking the Insurrection Act, which would allow the president to use active-duty military personnel for crowd control. “The option to use active-duty forces in a law enforcement role should only be used as a matter of last resort, and only in the most urgent and dire of situations. We are not in one of those situations now,” Esper said. “I do not support invoking the Insurrection Act.” Those comments appeared to doom Esper’s long-term prospects, with multiple media outlets reporting that White House staff were furious with Esper, and that the president himself was mad and considering dumping the former Raytheon lobbyist. While Esper held onto the job then, his public appearances afterward were more guarded; he held only one more open press briefing, in July, and largely avoided taking questions from reporters who travelled with him.

In October, Esper launched a series of speeches at various Washington think tanks, which seemed designed at burnishing his legacy as having successfully implemented the National Defense Strategy. During those events, he took no questions submitted by the audience, and questions from the moderator were almost uniformly tied to the specific subject Esper wished to discuss. Some Democratic lawmakers have already voiced fears Esper’s exit will risk national security and deepen the country’s period of uncertainty. “This president can still do a lot of damage between now and January. We can’t take our eyes off the ball yet,” Senate Intelligence Committee ranking member Mark Warner, D-Va., said in a statement. “Secretary Esper deserves our thanks for his service. And our country deserves better than this.”

“How does firing Secretary of Defense Esper keep us safe 70 days from [Trump] being fired?” added House Military Personnel Subcommittee Chair Jackie Speier (D-CA). House Armed Services Committee Chairman Adam Smith (D-WA) was similarly direct. “Dismissing politically appointed national security leaders during a transition is a destabilizing move that will only embolden our adversaries and put our country at greater risk,” Smith said. “President Trump’s decision to fire Secretary Esper out of spite is not just childish, it’s also reckless. It has long been clear that President Trump cares about loyalty above all else, often at the expense of competence, and during a period of presidential transition competence in government is of the utmost importance.”

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As former Defense Secretary Mark Esper packed up his Pentagon office 9 NOV, he released a final memo to the department urging troops and DoD civilians to “always do the right thing.” “While I step aside knowing that there is much more we could accomplish together to advance America’s national security, there is much achieved in the time we had to improve the readiness, capabilities, and professionalism of the joint force, while fundamentally transforming and preparing it for the future,” he wrote. Esper told Military Times in a 4 NOV interview that he had no intention of resigning from his post, though he had heard the rumors that the president intended to fire him after the election.

“Yeah, look, I mean — my soldiers don’t get to quit,” he said. “So if I’m going to quit, it better be over something really, really big. And otherwise, look, I’m going to do what I’ve always done, which is try and shape it the best I can.”

Esper touted the department’s progress on implementing the National Defense Strategy, confronting the COVID-19 pandemic and confronting conflicts with Iran, Russia and China. In a separate letter addressed to the president, Esper recapped his achievements while in office, from advancing the NDS to standing up Space Force. “I have never been prouder to serve my country than as a Soldier or Civilian in the Department of Defense. Especially knowing that the military has the faith, confidence, and support of the American people,” he wrote. [Source: DefenseNews & MilitaryTimes | Aaron Mehta & Meghann Myers | November 10, 2020 ++]

Ballistic Missile Sub Program

Navy Working through ‘Challenges’ on Tight Schedule

The Navy is working through challenges with its Columbia-class ballistic missile submarine program as it tries to meet a tight delivery schedule for its next generation of nuclear-armed boats, said the commander of Naval Sea Systems Command 12 NOV. The project is the sea service’s top modernization priority as it seeks to replace its aging Ohio-class subs. On 5 NOV, it awarded a \$9.4 billion contract to General Dynamics Electric Boat for full construction of the lead ship and advanced procurement for the second vessel. The Pentagon plans to buy a total of 12 boats. The Navy aims to have the first ship, USS Columbia, on patrol by 2031, and officials have said there is little margin for schedule slippage.

“The program is on plan,” said Vice Adm. William Galinis. However, “we are seeing ... some challenges as we come through the final parts of the design and get into construction a little bit.” This stage of the process is often where issues can spring up, he told reporters during a meeting hosted by George Washington University’s Project for Media and National Security. For “new ship construction programs in general that’s always kind of a challenge point ... to get that design completed and get into construction,” he said. “And then you’re building the first vessel and you’re going to have production issues along the way. And then the next phase is when you start to activate the systems, bring the submarine online and then get it delivered to the fleet. So that will really be our next challenge.”

Galinis gave the two main shipbuilders involved with the program — General Dynamics Electric Boat and Huntington Ingalls Industries Newport News Shipbuilding — high marks for working with the program executive office to keep the project on schedule. About 350 companies in the industrial base and supply chain are considered to be critical for the program, Galinis said. Among those, the Navy believes about 5 to 10 percent are “somewhat challenged” in one area or another to be able to meet the demand for the submarines, he noted.

“The supplier base is something that we continue to watch pretty closely,” he said. PEO Submarines “has done a pretty good job reaching out and working with their supply base through the shipyards to really kind of get a good understanding of where ... the risks are.” Across the supplier base, the Navy is most concerned about welding and non-destructive testing skills. “That’s a big part of shipbuilding — and that’s not just for Columbia, that’s sort of across the enterprise,” Galinis said. “I’m seeing some challenges there.” The sea service is working to ensure it has enough electricians and mechanics to meet the demand, he said. Writ large, the Navy’s biggest challenge is on-time delivery of ships and submarines, Galinis said. “We want them complete [and] we need the right level of quality,” he said. “That’s both in new construction and repair.”

Maintenance, which the Navy has struggled to perform on time in recent years, is one of Galinis’ top focus areas. While more improvement is needed, he noted that the service is making progress. Last year, the service conducted a study of its maintenance availabilities and found that it was not properly planning for availability duration, he said. Following that analysis, the Navy “reset” the availability duration of its ships, a move which Galinis believes will help

the service overcome issues. From fiscal year 2019 to 2020, the service decreased the “days of maintenance delays” by over 80 percent, he said, from more than 7,000 to about 1,100. However, “we adjusted the duration of the availability in some cases, so we changed the baseline,” he added. That means that percentage decrease would actually be closer to 40 if the service went with its original baseline, he noted.

“Overall we absolutely made a significant improvement in FY ’20 compared to FY ’19,” Galinis said. However, “going forward, what I would tell you is we're not going to get to zero [delays] in ’21,” he added. There are about half a dozen ships that will pose challenges, he noted, including some Aegis cruisers as they undergo extended maintenance for the service’s cruiser modification program. About 67 percent of the Navy’s maintenance availabilities are tracking toward on-time delivery, he said. “That’s up from less than 50 percent last year,” he said. “We’re moving the needle in the right direction, but there's still a lot of work to do there.” [Source: National Defense Magazine Online | Yasmin Tadjdeh | November 12, 2020 ++]

Uncrewed Surface Vessels

Update 02: USV Completes 17 Day Transit via Panama Canal to Port Hueneme



A Ghost Fleet Overlord test vessel

One of the Pentagon’s two Overlord large unmanned surface vessels conducted a first-ever Panama Canal transit, sailing thousands of miles from the Gulf Coast to California in a major test of autonomous systems with few reliability issues along the way, the chief of naval operations told USNI News. The 59-meter USV, which was converted from a regular high-speed craft to a USV prototype last year, departed Mobile, Ala., on 18 SEP. After operating in the Gulf of Mexico for some time, it made a Panama Canal transit and arrived in Port Hueneme, Calif., on 5 NOV according to data provided to USNI News from the MarineTraffic vessel tracking service.

“Recently, the Strategic Capabilities Office (SCO) in partnership with the Navy conducted a long-range autonomous transit with a Ghost Fleet Overlord vessel. During this voyage, the vessel traveled over 4,700 nautical miles, 97 percent of which was in autonomous mode — a record for the program. Ghost Fleet Overlord will continue fleet experimentation to inform the Navy’s unmanned concept development,” Pentagon spokesman Cmdr. Josh Frey told USNI News 10 NOV.

Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Mike Gilday told USNI News in a 5 NOV interview that the Navy has a good idea of its requirements for unmanned vehicles on the surface, under the sea and in the air, and that today the focus is boosting reliability of the prototypes. “You know, we just did transit of one unmanned [surface vessel] through the Panama Canal. Ninety percent of that transit, more than 90 percent was autonomous, with a very high-reliability rate,” he said, adding that there were “a couple of small casualties” during the voyage but that “we are learning, and what

we are trying to do is develop a prototype with a very high degree of reliability that we can then double down on and scale.”

The Pentagon’s Strategic Capabilities Office operates two Overlord large USV prototypes that came out of the 2017 kickoff of the “Ghost Fleet” effort. The vessels were converted to have autonomous navigation and engineering systems in early 2019, and late last year they advanced to Phase 2 of experimentation efforts. SCO will turn those over to the Navy’s Surface Development Squadron One by the end of this fiscal year, or by September 2021. SURFDEVRON Commodore Capt. Hank Adams previously told USNI News that, even prior to his squadron taking command of the vessel, he would be able to experiment with an Overlord USV paired with an ashore command and control node.

Adams said in a virtual panel event in September that, using an Overlord vessel in the end of Fiscal Year 2020 and into the beginning of FY 2021 – or around now – he would create the first 24-hour watch “of a fleet-manned unmanned operations center ashore, UOC ashore. It’s going to be here in San Diego. So I’m going to have fleet operators, [surface warfare]-qualified junior officers who have got training in COLREGs and ship-handling and things like that, and senior enlisted personnel in relevant rates, are going to stand up this watch, and they’re going to be sitting next to the technology developers that write the code for the supervisory control system. And for the duration of that training, which will be some number of weeks, I’m going to have my guys in that UOC ashore,” Adams said in the panel.

“We’ll be getting feedback on what we think command and control looks like from a UOC ashore. We’re going to be giving direct feedback to the tech developers on how to improve the human systems integration piece for the supervisory control system. We’re going to begin looking at what is the proper information display that should be part of a UOC ashore, what’s the proper manning, did we get the training right.”

The Overlord USVs are based in the Gulf Coast – one in Mobile and one in New Orleans, according to vessel-tracking data – but will be moved to California to serve under the SURFDEVRON. As part of their prototype work while still under SCO, Navy leaders have publicly discussed a Gulf Coast to East Coast transit of an Overlord this year, which appears to have been conducted by the second Overlord vessel earlier this fall. That voyage to Norfolk, Va., and back to the Gulf Coast was about 1,400 nautical miles in distance, USNI News previously reported, compared to this most recent 4,700 nautical mile trip out to California. The USV that conducted the Panama Canal transit is owned by Seacor Marine and was built at Gulf Craft in Franklin, La.

According to press reports, the SCO contracted with Gibbs & Cox and L3 ASV Global in 2018 to convert one craft each into unmanned prototypes. The Pentagon used special contracting rules to prevent disclosure of the contractors and the cost of the Overlord program. Additionally, the Navy has bought two Sea Hunter medium USV prototype vessels that are under SURFDEVRON control. The first of those vessels has already participated in two Surface Warfare Advanced Tactical Training (SWATT) events this past year and in FY 2021 will participate in multiple fleet exercises and training events. The craft is based in Point Loma, Calif. The second Sea Hunter is expected to deliver in the coming months.

Gilday said during the interview that “we have a really good sense of what we need. Under the sea we have a really good sense of what we want those platforms to deliver. On the sea, we know that we need larger unmanned as adjunct magazines, right, and medium unmanned to perform a number of other functions – and some of them are classified, and I don’t want to get into them, but they range from deception to command and control nodes. And so we know that that’s a valid requirement.” With the requirement for USVs and other unmanned systems validated, he said the next step is assuring their reliability and sustainability in the fleet.

In parallel, he added, “those vessels are useless unless we can command and control them with a very high degree of precision and reliability. And so that’s where we start talking about the Navy’s Project Overmatch that falls underneath or nests underneath JADC-2. And so there are four big pieces to that. It’s the networks. It’s the infrastructure. It’s the data standards. And then finally, it’s the capabilities, whether they’re battle management aids or whether they’re artificial intelligence and machine learning capabilities that we apply to that data that allow us to

decide and act faster than the bad guy, and then deliver ordnance faster out of these unmanned platforms.” [Source: USNI News | Megan Eckstein | November 10, 2020 ++]

Special Operations Forces

American Kidnapped in Niger Rescued



U.S. Special Operations on 31 OCT rescued an American citizen who was kidnapped by armed attackers last week in southern Niger, the Pentagon said. U.S. Navy SEAL Team Six led the overnight mission in northern Nigeria, where fighters loyal to al-Qaida and the Islamic State have established hideouts. No service members were injured in the raid. "This American citizen is safe and is now in the care of the U.S. Department of State," said Jonathan Hoffman, assistant to the secretary of defense for public affairs. "The United States will continue to protect our people and our interests anywhere in the world."

The assailants forced Philippe Nathan Watson, 27, from his farm in remote Massalata on 27 OCT, demanding more than \$1 million from his family, who are missionaries. Otherwise, they threatened to sell the captive to extremists, said a U.S. official, who was not authorized to discuss the matter publicly. Groups linked to al-Qaida and the Islamic State have made tens of millions of dollars from kidnappings in recent years, analysts say. The extremists gained a foothold nearly a decade ago in the Sahel, which lies just south of the Sahara Desert, after the Libyan government collapsed and mercenaries once employed by Moammar Gadhafi streamed into neighboring Mali. Violence has since spilled into Niger and Burkina Faso, turning once peaceful countryside into conflict zones.

The operation involved the governments of the U.S., Niger and Nigeria working together to rescue Walton quickly, sources said. The CIA provided intelligence leading to Walton's whereabouts and Marine Special Operations elements in Africa helped locate him, a former U.S. official said. Then the elite SEAL Team Six carried out a "precision" hostage rescue mission and killed all but one of the seven captors, according to officials with direct knowledge about the operation. "They were all dead before they knew what happened," another counterterrorism source with knowledge told ABC News. President Donald Trump called the rescue mission a "big win for our very elite U.S. Special Forces" in a tweet and the Pentagon lauded the rescue mission in a statement. Nigerian and American officials told ABC News that they believed the captors were from an armed group from Nigeria and that it was not considered terror-related. But hostages are often sold to terrorist groups.

Watson's abduction came two months after Islamic State fighters ambushed a giraffe sanctuary near Niger's capital, Niamey, killing seven aid workers and their local guide. The nation's military has partnered with French and regional troops to fight rising extremism in the West Africa. More than 5,000 people have died in the unrest this year alone, according to the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project, which tracks the casualties. Hundreds of American soldiers are stationed at two bases in Niger, a country of roughly 24 millions and three times the size of California. U.S. forces normally provide training and intelligence support in the region. Saturday's operation was extremely rare, the official said. "Last night, our Country's brave warriors rescued an American hostage in Nigeria," President Donald

Trump tweeted Saturday. "Our Nation salutes the courageous soldiers behind the daring nighttime rescue operation and celebrates the safe return of yet another American citizen!"

Another American kidnapped in Niger is still missing. Jeffrey Rey Woodke, a 59-year-old Christian aid worker, remains in captivity four years after Islamic State militants snatched him in the country's northern desert. His wife, Els Woodke, urged his captors to free him this spring as the world battled the coronavirus pandemic. "I would say, please consider Jeff's age and what is going on in the world," Woodke told ABC News. "It's not good to keep captives. Send him home." Four hostages held by insurgents in Mali were freed last month in apparent exchange for about 200 prisoners suspected of working with the extremist groups. The government - newly formed after an August coup d'etat - negotiated the release of a prominent Malian politician, a French aid worker and two Italians: a priest and a tourist. It's unclear if ransoms were paid.

Niger is one of many Sahel nations plagued by terrorism and instability, but its military has been a close U.S. partner in the fight against regional jihadist groups, including affiliates of both al Qaeda and ISIS. Last week, a U.N.-backed donor summit raised \$1.7 billion to support the region's governments as Secretary-General Antonio Guterres warned the humanitarian crisis is at a "breaking point," with 13.4 million people in need of assistance. [Source: The Washington Post & ABC News | Danielle Paquette, James Gordon Meek, Aicha El Hammar Castano, and Conor Finnegan | October 31, 2020 ++]

Vet OPM Pensions

Agency Miscalculation Payee

Feds that served in the armed forces, Peace Corps and Volunteers in Service to America will no longer be on the hook for agency miscalculations of their retirement deposits under a proposed rule issued by the Office of Personnel Management 5 NOV.

In order for veterans currently working in the federal government to count their time serving in the military toward their retirement under either the Civil Service Retirement System or the Federal Employees Retirement System, those employees must pay a deposit with interest for that time to the government. A federal employee who served in the Navy for five years, for example, would have to pay a deposit for any of those years they wanted to count toward their federal retirement. That employee could also opt to not count their military service, which would push their eventual federal retirement date back.

That deposit is used to make up the difference in paycheck deductions that would have normally been applied to an employee's pension, had they been working for a federal agency rather than in the military at the time. Previously, if an agency had miscalculated the interest on that deposit, it had no other option but to put the employee on the hook for that difference, meaning that a fed could end up owing thousands of dollars down the road through no fault of their own. The Correcting Miscalculations in Veterans' Pensions Act, signed into law in late 2018, provided the legal basis for *agencies to pay the miscalculated amount*, and the proposed OPM rule creates the necessary framework for implementing that new policy. The rule change also applies to Peace Corps and VISTA volunteers who credit their service and experience an administrative error in their payment calculations.

"[The Correcting Miscalculations in Veterans' Pensions Act] specifies that if an employing agency makes an administrative error in processing deposits for post-1956 military service or full-time volunteer service as a volunteer or volunteer leader with the Peace Corps or VISTA that increases the amount of interest owed on the deposit, the employing agency or OPM may pay on behalf of the employee any additional interest assessed due to the administrative error," the rule states. "Agencies are responsible for establishing their own guidelines for what constitutes administrative error and whether a payment is made. OPM has no role or authority in the decision." Comments on the

proposed rule are due via the [eRulemaking Portal](#) by 4 JAN. [Source: Federal Times | Jessie Bur| November 5, 2020 ++]

National Army Museum

Opened 11 NOV at 1775 Liberty Dr., Fort Belvoir, Va.



Seventy lifelike cast figures in uniform and bearing arms portray American soldiers from the Revolutionary War to recent combat in Afghanistan are spread throughout the National Museum of the United States Army, set to open to the public Nov. 11. The figures form centerpieces for the museum's six main galleries that reflect the Army's history from its militia roots in the early 1600s through its roles in ongoing wars in the Middle East, museum officials said Thursday. The chronologically arranged galleries feature unique artifacts, short vignettes about soldiers' personal experiences at war and interactive displays that explain things like the music soldiers listened to in the era and the food they ate.

Tammy Call, the museum's director, said it was important that visitors experience the chronological history of the Army, to see how the service and warfare has changed over time. But, more than anything else, she said she hoped visitors would find a connection with the unique stories of individual soldiers displayed throughout the museum. The National Museum of the United States Army's National Overseas Gallery documents life for American soldiers from 1989 to the 1918, including this immersive scene of soldier fighting during World War I. "My greatest desire is that an individual visiting here, that doesn't have a connection with the Army, or that does, that they walk away with knowledge of the American soldier," Call said. "That they see themselves reflected in our soldiers and that there's that understanding that our American soldiers and members of our Army are American citizens."

The 185,000-square-foot museum has been a longtime coming. The Army Historical Foundation has worked for more than a decade to build the service's first comprehensive museum. It will open on Veterans Day, in the midst of the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, just more than three years after the Army broke ground. The pandemic delayed the opening by about five months, Call said. When it opens Nov. 11, visitors must reserve free tickets online at theNMUSA.org and adhere to certain restrictions, like wearing a face-covering and social distancing. The museum is also providing styluses to allow visitors to work the plethora of touchscreens throughout the exhibits.

Officials wanted visitors to experience what soldiering was like for troops on the ground throughout the Army's history. A video inside the museum's Army Theater brings them into the action in Belgium during World War II, in the Ia Drang Valley in Vietnam and the Korengal Valley in Afghanistan, placing them into the heart of the battles

with a 300-degree screen. The theater shakes as bomb blasts go off and machine gun fire cuts through the air. Pylons details information about soldier who fought in Vietnam, inside the Cold War Gallery at the new National Museum of the United States Army at Fort Belvoir, Va. The exhibits include six dedicated to combat, one that examines the connection between the Army and American society, one that shares the history of the nation's highest military decoration, the Medal of Honor, and a virtual reality gallery where visitors can step into a World War II tank simulator, fly in virtual historic aircraft and even test their marksmanship skills.

Curators said the museum would rotate displays of 1,389 artifacts, most of which the Army has held for years but never before shared with the public. And more items are headed to the museum in the near future, including some from as recent as this year, Call said. The museum plans to add items from soldiers who were at Iraq's al Asad Air Base during the Jan. 8 ballistic missile attack by Iran in retaliation for the United States' drone strike that killed their top military figure, Maj. Gen. Qassem Soleimani. Call said on 5 NOV she was not certain what those items would include, but the staff considered the event a critical part of the Army's recent history. "We felt it was so important, just like all the artifacts in the in the exhibit wing ... to preserve those items, to get them, to take care of them and to be able to have them available." The museum has left room to expand its galleries to include whatever the future holds for the Army, Call said.

Paul Morando, who has been the museum's exhibits chief for about three years, said his team worked hard to ensure everyone who visits would learn from their time in the building. "You don't have to be a soldier to be connected to this museum," he said. "If you never served in the Army, but you can connect to something — a soldier's story here from the same hometown, and look and see what he or she did for our country, then there's a connection there." The most difficult part, he said, was working within the natural limits in a physical building. "You can't tell the entire story, of course, of the history of the Army," Morando said. "This museum would be five times the size if we incorporated every soldier's story, every aspect of the Army's history. But if we can just reach those visitors through the galleries, through the exhibits, through the artifacts that we have here, then we've done our job." [Source: VVA Web Weekly | November 6, 2020 ++]

Commissary Shortages

Officials Consider Drastic Measures as Shortages Hit Critical Levels



Increasing shortages of groceries have ramped up commissary officials' pleas to industry to help them supply commissary shelves, and caused officials high-level Pentagon officials to consider implementing the Defense Production Act for grocery production. It would be the first time the act has been invoked for commissaries. The problems are wide ranging, affecting many categories, such as canned goods and frozen goods — not just sanitizing products. Concerns started in the summer and early fall, and are related to various issues around the pandemic, including reduced production.

The Defense Production Act authorizes the president to require industry to give preferential treatment to national defense programs, in order to meet current national defense and emergency preparedness program requirements. But this would be uncharted territory, said Steve Rossetti, president of the American Logistics Association, an organization

of manufacturers and distributors selling products to commissaries and exchanges. “The existing regulations say that commercial items are not covered under the guidance, but then again, these are unusual times,” Rossetti said. “In March, the Pentagon designated commissaries as ‘mission critical’ and said that extraordinary measures need to be taken to keep the stores open and products flowing.” Rossetti said the ramped-up effort involving the Defense Production Act is being discussed and coordinated with several Pentagon offices.

DoD officials did not immediately comment on whether they were considering invoking this law to remedy the shortages. Defense and commissary officials are pursuing various options; Rossetti described it as a “full-court press to get commissary shelves filled.” A 10 NOV meeting is scheduled between commissary officials and industry representatives to discuss the issues and options for addressing the empty shelves, Rossetti said. In addition, commissary officials have scheduled “listening sessions” with major manufacturers, he said, to strengthen partnership with industry. The Defense Commissary Agency’s new director, Bill Moore, and other high-level commissary officials will be involved in the sessions.

The out-of-stock rate is “much higher than normal” in stateside commissaries, said Moore, 20 OCT, during an ALA conference. “We need to figure out how to resolve that sooner rather than later,” he said. The issue was brought up by numerous commissary and exchange officials during the conference. Berry Patrick, who works in the DoD Office of Morale, Welfare and Recreation and Nonappropriated Fund Policy, also urged industry to help the military stores beef up their pipeline, particularly the allocations of products. He praised industry for working with military store officials to get products in the stores as the pandemic unfolded. “You were doing such a good job helping keep us supplied... we had dozens of phone calls from companies asking to get products from us,” he said, during the conference. “We had to hold the line on that.”

In some places, the empty shelves are driving customers away. A shopper at McGuire Commissary at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, N.J., said she’s so frustrated with the empty shelves there that she doesn’t know if she’ll try shopping there again. “As it stands now, it’s a waste of time,” she said. The problem has persisted for months, she said, whether her visits are on pay day, before pay day, different days of the week and different times. The shelves were well-stocked with paper towels, toilet paper, baby items and personal care items the last time she shopped, but from there, the selections went downhill.

“Meat seemed to be stocked adequately but not as well as before. Yet sugar, spices, jarred pasta sauce, canned vegetables, frozen veggies, prepackaged lunch meat, bacon, sausage, paper plates, dish soap.... the list goes on... the shelves were bare,” she said. But it does vary. The shopper said she’s contacted friends who shop at other installations who are not having the same problems. And a retiree who shops each week at the Fort Belvoir, Va., commissary said he normally goes with a list and for the most part, finds what he’s looking for. Some of the exceptions he noted are turkey cutlets, Presto products, and spices that sell out quickly.

From the beginning of the pandemic, Defense Commissary Agency leaders prioritized shipments for overseas stores in Europe and the Pacific because of the limited options some of those customers have outside the gate, and in many cases, customers weren’t able to shop outside the gate. As products become available, the first priority is those overseas commissaries. The agency also arranged for multiple emergency air shipments as required. Commissary officials have also worked with suppliers within the overseas theaters to buy products offshore to supplement critical items that may not be available from the U.S., said commissary agency spokesman Kevin Robinson. “As a result, DeCA’s overseas central distribution centers and meat processing plant have sustained outstanding in-stock rates throughout the pandemic,” he said.

That’s left stateside stores short. According to ALA’s Rossetti, the pipeline for some overseas commissaries is 55 days, “forcing distributors to fill overseas orders and leaving little, if any, product for stateside stores.” Robinson said DeCA leadership is working with industry to try to get as much of available product as possible, to include working on one-time buys and alternate items to help supplement regularly stocked items that may not be available.

But commissary officials are seeing indications that commissaries may not be getting their fair share of products, compared to stores outside the gate, said Chris Burns, DeCA's executive director of sales, marketing and logistics, during the ALA conference. He said he's starting to see industry data that indicates some brands and categories are growing in stores outside the gate, but not in commissaries and other stores in the military channel of business, and allocations of products are moving forward to other retail companies. "We want to be treated as the number one retailer in your company and we need that message to get up to your CEOs," he told the industry representatives.

"If you say that the military channel is just another channel, then I would ask, is the military patron just another patron?" He urged industry representatives to talk to their company leaders about the military lifestyle and the sacrifices service members and their families make, and why commissaries exist. "We have a statutory requirement to provide savings, whether in the exchange or commissary, as a benefit, and we shouldn't have to force them to go outside the military installation" because the products are not on the shelves, Burns said.

Military Times asked the Consumer Brands Association about concerns that the industry isn't providing a fair share of products to military stores. "With COVID cases spiking around the country, winter on its way and uncertainty around the election, purchasing patterns have stabilized, but are far from normal," said Tom Madreki, vice president of supply chain and logistics for the association. "While some segments are steady, others— like cleaning and even more specifically, disinfecting products — continue to see record demand. "The industry is working around the clock to manufacture products and [is working] with its retail and distribution partners and [Defense Commissary Agency] leadership to get them in stores and on the shelves around the country," he said, in an email response.

In some cases, manufacturers' production rates on certain products are running at about 40 to 60 percent of what they were producing before the pandemic, said Tom Gordy, president of the Armed Forces Marketing Council, an organization of firms representing over 400 manufacturers who supply consumer products to military resale activities worldwide. "There's extreme competition" for products, he said, and some of the largest retailers outside the gate are getting the larger allocations. All retailers are going to manufacturers asking for higher allocations of products, Gordy said. "It's just a fierce environment right now."

There are many factors affecting grocery stores and manufacturers in general, said Rossetti and Gordy, such as more demand as more people are eating at home during the pandemic; a nationwide shortage of truck drivers that started long before the pandemic; a nationwide shortage of aluminum; effects of COVID on manufacturers' work forces. And the military channel is affected in different ways, as the number of customers increases and decreases as some bases have limited access to retirees and curtailed their commissary shopping. Between the manufacturer and the shelf there are many possible "points of failure" for that product, Gordy said, such as:

- The store not getting as much of a product as they ordered, or not getting the product at all.
- Backlogs on the part of the distributor causing delays in getting the product to the store.
- Stores ordering the wrong products, to include items that have are no longer being manufactured. Some companies have simply stopped producing certain products to focus on other products in higher demand.
- The product just doesn't get ordered.
- Problems in getting the product on the shelf when it gets to the store. The commissary staff has to sort products in the back of the store. From there, contracted vendor stockers put it on the shelves.

[Source: MilitaryTimes | Karen Jowers | November 4, 2020 ++]

POW/MIA Recoveries & Burials

Reported 01 thru 15 NOV 2020 | Two

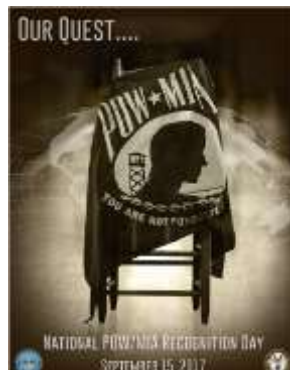
"Keeping the Promise", "Fulfill their Trust" and "No one left behind" are several of many mottos that refer to the efforts of the Department of Defense to recover those who became missing while serving our nation. The number

of Americans who remain missing from conflicts in this century as of FEB 2019 are: World War II 73,025 of which over 41,000 are presumed to be lost at sea, Korean War 7665, Vietnam War 1589 (i. e. VN-1,246, Laos-288, Cambodia-48, & Peoples Republic of China territorial waters-7), Cold War 111, 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 <https://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/Recent-News-Stories/Year/2019> for a listing and details of those accounted for in 2019. 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 Cpl. Paul W. Wilkins**, 19, was a member of B Company, 1st Battalion, 21st Infantry Regiment, 24th Infantry Division. He was reported missing in action on July 11, 1950, when his unit was fighting enemy forces near Choch'iwan, South Korea. He was never found, nor were any remains recovered that could be identified as Wilkins. The Army declared a presumptive finding of death for Wilkins on Dec. 31, 1953, and he was declared non-recoverable on Jan. 16, 1956. Interment services are pending. [Read about Wilkins.](#)

-- **Navy Coxswain Paul L. Boemer**, 21, was assigned to the battleship USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft on Dec. 7, 1941. The USS Oklahoma sustained multiple torpedo hits, which caused it to quickly capsize. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 429 crewmen, including Boemer. Interment services are pending. [Read about Boemer.](#)

* VA *



VA ATLAS Program

Update 02: Five Walmart Sites Reopened for Clinical Services

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs announced today five Accessing Telehealth through Local Area Stations ([ATLAS](#)) sites in select Walmart stores have resumed clinical services to Veterans in rural areas. VA suspended the operation of clinical services at all ATLAS sites, 10 APR, to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and implement additional safety and infection control measures. The reopened ATLAS sites give Veterans more options — allowing them to receive care without leaving their communities while offering the full privacy of a doctor’s office.

“The ATLAS initiative provides timely and convenient care to Veterans living in rural areas or with limited internet access,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “Telehealth innovations are critical during the COVID-19 pandemic. Virtual appointments protect the safety and well-being of both our Veterans and providers.” ATLAS sites offer services that do not require hands-on exams, such as primary care, nutrition, mental health counseling and social work. Establishing these points of care closer to Veterans’ homes, ATLAS reduces obstacles and increases access to care. In accordance with Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Environmental Protection Agency COVID guidelines for sanitation, the following Walmart Atlas sites have reopened.

- [Keokuk, Iowa \(Walmart #1431\)](#)
- [Howell, Michigan \(Walmart #1754\)](#)
- [Asheboro, North Carolina \(Walmart #1132\)](#)
- [Boone, North Carolina \(Walmart #2496\)](#)
- [Fond du Lac, Wisconsin \(Walmart #1643\)](#)

ATLAS is part of VA’s [Anywhere to Anywhere](#) initiative, which works to better serve the almost 9 million Veterans who receive care through VA — no matter where they choose to live. The Secretary’s [Center for Strategic Partnerships](#) has facilitated collaborations with Philips North America, The American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars and Walmart to provide convenient locations with private appointment space for Veterans to receive care. Veterans meet with their VA providers at ATLAS sites through VA [Video Connect](#), VA’s secure videoconferencing platform. The Secretary plans to expand this initiative to more sites nationwide by 2023. To learn more about ATLAS, visit VA’s [Office of Connected Care](#). [Source: VA News Release | November 2, 2020 ++]

VA Automobile Grants

Update 01: Automobile Allowance and Adaptive Equipment

You may be eligible for disability benefits if you have a disability that’s related to your service (called a service-connected disability) and that includes at least one of the conditions listed below.

- Loss, or permanent loss of use, of 1 or both feet, or
- Loss, or permanent loss of use, of 1 or both hands, or
- Permanent decreased vision in both eyes: 20/200 vision or less in your better eye with glasses, or greater than 20/200 vision but with a visual field defect that has reduced your peripheral vision to 20 degrees or less in your better eye, or
- A severe burn injury, or
- Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), or
- Ankylosis in 1 or both knees or hips (Note: This qualifies you for an adaptive-equipment grant only)

Both Veterans and Service members are covered under this program to receive a one-time payment of not more than \$21,488.29 to help them buy a specially equipped vehicle. In some situations, one or more adaptive-equipment grants to change a vehicle so it has features like power steering, brakes, seats, windows, or lift equipment to help you get into and out of the vehicle. Go to <https://www.va.gov/disability/compensation-rates/special-benefit-allowance-rates> To view current rates for these special allowances

To get these benefits you'll need to file a claim for disability compensation and get VA's approval before buying a vehicle or adaptive equipment. You can apply for—and use—either grant before or after military discharge. To find out how to file a claim for disability compensation refer to <https://www.va.gov/disability/how-to-file-claim>. When you file, you'll need to show that your disability is service connected or treated as if service connected under 38 U.S.C. 1151. Learn more about 38 U.S.C. 1151

For the one-time payment to help you buy a specially equipped vehicle you'll need to fill out an Application for Automobile or Other Conveyance and Adaptive Equipment (VA Form 21-4502) which can be downloaded at <https://www.vba.va.gov/pubs/forms/VBA-21-4502-ARE.pdf>. VA will pay the vehicle's seller directly. If you qualify for adaptive equipment only, you'll need to fill out an Application for Adaptive Equipment—Motor Vehicle (VA Form 10-1394) which can be downloaded at <https://www.va.gov/vaforms/medical/pdf/10-1394-fill.pdf>. VA may pay you, or they may pay the equipment seller directly. [Source: Veterans Benefits Newsletter | November 5, 2020 ++]

VA 3D Printing

Update 02: Moves to Print and Produce Medical Devices In-House



The Veterans Health Administration's sights are set on forming medical device manufacturing facilities—inside their hospitals—to push forward personalized patient care, and steer the production of health-related instruments from when they first emerge, through to the point when they're fully cleared for use by the Food and Drug Administration. Additive manufacturing solutions provider 3D Systems announced 5 NOV it's linked up with the federal agency to

advance the effort. “Through this collaboration, 3D Systems will not only be installing 3D printers at the VHA sites, but we’ll also be helping them install a quality management system that includes the processes, documentation, and training required to be compliant as a medical device manufacturer,” Ben Johnson, the company’s director of product development, healthcare said in a statement.

3D Systems engineers and sells 3D printing software, hardware, services, materials, and more, and it’s been around for more than 30 years. It’s co-founder, Chuck Hall, is credited with first inventing stereolithography, a form of 3D printing. In this VHA-led effort, 3D Systems will offer up its advanced printers and materials, as well as workflows and software to the agency. The business’ healthcare additive manufacturing team will also work directly with VHA to design medical devices and move them through FDA clearance. “3D Systems’ application experts will initially manage the regulatory paperwork and development of a quality management system at VHA facilities, and over time will train the VHA teams to take ownership of the process,” the press release notes. “The training will also include how to run the quality management system, and how to complete product submissions for regulatory clearance.”

The move comes well after the Veterans Affairs Department and its components like VHA have recognized and pursued the promise 3D printing holds as a potential game changer in patient-centered care. An early adopter for the emerging and evolving printing technology, the agency now runs an integrated virtual printing network and has for years been experimenting with 3D printing things like prosthetic limbs, or actual replications of patients’ organs. When COVID-19 hit, the agency also helped speedily launch a government-led 3D-printing partnership to make personal protective equipment-type designs and other medical supplies as supply chains were dangerously disrupted by the pandemic.

According to the release on the latest work, the agency also turned to 3D Systems around that time, when face masks were in high, hard-to-meet demand. Once the final design for those went into production, the company supported VA in the development of 3D-printed nasopharyngeal swab that could be manufactured on production level equipment. Experts from the company are working directly with VHA’s team both in the 3D System’s facilities and at the agency’s locations to help facilitate the on-site production of medical devices.

This new initiative builds on that collaboration. “What began during the pandemic in response to a critical need has expanded to change the way healthcare is delivered,” Menno Ellis, 3D Systems executive vice president, healthcare solutions said. [Source: NextGov | Brandi Vincent | November 5, 2020 ++]

Vet TEC

Update 01: VA Training Program Out of Money

A Department of Veterans Affairs high-tech job training program introduced last year has run out of money and won't return until its funding is replenished next October, VA officials announced 5 NOV. The Veteran Employment Through Technology Education Courses ([VET TEC](#)) program, which was created as part of the Forever GI Bill (Public Law 115-48), is meant to help veterans get the cutting-edge skills they need to succeed in today's high-tech industries. The planned five-year pilot program, which began Oct. 1, 2019, is limited to \$15 million in annual funding by law. After the \$15 million runs out, new enrollments for the program shut down.

The VA announced that the 2021 funding ran out as of Nov. 5, 2020, little more than a month after the fiscal year began Oct. 1. As a result, no more veterans are eligible to enroll in the program until Oct. 1, 2021, the beginning of next fiscal year. In fiscal 2020, the allocated funding lasted only until 21 MAY. But that doesn't mean veterans interested in the program shouldn't go ahead and apply. Instead, VA officials said the future money will most likely be used on a first-come, first-serve basis, starting with any backlog of applicants. If you're thinking about enrolling, you should apply as soon as possible to get your name on the waiting list, officials said.

Given the program's overwhelming success in the first two years of its existence, veterans who are interested in a high-tech job training program might want to explore other funding options that may be available to them, such as [state veteran benefits](#) or other GI Bill programs like [On-the-Job training](#) or [certification testing](#). Whether you need a guide on how to use your GI Bill, want to take advantage of [tuition assistance](#) and scholarships, or get the lowdown on education benefits available for your family, Military.com can help. Subscribe to Military.com to have education tips and benefits updates delivered directly to your inbox at <https://www.military.com/newmembers/education-cta21>. [Source: Military.com | Jim Absher | November 6, 2020 ++]

Coronavirus Vaccine

Update 16: Volunteers Needed for VA Phase III Clinical Trials

The Department of Veterans Affairs is recruiting 8,000 volunteers for the Phase III clinical trials of at least four COVID-19 vaccine candidates, a process playing out behind the scenes at 20 medical facilities across the U.S. Officials with the VA and Operation Warp Speed, the Trump administration's initiative to fast-track coronavirus vaccines and treatments, confirmed that participation, saying the effort allows veterans to continue contributing to the country in its time of need during the pandemic. "For our nation's veterans, this is another way they can continue to serve in this way, fighting the pandemic as a volunteer," said Dr. Matthew Hepburn, head of vaccine development for Operation Warp Speed, during a discussion hosted by the Heritage Foundation on 27 OCT.

The effort follows a Defense Department announcement in September that it had partnered with AstraZeneca to recruit Phase III volunteers [at five of its medical facilities](#). The DoD is in talks with developers of other vaccine candidates, but Pentagon officials have declined to name them. "There are a number of different vaccine Phase III trials in which the [Army](#) and the Department of Defense as a whole is involved in. Some of those are still in negotiations, in terms of the numbers and the sites that will be used," said Dr. Kayvon Modjarrad, director of emerging infectious diseases at Walter Reed Army Institute of Research, on 14 OCT.

The VA plans to recruit the volunteers for four trials at 20 of its medical centers, including 17 that will test Johnson & Johnson's candidate, made by subsidiary Janssen. Three other medical centers are recruiting or have completed recruitment for studies of candidates by Moderna, AstraZeneca and Pfizer, according to a VA website. At the VA, the department is seeking to recruit healthy veterans between the ages of 18 and 65 who are not pregnant and may be at risk for exposure. As with trials conducted in civilian facilities and at the DoD, participants will be paid, with compensation being determined and provided by the developer, VA spokeswoman Christina Noel said. VA nurses and case workers also are being asked to identify their sickest, most at-risk patients to determine who should be at the top of the list once a vaccine is approved.

This difference has some VA health providers worried. "These people who volunteer for the trials are heroes -- the ones who raise their hands -- but I'm concerned about my patient population. If we are only testing the vaccine on healthy people, how are we going to know how it affects those who are sick?" asked a VA nurse who asked not to be named because she is not authorized to speak to the press. "All this time, I have worked so hard to keep my patients alive." According to the nurse, the VA is prioritizing its patients to receive the vaccine. The priority groups are, in order:

- Veterans in VA nursing homes;
- Those age 85 in non-VA nursing facilities;
- Veterans in other residential settings;
- Vets over the age of 75;
- Those receiving hemodialysis or chemotherapy;
- Homeless veterans;

- Those age 65 and over, and among those, "emphasize patients with CDC high-risk conditions like hypertension, obesity or COPD."

The DoD plans to recruit 3,000 volunteers at five military hospitals for the AstraZeneca trial, and additional volunteers for other companies, depending on their agreements. DoD officials said the department is participating in the research because it requires a "diverse and representative population (demographics and distribution), including people who are most affected by COVID-19." Retired Navy Rear Adm. Tom Cullison, former deputy surgeon general for the service, said Oct. 30 that it is not unusual for the DoD as well as the VA to participate in multicenter trials, as they have participated for years in cancer and trauma research. "In general, standard recruiting for African Americans and other minorities for medical research is difficult, and the military provides a rich opportunity to find volunteers for those groups," Cullison said.

The DoD is seeking adult volunteers in the military health system, including active-duty personnel, retirees and family members. To be considered, volunteers must provide written informed consent to be screened and considered for participation, and they must have no known or planned change of location or [deployments](#) at the time of enrollment. No U.S. service members will be required to participate in the COVID-19 vaccine trials, according to the DoD. All volunteers must agree to be monitored at the same location for the expected study time of two years. Some active-duty members such as new recruits or boot camp participants will not be allowed to volunteer because they are "considered vulnerable from an ethical and regulatory standpoint," a DoD official said.

The VA and DoD did not disclose the financial arrangements they have with developers to support the research. Volunteers will be paid for participating in the trials; the amount they receive depends on developers. To volunteer, inquire at your local VA medical center or complete a screening survey at Coronavirus Prevention Network <https://www.coronaviruspreventionnetwork.org>. [Source: Military.com | Patricia Kime | November 6, 2020 ++]

VA National Suicide Prevention Report

2020 Report Released

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) released today the [2020 National Veteran Suicide Prevention Annual Report](#) which found no significant increases in the Veteran suicide rate from 2017-2018, average suicide deaths per day or total count of Veteran suicides — however, there were positive trends related to VA health care and suicide prevention efforts overall. The report includes analyses of Veteran suicide from 2005-2018 and findings from ongoing monitoring of VA health system suicide-related indicators during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"The suicide data presented in this new report is an integral part of VA's [Public Health Model for Suicide Prevention](#), which combines evidence-based clinical interventions and proactive community-based prevention strategies to address suicide in our nation," said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. "The data shows the rate of suicide among Veterans who recently used VA health services has decreased, an encouraging sign as the department continues its work and shares what we learn with those who care for and about Veterans." VA's Public Health Model for Suicide Prevention looks at evidence-based clinical interventions, such as cognitive behavior and problem-solving therapies which are paired with community-based prevention efforts to help Veterans who may be at risk for suicide. These efforts include the Veteran-to-Veteran [Together With Veterans](#) and state-driven suicide prevention [Governor's and Mayor's Challenge](#) programs. Key report findings include:

- The average number of Veteran suicides per day was 17.6 in 2018.
- The rate of suicide among Veterans who received recent VA care decreased by 2.4%
- No VA analyses to date indicate COVID-19 pandemic-era increases in VA health system-reported Veteran suicides, attempts or volume of emergency department visits related to suicide attempts.

Suicide data and monitoring presented in this report are critical elements of VA's ongoing implementation of the [National Strategy for Preventing Veteran Suicide](#). The full report and the accompanying state data sheets are available

at https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/mentalhealth/suicide_prevention/data.asp. [Source: VA News Release | November 12, 2020 ++]

VA Fraud, Waste & Abuse

Reported 01 thru 15 NOV 2020

Raleigh, N.C -- A Raeford woman self-surrendered on charges of wire and mail fraud. According to court documents, **Tracey Cathey McNeill**, Age 50, devised a scheme and artifice to defraud the Department of Veterans Affairs and the U.S. Office of Personnel Management by obtaining disability, retirement, and life insurance payments issued by those agencies for the benefit of W.R., an individual in McNeill's care at the time of the alleged scheme. The documents allege that between April 2015 and February 2017, McNeill received over \$90,000 in benefits from the agencies. McNeill is charged with wire fraud, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 1343, and mail fraud, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 1341. She faces a maximum penalty of 240 months in prison if convicted. A copy of this press release is located on website www.justice.gov/usao. Related court documents and information are located on the website of the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of North Carolina or on PACER (<https://pacer.uscourts.gov>) by searching for Case No.5:20-cr-474-D. [Source: DoJ Eastern District of North Carolina | U.S. Attorney's Office | November 2, 2020 ++]

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Clarksburg, West Virginia – Dr. **Kenneth C. Ramdat**, a physician employed at the Louis A. Johnson VA Hospital in Clarksburg, West Virginia, is facing federal criminal charges, U.S. Attorney Bill Powell announced. Ramdat, 65, of Silver Springs, Maryland, was indicted on two counts of "Abusive Sexual Contact" and two counts of "Simple Assault." Ramdat is accused of touching two staff women's breasts without permission in two separate incidents in August 2019 and October 2019 at the hospital in Harrison County. Ramdat faces up to two years of incarceration and a fine of up to \$250,000 for each of the sexual contact counts and faces up to six months of incarceration and a fine of up to \$10,000 for the assault counts. Under the Federal Sentencing Guidelines, the actual sentence imposed will be based upon the seriousness of the offenses and the prior criminal history, if any, of the defendant. An indictment is merely an accusation. A defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty. [Source: DoJ No. Dist of W. Virginia | U.S. Attorney's Office | November 5, 2020 ++]

* Vets *



Vet Unemployment

Update 26: OCT Decrease to 5.5 Percent

Veterans unemployment rates saw another sizable drop in October, the latest sign that some of the economic effects of the ongoing coronavirus pandemic may be softening. But jobless claims among veterans — and much of the rest of workers in America — still remain significantly above rates from one year ago. And increasing numbers of coronavirus cases and deaths could cause additional negative effects in months to come. On 6 NOV, officials from the Bureau of

Labor Statistics announced that the unemployment estimate for veterans in October was 5.5 percent, down almost a full point from the month before (6.4 percent in September) and less than half of its highest point in 2020 (11.7 percent, in April).

The number represents almost 500,000 veterans nationwide looking for jobs last month. About 8.7 million veterans in America are estimated to be of working age and able to work, just under half of the entire U.S. veterans population. Among veterans of the Iraq War and Afghanistan War eras, 6.2 percent were unemployed and looking for work last month. Like the overall veterans rate, that number has decreased significantly in recent months but remains well above pre-pandemic levels. The national unemployment rate in October was 6.9 percent, one point lower than the September rate. It has declined every month since April, when it peaked at 14.7 percent. In February, the national unemployment rate was 3.5 percent, the lowest level for the economic indicator in 50 years.

Amid the positive indicators released Friday, BLS officials warned that the number of long-term unemployed Americans (individuals jobless for 27 weeks or more) tripled last month, to 3.6 million. Members of Congress have made veteran hiring support and programs a focus in recent years, and proposed several new job training programs this year for veterans to offset the effects of the pandemic. However, most of those efforts have been stalled amid election campaigning and Capitol Hill legislative gridlock in recent months. [Source: MilitaryTimes | Leo Shane III | November 6, 2020 ++]

Vet Marijuana Access

Update 01: Election Brings to 15 States that legalize Use in Some Form



More states voted to legalize marijuana to differing degrees during the 2020 election and as the tide of public policy turns at the state level, advocates hope it will change at the federal level, too, clearing the way for more veteran access. As of Election Night, 15 states had legalized adult use of cannabis in some form, representing about a third of the U.S. population, "including millions of veterans," Eric Goepel, founder and CEO of Veterans Cannabis Coalition, said on Wednesday. Arizona, Montana and New Jersey voters all passed measures to legalize adult-use, South Dakota voters approved both medical and recreational use and Mississippi allowed medical use.

Some veterans fear their use or potential use of marijuana could jeopardize their Department of Veterans Affairs benefits and lawmakers have even introduced bills to prevent exactly that. But VA says on its website that "veterans will not be denied VA benefits because of marijuana use." None of the bills filed to codify that and ensure that VA could not take benefits from veterans for their marijuana use have passed so far. Dr. Ben Kligler of the Veterans Health Administration told Connecting Vets that veterans can talk to their VA doctors about cannabis use and ensure use will not interact negatively with existing medications, but VA doctors cannot prescribe or recommend its use to veterans, or replace existing medication with medical marijuana.

According to the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America 2019 member survey, at least 75% of veterans who responded said they're interested in using cannabis or cannabinoid products if available, 88% supported additional

research and 84% believe VA should drive that research. Wounded Warrior Project's 2019 survey found that nearly 17% of veterans who responded said they used marijuana in the last year for medical reasons. The wins on Election Night could make things easier for some veterans and could add pressure at a federal level. "This is a clear victory on several fronts," Goepel said. Goepel and Justin Strekal, political director of the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws (NORML) broke that win down into four main parts.

The more states sign off on legalizing adult use of cannabis, the lower the burden on veterans and other patients. Those users can avoid paying "sometimes hundreds of dollars a year in fees" to legally possess medical cannabis and "no longer have to deal with potential gatekeeping by doctors or local public health officials," said Goepel, who is also volunteering as director of Veterans Affairs for Los Angeles NORML. When states allow private businesses to sell cannabis to adults through their storefronts or delivery services, it also expands the geographic area people can access it, too. Expanding cannabis licenses across the supply chain, Goepel said, including cannabis cultivators, manufacturers and retail businesses, should lead to more competition "and potential savings for veterans and patients over more restricted medical-only markets."

Once cannabis use is legalized at the state level, it removes a significant social barrier to use, encouraging veterans and patients to "use cannabis as medicine as it becomes more accepted and widely available," Goepel said. "This is especially important since half of all living veterans are over 65 and that population both deals with the most stigma while also arguably stands to benefit most from using cannabis medication."

For years, VA Department leaders have used cannabis' status as a Schedule I drug as a reason VA cannot prescribe it for medical use, even in states where it is legal, and why research on the drug's usefulness for veterans has been stymied. But the lack of progress has continued to frustrate advocates and veterans who say it can help some, and more research could provide further effectiveness to treat a variety of veteran health concerns. As more states legalize cannabis, though, Strekal and Goepel said it only increases the likelihood of federal descheduling, decriminalization and legalization.

In late August, the House was poised to vote on legislation that would remove marijuana from the Controlled Substances Act, effectively ending marijuana prohibition at the federal level -- though states would still get to rule on it for themselves. At the time, House Majority Whip James Clyburn (D-SC) announced that the House planned to bring the bill to the floor after nine months of silence, and "will be voting soon" on H.R. 3884, the Marijuana Opportunity Reinvestment and Expungement (MORE) Act. But now it's been nearly a month and a half, and no such vote has taken place. But no such action has been taken since then, with Congress in gridlock over pandemic aid and embroiled in the election.

"Despite this public consensus, elected officials have far too often remained unresponsive to the legalization issue," NORML Executive Director Erik Altieri said in a statement. "The public has spoken loudly and clearly. They favor ending the failed policies of marijuana prohibition and replacing it with a policy of legalization, regulation, taxation, and public education. Elected officials — at both the state and federal level — ought to be listening." The legislation, though unlikely to pass the Senate, is one of the most significant steps from Congress so far in changing federal marijuana policy. The vote in the House would be historic, even if the bill is all but dead on arrival in the Senate. VA senior leaders, including Secretary Robert Wilkie, told Veterans Affairs lawmakers that it would take an act of Congress for them to be willing to sign off on doctors recommending the drug to vets in states where it was already legal.

Past attempts by Congress -- even those with some bipartisan support -- have been met with opposition from VA leaders. In the Senate, some of those measures have been met with opposition from Republican leadership. The bill itself contains a provision specifically for veterans -- allowing VA doctors, or contracted doctors, to make recommendations to qualifying veterans who live in states where use of the drug is legal for medical purposes. In November last year, the House Judiciary Committee took the first vote in Congress to remove marijuana from the Controlled Substances Act. The committee voted 24-10 to advance the bill, but as of early November, it still hasn't been up for a vote on the House floor.

Cannabis advocacy groups including VCC and NORML support the MORE Act, Goepel and Strekal said. "No matter who is in the White House and under current rules, we will need 60 Senators to advance the bill, which is impossible without Republican support or eliminating the filibuster," Goepel said. "Maybe not even then. But states with strong Republican representation like Montana and South Dakota approving adult-use legalization, and Mississippi creating a medical program all contribute to putting more pressure on their federal electeds to evolve." And when it comes to VA, Goepel said it may be time to step back from fighting with the department over whether doctors can recommend cannabis to vets. Instead, he said the focus should perhaps shift to compelling VA to create "a real cannabis science and medicine curriculum."

VA consistently touts that a majority of American doctors will, at some point, train or work at its massive healthcare system. But there aren't enough doctors who fully understand cannabis and its effects on the body, including phytocannabinoids like THC and CBD on body processes such as pain and immune function. That lack of understanding, Goepel said, "is a gross failure of the U.S. medical system" and one VA could help correct, in time. "The VA, which loves to talk about how 60%-70% of the nation's doctors will train or practice through the department, could nearly single-handedly set the standard on cannabis medicine education," he said. "The ripple effects, we hope, would significantly cut down on resistance or hostility from the medical community to incorporating cannabis medicine into their toolbox." [Source: ConnectingVets.com | Abbie Bennett | November 06, 2020 ++]

Vietnam Veterans Memorial

Update 25: Dedication Anniversary | 38th



Thirty-eight years ago, on November 13, 1982, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial was dedicated by the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund (VVMF). The Memorial, in Washington D.C., originally consisted of a wall of 70 inscribed panels containing 57,939 names. Today, there are 58,279 names inscribed with names of casualties, chronologically, from 1959 to 1975. Among the names are:

- Eight women who were nurses. Seven were from the Army; one from the Air Force.
- 160 Medal of Honor recipients
- 16 clergy. Seven Catholic; seven Protestant; two Jewish
- 120 individuals who listed foreign countries as their home of record. To include: Australia, Bahamas, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Columbia, Costa Rica, England, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Mexico, New Zealand, Pacific Island, Panama, Peru, Philippines, Puerto Rico, and Switzerland.

A 12-foot-by-8-foot flagstaff is also at the Wall, standing 60-foot tall. The flag flies 24 hours a day, seven days a week, in honor of the men and women who served in Vietnam. The flagstaff features an inscription and the seals of the five branches of the military service at its base and was donated by The American Legion.

The Three Servicemen sculpture, which was finished and added in 1984 along with the flagstaff, is a larger-than-life depiction of three infantrymen cast in bronze. The men—one white, one black, and one intended to represent all other ethnic groups in the country—are all in uniform, carrying weapons.

The Wall and surrounding grounds are beautifully sorrowful. Trinkets shining in the sun; tiny flags waving with the breeze. It is solemn, it is quiet, it is remorseful. Visitors from far and wide come to touch the Wall; to find a name of a long lost soldier. To show their grandkids, nieces, nephews the truth of war and how it has permeated their lives so much. Thank you Vietnam Veterans; those that were able to come home, and those that gave their lives for the freedom of others. [Source: <https://www.vvmf.org> | Kevin Secor | November 13, 2020 ++]

Vet Burials

Bottom Line on Your Free Entitlement

The Veterans Affairs National Cemetery Administration wants veterans to know the bottom line upfront: Many veterans don't realize that their military service entitles them to be interred in a national cemetery at no cost. Even if a veteran never received disability or any other benefit from the VA, if they served on active duty and were discharged under conditions other than dishonorable, they are eligible. If they served in the Reserve Component and were mobilized or served long enough to earn a retirement, they are eligible. Yet only 20% of all eligible veterans living in the United States take advantage of this benefit which would save their families thousands of dollars.

The best, most effective way to ensure veterans get the burial or memorial benefits they and their spouse have earned through military service is through a VA program called Pre-Need Eligibility, or Pre-Need. Pre-Need establishes eligibility for VA burial and memorial benefits before death, so the family doesn't have to go searching for documentation after the veteran's death. Simply fill out a VA form 40-10007 and mail it in to the St. Louis office indicated on the top of the form. Veterans can print out a form or fill it out online. The form and more information is available at <https://www.cem.va.gov/pre-need>.

VA officials will review each application and send a letter confirming or denying eligibility. If approved, safely store the letter and inform someone of its location. Pre-Need provides veterans and families with peace of mind. This information is particularly important for Guard and Reserve members, many of whom don't realize that their service entitles them to burial benefits. There are some nuances for reservists who may have to provide additional paperwork if a mobilization isn't documented on their DD Form 214, so it is even more important for them to apply for Pre-Need. Waiting to establish eligibility at the time of death can sometimes result in a non-eligible decision with little or no time to provide additional information.

If a VA national, state or tribal veteran cemetery is selected as the final resting place, a veteran will receive the following: gravesite, opening and closing of the grave, grave liner, and perpetual care of the gravesite. Also included are memorial benefits such as a headstone, marker or cover for a columbarium niche. All are absolutely free, which means a savings of thousands of dollars to the veteran's family. At many VA national cemeteries, NCA partners with local military units or volunteer service organizations to provide deceased veterans with military funeral honors, including the playing of taps and presentation of the burial flag. The veteran's spouse as well as minor children and unmarried adult children who legally rely on the veteran for support are also eligible for interment free of charge, typically in the same grave or columbarium niche as the veteran.

If veterans choose to be interred in a private cemetery, they can still have a free government-furnished headstone, marker or niche cover. If a veteran chooses burial in a private cemetery with a privately purchased headstone, marker or niche cover, their family may request a free bronze medallion with the word "veteran" and the appropriate branch of service to attach to the headstone. Families also receive a burial flag.

Finally, upon request, the veteran's family will receive a Presidential Memorial Certificate signed by the current U.S. president. Multiple copies can be requested so that all family members can have one. For more information about VA burial and memorial benefits, visit www.cem.va.gov or call 800-697-6947. [Source: National Cemetery Administration | Office of Engagement and Memorial Innovations | October 2020 ++]

Native American Veterans Memorial

Update 02: Opened on Veterans Day



On Veterans Day, the new National Native American Veterans Memorial to honor the military service of Native Americans opened on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. The memorial, Warriors' Circle of Honor, consists of an elevated stainless-steel circle balanced on an intricately carved stone drum. The artist who designed the memorial, Harvey Pratt of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma, served in Vietnam from 1962 to 1965. The museum has a complementary new online exhibition, [*Why We Serve: Native Americans in the United States Armed Forces*](#).

Twenty-five years in the making, the director of the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian and a citizen of the Pawnee Tribe of Oklahoma Kevin Gover said, "It's an article of faith in Indian country that Native Americans serve at a greater rate than basically any other group. He said the steel ring sculpture over a carved stone drum, in a wooded area near the museum's entrance, will become hallowed ground. "When people bring their memories and bring their prayers to a place, they make it sacred," he said. "We wish for this to be a sacred place, not just for Native Americans, but for all Americans."

For now, most of those prayers and memories are being sent virtually because of the coronavirus pandemic, but plenty of Native veterans are hoping to sanctify the site when it becomes safe to travel there. "My ancestors were warriors. Rain-in-the-Face who fought in the Battle of the Little Bighorn or Greasy Grass that they called it," says Marcella LeBeau, a 101-year-old former Army nurse. "My father was a Spanish American war veteran. My brother, oldest brother was a veteran. All down the line." LeBeau is a citizen of the Two Kettle Band, Cheyenne River Sioux. She recalls hearing a constant barrage of German "buzz bombs" during the Battle of the Bulge in World War II, while she worked as a surgical nurse at the 25th General Hospital in Liege, Belgium, just miles from the front. "To me it was a great honor," she said — and one recognized by her tribe when she returned home to South Dakota. With the memorial, she's hoping recognition of Native service will be nationwide. Marcella LeBeau served as a surgical nurse at the 25th General Hospital in Liege, Belgium, in World War II.

For other Native veterans, a tradition of military service isn't something they heard so much about. "For a lot of years, I thought I was a first-generation military person," says Army Col. Wayne Don, a native Alaskan. "Came to find out both of my grandfathers and uncles had served in the Territorial Guard during World War II," he said. Don has served 27 years so far, including tours in Bosnia and Afghanistan. Learning about his family history of military service

was emotional and complicated. "Not just Native Americans, but some of the other minority groups — ultimately they chose to serve, to represent their people and also to serve a country that sometimes didn't have what proved to be their best interest in mind. But they still did it," he said. Don said now that the country is wrestling with questions about racial justice, he hopes the memorial can play a part.

Army vet Allen Hoe feels the same. He's native Hawaiian and was drafted in 1966. He then volunteered as a combat medic in Vietnam. Both his sons followed in his footsteps and served in the Army after Sept. 11. His oldest son Nainoa K. Hoe, was killed in action in 2005 at age 27, in Mosul, Iraq. "He was a young man who felt the same I did and the same way his ancestors did. For me, his loss obviously very painful as his father, but I look back and say the greater feeling is that he worked so hard to do so much for this country and he will not be able to enjoy that," Hoe said.

"His younger brother is a staff sergeant. His name is Nakoa. The meaning of Nakoa is 'the warrior who is brave and courageous.' And you know, from the two sons he's had to carry the heavier load than his big brother did, simply because he's left with the legacy of his older brother's accomplishments, as well as now having to make sure Mom and Dad are OK," Hoe said. Those are the kind of stories of service and sacrifice Hoe wants Americans to learn about at the new Native American Veterans Memorial. For Native visitors, Hoe wants it to be a validation or maybe even an inspiration. "Maybe some young Native who experiences that memorial for the first time, in 50 years from now, he'll be the president of the United States. Who knows? Or he'll be the next great general?" Hoe said. [Source: NPR KPBS | Quil Lawrence | November 11, 2020 ++]

WWII Vets 235

Albert David | Boarded and Captured Sinking Nazi Sub



Navy Lt. Albert David had already spent nearly a quarter of a century in the Navy by the time he deployed to fight in World War II. His courage and leadership helped the Navy seize the first enemy warship to be captured on the high seas since the War of 1812. It also earned him the Medal of Honor. David was born July 18, 1902, in Maryville, Missouri, and enlisted in the Navy in September 1919 when he was just 17. For two decades, he served honorably on ships across the fleet. Shortly after his 20th year, he was placed in the Fleet Reserve. About a month later, Germany invaded Poland, which started World War II in Europe, so he was recalled to active duty.

David spent the next few years working stateside and received three promotions. By May of 1943, he was a lieutenant junior grade with orders to help outfit and serve on the newly commissioned USS Pillsbury, a destroyer that escorted Atlantic Ocean convoys into Casablanca, Morocco, and Gibraltar. The ship also served as part of a "hunter-killer" task force formed around the carrier USS Guadalcanal. On June 4, 1944, David was the Pillsbury's assistant engineering and electrical officer when the task force, using sonar, located a German submarine about 150 miles off the coast of Cape Blanco, a peninsula bordering Mauritania and Western Sahara in West Africa. One of the task force ships used depth-charges to jam the submarine's rudder and disable its auxiliary rudder controls. Some of the sub's compartments began to flood, which forced it to the surface.

The commander of the sub ordered his men to abandon ship and set demolition charges to sink it. However, there wasn't enough time for that to fully happen because of the Allies' quick work. David led a team of nine men from the Pillsbury to board the sub — later identified as U-505 — even though they knew Germans might still be below deck. Once they got onto the still-moving topside of the sub, they went down the conning tower hatch into the flooding boat to discover it was deserted. The sailors quickly gathered all the charts, codebooks, classified materials and Enigma decoding machines they could find. At the same time, the crew closed the opened valves to stop the flooding and disarmed the demolition charges set by the Germans. The flooding was eventually contained, and the sub's diesel engines were shut down. Meanwhile, all but one of U-505's men were rescued from the water and taken into custody. The Pillsbury's crew later learned that the U-boat had sunk eight Allied ships before its capture.

The quick work by David and his team ensured U-505 was still seaworthy and could be hauled to the U.S., marking the first successful capture of an enemy vessel since 1815. Upon inspection, the Navy learned that U-505 had the latest technology in radar, torpedoes, radio code and other advanced systems. With all of that and the materials found inside the sub, the Allies were able to learn a tremendous amount that would help in the fight against the German U-boat threat. In one instance, American cryptanalysts were able to take converted German messages from the codebooks and use them to break a special map coordinate code. This helped them find where many other U-boats were operating. The confiscated materials also allowed the Allies to continue decoding German submarine radio messages in real time, which led to greater successes in the European theater.

The Pillsbury mission's success also led to David's promotion to lieutenant and his recommendation for the Medal of Honor. Unfortunately, he would not live to accept it. David died of a heart attack on Sept. 17, 1945 — less than a month before the ceremony that would honor him with the nation's highest award for valor. Lynda Mae David accepted it on behalf of her late husband from President Harry S. Truman at the White House on Oct. 5, 1945. David was buried in Fort Rosecrans National Cemetery in San Diego. About two decades later, the USS Albert David was named in his honor. The destroyer escort was active throughout the fleet for more than 30 years.

Lt. David's Medal of Honor eventually made its way to the Museum of Science and Industry in Chicago. That's where U-505 was eventually restored and designated a National Historic Landmark in 1989. The sub is one of only two Type IXC U-boats still in existence. [Source DoD News | Katie Lange | September 28, 2020 ++]

WWII Vets 236

Paul Hilliard | 25 Combat Missions While too Young to Drink



More than 16 million Veterans served during World War II, some of whom participated in the events prior to the scheduled flyover at National Mall in Washington, D.C., on 25 SEP which was cancelled due to weather. One of those Veterans was 95-year-old Marine Corps Veteran Paul Hilliard. On his 13th birthday, Hilliard listened to Winston Churchill deliver his famous “Their Finest Hour” speech. During the speech, Hilliard said he took to heart Churchill’s message warning, “If we fail, then the whole world, including the United States, including all that we have known and cared for, will sink into the abyss of a new Dark Age” if they didn’t defeat the German military. As a teenager, Hilliard

said he ran outside his family farm, watching airplanes fly overhead. He would also read stories about SBD Dauntless dive bombers. The crews on those airplanes sank four Japanese carriers during the Battle of Midway.

Although he wanted to join earlier, Hilliard's mother wouldn't sign the paperwork for him to enlist. In 1943, the 17-year-old farm boy left for Marine Recruit Depot San Diego, celebrating his 18th birthday shortly after. He then went to Jacksonville, Florida, for training. Soon after, he deployed to the Pacific where he served as a radioman and gunner in the same SBD Dauntless dive bombers he read about a few years earlier. And then Off to war.

After boarding a ship, their first stop was Guadalcanal, following a major attack against the Japanese. "We just stopped for a few hours," Hilliard said. "They let us go ashore and get off that damn ship. First thing I did was take my combat knife and tried to open a coconut because I'd never seen a coconut before, and cut my finger so I could say, 'I was injured on Guadalcanal,'" he joked. After a few stops, Hilliard ended up on Bougainville Island. Hilliard trained for a few months. Soon after, he left for Luzon in the Philippines. There, he flew combat missions as airborne artillery for Army units. Hilliard said he was so focused on missions, he didn't even realize the impact. He said he found out several years ago when a retired Marine colonel handed him a book on Marine missions in the Philippines.

"I found out all sorts of stuff we were doing," he said. "I had no idea. We had no TV, no maps and charts. When we took off, we didn't know where we were going because we were flying for the Army. We were flying close support missions." Hilliard said the crews used to jokingly refer to the flights as 'Columbus missions'. "We didn't know where we were going when we took off, we didn't know where we were when we got there, we made a big mess, and we were extremely unwelcome," he said. "When we got back to base, we didn't know where we'd been, and we did it all at government expense." Hilliard's next trip was a small island near Borneo, where they continued to fly close air support missions for the Army. In all, Hilliard flew 45 combat missions during the war.

By July 1945 and with the war nearing an end, Hilliard headed home. "They said, 'You got 30 minutes to get in the truck, you're going back to the States for reassignment,'" Hilliard said. He said the crews were so happy, they wanted to leave in a hurry. "All I remember is one of the gunners said, 'I don't need 30 minutes. Give me 30 seconds to find my toothbrush. That's the only damn thing I want here.'" Hilliard then boarded a ship in Guam and headed back to San Diego. When he arrived, the combat Veteran was still only 20 years old—still too young to buy an alcoholic drink.

Discharged in 1946, Hilliard used his GI Bill to attend college. He later founded an oil corporation and served as president of the Louisiana Independent Oil and Gas Association. Hilliard joined The National World War II Museum's Board of Trustees in 2006. A self-proclaimed history junkie, he has funded the acquisition of several aircraft and artillery pieces for the museum, including an SBD Dauntless dive bomber. Over the years, he also used VA for various benefits throughout his life. In addition to his GI Bill, Hilliard said he bought his first home with the assistance of a VA home loan in 1951. He also receives his medication through VA. "They've been so good to me," he said. "I've got nothing but the highest regard for them [VA]." [Source: Vantage Point | Adam Stump | September 28, 2020 ++]

WWII Vets 237

Virginia Reavis | Wartime Nurse Turns 101



Virginia Caroline Russell Reavis was born in October 1920 in Hubert, North Carolina. She attended high school in Swansboro, North Carolina, and graduated from Louisburg College. In 1942, upon completing nursing school, she voluntarily enlisted in the U.S. Army Air Forces as a nurse at the 65th General Hospital at Duke University. Reavis joined the Army Air Forces at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. She spent eight months there working in the ward until she, along with her friend Emily Lewis, joined air evacuation. Reavis then transferred to Bowman Field in Kentucky for six months of extensive training. After completing training, she served with the 810th Medical Air Evacuation Squadron, which she remained a part of until the end of World War II.

In December 1943, Reavis' squadron deployed to England, which became their home base. She spent two years there taking care of wounded soldiers and making transatlantic runs, which served to send out supplies and return wounded soldiers to the U.S. for intensive care. She was often the only nurse on board. It was during one of these flights that Reavis met her husband Clay, who was a pilot. In 1945, Reavis' squadron moved to Preswick, Scotland, where they continued to make transatlantic runs until the war was over. Reavis then transferred to Charleston, South Carolina, where she discharged in December 1945 as a first lieutenant. During her service, Reavis received an Air Medal.

In 1947, she married Clay, the pilot she met during the war, and they moved to California, where they lived for 52 years. There, Reavis and her husband raised four children, and Reavis continued to work as a nurse. In 2000, Reavis moved back to her hometown of Hubert, North Carolina, where she enjoys spending time with her four children, eight grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren. Thank you for your service! [Source: Vantage Point | Raymond Lin | October 8, 2020 ++]

Burn Pit Toxic Exposure

Update 81: Lawmakers Investigate 'K2' Base Cancer Cluster of Veterans

A House committee is investigating cancer diagnoses in more than 400 veterans who served in Uzbekistan after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. The House Oversight and Reform National Security Subcommittee plans to hold a hearing 18 NOV to determine whether the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Defense are taking the health concerns of these former service members seriously.

"The courageous Americans who served at [Karshi-Khanabad, or K2] were among the first boots on the ground after the September 11 terrorist attacks. Today, many of them face devastating health conditions potentially tied to their service. They are looking for answers -- answers our government has denied them for years," Subcommittee Chairman Rep. Stephen Lynch, D-Mass., said in a release 11 NOV. He added that a bipartisan committee has found "clear evidence that K2 veterans were exposed to toxic and environmental hazards." "Yet the VA has refused to provide the full range of treatments and benefits these veterans deserve. I remain committed to advocating on behalf of our K2 heroes and look forward to hearing the VA and DoD's plans to right this injustice," Lynch said.

The U.S. used Karshi-Khanabad, a former Soviet and Uzbek military base, as a logistics installation to support operations in Afghanistan from 2001 to 2005. Service members who were stationed there have described polluted conditions at the base, including "black gunk" that oozed up through the floorboards of their barracks and fine dust that settled on surface areas. Hundreds of veterans who were assigned there have been diagnosed with various types of cancer, including brain, colon and thyroid.

Kim Brooks, whose husband, Army Lt. Col. Tim Brooks, died of brain cancer at age 34 in 2004, testified before the committee earlier this year that families deserve to know what substances their service members were exposed to and that veterans or their survivors should qualify for VA benefits. "I am here to ask -- to plead, really -- that you do

everything in your power to ensure that other K2 veterans and families receive the medical and financial support that they deserve," Brooks told the committee 27 FEB.

The controversy surrounding K2 contamination and suffering veterans was first reported in December 2019 by McClatchy reporter Tara Copp. DoD documents obtained by the news organization stated that the grounds of the base, also known as Camp Stronghold Freedom, were contaminated with missile propellant, solvents, fuel, lubricants, trace amounts of chemical weapons and depleted uranium. The runoff ponds at the installation were bright green -- a color so unnatural that personnel referred to them as "Skittles."

VA officials said 22 APR that the department is taking steps to address the concerns of service members and veterans who were assigned to the base, including a study to research health trends among them. The hearing is scheduled for 10 a.m. Nov. 18. Slated to testify are Patricia Hastings, VA's chief consultant for post-deployment health services, and David Smith, deputy assistant secretary of defense for health readiness. [Source: Military.com | Patricia Kime | November 11, 2020 ++]

Burn Pit Toxic Exposure

Update 82: Biden Suspects Toxic Exposure in Iraq Killed Son Beau

Joe Biden, like many other families of service members diagnosed with illnesses from overseas deployments, suspects toxic exposure may have been behind his son Beau's brain cancer. Beau Biden boarded a military aircraft for Iraq on Nov. 19, 2008, just days after his father became vice president-elect. He deployed with the Delaware Army National Guard to Balad Air Base, where the U.S. military burned an estimated 140 tons of waste a day in open air burn pits. When he died in 2015, Beau Biden was 46. In a 2019 speech to the Service Employees International Union, Biden said because of Beau's "exposure to burn pits, in my view, I can't prove it yet, he came back with stage four glioblastoma. Eighteen months he lived, knowing he was going to die."



Maj. Beau Biden and fellow members of the Delaware Army National Guard, board a plane bound for Iraq in 2008

For thousands of veterans who have also been struck by cancer after being exposed to the burn pits or other toxins while serving overseas, it's Joe Biden's personal loss that makes them hopeful they may finally get the help they need. Biden's military and veterans issues campaign director Leo Cruz told McClatchy News the president-elect is ready to help. "President-elect Joe Biden has made clear that our nation's most sacred obligation is to take care of the members of our military and their families, when they're deployed and when they return home," Cruz said. Biden's plan "includes expanding the list of presumptive conditions to include exposure to burn pits or other environmental toxins, and

increasing research dollars by \$300 million to invest in better understanding the impact of [traumatic brain injury] and toxic exposures.”

Despite years of data and more than 200,000 veterans who served in Iraq, Afghanistan and other bases throughout the Middle East who have reported cancers, respiratory illnesses or neurological health problems to the Department of Veterans Affairs, many of their claims continue to be denied. The VA still says there is not enough evidence to determine that the contaminants the service members were exposed to overseas are the cause of their illnesses when they return home.

Rosie Torres founded the toxic exposure advocacy group Burn Pits 360 after her husband, retired Army Capt. Le Roy Torres, came home with a debilitating lung disease after a deployment to Balad Air Base in Iraq from 2007 to 2008. The base, like hundreds of others in Afghanistan and Iraq, had multiple areas for disposal of metals, human waste, ammunition, trash that were burned with jet fuel. Service members assigned to those bases were exposed to harmful particulates from the burn pit smoke on a daily basis. Balad stopped using open air burn pits in 2009 over health concerns. Torres and a coalition of veterans advocacy groups are pushing for the VA to approve the illnesses as presumptive conditions, which would take away the burden currently on veterans to prove their cancers or other conditions are connected to their military service to have their treatments covered by the VA health system.

“[Biden] lost his son who was deployed to a base where many others died from the same illness,” Torres said. “I feel like this would be his way of honoring Beau.” But for years, including when Biden served as vice president in the Obama administration, help for those veterans has been pushed back as the VA has said it required more study to determine a service connection. Former VA Secretary David Shulkin told McClatchy that the VA’s current position, that more study needs to be done “leaves many veterans just simply waiting.”

“We are overdue,” said Jeremy Butler, chief executive officer of Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA). “It’s just like with K2, where it’s been 20 years, and they’ve got nothing, no health care, no response from the government.” K2, or Karshi-Khanabad, is a former Soviet base in Uzbekistan where U.S. special operations forces were sent just weeks after the 9/11 attacks. Last year, McClatchy reported that the Pentagon knew the as early as 2001 that the base had remnants of processed uranium, pools of fuel and solvents, and remnants of chemical weapons. Hundreds who served there have been diagnosed with cancer.

More than two dozen veterans organizations have formed a coalition to raise awareness on toxic exposure and drive legislation. They have a high-profile champion in comedian Jon Stewart, who has promised to keep the issue front and center until those veterans get the help they need, much like he did with the 9/11 first responders at the World Trade Center in New York. IAVA’s Butler said the group is focused on getting one broad piece of legislation through Congress next year that addresses all toxic exposure. Multiple lawmakers this year filed bills to help segments of veterans, such as legislation specifically to help K2 veterans, bills to address burn pits and presumptive conditions, and other bills focused on military pilot cancers.

But the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2020 election and the Supreme Court vacancy has made it likely that those individual legislative efforts will wait until the next session of Congress, Butler and Torres said. The bills sometimes have competing points of emphasis or congressional support which “ultimately means nothing gets done,” Butler said. The groups had planned to hold a Veterans Day rally on Capitol Hill on 11 NOV with Stewart to draw more attention to the issue, but new COVID-19 related restrictions in the District of Columbia prevented it from taking place. “Our goal is to go into 2021 with a renewed focus,” Butler said. “The fact we now have President-elect Biden is going to make it a lot easier to get something done. He is someone who understands in a way few civilians do.”

[Source: Miami Herald | Tara Copp | November 11, 2020 ++]

Military Retirees & Veterans Events Schedule

As of 16 NOV 2020

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

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

- HTML: http://www.hostmtb.org/RADs_and_Other_Retiree-Veterans_Events.html.
- PDF: http://www.hostmtb.org/RADs_and_Other_Retiree-Veterans_Events.pdf.
- Word: http://www.hostmtb.org/RADs_and_Other_Retiree-Veterans_Events.doc.

Note that events listed on the Military Retirees & Veterans Events Schedule may be cancelled or rescheduled. Before traveling long distances to attend an event, you should contact the applicable RAO, RSO, event sponsor, etc., to ensure the event will, in fact, be held on the date\time indicated. Also, attendance at some events may require military ID, VA enrollment or DD214. Please report broken links, comments, corrections, suggestions, new RADs and\or other military retiree\veterans related events to the Events Schedule Manager, Milton.Bell126@gmail.com [Source: Retiree\Veterans Events Schedule Manager | Milton Bell | November 15, 2020 ++]

Vet Hiring Fairs

Scheduled As of 16 NOV 2020



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. To participate, sign up for the workshop in addition to registering (if indicated) for the hiring fairs which are shown on the Hiring Our Heroes website <https://www.hiringourheroes.org> for the next month. For details of each you should click on the city next to the date. Listings of upcoming Vet Job Fairs nationwide providing location, times, events, and registration info if required can be found at the following websites. Note that some of the scheduled events for the next 2 to 6 weeks have been postponed and are awaiting reschedule dates due to the current COVID-19 outbreak. 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>

First Civilian Job

Forty-one percent of veterans surveyed indicated they left their first post-military job within one year. Another 31% indicated said they left their first civilian job to make ends meet and never intended to stay. Another 30% left as the result of finding a better job, while 19% left because the job did not align with their expectations. Only 12% left because the position was terminated or they were laid off. The reasons for staying at a job depend greatly on financial and long-term opportunities in the company. Sixty-five percent of veterans say they will stay at a company for better pay, while 55% stay for a clear path of career growth. Other activities, like veteran resource groups and volunteer activities, seem to have less impact on whether veterans remain or leave their jobs.

[Source: Recruit Military, USCC, and American Legion | November 15, 2020 ++]

Veteran State Benefits

Utah 2020

The state of Utah provides several benefits to veterans as indicated below. To obtain information on these refer to the attachment to this Bulletin titled, “**Vet State Benefits– UT**” for an overview of the ones listed below. Benefits are available to veterans who are residents of the state. For a more detailed explanation of each of the below refer to refer to <https://veterans.utah.gov>:

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

[Source: <https://www.military.com/benefits/veteran-state-benefits/utah-state-veterans-benefits.html> | November 2020 ++]

*** Vet Legislation ***



Vet Mental Health

Update 03: H.R.8247 | Veterans COMPACT Act of 2020

The evening before Veterans Day, the Senate passed more legislation aimed at improving mental health care and services for veterans and troops, sending them to the president's desk for final approval. The package of bills, the

Veterans Comprehensive Prevention, Access to Care and Treatment (COMPACT) Act includes nine parts intended to help prevent veteran suicides.

The latest VA veteran suicide data report from 2019 found that on average, about 17 veterans died by suicide per day in 2017. That number has remained stagnant or worsened in recent years despite increased spending and programs aimed at helping. The data typically is delayed by about two years, making it difficult to determine whether efforts have made a significant difference year over year. More than 6,000 veterans died by suicide each year from 2008 to 2017, according to previous reports. Since that data lags behind by about two years, advocates and lawmakers worry they won't have a concrete grasp of how the pandemic has affected suicide rates for veterans -- but they agree that the isolation and stress caused by the turmoil spreading alongside the virus likely won't improve things and that veterans, troops and their families need more help now than ever. Specifically, the COMPACT Act would:

- Provide free crisis care for any veteran with emergency suicide symptoms;
- Create a pilot program between VA and designated family or friends of veterans to share information on benefits and assistance;
- Require an annual report on VA's Solid Start program;
- Establish an education program for veteran families and caregivers on mental health concerns;
- Create an interagency task force on outdoor recreation for veterans;
- Establish a policy where veterans who have not had contact with VA in two or more years are encouraged to come in for an exam to continue eligibility for emergency care not linked to their service-connected disabilities;
- Require annual VA police de-escalation and crisis intervention training;
- Require a study of VA programs providing assistance to women veterans who are homeless;
- Provide a report on locations where women veterans are using VA health care.

The package of bills that became the COMPACT Act was part of an agreement between House and Senate Veterans Affairs leaders to pass major veteran mental health and suicide prevention legislation before the end of the year and the end of this Congressional session. The COMPACT Act originated in the House and passed the Senate 10 NOV just ahead of the national holiday.

"As long as 17 veterans, National Guard members, and reservists die by suicide each day, our work will not be done—but today we made real progress in the fight to reduce veteran suicide," House Veterans Affairs Chairman Mark Takano (D-CA) said in a statement Tuesday. "Our bipartisan, bicameral bill helps address gaps in prevention and care for veterans who are at heightened risk for suicide like women veterans, those who recently separated from military service, and veterans who haven't used VA healthcare recently. It also includes my bill, the Veterans ACCESS Act, to ensure that no veteran experiencing an emergency mental health crisis has to worry about cost when seeking the care they need."

Ranking member Phil Roe (R-TN), who plans to retire at the end of this session, said the bill package "builds on the provisions" of the Hannon Act "to ensure veterans and their families receive the support, care and services they need to live full, healthy lives following their brave service." If you or a veteran you know are struggling, contact the Veteran Crisis Line 24/7 at 1-800-273-8255 and select option 1, or text 838255.

[Source: ConnectingVets.com | Abbie Bennett | November 11, 2020 ++]

Note: To check status on any veteran related legislation go to <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress> for any House or Senate bill introduced in the 116th 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. To read the text of bills that are to be considered on the House floor in the upcoming week refer to <https://docs.house.gov/floor>.



Army Museums Giveaway

Excess Artifacts, Including Weapons and Historic Uniforms

The Army Museum Enterprise is getting rid of duplicate artifacts among its 580,000-item collection over the next five years, leaving opportunities for other museums, veterans organizations, national parks, and state and local governments to ultimately claim the excess inventory. The divestiture will include artifacts from all 46 museums operated by AME, according to an Army Headquarters press release 2 NOV. “We expect that the first divestiture by site will take place in Spring of 2021, but we have been working on collections reviews over the past year,” Stefan Rohal, AME’s historic materiel division chief, told Army Times.

Rohal’s division is working with the Defense Logistics Agency to establish the process for reviewing and distributing artifacts. He said the goal in announcing the plan early is to ensure that eligible organizations sign up with the General Services Administration so they have time to request property. “The Army Museum Enterprise is reviewing everything from tanks and howitzers to uniforms and canteens,” Rohal said in the news release, adding that some artifacts could be tightly controlled by law and regulation. Weapons, which require demilitarization, uniforms, hateful material, or anything with hazardous material cannot go to the general public, Rohal noted.

“Anything not in one of these categories that does not get picked up by an eligible organization could potentially make its way to the public,” Rohal said. Historic signage, weapons and WWII-era personal items are among some 580,000 items in the Army Museum Enterprise inventory that will be retained or divested during a five-year project beginning in 2021. Army museums have been collecting artifacts for years, but the service only finished consolidating the different facilities under a single command in 2019. The current effort was framed as a “right-sizing” by the Army HQ release, and it is intended to ensure the service only retains those artifacts that “need to be cared for in perpetuity.”

Organizations that are fully registered with federal surplus property request systems will be able to request items once property turn-ins begin. Once the property is turned over to the Defense Logistics Agency, it goes through its screening process, according to Rohal. “Our goal is that most of the material be placed with approved museums and educational institutions,” he said. “[The General Services Administration] believes they will place most of the property.” Department of Defense entities, including other military museums, should request items through the Defense Logistics Agency. Non-DoD entities such as the National Park Service, Smithsonian Institute, or similar organizations should request items from the U.S. General Services Administration website by contacting their national utilization officer.

Material not required by a federal entity will be declared surplus, released from the Army artifact collection, and made available to museums, states and municipalities, veterans organizations and other eligible recipients that qualify for the GSA Federal Surplus Personal Property Donation Program, according to the Army HQ release. [Source: ArmyTimes | Kyle Rempfer| November 4, 2020 ++]

Army Helicopters

Naming History



UH-64 Black Hawk



AH-64 Apache



RAH-66 Comanche



UH-72 Lakota

Black Hawk. Apache. Comanche. Lakota. Notice anything? The Army's history of naming its helicopters after Native American tribes and figures stems from an Army regulation made decades ago. The regulation has since been rescinded, but the tradition has carried on over the years. An Army press release posted 4 NOV explained the backstory of the U.S. military's "long history" with Native Americans — and specifically the American Indian Wars. "But Native Americans also served as some of the fiercest fighters for the United States for more than 200 years," the release said. "In fact, 32 Native Americans have earned the nation's highest military award, the Medal of Honor."

The tradition originated from Army Gen. Hamilton Howze, who was tasked with the job to "develop doctrine and the way forward when it came to employing Army aircraft" after the Air Force split from the Army in 1947, the Army release said. The original names for two helicopters were "Hoverfly" and "Dragonfly" — which Howze didn't like. He decided the next helicopter would be called the Sioux "in honor of the Native Americans who fought Army soldiers in the Sioux Wars and defeated the 7th Cavalry Regiment at the Battle of Little Bighorn." And from that decision, years later in 1969, Army Regulation 70-28 was born.

AR 70-28 required that Army aircraft had to be named after "Indian terms and names of American Indian tribes and chiefs." It also directed that tanks would be named after American generals, infantry weapons "would receive names for famous early American pioneers," and assault weapons would have "fearsome reptile and insect names," according to the press release. Though the regulation has since been rescinded, the tradition for Army helicopters was set. A 2008 press release further explained the process behind deciding on a name for an Army helicopter, saying that before the service could use the name Lakota for the UH-72A Lakota, the Lakota tribe was consulted for permission. The Bureau of Indian Affairs advised Stephen Hart, a Light Utility Helicopter maintenance manager, that the Army "had to contact and obtain approval from a majority of the council members making up the Sioux Nation," of which the Lakotas are a part.

Within six months, the Army had received the permission they needed. The Army wanted that name specifically, the press release said, because the Lakotas "were known as a peaceful, non-aggressive people," and the helicopter "is a non-arms-bearing helicopter that performs medical and casualty evacuations, provides disaster relief, aids in homeland defense, and also works to counter drugs and narcotics." In February 2008, Rosebud Sioux tribal leaders joined the Army for a ceremony at Redstone Arsenal, Ala., to celebrate the new helicopter. Rodney Bordeaux, the Rosebud Sioux tribal council president, said at the ceremony that it was a "great honor to have our name out there now where people can see it." [Source: Task & Purpose | Haley Britzky | November 5, 2020 ++]

Navy Terminology, Jargon & Slang

‘Pit Log’ thru ‘Pork Chop’

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

Pit Log – Short for Pitometer Log, a device for measuring the ship's speed through the water.

Pit Sword – The part of the PIT LOG (q.v.) which extends down into the water from the ship's hull and senses ship speed. It works by generating an electric field and measuring its variations, which are proportional to speed through the water.

PKP - Purple K Powder. Potassium carbonate. A dry firefighting agent that chemically prevents combustion.

Plane – See DIVE PLANE.

Plank Owner – A member of the original commissioning crew of a ship. Traditionally, when a plankowner leaves, he is presented with a piece of the wooden decking. Since the advent of all-metal warships, however, a common plankowner memento is a plaque bearing a brass or bronze escutcheon constructed from the machining scraps of the propellers.

Plastic Bug - Derisive term for the F/A-18, due to the large proportion of synthetic materials in its makeup.

PLAT - Pilot Landing Aid Television. Two cameras which record landings aboard the carrier. One is mounted flush in the landing area of the flight deck, one is mounted on the island. Often called upon to resolve pissing contests between pilots and LSOs.

Platform – (1) The station of the LSO, athwart the carrier's touchdown area, outboard of the portside deck edge. (2) A generic name for any ship, aircraft, etc.

Plimsoll Mark – A mark on the side of a ship's hull which indicates a certain level of loading and, therefore, draft.

Podunk - A small town, or one's hometown.

Pogey Bait – In modern usage, candy or other junk food. See also GEDUNK. Originally, a "pogue" was a young boy or sailor, and pogey bait was candy or other sweet stuff used as inducement for homosexual play.

Pole – (Aviation) The stick or yoke used to control the aircraft in roll and pitch.

Police - Pick up or clean up. 'Policing the brass' would be to shine or clean brass fittings and/or fixtures or, on a firing range, to pick up expended brass.

Pollywog, Polliwog - One who has never crossed the Equator aboard ship and become a SHELLBACK. Aka 'wog'. Frequently modified by the adjective "slimy".

Pollywog Ceremony - See LINE-CROSSING CEREMONY.

Pommie Bath – (RNZN) To change clothes without bathing, simply applying deodorant. Same as a MARINE SHOWER.

Pongo - (RN) Soldier. May be mistakenly used to refer to a ROYAL MARINE.

Pooped – Term used when a wave breaks over a ship's stern.

Poopie Pants – Permanently stained coveralls or dungarees used for performing particularly dirty work.

Poopie Suit - (1) Blue coveralls worn by sub crews (and, recently, surface ships) underway. (2) Immersion survival suit worn by aviators in cold-water ops.

Pork Chop, Chop – (USN) Supply Officer. From the resemblance of the collar device (actually oak leaves and three acorns) to a pork chop.

[Source: <http://hazegray.org/faq/slang1.htm> | November 15, 2020 ++]

Uncrewed Underwater Vehicle

Boeing to Develop New Payloads, Capabilities & Missions for UUVs



Officials of the US Naval Sea Systems Command in Washington announced they are asking the Boeing Defense, Space & Security segment in Huntington Beach, Calif., for engineering services to expand the XLUUV's role in future naval operations. The modular-construction Boeing Orca XLUUV is to be an open-architecture reconfigurable uncrewed underwater vehicle (UUV) with the core vehicle providing guidance and control, navigation, autonomy, situational awareness, core communications, power distribution, energy and power, propulsion and maneuvering, and mission sensors, Navy officials say. Boeing won a \$43 million Navy contract in early 2019 to build four XLUUVs, which are autonomous mini-submarines based on the Boeing-designed Echo Voyager large UUV.

Echo Voyager's advanced autonomy enables it to operate in clear and congested waters without physical human contact. The Echo Voyager has a range of 6,500 nautical miles on one fuel module, can reach depths of 11,000 feet, and can operate independently for months underwater. It is 51 feet long, with a modular payload section as long as 34 feet and a volume of 2,000 cubic feet. Boeing unveiled the Echo Voyager in early 2016 and began sea trials of the unmanned undersea craft in summer 2017. The large UUV's navigation system uses a Kalman-filtered inertial navigation unit supported by Doppler velocity logs and depth sensors. Powering the vessel is a hybrid combination of batteries and marine diesel generators. It can launch from shore or large military ships with well decks or large civil vessels with moon pools. The Lockheed Martin Rotary and Mission Systems segment in Riviera Beach, Fla., also has been involved in designing prototype XLUUV systems.

The Boeing Orca XLUUV will have well-defined interfaces for future upgrades to capitalize on advances in technology and respond to threat changes. The Orca XLUUV will have a modular payload bay with defined interfaces to support current and future UUV payloads. XLUUVs, which are among the largest unmanned submersibles ever conceived, will be for long-endurance surveillance missions or undersea cargo vessels to deliver other sensor payloads and other UUVs. These large unmanned undersea vehicles eventually could be used as motherships to deploy and recover smaller surveillance UUVs on far-flung reconnaissance, surveillance, or special warfare missions in the open ocean or along coastlines and inside harbors.

The Navy's XLUUV project moves to enable technologies forward that was developed initially in other projects such as the DARPA Hydra program to develop an unmanned submersible large enough to transport and deploy UAVs and UUVs stealthily in enemy territory to respond quickly to situations around the world. On this order, Boeing will

do the work in Huntington Beach, Calif.; and Cockeysville, Md., and should be finished by September 2021. For more information, contact Boeing Defense, Space & Security online at www.boeing.com/company/about-bds, or Naval Sea Systems Command www.navsea.navy.mil.

[Source: USSVI | John Keller | October 15, 2020 ++]

* Military History *



Army Base Historic Names

Update 01: Confederate Post Name History the Army Never Wanted You to See

Nearly two hours into a Congressional hearing on the military's role in the June crackdown on protesters in Washington's Lafayette Square, Rep. Anthony Brown (D-MD) was focused on something else: Why does the U.S. Army still have 10 bases named after officers who fought for the Confederacy in the Civil War? "Gen. Milley, I know that you are a student of history," Brown, a retired Army colonel who had served in Iraq, said on 9 JUL to Mark A. Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. "Can you comment on the naming of Army installations after Confederate soldiers? Does it reflect the values that we instill in soldiers? Are these Confederate officers held up as role models in today's military? Does it help or hurt the morale or unit cohesion of service members, particularly that of the Black and Brown service members who live and serve on these installations today?"

Milley, the gruff 62-year-old senior military advisor to the president, looked down at his hands. "Congressman, we've had a lot of discussion in the Department of Defense and the Joint Chiefs on that very topic," he said, fidgeting with some papers in front of him. "I'll give you a couple of things to think about." Army officials had argued for years against changing the names of its posts, insisting that officers who had fought against the United States during the Civil War had a "significant," if painful place in its history. Naming an installation in honor of Braxton Bragg, a general and military advisor to the Confederate president, or for John Brown Gordon, a Confederate major general and reputed leader of the Ku Klux Klan, was done "in the spirit of reconciliation, not division," an Army spokesman said in 2015. To read further what the Army and Congressman have said about the base naming issue since plus its history refer to the attachment to this Bulletin titled, "**Army Base Historic Names**".

[Source: Task & Purpose | Paul Szoldra | October 14, 2020 ++]

Hitler's Major War Goals

Lebensraum and Final Reckoning with the Jews

From the very beginning of his career until his dying day, Adolf Hitler had just two major goals. His primary goal was the forcible acquisition of Lebensraum (living space) for the German people. Secondly, he desired some kind of final reckoning with the Jews. The first steps toward Lebensraum occurred in 1935 when Hitler openly violated the

Treaty of Versailles by reintroducing military conscription and began rapidly rebuilding the German Army. Hitler then managed to negotiate a naval pact with Britain allowing Germany to have a Navy totaling 35 percent of Britain's fleet, along with a submarine fleet equal in size.

Hitler realized that world leaders were becoming increasingly nervous as Germany re-armed, given the country's role in the catastrophic World War some twenty years earlier. He continually reassured diplomats, and anyone else who would listen, that Germany's military buildup was solely a defensive measure designed to put the country on an equal footing with surrounding nations. After all, he would ask, didn't Germany have a right to defend itself like every other nation?



Germany's highest-ranking military leaders von Blomberg, von Fritsch, and Raeder (left) and Friedrich Hossbach (right) who took the meeting notes during the secret Führer conference on November 5th, 1937

Hitler would answer his own question in the affirmative while in the same breath promising that Germany would never break the peace. To emphasize the point, Hitler uttered some remarkable statements concerning the horrors of war, which he had witnessed first-hand as a frontline soldier. On May 21, 1935, he declared during a major speech: "The blood shed on the European continent in the course of the last three hundred years bears no proportion to the national result of the events. In the end, France had remained France, Germany Germany, Poland Poland, and Italy Italy. What dynastic egotism, political passion and patriotic blindness have attained in the way of apparently far-reaching political changes by shedding rivers of blood has, as regards national feeling, done no more than touched the skin of nations. It has not substantially altered their fundamental characters. If these states had applied merely a fraction of their sacrifices to wiser purposes the success would certainly have been greater and more permanent."

The leaders of France and Britain, and Hitler's smaller next-door neighbors, were naturally quite impressed by such sentiments. Years later, they would find out that on the very day Hitler spoke those words he had also approved a secret Reich Defense Law which put Germany on a war economy and revived the Army's General Staff organization, which had been banned after World War I. Most diplomats mistakenly took Hitler at his word and thought he was a man they could reason with, perhaps even trust. This, of course, was precisely what Hitler wanted them to think. He had them all at a distinct disadvantage, since they could never actually know what was in his mind. They didn't know they were dealing with a man who routinely used lies as a tool to achieve his long-range goals.

Hitler could look anyone in the eye and lie with the utmost sincerity. He would also lie to the whole world via radio broadcasts, endlessly proclaiming his desire for peace, even his love of peace, all the while secretly preparing for another catastrophic war. The people of Germany and many of the Reich's top leaders had no idea of the depth of their Führer's cynicism, but they would all find out sooner or later. For Germany's top Army leaders that revelation came on November 5th, 1937, when Hitler called a secret conference and bluntly outlined his plans to acquire Lebensraum at the expense of other nations.

The meeting was convened inside the Reich Chancellery in Berlin at 4:15 p.m. Incredibly, earlier on that same day, Hitler had met with Poland's ambassador and signed a treaty assuring that Germany would respect Poland's territorial rights. Present at the secret afternoon conference were Germany's two Army commanders; Field Marshal **Werner von**

Blomberg, the Commander-in-Chief of the German Armed Forces, and General **Werner von Fritsch**, the Commander-in-Chief of the Army. Also in attendance was Navy Chief **Erich Raeder**, along with **Hermann Göring** who headed Germany's new Air Force (among his many other duties). Foreign Minister **Constantin von Neurath** was there, along with Colonel **Friedrich Hossbach**, Hitler's military adjutant, who took the complete minutes of the meeting which has come to be known as the Hossbach Conference or Hossbach Memorandum.

Hitler began the four-hour-long meeting by asking each of the men to swear an oath of secrecy. He then informed them that in the event of his untimely death the following exposition should be regarded as his last will and testament. He started the exposition by explaining his theory of Lebensraum, stating that Germany had "a tightly packed racial core" and that the Germans were entitled to "greater living space than in the case of other peoples."

- "The history of all ages – the Roman Empire and the British Empire – had proved that expansion could only be carried out by breaking down resistance and taking risks...there had never been spaces without a master...the attacker always comes up against a possessor," Hitler declared. "The question for Germany ran: where could she achieve the greatest gain at the lowest cost?"
- He pointed out two major obstacles; "two hate-inspired antagonists, Britain and France, to whom a German colossus in the center of Europe was a thorn in the flesh..."
- "Germany's [Lebensraum] problem could only be solved by means of force," Hitler said, but "there remain still to be answered the questions 'when' and 'how'..."
- Hitler wanted to resolve the Lebensraum issue by 1943 to 1945 at the very latest to guard against military obsolescence, the aging of the Nazi leadership, and, "it was while the rest of the world was still preparing its defenses that we were obliged to take the offensive."

Although Hitler's ultimate goal was to acquire Lebensraum in the East, namely Russia, he focused the entire conference on his first objectives, the seizure of Austria and Czechoslovakia to protect Germany's eastern and southern flanks. Hitler outlined three strategies to achieve this, each one designed to capitalize on the military and political weaknesses of France and Britain.

- In the first scenario, Hitler would wait until 1943 when rearmament was complete and France and Britain would be heavily outgunned.
- In the second, he would act sooner by keeping a close eye on France's internal political problems, waiting for a chance to strike at Czechoslovakia in the event that France was weakened by a major crisis such as a civil war.
- In the third, he would strike as early as 1938 at both Austria and Czechoslovakia if France got bogged down in a military conflict with some other country, such as Germany's new ally, Fascist Italy.

Hitler's casual acceptance of the immense risks of starting a large-scale war in Europe shocked those in attendance, especially Blomberg and Fritsch who, according to Hossbach's notes, "repeatedly emphasized the necessity that Britain and France must not appear in the roles of our enemies." They were not objecting on any moral grounds to Hitler's war plans but merely out of practical consideration. Germany, in their opinion, was far from being ready for war, and even by 1943 would not be adequately armed.

Following the conference, an overwhelmed Neurath went home and suffered a series of heart attacks. Blomberg and Fritsch, meanwhile, maintained their steadfast opposition to Hitler's plans. Their reaction was completely unacceptable to the Führer and he decided they would both have to go. To dump the two generals, he would rely on the expert services of his masters of treachery, SS leader Heinrich Himmler and SS holocaust architect Reinhard Heydrich.

[Source: <http://www.historyplace.com/worldwar2/triumph/tr-hossbach.htm> | November 2020 ++]

WWII Bomber Nose Art

[63] Results



Every Picture Tells A Story

An Artist At Heart



Even a Royal Air Force combat photographer is an artist at heart. This artistic shot, taken at British airfield near the village of Bétheniville, France (in the Champagne district) during the winter-long “Phoney War”, frames a British soldier standing guard in the snow over a parked and camouflaged Bristol Blenheim Mk IV of 139 Squadron. The photograph was likely taken around the time that the squadron was moved from Great Britain to France in December of 1939. The Blenheims of 139 Squadron were the first aircraft to engage the Germans—one day after war was declared on 3 September 1939. It was on that same raid against German ships at Wilhelmshaven that the first Canadian died during the war—Albert Stanley Price, a Blenheim pilot with 107 Squadron, Royal Air Force. For more on 139 and 107 Squadron and the first battle of the war, [click here](#).

USS Seawolf (SS-197)

Probably Sunk By Friendly Fire after 3 Years of Combat



When war with Japan began, USS Seawolf readied for sea and was on her first war patrol from 8–26 December 1941 hunting Japanese shipping off San Bernardino Strait. She was a Sargo-class diesel-electric submarine, the second submarine of the United States Navy named for the Atlantic wolffish. *Her* keel was laid down on 27 September 1938 by the Portsmouth Navy Yard in Kittery, Maine. *She* was launched on 15 August 1939 and commissioned on 1 December 1939. She had a range: 11,000 nautical miles at 10 knots surfaced. She could travel up to 21 knots surfaced and 8.75 knots submerged with an endurance of 48 hours submerged at 2 knots. Her armament consisted of eight 21 inch torpedo tubes, 4 forward and 4 aft, 24 torpedoes (Mark 14's as designed, mixed with Mark 10's or mines during WWII). One 3 inch / 50 Cal deck gun, and 4 machine guns. Her normal crew compliment was 5 officers and 54 enlisted. Her voyages until her loss were as follows:

- On 14 December, she fired a spread of torpedoes at Sanyo Maru in Port San Vicente. One torpedo hit, but did not explode. She promptly underwent her first depth charge attack but suffered no damage.
- She departed Manila on 31 December 1941 for Australia and arrived at Darwin on 9 January 1942. She loaded 30–40 tons of .50 cal antiaircraft ammunition for use by American forces on Corregidor and sailed for Malila Bay on 16 JAN. The submarine sighted seven Japanese freighters accompanied by four destroyers and a cruiser on 21 JAN, but had no opportunity to fire any of the eight torpedoes that she had aboard. The ammunition was unloaded on 28–29 JAN at Corregidor. Seawolf then loaded torpedoes and passengers, and headed for Surabaya, Java.
- She sailed out of Surabaya on 15 FEB and began patrolling in the Java Sea-Lombok Strait area. On 19 FEB, she fired four torpedoes at two Japanese freighter-transports in the Bandung Strait. Damage to one was not ascertained, but the other was reported last seen down by the stern and listing to starboard. (However, Sagami Maru had been damaged by USAAF air attack, not by Seawolf's torpedo.)
- A week later, she fired her stern tubes at a freighter and watched one hit forward of the bridge before going deep to evade depth charges from an escorting destroyer at which she had also fired. In March, Seawolf was hunting between Java and Christmas Island. On 1 APR, she stealthily approached the anchorage at Christmas Island where the Japanese invasion force lay at anchor. Seawolf fired a spread at Naka. Though Seawolf was credited with a sinking at the time, only one torpedo hit, causing significant damage to the ship, although not harming any of the crew. Naka was forced to return to Japan for repairs and was out of the war for almost a year. Unaware she had hit her target, Seawolf then underwent 7 1/2 hours of depth charge attacks. On 1 APR, she attacked two cruisers. A violent explosion was heard, but no flames were seen. Seawolf ended her patrol on 7 APR at Fremantle and received the Navy Unit Commendation.
- On her fifth patrol, from 12 May until 2 July (a total of 51 days at sea), Seawolf patrolled the Philippine Islands area. She attacked freighters on 20 & 23 MAY and on 12, 13, 15, and 28 JUN. On 13 JUN, she

fired at two ships and her crew heard four explosions, but no sinkings were confirmed. Seawolf returned to Fremantle for three weeks before beginning her sixth war patrol.

- Seawolf prowled the Sulu Sea and Celebes Sea from 25 JUL – 15 SEP. She attacked a tanker on 3 AUG, sank Hachigen Maru on 14 AUG and Showa Maru eleven days later. She returned to Fremantle to refit and then hunted in the Davao Gulf area from 7 OCT to 1 DEC. Seawolf sank Gifu Maru on 2 NOV, Sagami Maru the next day, and Keiko Maru on 8 NOV. She ended her patrol at Pearl Harbor, where Lieutenant Commander Royce L. Gross relieved Commander Warder. She then proceeded to the West Coast of the United States.
- She arrived at [Mare Island Naval Shipyard] on 10 December 1942 and underwent an overhaul that lasted until 24 February 1943. She returned to Pearl Harbor on 13 MAR, and on 3 APR stood out for another patrol. She ended this patrol early, on 3 MAY, because she had expended all torpedoes on enemy shipping near the Bonin Islands. On 15 APR, she torpedoed Kaihei Maru, sank an old destroyer now known as Patrol Boat Number 39 on 23 APR; and sank two 75-ton sampans with her 3 in gun.
- Seawolf returned to Hunter's Point Naval Shipyard for refitting and departed that island on 17 MAY and headed for the East China Sea. She ran into several large convoys as she prowled from Formosa to Nagasaki. The submarine tracked a convoy of 11 ships and fired a spread of torpedoes at a large freighter on 6 JUN. One torpedo hit the target but proved to be a dud, and another passed under the freighter and hit an escort. Two weeks later, she fired a spread at four ships. One was hit in the stern and sank in approximately nine minutes. This was Shojin Maru loaded with troops. Seawolf returned to Midway Island on 8 JUL and, four days later, steamed into Pearl Harbor.
- Her next patrol was from 14 AUG thru 15 SEP. This patrol, in the East China Sea, was also ended prematurely due to firing all torpedoes. She sank 12,996 tons of enemy shipping, excluding two 75-ton sampans sunk by shellfire. Seawolf made contact with a six-ship convoy on her third day in the patrol area. She attacked day and night for three days before finally surfacing to sink Fusei Maru with her deck gun.
- On Seawolf's 11th patrol, in the South China Sea from 5 OCT to 27 NOV, she sank Wuhu Maru, Kaifuku Maru, and damaged a 10,000-ton cargo ship. The submarine refitted at Pearl Harbor, and on 22 DEC, headed for the East China Sea on what was to be her most lucrative patrol. She attacked a seven-ship convoy on the night of 10–11 January 1944 and sank three ships totaling 19,710 tons.
- On 14 JAN, Seawolf fired her last four torpedoes at two merchant ships in a convoy, damaging one and sinking Yamatsuru Maru. She continued tracking the convoy while radioing its position to Whale. Whale arrived on 16 JAN and promptly attacked, damaging one ship and sinking Denmark Maru. The next morning, Whale damaged another before action was broken off.
- Seawolf returned to Pearl Harbor on 27 JAN and sailed for San Francisco two days later. After undergoing a major overhaul at Hunter's Point, the submarine headed west on 16 MAY, with Lieutenant Commander Richard Barr Lynch in command. When she reached Pearl Harbor, she was assigned the task of photographing Peleliu Island in the Palau Islands, in preparation for the forthcoming attack on that stronghold. She carried out this mission despite constant enemy air patrols from 4 JUN to 7 JUL.
- The submarine headed to Majuro for voyage repairs and was rerouted to Darwin. There, she received orders sending her on a special mission to Tawitawi, in the Sulu Archipelago. The submarine approached to within 700 yards of the beach, offloaded supplies and men, picked up a Captain Frank Young, an Allied Intelligence Bureau coast watcher, and took him to Brisbane. The operation order also called for Seawolf to land a party and their supplies on northern Palawan Island.
- Seawolf stood out of Brisbane on 21 SEP to begin her 15th war patrol under the command of Lieutenant Commander Albert Marion Bontier. She reached Manus Island on 29 SEP, refueled, and sailed the same day carrying stores and Army personnel to the east coast of Samar.

Seawolf and Narwhal exchanged radar recognition signals at 0756 on 3 OCT in the Morotai area. Shortly thereafter, a 7th Fleet task group was attacked by Japanese submarine RO-41. The destroyer escort Shelton was torpedoed and

sunk, and USS Richard M. Rowell (DE-403) began to search for the enemy. Since there were four friendly submarines in the vicinity of this attack, they were directed to give their positions and the other three did, but Seawolf was not heard from. On 4 OCT, Seawolf again was directed to report her position, and again she failed to do so. One of two planes from the aircraft carrier Midway sighted a submarine submerging and dropped two bombs on it even though it was in a safety zone for American submarines. The site was marked by dye.

Rowell's commanding officer knew he was in a safety lane, but, having failed to get word Seawolf was behind schedule, believed there was no U.S. submarine nearby and chose to attack. Rowell established sonar contact on the submarine, which then sent a series of dashes and dots which Rowell stated bore no resemblance to the existing recognition signals. Believing this an attempt to jam her sonar Rowell attacked with Hedgehog. The second attack was followed by underwater explosions, and debris rose to the surface.

Post-war examination of Japanese records shows no attack listed that could account for the loss of Seawolf. While it is possible Seawolf was lost to an operational casualty or as a result of an unrecorded enemy attack, it is more likely she was sunk by friendly fire. 83 officers and men as well as 17 Army passengers were lost. She was the thirty-fourth U.S. submarine lost in the Pacific War, the second after USS Dorado (SS-248) in the Caribbean, to friendly fire. One of the Army passengers was Captain Howell S. Kopp, an Alamo Scout. Kopp was en route to an undisclosed location in the Philippines to conduct a clandestine mission in support of the upcoming Allied landing on Leyte.

On 28 December 1944, Seawolf was declared overdue from patrol and presumed lost. She was stricken from the Naval Vessel Registry on 20 January 1945. Seawolf received 13 battle Stars for World War II service. She ranked fourteenth in confirmed tonnage sunk (71,609 tons) and tied for seventh in confirmed ships sunk (with Rasher and Trigger), according to the JANAC accounting postwar. The contributions and sacrifices of Seawolf and her crew are officially commemorated in Seawolf Park, located on Pelican Island, just north of Galveston, Texas. [Source: USSVI Tucson Base | November 10, 2020 ++]

Medal of Honor Citations

Gerald O. Young | Vietnam



The President of the United States takes pride in presenting the

MEDAL OF HONOR

To

Lt. Colonel Gerald O. Young

Organization: U.S. Air Force, 37th Air Rescue Service, Da Nang Air Force Base, Vietnam

Place and date: Khesanh, Republic of Vietnam, November 9, 1967

Entered service: USN 1947 & 1955 at age 17 & 25

Born: May 19, 1930, Chicago, Cook County, IL

Citation

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty. Capt. Young distinguished himself while serving as a helicopter rescue crew commander. Capt. Young was flying escort for another helicopter attempting the night rescue of an Army ground reconnaissance team in imminent danger of death or capture. Previous attempts had resulted in the loss of two helicopters to hostile ground fire. The endangered team was positioned on the side of a steep slope which required unusual airmanship on the part of Capt. Young to effect pickup. Heavy automatic weapons fire from the surrounding enemy severely damaged one rescue helicopter, but it was able to extract three of the team. The commander of this aircraft recommended to Capt. Young that further rescue attempts be abandoned because it was not possible to suppress the concentrated fire from enemy automatic weapons. With full knowledge of the danger involved, and the fact that supporting helicopter gunships were low on fuel and ordnance, Capt. Young hovered under intense fire until the remaining survivors were aboard. As he maneuvered the aircraft for takeoff, the enemy appeared at point-blank range and raked the aircraft with automatic-weapons fire. The aircraft crashed, inverted, and burst into flames. Capt. Young escaped through a window of the burning aircraft. Disregarding serious burns, Capt. Young aided one of the wounded men and attempted to lead the hostile forces away from his position. Later, despite intense pain from his burns, he declined to accept rescue because he had observed hostile forces setting up automatic-weapons positions to entrap any rescue aircraft. For more than 17 hours he evaded the enemy until rescue aircraft could be brought into the area. Through his extraordinary heroism, aggressiveness, and concern for his fellow man, Capt. Young reflected the highest credit upon himself, the U.S. Air Force, and the Armed Forces of his country.



-o-o-O-o-o-

Air Force Lt. Col. Gerald Young was not the first helicopter pilot to risk his life in combat, but his heroics during a mission-gone-wrong over the jungles of Vietnam made him the first of such men to receive the Medal of Honor. Young's heroics during a mission-gone-wrong over the jungles of Vietnam helped save several stranded comrades who were directly in the path of enemy fighters.

Young was born just as the Great Depression was taking hold. He grew up during the World War II era, so by the time he was 17, he enlisted in the Navy to do his part to serve. Young was discharged in 1952 but, after a few years back in civilian life, he decided to reenlist in 1955. He served in the Navy for another year before being accepted into the Air Force aviation cadet training program, from which he earned his commission in 1958. Over the next decade, Young served in several locations, including Japan and for missions that supported the atomic tests taking place in the Marshall Islands. By 1967, the war in Vietnam was in full effect. Young deployed to the country as a rescue helicopter pilot with the 37th Air Rescue Service based at Da Nang Air Force Base. He was 37 and on his 60th combat mission as the pilot of an HH-3E Jolly Green Giant when he earned the Medal of Honor.

In the early-morning hours of Nov. 9, 1967, then-Capt. Young's helicopter was part of a five-aircraft team sent to rescue a U.S./South Vietnamese Army ground reconnaissance team that was surrounded in the jungle near Khe Sanh. Two other choppers that had tried to rescue them earlier were taken out by ground fire from the enemy. The Army team was stuck on the side of a steep slope, which required some special maneuvering to reach them. Young's helicopter was backing up another chopper that managed to pick up three of the survivors before being heavily damaged by enemy fire. As that pilot pulled away, he advised Young to abandon the rescue of the last survivors because the gunfire was impossible to evade. Other helicopters gunships that were supporting them were also reportedly low on fuel and ordnance.

Instead of escorting the damaged helicopter to safety, Young and his crew decided to try to finish the mission. Young dropped his helicopter down to the survivors, hovering with only one wheel on the ground so the rotors wouldn't touch the hillside. The last of the survivors boarded the aircraft before enemy fighters on the ground closed in. As Young prepared for takeoff, those insurgents raked the aircraft with gunfire and grenades at point-blank range. One of the helicopter's engines exploded. The chopper flipped, burst into flames and fell down the hill. Young, who was suspended in the cockpit by his seat belt, managed to kick out a window of the burning fuselage and rolled down the hill. When he stopped, he frantically put out the fire still on his clothes and parachute. Young was seriously burned, but he ignored his own injuries to tend to an unconscious man who had been thrown from the chopper. He hid that man in some underbrush. Young then tried to get back to the helicopter, but the heat and gunfire were too intense.

By dawn, Young had made his way to a clearing and had managed to use flares and radio signals to let searching aircraft know where he was. But he also knew hostile forces were using him as bait to draw in more helicopters, so he refused their rescue. During a lull in enemy fire, rescue crews were able to collect a few more crash survivors. But as enemy forces returned and closed in on Young's crash scene to find him, he led them in the opposite direction to take the pressure off more rescue forces. For the rest of the day, despite the intense pain from his burns, Young hid in dense foliage as the North Vietnamese pursued him. This gave other rescue crews time to land at the crash site and collect survivors and those who had died. After 17 hours, Young had wandered 6 miles from the crash site and was finally able to evade his pursuers long enough to call another rescue helicopter. That chopper was finally able to extricate him from his precarious position.

When he returned to the United States, Young spent three months in a hospital to recover from the burns that blistered more than a quarter of his body. A few months later, on May 14, 1968, he received the Medal of Honor from President Lyndon B. Johnson during a ceremony at the White House. Young continued his career in the military and earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Maryland while he was stationed in Washington, D.C. He met his wife, Yadi, during a trip to Costa Rica. They were married in 1972 and had a daughter they named Melody. Young retired in 1980 at the rank of lieutenant colonel. He and his wife moved to a 30-acre farm in Anacortes, Washington, where Young spent the next decade speaking about his military career to students, ROTC units and at public events. Young died on June 6, 1990, in Anacortes, WA, of a brain tumor. He was buried in Arlington National Cemetery (MH) (7-A-87), with full military honors. The town of Anacortes dedicated a park in his honor.

[Source: <https://www.cmohs.org> & DOD News | Katie Lange | November 9, 2020 ++]

Military History Anniversaries

16 thru 30 NOV

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 | November 2020 ++]



Medicare Cost | Military Retirees

Update 04: 2021 Premium Changes

Health care already [accounts for about 10% of spending](#), on average, by households headed by seniors. And 2021 brings more bad news for the pocketbooks of seniors on Original Medicare. Several premiums and deductibles for folks with the traditional Medicare health insurance are increasing for the new year, the federal government announced 6 NOV. The rising costs include the:

1. **2021 Medicare Part B standard premium:** \$148.50 per month, an increase of \$3.90 from \$144.60 in 2020. That's compared with an increase of \$9.10 per month [one year prior](#).
2. **2021 Medicare Part B deductible:** \$203 per year, an increase of \$5 from \$198 in 2020. That's compared with an increase of \$13 one year prior.
3. **2021 Medicare Part A inpatient hospital deductible:** \$1,484, an increase of \$76 from \$1,408 in 2020. That's compared with an increase of \$44 one year prior.

One consolation is that the Part B standard premium and deductible will not increase by as much as they did for 2020. This is partly due to a recent [federal law](#) that limited the increase in Part B premiums for 2021. Still, the Medicare cost increases for 2021 will effectively negate part of the 1.3% cost-of-living adjustment, or COLA, that increases retirees' monthly Social Security benefit payments in the new year. For the average retiree, the 2021 COLA translates to just an extra \$20 a month.

What Medicare Parts A and B cover

Medicare Part A covers the following types of care:

- Inpatient hospital services
- Skilled nursing facility services
- Some home health care services

About 99% of Medicare beneficiaries don't have to pay a premium for their Part A coverage due to how long they worked. That is, they get this break because they had Medicare taxes withheld from their paychecks during their working years.

Medicare Part B covers the following types of care:

- Physician services
- Outpatient hospital services
- Certain home health services
- Durable medical equipment
- Certain other medical and health services not covered by Medicare Part A

Part B premiums are [based on income](#). The standard monthly premium listed above applies to individuals who earn up to \$88,000 and married couples who earn up to \$176,000 and file a joint federal tax return. Folks with higher incomes pay higher Part B premiums — which will be anywhere from \$207.90 to \$504.90 next year, depending on income.

Medicare Advantage premiums projected to fall

Original Medicare and Medicare Advantage are the two main types of Medicare.

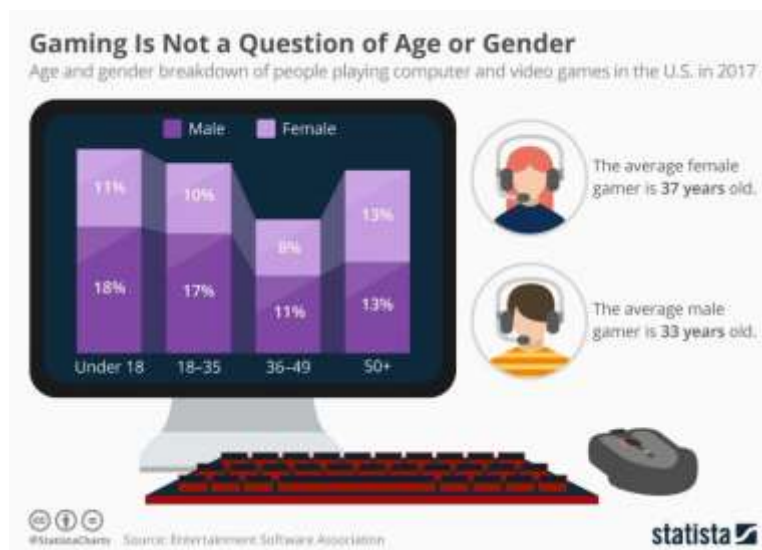
- Original Medicare is the traditional Medicare program offered directly by the federal government that includes Medicare Part A and Part B. The costs of Original Medicare generally include the premiums and deductibles above.
- Medicare Advantage plans are an all-in-one alternative to the traditional program offered by private insurance companies. The costs of Medicare Advantage plans, including any premiums and deductibles, vary by plan and insurer.

On average, though, Medicare Advantage premiums for 2021 are expected to be 34% lower than they were for 2017, according to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, the federal agency that oversees the Medicare program. In fact, the average 2021 Medicare Advantage premium will be the lowest since 2007. To learn more about Medicare Advantage plans for the new year, check out “[8 Extra Benefits in Most Medicare Advantage Plans for 2021](#).”

[Source: MoneyTalksNews | Karla Bowsher | November 7, 2020 ++]

Internet Gaming Disorder

Is IGD Addiction a Mental Disorder?



Online games are very popular, at least one person plays video games in two-thirds of American households, according to the Entertainment Software Association. Roughly 160 million American adults play internet-based games, one recent study estimates. The games can be very entertaining, and it may be easy to get absorbed in the competition, but can they be addictive? That is a question still being debated among researchers and health professionals.

Addiction to gaming is described in the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5), which is used by mental health professionals to diagnose mental disorders. There was not sufficient evidence to determine whether the condition is a unique mental disorder or the best criteria to classify it at the time the DSM-5 was published in 2013. However, it recognized internet gaming disorder in the section

recommending conditions for further research, along with caffeine use disorder and other conditions. The DSM-5 includes substance-related addictive disorders, such as alcohol, tobacco, stimulants, marijuana and opioids. Gambling disorder is the only behavioral addiction (as opposed to substance use) identified in DSM-5.

The DSM-5 notes that gaming must cause "significant impairment or distress" in several aspects of a person's life. This proposed condition is limited to gaming and does not include problems with general use of the internet, online gambling, or use of social media or smartphones. The proposed symptoms of internet gaming disorder include:

- Preoccupation with gaming
- Withdrawal symptoms when gaming is taken away or not possible (sadness, anxiety, irritability)
- Tolerance, the need to spend more time gaming to satisfy the urge
- Inability to reduce playing, unsuccessful attempts to quit gaming
- Giving up other activities, loss of interest in previously enjoyed activities due to gaming
- Continuing to game despite problems
- Deceiving family members or others about the amount of time spent on gaming
- The use of gaming to relieve negative moods, such as guilt or hopelessness
- Risk, having jeopardized or lost a job or relationship due to gaming

Under the proposed criteria, a diagnosis of internet gaming disorder would require experiencing five or more of these symptoms within a year. The condition can include gaming on the internet, or on any electronic device, although most people who develop clinically significant gaming problems play primarily on the internet. In late 2017, the World Health Organization (WHO) announced that in the upcoming edition (11th Revision) of the International Classification of Diseases* (ICD), gaming disorder will be identified as a new disorder. In some countries, including South Korea and China, video gaming has been recognized as a disorder and treatment programs have been established. Research is Ongoing

Whether internet gaming should be classified as an addiction/mental disorder is the subject of much debate and a growing body of research. Even while professional's debate, individual stories point to struggles and devastation from the phenomenon. An example was highlighted in a Washington Post article, which can be read [here](#). The Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences summarizes the current debate: "Adding video gaming to the list of recognized behavioral addictions could help millions in need. It could also characterize a normal behavior as abnormal and create a new stigma." If you are concerned about yourself or a loved one, talk with your health care provider or a mental health professional.

[Source: <https://www.psychiatry.org/patients-families/internet-gaming> | Ranna Parekh, M.D. | June 2018 ++]

Coronavirus Vaccine

Update 17: Pfizer Vaccine May Be 90% Effective

Pfizer Inc. said 9 NOV that its COVID-19 vaccine may be a remarkable 90% effective, based on early and incomplete test results that nevertheless brought a big burst of optimism to a world desperate for the means to finally bring the catastrophic outbreak under control. The announcement came less than a week after an election seen as a referendum on President Donald Trump's handling of the scourge, which has killed more than 1.2 million people worldwide, including almost a quarter-million in the United States alone. "We're in a position potentially to be able to offer some hope," Dr. Bill Gruber, Pfizer's senior vice president of clinical development, told The Associated Press. "We're very encouraged."

Pfizer, which is developing the vaccine with its German partner BioNTech, now is on track to apply later this month for emergency-use approval from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, once it has the necessary safety information in hand. Even if all goes well, authorities have stressed it is unlikely any vaccine will arrive much before the end of the

year, and the limited initial supplies will be rationed. Dr. Anthony Fauci, the U.S. government's top infectious-disease expert, said the results suggesting 90% effectiveness are just extraordinary, adding: "Not very many people expected it would be as high as that." "It's going to have a major impact on everything we do with respect to COVID," Fauci said as Pfizer appeared to take the lead in the all-out global race by pharmaceutical companies and various countries to develop a well-tested vaccine against the virus.

Dr. Bruce Aylward, the World Health Organization's senior adviser, said Pfizer's vaccine could "fundamentally change the direction of this crisis" by March, when the U.N. agency hopes to start vaccinating high-risk groups. Global markets, already buoyed by the victory of President-elect Joe Biden, rallied on the news from Pfizer. The S&P 500 finished the day with a gain of 1.2%, while the Dow Jones Industrial Average rose more than 800 points. Pfizer stock was up more than 8%. Still, Monday's announcement doesn't mean for certain that a vaccine is imminent: This interim analysis, from an independent data monitoring board, looked at 94 infections recorded so far in a study that has enrolled nearly 44,000 people in the U.S. and five other countries. Some participants got the vaccine, while others got dummy shots. Pfizer released no specific breakdowns, but for the vaccine to be 90% effective, nearly all the infections must have occurred in placebo recipients. The study is continuing, and Pfizer cautioned that the protection rate might change as more COVID-19 cases are added to the calculations.

Dr. Jesse Goodman of Georgetown University, former chief of the FDA's vaccine division, called the partial results "extremely promising" but ticked off many questions still to be answered, including how long the vaccine's effects last and whether it protects older people as well as younger ones. Trump, who had suggested repeatedly during the presidential campaign that a vaccine could be ready by Election Day, tweeted: "STOCK MARKET UP BIG, VACCINE COMING SOON. REPORT 90% EFFECTIVE. SUCH GREAT NEWS!" Biden, for his part, welcomed the news but cautioned that it could be many months before vaccinations become widespread in the U.S., and he warned Americans to rely on masks and social distancing in the meantime. He said the country still faces a "dark winter."

Confirmed infections in the U.S. eclipsed 10 million on 9 NOV, the highest in the world. New cases are running at all-time highs of more than 100,000 per day. And tens of thousands more deaths are feared in the coming months, with the onset of cold weather and the holidays. Pfizer's vaccine is among four candidates already in huge studies in the U.S., with still more being tested in other countries. Another U.S. company, Moderna Inc., also hopes to file an application with the FDA late this month. Both companies' shots are made with a brand-new technology. These "mRNA vaccines" aren't made with the coronavirus itself, meaning there's no chance anyone could catch it from the shots. Instead, the vaccine contains a piece of genetic code that trains the immune system to recognize the spiked protein on the surface of the virus.

Despite cheering the news, Trump posted a series of tweets 10 NOV accusing Pfizer and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration of waiting until after the election to announce its positive vaccine news for political reasons. Pfizer has insisted that its work is not influenced by politics and that it was "moving at the speed of science." The company itself learned of the interim results on Sunday after its independent data monitors met to discuss them. The FDA was not involved in Pfizer's decision to announce its early results and did not make any announcements of its own.

Pfizer initially opted not to join the Trump administration's Operation Warp Speed, which helped fund a half-dozen vaccine makers' research and manufacturing scale-up. Pfizer instead said it has invested \$2 billion of its own money in testing and expanding manufacturing capacity. But in July, Pfizer signed a contract to supply the U.S. with 100 million doses for \$1.95 billion, assuming the vaccine is cleared by the FDA. Pfizer said its only involvement in Operation Warp Speed is that those doses are part of the administration's goal to have 300 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines ready sometime next year.

The strong results were a surprise. Scientists have warned for months that any COVID-19 shot may be only as good as flu vaccines, which are about 50% effective and require yearly immunizations. Earlier this year, Fauci said he would be happy with a COVID-19 vaccine that was 60% effective. Whatever the ultimate level of protection, no one knows if people will need regular vaccinations. Also, volunteers in the study received a coronavirus test only if they developed symptoms, leaving unanswered whether vaccinated people could get infected but show no symptoms and unknowingly spread the virus.

Pfizer has estimated it could have 50 million doses available globally by the end of 2020, enough for 25 million people. Public Citizen, the consumer advocacy group, called the release of the preliminary and incomplete data "bad science" and said that any enthusiasm over the results "must be tempered" until they are reviewed by the FDA and its independent experts. "Crucial information absent from the companies' announcement is any evidence that the vaccine prevents serious COVID-19 cases or reduces hospitalizations and deaths due to the disease," the organization said [Source: Associated Press | Linda A. Johnson & Lauran Neergaard | November 9, 2020 ++]

Blood Pressure

Update 03: Understanding It



Basically, blood pressure readings are a measurement of how hard your heart is working to pump blood throughout your body. There are two numbers used to record your blood pressure. These are expressed as mm Hg, which stands for means millimeters of mercury. This has long been a medical standard for measuring pressure. The first number is called the systolic blood pressure. This is how much pressure your blood is exerting against your artery walls with each heartbeat. The second number is called the diastolic blood pressure. It measures how much pressure your blood is exerting against your artery walls between beats when your heart is at rest.

The American College of Cardiology and the American Heart Association released a comprehensive set of guidelines in 2017. Called the High Blood Pressure Clinical Practice Guideline, these guidelines changed the definition of normal blood pressure. You are considered to have a normal blood pressure reading if your systolic pressure is less than 120 and your diastolic pressure is lower than 80. If your blood pressure falls in this range, you should continue habits and behaviors that promote heart health like a proper diet and exercise regimen. Under the 2017 guidelines, almost half of American adults have at least mildly elevated blood pressure. The different stages of elevated pressure or hypertension are:

- Elevated: systolic pressure is between 120-130 and your diastolic pressure is less than 80
- Hypertension (stage 1): consistent blood pressure readings with systolic pressure between 130 -139 or a diastolic pressure of 80-89
- Hypertension (stage 2): systolic pressure of 140 or higher or a diastolic reading of 90 or higher
- Hypertensive emergency: systolic pressure is higher than 180 or diastolic pressure is greater than 120; risk for a stroke or cardiac event

For some people, blood pressure can be too low. This may result in dizziness, weakness, and fainting. If allowed to drop too low, hypotension can cause vital organs to be deprived of enough oxygen and may lead to serious damage to the heart and brain. If your heart has to work too hard to pump blood through your body, it can become damaged over time. In addition, elevated blood pressure greatly increases your risk of death from ischemic heart disease and stroke. If you have been diagnosed with hypertension, you should follow the advice of your doctor and take steps to reduce it.

Lifestyle behaviors can improve your heart health and possibly even lower your blood pressure readings. A few strategies you might try include:

- Eating a plant-based diet rich in omega-3 fatty acids

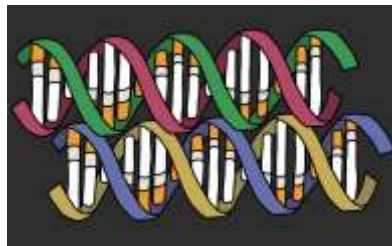
- Exercising at least 150 minutes each week at a moderate intensity
- Reducing stress
- Limiting your sodium intake
- Quitting nicotine
- Reducing your alcohol consumption or limiting it to moderate amounts of red wine

Your blood pressure doesn't give a complete picture of your overall health. It does, however, give an indication of your likelihood of developing other, serious, complications. Always take time to record your readings and work to keep them within a normal range.

[Source: Aging Healthy Today | June 11, 2020 ++]

Smoking

Update 09: New Research Indicates Smoking and Quitting May Be Genetic



A new Yale study reveals genetic markers that may predict which people are more likely to start and stop smoking than others. The study was published in the journal *Nature* on 20 OCT, co-authored by professor of psychiatry at the Yale School of Medicine Ke Xu and biostatistics doctoral candidate Boyang Li GRD '23. Through a genome-wide association study, or GWAS, the researchers identified 99 genetic variants linked to smoking initiation and 13 variants linked to smoking cessation. This research was funded by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and was part of its Million Veteran Program. "In the future," Xu said, "our goal is to use this as information to identify some provisional strategies to help veterans and also the general population ... [quit] smoking."

According to the VA website, over 825,000 veterans have partnered with the Million Veteran Program since its launch in 2011. Xu and Li's research was directly tied to the program's aim to understand how genetic and environmental factors affect the health outcomes of individuals. The researchers' work used data from veterans provided by the Million Veteran Program and specifically compared the genomes of these individuals. One benefit of accessing this data was the varying populations which they were able to study. "We are not looking at the widely studied European population," Xu said. "We also look at other populations including African Americans and Hispanic Americans."

With this large, ethnically diverse cohort they were able to access longitudinal data — which is data collected over an extended period of time — about the smoking history of the patients. They then identified particular loci, or locations, of genetic variations which may be linked to a patient's likelihood of smoking. Once researchers identify certain genetic markers that increase an individual's likelihood of smoking, it becomes possible to treat people with these risk factors in a more targeted way. "If we can use genetics to construct a sort of vulnerability or liability of certain complex traits," Li said. "We can then help them to actually change their behavior ... for a better health outcome."

While the study focuses on the way a person's genetics affect their smoking behavior, Xu specified that genes are not the only determining factor behind why a person may be more or less likely to smoke. She mentioned that the estimated heritability of smoking is about 40 to 50 percent, meaning that other environmental factors have a role to

play. According to Xu, education and policy can be important variables. Some examples of previously studied environmental variables include taxes on tobacco sales, smoke-free regulations and limits on sales and marketing of tobacco products. All of these have been proven to reduce tobacco use, according to a 2014 study. While a person's genetics may not be the whole picture, they are an immutable contributor to smoking risk, according to Li. Xu said that the next step is to use genetic variants to investigate the relationship between substance abuse and psychiatric disorders.

Antonio Giraldez, chair of the Department of Genetics, believes this study is a step forward in learning about the basic biology that guides individuals' decision making with regards to addiction. "Understanding that certain genes, when they have a particular mutation, give a preference for smoking versus not smoking is ... a window into understanding the neurological pathways that guide decision-making," he said. According to Giraldez, however, the genetic variations the study identified are only loosely linked to particular genes, and some may affect multiple genes simultaneously. He mentioned that scientists' understanding of which genes affect smoking initiation or cessation is thus uncertain, and there is a lot more work to be done before the research can be used in clinical practice.

The next step in this research, Giraldez said, is to replicate the study with another large cohort. According to the paper, the researchers were unable to replicate their findings as part of their paper. "The reason for that is not necessarily that the findings were not true," Giraldez said. "It's that they couldn't reach statistical significance based on the statistical power of their study." Essentially, they were unable to find a suitably large cohort with which to replicate their data. Nevertheless, this study has shed light on how genetics can impact one's smoking behavior, which may eventually be used to produce targeted treatments. Smoking is responsible for more than 480,000 deaths per year in the United States and remains the largest preventable cause of death in the country. [Source: Yale News | Kaitlin Flores & Amre Proman | November 05, 2020 ++]

Update 01: Home Remedies



If you had cold sores before, you might know the signs. It starts with a tingling sensation on the corner of your mouth or edge of your lip and then begins to burn. Then a blister appears, which is filled with fluid. They last around 7 to 10 days or, in many cases, up to 3 weeks and may break, open, ooze, or crust over. These 7 to 10 days or a few weeks can be very painful if not treated well. There are hundreds of cold sore remedies and prescribed treatments available, but how do you know which one to go for? Well, the best to try is a natural remedy because it doesn't have any harmful effects. We've examined the most prevalent natural remedies for cold sores and they are listed below.

1. Lemon Balm

Lemon balm has antiviral properties known as *Melissa officinalis* that helps to reduce redness and swelling. Make sure you use a balm with at least 1% of lemon balm extract to get significant results.

2. Use Ice

While ice may not speed up the healing process, it reduces the inflammation and discomfort you may feel. Apply an ice pack or a couple of ice cubes to the affected area. You can also wrap the ice in a towel to stabilize the temperature. It can be used as much as needed.

3. Wear Sunscreen

Exposure of skin to the sunlight may bring cold sores to the surface. You can prevent this by wearing sunscreen on and around your lips. For this, you can use lip balm on your lips and around the mouth. For better results, opt for a balm with SPF 30 or more.

4. Vitamin C

Vitamin can't cure cold sores solely, but it does assist the healing process. Being an antioxidant, Vitamin C supports the immune system and the wound healing process. For this, you can include berries, tomatoes, peppers, spinach, and broccoli in your diet.

5. Tea Tree Oil

We all know tea tree oil for its antiviral and antiseptic properties. Tea tree oil can help speed up the process by killing bacteria and drying out the cold sore. Though, no study proves it entirely. Tea tree oil is powerful, so make sure you apply it with a carrier oil or lip balm.

6. Aloe Vera

Aloe Vera gel is very common and is found in most of our houses. Due to its anti-inflammatory properties and being very soothing, aloe vera gel can reduce pain and redness. You can apply it directly to the skin.

7. Use Lysine

This supplement comes in cream or capsule form and is used sometimes to cure cold sores. Lysine activates essential parts of the immune system like T cells to heal the cold sores.

8. Reduce Stress

Stress can cause the herpes virus to come out of dormancy; that is why it is vital to reduce stress from your life to treat cold sores. You can meditate, practice mindfulness activities, and avoid the causes of stress.

9. Toothpaste

You can dab toothpaste on your cold sores to help it dry up faster. However, toothpaste has other ingredients, so make sure there isn't anything that may irritate the skin.

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If these natural remedies aren't helping you much, you can go for prescription treatments. If you experience outbreaks very often, you can take antiviral medication to prevent the same. Abreva is a clinically proven cream that is known to cure your cold sores in just 3 days if you use it as soon as you notice symptoms. You can apply the cream where you feel a burning or tingling itching sensation and see blisters to speed up the healing process.

What to Avoid During Cold Sores

It would be best if you tried to avoid triggers. For instance, if you know a hot day at the beach can trigger the cold sores to come out, try to avoid such situations as much as you can. It's advised not to touch or prick the cold sores, or you'll end up carrying the virus to other parts of your body. Always wash your hands before touching your face to prevent infection. The Bottom Line -- Many adults have tested positive for the virus that causes cold sores. Most of us don't show the symptoms, while many deal with recurring breakouts. By keeping a healthy lifestyle, following the remedies as mentioned earlier, and reducing stress from your life, you can keep cold sores at bay. This way, you prevent the pain it causes and the chances of it occurring again. [Source: Aging Healthy Today | October 23, 2020 ++]

Covid-19 Treatment

Update 04: Metformin | Commonly Prescribed for Type 2 Diabetes

A study involving hundreds of Veterans Affairs patients shows a link between the diabetes drug metformin and a lower risk of death from COVID-19. Metformin, one of the most commonly prescribed medications for people with Type 2 diabetes, is a known mammalian target of rapamycin inhibitor, which has been a recent focus of potential COVID-19 treatments. A study published in JAMDA last week examined the drug's influence among 775 nursing home residents infected with SARS-CoV-2 at 134 Veterans Health Administration Community Living Centers (nursing homes) between March 1 and May 13.

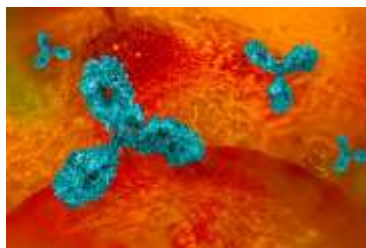
Diabetes is a known risk factor for developing a severe case of COVID-19, and patients typically fare worse with those infections versus non-diabetics. But residents taking metformin were at significantly reduced hazard of death in the 30 days following a COVID-19 diagnosis. Comparing medication records for the 14-days prior to diagnosis and patient outcomes 30 days after, the study found that 12.6% of SARS-CoV-2 residents taking metformin died, compared with 17.4% of those taking other diabetes medications, 23.3% of those taking insulin and 22.7% of those not taking any diabetes medications.

"These findings suggest a relative survival benefit in nursing home residents on metformin, potentially through its mTOR inhibition effects," reported the authors, led by James Rudolph, M.D., geriatrician and health services researcher at the Providence VA Medical Center and associate professor of medicine at Brown University. "Metformin is an inexpensive and readily available therapy that could reduce mortality and hospitalization associated with SARS-CoV-2 infection in patients with T2DM for which there are no drug contraindications." The research team is calling for a prospective study to investigate the drug's potential therapeutic benefits. [Source: www.mcknights.com/news | Kimberly Marselas | November 1, 2020 ++]

Covid-19 Treatment

Update 05: Bamlanivimab Receives FDA Emergency Use Authorization

In more good news for the fight against COVID-19, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration on 9 NOV authorized use of a drug that appears to protect infected people at high risk from getting very sick. The FDA issued an emergency use authorization to drug-maker Lilly for bamlanivimab, a monoclonal antibody that mimics the immune system's response to infection with the virus that causes COVID-19. "The data is very solid," said Dr. Daniel Griffin, head of Infectious Disease at ProHEALTH, an independent, physician-led health care organization. The drug is similar to a pair of antibodies made by Regeneron that President Donald Trump has said "cured" him of COVID-19. Regeneron has also applied for FDA authorization for its drug, REGN-COV2.



Antibodies used in medicine are Y-shaped proteins that attach to problematic molecules and cells, to flag them for destruction or block their activity

The FDA's emergency authorization was based on data from a study of the drug in 465 people who had COVID-19 but weren't hospitalized. Some patients got the drug, some got a placebo. Most patients in both groups had cleared the

virus from their system within 11 days. However, in people who were at high risk of severe COVID-19 disease, only 3% of those who got the drug went to the emergency room or were hospitalized. Among people who got the placebo, 10% ended up hospitalized or visiting the ER. A clinical trial of the same drug in COVID-19 patients who were hospitalized was stopped because the drug didn't help those patients recover from a more advanced stage of their disease. "If you're a hospital administration, you look at the number of hospital bed and ventilators and you think that 3% hospitalization versus 10% hospitalization could make a difference," said John Scott, a professor in the Department of Pharmacology at the University of Washington School of Medicine in Seattle.

As case numbers rise around the country, "Everything is going to help at the right point in time," he said. "But it's not going to help nearly as much as people wearing masks and socially distancing." The federal government has already agreed to spend \$375 million to provide 300,000 doses of bamlanivimab for high-risk patients, who will not have to pay out-of-pocket costs for the medication. According to the FDA's authorization, bamlanivimab is allowed to be used to treat recently diagnosed, mild to moderate COVID-19 in high-risk patients.

Delivered via a single dose infusion, the medication should be given as soon as possible after diagnosis and within 10 days of symptom onset, according to the company. The FDA did not license the drug but instead granted it an emergency use authorization. This is a fast-tracked approval process that differs from a regular drug license application in several ways, though the company still must prove to the FDA the drug is safe and effective. [Source: USA TODAY | Elizabeth Weise & Karen Weintraub | November 10, 2020 ++]

Covid-19 Headgear

Update 12: Clear Talker Mask



The Clear Talker mask is the latest invention from the Central Virginia VA Health Care System (CVHCS), meant to aid in communication between patients and staff. The device, a product of the hospital's Assistive Technology (AT) team, could revolutionize this key piece of Veterans' everyday lives. When masks became a requirement at all federal health care facilities, AT realized how much current surgical masks hindered communication. "I noticed after wearing a mask all day that I would come home and my eyes were tired," said Melissa Oliver, occupational therapist and program coordinator of the AT team. "I had to rely on just my eyes to physically express my greeting."

John Miller, Brian Burkhardt, and Seth Hills are rehabilitation engineers who work with Oliver. Their expertise ranges from vacuum forming, injection molding, laser cutting, electronics, 3D printing, and a whole range of other valuable skills used to help Veterans return to a sense of normalcy. "The Clear Talker mask may not make the cover of a fashion magazine," said Seth Hills. Hills has developed several adaptive sports tools, custom mounting solutions and a novel wheelchair interface while with AT. "The fact that you can see each other's faces and catch those social cues is invaluable." The Clear Talker meets FDA's requirements for surgical masks under the emergency use authorization for single-use surgical masks during the COVID-19 pandemic, says Burkhardt. When the pandemic is over, the AT team will submit the Clear Talker for approval to become the new surgical mask standard.

The inspiration behind the mask

John Miller from the AT team was the inspiration behind the Clear Talker mask. He was born with progressive hearing loss in both ears. “As a person with hearing loss, I do have hearing aids that allow me to hear sound,” Miller said. “But I also rely on lip reading to fill in the blanks that I miss with my hearing. After the pandemic started, I was grateful everyone was wearing masks, but it made my day-to-day life harder.” Miller’s personal experience inspired him to pursue an engineering degree that would allow him to directly help people with disabilities.

The Clear Talker mask is composed of a thermoplastic polyester (shown above right). It provides significant chemical resistance, durability and excellent formability for manufacturing. The mask sizes are universal. Designers based the sizes on The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health standards. “The first time the three of us had these masks on, I almost felt like a weight came off of my shoulders,” said Burkhardt. “I felt lighter knowing the burden of understanding was diminished with the ease of seeing the whole face.” The clear masks on the market today have filters located directly in front of the mouth, obstructing visibility.

“The idea behind the Clear Talker was to create a product with the fewest manufactured parts while still being able to read lips,” Burkhardt added. AT held focus groups to test the design to ensure it helps people read body language and facial expressions, and it improved the overall connection. Oliver said she hopes to have all testing completed within a few weeks to begin distributing the masks to staff at the hospital. [Source: Vantage Point | November 6, 2020 ++]

Covid-19 Virus Survivability

Update 02: Asymptomatic Patient Actively Infectious for 70+ Days

A 71-year-old immunocompromised woman at a Washington hospital shed SARS-CoV-2 for up to 70 days and tested positive for the virus 105 days after her initial diagnosis, according to a pre-proof study published in [Cell](#). Researchers said the patient had chronic lymphocytic leukemia and was unable to produce virus antibodies (protein produced by plasma cells used by the immune system to neutralize pathogens). After the patient's initial COVID-19 diagnosis 2 MAR, she was tested 14 more times over the course of the next 15 weeks and continued to test positive through 14 JUN. She remained asymptomatic (showing no symptoms) throughout the entire course of infection. The infectious period usually begins about two days before symptoms arise, and typically stops after eight days, making this patient's case particularly notable, according to the study. Since some immunocompromised patients could remain infectious for longer periods of time than previously thought and are often hospitalized, a "more nuanced approach to testing these individuals is warranted," researchers said. [Source: Beckers Healthcare Newsletter | Erica Carbajal | November 6, 2020 ++]

Covid-19 Testing

Update 06: Community-Based Testing Sites

Costco is a great place for discounted items and bulk shopping, but it’s probably not ideal for finding out if you have the coronavirus. Costco has begun selling [at-home COVID-19 diagnostic tests](#) online, and there are two choices: a saliva kit for \$129.99 and the same kit with video observation for travelers, costing \$139.99. Perhaps the main reason to avoid going with Costco is price. You don’t need to pay a cent to be tested for the coronavirus, thanks to the federal [Families First Coronavirus Response Act](#), which became law in March. As the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [explains](#): “COVID-19 tests are available at no cost nationwide at health centers and select pharmacies. The Families First Coronavirus Response Act ensures that COVID-19 testing is free to anyone in the U.S., including the uninsured. Additional testing sites may be available in your area.”

Pharmacy giants [Walgreens](#), [CVS](#) and [Rite-Aid](#) are all administering free tests at selection locations, and some Walmart Neighborhood Market pharmacies are supporting [drive-thru testing](#). The Department of Health has a handy website at <https://www.hhs.gov/coronavirus/community-based-testing-sites/index.html> that allows you to see where you can get a free test in all 50 states. The website furnishes information on which if the below testing sites are available in your location along with their contact info plus your state's Health Department website for local testing information.

- Rite Aid
- Walgreens
- Walmart
- CVS
- Health center near you.
- Local independent pharmacies

Using a coronavirus diagnostic test kit from Costco also is a bit cumbersome, and receiving the results might take longer than if you went to a local pharmacy for a free test. There are several steps to complete before a kit is shipped to you — including completing a health assessment and requesting a lab order — and you won't get the kit until the following day. Then, after collecting your saliva sample, you ship it to the lab, which will return the results 24-72 hours after receiving your test.

Compare that with Walgreens, which generally returns results in one to three days from the time you are tested, and CVS gives results in two to three days — and in some cases the same day. Of course, if you are trying to be ultra-safe and don't want to venture outside, Costco's at-home test kit might be the best option for you. It also is cheaper than some other at-home diagnostic test kits available online: It comes in cheaper than [Albertsons'](#) (\$139.99), about the same price as [Vitagene's](#) (\$129) but more expensive than [Everlywell's](#) (\$109). [Source: MoneyTalksNews | Alex Valdes | November 2, 2020++]

Covid-19 Testing

Update 07: Give Blood and Discover If You Have Had It

Find out if you have coronavirus antibodies — and help your community at the same time. Millions of us wonder if we've been exposed to the coronavirus without knowing it. Now, the [American Red Cross](#) is offering an easy way to find out. When you donate blood, platelets or plasma, the Red Cross will test your blood for the presence of coronavirus antibodies, which form when the body fights infections such as COVID-19, the disease caused by the coronavirus. Such testing can tell you whether you have had a coronavirus infection in the past — which in turn can indicate that you have potentially developed at least temporary immunity or resistance to the virus.

The Red Cross will test all donations between now and [at least January](#). The Red Cross says it will decide whether to extend the policy past January based on how the pandemic progresses. The Red Cross says donors will receive news about their antibody status about seven to 10 days after they donate. While a donation can help you get valuable information about your own health, it also can save the lives of others. The blood supply in the U.S. is critically low, with most blood centers reporting “significant declines in their blood collections,” according to a joint statement issued Oct. 19 by the Red Cross and two other organizations:

“As the nation confronts new surges of COVID-19 cases, AABB, America's Blood Centers and the American Red Cross are joining together to urge eligible individuals to make and keep an appointment to donate blood now. Since the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, the blood community has experienced unprecedented fluctuations in both supply and the need for blood. A variety of events — including wildfires in the western states, recent hurricanes and other storms — have led to additional disruptions to the collection of blood ...”

There also is an increasing need for blood donations due to hospitals returning to normal surgery schedules. If you would like to donate, you can schedule an appointment by:

- Visiting the [Red Cross website](#)
- Using the [Red Cross Blood Donor App](#)
- Calling 1-800-RED-CROSS
- Using the [Red Cross skill for Amazon Alexa](#)

The Red Cross emphasizes that it is testing for antibodies, which indicate a previous infection. It is not testing donors to diagnose current illness. If you do not feel well, the Red Cross urges you to postpone any donation appointment until you feel better. If you don't feel comfortable giving blood, there are other ways to receive antibody testing. For example, [Kroger recently announced](#) that it will be the first U.S. retailer to offer rapid antibody testing to customers. Such tests cost \$25, and you get the results within 15 minutes. [Source: MoneyTalksNews | Chris Kissell | November 2, 2020 ++]

* Finances *



IRS 2020 Filing Season

Update 01: Tax Rates

Everything from [Social Security benefits](#) to [retirement account limits](#) are adjusted regularly to account for inflation. The same goes for federal income tax brackets — the income ranges that determine your federal tax rate. And 2021 will be no exception: The IRS recently [announced](#) that every individual income tax bracket will increase a bit. Following is a look at how tax brackets as well as standard deductions will change for the 2021 tax year — the one for which your tax return is due by April 2022. The information in the following charts comes directly from [the IRS](#). The income brackets (the dollar amounts) represent *taxable* income — meaning your income after tax deductions and credits — rather than your total income. To determine your tax rate for 2021, find your tax-filing status (words in bold) and select the most applicable income bracket listed under your tax-filing status. To the right of that bracket is your tax rate.

Married couples filing joint tax returns

- Up to \$19,900 (was \$19,750 [for 2020](#)) — 10%
- More than \$19,900 (was \$19,750) — 12%
- More than \$81,050 (was \$80,250) — 22%
- More than \$172,750 (was \$171,050) — 24%
- More than \$329,850 (was \$326,600) — 32%
- More than \$418,850 (was \$414,700) — 35%
- More than \$628,300 (was \$622,050) — 37%

Surviving spouses

The brackets and rates for this tax-filing status are the same as those for married filing jointly.

Heads of household

- Up to \$14,200 (was \$14,100 for 2020) — 10%

- More than \$14,200 (was \$14,100) — 12%
- More than \$54,200 (was \$53,700) — 22%
- More than \$86,350 (was \$85,500) — 24%
- More than \$164,900 (was \$163,300) — 32%
- More than \$209,400 (was \$207,350) — 35%
- More than \$523,600 (was \$518,400) — 37%

Singles

- Up to \$9,950 in 2021 (was \$9,875 for 2020) — 10%
- More than \$9,950 (was \$9,875) — 12%
- More than \$40,525 (was \$40,125) — 22%
- More than \$86,375 (was \$85,525) — 24%
- More than \$164,925 (was \$163,300) — 32%
- More than \$209,425 (was \$207,350) — 35%
- More than \$523,600 (was \$518,400) — 37%

Married couples filing separate tax returns

- Up to \$9,950 (was \$9,875) — 10%
- More than \$9,950 (was \$9,875) — 12%
- More than \$40,525 (was \$40,125) — 22%
- More than \$86,375 (was \$85,525) — 24%
- More than \$164,925 (was \$163,300) — 32%
- More than \$209,425 (was \$207,350) — 35%
- More than \$314,150 (was \$311,025) — 37%

Let's say your taxable income is \$50,000 in 2021 and your tax-filing status is single, for example. You would fall into the "more than \$40,525" tax bracket and your tax rate would thus be 22%. If your taxable income is \$50,000 in 2021 and your filing status is married filing jointly, you would fall into the "more than \$19,900" bracket and your rate would be 12%. [MoneyTalksNews | Karla Bowsheer | November 5, 2020 ++]

Coronavirus Financial Planning

Update 23: 'Covid' Fees Starting to Appear on Medical Bills



Healthcare providers across the U.S. are adding "COVID" fees to patient bills to deal with their financial difficulties linked to the pandemic, according to *The New York Times*. This new fee has been tacked on to patient bills to help providers offset pandemic expenses ranging from acquiring protective gear for staff to sanitizing equipment more

often. *The Times* found that the new fees are most prevalent in dental offices and assisted living facilities. Dental offices have lost billions due to the suspension of non-urgent dental care, and assisted living facilities have been forced to admit fewer residents to prevent the spread of the disease.

But the charges soon may be coming to more physician offices, according to *The Times*. In October, the American Medical Association lobbied CMS to begin reimbursing a [billing code](#) that covers increased protective gear costs. To better understand the new fee, *The Times* analyzed several patient bills. In one instance, Michael Hambley's 87-year-old mother received a bill from her assisted living facility with a one-time \$900 fee for masks, cleaning supplies and meal delivery. Another bill for Jennifer Koeckhoven's mother had a \$60 personal protective equipment charge added to it, which was not covered by insurance. In a third instance, Carrie McGurk, a retired lawyer in Boca Raton, Fla., received a \$15 charge tacked onto her dental cleaning bill. She said she was not informed of the fee in advance and only saw it after asking for an itemized bill. "When I was putting it away in my file, I saw 'COVID charge,' and thought, 'Jeez, you could have at least told me,'" Ms. McGurk told *The Times*.

Overall, *The Times* said COVID fees from dentist offices ranged from \$12 to \$45, and insurance companies typically paid \$7 to \$10 of the charge. Read the full report [here](#). [Source: Becker's Healthcare | Alia Paavola | November 15, 2020 ++]

Prescription Drug Costs

Update 67: Prices Hit Communities of Color the Hardest

Seventy-three-year-old Leonard L. Edloe, a pharmacist of 50 years and pastor of a predominately Black church in Middlesex County, Va., knows the personal and professional sides of heart disease, stroke, and diabetes well. He also knows the astronomical costs of prescription medications and the related financial struggles. His father—also named Leonard L. Edloe—opened the first of their four family-owned pharmacies in 1948. But he was only 65 when he came home from work one day, sat down, had a sandwich and a beer and then died of a massive heart attack. It was a major emotional blow to lose his father and mentor that way. But then Edloe's sister died at 60 and his brother at 54 – also both of heart attacks. "I had to get out," he said sternly, reflecting on his now determined self-care through exercise and healthy eating. "I'm 73 now."

For decades, Edloe has been a prominent household family name in Richmond, Va. where his father's first pharmacy was established. Since his family was upper middle class, he acknowledged they had no problem paying for prescription medication. But given his father's legacy and his own community service through his profession and dedication to help people in need, he is known for being on the cutting edge of the struggle to establish health equity. That includes exploring ways to make prescription drugs more affordable and accessible to all. "The pricing has gone through the roof," he said in an interview. "I mean, insulin – a month's supply for some people – is \$600." That's \$7,200 a year. "Even the generic pricing has gone up," he points out. "That has become worse because so many of the drugs are imported. Seventy-five percent of the drugs in the United States have an ingredient that's made in China, India or Germany."

Edloe explained that "Because there's no control over pricing in the United States, they can basically charge what they want to; whereas in other countries, the government decides." As a former long-time member of Medicaid HMO Virginia Premier Health Plan's board – Edloe pointed out that the drug used to treat Hepatitis C costs \$1,000 a pill. But in Egypt, it is \$1 a pill. Edloe has expressed these concerns vehemently over the years in various leadership roles, including as chair of the Virginia Heart Association for the Mid-Atlantic Region; president of the American Pharmacists Association Foundation, and board member of the Virginia Commonwealth University Health Systems Authority. "My blood pressure medicine for myself has tripled in price. I was paying \$15 for three months. Now it's \$45," he said. "Fortunately, that's with my insurance." For people who lack health insurance, medicine for hypertension can cost

upwards of \$300-\$600 a year, which, can be difficult to manage financially along with paying for other medications and bills. “So, it’s real serious,” Edloe concluded.

Community health workers and researchers around the country have long recognized the increasing costs of prescription drugs and the difficult choices some people must make to afford them. An article in Harvard Medical School’s Harvard Health Publishing, titled, “Millions of Adults Skip Medications Due to Their High Costs” highlights findings from a national survey conducted by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention’s National Center for Health Statistics:

- Eight percent of adult Americans don’t take their medicines as prescribed because they can not afford them.
- Among adults under 65, six percent who had private insurance still skipped medicines to save money.
- 10 percent of people who rely on Medicaid skipped their medicines.
- Of those who are not insured, 14 percent skipped their medications because of cost.
- Among the nation’s poorest adults— those with incomes well below the federal poverty level — nearly 14 percent “did not take medications as prescribed to save money.”

Those statistics get even worse when exploring prescription drug affordability in the Black community. According to the National Center for Biotechnology Information, a division of the National Institute of Health, “Elderly black Medicare beneficiaries are more than twice as likely as white beneficiaries to not have supplemental insurance and to not fill prescriptions because they cannot afford them.” Likewise, an AARP survey of 1,218 African-American voters last year found more than three in five (62 percent) said “prices of prescription drugs are unreasonable” and nearly half (46 percent) said they did not fill a prescription provided by their doctor, mainly because of cost.

The inability to pay for prescription drugs – even for those under the age of 65 – has significantly impacted Blacks, Latinos and other people of color due to economic disparities. “Though the Affordable Care Act (ACA) reduced the number of uninsured Americans, over 28 million remain without insurance,” says PublicHealthPost.org. “More than half (55%) of uninsured Americans under the age of 65 are people of color. For those with no insurance, paying retail prices for medications is often financially impossible.”

This is no secret to those who have been working in the trenches on critical health care issues daily for years. Ruth Perot, executive director/CEO of the Summit Health Institute for Research and Education, Inc. (SHIRE), serves the 92 percent Black and largely low-income families of Washington, D.C.’s 6th, 7th and 8th Wards. She has been working on grassroots health equity issues in communities of color for more than 23 years. “I am certainly aware of the extent to which folks have to, of course make that choice between the cost of a prescription and the other commitments that they have, whether its rent or whether it’s food on the table or something related to the education for their children,” Perot said. “The cost of prescription drugs has always been out of control. It’s been a major profit-motive driven industry. That’s been true for some time. And so, whatever we see at the national level from a policy perspective still hasn’t addressed the fundamental issue that the drug prescriptions cost too much...I don’t think the federal government has ever used its power as the principle buyer of drugs to get those prices down. So, it’s been a persistent problem for many, many, many years if not decades.”

Edloe, having owned pharmacies in predominately Black communities, vehemently agrees. In addition to his medical career, he also interfaces with the community as pastor of the New Hope Fellowship Church in Hartfield, Va. As he personally works to avoid his family’s history with heart disease, he passes along health lessons to his congregation, and is intimately familiar with their struggles to pay for prescription drugs. Currently working with two groups involving health disparities and pharmaceuticals, he says he believes the answer to achieve equity will ultimately be “some form of universal health care.”

But, there must also be a culture change, he said. “Because a lot of health care providers still are not trained and the materials are still not designed for diverse communities. So it’s all about getting equity – not equality – but equity in health care. Because there’s a big difference. If everybody stands beside the fence and the fence is six feet and you’re

6 feet 5 inches tall, you can see over it, but other people can't. Equity means you might have to give them a stool to see." [Source: The Seattle Medium | Trice Edney | October 28, 2020++]

Amazon Support Scam

Update 01: Phony Amazon Callers Use BBB Phone Number

The COVID-19 pandemic has more people than ever ordering from Amazon. And, of course, scammers are finding ways to cash in on the trend. Con artists are posing as Amazon employees, calling people, and claiming to need information about their account. And if that wasn't tricky enough, scammers are spoofing BBB's phone number to do it!

How the Scam Works:

- You answer the phone, and it is a recorded message claiming to be from Amazon stating there is a problem with your Amazon account. The message ranges from a fraudulent charge on your Prime card to a lost or damaged package to an unfulfilled order for an iPhone 10. But no matter what the recording is, these scammers have the same goal: getting your personal information. The con artists will either outright ask for credit card and account login details. Or, they will request remote access to your computer under the guise of "helping" to solve the issue.
- Also look out for a confusing twist on this scam. The con artists are spoofing other organizations' phone numbers to help disguise their calls and lend them credibility - including BBB's number! That means they probably using other phone numbers too, so watch out.

How to Spot this Scam:

- Be skeptical of email and unsolicited calls. Some departments at Amazon will call customers, but Amazon will never ask you to disclose or verify sensitive personal information or offer you a refund you do not expect. Amazon will never ask you to make a payment outside of their website and will never ask you for remote access to your device.
- Ignore unsolicited messages that ask for personal information. Amazon will also never send you an unsolicited message that asks you to provide sensitive personal information, such as your tax ID, bank account number or credit card information.
- Ignore calls for immediate action. Scammers try to get you to act before you think by creating a sense of urgency. Don't fall for it.
- Beware of requests to pay via wire transfer, prepaid debit card or CashApp (such as MoneyPak, iTunes or similar cards). These are almost always a sign of fraud.
- Report it to Amazon. Any customer that receives a questionable email or call from a person impersonating an Amazon employee report them to [Amazon customer service](#). Amazon investigates these complaints and will takes action, if warranted.

For More Information

Learn more about phishing scams at [BBB.org/PhishingScam](#). Learn more about how to identify whether a call or message is really from Amazon in this article. If you've gotten a phony call or been the victim of another scam, make others aware by filing a report on [BBB.org/ScamTracker](#).

[Source: [BBB Scam Alerts](#) | October 9, 2020 ++]

Medicare Telephone Scam

Update 02: Beware of Medicare & ACA Cons during Open Enrollment

Every year during health insurance open enrollment season, scammers try to dupe unsuspecting consumers into sharing their personal information. This year is no exception. According to new [BBB.org/ScamTracker](https://www.bbb.org/scamtracker) reports, Americans are getting scam calls phishing for their Medicare numbers and other personal information. This year, open enrollment runs October 15 - December 7, 2020 for Medicare and November 1- December 15, 2020 for the Affordable Care Act.

How the Scam Works:

- You receive a call (or a recorded message) from someone who claims to be helping you navigate your Medicare options. They may call themselves a “health care benefits advocate” or a similar title. The caller says they can enroll you in a better Medicare program than what you currently have. This new plan is cheaper, and you can keep all the same services. To get started, all you need to do is provide some personal information, such as your Medicare ID number. Of course, the call is a scam, and sharing personal information will open you up to identity theft.
- In another version reported to [BBB.org/ScamTracker](https://www.bbb.org/scamtracker), the caller is trying to frighten – rather than assist -you. In this case, they claim that your Medicare will be discontinued if you don’t re-enroll. Fortunately, this “Medicare advisor” can fix the situation – if only you share your personal information.
- Also, [BBB.org/ScamTracker](https://www.bbb.org/scamtracker) is getting reports about callers pushing “free” back or knee braces. This is Medicare fraud, and you can [learn more about these scams here](#).

Tips to Avoid Open Enrollment Scams

Selecting a health insurance plan can be challenging and complex. Be on the lookout for common red flags.

- **Be wary of anyone who contacts you unsolicited.** People representing Medicare or ACA plans don’t contact you by phone, email, or in person unless you are already enrolled. Be especially cautious of threatening calls that require quick action or immediate payment.
- **Decline promotional gifts in exchange for personal information.** Keep a healthy level of skepticism any time a broker offers you [free gifts](#), health screenings, or other special deals. Never sign up with a broker who offers you an expensive “sign-up gift” in exchange for providing your Medicare ID number or other personally identifiable information.
- **Beware of dishonest brokers who offer “free health screenings.”** [Some brokers offer this to weed out people who are less healthy](#). This is called “cherry picking” and is against the Medicare rules.
- **Guard your government-issued numbers.** Never offer your Medicare ID number, Social Security number, health plan info, or banking information to anyone you don’t know.
- **Hang up and go to official websites.** You can enroll or re-enroll in Medicare at [Medicare.gov](https://www.Medicare.gov) or in a marketplace health plan at [Healthcare.gov](https://www.Healthcare.gov).

For more information:

Learn more about open enrollment and spotting a Medicare or ACA scam on the [Federal Trade Commission website](https://www.FederalTradeCommission.gov). If you are unsure whether a call or offer is from Medicare, or you gave your personal information to someone claiming to be with Medicare, call 1-800-MEDICARE to report it. If you suspect fraud when signing up for ACA coverage, go to [HealthCare.gov](https://www.HealthCare.gov) or call the Health Insurance Marketplace call center at 800-318-2596.

For more tips from BBB on avoiding health care scams, check [BBB.org/HealthCareScam](https://www.bbb.org/HealthCareScam). If you’ve been the victim of a scam, please report it to [BBB.org/ScamTracker](https://www.bbb.org/ScamTracker). By sharing your experience, you can help others avoid falling victim to similar scams. [Source: BBB Scam Alerts | October 16, 2020 ++]

COVID-19 Scams

Update 03: Phony Clinical Trials

Thought we had seen the end of COVID-19 scams? Think again! Scammers are sending out text messages promoting participation in phony clinical studies. Don't be tempted by the opportunity to help scientists while making extra cash. Make sure it's the real thing before you sign up.

How the Scam Works

- You receive an unsolicited message via text, email, or a social media message. It explains that you may qualify for a COVID-19 study, which pays upwards of \$1,000. One version received by BBB staff read: "Local Covid19 Study: Compensation up to \$1,220! Qualify Here: [link removed] stop2stop."
- No matter how curious you are – or how much you could use an extra \$1,200 – don't click. It's a scam! The phony message includes a link to see whether or not you qualify for the study. If you click it, you could unknowingly download malware onto your computer or phone. This virus can give scammers access to your usernames, passwords, and other personal information.
- In other cases, the link may take you to a website that looks like a real clinical trial. You will be asked for personal information, such as government ID or bank account numbers. Real medical researchers would never ask for this information during the screening process!

How to Avoid a Clinical Trial Scam:

- Look up the domain. Use lookup.icann.org to look up the URL. Look for warning signs such as a very recent registration date or registration in a foreign country.
- Think the trial is real? Find it on the official website. If you receive a message about a study and want to confirm whether it's true, go directly to (or do a web search for) the organization's website for further information. The National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the National Library of Medicine (NLM) also maintain [ClinicalTrials.gov](https://clinicaltrials.gov), a free searchable database of clinical studies on a wide range of diseases. If there is no government agency, university, or hospital mentioned, it's likely a scam.
- Never pay to be part of a clinical trial. Real clinical trials will never ask you to pay them.
- Legitimate clinical trials do gather information about candidates – but not financial information. To screen for participants, a real study might ask for your name, contact information, age, gender, race, ethnicity, or various pre-existing medical conditions. But they should never ask you for information like your bank account details.

For More Information

Read up more about clinic trial scams on the Federal Trade Commission [website](https://www.ftc.gov). Learn more about scams related to COVID-19 at www.BBB.org/Coronavirus. If you've been targeted by this scam, help others avoid the same problem by reporting your experience on the www.BBB.org/ScamTracker. [Source: BBB Scam Alerts | November 6, 2020 ++]

State Tax Burden for Vermont Retired Vets

As of NOV 2020

Many people planning to retire use the presence or absence of a state income tax as a litmus test for a retirement destination. This is a serious miscalculation since higher sales and property taxes can more than offset the lack of a state income tax. The lack of a state income tax doesn't necessarily ensure a low total tax burden. States raise revenue in many ways including sales taxes, excise taxes, license taxes, income taxes, intangible taxes, property taxes, estate

taxes and inheritance taxes. Depending on where you live, you may end up paying all of them or just a few. Following are the taxes you can expect to pay if you retire in the state of Vermont.

Sales Taxes

The Vermont state sales tax rate is 6%, and the average VT sales tax after local surtaxes is 6.14%.

- Groceries, clothing, prescription drugs and non-prescription drugs are exempt from the Vermont sales tax
- Counties and cities can charge an additional local sales tax of up to 1%, for a maximum possible combined sales tax of 7%
- Vermont has 19 special sales tax jurisdictions with local sales taxes in addition to the state sales tax
- Vermont has a higher state sales tax than 65.4% of states

Restaurants are charged at a 9% sales tax rate (plus a 1% local sales tax in certain cities), and all alcoholic beverages have a 10% sales tax rate (plus a 1% local sales tax in certain cities). The purchase of any motor vehicle is subject to the standard state sales tax of 6%, and short-term car rentals are taxed at 9%. Additional excise taxes apply to purchases of gasoline, cigarettes, and other goods. Refer to <https://tax.vermont.gov/exempt-items> for what is Taxable and Exempt in Vermont.

Excise Taxes

An excise tax is a tax directly levied on certain goods by a state or federal government. The most prominent excise taxes collected by the Vermont state government are the fuel tax on gasoline and the so-called "sin tax" collected on cigarettes and alcoholic beverages. An excise tax is not the same thing as the Vermont Sales Tax. The Vermont Sales Tax is collected as a percentage of the final purchase price of all qualifying sales, and is collected directly from the end consumer of the product. Vermont's excise taxes, on the other hand, are flat per-unit taxes that must be paid directly to the Vermont government by the merchant before the goods can be sold. Merchants may be required to attach tax stamps to taxable merchandise to show that the excise tax was paid. Even though excise taxes are collected from businesses, virtually all Vermont merchants pass on the excise tax to the customer through higher prices for the taxed goods.

- **Alcohol:** Liquor \$7.68 per gal | Wine: \$0.55 per gal | Beer: \$0.27 per gal. All are already added to their purchase prices by the retailer. The Indiana excise tax on liquor is higher than 70% of the other 50 states. Vermont's excise tax on Spirits is ranked #15 out of the 50 states lower than 64% of the other 50 states. Vermont's excise tax on wine is ranked #32 out of the 50 states. Vermont's excise tax on beer higher than 56% of the other 50 states. Vermont's beer excise tax is ranked #22 out of the 50 states.
- **Cannabis Tax:** Not Applicable
- **Cellphone:** The average tax collected on cell phone plans in Vermont is \$8.50 per phone service plan, lower than 60% of the other 50 states. Vermont's average cellphone tax is ranked #30 out of the 50 states. The Vermont cellphone tax is already included in the service plan price you pay to your service provider, and may be listed as "Misc. taxes and Fees" or "Other" on your monthly bill. **Cigarettes:** The Indiana excise tax on cigarettes is \$1.00 per 20 cigarettes, lower than 62% of the other 50 states. Indiana's excise tax on cigarettes is ranked #31 out of the 50 states. The Indiana cigarette tax of \$1.00 is applied to every 20 cigarettes sold (the size of an average pack of cigarettes). If a pack contains more than 20 cigarettes, a higher excise tax will be collected.
- **Cigarettes:** The Vermont excise tax on cigarettes is \$2.75 per 20 cigarettes, one of the highest cigarettes taxes in the country. Vermont's excise tax on cigarettes is ranked #8 out of the 50 states. The Vermont cigarette tax of \$2.75 is applied to every 20 cigarettes sold (the size of an average pack of cigarettes). If a pack contains more than 20 cigarettes, a higher excise tax will be collected. For all Vermont Cigarette and Tobacco Excise Taxes refer to <https://www.salestaxhandbook.com/vermont/tobacco>.

- **Fuel:** The Vermont excise tax on gasoline is **12.10¢ per gallon**, higher than 74% of the other 50 states. This is in addition to the federal excise tax of 18.4¢ per gallon on gasoline and 24.4¢ per gallon, on diesel. Refer to <https://www.salestaxhandbook.com/vermont/gasoline-fuel> for all state and federal taxes by type of fuel.
- **Vehicle:** Vermont collects a registration fee and a title fee on the sale or transfer of cars and motorcycles, which are essentially renamed excise taxes. Unlike standard excise taxes, however, the end consumer must pay the tax directly to the Vermont Department of Transportation and receive documentation (registration and title papers) proving the fees were paid.

Personal Income Taxes

Tax Rate Range: Low – 3.35%; High – 8.75% (Tax. Go to <https://www.tax-brackets.org/vermonttaxtable> for details).

Income Brackets: Varies w/Filing Status. Single Lowest – \$0 to \$39,600; Highest – \$200,200 and over

Number of Brackets: 5

Personal Exemptions: Single – \$4,250; Married – \$8,500; Each Dependent – \$4,250

Standard Deduction: Single - \$6,150; Couple - \$12,300; Head of Household - \$9,200 Qualifying Widow \$12,300; Age 65 or Over +\$1,000 each

Medical/Dental Deduction: Federal amount

Federal Income Tax Deduction: None

Retirement Income Taxes: No exemptions, except for Railroad Retirement benefits. Out-of-state government pensions are fully taxed.

Retired Military pay: Follows federal tax rules.

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.

Website: Vermont Department of Taxes <https://tax.vermont.gov>

Tax Forms:

- IN-111 Income Tax Form Instructions https://tax.vermont.gov/sites/tax/files/documents/IN-111_Instr.pdf
- IN-111 Income Tax Form <https://www.tax-brackets.org/vermonttaxforms/form-in-111>
- Vermont Tax Guide for Military <https://tax.vermont.gov/sites/tax/files/documents/GB-1099.pdf>
- All Vermont Tax forms <https://tax.vermont.gov/forms-and-publications>

Property Taxes

A property tax is a levy on property that the owner is required to pay, with rates set as a percentage of the home value. Property assessments include two components-the improvement or building value, and the land or site value. Your property taxes help to fund local programs such as schools, fire stations, and municipal governments like select boards. Additional information to help you with understanding property taxes, including how to appeal your property taxes can be found on the Secretary of State's website <https://sos.vermont.gov/municipal-division/laws-resources>.

- The median property tax in Vermont is \$3,444.00 per year for a home worth the median value of \$216,300.00. Counties in Vermont collect an average of 1.59% of a property's assessed fair market value as property tax per year. Vermont has one of the highest average property tax rates in the country, with only seven states levying higher property taxes.
- Vermont's median income is \$62,088 per year, so the median yearly property tax paid by Vermont residents amounts to approximately 5.5% of their yearly income. Vermont is ranked 3rd of the 50 states for property taxes as a percentage of median income.

- The exact property tax levied depends on the county in Vermont the property is located in. Chittenden County collects the highest property tax in Vermont, levying an average of \$4,096.00 (1.61% of median home value) yearly in property taxes, while Essex County has the lowest property tax in the state, collecting an average tax of \$1,727.00 (1.39% of median home value) per year. For more localized property tax rates, find your county in the county list at <http://www.tax-rates.org/vermont/property-tax#Counties>. Your county's property tax assessor will send you a bill detailing the exact amount of property tax you owe every year.
- All property is considered nonhomestead (formerly "nonresidential"), unless it is declared as a homestead. Property owners whose homes meet the definition of a Vermont homestead must file a Homestead Declaration upon purchase. If eligible, it is important that you file so that you are correctly assessed the homestead tax rate on your property. In Vermont, all property is subject to education property tax to pay for the state's schools. For this purpose, property is categorized as either nonhomestead or homestead. A homestead is the principal dwelling and parcel of land surrounding the dwelling, owned and occupied by the resident as the person's domicile.
- The Vermont Property Tax Credit assists many Vermont homeowners with paying their property taxes. You may be eligible for a property tax credit on your property taxes if your property qualifies as a homestead and you meet the eligibility requirements. The maximum property tax credit is \$8,000.00. Refer to <https://tax.vermont.gov/property/tax-credit>.
- When real estate is sold in Vermont, state income tax is due on the gain from the sale, whether the seller is a resident, part-year resident, or nonresident. If the seller is a nonresident, the buyer is required to withhold 2.5% of the sale price and remit it to the Vermont Department of Taxes. Refer to <https://tax.vermont.gov/property/rw>.

Renter Rebate Claim

The Renter Rebate Program refunds to eligible renters the portion of rent paid that exceeds an established percentage for household income. A Renter Rebate is allocated to eligible Vermont homeowners based on the portion of their rent paid that exceeds an established percentage of household income. Renters in Vermont may qualify for a rebate based on their household income and how much property tax they paid through rent on their principal place of residence. To be eligible for Renter Rebate, you must be a legal resident of Vermont for the entire calendar year, not be claimed as a dependent of another taxpayer, have a household income which does not exceed \$47,000, and you are the only person in the household making a renter rebate claim. Refer to <https://tax.vermont.gov/individuals/renter-rebate>.

Inheritance and Estate Taxes

Although Vermont does not have an inheritance tax, it has an estate tax. Vermont Estate Tax Return must be filed if the decedent had Vermont income and filed U.S. Estate Tax Return. Federal estate tax returns are required when an estate exceeds specified gross estate values. In 2021, estates valued at more than \$5 million will have to pay a tax. Refer to <https://tax.vermont.gov/individuals/estate-tax>.

Other State Tax Rates

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

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

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For further information call 802-828-2865 or visit the Vermont Department of Taxes site <https://tax.vermont.gov>, <https://tax.vermont.gov/research-and-reports/tax-rates-and-charts>, or <https://www.retirementliving.com/taxes-new-york-wyoming#Vermont>. [Source: | November 2020 ++]



Notes of Interest

November 01 thru 15, 2020

- **U.S. Navy.** The Navy has made 78 more ratings eligible for a reenlistment bonus of up to \$100,000 in fiscal 2021, and increased payouts for 14 more — but the bonuses for 51 skill sets already eligible will decrease and 44 ratings have been eliminated from the program, according to the service. The payouts for 107 ratings remain unchanged.
- **My Life, My Story.** At <https://www.blogs.va.gov/VAntage/80927/life-story-3-simon-work-hobby> you can listen to 13 episodes of vets telling their war experiences during service.
- **Social Security.** Former spouses can collect 2 or more checks as long as they were married at least 10 years each time and are now unmarried or remarried after age 60.
- **Gunny R. Lee Ermey.** Check out Gunny's video for the 2016 1st Battalion 7th Marines Vietnam Reunion at https://www.17marines.com/uploads/4/1/0/1/41019527/vietnam_veterans_reunion_512.mp4.
- **North Korea.** According to a recent estimate by a research institute affiliated with the U.S. National Defense University, North Korea is believed to have up to 60 nuclear warheads that can threaten regional stability. The Institute for National Strategic Studies said in its Strategic Assessment 2020 report that the North is assumed to have between 15 and 60 nuclear warheads and approximately 650 ballistic missiles capable of threatening cities in South Korea, as well as in Japan and eastern China.
- **Presidential Inauguration.** The Presidential Inauguration is set for Wednesday, January 20, 2021. If you're interested in securing tickets to the inauguration, call your Congressman's local or Washington office to be placed on a waiting list as they await event details. Refer to <https://www.house.gov/representatives> or <https://contactsenators.com/senator-phone-numbers> for their Washington number.
- **Federal Pay Raise Freeze.** Federal employees would not receive an across-the-board increase in pay next year under provisions outlined in a series of fiscal year 2021 funding bills released by the Senate Appropriations Committee 10 NOV.

[Source: Various | November 15, 2020 ++]

Iran Nuclear Threat

Update 02: Rouhani Wants Biden to Compensate for Alleged Past Mistakes

Iran's president called on President-elect Joe Biden to “compensate for past mistakes” and return the U.S. to Tehran's 2015 nuclear deal with world powers, a state-run news agency reported 7 NOV. Hassan Rouhani's comments mark the highest-level response from Iran to Biden and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris clinching the Nov. 3 election. “Now, an opportunity has come up for the next U.S. administration to compensate for past mistakes and return to the path of complying with international agreements through respect of international norms,” the state-run IRNA news agency quoted him as saying.

Under President Donald Trump, tensions between the U.S. and Iran have escalated, reaching a fever pitch earlier this year. One of Trump's signature foreign policy moves was unilaterally withdrawing the U.S. from Iran's nuclear deal in 2018, which had seen Tehran limit its enrichment of uranium in exchange for the lifting of economic sanctions. The U.S. has since reimposed punishing sanctions on Iran that have crippled its economy, which was further battered by the coronavirus outbreak. In an effort to pressure Europe to find a way around the sanctions, Iran has slowly abandoned the limits of the nuclear deal. "The people of Iran, though their heroic resistance against the imposed economic war, proved that the U.S. maximum pressure policy was doomed to fail," Rouhani said. He added Iran "considers constructive engagement with the world as a strategy."

Iran is continuing to build up its stockpile of low-enriched uranium and now holds roughly 12 times the amount permitted under the 2015 nuclear agreement, the United Nations Atomic Agency said in a report. The report's findings underscore the challenge the incoming Biden administration faces in persuading Iran to fully return to the 2015 nuclear deal: Besides the stockpile of low-enriched uranium, which when further refined can be used to fuel a nuclear weapon, Iran is also taking steps to potentially accelerate its production of low-enriched uranium and is continuing its nuclear research.

Also Sunday, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammed Javad Zarif tweeted that "the world is watching" to see if the new Biden administration would depart from Trump's approach toward Iran and seek international cooperation. "Deeds matter most," Zarif added. President-elect Joe Biden has said he is prepared to take the U.S. back into the 2015 nuclear deal provided Iran returns into full compliance with that deal and agrees to future negotiations for longer and more stringent constraints on its nuclear activities.

Meanwhile, Iran on Sunday reached its highest ever single-day death toll from the coronavirus with 459 new deaths recorded. This brings Iran's total recorded deaths from the virus to 38,291 nationwide. Another 9,236 new confirmed cases of the virus were confirmed over the past 24 hours, bringing total confirmed cases to more than 682,000 nationwide since February. Iran has struggled to contain the virus and has seen daily surges and highs over the past month. The capital, Tehran, has been the hardest-hit and recently extended some lockdown measures across the city. [Source: Associated Press | November 8, 2020 ++]

Nuclear Weapons Treaty

Update 02: Challenges from Russia, Iran & North Korea now Fall to Biden

Joe Biden will face three urgent nuclear challenges upon entering the White House. Why it matters: Arms control with Russia is crumbling, Iran's uranium stockpiles are growing, and North Korea is as vexing and threatening as ever. The last treaty constraining the world's two nuclear superpowers, New START, is due to expire 15 days after Biden takes office.

- President Trump was skeptical of that Obama-era deal, but both Biden and Russia's Vladimir Putin want to activate a five-year extension. Their approval and a bit of protocol are all that's required.
- That will avert an immediate arms race. It won't address Russia's new weapons systems and smaller "tactical" nukes — not to mention China's unconstrained nuclear buildup.
- The Trump administration pushed a proposal for the "future of arms control," involving both Russia and China, but it arrived to the issue late and didn't get very far.

The state of play: Biden sees New START, once extended, as the "foundation for new arms control arrangements." But in a climate of distrust with Moscow and Beijing — and with a plethora of competing priorities — he might struggle to break much more new ground than Trump did. Biden also wants to move quickly to salvage the Iran nuclear deal — promising to re-enter it by lifting sanctions if Iran returns to compliance.

- Iranian leaders have said they'd hold up their end of that deal. But they want the U.S. to make the first move and have waved away the idea of a broader, longer-lasting deal, which is Biden's ultimate objective.
- The UN's nuclear watchdog also revealed this week that Iran's stockpile of low-enriched uranium is currently 12 times what is permissible under the deal. Iran has also advanced its nuclear research and updated its facilities since Trump withdrew in 2018.
- The Trump administration, meanwhile, is attempting to block the path back to the deal by piling on new non-nuclear sanctions that Biden might find politically tricky to lift.

What to watch: Negotiations on a follow-on deal will probably have to wait for Iran to elect its next president in June. Trump will soon hand back the challenge Barack Obama said would be the most difficult of his presidency: North Korea. *Where things stand:*

- Besides parading a giant new missile through Pyongyang last month, Kim Jong-un has gone relatively quiet. Things won't stay that way.
- North Korea has a history of testing incoming U.S. administrations, and Kim has been clear that his suspensions of nuclear and long-range missile tests were only temporary.
- The leaders aren't starting on great terms. Biden called Kim a "thug" during the campaign, while North Korea labeled Biden a "rabid dog."
- Biden has proposed a bottom-up approach to negotiations, while working in conjunction with U.S. allies as well as China to apply pressure on Kim's regime. In the meantime, North Korea's nuclear capabilities will continue to advance.

The bottom line: North Korea might be Biden's most difficult foreign policy challenge too. [Source: Axios | Dave Lawler | November 12, 2020 ++]

Nuclear Weapons Arsenal

Update 07: Our Stockpile May Not Work

The Senate and House are currently engaged in a critically important debate over nuclear weapons testing. The decision reached may preserve or destroy America. We must resume nuclear weapons testing. Here's the situation. Our thousands of nuclear weapons were designed, tested and built in the 1960s, '70s and '80s to win the Cold War. None of these weapons has been tested since 1992, over a quarter century ago. Nor has a single new weapon been designed, tested or built during this same period.

The tens of thousands of active nuclear weapons scientists in our three nuclear weapons labs have never designed, tested and built a nuclear weapon. Nuclear weapons are the most complex systems ever created by man. The detonation of a nuclear weapon is so complex that there are many activities and processes occurring in the initial millionth of a second which we do not understand. The heart of a nuclear weapon is made of plutonium, and many aspects of its aging process are still unknown to us.

During our half-century of active nuclear weapons testing (1945-92), we conducted more than a thousand tests. A great many of these were failures. It is doubtful that any test was ever conducted in which unexplainable events did not occur. Our best and most experienced weapons designers were noted for telling of many cases where the designs in which they had the most confidence were the ones in which the most complete failures occurred. All of our nuclear weapons were designed and built when the nuclear weapons age was in its adolescence. Decades of recently-gained knowledge was not included. Also, these weapons were all built under wartime conditions, when speed was essential, shortcuts were taken and there was no time for accurate record-keeping. For example, as designers made last-minute design changes in the weapon under test, these changes may not have been recorded in the weapon's final "as-built" documentation.

All these weapons were designed to have an estimated 20-year lifetime. As a result, all the weapons in today's stockpile are long past the end of their design life. Some have gone through relatively recent "life extension" programs, which may have resulted in unintended critical design changes being made.

How did we get we get into this awful mess? The Cold War ended in 1991 and the Soviet Union ceased to exist. No major threats were apparent. Our national leaders — supported by the American people — established an unannounced "nuclear freeze." Nuclear budgets were slashed. Nuclear testing was prohibited. New weapons were outlawed. Nuclear research and development was denied. Nuclear infrastructure improvements were canceled. These were serious over-reactions, of course; and if we had reassessed them as our nuclear threats grew, we could have recovered. But we kept on making terrible nuclear policy decisions.

One of the worst was to insist on a zero-yield test policy. Russia and China, refused, of course, so they have tested and produced generations of advanced, low-yield nukes. Another incredibly bad one was to bring nuclear terrorism into the world by refusing to use conventional military force to stop North Korea's and Iran's early nuke development. Our hand-wringing didn't work. But our worst decision — by far — was to believe we could develop a computer program to replace testing in determining stockpile reliability. The scientists who spent decades designing and testing nukes in the Cold War warned against this fatal mistake. From a lifetime of observing test failures they knew there would always be too many unknowns in the nuclear detonation process.

As the years and decades passed, the arms controllers and anti-nuclear activists gained control, They approved computer simulations as the equivalent of nuclear testing, and put us on the road to disaster. Last year, however, new data appeared. The National Academy of Sciences published a scientific paper written by two senior nuclear scientists at the Los Alamos Lab, who had been active in Cold War testing. They describe exactly why we cannot be confident of the reliability of our stockpile. Our nukes may not detonate! This is an issue far beyond partisan politics. Our nation's survival is at stake.

The president must take action. He must assemble a team of surviving Cold Was nuclear weapons designers and testers to work with today's computer specialists in resolving the "unknown unknowns" that are at stake. And that's not all. Another very bad nuclear policy decision of the past decades has been to let our nuclear test site in Nevada deteriorate. The writer of this article estimates that recovery will take about five years and cost some \$2 billion. An immediate start must be made on this, in any case. [Source: Washington Times | Robert Monroe (Opinion) | November 12, 2020 ++]

China's Territorial Claims

Update 08: Proposed Revision to China's Maritime Police Law



The China Coast Guard would be allowed to use weapons against foreign ships in its waters under a proposed revision to its maritime police law, according to a translated version of the document. China's National People's Congress last month drafted the revised law, which has yet to be enacted, according to a 4 NOV report by the Chinese legislation blog NPC Observer. The coast guard would be authorized to use weapons "in the case of unlawful infringement by a national organization or individual," according to the translated draft. It also OKs "all necessary measures to stop the infringement and eliminate the danger on the spot."

China routinely accuses the United States of infringing on its sovereignty by sending naval vessels through contested waters. Those freedom-of-navigation operations challenge Chinese claims in the South China Sea that are unrecognized by international law. The U.S. Navy regularly sends its vessels within 12 nautical miles of the Spratly and Paracel islands, areas China claims as territorial waters, but the U.S. considers open to international passage. "[The U.S.] violated Chinese laws and relevant international laws, infringed upon China's sovereignty, and undermined peace, security and order of the relevant waters," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lu Kang told reporters after the USS McCampbell sailed through the Paracel Islands in January 2019. The draft law does not specify what kinds of weapons the coast guard would use, but the typical Type 218 Chinese patrol boat carries twin 14.5 mm machine guns, according to a 9 JAN report by the International Business Times.

The proposed legislation comes as the China Coast Guard this week broke its record for the number of days spent in one calendar year near the Senkaku Islands, which Japan controls but are also claimed by China and Taiwan. As of 3 NOV, the Chinese coast guard this year has spent 284 days in the waters surrounding the handful of rocky islets, Chief Cabinet Secretary Katsunobu Kato told reporters 2 NOV. At a press conference 5 NOV, Kato said he was aware of the Chinese legislation but declined to comment. However, he said, the Japanese government will continue to "firmly and calmly respond to Chinese vessels. "Under our policy to adamantly defend our territory, lives and property of the Japanese citizens including the Japanese fishing vessels, we will take all possible measures and monitor the situation around Senkaku Islands and gather information by coordinating with related ministries," Kato said.

The United States has said the U.S.-Japan Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security, which requires the U.S. to defend Japan, applies to the uninhabited Senkakus. The proposal also comes after national security adviser Robert O'Brien announced last month that the U.S. Coast Guard is strategically homeporting its newest fast-response cutters in the Western Pacific. Guam received its first of such cutters in September and are awaiting two more. The Chinese congress is accepting public comments on the draft law until 3 DEC after which it will be up for further deliberation, according to the NPC Observer. [Source: Stars & Stripes | Caitlin Doornbos | November 5, 2020 ++]

Dimension Origins

Mile, Acre, Foot, Gallon, Pound, & Horsepower

Why are there 5,280 feet in a mile, and why are nautical miles different from the statute miles we use on land? Why do we buy milk and gasoline by the gallon? Where does the abbreviation "lb" come from? Let's take a look at the origins of a few units of measure we use every day.

The Mile

The basic concept of the mile originated in Roman times. The Romans used a unit of distance called the mille passum, which literally translated into "a thousand paces." Since each pace was considered to be five Roman feet—which were a bit shorter than our modern feet—the mile ended up being 5,000 Roman feet, or roughly 4,850 of our modern feet. If the mile originated with 5,000 Roman feet, how did we end up with a mile that is 5,280 feet? Blame the furlong. The furlong wasn't always just an arcane unit of measure that horseracing fans gabbed about; it once had significance as the length of the furrow a team of oxen could plow in a day. In 1592, Parliament set about determining the length

of the mile and decided that each one should be made up of eight furlongs. Since a furlong was 660 feet, we ended up with a 5,280-foot mile.

The Nautical Mile

So if the statute mile is the result of Roman influences and plowing oxen, where did the nautical mile get its start? Strap on your high school geometry helmet for this one. Each nautical mile originally referred to one minute of arc along a meridian around the Earth. Think of a meridian around the Earth as being made up of 360 degrees, and each of those degrees consists of 60 minutes of arc. Each of these minutes of arc is then 1/21,600th of the distance around the earth. Thus, a nautical mile is 6,076 feet.

The Acre

Like the mile, the acre owes its existence to the concept of the furlong. Remember that a furlong was considered to be the length of a furrow a team of oxen could plow in one day without resting. An acre—which gets its name from an Old English word meaning "open field"—was originally the amount of land that a single farmer with a single ox could plow in one day. Over time, the old Saxon inhabitants of England established that this area was equivalent to a long, thin strip of land one furlong in length and one chain—an old unit of length equivalent to 66 feet—wide. That's how we ended up with an acre that's equivalent to 43,560 square feet.

The Foot

As the name implies, scholars think that the foot was actually based on the length of the human foot. The Romans had a unit of measure called a pes that was made up of twelve smaller units called unciae. The Roman pes was a smidge shorter than our foot—it came in at around 11.6 inches—and similar Old English units based on the length of people's feet were also a bit shorter than our 12-inch foot. The 12-inch foot didn't become a common unit of measurement until the reign of Henry I of England during the early 12th century, which has led some scholars to believe it was standardized to correspond to the 12-inch foot of the king.

The Gallon

The gallon we use for our liquids comes from the Roman word *galeta*, which meant "a pailful." There have been a number of very different gallon units over the years, but the gallon we use in the United States is probably based on what was once known as the "wine gallon" or Queen Anne's gallon, which was named for the reigning monarch when it was standardized in 1707. The wine gallon corresponded to a vessel that was designed to hold exactly eight troy pounds of wine.

The Pound

Like several other units, the pound has Roman roots. It's descended from a roman unit called the *libra*. That explains the "lb" abbreviation for the pound, and the word "pound" itself comes from the Latin *pondo*, for "weight." The avoirdupois pounds we use today have been around since the early 14th century, when English merchants invented the measurement in order to sell goods by weight rather than volume. They based their new unit of measure as being equivalent to 7000 grains, an existing unit, and then divided each 7000-grain avoirdupois pound into 16 ounces.

Horsepower

Early 18th-century steam engine entrepreneurs needed a way to express how powerful their machines were, and the industrious James Watt hit on a funny idea for comparing engines to horses. Watt studied horses and found that the average harnessed equine worker could lift 550 pounds at a clip of roughly one foot per second, which equated to 33,000 foot-pounds of work per minute. Not all scholars believe that Watt arrived at his measurement so scientifically, though. One common story claims that Watt actually did his early tests with ponies, not horses. He found that ponies could do 22,000 foot-pounds of work per minute and figured that horses were half again stronger than ponies, so he got the ballpark figure of 33,000 foot-pounds of work per minute.

[Source: www.mentalfloss.com | Ethan Trex | November 3, 2020 ++]

Bad Breath

Some Home Remedies to Eliminate

You brush your teeth daily but is that enough oral hygiene for the day? Let's face it. Bad breath isn't a desirable thing, and as typical as it is, many of us are mortified by it. That may not be the most productive path to take since the first step in figuring out a solution involves finding more information about the problem. The issue of bad breath, under certain circumstances, may only be resolved with the help of a doctor and professional tools. However, it's not always a medical condition behind bad breath, and the following effective home remedies will maintain oral hygiene and eliminate bad breath.

Tongue Scraping

It's undisputedly clear that you'll need to brush your teeth regularly. But assuming you already do that and would like to take some extra measures, tongue scraping is a useful addition to your oral hygiene. It will essentially remove the extra particles on the surface of your tongue –which is the reason behind the bad breath. It will remove the dead cells and the bacteria from the tongue and will reap various benefits. Tongue scraping is an excellent way of improving your overall health, your sense of taste, the appearance of your tongue, along with giving you better protection from dental decay. Tongue scraping should be done consistently to eliminate bad breath from your life.

Water

Dryness in the mouth may cause bad breath. Fortunately, the remedy is as effortless as chugging down a glass of water to refresh your mouth. Some people may not like drinking plain water. In such a case, one may add to their diet more foods rich in water content. For example, you can get rid of bad breath by eating tomatoes and watermelons or intake foods like cucumber, celery, and lettuce. If you're alright with the taste of plain water, drink sufficient amounts throughout the day and cut out the nastiness of bad breath from your life. Water is necessary for your overall health, so you should pay attention to dehydration signs like bad breath.

Brushing and Flossing

Brushing your teeth and tongue can reduce the odor by removing the bacteria lounging on your tongue. If you have a bad breath problem, it's best if you use a toothbrush that comes with a built-in tongue cleaner. Consider reducing or quitting smoking to help reduce bad breath. Be careful while you brush your tongue or use a tongue scraper instead. Regularly change your brush. Flossing every day also reduces the risk of diseases and helps you get fresher breath. Floss takes out particles of food stuck between your teeth, giving you the confidence of better breath.

Diet

Like treatments of various other diseases and issues, diet can play a crucial role in eliminating bad breath. For example, the bad breath after eating garlic can be reduced because of milk. Milk helps combat bad breath if you've consumed strong-smelling food. Similarly, yogurt has been noted for its beneficial effect in reducing bad breath. Yogurt is also over-all healthy for your body, and you should consider including it in your diet every day. Other foods that are good for your dental health include oranges, apples, pineapple juice, and popular mouth-freshening foods like fennel or anise seeds. Reducing your protein intake is also useful in eliminating bad breath since ammonia production will decrease significantly.

Green Tea and Zinc

Green tea has multiple health benefits and is thus usually an excellent addition to your diet. It is common knowledge that green tea assists in weight-loss with its health properties, but it's also helpful in reducing bad breath. The deodorant and disinfectant properties go a long way in freshening your breath. One cup of green tea is as good for your breath as putting a mint in your mouth. Another home remedy is to have Zinc because it is present in certain mouthwashes and dietary supplements. You can also opt for zinc chewing gum if you have a dry mouth. Six months of regular uses with a zinc solution can significantly improve bad breath.

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Some more home remedies for bad breath include baking soda and aromatic spices like cloves and cinnamon. If you're struggling with immense stress all the time, it can result in a bad breath too. Try to de-stress yourself, and don't hesitate to reach out to a mental health expert. A crucial thing to not forget is that while bad breath can be eliminated with home remedies, medical complications like diabetes and infection may also be the cause behind bad breath. As a precaution, you should make an appointment with a doctor if you think the terrible odor may have some serious underlying cause.

[Source: Aging Healthy Today | October 24, 2020 ++]

Cars That Never Made It

1954 De Soto Adventurer II, 1953 Ford X-100, and 1956 Packard Predictor

They were pure fantasy on wheels, machines designed to make the heart race and the mind ask, "What if?" These 1950s concept cars were automotive art built to attract public attention, test wild engineering ideas and give motorists a fleeting glimpse down the highway of tomorrow.



1954 DE SOTO ADVENTURER II



1953 FORD X-100



1956 PACKARD PREDICTOR

Have You Heard or Seen?

Punography (2) | Marines (1) | Latest Satirical Cartoons

Punography (2)

- Why is England known for being such a wet country? The queen has been reigning there for generations.
- Knock, knock. Who's there? To. To who? I think you mean "to whom."
- What did the time traveler do when he was still hungry after finishing his dinner? He got up and went back four seconds.
- What do you call a bear that does not have ears? B. What do you call a fish that does not have eyes? Fsh.
- Why did the skeleton decide to stay home from the school dance? Because it had no body to dance with.
- What part of the chicken can you make music with? The drumstick.
- Why are Saturday and Sunday the strongest days of the week? The rest of the days are weak days.
- What do you call an alligator that breaks the law? A crook-o-dile. What do you call an alligator that makes a living solving crimes? An investi-gator.
- What does the ocean say when greeting its friends? Nothing. It just waves.
- What did the beach say when the evening tide came in? "Long time no sea."
- Santa Claus' helpers are known as subordinate Clauses.

- She had a photographic memory but never developed it.
- The two pianists had a good marriage. They always were in a chord.
- I was struggling to figure out how lightning works, but then it struck me.
- The grammarian was very logical. He had a lot of comma sense.
- A chicken farmer's favorite car is a coupe.
- What do you call a person rabid with wordplay? An energizer punny.

Marines (1)

A Taliban Army Platoon was on patrol when the commander noticed a lone Marine standing on a hilltop above their location. The commander told two of his soldiers to go take out the Marine, so they dropped their packs and promptly ran as fast as they could toward the Marine. Just before they got to the top, the Marine ran over the other side of the hill. The two soldiers followed.

For the next few moments there were bloody screams and dust flying in the air. Then as quickly as it had started, it stopped and the Marine appeared back on the hilltop. He brushed off his cammies, straightened his cover, crossed his arms and stood there looking down at the Taliban soldiers.

The infuriated commander called for a squad to go get the Marine. They promptly ran as fast as they could toward him. Just before they got to the top, the Marine ran over the other side of the hill. The squad followed, and for the next few minutes there were bloody screams and dust flying in the air. When it stopped, the Marine again returned to the hilltop. He brushed off his cammies, straightened his cover, crossed his arms and stood there looking down at the remaining Taliban soldiers.

The commander was really hot now. He ordered the rest of his platoon to attack the Marine. Determined that Taliban soldiers were far superior to one lone Marine, they had blood in their eyes as they ran up the hill. Just before they got to the top, the Marine ran over the other side of the hill. The blood-thirsty soldiers followed. For many minutes there were horrific screams and clouds of dust flying in the air. It continued and continued.

When it finally stopped, one lone soldier came crawling back to the commander, all bloody and beat about the head and shoulders. His uniform was torn, cuts were all over his body. The commander demanded a report. The lone soldier, trying to catch his breath, replied in a forceful yet trembling voice, "Sir, run... it was a trick. There are TWO of them!!"

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A Marine was deployed with 1/7 in Vietnam. While he was there he received a letter from his girlfriend. In the letter she explained that she had slept with two guys while he had been gone and she wanted to break up with him. AND, she wanted pictures of herself back.

So the Marine did what any squared-away Marine would do. He went around to his buddies and collected all the unwanted photos of women he could find.

He then mailed about 50 pictures of women (with clothes and without) to his girlfriend with the following note:

"I don't remember which one you are. Please remove your picture and send the rest back."

Latest Satirical Cartoons





Thought of the Week

We must never forget why we have, and why we need our military. Our armed forces exist solely to ensure our nation is safe, so that each and every one of us can sleep soundly at night, knowing we have 'guardians at the gate.'

— Allen West (R-FL-22)

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